

By Medea Benjamin

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It's time for the peace movement to challenge the president's foreign policies.

Foreign policy played a minor role in a presidential election that focused on jobs, jobs, jobs. But like it or not, the United States is part of a global community in turmoil, and U.S. policies often fuel that turmoil. The peace movement, which lost steam during Obama's first term because so many people were unwilling to criticize the president, has a challenge today to reactivate itself and increase its effectiveness by forming coalitions within the progressive movement. This revitalized peace movement must address five issues. The first is Afghanistan. Despite Obama's talk about getting out of Afghanistan [by the end of 2014](#)

, the U.S. military still has some 68,000 troops and almost 100,000 private contractors there at a cost of \$2 billion a week. And Obama is talking about a presence of U.S. troops, training missions, Special Forces operations and bases for another decade. But the overwhelming majority of Americans think this war is not worth fighting, a sentiment echoed in a recent New York Times editorial “

[Time to Pack Up](#)

.” It is indeed that time. The peace movement must push for an immediate withdrawal and for ruling out any longterm presence in Afghanistan.

Second,

[drone attacks are out of control](#)

, killing thousands, many of them civilians, in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, creating widespread anti-American sentiment and setting a dangerous precedent that will back to haunt us.

[Anti-drone actions](#)

have sprung up all over the United States at Air Force bases where the drones are piloted, at the headquarters of drone makers, at the CIA and in Congressional offices. Our job now is to coordinate those efforts, execute a massive public education campaign to turn around pro-drone public opinion, and call on our elected officials to start respecting the rule of law. If we strengthen our ties with people in the nations most affected and join in with those at the U.N. bodies who are horrified by drone proliferation, we just might get some global standards for the use of lethal drones.

Third, looming on the horizon is a possible Israeli attack on Iran that would draw the U.S. into a

devastating regional war. Almost 60 percent of Americans

[oppose joining Israel in a war with Iran](#)

. We must make sure Obama and Congress hear that voice above the din of American Israel Public Affairs Committee lobbyists gunning for war, and steer clear of dragging us into yet another war.

Fourth, and perhaps hardest of all, will be to get some traction on changing U.S. policy toward the Israel/Palestine conflict. The grassroots movement to stop unconditional support for Israel is booming, with groups like Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace building networks across the country. The

[Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#)

campaign is gaining momentum not just in the United States, but globally. We're unlikely to see the Obama administration and Congress officially call for a halt to settlements, human rights abuses or the ongoing siege of Gaza, much less cut off the \$3 billion a year that helps underwrite these abuses. But we can continue to shift public opinion and gain allies in Congress, with an openness to reaching out to fiscal conservatives

calling for cuts in foreign aid.

Finally, there's the bloated Pentagon budget. At a time when the nation is looking at how best to allocate scarce resources, all eyes should be on the billions of dollars wasted on Pentagon policies and weapons that don't make us safer, from more than 800 bases overseas to outdated Cold War weapons to monies given to repressive regimes. We need a rational look at the Pentagon budget that could free up billions for critical social and environmental programs.



Michelle Benjamin protests against the use of Raytheon's Predator and Global Hawk drones in the Gulf of Mexico, where