

Perpetual Tyranny: Endless Wars Are the Enemy of Freedom

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“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... known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.” — James Madison

War is the enemy of freedom.

As long as America’s politicians continue to involve us in wars that bankrupt the nation, jeopardize our servicemen and women, increase the chances of terrorism and blowback domestically, and push the nation that much closer to eventual collapse, “we the people” will find ourselves in a perpetual state of tyranny.

It’s time for the U.S. government to stop policing the globe.

This latest crisis—[America’s part in the showdown between Russia and the Ukraine](#)—has conveniently followed on the heels of a long line of *other* crises, manufactured or otherwise, which have occurred like clockwork in order to keep Americans distracted, deluded, amused, and insulated from the government’s steady encroachments on our freedoms.

And so it continues in its Orwellian fashion.

Two years after COVID-19 shifted the world into a state of global authoritarianism, just as the people’s tolerance for heavy-handed mandates seems to have finally worn thin, we are being prepped for the next distraction and the next drain on our economy.

Yet policing the globe and waging endless wars abroad isn’t making America—or the rest of the world—any safer, it’s certainly not making America great again, and it’s undeniably digging the U.S. deeper into debt.

Indeed, even if we were to put an end to all of the government’s military meddling and bring

all of the troops home today, it would take decades to pay down the price of these wars and get the government's creditors off our backs.

War has become a huge money-making venture, and the U.S. government, with its vast military empire, is one of its best buyers and sellers.

What most Americans—brainwashed into believing that patriotism means supporting the war machine—fail to recognize is that these ongoing wars have little to do with keeping the country safe and everything to do with propping up a military industrial complex that continues to dominate, dictate and shape almost every aspect of our lives.

Consider: We are a military culture engaged in continuous warfare. We have been a nation at war for most of our existence. We are a nation that makes a living from killing through defense contracts, weapons manufacturing and endless wars.

We are also being fed a steady diet of violence through our entertainment, news and politics.

All of the military equipment featured in blockbuster movies is provided—at taxpayer expense—in exchange for carefully placed promotional spots.

Back when I was a boy growing up in the 1950s, [almost every classic sci fi movie ended with the heroic American military saving the day](#), whether it was battle tanks in *Invaders from Mars* (1953) or military roadblocks in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956).

What I didn't know then as a schoolboy was the extent to which the Pentagon was paying to be cast as America's savior. By the time my own kids were growing up, it was Jerry Bruckheimer's blockbuster film *Top Gun*—[created with Pentagon assistance and equipment](#)—that boosted civic pride in the military.

Now it's my grandkids' turn to be awed and overwhelmed by [child-focused military propaganda](#). Don't even get me started on the [war propaganda churned out by the toymakers](#). Even [reality TV shows have gotten in on the gig](#), with the Pentagon's entertainment office helping to sell war to the American public.

It's estimated that [U.S. military intelligence agencies \(including the NSA\) have influenced over 1,800 movies and TV shows](#).

And then there are the growing number of video games, a number of which are engineered by or created for the military, which have accustomed players to interactive war play through military simulations and first-person shooter scenarios.

This is how you acclimate a population to war.

This is how you cultivate loyalty to a war machine.

This is how, to borrow from the subtitle to the 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove*, you teach a nation to “stop worrying and love the bomb.”

As journalist David Sirota writes for *Salon*, “[C]ollusion between the military and Hollywood – including allowing Pentagon officials to line edit scripts—is once again on the rise, with new television programs and movies slated to celebrate the Navy SEALs....[major Hollywood](#)

[directors remain more than happy to ideologically slant their films in precisely the pro-war, pro-militarist direction that the Pentagon demands in exchange for taxpayer-subsidized access to military hardware.](#)"

Why is the Pentagon (and the CIA and the government at large) so focused on using Hollywood as a propaganda machine?

To those who profit from war, it is—as [Sirota recognizes](#)—“a ‘product’ to be sold via pop culture products that sanitize war and, in the process, boost recruitment numbers....At a time when more and more Americans are questioning the fundamental tenets of militarism (i.e., budget-busting defense expenditures, never-ending wars/occupations, etc.), military officials are desperate to turn the public opinion tide back in a pro-militarist direction — and they know pop culture is the most effective tool to achieve that goal.”

The media, eager to score higher ratings, has been equally complicit in making (real) war more palatable to the public by packaging it as TV friendly.

This is what professor Roger Stahl refers to as the representation of a “[clean war](#)”: a war “without victims, without bodies, and without suffering”:

“‘Dehumanize destruction’ by extracting all human imagery from target areas ... The language used to describe the clean war is as antiseptic as the pictures. Bombings are ‘air strikes.’ A future bombsite is a ‘target of opportunity.’ Unarmed areas are ‘soft targets.’ Civilians are ‘collateral damage.’ Destruction is always ‘surgical.’ By and large, the clean war wiped the humanity of civilians from the screen ... Create conditions by which war appears short, abstract, sanitized and even aesthetically beautiful. Minimize any sense of death: of soldiers or civilians.”

This is [how you sell war to a populace that may have grown weary of endless wars](#): sanitize the war coverage of anything graphic or discomfiting (present a clean war), gloss over the actual numbers of soldiers and civilians killed (human cost), cast the business of killing humans in a more abstract, palatable fashion (such as a hunt), demonize one’s opponents, and make the weapons of war a source of wonder and delight.

“This obsession with weapons of war has a name: [technofetishism](#),” explains Stahl. “Weapons appear to take on a magical aura. They become centerpieces in a cult of worship.”

“Apart from gazing at the majesty of these bombs, we were also invited to step inside these high-tech machines and take them for a spin,” said Stahl. “Or if we have the means, we can purchase one of the military vehicles on the consumer market. Not only are we invited to fantasize about being in the driver’s seat, we are routinely invited to peer through the crosshairs too. These repeated modes of imaging war cultivate new modes of perception, new relationships to the tools of state violence. In other words, [we become accustomed to ‘seeing’ through the machines of war.](#)”

In order to sell war, you have to feed the public’s appetite for entertainment.

Not satisfied with peddling its war propaganda through Hollywood, reality TV shows and embedded journalists whose reports came across as glorified promotional ads for the military, the Pentagon has also turned to sports to further advance its agenda, “[tying the](#)

[symbols of sports with the symbols of war.](#)”

The military has been firmly entrenched in the nation’s sports spectacles ever since, having [co-opted football, basketball, even NASCAR.](#)

This is how you sustain the nation’s appetite for war.

No wonder entertainment violence is the hottest selling ticket at the box office. As professor Henry [Giroux points out](#), “Popular culture not only trades in violence as entertainment, but also it delivers violence to a society addicted to a pleasure principle steeped in graphic and extreme images of human suffering, mayhem and torture.”

No wonder the government continues to whet the nation’s appetite for violence and war through paid propaganda programs (seeded throughout sports entertainment, Hollywood blockbusters and video games)—what Stahl refers to as “[militainment](#)”—that glorify the military and serve as recruiting tools for America’s expanding military empire.

No wonder Americans from a very young age are being groomed to enlist as foot soldiers—even virtual ones—in America’s Army (coincidentally, that’s also the name of a first person shooter video game produced by the military). Explorer Scouts, for example, are one of the [most popular recruiting tools for the military](#) and its civilian counterparts (law enforcement, Border Patrol, and the FBI).

No wonder the United States is the [number one consumer, exporter and perpetrator of violence and violent weapons](#) in the world. Seriously, America [spends more money on war](#) than the combined military budgets of China, Russia, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, Saudi Arabia, India, Germany, Italy and Brazil. America polices the globe, with [800 military bases and troops stationed in 160 countries](#). Moreover, the war hawks have turned the American homeland into a quasi-battlefield with military gear, weapons and tactics. In turn, domestic police forces have become roving extensions of the military—a standing army.

We are dealing with a sophisticated, far-reaching war machine that has woven itself into the very fabric of this nation.

Clearly, our national priorities are in desperate need of an overhaul.

Eventually, all military empires fall and fail by spreading themselves too thin and spending themselves to death.

It happened in Rome: at the height of its power, even the mighty Roman Empire could not stare down a collapsing economy and a burgeoning military. Prolonged periods of war and false economic prosperity largely led to its demise.

It’s happening again.

The American Empire—with its endless wars waged by U.S. military servicepeople who have been reduced to little more than guns for hire: outsourced, stretched too thin, and deployed to far-flung places to police the globe—is approaching a breaking point.

The government is destabilizing the economy, destroying the national infrastructure through neglect and a lack of resources, and turning taxpayer dollars into blood money with its endless wars, drone strikes and mounting death tolls.

This is exactly the scenario President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned against when he cautioned the citizenry not to let the profit-driven war machine endanger our liberties or democratic processes. Eisenhower, who served as Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II, was alarmed by the rise of the profit-driven war machine that, in order to perpetuate itself, would have to keep waging war.

Yet as Eisenhower recognized, the consequences of allowing the military-industrial complex to wage war, exhaust our resources and dictate our national priorities are beyond grave:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people. This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

We failed to heed Eisenhower's warning.

The illicit merger of the armaments industry and the government that Eisenhower warned against has come to represent perhaps the greatest threat to the nation today.

What we have is a confluence of factors and influences that go beyond mere comparisons to Rome. It is a union of Orwell's 1984 with its shadowy, totalitarian government—i.e., fascism, the union of government and corporate powers—and a total surveillance state with a military empire extended throughout the world.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), this is how tyranny rises and freedom falls.

The growth of and reliance on militarism as the solution for our problems both domestically and abroad bodes ill for the constitutional principles which form the basis of the American experiment in freedom.

As author Aldous Huxley warned: "Liberty cannot flourish in a country that is permanently on a war footing, or even a near-war footing. Permanent crisis justifies permanent control of everybody and everything by the agencies of the central government."

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