

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

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SL: Bolton, Abrams, Pompeo, Kissinger...

### The Takeaway:

- With the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan completed, it's time to reckon with the tragic legacy of that failed, twenty-year war. If we are to learn our lesson, one thing is clear: we must stop listening to the same old warmongers who led and kept us there.
- Bremer, Wolfowitz, Bolton, Pompeo, Abrams, Miller, Prince, Petraeus, McMaster, Kissinger — these are some of the names the media has turned to as “experts” on Afghanistan. In reality, they're the *last* people whose advice we need.
- Ending endless wars is about more than withdrawing ground forces. It's about taking foreign policy out of the control of war hawks and crusaders, and putting it back in the hands of the people.

## Who NOT to Listen to on Afghanistan (or Anything Else... Ever.)

This week, after twenty long years, the U.S. military finally, fully [withdrew](#) from Afghanistan. It's a historic moment in the movement to end our forever wars. But there's much more to be done. First: we owe a profound debt to the people of Afghanistan. In the coming weeks, months, and years, we must do everything possible to ensure safety and refuge for all Afghans who need it, and humanitarian and peacebuilding assistance for those who stay behind. Second: the overarching policy of U.S. militarism lives on. We can't bomb our way to peace, in Afghanistan or anywhere else. As we reflect on the tragedy of decades of warfare, we must fight to ensure that this lesson is learned. One key battle in that fight is over *whose voices will be heard*.

[Last week](#), we focused on the experts in Afghanistan and the diaspora that have for too long been marginalized in U.S. foreign policy-making, and to whom we now look to guide us. This week, we explore the opposite: ten of the biggest warmongers, violence profiteers, and establishment hacks that the media turns to as so-called “experts” on foreign policy, but who, in reality, should never, *ever* be heard from again.

### 1. Paul Bremer, “Governor” of Occupation of Iraq, Father of the Insurgency

In the midst of the chaos and tragedy in Afghanistan last month, Paul Bremer managed to crawl out of the woodwork to make an [impassioned defense](#) in the *Wall Street Journal* of... the Iraq war. As the head of the U.S. occupation of Iraq from 2003-2004, Bremer is best known for the

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



decision to disband the Iraqi army and purge the public sector of anyone with ties to the Ba'ath party. Shockingly, the “create tens of thousands of unemployed and disgruntled people” strategy did not work, and is considered one of the major causes of the insurgency that followed. Oh, and he also [wanted](#) to let U.S. soldiers shoot and kill looters on sight.

## **2. Paul Wolfowitz, Former Deputy Secretary of Defense, Iraq War architect**

As it goes at the *Wall Street Journal*, one warmonger wasn't enough last week; they also [ran a piece](#) decrying the withdrawal from Afghanistan from none other than Iraq War architect Paul Wolfowitz. In an illustrious career that also includes resigning [in scandal](#) from the World Bank, and advising the trainwreck Jeb Bush presidential run (please clap), Wolfowitz's greatest claim to fame is as one of the head cheerleaders for the invasion of Iraq. Ginning up false evidence of WMDs and 9/11 ties, and systematically [minimizing](#) the likely human and financial costs of the war, Wolfowitz bears direct responsibility for one of the worst U.S. foreign policy decisions in decades, as well as the resultant deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. So why exactly should we listen to him now?

## **3. John Bolton, Picture next to “warmonger” in dictionary**

Few could match Paul Wolfowitz's sheer lust for war — but if anyone can, it's John Bolton. Where to even start with John Bolton's decades-spanning resume of pure malevolence? When he [fought](#) reparations for Japanese-Americans interned during WWII? When he helped [cover up](#) Iran-Contra? When he used his position as Undersecretary of State for Arms Control to [erode](#) arms control measures? When he helped [orchestrate](#) the WMD misinformation campaign for the Iraq war? Or maybe his decades of experience rallying for crushing sanctions, assassinations, and even all-out war against [North Korea](#) and [Iran](#)? (None of this, though, stopped NPR from [interviewing Bolton](#) for his thoughts on the withdrawal from Afghanistan.)

## **4. Mike Pompeo, CIA Director and Secretary of State under Donald Trump (enough said)**

Mike Pompeo's accomplishments enacting Donald Trump's foreign policy agenda include: almost [starting a war](#) with Iran, imposing [harsh sanctions](#) that harmed millions of everyday people, [failing](#) at “diplomacy” with North Korea, [blacklisting](#) the International Criminal Court prosecutor for daring to look into U.S. war crimes in Afghanistan, general [racism](#) and [Islamophobia](#) — the list goes on. So, no, we don't need to hear him “[react to Joe Biden's handling of Afghanistan](#).”

## **5. Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State under Reagan, War Criminal**

During the Reagan administration, [Elliott Abrams](#) enabled horrific human rights atrocities in Guatemala and El Salvador, supported military coups and flouted democracy across Latin America, and was convicted of lying to Congress for his role in the Iran-Contra affair. To Donald Trump, that sounded like a perfect resume: during the Trump era, Abrams served first as U.S. Special Representative for Venezuela, and then for Iran. Our take: we don't want to hear another word from this war criminal, unless it's him pleading guilty at the Hague.

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## 6. Stephen Miller, Senior Political Advisor to Donald Trump, Xenophobe

Donald Trump was one of the most outwardly, blatantly anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant politicians of modern times. And behind most every one of his xenophobic policies stood one Stephen Miller. From ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, to instituting the family separation policy, to engineering the Muslim and Africa bans, Stephen Miller's anti-immigrant agenda is so virulent that the Southern Poverty Law Center has [labeled](#) him an extremist. Given all of this, it should come as little surprise that a recent interview question about the many Afghans in need of refuge sparked Miller to launch into a sprawling, anti-Muslim [tirade](#).

## 7. Erik Prince, Blackwater founder, War Profiteer Extraordinaire

Erik Prince is a warlord. It's hard to put it any other way. As founder of Blackwater (since rebranded several times, now as Academi), he controlled a [vast private army](#) that has repeatedly broken the law, has repeatedly and regularly lobbied for war, and has become a billionaire in the process. While Prince was head of Blackwater, the company [massacred](#) 14 innocent people in Iraq. He also created a [secret army](#) to protect the ruler of the UAE and illegally [supplied weapons](#) to a Libyan warlord who wanted to overthrow the government. Recently, he's been [charging](#) \$6,500 per person to evacuate Afghans — and giving [interviews](#) about his thoughts on Afghanistan.

## 8. David Petraeus, Former Commander of U.S. and NATO Forces in Afghanistan

If you're looking for an expert to speak about the U.S. war in Afghanistan on [WABC](#) or [NPR](#), who better than the former head of the occupation itself? Nevermind that, during [his tenure](#), he: loosened restrictions intended to mitigate civilian death and destruction; dramatically increased the use of airstrikes, and night raids on civilian homes; publicly opposed calls for withdrawal; and lied to the U.S. public about the war's (lack of) success after doing much the same while overseeing another failed "surge" in Iraq a few years earlier. As a cherry on top, he was also [found guilty](#) of sharing classified information with a woman with whom he was having an affair.

## 9. H.R. McMaster, U.S. National Security Advisor under Trump,

General H.R. McMaster, like Petraeus, was one of the [key figures](#) in the failed 2007 "surge" in Iraq — a prime example of the failed assumption that military force is somehow the solution to deep social, political, and economic problems. Despite much ballyhoo that McMaster would be an "adult in the room" check on Trump policy, McMaster's time in office was characterized by [deference](#) to Trump misinformation, and, unsurprisingly, efforts to [send yet more](#) U.S. forces to Afghanistan. Why, oh why, do we see "oversaw one of the worst catastrophes in U.S. foreign policy history" and think "let's [listen](#) to his [opinion](#) on foreign policy"?

## 10. Henry Kissinger, War Criminal

[Don't get us started.](#)

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Foreign Policy By and For the People

Ending endless wars is about more than withdrawing ground troops. Heeding the lesson of Afghanistan means not only ending our current wars, but preventing new ones. It means choosing diplomacy over conflict and “maximum pressure.” It means stopping drone warfare, covert operations, broad-based sanctions, and private military contracting. It means slashing the Pentagon budget, closing military bases, and putting peace-based solutions first.

If we're to do any of that, we can't keep listening to the same old voices who have stood at the helm of the war machine for the past two decades of catastrophic failure. To learn our lesson from Afghanistan, we must take the reins of foreign policy out of the hands of the profiteers and warmongers, and put them back in the hands of the people.

## BURIED LEDES

Pandemic, climate change, inequality crisis — sounds like a good time to add \$37 billion to the Pentagon budget, right? Well, if you're a member of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), apparently you think so. **Read our [statement](#) on HASC's arms dealer giveaway, then see if your Congressman voted the wrong way, and hold them accountable, [here](#).**

... HASC's bill, the National Defense Authorization Act, did contain at least a few positives, though, including language to **[bar](#) states from using private funds to pay for National Guard deployments to other states** — for that, we can thank in part the over 22,000 activists who signed our petition to stop this practice in its tracks.

Endless war isn't just the result of bad policy ideas, it's a question of who has power: the rich too much, and the working class too little. **For this Labor Day weekend, we re-share last year's [Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief](#) on war as a labor issue.**

Hurricanes, wildfires, floods: your regular reminder that the climate crisis is here. And **a new [report](#) shows that empowering Indigenous land defenders is one key to addressing it.**

As the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan ends, a new study [finds](#) that **over 800,000 people have died due to direct violence in the United States' post-9/11 forever wars** — and many more indirectly. These are the tragic costs of war...

... and there must be *full* accountability. **Win Without War joins leading pro-peace groups in [demanding](#) Congress investigate the dysfunction of the last 20 years of U.S. war in Afghanistan, not just the last 20 days.**

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



While many of us have the fortune of returning to restaurants, movie theaters, and a relatively normal pre-Covid life, here's a quick reminder: **“monopolies on Covid vaccines are [killing](#) people in poorer countries.”**

This week's **grave [attacks](#) on abortion access are a tragedy**. We salute and join in solidarity with activists in the U.S. and beyond who are fighting for their reproductive rights.

Not every court ruling this week was terrible though: **A federal judge [ruled](#) Thursday that forcing asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico is illegal.**

And finally, **oh, to be a cow [airlifted](#) through the Alps.**