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### **It Is Harder to End a War Than Begin One**

Twenty years ago, planes crashed into the World Trade Centers, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania. There was disbelief, weeping, and shock as people in the affected areas looked for their loved ones. There was a deep eeriness in the air, and grief and disbelief set in, and then the tone began to shift to revenge and retribution. Chants began to arise like "USA! USA! USA!" Politicians and preachers began to use the phrase "God bless America," as if America was somehow more deserving of God's blessings than anywhere else.

Three days later I was speaking on the phone with an insurance company representative about a personal matter, and the insurance representative paused the call so that the entire office could sing "God Bless America." The news sources were all rattling their proverbial sabers, and it would only be a short amount of time before all the pistons would be firing in the war engine. It was a time 20 years ago, a moment, and a setting that the American public could be cajoled and sold anything seemingly patriotic and retaliatory, and it was. The military went into Afghanistan to dislodge Al Qaeda, and it stayed to create a new government and country. Something that the Soviets had tried to do previously. But that was not a history that the US learned from because the neo-cons and the defense contractors with the military industrialists decided that it was an opportunity to reconstruct a region in its own image, control the natural resources of the region, and to create governments loyal to the interest of the west and particularly the US.

The US invaded Iraq under false pretenses as a result. If you remember there were claims of weapons of mass destruction, that Saddam Hussein was offering asylum to Al Qaeda, and any other excuse to invade Iraq, disassemble a nation and attempt to reassemble one in the image and imagination of the US. If the US controlled Afghanistan and Iraq then with the assistance of their client state, Israel, could put maximum pressure on Iran for its surrender. All this failed. Twenty years later the US has left

Afghanistan in failure, watching the cities and towns of the country fall to the Taliban without resistance.

It is this pride, this sense of exceptionalism that continues to haunt the US. Exceptionalism is where a country, an entity or person believes that they are the exception to the rules and even things like history do not apply to them. The US went into Vietnam after France was defeated by the Vietnamese, again believing that the events of history would not apply because they were the US and an exception to the tentacles of history. The result of Vietnam were the deaths of 2 million Vietnamese civilians, 1.1 million North Vietnamese troops, 200,000 South Vietnamese troops, and 58,000 U.S. troops. And still the US left in failure and disgrace. In Afghanistan the cost is not as high in deaths, yet some 3,500 US and so-called Coalition military, along with the deaths of over of 47,000 civilians, 69,000 Afghan military and police and more than 51,000 Taliban fighters. Overall, the war has killed more than 171,000 people. It was easy to go to war, but the cost of war is much too high, and the ability to end a war gracefully is nearly impossible.

Sergeant Johanny Rosario, 25, Latina, was one of those killed on August 26, 2021, in one of the final attacks as the US attempted to withdraw from Afghanistan. She was one of 13 US military killed by a suicide bomber, and she was only four years old when this conflict began. Many of the other victims of that blast were not yet born when this debacle began. Many of the troops were Latinx and many in their twenties. Most of them not yet born or too young to remember when these wars began or really to know why.

The messy withdrawal, the casualties throughout the war, and even in the final hours, people left behind and fearing for their lives, the military equipment abandoned in hangars and on the field only demonstrates that it is easier to get into a war than to get out of one.

A nation is expected to defend itself, and a country should protect its security, and no one faults the country for doing this. But this is not what happened. For the last 21 years the US public have been victims to a wider agenda built upon greed, control, white supremacy and idolatry, and the real terrorist to the country and humanity have been the defense industrialists, those who want to steal the resources of other nations, those

interested in empire building by creating client states, and these entities and people have not found a war that they did not like yet, nor fail at any opportunity to exploit the public's patriotism for their own greed and exploitative goals.

History continues to prove that events can be used, and usually are, for the purposes of war, and even the media will fan the flames of war through their rhetoric and so-called reporting. We discover that it is easier to go to war but extremely difficult to end it. It is like an addict using their drug of choice. When is enough enough? When has there been enough nation building? When has there been enough stealing of another's resources? When is this addiction with power, greed, and creating the world in the image of the US satisfied? And when will we, the people, stop enabling the addiction? Maybe we will learn these lessons someday and stop enabling the addiction and refuse to be used and manipulated by their lies, concocted events, and circumstances as they ply their greedy and arrogant agenda for their own coffers, lust, and pride. In the words of Nancy Reagan, we must learn to "just say no!" to the next war, the next hype, and the next tempted moment to break into a chant of "USA, USA, USA," or a verse of "God Bless America."