

# The Quick Slide From Hope to Despair As War Returns, If It Ever Went Away

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Terrorism, US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

*On the Sunday, the world came together to demand climate justice with massive marches of solidarity and positivity.*

On the Monday, the UN prepared for its global climate summit with more than 100 Heads of State, some there as ornaments, others as advocates for changes in environmental conditions that threaten the survival of many nations and peoples.

On the Monday afternoon, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called climate change Washington's number #1 priority.

On the Monday night, I was in New York with the visiting President of South Africa marking twenty years of freedom in that country after the overthrow of apartheid. I saw no American officials present.

Back home, later that evening, the news was out: the United States was then heavily bombing Syria for the first time with the support of a mélange of Arab dictators and theocracies, using planes we sold them, to make some point about western commitment to freedom.

The Jihadists are already vowing retribution, according to SITE, the pro-Israeli "intelligence" propaganda website that is relaying all of their videos, no doubt to frighten us more.

Washington claims support from 40 nations. The Christian Science Monitor reports, "Americans can be forgiven if this reminds them of the "coalition of the willing" President George W. Bush claimed to have when the US invaded and occupied Iraq 11 years ago."

Adds political scientist Michael Brenner: "... the so-called "coalition of the willing" will not amount to much except for its contribution of money to anti-IS forces of various hues, and the aforementioned American airstrikes. So long as no regional states are prepared to send in competent troops, their military role will be marginal at best. In regard to drying up IS' supply of recruits from places beyond Syria and Iraq, the prospects are not promising."

How fast we've moved from peace to war, from hope to despair.

Of course, like so many reports about US military action, there was no mention of civilian casualties or other "collateral damage." It was assumed by a press that marches in lockstep with the Pentagon that the strikes were surgical, hit their targets and damaged an enemy that earlier in the week released a video almost inviting such a strike, perhaps to show how bad and powerful they claimed to be.

On the Tuesday, The New York Times, to its credit, called the attacks “risky” and reported that “after six weeks of western air support in Iraq, Iraqi forces have barely budged Islamic State fighters.”

The government refused to estimate what all this would cost. And of course, there was this political calculation driving the turn to war, as revealed by Politico:

“With his new offensive against Islamic State terrorists in Syria, Barack Obama has a chance to revive his presidency, but the only way he can do that is to become a brand-new president, one who will be almost unrecognizable to his supporters. Obama must go from being the president who was elected to end wars—his most treasured self-image—to the president who finally leads one effectively. And he must now do it in two countries where for most of his presidency he has most resisted getting more deeply involved—Iraq and Syria.”

As the bombs fell, another video began airing, lacking the overproduction Hollywood glitz for which ISIS has become known, but, instead, offered up a simple stripped down “lecture” by British hostage John Cantlie who says he is doing it because his government abandoned him and he has no choice.

While it surely is a propaganda effort, Cantlie, makes a point that most of our media has not had the guts to make, saying, quite sensibly and in an understated way, “In this program, we’ll see how the Western Governments are hastily marching towards all-out war in Iraq and Syria without paying any heed to the lessons of the recent past.”

And then, the V-word was introduced for the first time: “Not since Vietnam have we witnessed such a potential mess in the making.”

Interestingly, a day earlier, I had an email from the Vietnamese-American filmmaker, Tiana, who is finishing a film on Vietnam’s victorious General Giap who held off the foreign invaders and turned the tide against them.

Tiana was asking for my advice on how to present the enormous scale of the body count after the first invasion. There were 500,000 deaths among the French forces, including civilians and the African people they brought to fight for them in a defense of colonialism that the US supported first with money, then, threats of nuclear war and, finally, with over 60,000 American lives.

Remember that the U.S. escalation in Vietnam came during the Presidency of a “liberal” Democrat, Lyndon Johnson, just as this war (or show of war) is being launched by Nobel Peace Prize Winner Barack Obama. (Don’t forget that Henry Kissinger won the Nobel for his role as a peacemaker in that carnage, while his counterpart, the Vietnamese negotiator Le Duc Tho, rejected and denounced the Prize.)

There are analysts who believe that by reacting the way Washington is to ISIS, the U.S. is actually playing into their script and building their prestige.

Ultimately, this is a propaganda war, not just a military conflict. It is to influence the direction of the Arab World. We have already seen interviews with ordinary people in Iraq who say that government backed troops there have been more brutal to them than ISIS.

They don't feel like they have many good options.

Of course, most Americans stopped paying attention to Iraqi realities years ago, and never realized that we lost the war.

Today, as crazy as this must sound to us, ISIS (IS) is posing as liberators, even as they march into the past. For many ordinary Sunni Arabs who have been humiliated by a succession of leaders we imposed, that "heroic" past, may sound better than a worsening present.

In some ways, the US bombardment will conjure up bad memories for Iraqis and do what bombing always does: stiffen resistance.

The Commander in Chief seems to be glowing as he and his "team" reach into an overused playbook, says Michael Brenner.

"The most likely course will be for Washington to do what it's accustomed to doing. That means leaning heavily toward employing military assets which are available in abundance. That carries with it a heavy liability. Every bomb dropped risks radicalizing those on the receiving end who may be innocent or relatives of combatants. When bullets fired by troops on the ground are added to the bombs, the negative effect is magnified. Moreover, the very knowledge that the United States is again killing Muslims may register in the same way. After a decade of killing (many Sunni) Muslims with no good cause, the claim the United States is now killing them with cause is less than wholly persuasive,"

They may be talking climate change at the UN, but the media world is showing pictures of bombs bursting in air, and changing the global conversation about a planet in peril that the world has been waiting for.

We will soon be back in the flag-saluting abyss of paranoia, with predictable results, once the "terries," as they are known, strike their first blow here. So far, only a deranged vet has penetrated the White House perimeter, but who knows what's next?

Actions produce reactions. Always have; always will. And, yes, sad to report, more Americans will die as things get worse, as they surely will. We have seen this movie before.

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