

Afghanistan Power Point

By David Swanson

Presented Friday, August 27, 2021, to the [Northern Colorado Alliance for a Livable Future](#)

I want to begin with five success stories.

SLIDE 1

SLIDE 2

1. The Peace Movement.

The people who spent 20 years largely excluded from the corporate media, lobbying Congress Members well paid not to listen to them, marching and protesting and holding teach-ins, making art, traveling across the globe or staying put on the same street corner for decades to build alliances and awareness, writing books and teaching courses, interrupting events, divesting from profiteers, wearing t-shirts, persuading uncles, exposing lies, defending whistleblowers, mocking war mongers, celebrating peace makers, and darn well screaming the most obvious truths until we could hardly stay on our feet had an impact. Public opinion moved to our side and stayed there. Politicians pretended more and more to be our side until they practically were, at least for one particular war that they call a mishandled flawed effort and we call, more succinctly, a war. I'm not praising myself. There have always been millions who said "don't do it," and then said "end it," and we have not been some sort of geniuses. We've just disapproved of mass-murder no matter how you dressed it up.

SLIDE 3

2. The Afghan Army.

These guys were armed to the teeth by U.S. taxpayers and told to kill and die to slow the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. They were encouraged to launch a new civil war, these poor people who have never known peace. They were revved up and pepped up and informed of the need to honor Uncle Sam, Freedom, and Lockheed Martin, and they chose instead to refuse to fight. Afghanistan had a transition of power roughly as peaceful and orderly as that of the United States this past January. What horrors are to come from the Taliban rule, we have yet to see. Which war lords launch new wars remains to be revealed. Which people

resort to the more effective strategies of nonviolent action we are seeing in the news. But there's not something worse than war that more war could have been justified in preventing. Most people in polls in Europe say they would never fight in a war. That we should be angry that Afghans won't fight Afghans at direction from NATO seems odd. Given their horrible choices, too many Afghans had come to view the Taliban as the lesser of two evils. U.S. voters are huge fans of lessers of two evils. We know all about those. But war is always the greater of two evils, and we should applaud President Joe Biden for withdrawing any troops he withdraws from anywhere, but not join with him in blaming Afghans for ending their so-called civil war the instant the foreign occupiers cleared out.

SLIDE 4

3. The Weapons Dealers.

The war on Afghanistan was a major success in transferring wealth from ordinary people to war profiteers. Big military weapons stocks outperformed the stock market by [58 percent](#). The biggest weapons dealers get five times now each year from the U.S. government what they got prior to the war. And there's no glimmer of a hint of a consideration that ending the war might change that. It's been normalized. In their legislation, including the big new progressive reconciliation bill, Congressional so-called leaders lay out a plan for steady increases in military spending for each of the next 10 years. Just because they can. And with no notion that the next 9 years of it might accomplish anything that could possibly alter the supposed need for even more military spending in the 10th year.

SLIDE 5

4. The Authoritarians.

During the course of this war and the wars it spawned, governments -- national and local -- have been militarized, the world has been heavily armed, government secrecy and surveillance have been accepted, civil liberties have been eroded, and the word "democracy" has come to mean oligarchic but reliable weapons customers that put up a little pretense of caring.

SLIDE 6

5. Safety, Democracy, and Enlightenment.

The war on terrorism has reduced terrorism, spread democracy, and enlightened those poor benighted foreigners who had been living in darkness. OK, this one I haven't verified but I did hear it on my television, so you can take it for what it's worth, and in any case four out of five success stories is not bad.

In fact, check out the latest from [Peace Science Digest](#): The more a country has contributed to U.S. war on terror, the more terrorism has come to that country. Ssshhh. Don't tell any governments this!

Let's talk about what we've learned about Afghanistan from our televisions.

SLIDE 7

Afghanistan is, in truth, far from the longest U.S. war. There was no peace before or after it. There is no after it until they end it -- and bombing has always been most of what it is. It has had nothing to do with opposing terrorism. It has been a one-sided slaughter, a mass killing over two decades by a single invading army and air force dragging along token mascots from dozens of vassal states. After 20 years Afghanistan was one of the worst places to be on Earth, and the Earth as a whole was a worse place to be -- the rule of law, the state of nature, the refugee crises, the spread of terrorism, the militarization of governments all worsened. Then the Taliban took over.

When the U.S. armed the Afghan military with weapons costing enough to cause panic attacks in U.S. Senators had the expense been for anything other than murder, and predicted a happy little civil war, and then the Afghans refused to fight each other, the President of the United States denounced such reprehensible restraint, blaming the victims, instead of acknowledging the massive gift of yet more weaponry to the Taliban, instead of recognizing -- after 20 years -- anything about what Afghanistan is like. (Of course he still calls the war a "civil war" as U.S. voices have done for years and years because unless the U.S. military is regretfully helping out in a civil war waged by primitive people, it will be understood to be, you know, waging wars, smack in the middle of what U.S. academics call The Great Peace.)

SLIDE 8

The puppet government was never a government outside of the capital. The people were never loyal to the Taliban or the invaders, but merely to whichever set of lunatics was nearby waving guns. First the Taliban collapsed, then the Muppets in Kabul, and for 20 years in between every home and village switched sides as needed, with the U.S. developing permanent enemies, the Taliban making practical alliances, and people persistently noticing that they lived where they lived, while the strange-looking foreigners who killed, imprisoned, tortured, mutilated, urinated on, and threatened them for "human rights" lived somewhere else.

But millions of people were made homeless. Children froze to death in refugee camps. Approximately half the victims of the U.S. war were women. The puppet government passed a law to legalize spousal rape. Yet the hypocritical screech of "Women's Rights" was heard over the agonized moaning of the injured, even as the U.S. government blissfully armed and supported the brutal militaries of such bastions of women's rights as Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa), Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Gabon, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Libya, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Oman, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Yemen.

The death, injury, trauma, homelessness, environmental destruction, governmental corruption, renewed drug dealing, and general catastrophe were kept quiet by an obsessive focus on the tiny percentage of deaths that were U.S. troops -- but excluding the majority even of those deaths because they were suicides.

SLIDE 9

Collecting reports on war deaths in Afghanistan from direct violence gave Brown University's Cost of War Project a total of about [240,000](#). Nicolas Davies [has pointed out](#) that in Iraq in 2006 you had to multiply the reported deaths by 12 to get the number arrived at by scientific surveys conducted in Iraq, and in Guatemala in 1996 you had to multiply by 20. Starting with 240,000 and multiplying by 12 gives us 2.8 million possibly dead directly from war violence in

Afghanistan. Multiply by 20 and you get, instead, 4.8 million. Interest in this question is limited in the extreme. There have been no serious studies conducted in Afghanistan. The U.S. corporate media reports on the topics are as nonexistent as humanitarian wars. And [according](#) to President Biden,

"American troops cannot and should not be fighting in a war and dying in a war that Afghan forces are not willing to fight for themselves."

In fairness, Biden was upset at the moment by the failure of a new civil war to materialize. Nonetheless, someone could have told him that Afghan military deaths were at least 10 times those of the U.S. military. Or the entire so-called intelligence so-called community could have been replaced by a single historian or peace activist, and the likely fate of foreign occupations might have been grasped 20 years earlier.

"There is no military solution" the generals and weapons-funded presidents and Congress members chanted for decades while pushing more militarism. Yet nobody asked what "solution" even meant. "We're winning" they lied for decades until everyone announced that they'd "lost." Yet nobody asked what "winning" would have been. What was the goal? What was the purpose?

SLIDE 10

The rhetoric, official and amateur, that launched the war was about bombing a nation full of people as revenge for the crimes of a small number of individuals who had spent some time in the place. "Hey Mr. Taliban" song lyrics were racist, hateful, and genocidal celebrations of bombing the homes of people who dressed in pajamas. But this was pure murderous bullshit. Crimes can and should be prosecuted, not used as excuses to commit worse crimes. The Taliban was willing to turn Bin Laden over to a third country to be put on trial, but the U.S. government wanted a war. It had long-since planned the war. Its motivations included base construction, weapons placement, pipeline routing, and the launching of a war on Iraq as a continuation of an easier-to-start war on Afghanistan (a war that Tony Blair insisted on starting prior to a war on Iraq).

Soon the U.S. president said that bin Laden didn't matter at all. Then another U.S. president said that bin Laden was dead. That didn't matter either, as anyone

paying the slightest attention had known it wouldn't. In fact, that same president escalated the war on Afghanistan three-fold in terms of troop presence but more than that in bombing, principally because he was largely keeping his predecessor's deal to scale back the war on Iraq. One can't just end a war without backing a different one. That's part of why the world's worried about a war on China right now.

But, then what was the excuse for the unending war on Afghanistan? Well, one excuse was a new bin Laden. He would return in another form like Voldemort if ever the U.S. left Afghanistan. So, after 20 years of a global war on terrorism spreading anti-U.S. terrorism from a few Afghan caves to capitals across Africa and Asia, we're now told that the Taliban takeover may mean the "return" of terrorism -- we're told this by the very same widely respected "experts" who just said the Taliban wouldn't take over.

SLIDE 11

You know who never believed that crap? The young men and women sent into Afghanistan from the United States year after year after year to become suicide risks and to . . . well, and to . . . to do what?

What passes for "winning" in the propaganda given the troops and everyone else is just the horrific wars with disastrous short- and long-term results that somebody had the sense to end more quickly than other wars: the Gulf War, the War on Libya. But they're not, of course, better than never having started them would have been.

On August 16, 2021, a U.S. military base at Niagara Falls posted this notice:

[SLIDE 12]

While President Joe Biden swears the nonsense about "nation building" was always nonsense, others cling to it. They were told they were doing it. They saw their buddies die in the name of doing it.

On August 17th an email from Lauren Mick, Senior Manager for Media Relations, Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), claimed "There is no doubt, however, that the lives of millions of Afghans had

been improved by U.S. government interventions, including gains in life expectancy, the mortality of children under five, GDP per capita, and literacy rates, among others." Even if you believe that, imagine what doctors and teachers could have done in that regard. Hell, imagine what giving every man, woman, and child in Afghanistan some \$600,000 or even a tiny fraction of that might have done rather than blowing over \$1 trillion on war per year for 20 years. Afghanistan, under the benevolent occupation, was the [third worst](#) place to give birth in terms of newborn mortality, with the first being the neighboring and heavily impacted Pakistan. The majority of marriages in Afghanistan during the humanitarian occupation were forced.

The letter in the image above illustrates one of the points I elaborated on in *War Is A Lie*, namely that one can have contradictory war lies working simultaneously and certainly at different stages, especially before, during, and after a war. Let us count the lies in the notice above:

1. "progress" -- no explanation given, so irrefutable, but vacuous
2. the war-making allowed people to vote, attend school, start a business, and live with basic necessities -- by definition anyone not killed in the war lived with basic necessities, just as prior to the war only less so; the rest of this has been very weak for 20 years and in fact for 50 years going back to the initial U.S. provocation of the Soviets back when the bad guys were the good guys as they very well may soon be again
3. evidence-free prevention of imaginary attacks on the Fatherland -- those have been made more likely, not less likely, by the war
4. saving fellow "service" members -- not sending them would have saved more of them
5. planting small seeds of "Freedom's Cause" -- what can I say except that people will reach for utter obnoxious nonsense to justify horrible things they've done?

Well, surely this harmless foolishness is better than veteran suicides? Not if it succeeds at its stated purpose of facilitating future warmaking it isn't, no. Guess what one of the minor results of those future wars will be? More veteran suicides!

SLIDE 13

At one point during the past 20 years, I sent some unsolicited advice to a young man who was considering offering the world the "service" of participating in wars. This was part of what I sent him:

Are you aware that the U.S. government [repeatedly](#) turned down [offers](#) to hand Bin Laden over to a third nation to be put on trial, preferring instead a war? Have you come into contact with the [understanding](#) that "if the CIA had not spent over a billion dollars arming Islamist militants in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War, empowering jihadist godfathers like Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden in the process, the 9/11 attacks would have almost certainly not taken place"? Are you familiar with the U.S. [plans](#) for war on Afghanistan that pre-dated September 11, 2001? Have you seen the predictable [excuses](#) that Bin Laden gave for his murderous crimes? They each involve revenge for other crimes committed by the U.S. military. Are you aware that war is a crime under, among other laws, the [United Nations Charter](#)? Are you aware that al Qaeda [planned](#) September 11th in numerous nations and U.S. states that, unlike Afghanistan, the United States chose not to bomb?

I continued:

[SLIDE 14]

Are you familiar with the gross [failures](#) of the CIA and FBI leading up to 9/11, but also with the [warnings they gave to the White House that went unheeded](#)? Are you aware of the evidence of the role played by [Saudi Arabia](#), close U.S. ally, oil dealer, weapons customer, and partner in the war on Yemen? Did you know that British Prime Minister Tony Blair [agreed](#) to the future war on Iraq as long as Afghanistan was attacked first? Are you aware that the Taliban had practically eradicated opium prior to the war, but that the war made opium one of the Taliban's top two sources of funding, the other being, according to an investigation by the U.S. Congress, the [U.S. military](#)? Are you aware that the war on Afghanistan has [killed](#) huge numbers of people, devastated the natural environment, and left the society very vulnerable to coronavirus? Are you aware that the International Criminal Court is [investigating](#) the overwhelming evidence of horrendous atrocities by all sides during the war on Afghanistan? Have you noticed the habit of just-retired U.S. military officials admitting that much of what

they've been doing is counter-productive? Here are just a few examples in case you've missed any of them:

- [Former CIA Bin Laden Unit Chief Michael Scheuer](#), who says the more the United States fights terrorism the more it creates terrorism.
- [The CIA](#), which finds its own drone program “counterproductive.”
- [Admiral Dennis Blair, the former director of National Intelligence](#): While “drone attacks did help reduce the Qaeda leadership in Pakistan,” he wrote, “they also increased hatred of America.”
- [Gen. James E. Cartwright](#), the former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: “We’re seeing that blowback. If you’re trying to kill your way to a solution, no matter how precise you are, you’re going to upset people even if they’re not targeted.”
- [Sherard Cowper-Coles, Former U.K. Special Representative To Afghanistan](#): “For every dead Pashtun warrior, there will be 10 pledged to revenge.”
- [Matthew Hoh](#), Former Marine Officer (Iraq), Former US Embassy Officer (Iraq and Afghanistan): “I believe it’s [the escalation of the war/military action] only going to fuel the insurgency. It’s only going to reinforce claims by our enemies that we are an occupying power, because we are an occupying power. And that will only fuel the insurgency. And that will only cause more people to fight us or those fighting us already to continue to fight us.”
- [General Stanley McChrystal](#): “For every innocent person you kill, you create 10 new enemies.”
- [Lt. Col. John W. Nicholson Jr.](#): This commander of the war on Afghanistan blurted out his opposition to what he’d been doing on his last day of doing it.

I tried to provide some context:

SLIDE 15

"Did you know that terrorism [increased](#) from 2001 through 2014, principally as a predictable result of the war on terrorism? Of course a basic question that a good education should bring one to ask about any field is this one: “Is it working?” I assume you’ve asked that regarding “counter-terrorism.” I assume also that you’ve looked into what distinctions, if any, truly separate a terrorist attack from a counter-terrorist attack. Are you aware that [95%](#) of all suicide terrorist attacks are indefensible crimes conducted to encourage foreign occupiers to leave the terrorist’s home country?

I tried to provide some alternatives:

Did you know that on March 11, 2004, Al Qaeda bombs killed 191 people in Madrid, Spain, just before an election in which one party was campaigning against Spain's participation in the U.S.-led war on Iraq. The people of Spain [voted](#) the Socialists into power, and they removed all Spanish troops from Iraq by May. There were no more bombs in Spain. This history stands in strong contrast to that of Britain, the United States, and other nations that have responded to blowback with more war, generally producing more blowback.

Are you aware of the suffering and death that polio used to cause and still causes, and how hard many have worked for years to come very close to eradicating it, and what a dramatic setback these efforts were handed when the CIA [pretended](#) to be vaccinating people in Pakistan while actually trying to find Bin Laden?

Did you know that it isn't legal in Pakistan or anywhere else to kidnap or to murder? Have you ever paused and listened to whistleblowers about their regrets? People like [Jeffrey Sterling](#) have some [eye-opening](#) stories to [tell](#). So does [Cian Westmoreland](#). So does [Lisa Ling](#). So do many others. Were you aware that much of what we think about drones is [fictional](#)?

SLIDE 16

Are you familiar with the dominant role the U.S. plays in weapons dealing and [war](#), that it's responsible for some [80%](#) of international arms dealing, [90%](#) of foreign military bases, [50%](#) of military spending, or that the U.S. military arms, trains, and funds the militaries of [96%](#) of the most oppressive governments on earth? Did you know that [3%](#) of U.S. military spending could end starvation on earth? Do you really believe, when you stop to consider it, that the current priorities of the U.S. government serve to counter terrorism, rather than to fuel it?

We have real crises facing us that are far more severe than terrorism, no matter where you think terrorism comes from. The threat of nuclear apocalypse is [higher than ever](#). The threat of irreversible climate collapse is higher than ever and massively [contributed to](#) by militarism. The trillions of dollars being dumped into

militarism are desperately needed for [actual defense](#) against these dangers including spin-off catastrophes like coronavirus.

SLIDE 17

Now, we've been through two decades of atrocity aberration stories in Afghanistan. Some troops were hunting children but that wasn't the norm. Some troops were peeing on corpses, but politely and respectfully creating the corpses was the norm. Innocent people were imprisoned and tortured but only by mistake.

We've been treated to two decades of regrets that crimes should have been committed more properly. So and so shouldn't have pretending to be "winning." Such and such shouldn't have pretended to be withdrawing. This and that shouldn't have lied about murders of civilians. Big shot shouldn't have shown his brilliant plans for dragging out this madness to his girlfriend.

We've been treated to two decades of imagining that mass killing can be reformed. But it cannot be. Remember that this was the "good war" the war that one had to praise in order to oppose the war on Iraq without being some radical advocate of abolishing mass slaughter. But if this was a "good war" -- a war that even peace activists pretended had been UN-sanctioned (simply because the war on Iraq had not been) -- one would hate to see the "bad war."

The big lies are not the lies in the Afghan Papers but the lies evident on the day the war began. Here are some of them and links to their refutations:

[SLIDE 18]

[War is inevitable](#)

[War is justified](#)

[War is necessary](#)

[War is beneficial](#)

If you're really good at the war propaganda game, you can do the inverted myths:

[SLIDE 19]

Peace is impossible.
Peace is unjustifiable.
Peace serves no purpose.
Peace is dangerous and gets people killed.

These are themes in U.S. corporate media these days. People get hurt when you end good stable wars. They die at airports (when you shoot them or let them crowd onto runways and generally run the airport like it's a branch of the SNAFU war machine you sent in for the non-nation building).

What can peaceniks say for themselves at such a moment?

Well, here's what this one says:

SLIDE 20

On September 11, 2001, I said, "Well, that proves all the weapons and wars are useless or counterproductive. Prosecute crimes as crimes, and start disarming."

When the U.S. government launched an illegal, immoral, sure to be catastrophic war on Afghanistan, I said, "That's illegal and immoral and sure to be catastrophic! End it now!"

When they didn't end it, I said, "According to the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan, there's going to be hell when they end this, and it's going to be a worse hell the longer it takes them to end it. So, end it now!"

When they didn't end it, I went to Kabul and met with all kinds of people and saw that they clearly had a lousy, corrupt, foreign-backed puppet government, with the looming threat of the Taliban, and neither choice was any good. "Support nonviolent civil-society," I said. "Provide actual aid. Try democracy at home to lead by example. And (redundantly, since democracy at home would have done this) get the U.S. military the @%!%# out!"

SLIDE 21

When they still didn't end it, and when a Congressional investigation found the top two sources of income for the Taliban to be the revived drug trade and the U.S. military, I said "If you wait additional years or decades to get the !^%& out, there's going to be no hope left. Get the hell out now!"

By the way, the opioid epidemic in the United States seems to have been connected to the war that revived the world's largest opium production about as much as the next drought or hurricane will be connected to climate destruction.

When Amnesty International put ads up on bus stops in Chicago thanking NATO for the lovely war for women's rights, I pointed out that bombs blow up women the same as men, and marched to protest NATO.

I asked people in Afghanistan, and they said the same thing.

SLIDE 22

When Obama pretended to get out, I said, "Really get out, you lying scheming fraud!"

When Trump got elected promising to get out and then didn't, I said, "Really get out, you lying scheming fraud!"

(When Hillary Clinton failed to get elected, and evidence suggested that she'd have won had she credibly promised to end the wars, I said, "Do us all a favor and retire for godsake!")

Presidents I proposed be impeached for this war among other grounds were Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden.

Now I've gone and offended both political Parties, of course, and must apologize for burning my Party membership cards and not children.

SLIDE 23

When they STILL didn't end the war, I said, again, "According to the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan, there's going to be hell when they end this, and it's going to be a worse hell the longer it takes them to end it. So, end it now!"

When Biden pretended to get out while promising to keep troops there and to increase the bombings, I said, "Really get out, you lying scheming fraud!"

I encouraged all the insiderish groups that said the same thing super gently and politely. I encouraged all the fed-up groups blocking doors and streets and weapons trains. I supported efforts in ever country involved to get their token troops out and stop legitimizing a U.S. crime. Year after year after year.

When Biden claimed the war was some sort of success, I pointed out how it had spread anti-U.S. terrorism across half the globe, spawned more wars, murdered countless people, devastated the natural environment, eroded the rule of law and civil liberties and self-governance, and cost trillions of dollars.

When the U.S. government refused to abide by agreements, refused to stop bombing, refused to give credible negotiation or compromise a chance, refused to support the rule of law around the world or lead by example, refused to stop shipping weapons into the region, refused to even acknowledge that the Taliban is using U.S.-made weapons, but finally claimed it would get its troops out, I expected that U.S. media outlets would develop anew a strong interest in the rights of Afghan women. I was right.

SLIDE 24

But the U.S. government, according to its own reporting, accounts for 66% of all the weapons exported to the least democratic quintile of nations on earth. Of the 50 most oppressive governments identified by a U.S.-government-funded study, the U.S. arms 82% of them.

Israel's government, notorious for its violent oppression of Palestinian people, is not on that list (it's a U.S.-funded list) but is the top recipient of "aid" funding for U.S. weapons from the U.S. government. Some women live in Palestine.

The Stop Arming Human Rights Abusers Act (H.R.4718) would prevent U.S. weapons sales to other nations that are in violation of international human rights law or international humanitarian law. During the last Congress, the same bill, introduced by Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, gathered a grand total of zero cosponsors.

One of 41 U.S.-armed oppressive nations on U.S. funded lists, Afghanistan, was on the lists of oppressive governments before the Taliban threatened to take it over. And the other 40 are of truly minimal interest to the U.S. corporate media, much less to any of the “BUT THE WOMEN!” crowd out there moaning in agony that a war might end.

The same crowd seems to have no objection to the proposal moving through the U.S. Congress to force U.S. women at age 18 to register for a military draft that would force them against their will to kill and die in more of these wars.

SLIDE 25

So, what would I propose that the U.S. government do for the women and men and children of Afghanistan now, regardless of horrible decisions in the past that it's obviously too late to undo and just silly and offensive to rehash like this?

1. Until it can reform itself into an entity capable of benevolent action, not a goddamned thing in Afghanistan. Get out and stay out. Lay off freezing Afghan funds or blocking international aid. End sanctions. Make Afghanistan neither a client state nor an enemy to be punished further.

SLIDE 26

2. Stop encouraging the Taliban to think that it can become a model U.S. client state in a few years if it's mean and nasty enough, by ceasing to arm and train and fund brutal dictatorships all over the globe. In 2019, the *New York Times* [published](#) this comment from the Taliban:

“What they are saying to Americans is this: You have accepted Saudi Arabia, and we won't do more than their basic code — retribution for murder, chop off the hand for robbing,” Mr. Shinwari said. “If you have accepted Saudi, what's wrong

with us being another? The rest will be your priorities: aid, friendship, economic relations.”

SLIDE 27

3. Cease eroding the idea of the rule of law around the world by dropping opposition to the International Criminal Court and the World Court, by joining the International Criminal Court, and by eliminating the veto and democratizing the United Nations Security Council.

SLIDE 28

4. Catch up with the world and cease being the leading holdout globally on the most major human rights treaties including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (every nation on Earth has ratified except the United States) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (every nation on Earth has ratified except the United States, Iran, Sudan, and Somalia).

SLIDE 29

5. Move 20% of the U.S. military budget into useful things each year for five years. Shouldn't ending a war reduce, rather than increase, the U.S. military budget?

SLIDE 30

6. Move 10% of that rededicated funding into providing no-strings-attached aid and encouragement to the most law-abiding and honest-to-god small-d democratic poor nations on the planet.

SLIDE 31

7. Take a hard look at the U.S. government itself, understand the powerful case that the U.S. government could make for bombing itself were it not itself, and take serious steps to remove the bribery from the election system, establish fair public funding and media coverage for elections, and remove gerrymandering, the filibuster, and as soon as possible the United States Senate.

SLIDE 32

8. Free, apologize to, and thank every whistleblower who's told us what the U.S. government was doing in Afghanistan for the past 20 years. Consider why we needed whistleblowers to tell us.

SLIDE 33

9. Prosecute or free and apologize to every prisoner at Guantanamo, close the base, and get out of Cuba. Now that innocent prisoners in Guantanamo can't "return" to a battlefield that's been abandoned, free them!

SLIDE 34

10. Get out of the way of the International Criminal Court's prosecution of Taliban crimes in Afghanistan, as well as its prosecution of crimes committed there by the Afghan government, and by the militaries of the United States and its junior partners.

SLIDE 35

11. Swiftly become an entity that can credibly comment on horrors being committed by the Taliban, by — among other things — caring enough about the horrors coming to all of humanity to invest heavily in ending the destruction of the Earth's climate and ending the existence of nuclear weapons.

SLIDE 36

12. Let a million Afghans into the United States and fund the creation of education centers at which they explain to people where Afghanistan is and what the U.S. military did to it for 20 years.

I propose that last idea in the spirit of Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi's idea way back when that instead of attacking Afghanistan, the United States build schools across Afghanistan and name them for victims of the crimes of 9/11,

thereby informing people who had mostly never heard about those crimes, instead of bombing them as revenge for those crimes.

I hope we can break away from the approach articulated by Joe Biden in 2010 according to Richard Holbrooke who says he asked Biden about rescuing Afghans who would be endangered by a withdrawal, and Biden responded: "Fuck that, we don't have to worry about that. We did it in Vietnam, Nixon and Kissinger got away with it."