

# Endless War Is a Feature of U.S. Policy. Why We Are In a Perpetual Series of Wars ...

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Region: [Asia, Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

We are in the middle of a *perpetual* series of wars. See [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#).

As just one example, in 2010 the war in Afghanistan became the [longest war in U.S. history](#). But – no matter what you’ve heard – there are [no plans to get out any time soon](#).

As Glenn Greenwald [notes](#) today:

Despite the happy talk from [the Pentagon’s top lawyer, the war on terror] is not ending soon. By its very terms, it cannot. And all one has to do is look at the words and actions of the Obama administration to know this.

In October, the Washington Post’s Greg Miller [reported](#) that the administration was instituting a “disposition matrix” to determine how terrorism suspects will be disposed of, all based on this fact: “among senior Obama administration officials, there is broad consensus that such operations are likely to be extended at least another decade.” As Miller puts it: “That timeline suggests that the United States has reached only the midpoint of what was once known as the global war on terrorism.”

The policies adopted by the Obama administration just over the last couple of years leave no doubt that they are accelerating, not winding down, the war apparatus that has been relentlessly strengthened over the last decade. In the name of the War on Terror, the current president has [diluted](#) decades-old Miranda warnings; [codified](#) a new scheme of indefinite detention on US soil; [plotted](#) to relocate Guantanamo to Illinois; increased [secrecy](#), [repression](#) and [release-restrictions](#) at the camp; [minted](#) a new theory of presidential assassination powers even for US citizens; [renewed](#) the Bush/Cheney warrantless eavesdropping framework for another five years, [as well as](#) the Patriot Act, without a single reform; and just [signed into law](#) all new restrictions on the release of indefinitely held detainees.

Does that sound to you like a government anticipating the end of the War on Terror any time soon? Or does it sound like one working feverishly to make their terrorism-justified powers of detention, surveillance, killing and secrecy permanent?

Why is the war of terror being waged indefinitely?

Many have [said](#) that “war is the health of the state”, and Thomas Paine [wrote](#) in the Rights of Man:

In reviewing the history of the English Government, its wars and its taxes, a bystander, not blinded by prejudice, nor warped by interest, would declare, that taxes were not raised to carry on wars, but that wars were raised to carry on taxes.

George Washington – in his [farewell address of 1796](#) – said:

Overgrown military establishments are under any form of government inauspicious to liberty.

James Madison said:

In time of actual war, great discretionary powers are constantly given to the Executive Magistrate. Constant apprehension of War, has the same tendency to render the head too large for the body. A standing military force, with an overgrown Executive will not long be safe companions to liberty. The means of defence against foreign danger, have been always the instruments of tyranny at home. Among the Romans it was a standing maxim to excite a war, whenever a revolt was apprehended. Throughout all Europe, the armies kept up under the pretext of defending, have enslaved the people.

Madison also noted that never-ending war tends to destroy both liberty and prosperity:

Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed [debts](#) and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few. In war, too, the discretionary power of the Executive is extended; its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied: and all the means of seducing the minds, are added to those of subduing the force, of the people. The same malignant aspect in republicanism may be traced in the inequality of fortunes, and the opportunities of fraud, growing out of a state of war, and in the degeneracy of manners and of morals, engendered by both. No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.

Greenwald [noted](#) in October:

As the Founders all recognized, nothing vests elites with power – and profit – more than a state of war. That is why there were supposed to be substantial barriers to having them start and continue – the need for a Congressional declaration, the [constitutional bar](#) on funding the military for more than two years at a time, the prohibition on standing armies, etc. Here is how John Jay [put it in Federalist No 4](#):

“It is too true, however disgraceful it may be to human nature, that nations in general will make war whenever they have a prospect of getting anything by it; nay, absolute monarchs will often make war when their nations are to get nothing by it, but for the purposes and objects merely personal, such as thirst for military glory, revenge for personal affronts, ambition, or private compacts to aggrandize or support their particular families or partisans. These and a variety of other motives, which affect only

the mind of the sovereign, often lead him to engage in wars not sanctified by justice or the voice and interests of his people.”

In sum, there are factions in many governments that crave a state of endless war because that is when power is least constrained and profit most abundant.

Indeed, top American military officials and national defense experts say that our specific actions in the “war on terror” are [creating more terrorists and more war](#).

As Greenwald points out today, the *endless* nature of the war on terror is [a feature, not a bug](#):

There’s a good reason US officials are assuming the “War on Terror” will persist indefinitely: namely, their actions ensure that this occurs.

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There’s no question that this “war” will continue indefinitely. There is no question that US actions are the cause of that, the gasoline that fuels the fire. The only question – and it’s becoming less of a question for me all the time – is whether this endless war is the intended result of US actions or just an unwanted miscalculation.

It’s increasingly hard to make the case that it’s the latter. The US has long known, and its [own studies have emphatically concluded](#), that “terrorism” is motivated not by a “hatred of our freedoms” but by US policy and aggression in the Muslim world. This causal connection is not news to the US government. Despite this – or, more accurately, because of it – they continue with these policies.

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There is zero reason for US officials to want an end to the war on terror, and numerous and significant reasons why they would want it to continue. It’s always been the case that the power of political officials is at its greatest, its most unrestrained, in a state of war. Cicero, two thousand years ago, warned that “In times of war, the law falls silent” (Inter arma enim silent leges).

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If you were a US leader, or an official of the National Security State, or a beneficiary of the private military and surveillance industries, why would you possibly want the war on terror to end? That would be the worst thing that could happen. It’s that war that generates limitless power, impenetrable secrecy, an unquestioning citizenry, and massive profit.

Just this week, a [federal judge ruled](#) that the Obama administration need not respond to the New York Times and the ACLU’s mere request to disclose the government’s legal rationale for why the President believes he can target US citizens for assassination without due process. Even while recognizing how perverse her own ruling was – “The Alice-in-Wonderland nature of this pronouncement is not lost on me” and it imposes “a veritable Catch-22” – the federal judge nonetheless explained that federal courts have constructed such a protective shield around the US government in the name of terrorism that it amounts to an unfettered license to violate even the most basic rights: “I can find no way around the thicket of laws and precedents that effectively allow the executive branch of our government to proclaim as perfectly lawful certain

actions that seem on their face incompatible with our Constitution and laws while keeping the reasons for their conclusion a secret” (emphasis added).

Why would anyone in the US government or its owners have any interest in putting an end to this sham bonanza of power and profit called “the war on terror”? Johnson is right that there must be an end to this war imminently, and Maddow is right that the failure to do so will render all the due-process-free and lawless killing and imprisoning and invading and bombing morally indefensible and historically unforgivable.

But the notion that the US government is even entertaining putting an end to any of this is a pipe dream, and the belief that they even want to is fantasy. They’re preparing for more endless war; their actions are fueling that war; and they continue to reap untold benefits from its continuation. Only outside compulsion, from citizens, can make an end to all of this possible.

Indeed, the American government has directly been supporting Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups for the last decade. See [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#).

(Remember, if there aren’t scary enough enemies in real life, [we’ve got to create them](#). Oops ... did I say that out loud?)

And the American government [lies](#) – and even [kills its own](#) – to justify new wars.

Top American economists say that endless war has [ruined our economy](#). It benefits a handful of elites, while [levying a tax](#) on the vast majority of Americans.

Congress members – part of the super-elite which has [made money hand over fist](#) during this economic downturn – are [heavily invested in the war industry, and routinely trade on inside information ... perhaps even including planned military actions](#).

No wonder the American government is making the state of war permanent, and planning to [unleash new, widespread wars](#) in the near future.

*Postscript: Under Bush, it was the “war on terror”. Obama has [re-branded the perpetual fighting](#) as “humanitarian war”.*

*But – underneath the ever-changing [marketing and branding](#) campaign – it’s really just the good ‘ole [military-industrial-and-banking](#) complex consolidating their power and making money hand over fist.*

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