

An Alternative to War?



Bin Laden is dead, but he got what he wanted: sucker the United States into the costliest wars since World War II, for a pittance.

To date, the United States has spent **more than \$2.5 trillion on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan**, according to Joseph E. Stiglitz, Nobel Prize laureate in Economics.

How have we covered the cost of the wars? **Entirely through borrowing.**

Not only did we pay in borrowed money, our huge debts from the wars are not listed anywhere in the federal government's budget. Even if we were to leave Afghanistan and Iraq tomorrow, our war debt would continue to rise for decades.

The wars have affected the nation's economy, leading up to the financial crisis in 2008. The invasion of Iraq caused the oil prices to skyrocket from \$30 a barrel in 2003 to \$140 a barrel in 2008. Higher oil prices threatened to depress U.S. economic activity, prompting the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates and loosen regulations. These policies were major contributors to the housing bubble and the financial collapse that followed.

Our response to the 9/11 attacks has weakened both the current economy and our future economic prospects, and has undermined our national security. And a decade of war only generates more violence and suffering in Afghanistan that had nothing to do with 9/11.

Did the 10-year war, so costly in lives and money, lead to the capture of bin Laden? No. Good intelligence efforts did. Clearly, there was an alternative to war.

The 9/11 attacks should have been approached as a **"crime against humanity"** which was also condemned in much of the Arab world. We could have sought for international cooperation to apprehend the suspects and bring them to a trial.

But that path wasn't taken. Instead we lashed out with two violent wars, following bin Laden's playbook. No wonder Michael Scheuer, head of the CIA task force that has tracked bin Laden concluded that the U.S. "remains bin Laden's only indispensable ally."



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Every Saturday, 1-3 pm, at Rte. 59 & Middletown Rd. in Nanuet, NY
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