

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Maybe we... don't listen to George W. Bush?

The Takeaway:

- As the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan moves forward, some are trying to twist every challenge that arises into a case for extending the forever war.
- But 20 long years have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that endless war is not the answer. Ending the U.S. military occupation in Afghanistan remains the right choice — and the popular one too.
- Make no mistake: the violence in Afghanistan is grave, and the challenges serious. But more war won't solve Afghanistan's problems. Only peace-based solutions will.

20 Years of Occupation. Not A Moment More.

This week, the top U.S. commander in charge of the war in Afghanistan, with no more war to lead, formally stepped down from his post. It was a symbolic step forward in the process of winding down the nearly two decade-old occupation. But while progress toward ending this endless war continues, serious challenges remain. Namely: violence rages in the country as the Taliban have seized the opportunity of U.S. withdrawal to claim territory. It's a serious problem that deserves urgent diplomacy, but the usual war apologists — including none other than [George W. Bush himself](#) — have twisted it to attack the withdrawal itself and justify their support for ever more endless war. For this week's Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief, we want to make clear: withdrawing from Afghanistan *was* the right decision, *is* the right decision, and *will continue to be* the right decision... and no, we shouldn't care what dubya has to say.

Twenty Years

For twenty years, the United States has been at war in Afghanistan. For twenty years, proponents of endless war have claimed that if we could just stay a little longer, if we could only drop a few more bombs, we may finally 'win.' But twenty years of experience have proven that to be an utter fallacy. The defining lesson of the last few decades of endless war is that there is simply no military solution to what is now a four decades-long conflict in Afghanistan. Since 2001, the war in Afghanistan has led directly to the deaths of [tens of thousands](#) of people, thousands of U.S. service members, and the displacement of [millions](#) more. Those who [ignored](#) twenty years of bombings, occupation, and war, when it was caused by the U.S. intervention, but are now seizing on this uptick in violence as proof that we need *more* war should, quite frankly, not be taken seriously.

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The Right Choice, The Popular Choice

President Biden's decision to finally recognize the catastrophic futility of endless war was the right one. You don't have to take just our word for it; the people know it too. Poll after poll has revealed that whatever the politicians and beltway pundits may say, the people want an end to the U.S. war in Afghanistan. One recent poll finds that an overwhelming [73%](#) of U.S. voters support withdrawal. That popularity holds across party lines, with [65%](#) of self-described conservatives approving of Biden's plan. And though politicians are quick to [speak on behalf of](#) members of the U.S. military to justify their warmaking, the evidence shows that support for withdrawal is actually [higher](#) among veterans than in the general public. The same holds true outside of the United States: [80%](#) of Afghans believe that only a political (i.e. non-military) solution will bring about peace, and only one third would prefer U.S. and NATO forces remain in the country. Meanwhile, globally, the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan has been found to be a [major driver](#) of anti-U.S. sentiment. In other words: the decision to withdraw was not only the right thing to do. It was also the popular thing to do.

Centering the Human Cost

Let's be clear: the situation in Afghanistan is dire, and may get worse before it gets better. The Taliban have taken ground, Afghan security forces have [been killed](#), and civilians, as ever, have been caught in the crossfire. This increase in violence takes place in the context of a prolonged [humanitarian crisis](#) — displacement, poverty, food and water insecurity, and more have plagued the country for decades, in no small part due to U.S. intervention. Any progressive foreign policy approach to Afghanistan must recognize, and center, this tragic human cost. While there have been valid concerns raised about the administration's withdrawal process and its mitigation of further violence, the fact: is the gravity of the situation in Afghanistan is simply not an argument for staying at war. Maintaining that war for twenty years has failed to build peace. Quite the opposite, the last two decades are *all the more evidence* of the utter failure of the war-first approach, and the need for an alternative.

Give Peace A Chance

Ending the U.S. war in Afghanistan does *not* mean ending U.S. responsibility for what comes next. It means ending the failed endless war strategy and turning to peace-first solutions to address the *root* drivers of the conflict. That means, first of all, seeing the withdrawal to its conclusion, and ending *all* military involvement, including private security forces, covert funding of armed nonstate groups, and drone warfare. It means instead investing heavily in desperately needed humanitarian assistance, diplomatic negotiations, transitional justice, and peacebuilding efforts. It means focusing U.S. interests on the needs and demands of the Afghan people, and understanding that working toward sustainable peace in Afghanistan is essential to our collective security. It can do so by using its diplomatic power and foreign assistance to empower and build the long-term capacity of Afghan civil society — from [women's rights](#) organizations to grassroots peacebuilders — who are already organizing for a better future based on their own

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needs, not the United States' assumptions about their needs. It means holding ourselves and our partners accountable by ending U.S. opposition to the International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan — something could go a long way toward deterring further abuses and supporting transitional justice in Afghanistan. Above all, it means creating the conditions for the people of Afghanistan to finally, after decades and decades of war and intervention, write their own futures.

The uptick in violence in Afghanistan is real, and it is serious. But to look at the last twenty years of U.S. occupation and blame that violence on not having *enough* war is, frankly, absurd. There is only one path forward for building peace in Afghanistan: seeing withdrawal to its conclusion, ending the forever war, and investing in non-military solutions to empower Afghans to build a long-term, sustainable peace.

BURIED LEDES

We've said it before and we'll say it again:  **NO PENTAGON MONEY IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE BILLS!** This week, we joined 48 advocacy organizations in [calling on](#) Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi to spend our resources on human needs, not Pentagon greed.

Here in the United States, we like to paint ourselves as the heroes in a fight for world democracy. But what if... **we're actually just looking out [for the rich](#)**? (Shocker, I know)

As protests in Cuba take center stage in the news, we want to make clear: no discussion of Cuba is complete without mention of the decades-long, criminal, suffocating blockade of the island. **It's time for the president to listen to [the rest of the world](#) and end the blockade.**

As if the U.S. military doesn't [cause](#) enough misery and destruction in Africa, **appalling new reports detail that the Pentagon systematically undercounts and ignores reports of sexual assault on the continent.**

"Republicans are [pushing](#) the president to hold on to expanded military authority, even as Biden wants to hand those reins back to Congress." If you think that sounds absurd... you're absolutely right. Welcome to Capitol Hill!

In the aftermath of last week's assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, **the White House has not ruled out the possibility of [sending](#) U.S. troops to Haiti.** Hot take: *they should very much absolutely unequivocally without a doubt rule that out...*

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😬 Don't tell anyone but: did you know that **the U.S. [trained](#) the Colombian mercenaries involved in the assassination?** Tell us again how training foreign militaries leads to peace.

Quick reminder: there's still a pandemic going on. And big pharma and rich countries like Germany are still making it worse by blocking global vaccine production. This week, [protests across the country](#) called on Chancellor Merkel to do her part to **#EndVaccineApartheid**.

This week marked the [6th anniversary](#) of the Iran nuclear deal. As negotiations for a return to the deal continue, let's remember: the Iran Deal was a major success. Trump threw it away and left us where we are today. Diplomacy works "Maximum pressure" fails

And finally, what could be better than a funny cat pic? **A [poor drawing](#) of a funny cat pic.**