

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: If we could only drop ONE more bomb... 😞

The Takeaway:

- This Sunday, the United States conducted airstrikes against militias in both Iraq and Syria. That these continue 18 years since the United States first invaded Iraq is proof positive of the disastrous failure that is endless war.
- As the cycle of tit-for-tat military strikes escalates once again, we must ask: Are we effectively at war? Under whose authority are we bombing multiple countries? Certainly not the people's.
- This weekend's strikes make clear: it's time to end the absurd belief that we can ever bomb our way to peace. That means stopping lethal strikes, bringing home U.S. troops from wars the people do not support, and reasserting Congress's war powers to end the forever wars once and for all.

Airstrikes on Iraq and Syria: Endless War Marches On

It was early Monday morning local time when two U.S. Air Force fighter jets [dropped their bombs](#) on multiple locations said to be used by Iranian-allied militias on either side of the Iraqi-Syrian border. Soon thereafter, push notifications pinged around the world: "the United States carries out airstrikes in Iraq and Syria." If you're like us, reading that headline may have prompted feelings of anger, frustration, despair, or fear. But for many people who have lived through what is now almost two decades of the United States' post-9/11 endless wars, the latest airstrikes also triggered something else: an unmistakable sense of *deja vu*.

Endless War in Action

The latest airstrikes on Iraq and Syria are perhaps unremarkable in and of themselves. But that's exactly what makes them remarkable. The United States has, for many years, in many countries, operated under the assumption that if we could just maintain a military presence for a little bit longer, if we could just drop one more bomb, then we might finally find our way to peace. Case in point: the United States has sought to bring 'peace and stability' to Iraq via airstrikes or bombings in [26 of the last 30](#) years. That we are still conducting supposedly defensive airstrikes in Iraq and Syria in 2021, 18 years since the invasion of Iraq, and nearly 10 since the official end of the war, shows us all we need to know about how ineffective, disastrous, and truly endless our endless wars really are.

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A New Unauthorized War?

The fact that we are bombing Iraq 10 years since the war officially ended — not to mention Syria, which is not covered by *any* existing authorization for the use of military force (AUMF) — raises a question: under what authority were these airstrikes conducted? President Biden has justified the actions by [invoking](#) Article 2 of the constitution, which grants him the authority to act in self-defense against truly *imminent attacks*. That [means](#) that the “threat must be so extreme and imminent that it would be unreasonable to seek the necessary approvals before taking action to defend the country.” But launching a retaliatory strike against groups for earlier attacks on bases housing U.S. troops is [not self-defense](#) under international law. Rather than protecting U.S. troops in the region, U.S. troops [faced more retaliatory strikes](#) against their positions less than 24 hours after Biden acted.

U.S. troops are based in Iraq at the Iraqi Prime Minister’s invitation. Meanwhile, U.S. troops also continue to illegally occupy parts of eastern Syria. It’s time to stop ignoring the fact that U.S. personnel shouldn’t be in Iraq or Syria in the first place, and are in harm’s way without a public debate. Even the Iraqi government has [condemned](#) the strikes, and [voted](#) for U.S. troops to leave over a year and a half ago. Years of airstrikes have seemingly failed to stop attacks on U.S. personnel (which have occurred ever since the US invaded in 2002). With such retaliatory tit-for-tat combat escalating in recent years, there’s reason for serious concern that yet another president is inviting yet more endless war by entangling us into a low-level war in places and against adversaries that didn’t exist two decades ago.

Caught in the Crossfire

While the question of authority to wage war is of critical importance, in all of the debates around the merits and legitimacy of any particular airstrike, one perspective typically goes ignored: that of the civilian victims caught in the violence. Individuals, families, communities — real *people* live in the areas of both Iraq and Syria where these strikes now regularly take place. Their homes have become a battleground, their suffering rebranded as “collateral damage.” While we don’t know the specifics of how much harm may have been caused by these particular strikes, we do know that violence begets violence, and that the impacts of an endless war approach radiate outwards. It’s time we think of, and listen to, those caught in the crossfire.

Veering Off the Path of Diplomacy

Not only were these airstrikes part of a failed endless war approach, not only were they done with dubious legal authority, not only do they harm civilians, but they also risk undermining U.S. diplomacy with Iran at a critical moment. While many media portrayals overstate the extent to which these militias in Iraq and Syria are actually backed or controlled by the Iranian government, it is clear that they are allies. As such, a direct attack on them may be seen as a shot across the bow of Iran right as the United States and Iran are deep in negotiations for a [much-needed](#) return to the Iran nuclear deal. In fact, that may have even been intentional — perhaps to goad Iran, or perhaps simply to show Iran’s longtime rival, Saudi Arabia, that a

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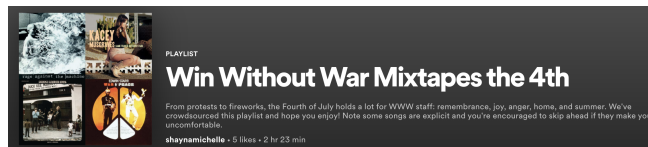


revived nuclear deal doesn't mean an end to Trump's destructive campaign against Iran. While we're on the verge of a breakthrough on the path of diplomacy, the U.S. penchant for warfare risks it all.

A New Approach

In short, while these specific strikes may not have been anything out of the ordinary, they represent much of what is wrong with U.S. foreign policy: from a failed endless war mentality, to an overpowered imperial presidency, to a disregard for impacted groups, to a continued prioritization of warfare over diplomacy. We need a new approach. One key step forward would be to end the U.S. program of lethal strikes outside of war zones — a [demand](#) that over 100 organizations, including Win Without War, made of President Biden just this week. Another: for the Senate to follow the House and [repeal](#) the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) which, while not invoked in this case, has long been used to justify endless war in Iraq and Syria.

Beyond that, there is much to be done: we must end the cycle of tit-for-tat violence, see reentry into the Iran deal through, follow the repeal of the 2002 AUMF with that of its [predecessor](#), cut the outrageous [Pentagon budget](#) that fuels such violence, and, ultimately, do whatever it takes to end the endless war approach to U.S. foreign policy for good. If we don't, we may still be getting push notifications about the latest U.S. bombings in another two decades.



July 4th: a day for relaxing, grilling out, launching fireworks, and... listening to music that subverts the holiday's more jingoistic elements? Just as we did last year, we're sharing with you a playlist curated by the Win Without War team that treats July 4th not as a moment to whitewash this nation's history, but as a chance to move, inspire, and challenge us in our fight for a better country, and a better world. We hope you'll listen with us!

BURIED LEDES

Right now, we have a chance to finally invest in our long-neglected infrastructure, jobs, and communities. So, *naturally*, some in Congress want to use this opportunity to give tens-of-billions of dollars away to the Pentagon. **Today, 24 members of Congress [released](#) a letter with a clear message: No new Pentagon spending in the American Jobs Plan.**

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Violence is on the rise in the Sahel. Now, bear with us here, but: what if pumping the region full of weapons isn't the solution? [Read](#) our very own Policy Associate Amisha Parikh-Friese on why **we need a peace-first approach to violence in the Sahel.**

The climate crisis is here. Want a preview of how the next century will play out? **The rich get to [pay](#) top dollar to escape consequences while everyday people, especially [Indigenous communities](#) and those in the [Global South](#), suffer.**

Let's not eulogize one of the architects of the catastrophic U.S. invasion of Iraq. Instead, **let's mourn his [victims](#), and remember those who [refused](#) his orders to torture fellow human beings.**

Speaking of torture, a quick reminder that **the Guantánamo Bay prison remains open** — and one of the [enduring symbols](#) of the United States' catastrophic post-9/11 national security overreach.

"When America [China-bashes](#), then Chinese get bashed, and so do those who 'look Chinese.' **American foreign policy in Asia is American domestic policy for Asians.**"

The pandemic has plunged many poor countries into a debt crisis. But if the suffering of billions of people across the Global South isn't enough to get policymakers' attention, maybe this will: **the fallout of the debt crisis will come back to haunt us all** — so [writes](#) our Michael Galant.

Recognizing that 2017's systematic attacks on the Rohingya amounted to genocide would not alone bring justice. But it would be a critical step towards it. President Biden: [make](#) the right decision.

Last month was far from the first time that Israeli apartheid and occupation has flared into violence. But this time may have been [different](#). **The struggle for Palestinian liberation can no longer be ignored.** Or so we hope.

And finally, after a long week, **I think we could all use a little bit of this boy's [positivity](#).**