

# THE JORDAN TIMES

## America and its perpetual wars

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The United States is the "most warlike nation in the history of the world", That is the judgment of former President Jimmy Carter.

Carter ran for office on a platform of human rights, though his presidency from 1977-1981 fell far short of his principles.

It was on his watch that the United States began arming the so-called Mujahidin in Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Union. This eventually gave birth to Al Qaeda. We are still living with the consequences.

Nonetheless, at 94, Carter remains a highly respected statesman who since leaving office has tried to be a voice for peace, human rights and moderation.

He was speaking during a Sunday school lesson in April 2019, at Maranatha Baptist Church in his hometown of Plains, Georgia.

Carter revealed that President Trump had spoken to him about China, expressing concern about how it would likely overtake the US as the world's largest economy by 2030.

Carter shared Trump's concerns, but his response was that "China is getting ahead of us" because since 1980 it has not gone to war with anybody.

While China stayed at peace with its neighbours and the world, the US "stayed at war."

By comparison, Carter observed, the US "has been at peace for only 16 out of its 242 years as a nation", trying to force the world to "adopt our American principles".

China, the former president said, has made enormous progress because it has spent its wealth on building infrastructure, including 29,000km of high-speed rail.

Meanwhile, the US squandered \$3 trillion dollars on the military. According to the Watson Institute at Brown University, the United States has accrued more than \$6 trillion in costs for its wars on Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and other nations just since the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

This includes not just the direct costs of the war, but the future costs Americans will pay in interest medical care and disability benefits for veterans.

It is no wonder then that poll after poll shows that around the world, people consistently view the United States as the greatest threat to world peace, a far cry from the American self-image as a beacon of freedom and democracy.

Brett Wilkins, who reported Carter's words in *Common Dreams* (April 18, 2019), observed that "the US also invaded dozens of countries and supported "every single right-wing dictatorship in the world since the end of World War II".

It is well-known that the US has overthrown or attempted to overthrow dozens of governments in this period and has, as Wilkins puts it, "actively sought to crush nearly every single peoples' liberation movement".

It has, he adds, "meddled in scores of elections, in countries that are allies and adversaries alike".

While Carter is a Democrat and considered on the left in American terms, his views are shared by some on the right.

Doug Bandow, a conservative writer, for instance, observed in an article for *Antiwar.com* on 3 August that the US is "the most militarised and warlike nation on earth".

He names 16 nations that have been droned, bombed, invaded, and/or occupied, or threatened with war by the US, or attacked by other nations aided by America, over the last three decades.

Many more have been hit with sanctions that can be as devastating to people's lives as military actions.

The fact that America's record of success in these costly wars is minimal, has done nothing to teach American leaders any lessons. Failure is almost never acknowledged, and no one takes responsibility.

Bandow points to the example of Samantha Power, US ambassador to the UN under President Barack Obama. He calls Power "one of the most visible advocates of 'humanitarian' war making".

Power, along with then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, led the push for the US war on Libya, that led to the collapse of that country into a failed state.

When Power was challenged over repeated policy disasters, she responded: "I think there is too much of, 'Oh, look, this is what intervention has wrought...' one has to be careful about overdrawing lessons".

As Bandow drily notes, Power would prefer that we draw no lessons at all, "if they indict a warrior wannabe's competence, foresight and judgment".

Power is likely to assume another major foreign policy role if Joe Biden wins the US presidency.

Bandow attributes America's indiscriminate use of force to two factors. One is military superiority over every country or collection of countries.

"Since American officials possess the policy equivalent of a very big, expensive hammer, every problem on earth looks like a nail," he writes.

A second factor, he says, "is overweening, pervasive blinding hubris".

That was captured in the comments of Madeleine Albright, secretary of state under President Bill Clinton. In 1998, Albright said, "If we have to use force it is because we are America: We are the

indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future and we see the danger here to all of us."

A year later, under Bill Clinton and Albright, the United States would go to war to separate Kosovo from Serbia, the first major war to be launched under "humanitarian" pretexts and the model for disasters to come.

In fact, that war was part of NATO's eastward expansion into former communist states and created more humanitarian catastrophes and ultimately more instability than it was supposedly meant to solve.

Albright is also notorious for responding, when asked to justify the death from sanctions of 500,000 Iraqi children: "We think the price is worth it."

This history that not even a former American president can deny paints a very gloomy reality about America's role.

But this in no way implicates the entirety of the American people, known for their kindness and goodness.

There is a big gap between ordinary Americans and those who run their country: Profiteers, ideologues, unprincipled politicians, arms merchants, interventionists, religious fanatics and extreme Israel supporters.

But there is a connection: the more America spends on war, the less it has available for human needs including education. Without proper education, people are easily misled to believe the worst about other people and to support catastrophic wars.

They easily fall prey to media distortions and misrepresentations at the expense of justice and their own interests.

There is no question that many of the American wars, or other hostile interventions and sanctions, particularly against Arab and Muslim countries were for Israel's sake, even if they end up causing major harm to American interests.

Ironically, President Trump won election precisely because he was outspoken against these wars, which within the US primarily take a toll on the poor who have few other options except joining the military.

But Trump did not keep his promises to end the endless wars.

It is difficult not to see what is happening in Lebanon now as part of the same misguided policies that continue to destroy the region in the belief that Israel's security can be achieved only by crushing its victims and eliminating any people's movement aimed at restoring legitimate rights.

No country can enjoy normal relations with the US before obtaining a good conduct certificate from Israel, without which such countries face certain American punishment.

One of the clear lessons of history is that the perpetuation of injustice by brute force will only create a more lethal and determined counterforce.

Those who for successive decades pinned their hopes on supposed American values of morality, justice and legality have been let down time and again.

Let us hope that America will listen to the wisdom of its former president before it is too late.