

US Military should leave Afghanistan and stop drone strikes

There is perhaps no time in American history when our leaders have fought a war with so little support. More than 60 percent of Americans want out of Afghanistan. Even at the peak of the anti-Vietnam-war movement, after a majority had turned against the war, there were still a large number of citizens who believed in the war and its official justifications. Today, as my colleague Robert Naiman of Just Foreign Policy notes, "Western leaders have largely given up trying to explain or justify why Western troops are still in Afghanistan and why they are still killing and being killed."

Yet the war goes on, and even the White House plans for too slowly reducing the U.S. troop presence meet resistance from the Pentagon. In a replay of the internal fight over U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, U.S. commander General George Allen was pushing just a few months ago to keep the current level of troops for another year. The military would also like to maintain a permanent presence of some 6,000 to 15,000 troops.

That is not going to happen, as the Afghan people don't want foreign troops in their country any more than we would want armed fighters from Al Qaeda here in the U.S. But the attempts to establish a permanent base of operations will make it more difficult to negotiate an end to war.

And yes, ironically, the U.S. will most likely end up negotiating with the Taliban to end this war, something our government refused to do after 9-11 when it launched the invasion instead. So, 11 years of war, more than 2,000 U.S. troops dead and tens of thousands wounded will have all been for nothing, to arrive at the same opportunity that was

available without America's longest war. Thousands of Afghans have been killed, and the population has suffered enormously.

The invasion of Iraq was disaster on an even larger scale, with more than a million estimated dead, including more than 4,400 U.S. troops. Hundreds of thousands came home wounded or with brain or psychological trauma and bleak job prospects. Beside the fact that the war was launched on the basis of lies, it is hard to see how anyone could excuse this crime even in retrospect. As the revolution in Egypt showed, people can get rid of their own dictators – foreign intervention is much more likely to create or vastly expand a bloody civil war.

Meanwhile, U.S. drone strikes carried out “secretly” by the C.I.A. are becoming institutionalized, widening the so-called “war on terror” to more countries, in addition to the hundreds of strikes already carried out in Pakistan. These attacks, which have killed hundreds of civilians and have even targeted rescue workers, are each day making more people want to kill Americans.

Our country and our media have too much reverence for the U.S. military and the CIA, which are not making us safer but rather helping to create new threats. As the Washington Post reports, some of our generals have an “array of perquisites befitting a billionaire, including executive jets, palatial homes, drivers, security guards.” Even worse, many officers later join the boards and executive suites of military contractors, where they rake in millions making corporations such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman richer at taxpayer expense, and sometimes promoting war itself on the network news. Our military-industrial complex is as corrupt and rotten as any institution of America's broken democracy, and more deadly than most in its consequences.

We need to end this war in Afghanistan and the other

operations that are making Americans less secure and recruiting new enemies daily. Then we can focus on fixing our broken economy at home.

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