

America's Long War against Afghanistan (1979-)

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On April 13, 2021, President Joe Biden announced that the United States would pull all remaining 2,500 [troops out of Afghanistan](#) by 9/11/21. The announcement comes after 20 years of combat operations.

Afghanistan is the longest war in U.S. history. It cost over [\\$1 trillion](#) that included \$978 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations spent directly on the war. In addition, the base budget for the Department of Defense increased from \$343 billion in 2001 to \$633 billion in 2020. To this cost must be added an increase of \$175 billion over a twenty-year period for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It does not end there. It is estimated that the costs of U.S. wars in the Middle East added \$453 billion in interest payments to the national debt, outlays that are expected to mushroom to an astonishing [\\$7.9 trillion](#) over the next forty years.

The Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University estimates that [157,000 people died in Afghanistan](#) because of the war between 2001 and 2019. A gross underestimate.

These included 2,298 U.S. military personnel, 6 U.S. Department of Defense employees, 3,814 U.S. contractors, 64,124 Afghan government military and national police forces, 43,074 Afghan civilians, 42,100 opposition fighters, 67 journalists and media workers, and 424 humanitarian workers.

The history and significance of this war bears scrutiny at a time of unprecedented tensions in the American empire.

The bombing, invasion and occupation of Afghanistan saw the first shots fired in George W. Bush's 'war on terror', a deceitful strategy that provided a pretext for U.S. global interventionism after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was soon followed by the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the greatest strategic military blunder in U.S. history. Both wars were based on lies.

In Afghanistan, the pretext was the capture of Osama bin Laden and destruction of Al Qaeda, accused of perpetrating 9/11. In Iraq, the pretense was Saddam Hussein's

possession of “weapons of mass destruction” and ties to Al Qaeda.

The allegations were false. No forensic evidence linked Bin Laden to 9/11. Saddam’s biological and chemical weapons, supplied to him during the Iraq/Iran war by the United States, were degraded by 10 years of UN sanctions and inspections.

Further, Saddam had no ties to Al Qaeda. He was a secular Arab leader who detested Islamic fundamentalists such as Bin Laden. Al Qaeda had no presence in Iraq until the U.S. invasion gave birth to ‘Al Qaeda in Iraq’ which later evolved into the ‘Islamic State in Iraq and Syria’, better known as ISIS.

Seven Muslim countries were bombed during a ‘war of terror’ that saw the United States conduct counter-terrorism operations in 80 countries.

The ‘war on terror’ witnessed countless U.S. violations of international law including crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, warrantless surveillance, extraordinary renditions, preventive detention, torture, and drone assassination.

The U.S. war in Afghanistan began 42 years ago with covert intervention under the Carter administration. Secret involvement began when Jimmy Carter followed the advice of his National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski by allowing the CIA to arm Islamists to fight the secular government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to induce a Soviet intervention in the country.

Brzezinski, it should be noted, was a member of the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations, illustrating his globalist orientation. He authored a book in 1997 titled, [The Grand Chessboard](#), that documents the geostrategic necessity of U.S. domination of the Eurasian landmass.

The Soviet intervention occurred on December 24, 1979. Soviet troops immediately stabilized the Afghan government against the Islamic insurgency. The United States promptly labeled the intervention as an “invasion.”

Public pronouncements by U.S. government officials portrayed the Islamic resistance as being organized as a response to the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan. In a subsequent [interview](#) granted to a French journalist in 1998, Brzezinski admitted to springing a “bear trap” by deploying the Islamic mercenary army six months prior to the intervention hoping to precipitate an “invasion” that would give the Soviet Union its own “Vietnam.”

The “Soviet invasion” of Afghanistan was used by Jimmy Carter to announce the ‘[Carter Doctrine](#)’ during his State of the Union Address on January 23, 1980. This doctrine stated that any attempt by an “outside force” to “gain control of the Persian Gulf region” would be interpreted as an assault on “vital interests of the United States” and would provoke a military response.

The doctrine served as a [blueprint](#) for massive U.S. military and naval intervention in the Middle East that witnessed the installation of permanent military and naval bases, positioning of rapid strike forces, deployment of naval fleets to patrol the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, plans to use tactical nuclear weapons launched from U.S. warships in the Indian Ocean, and massive weapons sales to reactionary governments in the region.

Ronald Reagan and CIA director William Casey dramatically increased aid to the Islamic mujahideen in Afghanistan as part of a global counter-revolutionary offensive against the “Evil Empire” of the Soviet Union and “international terrorism” sponsored by the “Red Menace.” CIA and Pentagon “[black budgets](#)” mushroomed under Reagan and George Herbert Walker Bush from \$9 billion to \$36 billion per year to finance covert war.

Reagan’s imperious Secretary of State George Shultz continually bludgeoned the Soviet Union for alleged violations of human rights, support for socialist governments in Cuba and Nicaragua, provision of aid to insurgency in El Salvador and support for the African National Congress in South Africa and the Palestine Liberation Organization and Fatah in Palestine.

The blatant hypocrisy of Shultz’s claims was glaringly clear given U.S support for dictatorships in the Philippines and Indonesia, apartheid states in South Africa and Israel, contra war in Nicaragua, death squads in El Salvador and Guatemala, military dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, and terror campaigns in Afghanistan, Angola and Mozambique to counter Soviet support for liberation struggles across the globe.

The ideological heart of Reagan’s anti-communist offensive was use of the ‘terrorism’ label to invert reality by criminalizing liberation struggle and sanctioning ‘counter-terrorist’ repression.

Afghanistan was one part of a global ‘war of terror’ unleashed by the United States against the USSR.

The Afghan intervention was extremely costly to the Soviet Union. The Islamic insurgency was armed and financed by the United States and Saudi Arabia. Insurgents were trained in Pakistan. They were provided with advanced weapons, including stinger missiles capable of destroying Soviet jets and helicopters. Opium addiction demoralized Soviet troops, many of whom were skinned alive when captured by Reagan’s “freedom fighters.” Rampant drug addiction and criminal gangs eventually spread to the USSR.

It is estimated that approximately [1 million Afghan civilians](#) were killed in the nine-year conflict along with 90,000 Islamic insurgents, 18,000 Afghan troops, and 14,500 Soviet soldiers. In fact, the U.S. proxy war in Afghanistan contributed to the [overthrow of the USSR](#) in 1991, American triumphalism, and creation of a unipolar world.

The defeat of the Soviet Union provoked publication of the neoconservative policy document titled “[Defense Planning Guidance](#),” written by Under Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz in 1992.

Known as the ‘[Wolfowitz Doctrine](#)’, the policy paper stated that the goal of the United States was to prevent the rise of another super-power that could challenge U.S. global hegemony. It articulated the doctrine of unilateral and preemptive war that would eventually become known as the “[Bush Doctrine](#)” when neoconservatives seized power in 2000 after spending a decade developing their hegemonic agenda in the [Project for a New American Century](#) and other right-wing think tanks during the 1990s.

The Wolfowitz doctrine officially became the Bush doctrine with the publication of the [National Security Strategy of the United States](#) in 2002.

George W. Bush executed the [Wolfowitz doctrine](#) of preemptive war in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. The catalyst was 9/11, America’s “New Pearl Harbor,” an event predicted

in 2000 by neoconservatives in a PNAC document titled, "[Rebuilding America's Defenses](#)." Thoughtful individuals should study the evidence surrounding the terrorist attacks of [9/11](#) to determine whether the neocons led by Bush, Richard Cheney, and their minions were simply clairvoyant or criminally complicit.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the demise of secular-nationalist movements, particularly in the Middle East, which paved the way for the emergence of the Islamic resistance to imperialism and the settler state of Israel.

For example, isolation of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the wake of Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War led to Yasser Arafat's capitulation to Israel at [Oslo](#). In exchange for policing several cantons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Authority collaborated with the Israelis provoking intensification of the armed resistance to occupation being waged by Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The irony is that British and [U. S. imperialists](#) along with their Zionist counterparts, had a long history of supporting Islamic fundamentalism as a counter-weight to secular nationalism as evidenced by their support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt against Nasser, Syria against Assad.

Without the defeat of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War of 1991, Afghan war of 2001, Iraq war of 2003, Libyan war of 2011, and Syrian covert war beginning in 2011 would never have occurred.

In each of these cases, the United States used a combination of overt military intervention and covert war to destabilized targeted governments illustrating the fact that the 'war on terror' was a fraud from the very beginning. The United States supported Islamic fundamentalist mercenaries, including Al Qaeda and Bin Laden in Afghanistan and used Al Qaeda and its stepchild, ISIS in Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

In Afghanistan, the defeat of the secular government in 1992 led to internecine warfare between competing war lords of the National Alliance and led to the rise of the Taliban.

Bill Clinton bombed Afghanistan in 1998 as a diversion from the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal.

What Gore Vidal often referred to as the [Cheney/Bush Oil Junta](#) negotiated with the Taliban to construct a [Caspian Sea oil pipeline](#) through Afghanistan and proceeding to offer the leadership either a "carpet of gold" if they supported the project or a "carpet of bombs" if they refused. The [orientalist](#) mind-set illustrated by that offer was brilliantly deconstructed by the Palestinian intellectual Edward Said fully two decades before the obscenity was uttered.

The Taliban refused. The bombs dropped.

George W. Bush bombed and invaded the country in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 implementing plans drawn up prior to the terrorist attack.

Barack Obama continued the war by drawing down troops in Iraq and surging U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Donald Trump escalated bombing attacks in Afghanistan and promised to remove troops by establishing May 1, 2021, as the withdrawal date. He made the pledge at the end of his presidency. Biden extended that date to September 11, 2021.

When the United States withdraws from Afghanistan, the corrupt puppet government installed by U.S. coalition forces will fall and the Taliban will regain control of the country. The ugly Americans will have lost Afghanistan in the same way they lost Vietnam.

It is brutally ironic that although Brzezinski promised Carter to give the Soviet Union its own Vietnam by supporting the mujahideen in Afghanistan, his policy ended up providing another Vietnam to the United States.

Predictably, humanitarian interventionists who supported the war in Afghanistan by claiming the United States was defending women's rights against the Taliban are voicing opposition to Biden's pull out.

In fact, Brzezinski's covert war destabilized the country and led to the eventual fall of a secular government that defended women's rights, ended the bride price, and promoted women's literacy, advanced education, and employment.

The liberation of women was used by the CIA to recruit reactionary Islamic fundamentalists to fight Afghanistan's socialist government and the godless, atheistic army of the Soviet Union.

The war in Afghanistan was a [killing field](#) much like Vietnam. Thousands of women, children and peasants were among the victims. So much for humanitarian intervention.

Afghanistan is known as the "graveyard of empires." Alexander the Great and the ancient Greek Macedonian empire, the British empire and the American empire were all compelled to leave this forsaken land proving once again the timeless axiom of philosopher George Santayana: "Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it."

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