

Where Did The Antiwar Movement Go?

[Doug Mataconis](#) · Monday, March 21, 2011 · [29 Comments](#)

The Cato Institute's David Boaz looks around and wonders [what happened to the antiwar movement that used to crowd the streets of D.C. only a few years ago](#):

On a street corner in Washington, D.C., outside the Cato Institute, there's a metal box that controls traffic signals. During the Bush years there was hardly a day that it didn't sport a poster advertising an antiwar march or simply denouncing President [George W. Bush](#) and the war in Iraq. But the marches and the posters seemed to stop on election day 2008.

Maybe antiwar organizers assumed that they had elected the man who would stop the war. After all, Barack Obama rose to power on the basis of his early opposition to the Iraq war and his promise to end it. But after two years in the White House he has made both of George Bush's wars his wars.

As Boaz notes, though, the reality of the past two years has shown that there aren't really that many differences between Barack Obama and George W. Bush on the foreign policy front:

Today, however, he has [tripled President Bush's troop levels](#) in Afghanistan, and we have been fighting there for more than nine years. The Pentagon has declared "the official end to Operation Iraqi Freedom and combat operations by United States forces in Iraq," but [we still have 50,000 troops there](#), hardly what Senator Obama promised.

And now Libya. [In various recent polls](#) more than two-thirds of Americans have opposed military intervention in Libya. No doubt many of them voted for President Obama.

Yes, there is still a rump antiwar movement out there, and many of them spent the better part of this weekend [protesting the treatment of Bradley Manning at the brig on the Quantico Marine Base](#). For the most part, though, the mass antiwar protests are over, despite the fact that we are still engaged in fighting the very wars that they were protesting only a few years ago, along with a new one as of Saturday. As Boaz notes, it's hard not to reach the conclusion based on all of this that the Bush-era antiwar movement was really an anti-Bush movement. Indeed, [one study](#) found that the vast majority of antiwar protesters withdrew from active involvement in the movement after Bush left office.

Moreover, as one of my co-bloggers at The Liberty Papers noted in a post originally written two years ago, [the antiwar movement wasn't really antiwar at all](#):

The so-called “anti-war” groups that popped up before the Iraq War were never anti-war. Many of their founders and leaders cheered on BJ Clinton’s wars in the Balkans and in Haiti. They were not completely anti-American or merely “on the other side” as some conservative and neo-libertarian bloggers accused them either. The “anti-war” movement was simply a rallying point for leftists and Democrat party hacks who needed to gain traction against a popular (at the time) President Bush. They needed to sow doubt about the Iraq War (the mismanagement of the war by the Bush administration helped as well) in order to have a wedge issue against President Bush. Naturally, they rooted for more American deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq and for American objectives to go unfulfilled, at least while Bush was president.

Now their Messiah has been elected and he wants to expand the Afghan War, possibly into Pakistan. What’s a leftist posing a peace activist supposed to do. Well, what all good leftists do, follow their leader, in this case the Messiah. He wants to send 17,000 more Americans into Afghanistan to bring democracy, destroy the Taliban, and put in chicken in every Afghan pot. He has not defined what “victory” is in Afghanistan, nor does he have a plan, short of nuclear war, to combat the Talibanization of Pakistan. If George W. Bush planned this, the so-called peace activists would have been the ones having Tea Parties on April 15.

Aren’t the so-called “peace activists” being just a tad bit hypocritical now that their Messiah is in the Oval Office and wants his little war?

I think it’s fairly clear that, for the most part, they are.