

LATEST NEWS Breaking: Trump, Putin Discuss Counter-Terrorism and Arms Control

NEWS

OPINION



**Tony Broadbent**  
Award-winning author, writer, speaker, brand strategist and

### Why the Papering over of America's Longest War?

"...kudos to 'The Washington Post' for not being deterred from their long, hard, and determinedly fought battle to bring 'The Afghanistan Papers' to light; yet another huge feather in the newspaper's storied cap."

### Why the Papering over of America's Longest War?

Politics  
Tony Broadbent Mon, 30 Dec 2019 11:36 GMT

f t G+ i

## Why the Papering over of America's Longest War?

Politics | Tony Broadbent | Mon, 30 Dec 2019

Just so that we're all on the same page: The Cambridge Dictionary definition of 'to paper over': transitive verb. 1 - To gloss over, explain away, or patch up (differences, disparities, etc.) especially in order to maintain a semblance of unity or agreement. 2 - hide, conceal. To hide an unpleasant situation, especially a problem or disagreement, in order to make people believe that it does not exist or is not serious.

That said: On the December 9th 2019, 'The Washington Post' published 'The Afghanistan Papers': an extensive review of thousands of pages of internal government documents relating to the war in Afghanistan; much of it consisting of detailed reports by, and interviews with, both US and foreign officials. The documents reveal the full extent to which politicians and military leaders lied to the American public about the conflict. And, by dint of that, how they perpetuated the falsehood to the rest of the world.

A self-inflicted, bloody, black eye for Uncle Sam: whatever the given reasons for the war at the very beginning or since.

If only that was all. For it gives the lie to the butcher's bill of more than 2,300 US service personnel killed and over 20,000 injured, as well as the tens of thousands of Afghan civilians killed and countless more injured. Not to say the cost to the US taxpayer of over a trillion dollars. And the war, not yet ended and the number of dead and wounded still mounting.

Even the curt sub-heads to the six different parts of 'The Washington Post' report make for hard reading, but I list them here to give a better idea of the breadth and depth of 'The Afghanistan Papers': At war with the truth: U.S. officials constantly said they were making progress. They were not, and they knew it. | Stranded without a strategy: Bush and Obama had polar-opposite plans to win the war. Both were destined to fail. | Built to fail: Despite vows the U.S. wouldn't get mired in "nation-building," it has wasted billions doing just that. | Consumed by corruption: The U.S. flooded the country with money and then turned a blind eye to the graft it fuelled. | Unguarded nation: Afghan security forces, despite years of training, were dogged by incompetence and corruption. | Overwhelmed by opium: The U.S. war on drugs in Afghanistan has imploded at nearly every turn.

The mountain of detail acquired courtesy of the Freedom of Information Act: but, even, then, only after a tortuous 3-year struggle with authorities that would have much rather let sleeping dogs lie until dead and buried.

The whole wretched catalogue of institutionalized corruption; the unimaginable levels of waste; the tragic loss of US servicemen and servicewomen, and materiel; and one ill-conceived mission or ineffective development scheme after another; all now fully revealed.

All of which, to date, has resulted in a complete failure to bring any sort of lasting peace or prosperity, or promise of a settled future to Afghanistan. Or, for that matter, for US forces to be able to institute any sort of "honourable withdrawal."

The previous administration of George W. Bush damned for starting the war, in the first place. The Obama administration for allowing the war to continue; the twin targeted policies of "surge" before "drawdown", in the end, only prolonging the misery and further helping to contribute to the deceit. Each successive vaunted US military commander, deployed to Afghanistan, trumpeting that the war could be won, indeed, was being won. Yet, given sufficient time with boots on the ground, each being faced with the harsh reality that it wasn't and, likely, couldn't ever be won. The grimly assured public face of command a sad and sorry mask for the continued loss of life and treasure.

The one positive thing one can say about the Trump administration is that the president seems to want America to get the hell out, and as fast as is humanly possible.

So who are you gonna' blame when everyone is to blame and there's little or no political capital to be wrought by either side of the aisle?

Little wonder 'The Afghanistan Papers' have all but been pushed aside or ignored altogether. After all, it's 'The Holidays': that annual interruption to 'business-as-usual'; full of 'Black Fridays', 'Cyber Mondays', Giving Tuesdays', 'Small-Business Saturdays',

and everyday shopping days, in between, all set aside for consumer bingeing and partying that starts at Thanksgiving and ends on or just after the first day of the New Year depending on just how good the 'January Sales' are.

The public news appetite already sated by the Trump impeachment hearings, the major media outlets; whether network or cable, newspaper, website, or news aggregator; all seemingly content to feed sound-bite 'bon mots' or Tweet-sized chunks of red meat, or dangle click-bait, to whatever happens to be their own particular brand of partisan demographic.

And so kudos to 'The Washington Post' for not being deterred from their long, hard, and determinedly fought battle to bring 'The Afghanistan Papers' to light; yet another huge feather in the newspaper's storied cap.

Even now, more than a week after the event, the body slam of reading the first salvo of 'the multi-part bombshell report on 'The Afghanistan Papers' still remains with me. My heart sinking with each newly revealed detail brought to light by chief investigative reporter, Craig Whitlock, and his team. One's worst fears being confirmed with each new revelation, and me already drained after reading down to the end of 'Part 1: At war with the truth'. And another five parts and several additional items still yet to be read. I needed a break.

It was then, in dire need of some relief, however brief, I happened to glance at the list of the 'Most Read' items, four out of five of which were from different parts of the 'The Afghanistan Papers'. My eye suddenly drawn to the No.4 'most read' item on the 'Wa-Po' website: 'The five best lightsaber battles in 'Star Wars' history.'

'Star Wars'! Right, there, for all to see. Embedded within the opening crawl of unimpeachable narrative: unravelling the truth, revealing the lie of America's longest war. What?!?

Then another moment's pause and reflection and the slowly dawning realisation that, in the face of 18 years of such awful waste and calamity, of such needless death and mindless suffering, we all of us, at some point or another, need to find ourselves "in a galaxy far, far away." If only for a minute or two, let alone a full two-hour movie, desperate for a new hope, to help rekindle our sense of what's right and what's wrong; who are the heroes and who the villains; and what's truly worth fighting for and why.

The just released, 'The Rise of Skywalker', the ninth film that brings to close the first saga of 'Star Wars'. If only history; especially US history; was as neat and as contained and as inspiring. If only George Lucas of Lucas Films or Bob Iger of Disney had been running things, we might have had more to believe in and look forward to, in the coming decade, as opposed to yet more monstrous let downs and appalling lies, all, purportedly, carried out in the name of honour and truth and democracy.

If you ever want to feel what a disturbance in “The Force” truly feels like, just, take a deep breath and do a ‘Kessel Run’ into ‘The Afghanistan Papers’. As, mercifully, there’s no more papering over the facts of America’s longest war. The bright shining lie now fully revealed for all to see.

CODA: I was already well into writing this Opinion piece when I mentioned it in conversation with my editor at 7DNews, who informed that a couple of other 7DNews Opinion writers had also just submitted pieces about ‘The Afghanistan Papers’. She quickly followed up by sending copies of both pieces and very cogent and informative they are, too. And I can’t recommend them highly enough: the first by former British Ambassador, James Watt, posted December 16th; the second by Dr Amin Saikal, posted December 17th. [See 'Related News' at the end of this article]

Given that the thrust of my own Opinion on the matter was questioning the very oddness of ‘the dog not being heard to bark in the night’, so to speak; that so little attention had been made by major US media outlets about revelations of such weighty importance; I pressed on in the slim hope that another feather alighting on the scales might yet help tilt the balance towards ‘The Afghanistan Papers’ continuing to see the light of day.

**Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of 7Dnews.**