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What is an AUMF? Briefly, AUMFs is a congressional authorization for a president's use of force. The wars in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq have all been authorized by AUMFs.

Just three days after 9/11, Congress granted President George W. Bush a sweeping authorization to use military force in Afghanistan. At the time, Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-13) was the sole member of Congress—House and Senate—to vote against it. "I knew even then there was no military solution in Afghanistan," she said in a recent interview with Aida Chavez for *The Nation* (Sept. 20-27, 2021, page 11). The 60-word resolution worried her, for it gave a president unilateral war power. The resolution "amounted to a blank check for any president to use force anywhere in the world."

Following her lonely vote in 2001, the Congresswoman received so many death threats, the Capitol Police forced her to get around-the-clock security protection, observes her interviewer. "Thousands of letters and phone calls flooded her office. Those who stopped short of calling her a traitor swore she would lose reelection."

Yet another, similar authorization, the 2002 Iraq AUMF, gave President Bush the go-ahead to invade Iraq—on the basis of a fiction, the "weapons of mass destruction" supposedly held by Saddam Hussein. During the 2006-8 troop "surge," almost all cadets graduating from West Point were sent into the bloodletting, write retired Major Danny Sjursen and retired Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson in "Repeal the AUMF Now" (*The Nation* (Sept. 20-27, 2021, page 4). This AUMF "allowed four presidents to utilize an earlier and even more ambitious post-9/11 authorization to wage a 'global war on terror' with no limits in time and space," write the authors. The 9/11 authorization, which remains in force, justified US support for the Saudi terror war on Yemen. Even with American help, the Saudis have lost that conflict, "while thousands of civilians in Yemen have died of cholera and starvation, the result of a cruel naval blockade choking off medicine and food." The authors note that in April 2019 Congress invoked the War Power Act to halt US support for the horror, but "President Trump vetoed the legislation and a cowardly Congress failed to override him." Although President Biden announced an end to American support of Saudi "offensive operations" in Yemen, it came with a caveat: continued support of Saudi "territorial integrity." Since then, the authors note, President Biden's unilateral bombing of Iraqi militias inside Syria in February 2021 and of Iraq and Syria in June, illustrates how useful an AUMF is to accommodate the whims of presidents. "If presidents possess indefinite blank checks, they're almost certain to use them," putting American troops in harm's way. "We hope Congress passes, and Biden signs, an AUMF repeal soon," the authors conclude.

What has the meddling brought us? "Six wars, millions killed, trillions wasted, and a plague of suffering inflicted on the Muslims world, accelerating a tidal wave of refugees that has created panic in the European Union," writes Tarig Ali under a line from a poem, "The Foreign Master's Rage" (*The Nation*, Sept. 20-27, 2021, pp. 14-17). Among other things he points out that American rage was not directed at the actual perpetrators—the Saudi and Egyptian governments from whose citizens emerged the 9/11 pilots; instead, we directed a war of revenge against the Afghan people who sheltered Al Qaeda—even though our government had befriended the group when it was fighting the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Islamophobia,

adds Ali, which has been promoted by politicians of every stripe in the West, is now embedded in Western Culture.

On February 15, 2003, harboring few illusions about their leaders, some 14 million people marched on all seven continents against the impending war in Iraq, a country already crippled by sanctions. The sanctions, imposed in 1990, just before Bush I's Gulf War and remained until Bush II's invasion, led to as many as half a million people, many of them children, and constitutes "a war crime on their own," writes Ali (page 16). The largest gatherings were in Rome (2.5 million), Madrid (1.5 million), and London (1.5 million), while hundreds of thousands marched in New York and Los Angeles, along with huge assemblies in most state capitals.

The largest gathering for peace in global history was ignored by Bush, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, and their cronies. Iraq was pulverized and its leader subjected to a judicial lynching. Torture by US soldiers (both men and women) was widespread, and triumphal rape pictures were bandied about. . . . At least half a million Iraqis died in the war. Baghdad's museums were looted, and the social infrastructure of the country was devastated by bombing raids. These were war crimes, but they were "our" crimes, and so they were ignored. . . . In the War on Terror, it's always open season: shoot to kill, no trials necessary, and indefinite imprisonment (16).

Torture of civilians and triumphal rape photos. So much for "Operation Enduring Freedom."

Libya's six months of US and NATO bombing campaigns, which began in March 2011, turned into yet another war of follies. Brutal though Moamar Gadhafi's regime was, scant evidence existed that the bombardments prevented genocide, or another Rwanda, or, as President Obama put it, "a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world." The dictator was captured, tortured, and mob-lynched while an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 people perished. The state collapsed into civil war, with post-Gadhafi Libya taken over "by a loose coalition of Islamic militias, including those linked to Al Qaeda." Black African were expelled and Mali's capital, Timbuktu, and much of the Sahel were taken over while more terrorist attacks occurred in London, Pristina, Mumbai, and Islamabad. "While the US military and its allies bombed and droned their way across foreign lands, their governments were busy waging war on civil liberties on domestic soil." (For an account on just how severely our government has curtailed civil liberties, I recommend Radley Balko's 2013 "Rise of the Warrior Cop.")

For the past twenty years, Congresswoman Lee has brought bills before the House to repeal that AUMF. Her 2021 bill, H.R. 256, has gained traction, with more than 125 bi-partisan co-sponsors. Meanwhile in the Senate, a resolution from Senators Tim Kaine (VA) and Todd Young (IN), would repeal both the 2002 Iraq AUMF and the 1991 Gulf War AUMF. That resolution currently has 13 bipartisan co-sponsors. Congress needs to act on repeal now, not put it off yet again.