

# Failed Anti-War Rallies and America's Wars: Why I Am Not Joining This Weekend March in Washington (or Anywhere Else)

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*On February 15, 2003, when millions reportedly filled the streets of U.S. cities to oppose the invasion of Iraq, I was in Mosul. Yes, the Mosul Iraqi forces are poised to retake, the Iraqi city adjacent to Nineveh, the ancient site trashed by ISIL.*

For 12 years, from 1990 to 2002, it was evident that the U.S. and its chief allies, England and Israel, were bent on wholly destroying Iraq. Millions died (lives lost before 2003 are not figured into 'Iraq body count'); millions more were stricken by one disease or another, fell into poverty, or fled. That war was carried out under the auspices of our global peace agency, the United Nations, in a multi-pronged U.S.-designed and policed blockade. So successful was that embargo, so intimidated or distracted was the public, that only a handful of individuals, mainly Europeans, dared to enter Iraq to document that onslaught, the resulting 'humanitarian' disaster, and the collapse of a remarkable modern society and an ancient civilization.

<http://johnpilger.com/videos/paying-the-price-killing-the-children-of-iraq>

By 1998, after eight brutal years of punishment and deprivation, unexpectedly and wondrously, Iraq began to reverse its downward trajectory. And, when the enemy (U.S.A./U.K./Israel) saw its embargo was collapsing, they raised the WMD scare and activated their military option. Seeing their government preparing for a massive assault, the American public awoke in panic, afraid not for Iraqis but for their own sons and brothers.

Hordes unmoved by 12 years of Iraqi suffering and deaths suddenly erupted with anti-war fervor: "No blood for oil", "Not in our name", "We are the greater truth". The largest rally in history would be remembered as "an incredible moment"—800 cities. Today liberals of all stripes boast of their anti-war devotions, their respect for Iraqi civilization, their opposition to violence. They all loved peace; they loved Iraqi people. (Later they would claim, "while we couldn't prevent war, we proved it's clear illegality".)

It was sobering to be inside Iraq that February 15<sup>th</sup> in 2003. Together with my friends in Mosul I watched news of the purported millions rallying across the world on Iraq's behalf. But no one inside Iraq was impressed. The protests had nothing to do with Iraqis. Where had these peace devotees been for the last decade? Those rallies were, we felt, disingenuous—just a panic attack by a naïve people who wanted to assure themselves that

they are kind, moral, knowing.

Within Iraq we felt a confused sadness, and surrender. No one knew from where the enemy would descend. Their decimated forces could not defend Iraq's borders. There was nowhere to run, to hide. To whom could they plead for intervention? People called their families- to gather loved ones near. Everyone prayed silently. Millions sat in a daze, waiting. Hearing about that impulsive interest in peace around the globe did not stir us, not at all. It was late, and childish.

How does that history bear on today's rallies across USA? Like the righteous anti-war upsurge of 2003, this weekend's march is a demonstration of liberal America's panic—a belated attempt to redress a wrong, a mistake, a realization of having been coddled and misled, or misinformed. Those retreating to the street to shout “Not my president” are secretly admitting they goofed. It's not Trump's or Clinton's missteps motivating them. It's their own errors: their misunderstanding of how democracy works.

Week after week these 'good guys' used their (first amendment) freedom of speech repeating daily gossip generated over Facebook and the media, a deluge of funny, encouraging, or bizarre utterances by Sanders, Clinton, Carson or Cruz, and especially by Trump, while ignoring the senate races, state legislative elections, their own district politicians and neighbors with different ideas. Like-minded friends huddled in social networks agreeing that they knew best, that their single news source offered the truth.

There were so many clever quotes to relay, so many alarming things said, so much money spent, such good satire. Overwhelmed, liberals panicked and sought shelter with the familiar. Even those who foreswore network news couldn't resist indulging crazy quotes and caricatures. When Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> arrived, perhaps many didn't bother voting, as if only presidential candidates were on the ballot.

Some knew Clinton would win from their holy book, the New York Times. After all, Clinton was endorsed by a Nobel laureate, Michael Moore, and Noam Chomsky. And millions of feminists were determined that America must finally catch up to the rest of the world with its own woman leader.

We know what happened. And we see today, similar to Feb. 15, 2003 preceding the invasion of Iraq, these good guys find that they have been misled, misinformed, misguided, overconfident, and a minority—just plain out of touch. Some actually wept. When conceding defeat, Clinton addressed her distraught supporters as if they were children.

About the failed 2003 anti-war rally, one unapologetic organizer noted:

“While we did not prevent the Iraq war, the protests proved its clear illegality....” This weekend's marches are expressing essentially the same message. As John Whitehead writes in his Rutherford Institute 01/19/2017 newsletter: “If those marches and protests are merely outpourings of discontent ... with no solid plan of action or follow-through, then what's the point?”

Some Republican TV presenters' advice to despondent liberals is: “You lost; get over it; suck it up”.

The only value of the marches and protests is to energize, rebuild networks, and identify new leaders. Meanwhile a rush of guidebooks, some humorous, for living in the new America have been rushed through the press. Among them is Gene Stone's Trump Survival Guide. In a radio interview, Stone (<http://wamc.org/post/trump-survival-guide>) offers some solid counsel, invoking successful organizing strategies of the opposition. I would also advise liberals to dump their New York Times subscription (although I'm dismayed to learn NYT readership rose after Nov 8<sup>th</sup>);

The major issue for liberals is: can you learn to cross the isle? America is smitten with a polarized two party system. And liberals thus far seem disinterested in either cleaning up the Democratic Party or building a new movement independent of it.

Just don't take too long to figure out the way forward. END

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