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No End in Sight for US War in Afghanistan

Jasom Ditz
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Starting with the 2001 invasion, the US war in Afghanistan is now 16 years in: as President Trump pointed out in last night's speech, the longest war in American history. Even President Trump thought this was excessively long, admitting that "my original instinct was to pull out."

But the US isn't pulling out. Instead, President Trump recommitted the US to a new round of escalation with no concrete end conditions, and formally disavowed a "time-based" approach. He added that he doesn't think the US should publicly announce the dates for ending their "military options."

The reality behind this rhetoric, though, is that once again any pretense of the Afghan War ending is out the window, and the seemingly endless war again has no end in sight. Trump has laid the ground for reckless new escalations, and in presenting 9/11 and the Iraq withdrawal as justification, is committed to staying.

This may point to the US again following down the path that President Obama took on Afghanistan, with large escalations early in his presidency accomplishing nothing, and a drawdown to give the impression the war was almost over.

Yet as with Obama, President Trump seems to be uncomfortable ending America's longest war on his watch. This commits the US to years of more conflict in Afghanistan, and the casualties that will undoubtedly follow. Assuming President Trump's end condition of a victory "worthy"

of the number of soldiers killed remains intact, the war is likely to get further and further away from an end.