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10 Reasons Why Americans Opposed, and Averted, a US War on Syria

The Crisis Isn't Over Yet

By: JANET WEIL

9/18/2013

As I took part in rallies, marches, vigils, conference calls, personal conversations and meetings in the San Francisco Bay Area during the recent crisis over Syria, these are the reasons I heard that Americans opposed even a “limited” US strike on that country:

1 - **It won't do any good.** The insanity of killing people with cruise missiles and other conventional weapons to “send a message” that killing people with poison gas is WRONG, was repeated over and over, to good effect.

2 - **We're supporting Al-Qaeda now, really?!** I heard this at the August 4 Restore the 4th rally in San Francisco as this crisis started to build. I have the sense that this was mostly a libertarian and right-wing perspective, though Dennis Kucinich came down hard on this as well.

3 - **Don't get involved in someone else's civil war.** People expressed overall wariness not only about Al-Nusra and/or Al-Qaeda in Syria but also unease about the violent and divided Syrian “rebels.” Sometimes an ugly “let the bastards kill each other” or “they're not worth us getting involved” message was a barely hidden subtext to this oppositional messaging.

4 – **Iraq. The US didn't help that country.** Yeah, no kidding. For millions in this country who believed the propaganda in 2002-2003, the lessons from the horror of the Iraq War are finally sinking in. Many people saw a US “strike” as the beginning of Iraq II, and they weren't having it.

5 - **We're not going to war for Obama.** Republicans and Libertarians were the first and some of the strongest opposition; see Bruce Gagnon's analysis: <http://space4peace.blogspot.com/2013/09/many-to-thank.html> Some of this opposition was based in a racist desire to thwart our first “black” (really, biracial) president regardless of the issue, but some was principled opposition based on a lack of trust and respect for Obama's policies overall, including his “dirty” drone strikes and special operations in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. <http://dirtywars.org/the-book>

6 - **It costs too much, and we need the money at home.** The Bring Our War \$\$ Home <http://www.codepink.org/section.php?id=429> messaging has been circulating since 2009, and many people across the political spectrum picked up on it. Also sequester cuts happening simultaneously with this latest propaganda push, and the weak economy, added to the force of “we can't afford it.”

7 - **Our military has been stretched and overdeployed for too long.** *Active duty* troops photographed themselves opposing another war – an unusual and brave move link. People didn't believe Kerry's/Obama's reassurances about how limited a US (air) war on Syria would be.

8 – **Afghanistan.** The US is still engaged in a “hot” war, one that is still sending young Americans home in coffins or wheelchairs. <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/us-military-deaths-afghanistan-2135-20281097?.tsrc=tmobustoday> Even if the mainstream media can't be bothered to cover that war, Americans, especially veterans and military families haven't forgotten.

9 - **Libya.** Americans are (dimly) aware that all is not right in Libya and there have been many unintended, negative consequences from the US/NATO air war there.

10 - **The UK Parliament voted NO.** Last but certainly not least. It's one thing to say, write, chant “Say no to war” — it's quite another, and more mobilizing, thing for our country's closest ally to do so in a public vote of their legislature, pushed by their citizens. The vote being close didn't even matter – it was an historic NO, and a pivotal moment in this crisis – the push to “take it to Congress” really took off after this vote.

Final thoughts: This crisis isn't over, and the US warships, jets and other machinery of destruction are still hanging fire in the eastern Mediterranean, at vast taxpayer expense. Going forward, we in peace/antiwar organizations, from whatever political perspectives, need to amplify these “talking points of the people” and stay ready to take action again.

There isn't a single “movement” against war, but an informal, multifocal opposition from across the political spectrum. “Yelling at empty buildings” aka the huge marches of the past especially in DC, may be a tactic that's outlived its usefulness. Americans live on our phones these days,

and we found ourselves ready to use them to call Congress. The timing of this crisis was helpful – we were able to show up at representatives’ town halls during the August recess and speak our minds in person. For now, that was enough to avert a war. More may well be needed later in the year, as the military-industrial-media complex hasn’t gone away. But for now, let’s reflect on a rare, and much-needed victory, staying humble and nimble for the challenges ahead.