

# *The endless war*

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The new U.S. Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, made his first visit to Afghanistan, where he met with the high command of the occupying army and local authorities, and repeated the old litany that his country is seeking a "responsible" solution to the war.

The truth is that it is very difficult to find that kind of solution to a conflict that will soon be 20 years old, the longest in which the Pentagon has been involved, and which has had immeasurable human, economic and political costs.

As most people know, the invasion of the Afghan territory began in October 2001, after the twin towers attack in New York, under the pretext that the Taliban government was harboring Osama Bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of those attacks.

It was, actually, an action of revenge, retaliation and an absurd demonstration of U.S. military might and its allies aimed at intimidating the whole world.

The Taliban were displaced from power, but resistance spread throughout the territory and the two apparent objectives of the occupation -- to combat terrorism and put an end to drug trafficking -- were an utter failure.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense from 2001 to March 2019, the war has cost the country -- that is to say U.S. taxpayers -- \$760 billion, but an independent study by Brown University says the figure is much, much higher.

If we add the medical treatment of soldiers wounded by the war, plus other expenses incurred by several government departments and interest on debts contracted to pay for the military operations, the figure reaches \$1 trillion.

U.S. casualties are 2,300 dead and 20,500 wounded in action, quite apart from the psychological disorders, which are many more.

The highest price of this conflict, has been paid by the occupied country, with conservative statistics of 45,000 members of the security forces killed, 32,000 civilians and 60,000 wounded. And it should be noted that civilian casualties began to be recorded only in 2009.

In this moderate count, the only "responsible" way out for the United States and its allies is to immediately evacuate all its forces, make a just restitution to the victims and the Afghan people and finance the reconstruction of the devastated region.

If President Joe Biden wants to distance himself from his predecessor, which he hasn't done yet, he must apologize for a cruel and unjust war.

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