**Afghan war, reminiscent of Vietnam**

[**Adnan Ali**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/adnan-ali)

September 06, 2021

The Vietnam war was undoubtedly one of the blot spots on the history of the United States until Afghanistan. The country and its people went in arms with the unfolding of the Vietnam war when the small in-and-out gig to bulwark the spread of communism turned messy. The national narrative was not enough to change the true unfolding of the war.

When the proposal to build a localised Mujahideen force to stop the communist expansion was brought forward, the US readily assembled cash and arms to teach the Soviets a lesson. Then president Jimmy Carter, gleefully announced that they would now give the Soviets their Vietnam, a shameful acceptance of what really went down with the US army in Vietnam.

As the Taliban encircled Kabul, the US and UK redeployed forces to evacuate their embassy staff. Helicopters roamed the Kabul skies as they hurriedly put their staff in army planes. A Saigon moment was witnessed once again in the history of the US. This time the withdrawal was streamed to the whole world as people joined in across the globe through social media to watch helpless Afghans desperately begging for their lives. There were and are general news narratives on the changing conditions in Kabul, but also individual updates from the besieged city as young activists posted on Instagram, twitter, and Facebook. More interestingly, this time the Taliban came with a totally different package. They surprised everyone with their actions and the policies they introduced: religious harmony, general amnesty for all, no ban on girls’ educations, women in politics, a welcome note for all investors and many more.

[Taliban says ready to announce new Afghan government](https://nation.com.pk/07-Sep-2021/taliban-says-ready-to-announce-new-afghan-government)

The US forced the war on Pakistan with a binary question of ‘with us or against us’. With Pakistan’s support, the US entered Afghanistan to annihilate the Taliban. The vengeance cost the US and allies more than 3500 lives, of which more than 2300 were US and more than a trillion dollars have been spent. More than 100 thousand Afghans have died or injured in the war post 2009 according to UN numbers and these numbers are far more as per other sources.

After 20 years of losing lives, and spending trillions, the US has now hastily left Afghanistan. The Taliban faced no resistance from the highly-trained Afghan army and the expected 3 months of the Kabul takeover happened in a matter of days. Nobody has been able to digest wholly what has been happening in Afghanistan after the US withdrawal. Some intimated that it was an intelligence failure on behalf of the US, but later a US general commented that this was also one of the possible scenarios they were expecting, but not this quickly. The tragedy that followed was possibly one of the bleaker moments in human history—helpless Afghans clinging onto a C-17 plane. How did the champions of democracy and human rights abandon their own principles and values overnight? The sudden withdrawal brought criticism, and some experts assert that this event will certainly damage the international standing of the US. The US gave up power to the same old defiant Taliban that they ventured in to destroy. Before the US invasion, the Taliban were projected as the antithesis to humanity and how they must be dealt with immediately and now, there is a soft tone which emphasises on giving them time and space to experiment.

[Manchester United sold iconic Ronaldo no. 7 t-shirts for $47 million in twelve hours: Reports](https://nation.com.pk/06-Sep-2021/manchester-united-sold-iconic-ronaldo-no-7-t-shirts-for-dollar-47-million-in-twelve-hours-reports)

The forced nation building project has miserably failed and it has lessons for the world. Was it a good time to leave Afghanistan; only time will tell. One thing that all can unanimously agree on is that whatever happens in Afghanistan beyond 2021 must be Afghan owned and Afghan led, and the international community must be supportive of it. What the US can at least do is to introduce a similar act as it had in 1975 for the affectees of the Vietnam war for the resettlement of Afghans who want to leave the country. Similarly, Pakistan must play a constructive role in stabilising Afghanistan as peace in Afghanistan has dividends not only for Afghanistan, but for the region.