

AFGHANISTAN: America's Lost War

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America's Afghan war is lost and illegal. The Bush administration got no Security Council authorization or congressional declaration of war.

International law expert Francis Boyle said Congress passed a War Powers Resolution Authorization. Doing so gave Bush "blank check" power "to use military force against any individual, organization, or state" at his discretion.

International and constitutional law be damned. Waging war on Afghanistan "is clearly illegal. It constitutes armed aggression. It is creating a humanitarian catastrophe for the people of Afghanistan."

It's also a lost cause. Pentagon commanders know it. So does Lt. Colonel Daniel Davis. In an [unclassified report](#) and more detailed classified one, he explained ongoing disastrous conditions.

From his own firsthand observations and what others told him, he concluded that America's war failed. It can't be won. Official statements conceal hard truths. He witnessed "the absence of success on virtually every level."

Every area he observed firsthand "all over Afghanistan....the tactical situation was bad to abysmal."

Sunday, April 15 highlighted his assessment. The [New York Times](#) tried but failed to downplay Taliban success and US failure in an article headlined, "Afghan Forces Quell Attack; Few Civilians Are Killed."

In fact, Taliban forces rocked Afghanistan. Coordinated attacks struck strategic targets in Kabul and at least three other Eastern provincial cities. Jalalabad's airport was attacked. So were police stations and other government facilities.

Beginning what it called its "spring offensive," high profile targets included government buildings, the Parliament, presidential palace, and foreign embassies.

Calling the attacks “complex,” The Times admitted they “immobilized much of Kabul” and other areas struck. “Life slowly returned to normal,” it continued. A “remarkably small number of civilians” were killed.

Hamid Karzai blames a NATO “intelligence failure.” At the same time, he praised Afghan security forces. Given their ineffectiveness, it’s how knowing for what.

According to US ambassador Ryan Crocker, the attacks showed how America’s forces are still needed. His comment was revealing. America needs violence and instability to justify its presence. Peace and calm means staying isn’t warranted. Expect none any time soon.

Interviewed on [CNN](#), Crocker said Washington’s embassy was on lockdown. Like The Times, he downplayed the attacks. He stopped short of admitting that Afghan security forces and America’s can’t contain Taliban determination to expel an unwanted occupier.

If Sunday didn’t prove it, what will? Throughout the day, well-planned, coordinated attacks used rocket-propelled grenades, explosives, and other weapons effectively.

Parliament and adjacent areas were struck. So were NATO headquarters, Karzai’s presidential palace, and foreign embassies. Among them were Britain’s, Germany’s, Japan’s and Russia’s.

The British ambassador’s residence was struck. So were two hotels, including Kabul’s Star Hotel. Fighters used rocket-propelled grenades, other rockets, hand grenades, other explosives, heavy machine guns, lighter weapons, and suicide vests.

Fighting raged for 18 hours. In ten and a half years of war, it was the most dramatic example of Taliban determination to prevail, and America’s inability to stop them.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said attacks were preceded by two months of planning. Dozens of fighters were involved. “We are strong, and we can attack anywhere we want,” he said. On Sunday, he proved it. The whole world saw what America’s scoundrel media tried, but couldn’t downplay.

Comparisons to Tet

April 15 is reminiscent of January 30, 1968. It was Tet Offensive day one. North Vietnam army regulars and NLF fighters launched nationwide attacks.

Three and a half years into the war, it turned the tide. It showed determined freedom fighters can prevail over the world’s mightiest military, though they alone didn’t do it, nor could they declare victory after weeks of bloody conflict. More on that below.

Carefully planned, Tet lasted two months. Fighting was fierce across South Vietnam. Strategic targets were struck, including the heart of Saigon, Hue, and around America's Khe Sanh base.

Vietnamese called years of struggle "The War against the Americans to save the nation." They never wanted war, their nation divided, or Washington as an enemy. Imperial arrogance had other plans from end of WW II. Liberation came only after 30 years of conflict.

May 1954 Dien Bien Phu defeat ended French involvement. America's exit took another two decades.

On January 30, 1968, three and a half years after America's August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution, thousands of Vietnamese soldiers and NLF guerrillas stormed Banmethut, Kontum and Pleiku.

At the same time, they invaded 13 of the 16 provincial capitals throughout the Mekong Delta. US forces were caught off guard and stunned. America's Saigon embassy was penetrated. So was the presidential palace, a radio station, ARVN headquarters, and General Westmoreland's own Tan Son Nhut airbase compound.

America's Bien Hoa air base was assaulted. Over 20 aircraft were either destroyed or damaged. Surprise gave fighters an advantage. Saigon experienced chaos.

Tactics varied from area to area. Most Saigon fighting ended in days. In Hue, it raged for weeks. It became one of Vietnam's longest and bloodiest battles.

After two months of conflict, Tet ended in defeat. Years later, Vietnamese won the war. Tet was decisive. It turned the tide. It showed US vulnerability from freedom fighter determination to prevail. They didn't succeed alone. American anti-war activism made the difference. So did Congress.

Vietnam Era Anti-War Activism Absent Today

In the 1960s and 70s, students, workers, middle class households, academics, and others rallied effectively against war. In 1968, their efforts peaked. With a 36% approval rating and 26% on Vietnam, Johnson became a lame duck. On March 31, he announced:

"I shall not seek, nor will I accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president."

Despite his Great Society accomplishments, he was finished, a broken man. He became a

shadow of his former self, a once bigger than life figure in Congress and as president. In January 1973 at age 64, he was dead.

Beginning in early 1965, anti-war activism gained momentum. Efforts included protest rallies and marches, university "teach-ins," other campus activities, and an April 17, 1965 Washington rally, drawing up to 25,000. A later one drew half a million.

Numerous events followed. Thousands participated. In October 1967, a two-day march on the Pentagon attracted national media attention. Activists advocated draft card burning.

Today's military is all-volunteer. But no one forces young men and women to enlist. A Main Street Depression pressures them. Better to be unemployed than dead, maimed, or psychologically traumatized.

Perhaps a voice today like Martin Luther King's could persuade them and rally nationwide anti-war fervor. His spirit's badly needed. No one matches what counts most. Nor has a new millennium Daniel Ellsberg exposed today's lies like his Pentagon Papers revealed.

If they did, who'd publish them? Not The New York Times and Washington Post. What they did in 1971 wouldn't likely repeat now.

Perhaps today's Internet can substitute effectively. Revealing vital truths and spreading them is crucial. It's step one to arousing public passion for peace. If sustained, anything is possible.

Congressional Authority to Wage or End Wars

Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution authorizes only Congress to declare war. It also has power to end them. It controls funding. It can supply it or cut it off.

Article I, Section 7, Clause 1 says:

"All bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with amendments as on other Bills."

Either House may originate an appropriations bill though the House claims sole authority. Either House may amend bills, including revenue and appropriations ones.

Congressional appropriation power is key. Cutting off funds ended Vietnam fighting. Early critics like Senators Mike Mansfield, Frank Church, William Fulbright, Albert Gore Sr., and Stuart Symington spoke privately for the most part. They didn't act.

Congressional debate then changed things. Under Johnson, it began ineffectively. Under Nixon, it gained traction. By June 30, 1970, the Church/Cooper amendment stipulated no further spending for soldiers, combat assistance, advisors, or bombing operations in Cambodia. It was the first congressional budgetary act limiting war funding.

Others followed. In 1972, the Church/Case amendment ended funding for America's Southeast Asia military operations. Time for a face-saving withdrawal was permitted. House passage didn't follow Senate action. It slowed, but didn't defeat anti-war efforts.

In June 1973, Congress passed another Church/Case amendment. Beginning August 15, war funding ended. Nixon's veto was overridden. The War Powers Act followed.

It gives presidents the power to act unilaterally for 60 days in response to a "national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces." It authorizes another 30 days to disengage, short of congressional assent to continue.

On April 30, 1975, America's Vietnam involvement entirely ended with a humiliating Saigon embassy rooftop pullout. With sustained anti-war fervor, replicating that in Kabul, Baghdad, and Libya can happen.

Afghan, Iraqi, and Libyan Jamahiriya freedom fighters keep resisting. With effective US public support, Afghan fighting and occupation can end. Iraqi and Libyan liberation struggles can succeed. Syrians can be free from Western-generated violence. Iran can avoid it.

Anti-war activism ended America's Vietnam involvement. Why not in today's theaters of war and occupation! Popular resistance must reawaken. Sustained public pressure can prevail!

A Final Comment: Ending a Lost War

In his 1995 book, ["In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam,"](#) former Defense Secretary McNamara wrote: "...we were wrong, terribly wrong. We owe it to future generations to explain why."

In 1965, he knew the war was lost and said so. He told Lyndon Johnson: "I don't believe they're ever going to quit. And I don't see....that we have any....plan for victory - militarily or diplomatically."

He spoke privately as escalation increased dramatically. He knew the futility and lawlessness, but went along anyway. When it was too late to matter, he explained. Johnson also knew but continued a war he couldn't win. It cost him a second term and shortened his life.

After multiple post-9/11 wars, occupations, and others planned, public resistance can replicate what ended America's Vietnam involvement. It's high time that happened!

Aroused people power can defeat America's imperial arrogance if it decides enough's enough and tries!

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