
Rethinking Twenty Years of American Unilateralism in the Middle East: A Critical Evaluation of the War on Terror

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The War on Terror launched by the US against Islamic terrorist groups persisted through the Bush-Obama-Trump administrations for nearly 20 years before President Biden completely withdrew the US forces from Afghanistan by the end of August 2021. These military interventions are noticeable examples of American unilateralism in the Middle East. The War on Terror has been severely criticized by the global community as military actions without just cause and lacking grounds under international law. This research aims to critically evaluate the War on Terror in terms of legal and political theories of war now that twenty years of American unilateralism in the Middle East is over. In this article, the author examines other underlying reasons for, and the outcomes of, the war against terrorist groups. He will also suggest peaceful means to fundamentally resolve the Middle East conflict with a view to preventing war in other world regions.

Keywords

The War on Terror, 9/11, Just War Theory, American Unilateralism, Middle East, Terrorism, US Middle East Policy

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I. Introduction

Twenty years have passed since the terror attacks on September 11 (hereafter, 9/11 incident). On the morning of September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon (US Department of Defense) in Washington, D.C. were suddenly attacked by hijacked airliners, which killed about 2,996 and injured more than 6,000 people.¹ The US identified these terrorist attacks as committed by the Islamic fundamentalist group, Al-Qaeda, led by Osama Bin Laden. Shortly thereafter, in December 2001, the US bombarded Afghanistan, which it thought was the stronghold of Osama Bin Laden, and consecutively invaded Iraq in March 2003. These armed interventions (War on Terror) launched by the US against Islamic terrorist groups had been continuing through the Bush-Obama-Trump administrations for nearly 20 years, before President Biden completely withdrew the US forces from Afghanistan by the end of August 2021.

During the Cold War, the US engaged in the Middle East in a political or economic sense. In the post-Cold War period, however, it began a full-scale armed intervention. The two wars against Afghanistan and Iraq are noticeable examples. In the beginning of the War on Terror, the US armed forces easily defeated the Taliban group in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, which were blamed for terrorism. These military victories, however, did not expel the terrorist groups ultimately due to the complex political and religious situation inside the Middle East and conflicting interests over the regional issue with other major powers including France and Russia. Without finding a cause for ending the war, the subsequent US administrations were swamped with political and military deadlock in Afghanistan and Iraq for nearly 20 years.

The War on Terror has resulted in disastrous human losses with material damages on both sides. In the Afghanistan War alone, as many as 2,448 American servicemen were killed up to April 2021 and there was around USD 2.26 trillion in military expenditure.² Nonetheless, these efforts were totally frustrated. Immediately after US military forces withdrew in August 2021, Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city, was taken over by the Taliban regime. Even worse, a drone strike in retaliation for the terrorist attack of the Islamic State (ISIS) at Kabul Airport on August 26, 2021, resulted

¹ B. Plumer, *Nine facts about terrorism in the United States since 9/11*, WASH. POST, Sept. 11, 2013, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/09/11/nine-facts-about-terrorism-in-the-united-states-since-911>.

² E. Knickmeyer, *Costs of the Afghanistan war, in lives and dollars*, AP NEWS, Aug. 17, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-business-afghanistan-43d8f53b35e80ec18c130cd683e1a38f>.

in serious civilian casualties by error, and the US government issued an official apology.³ In the Iraq War that ended in 2011, an estimated 4,337 American soldiers and innumerable Iraqi civilians were killed.⁴ The US government simply ended the war without any convincing statement.

The War on Terror is different from other armed conflicts in human history because it is a conflict between a State and a “terrorist group” which is not defined under international law.⁵ In fact, many terrorist groups, especially across the Middle East, including the Mujahedeen and later the Taliban, were funded and fostered by the US in response to Soviet intervention in this region during the Cold War period.⁶ These terrorist groups were an outpost for armed struggle against the then Soviet Union.

The War on Terror has been severely criticized by the global community as military actions without just cause and international legal grounds.⁷ As the War on Terror is now over, it is necessary for human society to seriously look back the US’s military interventions in the Middle East. Against the background, this research will critically evaluate the War on Terror now that twenty years of American unilateralism in the Middle East is over.⁸ In this study, the author will examine the real reason why the US launched its all-out war against terrorist groups as well as its outcome. The War on Terror was not only retaliation against terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda, which was responsible for the 9/11 attacks, but also implicating complex aspects of 21st century’s international society, such as good/evil, terrorism/anti-

³ B. Plett-Usher, *Afghanistan: US admits Kabul drone strike killed civilians*, BBC, Sept. 18, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58604655>.

⁴ Staff reporter, *FACTBOX-Military and civilian deaths in Iraq*, REUTERS, Sept. 9, 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSB409544>.

⁵ C. Stabn, *International Law at a Crossroads? The Impact of September 11*, ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR AUSLÄNDISCHES ÖFFENTLICHES RECHT UND VÖLKERRECHT 196-7 (2002); C. Greenwood, *War, Terrorism, and International Law*, 56 CURRENT L. PROBS. 529 (2004); M. Ellen O’Connell, *The Legal Case against the Global War on Terror*, 36 CASE W. RES. J. INT’L L. 349-57 (2004); C. GRAY, INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE USE OF FORCE ch. 5 (4th ed. 2018).

⁶ R. Fisk, *Public Enemy No 1-a title he always wanted*, INDEPENDENCE, Aug. 22 1998, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/public-enemy-no-1-a-title-he-always-wanted-1173134.html>.

⁷ On the legal aspects of the War on Terror, see A. Cassese, *Terrorism Is also Disrupting Some Crucial Legal Categories of International Law*, 12 EUR. J. INT’L L. 993 (2001); A. McDonald, *Declarations of War and Belligerent Parties: International Law Governing Hostilities between States and Transnational Terrorist Networks*, 54 NETH. INT’L L. REV. 279-314 (2007); M. Bothe, *Terrorism and the Legality of Pre-emptive Force*, 14 EUR. J. INT’L L. 227-40 (2003).

⁸ For details on American unilateralism, P. Sands & D. Robinson, *American Unilateralism*, 96 AM. SOC’Y INT’L L. ANNUAL MTG. PROC. 85-94 (Mar. 13-16, 2002); D. Skidmore, *Understanding the Unilateralist Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy*, 1 FOREIGN POL’Y ANALYSIS 207-28 (2005); D. Malone & Yuen Foong Khong, *Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Perspectives*, in UNILATERALISM AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES 1-17 (D. Malone & Yuen Foong Khong eds., 2003), <https://www.rienner.com/uploads/47d832b1257af.pdf>; R. Higgott, *American Unilateralism, Foreign Economic Policy and the ‘Securitisation’ of Globalisation* 2-37 (CSGR Working Paper No. 124/03, Sept. 2003), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/47596.pdf>.

terrorism, Christianity/Islam, oil dominance, etc. It is thus significant to analyze the US military interventions in the Middle East in terms of theories of war which have long been discussed in philosophy, ethics, politics, and international law. The author will also look for a peaceful way to fundamentally resolve the Middle East conflict. This analysis is expected to give a way to prevent war in other global regions. This paper is composed of five parts including Introduction and Conclusion. Part two will review the origin and evolution of American unilateralism for the past 20 years in the Middle East. Part three will critically re-examine the causes and outcome of the War on Terror. Part four will evaluate the American military interventions in the Middle East.

II. American Unilateralism in the Middle East

A. Geopolitical Overview of the Middle East

The Middle East refers to an area “around the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, encompassing at least the Arabian Peninsula and, by some definitions, Iran, North Africa, and sometimes beyond.”⁹ The Middle East had been closed to the outside world before the Middle Ages. It is not until the Crusades (1095-1291) that the Middle East opened to European society.¹⁰ Entering the 19th century, the Middle East received attention because of the construction of the Suez Canal and the discovery of petroleum. In 1869, when the Suez Canal connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean opened, and petroleum, called “burning oil,” was found in the Middle East in large quantities, Britain and France began political and military interventions there to secure supremacy. Both countries maintained their hegemony in the Middle East in the early 20th century, but this power politics was reshuffled by the US, which rapidly emerged after World War II.¹¹ The US as a new hegemony inherited Britain’s political and economic privileges in the Middle East and competed with France. When the Cold War began, the region became the front line of the US-Soviet confrontation.¹² The Middle East then became a tragic land

⁹ See *Middle East*, BRITANNICA ENCYCLOPEDIA (online), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-East>.

¹⁰ G. Dickson, *Crusades*, BRITANNICA ENCYCLOPEDIA (online), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Crusades>.

¹¹ N. Danforth, *How the Middle East was invented*, WASH. POST, May 19, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/05/19/the-modern-middle-east-is-actually-only-100-years-old>.

¹² W. McDougall, *The Cold War in the Middle East and Asia*, BRITANNICA ENCYCLOPEDIA (online), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/20th-century-international-relations-2085155/The-Cold-War-in-the-Middle-East-and-Asia>.

through four wars between Arab countries and Israel from 1948 to 1973. In this course of hegemonic competition, the US has become the premier superpower with huge regional influence.¹³

B. US Hegemony-Building in the Middle East

The US's hegemony building in the Middle East had two major turning points. One is the Carter Doctrine in 1980 for selective military intervention in the Middle East. The other is the Bush Doctrine, which authorized a full-scale military intervention for fundamental change of Middle East politics and society in 2003. Today, the US's Middle East policy is taking a new turn as President Biden completed the withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan in August 2021. The following section will discuss in more detail the background of the US hegemony in the Middle East.

C. Carter Doctrine

Until the late 1970s, the US did not actively consider direct military intervention in the Middle East. The US troops were stationed in Turkey only to contain the Soviet Union and operated military facilities in Iran. At that time, the US focused on Iran as its strategic location to control the Persian Gulf. The US regarded Iran as a bridgehead for the Middle East and tried to control the Middle East indirectly by supporting the pro-American Pahlavi dynasty.¹⁴

When the anti-American regime led by religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was launched in Iran in 1979, however, the US position in the Middle East was shaken, followed by the hostage crisis at the US Embassy in Tehran in 1980. As a result, President Carter announced his doctrine towards selective military intervention as Middle East policy. The Carter Doctrine implied the "containment of Iran."¹⁵ It eventually led to the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and, in response, the US's First Gulf War, and further the September 11 attacks launched by Osama Bin Laden Al-Qaida.

¹³ See *Arab-Israeli wars*, BRITANNICA ENCYCLOPEDIA (online), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Israeli-wars>.

¹⁴ P. Tristram, *U.S. Policy in the Middle East: 1945 to 2008*, THOUGHTCO., July 30, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/us-and-middle-east-since-1945-2353681>.

¹⁵ H. Brands & S. Cook & K. Pollak, *Rip The Carter Doctrine, 1980-2019*, FOREIGN POL'Y, Dec. 13, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/15/carter-doctrine-rip-donald-trump-mideast-oil-big-think>.

D. Bush Doctrine

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush declared a new doctrine for active military intervention in the Middle East. The Bush doctrine was a more hawkish Middle East policy than the Carter doctrine. The Bush doctrine involved fundamental change of political and social order of the Middle East beyond the selective military engagement on a case-by-case basis, following the needs of the US. With his doctrine, President Bush, dividing the world into good (pro-American) and evil (anti-American), announced indiscriminate attacks on terrorist groups and their sponsoring Islamic regime in the Middle East based on the overwhelming military and economic power of “the only super hegemony” in the post-Cold War period.¹⁶ The Bush Doctrine was the prelude of the twenty-year of American unilateralism in the Middle East through the armed interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. These armed actions, however, did not represent easy going for American dominance in the Middle East. In the following course, the US would confront many impediments in the region, despite initial victories, such as the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) and its repelling war in Afghanistan, escalation of terrorism, and the Syrian Civil War.

E. Post-Bush Initiative of the US (Biden Doctrine)

As the War on Terror fell into deadlock, President Obama pursued a strategic rebalance between the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific regions with the “Pivot to Asia” policy.¹⁷ He shifted the US strategic focus from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific. President Obama finally withdrew the US forces in Iraq, but failed to stop the US’s intervention in the Middle East due to the Syrian Civil War, ISIS, and the Afghanistan War.¹⁸ Meanwhile, President Trump publicly vowed to end the Middle East War because he thought it was a meaningless ‘investment.’¹⁹ However, President Trump took measures contradictory to his announcement. He unilaterally withdrew from the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,” a nuclear deal with Iran in 2018 and escalated confrontation with Iran, which aggravated the circumstances

¹⁶ P. Beaumont, *Now for the Bush Doctrine*, GUARDIAN, Sept. 22, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/22/iraq.usa>.

¹⁷ M. Green, *The Legacy of Obama’s “Pivot” to Asia*, FOREIGN POL’Y, Sept. 3, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/03/the-legacy-of-obamas-pivot-to-asia>.

¹⁸ A. Cordesman, *Obama and U.S. Strategy in the Middle East*, CSIS, June 23, 2016, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/obama-and-us-strategy-middle-east>.

¹⁹ S. Zunes, *Trump’s Middle East Policy: The Ironies of Hawkishness*, ALJAZEERA, Mar. 8, 2018, <https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2018/03/trumps-middle-east-policy-ironies-hawkishness-180308095434445.html>.

in the Middle East.²⁰ Even long after President Bush left the White House, the Bush doctrine remained like a haunting phantom and bogged the US down in the Middle East swamp.

Since President Biden finally ended the longstanding wars through withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, the US has been leaving the quagmire. However, it remains to be seen whether the deep-rooted conflict in the Middle East can be easily sealed over only by discontinuing military intervention.

III. The War on Terror: Causes and Outcomes

A. Afghanistan War: Operation Enduring Freedom

On September 11, 2001, the US mainland experienced the first air attacks in its history. These terrorist attacks were a turning point, causing fundamental reform of the US Middle East policy. American pride as the only superpower reigning over the international community in the post-Cold War period was seriously encroached due to the 9/11 incident. In response, President Bush vehemently announced retaliation against the terrorist groups, recognized as fulfilling the role and calling of the US.²¹ The Bush administration divided the world into ‘allies’ and ‘enemies.’ Such extreme divisions based on “good or evil” dominated American society, as well. Finally, the Bush administration launched a new policy stance to fundamentally change the Middle East through slogans, such as moral absolutism, hegemonic unilateralism, and offensive realism, that liberal democracy and the market economy system should spread to this region.²²

Immediately after the 9/11 incident, the US, who suspected Al-Qaida of planning and implementing these attacks, demanded that Afghanistan extradite Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaida.²³ When the Taliban regime rejected these demands, the US and the UK allied forces finally launched “Operation Enduring Freedom,”

²⁰ M. Landler, *Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned*, N. Y. TIMES, May 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html>.

²¹ eMediaMillWorks, *Text: President Bush Addresses the Nation*, WASH. POST, Sept. 20, 2009, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html.

²² See generally P. VAN NESS & M. GURTOV, *CONFRONTING THE BUSH DOCTRINE: CRITICAL VIEWS FROM THE ASIA-PACIFIC* (2004).

²³ M. Lev, *Taliban maintains refusal to turn over bin Laden*, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, Oct. 3, 2001, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/sns-worldtrade-taliban-chi-story.html>.

bombing Kabul, capital city of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001.²⁴ This operation aimed to dismantle Al-Qaida's base in Afghanistan, oust the Taliban regime, and demolish terrorist groups in the Middle East.²⁵ The US-British allied forces took over the capital Kabul on November 13 and the Taliban regime ended completely on December 9, 2001. Subsequently, the US and Afghan forces conducted "Operation Anaconda" in Paktia Province in March 2002. On May 1, 2003, the US officials declared an end to "major combat."²⁶ In December 2001, the UN Security Council established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to support Afghan authorities in various missions such as securing Kabul.²⁷

However, the Taliban reorganized its power around Muhammad Omar and rebelled against the ISAF from 2003. Despite inferior weapons and numerical disadvantages, rebels from various armed groups, including the Taliban, Haqqani Network, and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, resisted through guerrilla warfare, suburban ambush, suicide terrorism in downtown areas, and murder of renegades. Through this resistance, the Taliban began to exert influence again in the Southern and Eastern suburbs.²⁸ Meanwhile, the Northwest Pakistan War broke out while ISAF were confronting Taliban rebels.²⁹ Despite the rebellion, Navy Seals, US special forces, terminated Osama Bin Laden in Abotabad, Pakistan on May 1, 2011.³⁰

While the frontline was stalled due to guerrilla warfare inside Afghanistan, the US declared the operation's end and withdrew its remaining troops by December 2014, at the beginning of a peace conference between the Afghanistan government and the Taliban in May 2012.³¹ In fact, on December 28, 2014, NATO officially ended the ISAF combat operation in Afghanistan and completely transferred responsibility to the Afghan government. Subsequently, the US signed a conditional agreement with the Taliban in September 2019 and the "Doha Agreement," which ended the 18-year's

²⁴ See *U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan begins*, HISTORY.COM, Oct. 14, 2021, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/u-s-led-attack-on-afghanistan-begins>.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ K. Katzman & C. Thomas, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, CRS Report (RL30588) 7 (Dec. 13, 2017), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>.

²⁷ NATO, *ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014)* (Archived), Aug. 19, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm.

²⁸ L. Harding, Luke, *Taliban are back-and with a murderous vengeance*, GUARDIAN, June 8, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jun/08/afghanistan.lukeharding>.

²⁹ B. Yowell, *Top 10 facts about the war in Northwest Pakistan*, The Borgen Project (Mar. 5, 2017), <https://borgenproject.org/war-in-northwest-pakistan>.

³⁰ A. Taylor, *Osama Bin Laden Killed: Worldwide Reactions*, ATLANTIC, May 2, 2011, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2011/05/osama-bin-laden-killed-worldwide-reactions/100058>.

³¹ Council on Foreign Relations, *The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2021* (Timeline), <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

armed conflict on February 29, 2020. According to the Doha Agreement,³² President Biden announced that the US military forces would withdraw from Afghanistan on May 1, 2021.³³ As soon as the US military withdrew, however, the Taliban began to take control over major Afghan cities such as Herat and Kandahar. Eventually, on August 15, the Taliban entered Kabul without bloodshed as the Afghanistan government surrendered.³⁴

“Operation Enduring Freedom” (Afghanistan War), which began in 2001 as retaliation for the 9/11 terrorist attacks, virtually ended in 2021 after 20 years’ armed intervention, with the withdrawal of the US forces. During this war, 3,600 multinational military personnel were killed or missing and 27,000 people were injured. The US has been estimated to have spent at least USD 2.26 trillion. In addition, the war caused 230,000 civilian deaths, five million refugees, and an astronomical amount of property damage in Afghanistan. However, the US failed to achieve its intended goal to eradicate terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida.

B. Iraq War

The US originally established a policy to check Iran’s Khomeini regime by using Iraq’s Saddam Hussein. In the 1980s, Iraq was a pro-American Middle Eastern country. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1991, however, the friendly relationship between the US and Iraq ended. In January 2002, President Bush pointed to Iraq as part of an “axis of evil” threatening world peace along with Iran and North Korea.³⁵ In addition, in September of the same year, President Bush delivered a speech at the UN General Assembly making five demands, including the immediate abolition of WMDs, suspension of terrorist aid and public oppression, and expressed his willingness to oust the Saddam Hussein regime.³⁶ Neo-conservatives and right-wing Christian fundamentalist encouraged the war, referring to the evangelization of the Middle East and the second Crusade despite concerns from the international

³² G. Farr, *The Afghan Peace Agreement and Its Problems*, E-INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, Apr. 6, 2020, <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/04/06/the-afghan-peace-agreement-and-its-problems>.

³³ A. Williams & B. Parkin, *US withdraws from Afghanistan, bringing an end to 20-year war*, FIN. TIMES, Aug. 31, 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/b2ba76a1-694b-47f9-b077-d48ad88a8cb5>.

³⁴ N. Ishak, *The rapid fall of Afghanistan to Taliban forces, explained*, VOX, Aug. 15, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/2021/8/15/22626082/kabul-capital-fall-afghanistan-government-taliban-forces-explained>.

³⁵ A. Glass, *President Bush cites ‘axis of evil,’* POLITICO, Jan. 29, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/01/29/bush-axis-of-evil-2002-1127725>.

³⁶ See *George Bush’s speech to the UN general assembly*, GUARDIAN, Sept. 12, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/12/iraq.usa3>.

community.³⁷

On March 20, 2003, the US launched “Operation Iraq Freedom” with an air strike on Baghdad and a drive attack with 300,000 multinational forces.³⁸ The US condemned Saddam Hussein’s Iraq as an illegal regime threatening world peace.³⁹ President Bush declared that the Hussein regime illegally developed WMDs, supported terrorism, threatened world peace, and oppressed its people.⁴⁰ Baghdad eventually fell on April 9, two weeks after the operation was launched. The Saddam Hussein regime finally collapsed through this short period of operation. Up to April 30, about 9,200 Iraqi soldiers, 7,299 civilians, 139 US troops, and 33 UK troops were killed.⁴¹

When Baghdad was conquered about 20 days after the invasion, the war ended with the victory of the allied forces. However, such easy success did not immediately lead to achieving the ultimate political goals of the US. As resistance in Iraq continued even after the fall of Baghdad, the US forces faced another aspect of postwar terrorism all over Iraq. Operation Iraq Freedom was virtually over in 2006 when Saddam Hussein was arrested by US troops and executed by the Iraqi Special Tribunal on December 30, 2006.⁴² The US military broke down the support base of dictatorships through a military operation in Iraq, but this led to a breakdown in security in Iraq, which had been barely maintained until then. Under these conditions, sectarian disputes such as retaliation and murder, occurred and the armed resistances resulted in thousands of the American soldiers being killed. The US belatedly began stabilizing Iraq by increasing force numbers, but this was also in danger due to the complicated situations inside and outside of Iraq. As a result, combat forces began to be withdrawn on August 20, 2010, seven years after the war started.⁴³

Despite the end of the war, there are currently about 2,500 US troops stationed in Iraq. President Biden declared that the US military’s combat mission in Iraq would be over by the end of 2021. However, the US military support for Iraq is continuing,

³⁷ M. Berger, *Afghanistan war neocons like George W. Bush would like you to know this isn’t their fault*, NBC NEWS, Aug. 21, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/afghanistan-war-neocons-george-w-bush-would-you-know-isn-ncna1277267>.

³⁸ *See Iraq War*, BRITANNICA ENCYCLOPEDIA (online), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Iraq-War>.

³⁹ *See THREATS AND RESPONSES; Bush’s Speech on Iraq: ‘Saddam Hussein and His Sons Must Leave,’* N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 18, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/18/us/threats-responses-bush-s-speech-iraq-saddam-hussein-his-sons-must-leave.html>; The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (Sept. 2002), <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/print/index.html>.

⁴⁰ *See Full text: Bush’s speech*, GUARDIAN, Mar. 18, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/18/usa.iraq>.

⁴¹ S. Hamasaeed & G. Nada, *Iraq Timeline: Since the 2003 War*, United States Institute of Peace, May 29, 2020, <https://www.usip.org/iraq-timeline-2003-war>.

⁴² Council in Foreign Relations, *The Iraq War: 2003-2011 (Timeline)*, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/iraq-war>.

⁴³ *Id.*

including training and advice to defeat the Islamic State (ISIS). If this initiative is fulfilled as planned, President Biden would be the one who finally ends the US military's mission in both Afghanistan and Iraq, which have bogged down the US in the mire of the Middle East. After twenty years of War on Terror, he is expected to focus on checking Russia and containing China.

IV. The Evaluation of the War on Terror: A Critique of American Unilateralism

A. Theories of War

Human history can be regarded as a course of war. According to a recent study, mankind has only lived without war for 268 years out of the past 3,400 years.⁴⁴ As constant war seriously threatens the survival of the state and individuals, people have developed the way to prevent war involving terrible violence as well as to effectively control and carry out war if inevitable.

In China, the origin of war research can be found in "The Art of War" written by Sun Tzu. In this book, Sun Tzu approached war from an empirical point of view. He thought that the attitude of just trying to avoid wars would not help protect people and keep the country intact because wars or armed aggressions are constantly and inevitably occurring. In this regard, Sun Tzu valued how to achieve victory in war more than moral judgment on war itself. Sun Tzu said: "To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."⁴⁵

In the West, theory on war began in ancient Greece. Aristotle said in his *Politics*: "The art of war is a natural art of acquisition, for the art of acquisition includes hunting, an art which we ought to practice against wild beasts, and against men who, though intended by nature to be governed, will not submit; for war of such a kind is naturally just."⁴⁶ Aristotle's theory of war developed into a 'just' war theory in the 13th century by theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. Based on the Christian concept of holy war, Aquinas said:

⁴⁴ See generally C. HEDGES, WHAT EVERY PERSON SHOULD KNOW ABOUT WAR (2003).

⁴⁵ SUN TZU, THE ART OF WAR ch. 3 (Offensive Strategy) (republished in English by Oxford University Press, 1963), <https://web.stanford.edu/class/polisci211z/1.1/Sun%20Tzu.pdf>.

⁴⁶ ARISTOTLE, POLITICS (republished in English by Batoche Books, 1999), <https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>.

So just as the rulers are permitted to defend the republic by the material sword against internal disturbances when they punish malefactors-so, too, it belongs to them to protect the republic from external enemies with the sword of war. ... When someone who uses the sword (a) on the authority of a ruler or judge (in the case of a private person) or (b) out of a zeal for justice and, as it were, by God's authority (in the case of a public person), he is not 'taking up' the sword himself but is using the sword that has been commissioned to him by someone else.⁴⁷

Aquinas understood war as an act of restoring the Christian moral order by punishing their enemy-other religious groups like Islam.

The Christian theory of war in the West, which distinguished war from the perspective of good and evil, developed into a rigorous discussion of just war during the Thirty Years' War (1618-48). In this period, an outstanding thinker on war was Hugo Grotius, the founder of modern international law. In his masterpiece, *On the Law of War and Peace* [*De jure belli ac pacis*] (1625),⁴⁸ Grotius attempted to analyze war within a normative framework, presenting specific rules for just war through it. He suggested the requirements for just war are as follows:

Table 1: Requirements for Just War presented by Hugo Grotius⁴⁹

Subject	Waging a war by authorized public authority.
Object	Just cause for waging a war and the existence of a corresponding object.
Means	Proportionality between means and purpose
Purpose	Beginning from the just intention

The theory of war in the contemporary sense was embodied by Michael Walzer. In his book, *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977), he elaborately refined the requirements for a just war. Walzer considers that justice in war can be divided in two. One is *jus ad bellum* (justice related to the conditions under which a state wages war), and the other is *jus in bello* (justice related to a state's conduct in carrying out a war).⁵⁰ *Jus ad bellum* may be conditioned as follows: just cause; just intention; proper authority and public

⁴⁷ T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, <https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/TOC-part2-2.htm>.

⁴⁸ H. GROTIUS, *ON THE LAW OF WAR AND PEACE* (trans. by A. Campbell, 2001), <https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3113/grotius/Law2.pdf>.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ M. WALZER, *JUST AND UNJUST WARS: A MORAL ARGUMENT WITH HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS* 22 (5th ed. 2015).

declaration; last resort; probability of success; proportionality.⁵¹ Although a war is waged based on the rule of *jus ad bellum*, however, it is not a just war if a state violates the *jus in bello* such as committing war crimes through, for example, using Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) to quickly end the war without careful consideration.⁵²

Meanwhile, Brian Orend argued that legitimate postwar settlement is a requirement for just war. This condition, referred to as *Jus Post Bellum*, presents five rules. First, there must be a cause for termination. Second, war must be finalized with the right intention; in other words, retaliation against the defeated country is not permitted. Third, peace must be declared by legitimate authorities. Fourth, unfair pain to ordinary citizens should be prohibited. Fifth, excessive attacks and recklessly killing enemy casualties should be prevented to the extent necessary.⁵³

Considering the theories discussed above, the requirements for just war under international law are approximately as follows.

Table 2: Requirements for Just War

Cause	Cause for the war must be just.
Procedure of declaration	It should be publicly promulgated by a legitimate authority.
Intention	The intention of war must be justified. For example, if going to war is based on racial disgust or the glory of the country, this is not a just intention.
Proportionality	The overall loss caused by carrying out of the war must be less than the overall loss caused by not carrying out the war.
Post-war processing	Post-war processing must be legitimately performed.

Source: Compiled by the author.

B. Evaluation of the Afghanistan War

The Afghanistan War (2001-21) is the longest armed conflict in American history, lasting for 20 years. This period is longer than twice that of the US intervention during

⁵¹ E. Aloyo, *Just War Theory and the Last of Last Resort*, 29 ETHICS & INT'L AFF. 189-90 (2015), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/48646EC5B16BC99A8A1240146AB8CC27/S0892679415000064a.pdf/just-war-theory-and-the-last-of-last-resort.pdf>. For details, see WALZER, *id.* at 80-1; C. FABRE, COSMOPOLITAN WAR 5 (2012); J. McMahan, *Just War*, in A COMPANION TO CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY 673 (R. Goodin et al. eds., 2012); J. PATTISON, HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: WHO SHOULD INTERVENE? 34 (2010).

⁵² For simple division between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, see WALZER *id.* at 21.

⁵³ B. OREND, WAR AND INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE: A KANTIAN PERSPECTIVE 232 (2000). For details, see also B. Orend, *Jus Post Bellum: The Perspective of a Just-War Theorist*, LEIDEN J. INT'L L. 580-1 (2007).

the Vietnam War (1964-73). It was catastrophic, as well. The US spent USD 2.26 trillion. In addition, more than 2,448 US soldiers, 47,245 civilians, and 66,000 Afghan national military and police were killed.⁵⁴

Despite these terrible human and material losses, it turned out that this war was waged and carried out through the manipulation of information. The Washington Post reported on December 9, 2019, that the cause of the Afghan War was fabricated and had been packaged with all kinds of false information.⁵⁵ According to testimony from senior American officials, the US government failed to tell the truth about the Afghanistan War, made rosy pronouncements, and concealed clear evidence that there was no possibility of winning the war. General Douglas Lute, interviewed by the Washington Post, said: “We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan,” adding, “we didn’t know what we were doing.” Other senior officials interviewed also confessed that it was not clear what the US had planned and targeted in Afghanistan after driving out Al-Qaida and ousting the Taliban. The US government distorted statistical data to continue the war.⁵⁶

Analyzing the Afghanistan war based on disclosed evidence, it was far from a just war. First, the war was caused by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan reportedly protecting Osama Bin Laden, the head of Al-Qaida known to be behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, Osama Bin Laden was not confirmed to be located inside Afghanistan at the time. He was hiding in Pakistan when he was shot by special US troops on May 1, 2011.

Second, the war’s intention was unclear. This is a natural consequence of the ill-defined cause of the war. Nevertheless, the US military stayed in Afghanistan for 20 years at the expense of enormous human and material damage, even after driving out the Taliban regime through their initial military operations. After the successful removal of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, a key justification for this war, the intention to continue the war is questionable. This may be understood just as an intention to achieve the US strategic interests in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Third, the overall loss caused by the Afghanistan War is incomparably greater than other possible measures to resolve the conflict. The number of victims of the US troops alone have reached that of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In addition, tens of thousands of the US soldiers were injured, and countless innocent Afghani

⁵⁴ E. Knickmeyer, *Costs of the Afghanistan war, in lives and dollars*, AP NEWS, Aug. 17, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-business-afghanistan-43d8f53b35e80ec18c130cd683e1a38f>.

⁵⁵ C. Whitlock, *At War with The Truth*, WASH. POST, Dec. 9, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-confidential-documents>.

⁵⁶ *Id.*

civilians were sacrificed. Nevertheless, Afghanistan returned to its prewar situation just three months after the US military began its withdrawal.

Fourth, the post-war settlement was even more disastrous. The US has injected USD 100 billion in aid to rehabilitate Afghanistan, but most of the aid allegedly went to corrupt Afghani officials.⁵⁷ This astronomical cost would have produced desirable results if it had been used for the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and their families. Moreover, most of the victims of drone attacks at Kabul airport were innocent civilians.⁵⁸ The US drone pilots cited mental distress caused by the guilt over such killing and raised the problem of drone attacks.⁵⁹ In the end, the US military followed the same route taken by the Soviet army decades ago. Regarding the Afghanistan War, the only factor that meets the requirements of just war was that it was declared by legitimate authorities.

The Taliban said: “You [US] may have the watches, but we have the time.”⁶⁰ This suggested what the Afghanistan war was like. Their message reminds us of the lesson from the Vietnam War that the superiority of weapons and technology becomes meaningless in the face of a war of attrition.

C. Evaluation of the Iraq War

The Iraq War is even further from a just war. While the Afghanistan War was due to the errors in decision-making based on information, the Iraq War resulted from blatant manipulation and intentional distortion of such information. While the attack on Afghanistan is usually referred to as a “war,” the armed intervention in Iraq is called an “invasion.” Moreover, from the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003, the US ignored basic principles of international law such as prohibition of the use of force as laid down under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter; it did not even seek a UN Security Council resolution. The then-UN Secretary-General, Kofi Atta Annan, said the US-led Iraq war was illegal and breached the UN Charter.⁶¹ Michael Walzer also concluded that the Iraqi War began with unjust cause and intention.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ B. Plett-Usher, *Afghanistan: US admits Kabul drone strike killed civilians*, BBC, Sept. 18, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58604655>.

⁵⁹ R. Saini, M. Raju & A. Chail, *Cry in the sky: Psychological impact on drone operators*, 30 *INDUSTRIAL PSYCHIATRY J.* (Supp. 1) 15-9 (2021).

⁶⁰ D. Walsh, *Relief at last for hard-pressed Fusiliers*, *GUARDIAN*, Apr. 11, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/apr/11/afghanistan.foreignpolicy>.

⁶¹ E. MacAskill & J. Borger, *Iraq war was illegal and breached UN charter, says Annan*, *GUARDIAN*, Sept. 16, 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/16/iraq.iraq>.

⁶² M. Peterson, *Did Iraq Ever Become A Just War?*, *ATLANTIC*, Mar. 25, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/>

Above all, the claim regarding Iraq's development of WMDs turned out to be false, which was a key justification for the invasion. Inspectors, led by intelligence agencies from the US, the UK, and Australia, searched all over Iraq, but failed to find WMDs. After more than a year of activity, the inspectors submitted a final report of over a thousand pages to the US Senate's Military Commission in October 2004 and concluded that: "There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq during the US invasion last year."⁶³ Even before the outbreak of the Iraq War, the UN and the IAEA inspectors confirmed neither existing WMDs, nor signs of developing WMDs in Iraq.⁶⁴ On January 28, 2003, just before the Iraq War, President Bush argued in his State of the Union speech: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production."⁶⁵ However, this information turned out to be unconvincing.

Shortly after the Iraq war, the British House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee released a report that the information lacked credibility.⁶⁶ Although the US military announced that it had discovered two trailers for mobile biological weapon laboratories, even this turned out to be a hydrogen production facility for weather observation hot-air balloons.⁶⁷ In this regard, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense in 2003, said: "There are known knowns... there are unknown unknowns."⁶⁸ This was an inappropriate statement to be made by the Secretary of Defense, who was authorized to control policy regarding the authenticity of key information, which was the cause for initiating the war. Eventually, in December 2005, President Bush made a

archive/2018/03/iraq-war-ethics/556448.

⁶³ Iraq Survey Group, Iraq Survey Group Final Report: Weapons of Mass Destruction, Global Security.org (Sept. 30, 2004), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/report/2004/isg-final-report>.

⁶⁴ The Security Council, UN Inspectors found no evidence of prohibited weapons programs as of 18 March Withdrawal, Hans Blix tells security council, UN Press Release, May 6, 2003, U.N. Doc. S/7777 (June 5, 2003), <https://www.un.org/press/en/2003/sc7777.doc.htm>.

⁶⁵ See Text of President Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address, WASH. POST, Jan. 28, 2003, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/bushtext_012803.html.

⁶⁶ UK Parliament Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, Memorandum from BASIC and Saferworld: Summary of Observations and Recommendations, July 7, 2003, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmcaff/813/813we20.htm>.

⁶⁷ See Bio-labs were hydrogen plants, THE TIMES, June 23, 2003, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/world-in-brief-s8mzcxlfvts>.

⁶⁸ M. Shermer, *Rumsfeld's Wisdom: Where the known meets the unknown is where science begins*, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, Sept. 1, 2005, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/rumsfelds-wisdom/>; Dan Zak, *Nothing ever ends': Sorting through Rumsfeld's knowns and unknowns*, WASH. POST, July 1, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/rumsfeld-dead-words-known-unknowns/2021/07/01/831175c2-d9df-11eb-bb9e-70fda8c37057_story.html.

speech acknowledging responsibility for overconfidence of information provided by intelligence agencies and announced he had commenced reforming the intelligence agencies.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the UK government also formed the “Iraq Inquiry” Committee led by Prime Minister Gordon Brown in 2009. This Committee analyzed 150,000 government documents and listened to testimony from more than 200 persons, including then-Prime Minister Tony Blair, to evaluate the UK’s policy-making process and combat performance during its participation in the Iraq War.⁷⁰ The Committee released a vast report (Chilcot Report: Iraq Inquiry) which concluded the following.⁷¹ First, Iraq was not an imminent danger to the UK, and all information regarding WMD in Iraq was exaggerated or fabricated. Therefore, the UK’s decision to participate in this war was legally inappropriate. Second, Prime Minister Tony Blair uncritically followed Bush, who was determined to wage the war, even though there were peaceful solutions available. Third, Blair’s decision to participate in war escalated the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and Al-Qaida (to the UK).⁷²

In the Iraq War, the US lost justification and utility. Despite numerous military and civilian sacrifices and astronomical war expenditures, it has resulted in a model of failed armed intervention. As a consequence, the US had to quickly leave behind its status as “the only superpower” in the post-Cold War period, leaving a disgraceful stain on its morality as the leader of the international community, with 500,000 protesters who gathered in London for anti-American protests. The invasion of Iraq was definitely an unjust war in which the cause and intention of the war were unclear; the loss from the war was incomparable to the gains; and the postwar settlement was worse than any other military interventions. The Bush administration ignored sound criticism from global civic society as well as domestic public opinion. Instead, it only depended on neo-conservatives and extreme-rightwing Christian fundamentalists, and disrespected the principles of international law. This position proved a typical example of military intervention by a rogue state, which will be remembered as dark period in the American history. In addition, the casualties of the Iraq War dissolved

⁶⁹ The White House, Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf.

⁷⁰ House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Lessons still to be learned from the Chilcot Inquiry: Tenth Report of Session 2016–17 (Feb. 27, 2017), <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpublicadm/656/656.pdf>.

⁷¹ J. Chilcot, The Report of the Iraq Inquiry, The [UK] National Archives (2016), https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/246416/the-report-of-the-iraq-inquiry_executive-summary.pdf.

⁷² *Id.* at 44.

American unity and solidarity and deepened the gap between the rich and the poor in domestic society. More seriously, both the US's external credibility and its influence fell due to severe fiscal deficits from the enormous amounts of defense expenditures for the war, as mentioned above. The US tried to secure minimal legitimacy by arresting and executing Saddam Hussein, but this resulted in another tragedy of the Iraqi civil war.

In a sense, the execution of Saddam Hussein during the Iraq War appears to be a mistake because the Hussein regime in Iraq was a useful cause for the US to intervene in the Middle East. During the first Gulf War in 1991, such a strategic consideration might be applied to the fact that the US easily won the war but maintained the Saddam Hussein regime. This is in line with the US position towards, for example, North Korea's Kim Jong Un regime. Also, this may be a reason why the Assad regime in Syria was recognized by the Obama administration.

V. Conclusion

In this research, the author has critically evaluated the War on Terror over the past 20 years and analyzed these armed interventions through legal and political theories of war. As discussed above, even though the US armed attacks against Afghanistan and Iraq were retaliations for the 9/11 terrorist attacks, these military actions cannot be called 'just' considering the basic requirements for war to be legitimate, including its cause, intention, means, and post-war processing.

The US launched armed attacks against Taliban regime in Afghanistan on the premise of eradicating Al-Qaida's base (even though it turned out to be an error), but the Iraq War was truly absurd, based on distorted information that Iraq was developing WMDs. In fact, the Saddam Hussein's regime had nothing directly to do with the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

This war resulted in an enormous number of human losses and military costs on both sides. Statistics show that US forces spent USD 250,000 per minute on initial war expenses in Iraq. Converting this into a month, it is around USD 10 billion, which is about as much as five percent of the Republic of Korea (a solid mid-sized country)'s budget for a year (2007). The New York Times estimated the cost of the Iraq War at USD 1.2 trillion from 2003 to 2009; if spending only USD 100 billion, half of the annual war budget (USD 200 billion), free medical services could be provided for Americans without medical insurance. In comparison, the annual cost for the Iraq War was more

than the sum of all the costs incurred for free “pre-school education” for children aged 3-4 in the US (USD 35 billion), various security projects (such as strengthening cargo inspection systems) recommended by the 9/11 terrorist investigation committee (USD 10 billion), and the annual budget of US’s National Cancer Institute (USD 6 billion), the best in the world. The New York Times further reported that if the cost of the war in Iraq had provided a little more support for the Afghanistan War, Taliban’s terrorist activities could have been effectively prevented.⁷³

The outcome of this absurd war was disastrous for America, as well. Currently, more than 40 million people, far exceeding 10 percent of the US population, are suffering from poverty; in 2020, about 28 million people did not have health insurance at any point during the year.⁷⁴ The situation in some poor group’s residential areas is reportedly becoming worse than that of Syrian refugee camps. It is an uncomfortable reality of the world’s strongest and richest country in the 21st century, which has never before been second-guessed. Nevertheless, some argue that the War on Terror was a just war.⁷⁵ However, such justification is only based on Thomas Aquinas’ view of war, which originates from the dichotomous view of good (Christianity) and evil (Islam) in the medieval religious sense. Because war essentially leads to violence and murder, armed invasion cannot be ‘justice’ inherently. Mencius said: “In the ‘Spring and Autumn [Human History]’ there are no righteous wars. Instances indeed there are of one war better than another.”⁷⁶ Just war can be thus applied to an act of aggression in which one country unilaterally attacks another country. Only defensive war can be just and legitimate.

Contemporary international law does not recognize any exercise of armed force as a way of resolving disputes between countries. The use of armed forces is restrictively permitted under the following conditions. First, with the approval of the UN Security Council, the exercise of armed forces for defensive purposes against an invasion is justified. Second, even before the approval of the UN Security Council, the limited exercise of self-defense in response to an invasion from another country is justified. Third, in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter, collective armed measures can be exercised as a legitimate response to the threats to peace, breaches of the peace,

⁷³ D. Leonhardt, *Cost of Iraq war (\$1.2 trillion) changes economic perspectives*, N. Y. TIMES, Jan. 16, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/16/business/worldbusiness/16iht-leonhardt.4227732.html>.

⁷⁴ K. Keisler-Starkey & L. Bunch, *Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2020*, United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-274.html>.

⁷⁵ B. JENKINS & J. GODGES (EDS.), *THE LONG SHADOW OF 9/11: AMERICA’S RESPONSE TO TERRORISM* (2011), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1107.html>.

⁷⁶ *THE CHINESE CLASSICS: VOL. 2 THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF MENCIUS* (trans. into English by James Legge, 1875), <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/legge-the-chinese-classics-vol-2-the-life-and-teachings-of-mencius>.

and acts of aggression. However, even on such legitimate grounds, the principle of proportionality between purpose and means (concept of retribution where the punishment must fit the crime) should be adhered to.

Korea's most respected Buddhist monk, Beop Jeong (法頂), warned that: "The vicious cycle of hatred will eventually cause more terrorism" at the scene of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York shortly after the Iraq War.⁷⁷ The US launched the War on Terror to retaliate against the 9/11 terrorist attacks. During the war, ironically, it created a larger terrorist group: the Islamic State (ISIS). In 2014, 33,658 people died because of terrorism, an increase of up to 80 percent compared with a year before. This number is nearly 10 times more than that in 2000. There were 26 massive terrorist attacks in 2014, 4.2 times more the annual average from 1978-2013.⁷⁸ The number of terrorist attacks went down a little in 2015-18, but resumed escalating from 2019.⁷⁹ These statistics clearly show that the War on Terror has not succeeded. The rapid increase in terrorism requires more efficient counter-terrorism strategies between the US and its alliance. For example, ISIS was able to grow rapidly because it absorbed Syrian rebels who were nurtured with the US military funds. It is time for the international community to develop a consensus on counter-terrorism strategy prior to more armed interventions.

Some might argue that mercy is useless in harsh international relations dominated by power politics and that national survival and prosperity can be maintained only by the principle of retaliatory response-*lex talionis*, "Eye for an Eye, tooth for a tooth." However, if solely relying on the logic of this law of the jungle, as Gandhi said: "An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind."⁸⁰ The US failed to escape the Middle East swamp for the past 20 years. When President Biden announced withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan, only disastrous results remained.

Indiscriminate armed intervention can never prevent terrorism. The global community took the lesson that the war, which began in the name of suppressing terrorism by force, was not fully justified. Sincere reflection on the tragedies of the past 20 years is the starting point for rebuilding a world without terrorism. The tragedy of the War on Terror is mainly due to the unilateralism of the US, which tried

⁷⁷ See *Meeting him in Mountain*, KBS, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1O3o-GjDaw&t=211s>.

⁷⁸ A. Cordesman, *The Uncertain Trends and Metrics of Terrorism in 2016*, CSIS, https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/sites/default/files/generated/document/en/161107_Terrorism_Metrics_Survey.pdf.

⁷⁹ In 2020, 10,172 terrorist attacks were recorded globally increasing from the previous three years. See *Number of terrorist attacks worldwide between 2006 and 2020*, Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/202864/number-of-terrorist-attacks-worldwide>.

⁸⁰ Indian Institute of Public Administration, *150 Years of Gandhi* (2021), <https://www.iipa.org.in/cms/public/page/gandhi>.

to realize its values and hegemony without acknowledging differences and diversity between regions and countries around the globe. The Bush administration may have launched the War on Terror to suddenly change the world's extant normative ground, based on European tradition, to a new fundamentally America-led anti-terrorist framework. However, the US should acknowledge the same lesson that Qing Dynasty (China) did in the mid-eighteenth century: "arrogance is more disastrous than opium." If humankind admits differences without prejudice and seeks an order based on harmony and co-existence under international law, people will soon be able to live in a more peaceful world far from the fear of terrorism.

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