

yes! magazine

Published by
Positive Futures Network
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Building a Just and Sustainable World

DISCUSSION GUIDE | ISSUE 46 | A JUST FOREIGN POLICY

[YES! Discussion Guides](#) are designed to help you explore your own experiences, opinions, and commitments as they relate to material found in YES! Magazine. Use them in group discussions, classrooms, or study circles. We believe that when people discuss critical issues of our time with mutual respect and caring, they create a powerful avenue for constructive social change.

You can find the articles mentioned below on our website at www.yesmagazine.org. You are welcome to download and photocopy them free of charge. If you'd like to purchase multiple copies of YES! or subscriptions for your class or group, see the order form on the back.



Noah Grant

In this issue of YES! we highlight the efforts of people who are working to build a new U.S. foreign policy from the ground up. From pushing for fair labor conditions in factories to sending peace delegations to Iran, individual Americans are helping move us away from the aggressive and unilateral approach to foreign policy pursued by our federal government. Their work is particularly timely because our country is at a crossroads. The majority of Americans now want a change in the direction of U.S. foreign policy. The rise of China and India, and the increasing boldness of Latin America and Russia, have brought the United States to the brink of major change in our global role. As a nation, we have a historic choice to make. We can continue to assert our military and economic dominance, or we can work with other countries to tackle issues like

global warming and ultimately create a more secure world. The United States still has the power to do great things, both for its citizens and for people around the globe, if we can muster the political will to move toward cooperation. This issue of YES! looks at plans for reform and highlights the efforts of activists working to make it happen.

This discussion guide focuses on these articles:

- John Feffer, "[The Way to a Just Foreign Policy](#)"
- Tom Andrews, "[Fighting Terror with Law and Dignity](#)"
- Maude Barlow, "[Life, Liberty, Water](#)"
- Ben Manski and Karen Dolan, "[Has Your City Declared Peace Yet?](#)"
- Edward Tick, "[Heal the Warrior, Heal the Country](#)"

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The Way to a Just Foreign Policy

The United States is overstretched and our military, political, and economic dominance cannot last. Rather than lament our loss of power, we should recognize the opportunity for positive change. John Feffer says we can try to remain the world's superpower or we can shift our foreign policy to work with other countries for sustainability and security in a multipolar world. He suggests ways to reform our foreign policy: re-engage in international agreements and covenants, take the lead on fighting global warming, and push for labor and environmental standards in trade deals. Feffer calls for a new social movement to build the political will to create a more cooperative foreign policy.

1. How do you think U.S. actions abroad (e.g., giving development aid, intervening militarily) affect you and your community, your economic well-being, and your safety and security?
2. How do you think your life would be affected if the U.S. moved toward greater international cooperation?
3. Which of Feffer's ideas for reforming U.S. foreign policy are most important? How can you help make them a reality?

Fighting Terror With Law and Dignity

In his article on terrorism, Tom Andrews argues that the United States has encouraged extremism with our aggressive unilateral actions. He suggests that we combat extremism by investing in economic development and ending the Iraq war and other actions that fuel anti-Americanism.

4. Do you agree with Andrews about the causes of terrorism? Do you think his ideas for fighting terrorism will make us more or less secure?
5. What do you think is a good U.S. strategy for discouraging extremist violence?

Life, Liberty, Water

Maude Barlow talks about water's role as a strategic resource. Shortages, unequal access, and corporate control threaten its universal availability. Corporations are increasingly taking steps to control water and turn profits from its use, export, and exploitation. At the same time, activists around the world are working to ensure conservation and universal access. Barlow finishes her piece by advocating for a U.N. covenant protecting water as a human right.

1. Where does your community's water come from?

2. Does your community face any water management challenges (such as drought, overconsumption, water rights disputes, climate change, or pollution)? Have there been positive actions in your local area to conserve or ensure equal access to water? Do you have lessons (successes or challenges) to share with other communities?

3. Do you have any ideas about how your community can prepare for a possible water shortage or other water crisis?

4. Do you take personal steps to conserve water. If so, how?

5. Do you believe water is a basic human right? Why or why not?

6. Do you think privatizing water resources is a good or bad step? How might private control pose problems for communities or ecosystems in a time of water crisis?

7. What steps do you think the government should take to protect the right to water, internationally, nationally, or locally?

Has Your City Declared Peace?

Karen Dolan and Ben Manski talk about the growth of "municipal foreign policy," in which local and state governments weigh in on international issues. Hundreds of towns around the country have passed resolutions that call for ending the war in Iraq. Local officials have formed sister-city relationships with communities around the world and signed on to the principles of the Kyoto Protocol. The authors foresee greater local involvement in decision-making in the short term and the strengthening of democracy and accountability in the long term.

1. Dolan and Manski are very optimistic about the spread of "municipal foreign policy." Do you think actions like troop withdrawal resolutions are effective at the local level?

2. The authors mention the creation of sister city relationships as an example of "municipal foreign policy." Does your community have a sister city? What affect might a sister city relationship have on the U.S. role in the world, and other nations' perceptions of Americans? What affect might sister city partnerships have on Americans?

3. Has your state or local government passed any ordinances or resolutions on international affairs? What resolution or ordinance would you most like your state/local government to pass, and how do you think you can get them to do it?



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Heal the Warrior, Heal the Country

Edward Tick talks about the traditional role of warriors as protectors, not destroyers. Warriors once helped keep societies "whole and strong," Tick claims. Now soldiers are forced to use violence for political ends. The false pretenses used as motivation and justification for the wars in Vietnam and Iraq obliterated the moral basis for fighting and contributed to the post-traumatic stress disorder that modern-day American warriors suffer. Tick argues that in order to heal our warriors we must claim collective responsibility as a society for our wars. By shifting the burden from soldiers to Americans as a whole, we can heal together and deal with the trauma of war.

1. How do you feel when you meet or speak to a returned soldier? What might be difficult about welcoming him or her back into your community? What might be rewarding?

2. Do you agree that all Americans share responsibility for the war in Iraq? What does that mean on an individual level? Even if you were against the war from the start, do you think you are responsible for helping returned soldiers heal? If not, who should take responsibility?

3. Should Americans feel guilty about the Iraq war? Do you feel any guilt or shame over the war? Do you think the process of healing should include reparations to the victims of the war? Do you think that humanitarian or other types of support to Iraqis could help relieve our collective guilt, or your personal guilt? Is it legitimate to send aid in order to assuage our guilt?

4. How do you think both anti-war activists and those that supported the war can work together to heal our returning soldiers? What opportunities for dialogue between liberals and conservatives might this healing process offer?

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