

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: 20 Years Since 9/11

The Takeaway:

- The September 11, 2001 attacks were a tragedy. In recognition of the upcoming anniversary, we join the world in mourning those who lost their lives on that day.
- We also mourn those who suffered as a result of what came next: two decades of failed endless war, repression of Muslims and people of color, and systematic attacks on our fundamental rights.
- At home and abroad, U.S. policy following the 9/11 attacks has caused immense suffering. To honor the legacies of these victims, we must learn our lessons from the last two decades, and work together for a foreign policy that puts peace first.

Remembering the Victims of the 9/11 Attacks and the Endless Wars That Came After

20 years ago tomorrow, the United States faced an unthinkable, deadly attack. The events of September 11, 2001 took the lives of thousands of people, and affected many more. As we approach the anniversary of that tragic day, we join those across the country, and the world, in mourning the loved ones lost on that day.

We also mourn the many who have died or suffered as a result of what came next. In the months that followed the attacks, much of the U.S. public, in their grief, were sold a misguided set of policy prescriptions that would do little to bring peace or justice. Instead, they would only add to the deadly toll. In advance of the coming anniversary, we must reflect on these last twenty years, and work together to chart a new course.

In The Wake of Tragedy, War

After the events of September 11, the march to war began quickly. Little time was given to due consideration of what would actually bring security for the people, or justice for the perpetrators — instead, to a nation that was understandably fearful and aggrieved, war was offered as the ultimate solution. Less than a week after the attack, Congress passed the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). Nominally intended to authorize the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan to stop Al Qaeda and topple the Taliban government, the reality was a [blank check for endless war](#) that is still in use today. In a vote that has gone down in history, Representative Barbara Lee

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was the single person in Congress to [vote against it](#) — and was much maligned for it. By October 7, the U.S. war in Afghanistan had begun.

The Era of Endless War

What came next is well known. The U.S. war in Afghanistan would rage on for twenty years, at profound cost, and with little success. The 2001 AUMF, as Rep. Lee predicted, would be used to [justify](#) a globe-spanning operation of military occupation, drone strikes, and covert action in at least 19 countries. The Bush administration would combine a crusading, “[good vs. evil](#)” narrative with outright lies to get Congress to pass another authorization — the 2002 AUMF — to invade Iraq. That war, too, would last years, causing unimaginable suffering. The Pentagon budget would balloon, the sale of weapons to other countries would skyrocket, and the United States would commit terrible abuses of human rights, from [Abu Ghraib](#) to [Guantanamo](#), none of which would actually make the world safer. The United States had been no stranger to war before the September 11 attacks, but they did mark the beginning of a new era that is still with us today: the era of endless war.

The Costs of War

These endless wars not only failed to achieve their stated goals — they did so at unimaginable cost, as friends like those at the [Cost of War Project at Brown University](#) and others have long documented. To start, the United States spent an astonishing [\\$8 trillion](#) financing them. That is \$8 trillion not spent investing in our communities, providing people with homes, education, or healthcare, or taking action to address the pressing security threat of climate change. Then there’s the human cost: over [900,000 people](#) have died as a direct result of the United States’ post-9/11 wars, and many times more from the wars’ reverberating effects. Over 38 million people have lost their homes. Countless have suffered, temporary or lasting injuries, both physical and mental. These are astonishing figures — but they’re more than statistics. Behind each one lies a [real human being](#), whose life will forever be altered by the decisions made in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. These are the costs of endless war.

The Wars Come Home

People in the United States have also paid a high price for the decisions made after the 9/11 attacks. For many Black, brown, and Muslim communities, the period following September 11 was marked by [a wave](#) of bigotry. Much of this hatred and repression was either the direct result of U.S. policy, or instigated by the decisions of policymakers: from the increased [policing](#) and [surveillance](#) of Muslim communities to [Islamophobic rhetoric](#) that transcended party lines. The endless war era also saw the [erosion of basic civil liberties](#), the rapid expansion of the [surveillance state](#) (and the [suppression](#) of those who blew the whistle on it), and the further [militarization](#) of domestic policing through the surplus weapons of endless war. On top of it all, the climate of fear around terrorism, weaponized by policymakers to justify endless war, came at the expense of the wholesale neglect of major national security threats such as climate change, inequality, and pandemics. Foreign policy and domestic policy are inseparable — and in the

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case of the reaction to the tragic events of September 11, both led to undue suffering, here and abroad.

A Time For Reflection — And Learning

Tomorrow's anniversary is a time of mourning, both for the lives lost on that day, and for the many who have suffered since. It should also be a time of learning. The choices that we made following the September 11 attacks not only failed to bring security, they fueled insecurity, death, and untold suffering. To honor the legacies of these victims, it is our responsibility to make sure that these never happen again. That means learning the key lesson of the last twenty years: endless war, bigotry, and repression were never the answers. Only by heeding this — by working together for a new foreign and domestic policy that [puts peace first](#) — can we build a world of freedom, security, and justice for all.

For more of our reflections on the twenty years since the September 11 attacks, see:

- [20 Years After 9-11](#) — Webinar feat. Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Democracy Now's Amy Goodman, the Institute for Policy Studies' Tope Folarin, the Friends Committee on National Legislation's Diane Randall, and Win Without War Executive Director Stephen Miles.
- [CAIR on AIR: Civil Rights Violations and Foreign Wars](#) — Webinar feat. the Council on American Islamic Relations' Robert McCaw, the Costs of War Project's Dr. Stephanie Savell, and Win Without War Deputy Director Sara Haghdoosti
- [“How presidents used the 2001 AUMF to justify wars unrelated to 9/11”](#) — Win Without War Executive Director Stephen Miles, *Responsible Statecraft*

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[22,000](#). That's at least how many civilians the United States has killed in airstrikes since 9/11, according to the International NGO Airwars. That's why ending our forever wars cannot just mean bringing troops home. Drone and air warfare is not a more “humane” type of war. It's just more secretive.

There was a [military coup in Guinea](#) this past weekend, ousting President Alpha Condé. The coup leaders were from the Group of Special Forces of the Guinean Army, a unit [trained by](#) — *shocker* — the United States and France.

The World Health Organization is recommending a [pause on Covid booster shots](#) until the end of the year, urging wealthy countries to supply vaccines to poorer countries. It's time to invest in our collective security and make vaccines accessible around the world.

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And to get the world vaccinated, other countries also need to be able to manufacture more vaccines. A new report from Public Citizen asserts that the **U.S. government may have [unilateral rights](#) to the Moderna vaccine recipe** – and it’s simply unethical (and ineffective) to keep hoarding it.

Next month, many government officials and US business execs are set to attend the UAE Dubai Expo. Yes, the same UAE that is bombing civilians in Yemen. We joined organizations **calling on these leaders to [withdraw from the expo](#) and condemn the Saudi- and UAE-led war.**

A simple question may sum up how many of us are feeling about the 20 years of war post 9/11 — **[“What has been the point of it all?”](#)**

There’s good reason to take everything you read on the internet with a grain of salt, and there’s an even better reason when **the writers are [being funded by Lockheed Martin](#)**. The military-industrial complex at work.

If you need another reason to support cutting the Pentagon budget, look no further than the U.S. military’s environmental destruction, here and abroad. **Over the last 70 years, the U.S. [poisoned South Korea’s air, water, and land](#), and is now refusing to pay for its clean-up.**

And finally, **“don’t make me say ‘I told you so’”** — but in [ancient Babylon](#).