

Biden Must Call Off the B-52s Bombing Afghan Cities

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[Nine](#) provincial capitals in Afghanistan have fallen to the Taliban in six days – Zaranj, Sheberghan, Sar-e-Pul, Kunduz, Taloqan, Aybak, Farah, Pul-e-Khumri and Faizabad – while fighting continues in four more – Lashkargah, Kandahar, Herat & Mazar-i-Sharif. U.S. military officials now believe Kabul, Afghanistan’s capital, could fall in [one to three months](#).

It is horrific to watch the death, destruction and mass displacement of thousands of terrified Afghans and the triumph of the misogynist Taliban that ruled the nation 20 years ago. But the fall of the centralized, corrupt government propped up by the Western powers was inevitable, whether this year, next year or ten years from now.

President Biden has reacted to America’s snowballing humiliation in the graveyard of empires by once again dispatching U.S. envoy **Zalmay Khalilzad** to Doha to urge the government and the Taliban to seek a political solution, while at the same time dispatching [B-52 bombers](#) to attack at least two provincial capitals.

In [Lashkargah](#), the capital of Helmand province, the U.S. bombing has already reportedly destroyed a high school and a health clinic. Another B-52 bombed [Sheberghan](#), the capital of Jowzjan province and the home of the [infamous warlord](#) and accused [war criminal](#) Abdul Rashid Dostum, who is now the [military commander](#) of the U.S.-backed government’s armed forces.

Meanwhile, the [New York Times](#) reports that U.S. [Reaper drones](#) and [AC-130 gunships](#) are also still operating in Afghanistan.

The rapid disintegration of the Afghan forces that the U.S. and its Western allies have recruited, armed and trained for 20 years at a [cost](#) of about \$90 billion should come as no surprise. On paper, the Afghan National Army has [180,000 troops](#), but in reality most are unemployed Afghans desperate to earn some money to support their families but not eager to fight their fellow Afghans. The Afghan Army is also [notorious](#) for its corruption and mismanagement.

The army and the even more beleaguered and vulnerable police forces that man isolated outposts and checkpoints around the country are plagued by high casualties, rapid turnover and desertion. Most troops feel [no loyalty](#) to the corrupt U.S.-backed government and routinely abandon their posts, either to join the Taliban or just to go home.

When the BBC asked **General Khoshal Sadat**, the national police chief, about the impact of high casualties on police recruitment in February 2020, he [cynically replied](#),

“When you look at recruitment, I always think about the Afghan families and how many children they have. The good thing is there is never a shortage of fighting-age males who will be able to join the force.”

But a [police recruit](#) at a checkpoint questioned the very purpose of the war, telling the BBC’s Nanna Muus Steffensen, “We Muslims are all brothers. We don’t have a problem with each other.” In that case, she asked him, why were they fighting? He hesitated, laughed nervously and shook his head in resignation. “You know why. I know why,” he said. “It’s not really our fight.”

Since 2007, the jewel of U.S. and Western military training missions in Afghanistan has been the Afghan [Commando Corps](#) or special operations forces, who comprise only 7% of Afghan National Army troops but reportedly do 70 to 80% of the fighting. But the Commandos have struggled to reach their target of recruiting, arming and training 30,000 troops, and poor recruitment from Pashtuns, the largest and traditionally dominant ethnic group, has been a critical weakness, especially from the Pashtun heartland in the South.

The Commandos and the professional [officer corps](#) of the Afghan National Army are dominated by ethnic Tajiks, effectively the successors to the Northern Alliance that the U.S. supported against the Taliban 20 years ago. As of 2017, the Commandos numbered only [16,000](#) to [21,000](#), and it is not clear how many of these Western-trained troops now serve as the last line of defense between the U.S.-backed puppet government and total defeat.

The Taliban’s speedy and simultaneous occupation of large amounts of territory all over the country appears to be a deliberate strategy to overwhelm and outflank the government’s small number of well-trained, well-armed troops. The Taliban have had more success winning the loyalty of minorities in the North and West than government forces have had recruiting Pashtuns from the South, and the government’s small number of well-trained troops cannot be everywhere at once.

But what of the United States? Its deployment of [B-52 bombers](#), [Reaper drones](#) and [AC-130 gunships](#) are a brutal response by a failing, flailing imperial power to a historic, humiliating defeat.

The United States does not flinch from committing mass murder against its enemies. Just look at the U.S.-led destruction of [Fallujah](#) and [Mosul](#) in Iraq, and [Raqqah](#) in Syria. How many Americans even know about the officially-sanctioned [massacre of civilians](#) that Iraqi forces committed when the U.S.-led coalition finally took control of Mosul in 2017, after President Trump said it should [“take out the families”](#) of Islamic State fighters?

Twenty years after Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld committed a full range of war crimes, from torture and the [deliberate killing](#) of civilians to the “supreme international crime” of [aggression](#), Biden is clearly no more concerned than they were with criminal accountability or the judgment of history. But even from the most pragmatic and callous point of view, what can continued aerial bombardment of Afghan cities accomplish, besides a final but futile climax to the 20-year-long U.S. slaughter of Afghans by [over 80,000](#) American bombs and missiles?

The [intellectually](#) and strategically bankrupt U.S. military and CIA bureaucracy has a history of congratulating itself for fleeting, superficial victories. It quickly declared victory in Afghanistan in 2001 and set out to duplicate its imagined conquest in Iraq. Then the short-lived success of their 2011 regime change operation in Libya encouraged the United States and its allies to turn [Al Qaeda](#) loose in Syria, spawning a decade of intractable violence and chaos and the rise of the Islamic State.

In the same manner, Biden’s unaccountable and [corrupt](#) national security advisors seem to be urging him to use the same weapons that obliterated the Islamic State’s urban bases in Iraq and Syria to attack Taliban-held cities in Afghanistan.

But Afghanistan is not Iraq or Syria. [Only 26%](#) of Afghans live in cities, compared with 71% in Iraq and 54% in Syria, and the Taliban’s base is not in the cities but in the rural areas where the other three quarters of Afghans live. Despite support from Pakistan over the years, the Taliban are not an invading force like Islamic State in Iraq but an Afghan nationalist movement that has fought for 20 years to expel foreign invasion and occupation forces from their country.

In many areas, Afghan government forces have not fled from the Taliban, as the Iraqi Army did from the Islamic State, but joined them. On August 9th, the Taliban [occupied Aybak](#), the sixth provincial capital to fall, after a local warlord and his 250 fighters agreed to join forces with the Taliban and the governor of Samangan province handed the city over to them.

That very same day, the Afghan government’s chief negotiator, Abdullah Abdullah, [returned to Doha](#) for further peace talks with the Taliban. His American allies must make it clear to him and his government, and to the Taliban, that the United States will fully support every effort to achieve a more peaceful political transition.

But the United States must not keep bombing and killing Afghans to provide cover for the U.S.-backed puppet government to avoid difficult but necessary compromises at the negotiating table to bring peace to the incredibly long-suffering, war-weary people of Afghanistan. Bombing Taliban-occupied cities and the people who live in them is a savage and criminal policy that President Biden must renounce.

The defeat of the United States and its allies in Afghanistan now seems to be unfolding even faster than the collapse of [South Vietnam](#) between 1973 and 1975. The public takeaway from the U.S. defeat in Southeast Asia was the “Vietnam syndrome,” an aversion to overseas military interventions that lasted for decades.

As we approach the 20-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, we should reflect on how the Bush administration exploited the U.S. public’s thirst for revenge to unleash this bloody, tragic and utterly futile 20-year war.

The lesson of America's experience in Afghanistan should be a new "Afghanistan syndrome," a public aversion to war that prevents future U.S. military attacks and invasions, rejects attempts to socially engineer the governments of other nations and leads to a new and active American commitment to peace, diplomacy and disarmament.

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September 11, 2001 provides a justification for waging a war without borders. Washington's agenda consists in extending the frontiers of the American Empire to facilitate complete U.S. corporate control, while installing within America the institutions of the Homeland Security State.

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