

The Vietnam war was a controversial war, and amid a divided nation dissent was everywhere, including the radio. The Vietnam era gave birth to a plethora of 'protest songs' which either promoted or showed disdain for the war effort against the Vietcong.

One famous example of one of these famous Vietnam protest songs is Creedence Clearwater Revivals 1969 hit *Fortunate Son*. The song, a cultural icon even in the 21st century, depicts the lead singer John Fogerty's disdain towards those who had started the war and how it became the poor's responsibility to fight the rich mans war. In 2015 Hogerty stated "The thoughts behind this song—it was a lot of anger. So it was the Vietnam War going on. ... Now I was drafted and they're making me fight, and no one has actually defined why. So this was all boiling inside of me and I sat down on the edge of my bed and out came "It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no senator's son!" You know, it took about 20 minutes to write the song." This sentiment was popular among the lower class soldiers that had been drafted for the war, and it showed in the charts. The song peaked at number three on the Billboard United States charts.

The lyrics

Yeah-yeah, some folks inherit star-spangled eyes

Hoo, they send you down to war, Lord

And when you ask 'em, "How much should we give?"

Hoo, they only answer, "More, more, more, more"

demonstrate attitudes at the time, where people felt exploited by the government, the idea that our boys were being sent off to die for the Vietnamese? That when a hundred thousand died, they ordered a hundred-fifty thousand more? Created a sense in people that they were giving more than they were receiving back, and it left people disenchanting. People were livid with the cost of the war, and how in particular there was a class untouched by the war, that being those who had wealth and connections. These people could avoid the draft, they could save themselves from being sacrificed in vain. Another sort of example in this song is

Some folks are born silver spoon in hand

Lord, don't they help themselves, Lord?

But when the taxman come to the door

Lord, the house lookin' like a rummage sale, yeah

which demonstrates the insincerity of the elite class. How they were pretending to look as though they were *suffering too* and *bearing the same cross* that the boys in Vietnam had to die carrying.

Another great example, a German anti-war song from the cold war era was West Berlin's Nena and their 1983 hit 99 *Luftballons* (in English 99 *Red Balloons*). The song revolves around 99 Red Balloons, and the red scare that they become. With lines such as

Ninety-nine red balloons

Floating in the summer sky

Panic bells, it's red alert!

There's something here from somewhere else!

the connection to the paranoia surrounding the Soviets becomes apparent. The red balloons represent something benign, yet unrecognized, prompting panic. The use of the phrase "red alert" works in the context of a panic but may also refer to the Soviets. The frequent use of 'red' in my opinion doesn't seem unintentional.

*99 Decision Street
Ninety-nine ministers meet
To worry, worry, super-scurry
Call the troops out in a hurry
This is what we've waited for
This is it, boys, this is war
The president is on the line
As ninety-nine red balloons go by*

The second verse starts off strong, presenting us with the *ninety-nine ministers* which likely represent western powers, the very strong response and phrases such as '*Call the troops out in a hurry*' and '*This is what we've waited for*' could either represent the skittish nature of both sides of the Cold War and the rapid readiness both sides possessed in preparation for the eventual conflict.

*Ninety-nine dreams I have had
In every one, a red balloon
It's all over and I'm standin' pretty
In this dust that was a city
If I could find a souvenir
Just to prove the world was here
And here is a red balloon
I think of you, and let it go...*

The outro gives us a glimpse into the worse case scenario, in this situation war has broke out and the city is gone, possibly due to a nuclear blast, and the red balloon is the cause of all this chaos. This could be a message to the Soviets to please calm down, or likely this could be to the West to please calm down. Its likely both, the soviets are the red balloon that prompt the attack, but the West overreacts and blows up the city. This song plays into the very scary situation, and how the world is very unstable and has a high potential to collapse at any moment, even if its just red balloons.

Protest songs however did not thrive and die with the Cold War/Vietnam era, after all wars have only become more common, though more nuanced and through more proxies. Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Ukraine, Israel, Sudan, Benghazi, Chechnya, The Troubles. In particular this next war song focuses on The Troubles, an internal conflict between the British controlled Northern Ireland and the free Republic of Ireland. This bloody conflict had been ongoing since the 1960s. At the time of this songs release in 1994 tensions were very high. In early 1991 *The Irish Republican Army* had orchestrated an attempted assassination of then British prime minister John Major by launching a mortar at his home. In 1994, a truck bombing in Canary Wharf killed two Londoners and injured 39 others. Car bombs had been a weapon of choice for the IRA. This song comes from the Republic of Ireland's *The Cranberries* with their 1994 hit *Zombie*

*It's the same old theme, since 1916
In your head, in your head, they're still fightin'
With their tanks and their bombs and their bombs and their guns
In your head, in your head, they are dyin'*

The lyrics, speak on the relative peace between the British and the Irish, and how the sorts of oppression the IRA and the Loyalist Paramilitaries believe they're fighting against is pure

imagination. This conflict doesn't have to be fought, and the Irish have their independence from Britain and the British have their part for themselves.

Another head hangs lowly

Child is slowly taken

And the violence caused such silence

Who are we mistaken?

This verse refers to the children killed during the troubles, in 1993 three-year old Johnathan Ball, and 12-year old Tim Parry were killed by car bombs. Both sides of the Troubles blamed each other for the deaths, in total around 257 children were killed during the Troubles. This is reaffirmed with the second verse:

Another mother's breakin'

Heart is takin' over

When the violence causes silence

We must be mistaken

When we step into the 21st century one conflict becomes very apparent as one of the most controversial, our involvement with Iraq. It was told to the country that the purpose of the operation was to disarm Saddam Hussein, that he had "weapons of mass destruction". Which was found later to be as much of a threat as was the Gulf of Tonkin "attack". What also entered the mainstream in the 2000s was rap music. Rap stars were made during this period such as Ja Rule, 50 Cent, Kanye West, Ludacris, and some had a message for then president George W. Bush. This would be Eminem with his 2006 song *Mosh*

Maybe we can reach Al-Qaeda through my speech

Let the president answer a higher anarchy

*Strap him with an AK-47, let him go Fight his own war, let him impress
daddy that way*

No more blood for oil

We got our own battles to fight on our own soil

These lyrics present us with the disdain of the people towards Bush, not to dissimilar to the disdain towards Nixon in *Fortunate Son*. Both songs speak on how the powerful send the weak to fight their war, and the undemocratic nature of the situation, Eminem plays this as George W. Bush trying to impress his father George H.W. Bush who from 1990 to 1991 led the war against Iraq in the Gulf War.

*Someone's tryna tell us somethin', maybe this is God just Sayin' we're
responsible for this monster, this coward*

That we have empowered, this is Bin Laden

Look at his head noddin'

How could we allow somethin' like this without pumpin' our fists?

Now this is our final hour

This verse accuses George W. Bush of bearing responsibility for the World Trade Center attacks on September 11th, 2001. Either claiming Bush was involved, or too ignorant to prevent it, either are plausible. Eminem speaks on how its crazy for us to be mad at Iraqis rather than our president who let this happen. That the president may be the enemy rather than the Iraqis.

No more psychological warfare

To trick us to thinkin' that we ain't loyal

If we don't serve our own country, we're patronizin' a hero

This verse refers to attempts of the Bush administration to paint dissenters of the Bush Agenda as traitors to the nation. Eminem disagrees with the notion that Bush is a hero for his response to the World Trade Center attacks, and that not promoting his agenda in Iraq doesn't make them unpatriotic.