

# Afghanistan – a second Vietnam?

by Robert Seidel

*It is well known that the lie takes the elevator,  
while the truth climbs up the stairs.*

*The images of the hasty withdrawal of the US Army from Kabul evoke memories of the withdrawal 46 years ago from the South Vietnamese capital Saigon. By comparing the two U.S. wars, Vietnam and Afghanistan, an attempt is made to draw possible consequences for a more peaceful international policy.*

If one compares the U.S. war effort in Vietnam (1964–1975) and the military effort under U.S. command in Afghanistan (2001–2021), one finds various parallels. Perhaps this approach makes it possible to gain a sober view of the processes behind both wars. They were and are by no means the only wars in which great suffering and injustice were inflicted on the civilian population over years or decades. The wars and war-like conditions in Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and Syria alone are reminders of the original impulse behind the founding of the UN after the horrors of the Second World War, namely to seek peace among nations.

## **The suffering of the civilian population**

In both the Vietnam War and the Afghanistan War, it was primarily the civilian population that had to pay the greatest toll in terms of suffering. In addition to the dead, there are the injured, the traumatised, the children who have only known war as everyday life, the social brutalisation, the economic decline, the poverty, the drug problems or the ecological damage.

## **Wars against International Law**

In both wars, the U.S. administration played an inglorious role. In retrospect, it became clear that the attacks were illegal under international law. In both cases, the reasons were faked in order to create an aggressive readiness for war in one's own country, controlled by the media. In Vietnam, the Tonkin incident was used to start the war. This incident later proved to be a U.S. "false flag" operation.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that after the attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, Afghanistan of all places was to be systematically bombed as a consequence had neither a logical nor a legally sufficient justification. After all, the alleged mastermind came from Saudi Arabia and had also been trained and financed for years by the U.S. secret service. As is known today, the war against Afghanistan was planned even before the attack.<sup>2</sup>

## **Subordination of Western States**

The fact that the vast majority of Western governments supported both wars makes their political subordination clear. Whereas the war against Vietnam was ideologically justified by the threat of communism, the war in Afghanistan was fought on the basis of the common "Global War on Terrorism".<sup>3</sup>

## **War costs passed on**

Both wars incurred huge costs. The abandonment of the U.S. Dollar convertibility to gold in August 1971 is today generally regarded as a consequence of the gigantic national debt of the U.S. caused by the Vietnam War. With a single stroke, the USA spread its debts over the entire globe. The situation is similar today with the Afghanistan war (and the many parallel U.S. wars). The gigantic national debt is financed by the FED, which produces dollars without restraint. This time, too, a worldwide inflation will spread the debts over the entire globe.<sup>4</sup>

## **"Agent Orange" and Tora Bora**

Synonymous with the Vietnam War was the use of the defoliant Agent Orange<sup>5</sup> and the incendiary weapon *Napalm*.<sup>6</sup> Two weapons from which the population of Vietnam still suffers today, 50 years later. Banned weapons of war were also used in Afghanistan. Since the use of weapons remains mostly secret, more details will be known only after many years. Uranium weapons were apparently used in the bombing of *Tora Bora (Daud Miraki)*.<sup>7</sup> Little is known about medical aid or scientific research to remedy the con-

sequences. – In both wars, the “West” tortured, illegally imprisoned, deported and massacred – contrary to its self-imposed claim to be guided by international law and human rights.

### **My Lai as a moral turning point**

But now differences are becoming clear. The partially still independent reporting during the Vietnam War – also by renowned media houses – led to strong protests among the American civilian population. The questionability of the war was discussed, and the U.S. administration lost popular support also because of realistic images and reports: the pictures of coffins of young American soldiers, the massacre at My Lai,<sup>8</sup> the release of the “Pentagon Papers”,<sup>9</sup> the photo of a screaming girl after a napalm bomb attack.<sup>10</sup> This etched itself into the memory of public opinion. Faith in a leadership with political integrity was broken.

### **“Embedded journalism”**

The consequence was “embedded journalism”. No more uncensored images came out of Afghanistan. Journalists were only allowed to report alongside and under the control of the army. The strict control prevented critical reports. Media outlets adopted government reports or army news without questions. This led to completely unrealistic reporting that no longer allowed any conclusions to be drawn about what was actually happening. After all, the task should have been to uncover possible abuses, questionable facts or war crimes.

### **Julian Assange and Edward Snowden**

But at the same time, Internet forums emerged that dared to publish U.S. intelligence reports and images. Now the reality of the war was coming out into the open. Wikileaks was one of the important platforms. (This is the reason why *Julian Assange* and whistle-blower *Edward Snowden* have been mercilessly persecuted internationally by the US administration to this day).

### **Western involvement**

While the USA tried to contain “communism” in Vietnam and later in Cambodia and Laos alone (Containment Policy),<sup>11</sup> they managed to mobilise the soldiers, equipment and know-how of their allies for “their” war in Afghanistan, invoking the case for mutual defence within NATO. In-

terestingly, many left-wing governments in Europe got involved (e.g. SPD *Gerhard Schröder*, Labour Party *Tony Blair*). Moreover, the PfP members [“Partnership for Peace”] of NATO were also asked to cooperate. Switzerland, for example, also sent military personnel to Afghanistan for a time.<sup>12</sup> Unlike in Vietnam, the U.S. more often used foreigners or mercenaries from private companies. It was no longer U.S. soldiers who were to die officially, but soldiers of foreign nationality who were not to appear in the statistics.

### **Scorched earth policy**

With the withdrawal of the American army from Saigon, the Vietnam War ended for the USA in 1975. They left their mark with the opium cultivation in the so-called “Golden Triangle”, which started its first devastating triumphal procession through the Western states as heroin in the 1970s. But Southeast Asia was able to stabilize and recover.

In Afghanistan, the U.S. is apparently pursuing the “newer” strategy of longer-term destabilization just as it did in Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, or Syria:<sup>13</sup> hostile warring factions are armed and played off against each other, state structures are weakened, secret military operations are carried out at will. A scorched earth policy – without regard for the population: A blatant violation of International Law, which demands an official and de facto end to the war in order to protect the civilian population.

### **Sham Aid**

What was new in Afghanistan was the so-called “civil society engagement” of the NATO war alliance: commitment to women's rights, gender chairs at the university, the construction of schools and hospitals, and so on. They were supposed to drive a reconstruction according to Western values and morally justify the military deployment. A ludicrous and expensive PR campaign that has now proved ineffective. Many serious NGOs allowed themselves to be abused.

### **Making wars obsolete**

Eleven years of Vietnam war, 20 years of Afghanistan war: unspeakable human suffering, official lies, deliberate disregard of international law and human rights, costs and damages in the trillions. An analysis of the causes, the political processes, the war profiteer,<sup>14</sup> the corruption, the

failure of national and international organisations would be useful to prevent political processes of this kind in the future. "War is obsolete", even more so in the age of nuclear armament. The inhabitants of the earth have other problems and need the financial resources to fight global problems like hunger, poverty and diseases.

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

- <sup>1</sup> The *Tonkin incident* with the destroyer USS-Maddox was staged as a reason for war to justify an attack on North Vietnam. Subsequently, the gigantic bombardment of North Vietnam began.  
Cf. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonkin-Zwischenfall>.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. *Helmut Scheben*: "The illusion of the USA as the sole world power has been shattered." Infosperber 18 August 2021. Scheben describes the invasion of Afghanistan in September 2001 as a result of burst pipeline deals by the U.S. administration with the Taliban regime at the time.  
<https://www.infosperber.ch/politik/welt/die-illusion-von-der-einzigen-weltmacht-usa-ist-geplatzt/>
- <sup>3</sup> *Global War on Terrorism (GWOT)* was a catchphrase used by the U.S. administration under George W. Bush at the time to describe the political, military and legal campaign against selected individuals and states following the attacks of 11 September 2001.
- <sup>4</sup> Vietnam: Many national banks at the time held U.S. dollars in their deposits with the understanding that the dollar would be pegged to the price of gold. As the debt of the U.S. government became unpayable due to the Vietnam War, the U.S. abandoned the link to the gold price. That is, they no longer lent gold at the previously agreed-upon dollar price. *Afghanistan*: The U.S. wars in the 2000s and the disproportionately bloated "defense budget" are financed by a huge national debt. The FED makes this possible by buying unlimited amounts of U.S. government bonds. Repayment is no longer possible, inflation becomes inevitable.
- <sup>5</sup> Agent Orange was used as a defoliant to better detect enemies in the jungle. It is the most toxic representative of dioxins. It leads to the poisoning of the food chain and to massive deformities in newborns. Even today, malformed children are born due to the poison. Compensation claims by Vietnamese and US veterans have been rejected by the US courts.
- <sup>6</sup> Napalm is an incendiary weapon with gasoline as its main ingredient, which is gelled. This ensures that napalm adheres to the target as a viscous, sticky mass and develops a strong incendiary effect.
- <sup>7</sup> Hardly verifiable reports about the use of secret weapons appeared in various media. For example: *Rüdiger Göbel*. "Uranium Weapons Use in the Hindu Kush: All of Afghanistan Nuclear Contaminated?" jW spoke with Mohammed Daud Miraki, Director of the 'Afghan DU and Recovery Fund' ([www.afghandufund.org](http://www.afghandufund.org)). In: *junge welt*, 24.10.2003
- <sup>8</sup> Massacre of 504 villagers by the U.S. Army in March 1968. Cf: Bernd Greiner. "War without Fronts. The USA in Vietnam". Hamburg Edition 2007. ISBN 978 3 9360 96 80 4
- <sup>9</sup> Through the release of the *Pentagon Papers*, it became known that the U.S. administration had systematically and continuously lied to the U.S. population about the Vietnam War.
- <sup>10</sup> The photo of a girl screaming in fear, pain and terror after a 1972 napalm bomb attack on a Vietnamese village provoked worldwide outrage against the U.S. war effort. Cf. <https://www.welt.de/geschichte/kopf-des-tages/article231649425/Kim-Phuc-Das-Napalm-Maedchen-aus-Vietnam.html>
- <sup>11</sup> Containment policy: strategy of the USA since 1947 to "contain" the spread of communism by the USSR worldwide.
- <sup>12</sup> The so-called *Partnership for Peace (PfP)* is an organization established in 1994 for the military connection to NATO of non-NATO members from Europe and Asia. Switzerland has been a member of the PfP since 11 December 1996. From February 2004 to March 2008, Switzerland participated in NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan. As the mission became visibly armed, the Federal Council decided to end participation because of the country's neutrality.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. Thierry Meyssan: Is Defeat in Afghanistan Aimed at Hampering Russia and China? <https://www.voltairenet.org/article213829.html>, 25 August 2021
- <sup>14</sup> Those who want to profit from the war business often enough exert their influence on decisions in politics.