CGTN Think Tank
Online Survey

Global online survey on the withdrawal of
U.S. troops from Afghanistan

August 26，2021

Results of online survey

After the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, U.S. forces invaded Afghanistan in the name of anti-terrorism, on the grounds that the Taliban government refused to hand over Osama Bin Laden. Twenty years later, on the night of August 15, 2021, Taliban fighters took over the Afghan presidential palace and were seen reciting from the Quran at the desk of former President Ashraf Ghani, who had fled the country. The dramatic scene marked the victory of the Taliban and the end of the two-decade war on terrorism waged by the United States. Images of desperate Afghans trying to board a U.S. transport plane at Kabul airport later shocked the world. On August 19, the Taliban announced the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. It had taken only 11 days from the capture of the first Afghan provincial capital Zaranj to their takeover of Kabul.

CGTN Think Tank conducted a global survey in Chinese, English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Russian on social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Weibo between August 20 and 26. More than 140,000 responses including liking, sharing and commenting in this online poll. Among the questions, the one regarding the reason for the U.S. becoming warlike was the most answered, making up 48.35 percent of total responses to the survey.

Key points (among all global netizens who participated in the poll):

·   **84.6 percent of respondents said the U.S. war against terrorism in Afghanistan failed and English-speaking netizens made up the majority of respondents by far (77 percent on average) on all three questions in the survey, outnumbering participants in the other five languages. Over 90 percent of the comments made by Arabic-speaking netizens tend to believe that the US's anti-terrorism war in Afghanistan has failed.**

·   **81.9 percent of netizens surveyed said that U.S. wars since World War II have had a negative impact on the countries affected. The most frequently used words across all six languages were: destroy, ruin, turmoil, division, death, despair, pain and hatred.**

·   **"What do you think led to the U.S. becoming so warlike?" was the topic with the highest participation. 80.2% of respondents hold negative opinions on the reasons for the American belligerence.**

The United States launched the Afghanistan war in the name of counterterrorism in 2001 and made a hasty troop withdrawal in 2021.

Q1: Do you think the U.S. war against terrorism in Afghanistan has failed? Why?

A total of 84.6 percent of respondents said the U.S. war against terrorism in Afghanistan failed. Among Arabic-speaking netizens, the figure topped 90 percent. Besides, English-speaking netizens cast the highest number of votes, reaching 77%.

● % of English-speaking netizens responding
● % of netizens in other languages responding
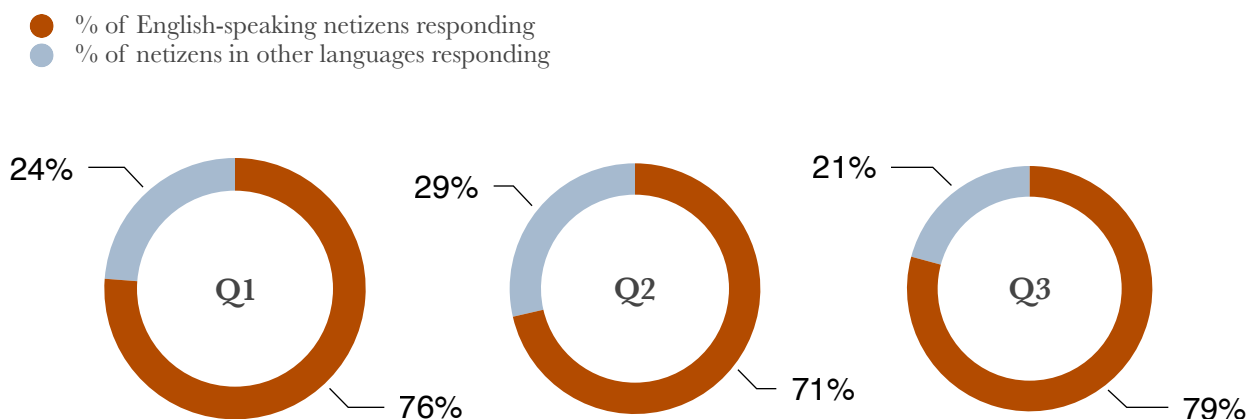
Q1 24% 76%
Q2 29% 71%
Q3 21% 79%

Figure 1: Proportion of responses from English-speaking netizens vs. other languages (Chinese, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian)
Note: Number of responses = number of likes + number of shares + number of comments

English-speaking netizens made up the majority of respondents by far (77 percent on average) on all three questions in the survey, outnumbering participants in the other five languages. As shown in Figure 1, they made up 76 percent of responses on Q1, 71 percent on Q2 and 79 percent on Q3.

Q1: Do you think the U.S. war against terrorism in Afghanistan has failed? Why?		Tending toward a failure	Tending toward 'not a failure'	Others
	cgtnofficial	80.15%	15.37%	4.48%
	cgtn en español	87.64%	8.61%	3.75%
	CGTN Français	75.00%	14.58%	10.42%
	cgtnarabic	92.31%	0.00%	7.69%
	CGTN на русском	75%	25.00%	0.00%

Table 2: Q1 survey data that can be displayed on YouTube
(English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian)

Analysis of YouTube data in Table 2: The number of comments generated by YouTube is ahead of Facebook and Twitter, ranking first. Among them, the attitude of Arabic-speaking netizens is the most distinctive, with over 90% of the comments tending to believe that "the United States has failed in the war on terrorism in Afghanistan."

Analysis: Netizens' comments in Chinese, English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Russian

Most frequently used words on Q1:

English: failure, Muslim, anti-terrorism, peace, Iraq, interests, innocence, killing

Spanish: end, support, organization, Al-Qaeda, Russia, children

French: Iraq, the West, problems, control, bad, interests

Arabic: excuses, Islam, destruction, freedom, lies

Russian: failure, escape, heroin, values, Russia

Chinese: hegemony, failure, oil, weapons, plunder, standards

The survey found that while respondents in the six languages predominantly agreed that "The United States has failed in the war on terrorism in Afghanistan," explanations for the failure varied widely. French-speaking participants compared the anti-terrorism war in Afghanistan with the wars in Iraq and Vietnam, saying the U.S. made a negative return on investment. "The war in Afghanistan ended in the same defeat as Vietnam, Iraq and Syria. For 20 years, America has supported the Taliban while pretending to fight them. Now, with over $2 trillion in losses, the United States is pulling out of Afghanistan in disgrace," said one comment.

Many English-speaking respondents said the U.S. war in Afghanistan was based on lies and disinformation, so it was doomed to failure. Many also noted that the withdrawal of U.S. troops could be a good thing, or the war in Afghanistan would have continued destroying lives. "I personally think this is an important lesson for the U.S. to avoid any future conflicts, and focus on its own affairs instead of interfering in other countries' affairs," one netizen wrote. Russian-speaking netizens commented that the U.S. failure in Afghanistan not only caused economic damage and hurt its allies, but also brought a drug economy to Afghanistan. They said the so-called "fight against terrorism" did not suppress terrorists, but was a cover for looting the once prosperous country and trafficking banned tools. Spanish-speaking netizens noted it was not only the Afghan people who suffered from the ravages of the war, but that countless American families were also broken. The world should understand that there are no winners, but all are losers. Many also expressed concern about the global spillover effects of the war, commenting that every time the United States launches a war, it reactivates its economy. But this comes at the expense of innocent and defenseless people, children, the elderly and women. An Arabic-speaking respondent shared the message that "the Taliban are not a product of traditional Islam, and Islam is not the cradle of terrorism". Chinese netizens generally believed that the United States started the war for its own interests, and ended it also for its own interests. "For the United States, there is no such thing as failure, just a shift in strategic focus because there is no need to invest war resources to areas that don't matter anymore!," said one respondent.

After World War II, the United States launched a series of wars, including the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Iraq War and the Afghanistan war.

Q2: What do you think these wars have brought to these countries?

Among respondents, 81.9 percent said that U.S. wars since World War II have had a negative impact on the countries affected. The most frequently used words to describe this, across all six languages, were: destruction, turmoil, division, death, despair, pain, and hatred.

Q2: What do you think U.S. wars have brought to these counties?		Negative impact	Positive impact	Others
	@ChinaGlobalTVNetwork	71.20%	12.78%	16.02%
	@cgtnenespanol	88.89%	5.55%	5.56%
	@CGTNFrancais	82.14%	10.71%	7.15%
	@cgtnarabic	88.00%	0.00%	12.00%
	@CGTN на русском	70.01%	11.84%%	18.15%

Table 3: Q2 survey data on Facebook (English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian)

Qualitative/quantitative analysis based on Facebook data in Table 3: An overwhelming majority of Spanish-speaking respondents (88.89 percent), Arabic-speaking respondents (88 percent) and French-speaking respondents (82.14 percent) found that U.S. wars have had a negative impact on the countries affected. Nearly twice as many Russian-speaking netizens responded to this question as to the other two questions.

Analysis: Netizens' comments in Chinese, English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Russian

Most frequently used words on Q2:

English: destruction, innocence, destruction, terrorists, death, people, hatred, failure
Spanish: death, pillage, human rights, intervention, violence
French: desolation, misery, suffering, propaganda, poverty
Arabic: wealth, theft, catastrophe, displacement
Russian: war, destruction, destroy, prosperity, death, chaos
Chinese : poverty, turbulence, crime rate, life, hatred, refugees

The survey analyzes the comments of six language groups: Chinese, English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Russian, and finds that respondents in six languages believe that "after WWII, the United States successively launched the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War. Such series of wars have brought violence, poverty, suffering and even destruction."

English-speaking netizens said the wars launched by the U.S. had brought destruction and heavy casualties among innocent civilians, and intensified hatred between other countries and the U.S. One

respondent commented, "The wars have brought pain, bloodshed and death to these countries, while increasing the number of America's enemies worldwide. Americans may walk with fear abroad." One netizen summed up the post-war devastation left by the U.S. military: "The Korean War: National Division. The Vietnam War: Agent Orange. The Iraq War: Oil Bandits. The Afghanistan War: Taliban 2.0." A Spanish-speaking participant stated that: "Aggression is for profit, but also for the use of weapons." "Chaos, misery, immigration, violence, epidemics, corruption, injustice, hatred, destruction, despair," a French-speaking netizen added. A widespread perception among Arabic-speaking netizens was that U.S. military intervention in many countries had brought instability, backwardness, famine and death. "Destruction and displacement of citizens of various countries has brought losses to the United States in all aspects, including lives, money, reputation and goodwill," said one comment. "It has brought damages to Iraq by killing many innocent people, destroying the country's infrastructure and plundering its natural resources in the name of democracy," another noted, while a third added: "It left behind destruction, the massacre and dismantling of infrastructure, followed by conflicts within these countries." One Russian-speaking netizen commented that "Vietnam is still full of minefields… There are many children with genetic defects from radioactive cluster bombs. Damages happen in Iraq, and so in Libya." Chinese netizens meanwhile argued that the U.S. initiated these wars without cause, and that these conflicts have adversely affected world peace and development. History will prove it to us, but the pain cannot be erased. Even to this day, these countries are plagued by poverty, political instability and high crime rates.

As to the causes of war, one Spanish-speaking netizen questioned: "War? Or is it the looting of mineral resources and the theft of assets, gold and art as they did in Iraq, Libya and Yemen?" Another stated that "American wars only bring disruption and division to the lives of local people because they only wage wars to benefit their own financial tycoons and also to impede freedom or prevent the rise of rival powers like China." One French-speaking netizen commented: "The real question is what these wars have brought to the United States? Military progress? Economic or geopolitical rule." Another noted: "In addition to tragedies, we have seen struggles to find stability by three or four generations of people. Unfortunately, these efforts are still far from enough to feed the people."

Former President Jimmy Carter said in 2019 that the U.S. was "the most warlike nation in the history of the world," noting that it had enjoyed only 16 years of peace in its 242-year history.

Q3: What do you think led to the U.S. becoming so "warlike"?

Of all the questions in the survey, this was the one that saw the most participation from netizens. 80.2 percent showing negative attitude towards belligerence.

Q3: What do you think led to the U.S. becoming so "warlike"?		Negative attitude toward belligerence	Positive attitude toward belligerence	Others
	cgtnofficial	92.77%	6.13%	1.10%
	cgtn en español	89.63%	7.93%	2.44%
	CGTN Français	72.41%	13.79%	13.80%
	cgtnarabic	71.43%	0.00%	28.57%
	CGTN на русском	92.59%	3.70%	3.71%

Table 4: Q3 survey data on YouTube (English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian)

Q3: What do you think led to the U.S. becoming so "warlike"?		Negative attitude toward belligerence	Positive attitude toward belligerence	Others
	@ChinaGlobalTVNetwork	73.38%	13.62%	13.00%
	@cgtnenespanol	87.23%	2.13%	10.64%
	@CGTNFrancais	78.48%	15.19%	6.33%
	@cgtnarabic	93.88%	0.00%	6.12%
	@CGTN на русском	69.23%	7.69%	23.08%

Table 5: Q3 survey data on Facebook (English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian)

Table 4 and 5 show that the question "What do you think led to the U.S. becoming so 'warlike'?" becomes the topic with the highest participation of netizens in this poll. Respectively, 89.63 percent and 87.23 percent of Spanish-speaking netizens comment negatively on the cause of belligerence on YouTube and Facebook.
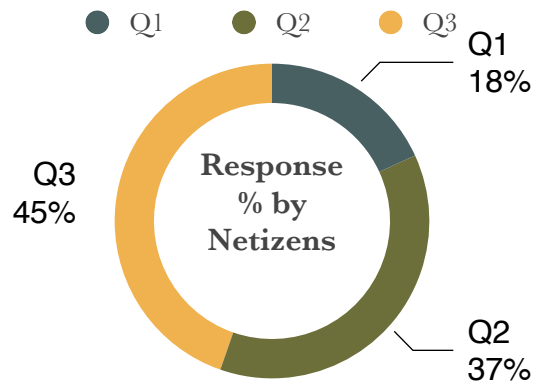
Figure 3: Proportion of Twitter responses to each question (English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian)

Figure 3 shows that the question "What do you think led to the U.S. becoming so 'warlike'?" was the most hotly discussed of the survey's three questions on Twitter, accounting for 45 percent of the total number of responses.

Analysis: Netizens' comments in Chinese, English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Russian

Most frequently used words on Q3:

English: belligerence, weapons, domination, Muslims, greed, superpowers
Spanish: money, land, Russia, oil, steal
French: conflict, economy, interests, manufacturing, arms
Arabic: control, economy, arms, trade, destruction
Russian: greed, imperialism, Rome, murder, Europe, destruction
Chinese: plunder, aid, Christianity, business, violence, lies

"Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter has said that the U.S. is 'the most warlike nation in the history of the world', and the country has enjoyed only 16 years of peace in its 242-year history. What do you think led to the U.S. becoming so 'warlike'?" Participants in six major languages make their analysis from the aspects of history, economy, military and foreign policy of the United States.

One English-speaking netizens stated: "I think the U.S. uses the term superpower not for the well-being of the world, especially poor countries, but for plundering money in Muslim countries… then (they) leave to attack other countries, in order to make their own country safe." Some French and Arabic-speaking netizens believe "arms" as one of the reasons for America's belligerence. The view that "the United States has become a country kidnapped by arms dealers" has been highly agreed by comments posted on different platforms and in different languages. One French-language netizen stated: "Their economic-military policies have pushed them onto this path, especially the arms trade. Therefore, it is necessary to use war to test every weapon they make, for selling weapons". An Arabic-speaking netizen said that the U.S. "wants to maintain its status as a superpower, so it has to use the natural resources of other countries to (conduct) arms trade." Several Spanish-speaking respondents commented that winning or losing the war was meaningless to the U.S., but that prolonging conflict was extremely important to sell oil, weapons, and liaise with terrorist organizations. This was the foundation for maintaining the U.S. sphere

of influence and market dominance. Chinese netizens mainly focused on three elements: "making profits out of war", "exporting American democracy", and "maintaining hegemony," noting that the U.S. usually goes to war because it sees considerable resources in a country. The U.S. almost always has a presence in countries with significant strategic assets such as oil, netizens noted. "The primary purpose of war is to conquer, obtain the desired authority and order, and to gain benefits and resources. The so-called maintenance of world peace is a complete lie," said one comment.

Other netizens pointed to the expansionist nature of capitalism and the need to maintain America's status as "the world's largest economy" as reasons for U.S. belligerence, noting that war is a way to successfully open and control the market. "The United States is a 'predatory capitalist state' where the plutocrats and their global elites lobby and control their government, and their profits come from war rather than peace," an English-speaking participant said. A Spanish netizen commented: "If there is no war, how can the United States rob other countries' resources to maintain American life." An Arabic-speaking respondent summed it up in one word: "Arrogance. They place an unrealistic value on themselves, concealing the internal failure of the American social structure to achieve equality and the greed of acquiring wealth at the expense of other countries".