

Anti-war Protests

Can rallies make a difference?

Context **Hundred of thousands of people gathered for a huge protest against a possible US-led war in Iraq in the Australian city of Sydney.** It is the latest in a series of an estimated 600 peace rallies around the world this weekend which around eight million people so far have attended. Two of the largest demonstrations were held in New York and London.

I applaud both the spirit of the protestors and the (mostly) non-violent nature of the demonstrations. However I still feel their actions and sentiments are misguided. Of course the public should have the right and means to air their views on all issues, and governments should always be sensitive to this. But we have elected officials for a reason, namely to make tough decisions that they believe are for the greater good, regardless of how unpopular this may make them. Majority public opinion seems opposed to war with Iraq regardless of the circumstances, much as it was in 1930's Europe in the face of Nazi Germany's aggression. Had public opinion prevailed then, people today would not have the right to protest about anything.

Paul Finn, England

People are saying that war should only be the last resort. But what other options are there? Peace is not a choice - we can't ignore what's happening in Iraq and pretend that we've achieved peace. At school they always taught us that the one that stands by is as bad as the bully. A choice has to be made - leave Saddam in power, or fight him. No one wants war, but the consequences of not going to war could be far worse.

Jenni, Sheffield, England

Public protest is necessary in order to uphold the values of democracy. Since we (the public) can't vote on whether or not our country should engage in war, it is essential that our opinions be heard. I do believe the recent antiwar protests have had an impact on whatever the final outcome will be. World leaders watch the news too, when they see their own people protesting in large masses, there is bound to be some impact on their personal opinion and hence on their decisions. The more they see these protests, the more they will question their own ideas.

Allen, Boulder, USA

I don't think it's fair to blame the Japanese Government for their lack of opposition to the war when most Japanese people have no interest in it (although many are understandably preoccupied with the North Korean situation). I was at the demonstration in Tokyo and it was saddening to see that while a million can turn out on the streets of London, only around 5,000 protested in Japan, and about half of them weren't even Japanese! It's the British Government that really deserves contempt if it ignores its citizens and joins the war, but it would be nice if more Japanese people could show some interest in global problems like this.

Dan, Japan

I repeat, the anti-war protestors are not supporting Saddam. They are opposing the double standards of the Western governments in propping up evil dictators when it suits them and deposing them when it doesn't, killing thousands of innocents in the process. All the nations that the US has bases in, in the Middle East are despotic regimes. Let the US overthrow them first to prove its sacred intentions.

Prasad Metta, India

The world is acting like a circus. Government leaders are hurling insults at each other like school children. I am sure that Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are laughing their heads off. Their "war" has already begun. It is being waged within the hearts and minds of the citizens of the world, tearing nations apart.

Military might is no longer the gauge of strength because the battlefield is abstract. We must unite in protest so that Bush and Blair will see with their eyes what their hearts cannot feel. Nature should be allowed to take its course. The people of Iraq will get rid of Hussein when they are good and ready. No other government has the right to dictate what is best for another nation because they are making dictators of themselves by doing so.

Abigail Villaraza, Manila, Philippines

Yes, I do believe we should be all in the streets if we want to make a difference. Governments are representatives of the people, therefore they should be acting according to people's opinions and not against them. I was in the street on Saturday, not many of us here, unfortunately, but still, we also showed that we care and that we disagree with the Romanian government's position in the Iraqi issue.

Nadia, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

I joined the peace march because I am convinced that to proceed the way that the US president, Blair and Howard seem to want to go is hypocritical, would set an extremely dangerous precedent, and is a political stunt to hide their hidden agendas of exploiting poor nations for economic gain. Why aren't the US, UK, and Australia invading Israel? Why aren't they invading North Korea? What is really going on behind closed doors?

Alexander Dudley, Sydney, Australia

I have been spreading demonstration flyers for a month now and yes, of course, I'm going to the anti-war demonstration here in Helsinki, Finland. I'm coming with many friends some of whom are coming all the way from Tampere (central Finland). I feel that going is my obligation and responsibility as a citizen of Europe and the world.

Valtteri Halme, Finland

I will not be marching against this war, even though I marched in the USA against the Vietnam War thirty years ago. I will not be marching because I believe that the credible threat of force is the only thing that might persuade Iraq to back down, and that such marches make it hard for politicians in the West to take a strong stand and send a clear message. Without a credible threat of force, war becomes inevitable.

Eric Lee, UK

I see someone has used the term "war on Hussein" in their comment. You should understand that a war cannot be waged against a single person. An attack on Iraq would result in the deaths of many thousands of innocent civilian people. The motive for attacking is not one of 'freeing the Iraqi people' - if that was the case, then when are we going to free the people of Tibet? I will march, because I want to make myself heard as best I can, the government is not interested in representing my views, so I shall represent myself on this occasion. Unfortunately I do not have a seat in parliament, my letters and petitions have been ignored... taking to the street is my last option.

Ben Whitham, UK

I support demonstrations but I am not sure they will avert anything. Democracy that we claim to support and practice seems to be good only for our leaders' speeches. We are finding out that we, the USA, are an undemocratic nation. If we, the people counted, there would not be a war at all because the majority says no to war.

Sue McDowell, USA

In the 1930s public opinion also opposed "war under any circumstances" with Nazi Germany until it was forced upon them. Such Chamberlainesque comments, I fear, prove that we indeed have learnt nothing from history. Once again, the world has to look to the Churchillian leaders of America and Britain - as leaders of the free world - to ensure the liberties we are so clearly taking for granted, and help bring those freedoms to the Iraqi people and hopefully across the vastly tyrannical Middle East region.

Yoav Bezael, Israel

Under no circumstances will I accompany rank appeasers. This war is I am afraid a necessary evil. It is time these protestors had the same realisation.

Derek Johnson, United Kingdom

If presidents Wilson and Roosevelt had listened to protesters and pacifists United State would have never entered WWI and WWII. After all, those weren't OUR wars!

Mirek Kondracki, USA

I'm going to any protests here in NYC for the same reason most people go to these things; to meet hot chicks.

Igor Cretu, USA!