

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: 5 Steps Toward a Peace-First Foreign Policy

The Takeaway:

- As the year comes to a close, we at Win Without War have much to be grateful for.
- Putting the brakes on out-of-control Pentagon spending, limiting U.S. complicity in Yemen, reining in out-of-control war powers, and ending the U.S. war in Afghanistan — there's *much* left to be done, but on each front, our movement has made real progress. And momentum is on our side.
- And we couldn't have done any of it without our partners, champions, and grassroots activists. Above all, we're grateful for the power that we've built, *together*, as a movement — as a community.

All That We've Accomplished: Looking Back on 2021

2021 has been hard. An insurrection at the Capitol, another year under the weight of the pandemic, and no shortage of political disappointments. But as we look back, it's easy to forget that it was not all doom and gloom. Amidst the challenges, there is also so much to be grateful for: meaningful policy victories, signs of change to come, and, most of all, a community of passionate activists fighting together at our sides. For this, the last Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief of the year, we look back at just a few of the many things that we — together — have accomplished in 2021.

1. No Pentagon Spending in the Infrastructure Bill

When the military-industrial complex sees a chance to make money, they seize it. So while it may not have been a *surprise* to see Senators try to tack on a \$50,000,000,000 Pentagon budget boost to the bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, that didn't make it any less disgusting. So we mobilized. From our one-on-one Congressional advocacy, to the over **6,000** actions taken by grassroots activists, we helped force Congress to [reject](#) this gross Pentagon money-grab... just like we did [last year](#) when tried to sneak more Pentagon spending into the Covid-19 relief bills.

With the recent passage of the bloated [National Defense Authorization Act](#), it's clear that we have a long way yet to go in righting our nation's budget priorities. But even there, there's reason for hope. Just last year, [almost half](#) of all Democrats in Congress voted to cut the Pentagon budget by 10%. In years past, that number would have been unthinkable. So it won't be easy, but we're fired up — and [we believe that we can win](#).

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2. Landmark Steps Toward Ending U.S. Complicity in Yemen

When Win Without War started advocating for an end to U.S. complicity in the disastrous Saudi- and UAE-led intervention in Yemen, many in the foreign policy blob weren't even aware that the U.S. was involved — much less that our involvement should stop. But after years of tireless organizing, from the grassroots to the grasstops, the landscape couldn't be more different.

This February, mere weeks after taking office, President Biden [announced](#) the end of U.S. support for “offensive operations” in Yemen. Frankly, it was a qualified commitment in the first place, and the administration has in many ways [failed](#) to even live up to that. Yet there's no doubt that things would be far worse if we had continued on with the old status quo. The fight continues, as does, for now, the crisis in Yemen. But as we look back, there's no denying just how far we've come.

3. Momentum Toward Reining in War Powers

Nearly twenty years ago, Congress passed the [2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force \(AUMF\)](#), allowing the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It was a terrible, tragic decision. And even when the U.S. war in Iraq formally ended, that decision continued to cost lives. The 2002 AUMF has since been twisted to justify military operations more than a decade after the Iraq war ended, and remains a cornerstone of the legal architecture of the endless war era. But this year, thanks to over 200 phone calls, 6,000 letters, and 17,000 petition signatures from Win Without War activists, the House passed Rep. Barbara Lee's bill to *repeal* the 2002 AUMF, and a filibuster-proof majority of over 60 Senators has [pledged](#) to do the same. 2002 AUMF repeal is on the horizon — and if we keep up the fight, it will soon be here.

Elsewhere, too, efforts to rein in out-of-control executive war powers continue to gain speed. This July, Senators Murphy, Sanders, and Lee introduced the groundbreaking [National Security Powers Act](#), which would bring critical [powers of war and peace](#) — from war authority to weapons sales to national emergency declarations — back into the hands of Congress, and the people it represents. They were joined by Representatives McGovern and Meijer in the House, who introduced a companion version, [the National Security Reforms and Accountability Act](#), making this a bicameral, bipartisan fight. It may have only been introduced for now, but this type of bold legislation is just what we need to build a future where peace comes first.

4. Ending the U.S. War in Afghanistan

Twenty years. The United States military occupation in Afghanistan lasted so long that there were U.S. service-members risking life-and-limb in the country that were born *after* 9/11 — and Afghan *adults* who had never known a country that was not occupied by the United States. Until this year. There can be no doubt: the U.S. withdrawal saw many tragic moments. We should in no way ignore the dire human toll of those days of chaos, and the suffering that many will face

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under Taliban rule. The final deadly chapter of two decades of a deadly war is not a moment of celebration, but one of reflection.

At the same time, let's be clear: these were not the costs of *withdrawal*, they were the deadly costs of *going to war* in the first place. And the speed with which the Taliban took over was a clear sign of just how little twenty years of warfare actually accomplished. Withdrawal remained the long overdue, right choice, and President Biden deserves tremendous credit for making the hard choice his predecessors refused to. Yet, the presence of U.S. military personnel is never the only tool in U.S. foreign policy, and there is *much* work left to be done on Afghanistan. From ensuring safe passage and [refuge](#) for all seeking to leave the country, to urgently addressing the economic crisis that has put millions of Afghans at risk of starvation, to accountability and reparations for the decades of harm done. But as we keep up the fight, we are also grateful for the end of our nation's longest active war.

5. Building Power, and Changing Minds, Together



The Pentagon budget, Yemen, war powers, Afghanistan — as we round out the year, we're grateful for accomplishments on each of these fronts and more. But most of all, we're grateful for people like you, who make it all possible. Our work is about far more than any single policy decision. It's about building a movement of people who are committed to seeing an end to the *entire* foreign policy status quo, and building a world of justice, equality, and security for all. Every step, every action taken, helps to change minds and bring us closer to that goal.

Thank you for working for peace, last year, next year, and always.

Tis' The Season (For Cutting the Pentagon Budget)

This week, the Senate authorized a Pentagon budget of over three quarters of a trillion dollars, while the Build Back Better act got shelved. It couldn't be more clear: our nation's budget priorities are broken. But together, we have the power to build a world where human needs come before arms dealer greed. As 2021 comes to a close, **we've decided to compile some of our most useful resources into a single short [Activist Guide](#)**, to arm our movement with the knowledge needed to bring us to victory as we start a new year. We hope you find it useful.

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 BIG NEWS! We are *thrilled* to [announce](#) that, starting in 2022, **Deputy Director Sara Haghdoosti will become our newest Executive Director, while current ED Stephen Miles will be moving to the newly-formed position of President.** 

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New rule: **if you rubber-stamped a \$778 billion Pentagon budget, you're [not allowed to say](#) that we can't afford to meet our basic human needs.** Sound good?

In other slash-the-Pentagon-budget news, more than **50 Nobel laureates [called on governments around the world to cut their military spending by 2% and invest the savings in global health, climate action, and ending poverty.](#)**

This [shocking story](#) from the Associated Press has it all: war, action, conspiracy, undercover agents... **and an important lesson that when we flood the world with weapons, we don't always control where they end up.**

If the choice is between human lives and corporate profit, we know what decision Facebook would make. **In a new op-ed, the legal team representing the Rohingya in court [accuse Facebook of boosting hate speech, and fueling a genocide.](#)**

Broad-based sanctions are terrible weapons of economic warfare at the best of times. In a pandemic, they should be all the more unthinkable. And it's not just us saying it. **Faith leaders are [calling on President Biden to lift sanctions and save lives.](#)**

Speaking of deadly sanctions, a reminder that the U.S. maintains a suffocating, decades-old embargo of a small island nation less than 100 miles off our coast. And this week, **more than *half* of House Democrats [called for](#) a loosening of those restrictions and a new approach to Cuba.**

The endless war era has gone on for so long that **Iraqis born during the U.S. invasion are now coming of age — and they face a [bleak future](#) in the war-ravaged country.** While most in the United States have moved on, the human costs of the war in Iraq live on.

Receiving the award for the year's least surprising revelation, **Donald Trump [shared](#) this week that, in his experience, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "never wanted peace" with the Palestinians.**

Progressive reformer Boric and neo-fascist Kast are in a [dead heat](#) in Chile's presidential elections. This seems like a good excuse to remember that the U.S. helped assassinate one of the last progressive reformers, plunging the country into decades of brutal military dictatorship.

And finally, **we hope 2021 lived up to everything the Win Without War pets for peace [wished for.](#)** Happy holidays!