

A NEW MOMENTUM FOR PEACE : NO SYRIA INTERVENITON –
WHAT NEXT?

No Syria Intervention – How Future Wars can be Stopped

End Hypocrisy and Double Standards to Build a Peaceful World

Vijay Mehta

vijay@vmpeace.org

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1. Not to Go to War – Historic UK Parliament Decision: How and Why It Happened?

In August 2013 MP's in UK Parliament voted against engagement in military action against Syria. This was extraordinary and I can't find no similar episode in British History. It was indeed a landmark decision. Can this turning point in history be made a permanent future in our world. I hope we can as we may be at the tipping point of history.

It brings home the point that the myth of going to wars has never been a solution and is never effective. Official lies are no longer effective and people are becoming tired of wars especially after the illegal war on Iraq. Public opinion polls in US, France and Britain in August and December 2013 showed huge opposition for intervention in Syria.

It was amazing that the US President Barack Obama did not use the 1973 War Powers Act as constitutionally he did not need a congress approval to go to war in Syria. The other influence was the refusal of UN and the Arab League to back the Syrian war. The lobbying of the anti-war movement in US and the policies of isolationists had its affect to stop military engagement although the French were ready and raring to go to war.

It has to be said that the US President and UK Prime Minister are not elected monarchs with a blank cheque. In any case, unilateral use of major force is improper, illegal and amounts to dictatorship. It was good to see the return of democratic decision making and the will of the people respected for once.

2. Geopolitical Situation and Danger of Future Conflicts

Recent events in Ukraine have been so much in the news that it is easy to lose sight of other trouble spots that are equally important. Today, we have many threats and flashpoints around the world including US pivot to Asia with the obvious possibility of a armed conflict with China, return of the Cold War, East West rivalries in Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe and drone wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan.

The most worrying situation is in Ukraine where US government funded coup has gone drastically wrong and has led to Russia's interference to protect its own interest in Crimea and Eastern Europe although it is a violation of the rights of a sovereign country. The neo conservative in the US have been wanting a confrontation with

Russia for a long time. They want to trim the powers of Russia, China and Iran to gain hegemony and control. A military escalation and tensions in Ukraine can lead to a major war between two powerful countries, US and Russia, possessing nuclear weapons which will result in huge destruction with no winners.

Afghanistan/Pakistan: In the continuing tension between the two countries, withdrawal of NATO/ISAF forces this year will increase Taleban threat to both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the former, negotiations/elections are likely to involve Taleban in a new political settlement; Pakistan is more threatened, because of increasing Taleban presence and terrorism in Pakistan cities, US drone strikes etc. “Afghanistan-Pakistan is an increasing flashpoint”

Israel/Palestine: This long-standing dispute has been pushed to sidelines due to preoccupation with ‘Arab Spring/Winter’, Egypt crisis, Syrian Civil War; and US re-focusing on domestic agenda. Can any meaningful ‘peaceful process’ be revived? This is an unresolved flashpoint. There is also a threat of a military strike by Israel on Iran if ongoing negotiations of manufactured crisis of nuclear weapons issue do not lead to anywhere and it could risk a catastrophic regional war.

NATO/EU: NATO/EU expansionism seeking to get Georgia and Ukraine into the Western bloc is worrying. US wants to expand its military reach, EU its economic reach. Russia wants to keep control of its ‘near abroad’ regions historically within Russia. Caucasus is ongoing flashpoint with international Islamist Jihadism that is in Chechnya and Dagestan as a very dangerous threat.

3. Reform of the International System to Contain Future Wars

The peace movement have to figure out how to contain these threats and avoid future interventions taking place.

I will outline some of the ways in which we can contain future conflicts.

- i) Let us start with Syria. For example, the war in Syria which has entered the fourth year and 140,000 lives have been lost and millions of refugees are displaced in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon since the unrest started in 2011. The demands of the Syrian people are simple and clear; end the bloodshed, allow for humanitarian access for aid, push for peace talks that include most of those affected, especially civil society and women. Those in power are conducting dangerous proxy games by arming both sides to the conflict. Russia and Iran are siding with the Assad regime while US and western powers are taking sides with

the rebels while killings continue. International and regional powers via UN need to work out a single peace plan on Syria to agree and impose on all parties, a plan involving all the actors in the conflict.

A third Geneva conference should be convened urgently in which all parties to the conflict should attend for a more proactive outcome. To bring all sides to the table including Assad regime, the rebels, all regional players, their strategic backers should be involved as well – Iran, Russia, France, Britain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar alongside with US. They will have play to a role to push reluctant parties to negotiate. Under such talks, a final and productive plan can be hammered out for hostilities to end and for peace to begin. Syrian women should also be involved in peace negotiations. An immediate ceasefire and humanitarian aid needs urgently to be put in place for peace talks to start in earnest.

- ii) On a broader push for peace we need to activate the democratic checks and balances system which has been dormant for so long for a healthy democracy to operate. The government of the day should have discussions on adopting an ethical foreign policy which serves the interest of all. Future conflicts need to be resolved via dialogue, diplomacy and a foreign policy which does not authorise any country to go to war.
- iii) The UK Prime Minister should be stripped off his war powers under Royal Prerogative as it is dangerous to put war powers in a single individual. For example, the vote on Libyan operation took place only after the fighting had commenced. So any military action should always be the last resort and rely on parliament's approval.
- iv) Any future intervention should have proper debate and consultation by United Nations as it was created to prevent wars and violence. The UN has not been able to broker the peace in Syria and need to be more strengthened so that it can perform the role for which it was created i.e. maintenance of international peace and security.
- v) The reforms of UN Security Council is the one that must be addressed with a sense of urgency so that it would ensure measure of international cooperation for peace at all times. UN needs to be transparent and accountable. It should give priority to conflict prevention and protection of civilians so that root causes of conflict can be addressed before it escalates into an open conflict.

- vi) We also need to strive for a world without war by uprooting causes of war. It is the militaries of the most advanced countries that have brought destruction on the widest scale. Today, weapons of mass destruction and latest drones (unmanned aerial vehicle) continue to threaten international peace and security by bombing Pakistan, Yemen, Mali, Afghanistan and are becoming breeding ground for more terrorists.
- vii) The key to peace is East West Co-operation. We need to stop the East/West rivalries and cold war tactics of manipulation of countries against each other. We know that demonstrations in Ukraine have been funded by CIA and Pentagon who have spent millions to orchestrate the troubles in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world, under the pretence of protection of Human Rights and Democracy known as ‘colour revolutions’.
- viii) The reckless behaviour of Russia and its domineering attitude of grabbing Crimea is to demonstrate its zeal to build a counterweight to arrogant West via its Eurasian union and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation)¹. The task of the peace movement is to denounce oppression, imperialism and militarism and propose ways via dialogue and diplomacy for peaceful resolution of conflicts.
- ix) International community should strengthen the rule of law as some of the most powerful leaders and nations selectively place themselves above international law like Bush and Blair on Iraq. The use of drones undertaken in the name of national security, are fast evaporating human rights of people, are unconstitutional and against international law. We need justice by law and not arms and restore democratic decision making for a safer world.
- x) We need to reduce inequality in the world and work for the completion of Millennium development Goals for an equal world. Reduction of armament and military personnel and opening up opportunities for the poorest people of the world should be a priority. We can reduce poverty and inequality through investing in healthcare, education and progressive taxation and not through austerity policies which worsens inequality and is according to recent IMF report in March, a number one threat to economic recovery.
- xi) Stop expansion of NATO and take steps to wind down its military pact with the European Union. Disband its operations like the Warsaw Pact. We need to:
 - a) *Expose the militaristic role of NATO which is a continuous threat to world peace.*
 - b) *Reveal the de-stabilising effects of NATO expansion and its nuclear policies*

¹ SCO Member States include: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

c) *Condemn its military operation and engagement in various countries.*

Till such time that it is not disbanded:

d) *It's troops should be deployed as a Rapid Reaction Unit of peacekeepers to help countries in need.*

e) *Stop having confrontational policies with Russia*

f) *Stop claiming nuclear weapons are needed to preserve peace*

g) *Stop military adventures across the globe to justify its existence*

xii) We should have a strong peace lobby to match the military defence lobby in EU to have major impact on matter of decisions of avoiding war and building peace. Some figures speak of more than 15,000 lobbyists in Brussels, mainly representing business interests including the arms industry. The vital question is how much a country should spend on armament and military force? At present, NATO target is 2% of GDP to be spent on defence. It needs to be forcefully contested, debated and reduced/eliminated/slashed to the minimum.

xiii) 4D for World Peace – A New Campaign Idea for Nonviolent Future -

To highlight, promote and adopt the soft power approach for the well being of humanity, we need to reinforce the fact that there should not be any place for violence and wars in our society. There are no military solutions – dialogue and diplomacy are the key which can guarantee lasting peace. In 2012 I started a campaign, 4D for World Peace inspired by my book the Economics of Killing. It is a campaign for civil society groups to work not only to change government policies, but also economic incentives and cultural understandings.

The 4D's are DISARMAMENT, DEMILITARISATION, DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

This campaign aims to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus accrued to be deployed for real development and genuine democracy. World Peace and building a compassionate society is not a utopian dream. It can be realised by overcoming forces of destruction, violence, & war mongering. A film Change the World and a booklet 4D for World Peace is taking the campaign to the next level.

4. A Vision of a World without War

To follow and put in practice our vision of a world without war, we should work:

- Towards increasing public awareness to the costs of war
- To restrain governments from increasing military spending (\$1.75 trillion in 2012) and intervening other nations conflicts
- To end the arms race and eventually eliminate conventional and nuclear weapons
- To abolish violence and war as an instrument of finding solutions instead of dialogue, diplomacy and conflict resolution
- To take small routine actions to make our world a little kinder, a little less angry and a bit more loving to end wars
- To form groups or a worldwide movement networks to bring an end to the practice of war as an instrument of ordinary policy and push towards the total abolition of the institution of war.
- Have education, communications, legislations, treaties and campaigns to resist against wars or weapons and military spending in support of transition to peaceful and green industry.
- To change the mindset from culture of guns which rely on recrimination and revenge to a culture of peace through tolerance, forgiveness, compassion and reconciliation by breaking down barriers and conditioning of our mind.

5. Conclusion

Peace is not a dream. It can be achieved by persistence, focus and hard work. In today's society, we have weapons because violence has been glamorised and wars have become a common occurrence. How do we counter this trend? We must delegitimise war as a way of solving disputes. Our leaders must support their rhetoric of peace with implementation of laws and treaties limiting the arms and arms race. For example, every country should pass a law which prevents its military budget from exceeding its spending on education and health care.

Going forward, governments, leaders and civil society need to boost the role in peace-building, conflict management and prevention of violent conflicts.

Let me conclude by a quotation from Dag Hammarskjöld, 2nd UN Secretary General, who like us assembled here and in the peace movement remain optimistic about the betterment of humanity. He said and I quote: "There will always be enough people to fight for a decent future." So let us start to strive for a world where future wars can be stopped.

This article can be reproduced at anytime, anywhere. Thanks for listening.

Please watch 4D for World Peace film: "Change the World" –
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9GEK4FFrXk>

Bio – **Vijay Mehta** is a renowned author, international speaker and global activist for peace, development and human rights. He is the chair of Uniting for Peace (www.unitingforpeace.org) and Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org).

Working since 1979, Uniting for Peace is a non-profit organisation devoted to creating and promoting a global culture of peace, nonviolence and poverty reduction. The flagship campaign of Uniting for Peace is called 4D for World Peace. It is a campaign to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for development and democracy.

The charity Fortune Forum whose founder is Renu Mehta, daughter of Vijay Mehta, held summits (2005 and 2006) where Former US President Clinton, Former US Vice President Al Gore and Actor Michael Douglas were keynote speakers. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage.

Vijay Mehta's books include *The Economics of Killing* (2012), *The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future* (2006), *Arms No More* (2005) and *The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century* (2005).

In 2014, Vijay Mehta's bio, "The Audacity of Dreams" appeared in the book *Karma Kurry*, published by Jaico Publishing House. It included 25 other inspiring change-makers' biographies. Nelson Mandela who wrote the foreword to the book, had this to say, "Ordinary people do extra ordinary things. These stories have that power to inspire people to rise and act, to make a difference." To read Vijay Mehta's full bio, please follow this link: <http://goo.gl/JcUGwr>

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Aitak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

Vijay Mehta is the recipient of the Global Indian Karmaveer (Action hero) Puraskaar (Award) by iCONGO (International Confederation of NGO's). He is now a noble-laureate 2012 – 2013 of the iCONGO team of advisors and mentors (www.icongo.in). It is an award for outstanding luminaries working for peace and social justice.

He has been appointed a fellow of the New Westminster College, Province of British Columbia, Canada in 2013.

Vijay Mehta's new book "**The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World**" is published by Pluto Press (UK) / Palgrave Macmillan (USA) / Amazon (Worldwide). For reviews and endorsements of the book, please visit: www.theeconomicsofkilling.org

"Vijay...a long standing activist for peace, development, human rights and environment"
The Sunday Times Magazine, London 1st February, 2009

"Vijay Mehta lends intellectual credibility to the project and wrote 'The Fortune Forum Code for a Sustainable Future', a sort of manifesto that will underpin the group's future activities."
The Independent, London 26 September 2006