

## The Iraq War, 20 years Later

### The Headline

In this bonus edition of our Debrief, we want to mark a solemn occasion: the 20th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. As some of our readers may know, this is [where our story began](#) - in 2002 in a DC Chinese restaurant in a discussion among a group of eight progressive activists wanting to do something in the ramp up to the war. Twenty years on, the war's horrible consequences are still with us and, though much progress has been made, the movement to end endless war still has a huge amount of work ahead of it. This debrief will be a brief version with reflections from us at Win Without War and a list of events covering the anniversary, as listed in The Happenings below.

The Bush administration's war of choice in 2003 caused [devastation for the people of Iraq](#) and its neighbors, [wasted](#) 2.9 trillion dollars that could have been used to improve people's lives, and supercharged what was an already growing industry of grifting foreign policy "experts," building careers out of bland talking points and a total devotion to American supremacy. Today, many of those grifters have turned their attention to stoking tensions with China, untroubled by the consequences of the wars they have already fomented. The military industrial complex that funds and profits from their grift will never be satiated, but the American people have had enough.

In the years since the invasion, ending endless wars has become a political imperative. It is no accident that every Presidential winner since Barack Obama in 2008 won by criticizing wars of choice and it is no accident that President Biden delivered on his campaign promise to end the failed 21-year occupation of Afghanistan. Still, the Pentagon budget continues to skyrocket, and that money keeps the endless war industry in business. The real key to changing U.S. foreign policy is cutting the Pentagon budget, investing in diplomacy, and encouraging Congress to keep executive power in check.

What's next: The real question for Iraq (and for Afghanistan) is what does justice look like. We cannot allow pundits who thought the invasion was a good idea continue to shape our foreign policy discussion as we shrink from the need to repair the harms done by our [wars of choice](#). This means welcoming refugees, reparations, and preventing the next war of choice from ever happening again.

### The Happenings

Last week (recording included): "Remembering and Misremembering the Iraq War," [Carnegie Endowment](#)

Last week (recording included): "Iraqi Women Speak: Promoting Women, Peace, and Security," [Keough School of Public Affairs](#)

Yesterday (stay tuned for recording): "Iraq War at 20 years," [Cato Institute](#)

March 17th, 10am ET: "Iraq 20 years later: The War's Legacy for Iraq, the Middle East, US Policy, and beyond," [Brookings Institution](#)

March 21, 12-1:30pm ET: "Twenty Years of War in Iraq: The Costs and Consequences," [Costs of War](#)