Severe Humanitarian Disasters Caused by US Aggressive Wars against Foreign Countries

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The United States has always praised itself as "a city upon a hill" that is an example to others in the way it supports "natural human rights" and fulfills "natural responsibilities", and it has repeatedly waged foreign wars under the banner of "humanitarian intervention". During the past 240-plus years after it declared independence on July 4th, 1776, the United States was not involved in any war for merely less than 20 years. According to incomplete statistics, from the end of World War II in 1945 to 2001, among the 248 armed conflicts that occurred in 153 regions of the world, 201 were initiated by the United States, accounting for 81 percent of the total number. Most of the wars of aggression waged by the United States have been unilateralist actions, and some of these wars were even opposed by its own allies. These wars not only cost the belligerent parties a large number of military lives but also caused extremely serious civilian casualties and property damage, leading to horrific humanitarian disasters. The selfishness and hypocrisy of the United States have also been fully exposed through these foreign wars.

1. Major Aggressive Wars Waged by the United States after World War II

(1) The Korean War. The Korean War, which took place in the early 1950s, did not persist for a long time but it was extremely bloody, leading to more than three million civilian deaths and creating more than three million refugees. According to statistics from the DPRK, the war

destroyed about 8,700 factories, 5,000 schools, 1,000 hospitals, and 600,000 households, and more than two million children under the age of 18 were uprooted by the war. During this war, the ROK side lost 41.23 billion won, which was equivalent to 6.9 billion US dollars according to the official exchange rate at that time; and about 600,000 houses, 46.9 percent of railways, 1,656 highways, and 1,453 bridges in the ROK were destroyed. Worse still, the war led to the division of the DPRK and the ROK, causing a large number of family separations. Among the more than 130,000 Koreans registered in the Ministry of Unification in the ROK who have family members cut off by the war, 75,000 have passed away, forever losing the chance to meet their lost family members again. The website of the United States' The Diplomat magazine reported on June 25, 2020, that as of November 2019, the average age of these family separation victims in the ROK had reached 81, and 60 percent of the 133,370 victims registered since 1988 had passed away, and that most of the registered victims never succeeded in meeting their lost family members again.

(2) The Vietnam War. The Vietnam War which lasted from the 1950s to the 1970s is the longest and most brutal war since the end of World War II. The Vietnamese government estimated that the war killed approximately 1.1 million North Vietnamese soldiers and 300,000 South Vietnamese soldiers, and caused as many as two million civilian deaths. The government also pointed out that some of the deaths were caused by the US troops' planned massacres that were carried out in the name of "combating the Vietnamese Communist Party". During the war, the US forces dropped a large number of bombs in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, almost three times the total number of bombs dropped during World War II. It is estimated that as of today, there are at least 350,000 metric tons of

unexploded mines and bombs left by the US military in Vietnam alone, and these mines and bombs are still explosive. At the current rate, it will take 300 years to clean out these explosives. The website of The Huffington Post reported on December 3, 2012, that statistics from the Vietnamese government showed that since the end of the war in 1975, the explosive remnants of the war had killed more than 42,000 people. Apart from the above-mentioned explosives, the US forces dropped 20 million gallons (about 75.71 million liters) of defoliants in Vietnam during the war, directly causing more than 400,000 Vietnamese deaths. Another approximately two million Vietnamese who came into contact with this chemical got cancer and other diseases. This war that lasted for more than 10 years also caused more than three million refugees to flee and die in large numbers on the way across the ocean. Among the refugees that were surveyed, 92 percent were troubled by fatigue, and others suffered unexplained pregnancy losses and birth defects. According to the United States' Vietnam War statistics, defoliants destroyed about 20 percent of the jungles and 20 to 36 percent of the mangrove forests in Vietnam.

(3) The Gulf War. In 1991, the US-led coalition forces attacked Iraq, directly leading to about 2,500 to 3,500 civilian deaths and destroying approximately 9,000 civilian houses. The war-inflicted famine and damage to the local infrastructure and medical facilities caused about 111,000 civilian deaths, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that the war and the post-war sanctions on Iraq caused the death of about 500,000 of the country's children. The coalition forces targeted Iraq's infrastructure and wantonly destroyed most of its power stations (accounting for 92 percent of the country's total installed generating capacity), refineries (accounting for 80 percent of the country's production capacity), petrochemical complexes,

telecommunication centers (including 135 telephone networks), bridges (numbering more than 100), highways, railways, radio and television stations, cement plants, and factories producing aluminum, textiles, wires, and medical supplies. This war led to serious environmental pollution: about 60 million barrels of petroleum were dumped into the desert, polluting about 40 million metric tons of soil; about 24 million barrels of petroleum spilled out of oil wells, forming 246 oil lakes; and the smoke and dust generated by purposely ignited oil wells polluted 953 square kilometers of land. In addition, the US troops' depleted uranium (DU) weapons, which contain highly toxic and radioactive material, were also first used on the battlefield during this Gulf War against Iraq.

(4) The Kosovo War. In March 1999, NATO troops led by the United States blatantly set the UN Security Council aside and carried out a 78-day continuous bombing of Yugoslavia under the banner of "preventing humanitarian disasters", killing 2,000-plus innocent civilians, injuring more than 6,000, and uprooting nearly one million. During the war, more than two million Yugoslavians lost their sources of income, and about 1.5 million children could not go to school. NATO troops deliberately targeted the infrastructure of Yugoslavia in order to weaken the country's determination to resist. Economists of Serbia estimated that the total economic loss caused by the bombing was as much as 29.6 billion US dollars. Lots of bridges, roads, railways, and other buildings were destroyed during the bombing, affecting 25,000 households, 176 cultural relics, 69 schools, 19 hospitals, and 20 health centers. Apart from that, during this war, NATO troops used at least 31,000 DU bombs and shells, leading to a surge in cancer and leukemia cases in Yugoslavia and inflicting a long-term disastrous impact on the ecological environment of Yugoslavia and Europe.

(5) The Afghanistan War. In October 2001, the United States sent troops to Afghanistan. While combating al-Qaeda and the Taliban, it also caused a large number of unnecessary civilian casualties. Due to the lack of authoritative statistical data, there is no established opinion about the number of civilian casualties during the Afghanistan War, but it is generally agreed that since entering Afghanistan, the US troops caused the deaths of more than 30,000 civilians, injured more than 60,000 civilians, and created about 11 million refugees. After the US military announced its withdrawal in 2014, Afghanistan continued to be in turmoil. The website of The New York Times reported on July 30, 2019, that in the first half of 2019, there were 363 confirmed deaths due to the US bombs in Afghanistan, including 89 children. Scholars at Kabul University estimated that since its beginning, the Afghanistan War has caused about 250 casualties and the loss of 60 million US dollars per day.

(6) The Iraq War. In 2003, despite the general opposition of the international community, US troops still invaded Iraq on unfounded charges. It is hard to find precise statistics about the civilian casualties inflicted by the war, but the number is estimated to be around 200,000 to 250,000, including 16,000 civilian deaths directly caused by US forces. Apart from that, the occupying US forces have seriously violated international humanitarian principles and created multiple "prisoner abuse cases". After the US military announced its withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, local warfare and attacks in the country have continued. The US-led coalition forces have used a large number of DU bombs and shells, cluster bombs, and white phosphorus bombs in Iraq, and have not taken any measures to minimize the damage these bombs have inflicted upon civilians. According to the estimate of the United Nations, today in Iraq, there are still 25 million mines and other explosive remnants that need to

be removed. The United States has not yet withdrawn all its troops from Afghanistan or Iraq for now.

(7) The Syrian War. Since 2017, the United States has launched airstrikes on Syria under the pretext of "preventing the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government". From 2016 to 2019, the confirmed war-related civilian deaths amounted to 33,584 in Syria, and the number of Syrian civilians directly killed by the airstrikes reached 3,833, with half of them being women and children. The website of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) reported on November 9, 2018, that the so-called "most accurate air strike in history" launched by the United States on Raqqa killed 1,600 civilians. According to a survey conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP) in April 2020, about one-third of Syrians were faced with a food shortage crisis, and 87 percent of Syrians had no deposits in their accounts. Doctors of the World (Médecins du Monde/MdM) estimated that since the beginning of the Syrian War, about 15,000 Syrian doctors (about half of the country's total) had fled the country, 6.5 million Syrian people had run away from their homes, and about five million Syrian people had wandered homeless around the world.

Apart from being directly involved in wars, the United States has intervened directly or indirectly in other countries' affairs by supporting proxy wars, inciting anti-government insurgencies, carrying out assassinations, providing weapons and ammunition, and training anti-government armed forces, which have caused serious harm to the social stability and public security of the relevant countries. As such activities are great in number and most of them have not been made public, it is hard to collect specific data regarding them.

2. The Disastrous Consequences of Foreign Wars Launched by the

United States

Since the end of World War II, almost every US president has waged or intervened in foreign wars during their terms of office. The pretexts they used include: stopping the spread of communism, maintaining justice, stopping aggression, humanitarian intervention, combating terrorism, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), protecting the safety of overseas US citizens, etc. Among all these foreign wars, only one was waged as a counterattack in response to a direct terrorist attack on the United States; the others were waged in a situation where the vital interests of the United States were not directly affected. Unfortunately, even this singular "justifiable counterattack" was obviously an excessive display of defense. Under the banner of eliminating the threat of al-Qaeda, the US military wantonly expanded the scope of the attack in the anti-terrorism war in accordance with the principle "better to kill by mistake than to miss out by accident", resulting in a large number of civilian causalities in the war-affected areas, and despite using the relatively accurate drone strikes, the US military still did not succeed in reducing and mitigating the causalities of the innocent local people.

As for the procedures followed by the United States to start aggressive wars against foreign countries, some were "legitimate procedures" that the United States managed to obtain by manipulating the UN into authorizing them through the Security Council; more often, the United States just set the Security Council aside and neglected the opposition of other countries, and even the opposition of its own allies, when willfully and arbitrarily launching an attack on an independent country. Some US foreign wars were initiated without the approval of the US Congress, which has the sole power to declare war for the country.

US foreign wars have triggered various regional and international crises.

First of all, these wars have directly led to humanitarian disasters in the war-affected countries, such as personnel casualties, damage to facilities, production stagnation, and especially unnecessary civilian casualties. In the war-affected areas, people died in their homes, markets, and streets, they were killed by bombs, bullets, improvised explosive devices, and drones, and they lost their lives during airstrikes launched by US forces, raids launched by their government forces, terrorist and extremist massacres, and domestic riots. In November 2018, Brown University released a research study that showed that the number of civilian deaths during the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen were 43,074; 23,924; 184,382 to 207,156; 49,591; and 12,000 respectively, the number of journalists and media personnel who died at their posts during these wars, were 67; 8; 277; 75; and 31 respectively, and the number of humanitarian relief workers who were killed at their posts during these wars were 424; 97; 63; 185; and 38 respectively. Such casualties are often understated by the US government. The Intercept website reported on November 19, 2018, that the actual civilian deaths in Iraq were far higher than the number officially released by the US military.

Second, US foreign wars brought about a series of complex social problems, such as refugee waves, social unrest, ecological crises, psychological traumas, etc. Statistics show that each of the several recent US foreign wars created a larger number of refugees, such as the 11 million Afghan refugees, the 380,000 Pakistani refugees, the 3.25 million Iraqi refugees, and the 12.59 million Syrian refugees; these refugees have been forced to flee from their homes, of which 1.3 million Afghan

refugees have fled to Pakistan, 900,000 Afghan refugees arrived in Iran, 3.5 million Iraqi and Syrian refugees fled to Turkey, and one million Iraqi and Syrian refugees fled to Iran. In Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, the deaths and injuries caused by the lack of medical treatment, malnutrition, and environmental pollution have exceeded the casualties directly caused by the wars, with the former number being four times greater than the latter. The uranium content per kilogram of soil in Basra, Iraq, rose sharply from less than 70 becquerels before 1991 to 10,000 becquerels in 2009, and the number was as high as 36,205 becquerels in the areas polluted by war remnants. The website of the British newspaper The Guardian reported on August 22, 2016, that 30 percent of the babies born in Iraq in 2010 were born with some form of congenital anomaly, while this figure is around two to four percent under normal circumstances.

Third, US foreign wars have often produced spillover effects, causing harm to the countries that were not involved in the wars. For example, in the Vietnam War, the US military spread the fighting to neighboring countries such as Cambodia and Laos on the excuse of blocking the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" (a military supply route running from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia to South Vietnam), resulting in more than 500,000 unnecessary civilian casualties and leaving a large number of war remnants in those countries, which are still explosive. When attacking terrorists in the Afghanistan War, the US aircraft and drones often dropped bombs on neighboring Pakistani villages, and even on wedding cars and Pakistani border guard soldiers. In an airstrike on Yugoslavia, the US forces even targeted the Chinese embassy, leading to the deaths of three Chinese journalists and the injuries of a dozen embassy personnel.

Last but not least, even the United States itself has fallen victim to

the foreign wars it has started. According to statistics from the US Department of Veterans Affairs, there were 103,284 US soldiers who suffered physical injuries during the Korean War, and the number reached 153,303 for the Vietnam War. Between 2001 and 2005, about one-third of the 103,788 veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were diagnosed with mental or psychological illness, and 56 percent of those diagnosed had more than one disease. A study by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), which works exclusively for the United States Congress, pointed out that more than 6,000 veterans committed suicide every year from 2008 to 2016. The amount of economic compensation offered by the US military to the Korean War veterans reaches 2.8 billion US dollars per year, and the amount given to the Vietnam War veterans and their families is more than 22 billion US dollars per year. The cost of medical and disability care for the Afghanistan War veterans has exceeded 170 billion US dollars. Business Insider, a US business and technology news website, reported in December 2019 that the Afghanistan war has led to the deaths of more than 3,800 US contractors, and this number far exceeds the relevant statistical result released by the US government and even the US military deaths in Afghanistan.

3. The Major Cause of the Above-Mentioned Humanitarian Crises: The United States' Hegemonic Mentality

When reviewing the many aggressive wars launched by the United States, it can be seen that many of these military actions have led to humanitarian crises. In Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other countries where wars are still ongoing, accidental bombings and injuries still frequently occur, and refugees have nowhere to stay. The infrastructure of these countries is crippled, and their national production is stagnant. The United States launched these foreign wars under the pretext of

"humanitarian intervention" or "human rights overriding sovereignty", but why did these wars fought for humanitarian purposes turn into humanitarian disasters in the end?

In April 2011, the US-based magazine Foreign Policy summarized five reasons for the frequent foreign wars waged by the United States, such as the military advantages of the United States making it hard to resist the temptation to resort to force, and the checks and balances mechanism within the United States failing to play an effective role, while excluding any reason related to the values of the United States. "To safeguard human rights" was not a clear driving force for US foreign wars and that waging foreign wars was only a means to an end, although such an act did not exclude a sense of morality. The United States may feel an impulse to start a foreign war as long as it is considered necessary, believed to be in its own favor, and within its ability, while a sense of morality is not a sufficient or necessary condition to initiate such a war; and as for the terrible humanitarian disasters caused by these foreign wars, they will be borne by others instead of directly harming US citizens and preventing the United States from reaching its goals. Choosing to use force irrespective of the consequences reveals the hegemonic aspirations of the United States, which propel the United States to prioritize itself, demonstrate its "winner-take-all" mentality, and expose its unilateralist ideas of dominating the world and wantonly doing injustice to other countries.

US politicians claim that they respect "universal values", but do they agree that their own natural human rights are also natural for other people in the world?

The United States has formulated laws to ensure equality among all its ethnic groups within the country, but does it really believe that people

of other countries should enjoy the same rights? Or, does it think that it can act wantonly in foreign countries just because the people there do not have a vote in US elections?

The United States believes that terrorist attacks targeting civilians within its territory are despicable and punishable, then what makes it accept that the incidents created by the US military in other countries, which have led to a large number of civilian deaths and injuries, are acceptable and even "necessary"?

When they adopt the principle "better to kill by mistake than to miss out by accident", when they arbitrarily use radioactive weapons and destroy all vegetation with toxic reagents, and when they open fire before clearly identifying the targets, do the US forces still respect the "natural" human rights treasured by the values of the United States?

The civilians who were unable to flee their war-affected areas and were treated as terrorists and shot at randomly did not have any human rights. The children who have been disabled at birth by the chemical weapons of the US forces and will suffer for the rest of their lives do not have any human rights. The refugees who have been forced to flee their homes and become homeless in other countries because of the US foreign wars do not have any human rights.

In the final analysis, the mindset of solving disputes by taking unilateral military actions is questionable. Given the inherent antagonism between humanitarianism and hegemony, it is ridiculous to expect a hegemonic country to defend the human rights of other countries. International disputes shall be settled through equal consultations within the framework of the United Nations. Coordinated efforts shall be actualized by regulating and improving international mechanisms and by establishing a community with a shared future for mankind. Only by

discarding the hegemonic thinking, which is chiefly motivated by self-interest, can we prevent "humanitarian intervention" from becoming humanitarian disasters. Only in this way can we achieve mutual benefits and win-win results and can all the people across the globe truly enjoy natural human rights.

Appendix:

1. List of Civilian Casualties, Refugees, and Economic Losses Caused by Major Wars of Aggression Waged by the United States after the End of World War II

The Korean War: about 3 million civilian deaths and 3 million refugees;

The Vietnam War: about 2 million civilian deaths, 3 million refugees, and 3 million victims of defoliants;

The Airstrike on Libya: about 700 military and civilian deaths;

Invasion of Panama: about 302 civilian deaths and 3,000 civilian injuries;

The Armed Intervention in Somalia: about 200 civilian deaths and 300 civilian injuries;

The Gulf War: about 120,000 war-related civilian deaths and 2 million sanction-related civilian deaths, and economic losses amounting to 600 billion US dollars;

The Kosovo War: more than 2,000 deaths and 6,000 injuries, and economic losses amounting to 200 billion US dollars;

The Afghanistan War: more than 30,000 civilian deaths, 70,000 civilian injuries, and 11 million refugees;

The Iraq War: about 200,000–250,000 civilian deaths and 3.25 million refugees;

The Syrian War: more than 40,000 civilian deaths and 12.59 million refugees.

2. List of Wars of Aggression Waged by the United States and the US Interventions in Foreign Countries after the End of World

War II

1947–1949: intervening in the Greek civil war

1947–1970: intervening in Italy's elections and supporting anti-communism activities

1948: supporting the anti-government forces in Costa Rica's civil war

1949–1953: supporting anti-communism activities in Albania

1949: intervening in the government change in Syria

1950–1953: waging the Korean War

1952: intervening in the Egyptian Revolution of 1952

1953: supporting a coup in Iran to overthrow the then Iranian government

1954: supporting the change of the then Guatemalan government

1956–1957: plotting a coup in Syria

1957–1959: supporting a coup in Indonesia

1958: creating a crisis in Lebanon

1960–1961: supporting a coup in the Congo

1960: stopping the government of Laos from starting a reform

1961: supporting the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba

1961–1975: supporting civil war and opium trade in Laos

1961–1964: supporting anti-government activities in Brazil

1963: supporting civil strife in Iraq

1963: supporting riots in Ecuador

1963–1975: fighting the Vietnam War

1964: intervening in the Simba rebellion in the Congo

1965–1966: intervening in Dominica's civil war

1965–1967: supporting the Indonesian military government's massacre of communists

1966: supporting an insurgency in Ghana

1966–1969: creating conflicts in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which is a region on the Korean peninsula that demarcates North Korea from South Korea

1966–1967: supporting an insurgency in Bolivia

1967: intervening in the change of the Greek government

1967–1975: intervening in Cambodia's civil war

1970: intervening in Oman's domestic affairs

1970–1973: supporting a military coup in Chile

1970–1973: supporting a coup in Cambodia

1971: supporting a coup in Bolivia

1972–1975: offering assistance to anti-government forces in Iraq

1976: supporting a coup in Argentina

1976–1992: intervening in Angola's domestic affairs

1977–1988: supporting a coup in Pakistan

1979–1993: supporting anti-government forces in Cambodia

1979–1989: intervening in the war in Afghanistan

1980–1989: financing the anti-government Solidarity trade union in Poland

1980–1992: intervening in El Salvador's civil war

1981: confronting Libya in Gulf of Sidra

1981–1982: pushing the change of the then Chadian government

1982–1984: participating in a multilateral intervention in Lebanon

1982–1989: supporting anti-government forces in Nicaragua

1983: invading Grenada

1986: invading Gulf of Sidra, Libya

1986: bombing Libya

1988: shooting down an Iranian airliner

1988: sending troops to Honduras

1989: confronting Libya in Tobruk

1989: intervening in the Philippines' domestic affairs

1989–1990: invading Panama

1990–1991: waging the Gulf War

1991: intervening in Haiti's elections

1991–2003: leading the enforcement action to establish a no-fly zone in Iraq

1992–1995: intervening in Somalia's civil war for the first time

1992–1995: intervening in the Bosnian War

1994–1995: sending troops to Haiti

1996: supporting a coup in Iraq

1997: sending troops to Albania

1997: sending troops to Sierra Leone

1998–1999: waging the Kosovo War

1998: launching cruise missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan

1998–1999: sending troops to Kenya and Tanzania

2001–present: waging the Afghanistan War

2002: sending troops to Côte d'Ivoire

2003–2011: waging the Iraq War

2004–now: inciting wars between Pakistan and Afghanistan in their contiguous areas

2006–2007: supporting Fatah, a Palestinian political and military organization, in overthrowing the elected government of Hamas

2007–present: intervening in Somalia's civil war for the second time

2009: supporting a coup in Honduras

2011: supporting anti-government forces in Libya

2011–2017: carrying out military operations in Uganda

2014–present: leading the intervention actions in Iraq

2014–present: leading the intervention actions in Syria

2015–now: supporting Saudi Arabia's participation in Yemen's civil war

2019: supporting the change of the Venezuelan government