

Is The Military-Industrial Complex Invincible?

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It was more than half a century ago that the then U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower, in his farewell address to the nation, warned of the growing influence of a phenomenon that still continues to undermine and weaken the bases of American democracy: the military-industrial complex.

The military-industrial complex is a concept denoting a money-spinning and economically beneficial interaction between the war-planners and the arms industry. The government officials set the plans for a new military adventure with the apparent goal of “exporting democracy” to other countries and “liberating” them while the genuine, behind-the-scenes goal is to further some political interests and plunder the natural resources of the target country. On their part, the multinational companies get profitable and lucrative deals for manufacturing weaponry, and the whole process, which ultimately leads to unwarranted killings and irretrievable destructions, undercuts the government’s accountability before the Constitution and the international law.

To get an idea of what the military-industrial complex is, it would be helpful to take a look at the relationship between the legislative bodies of the U.S. federal government, i.e. the bicameral Congress comprised of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the arms manufacturing industry, the interest groups, political lobbies, the multinational organizations and the corporate media.

For a long time, this dreadful complex, which the only army general elected as the U.S. President has worriedly warned about, has imposed additional and unjustifiable costs on the American taxpayers. The U.S. citizens have been bearing the brunt of the government’s warmongering and bloodletting across the globe. It’s noted that the United States, since its independence, has either directly or indirectly taken part in more than 50 wars and military confrontations that have cost the lives of millions of innocent, unarmed civilians. The most recent example is the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which until the complete withdrawal of the U.S. forces in 2011, claimed around 1.5 million lives.

The American citizens, even those who usually approve of the government policies regardless of which party is in power, have always complained about the disproportionate and irrational spending of the successive administrations on militarism and wars. This concern was echoed in President Eisenhower’s farewell address delivered on January 17, 1961 where he stated, “three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations.”

The people’s dissatisfaction with the U.S. government’s excessive spending on military projects and arms production has been manifested in different ways; from the millions-

strong rallies and demonstrations in several U.S. cities preceding the Iraq War, to the recent Occupy Wall Street movement, which was seminally oriented on economic demands, but subsequently expanded to encompass the people's political grievances regarding the U.S. foreign policy and its military expeditions in the Middle East. Needless to say the Occupy Wall Street movement, which was a purely democratic and popular uprising, was brutally crushed and suppressed by the U.S. police state, as the prominent lawyer Marjorie Cohn puts it.

However, as the military-industrial complex grows and becomes stronger, the American democracy turns more fragile and unstable. The military-industrial complex has been a serious challenge to the democratic values upon which the Founding Fathers have constructed the U.S. Constitution. As time goes by, the government finds it more difficult to rationalize its imperial, expansionistic and militaristic agenda and justify its war adventures to its people, and once a government ceases to be responsible, accountable and transparent, it would be the starting point of the enfeeblement and evaporation of democracy.

The military-industrial complex wins profits for the arm dealers and traders whose existence and survival is hinged on wars and military confrontations. These contractors control and manipulate the public opinion through their dominance over the mainstream media. The mainstream media rarely run stories that are critical of the war policies of the government, and instead function as the propaganda wing of the state. A notorious example is the joint collaboration by Judith Miller and her colleagues at the New York Times to lay the groundwork for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by presenting false evidence of the non-existent Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction. The massive media propaganda campaign by the New York Times and other state-controlled newspapers and TV channels in the United States instituted this belief that a war was necessary to prevent Saddam Hussein from going mad and dropping its chemical bombs on the heads of the American citizens. It goes without saying that Saddam Hussein was the very puppet whom the United States and its European allies prodded into attacking Iran in 1980.

Although imperialism and militarism have been two inherent and characteristic features of the U.S. political establishment for a long time, the world has been witness to an extreme growth of the American greed for more wealth and political power in the recent years, especially following the 9/11 attacks that marked the beginning of a new era in the U.S. relations with the international community. The 9/11 attacks, which completely accidentally took place when the hawkish Republican George W. Bush was in power, underpinned the mindset of "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" and provided a good justification for invading and attacking the countries which are seen as potential threats to the U.S. national security.

Of course the role of lobbies and interest groups in the unrestrained growth of the military-industrial complex should not be ignored. The Israeli lobby is seen as the most powerful and influential external force in the U.S. political atmosphere and the foremost role-player that alters the major foreign policy decisions took by the White House.

The prominent investigative journalist Wayne Madsen believes that the Israeli lobby owns the White House, Congress, the Democratic and Republican parties and Hollywood. "The Israeli Lobby owns the Congress, media, Hollywood, Wall Street, both political parties, and the White House. This kind of talk will get people fired by this lobby, as we have seen

recently with White House correspondent Helen Thomas and CNN anchor Rick Sanchez. However, many Americans are growing tired of the arrogance of the Israel Lobby and their bigoted attitudes toward anyone who challenges their influence-peddling and their ridiculous insistence that Israel must be supported because of some ancient fairy tales involving some tribes who wandered the deserts of the Middle East and saw and heard non-existent things because of sun stroke, drinking bad water, and smoking local hallucinogenic plants," said Madsen in a December 2010 interview with the Veterans Today news and analysis website.

The military-industrial complex never cares for the morality or decency of the wars in which innocent people are massacred. It simply cares for the dollars that are earned through waging wars. The White House and Pentagon have also shown that they stride on the same path and take action whenever there are chances for winning some financial gains, even if the gain is insignificant and dispensable.

Nevertheless, even though the military-industrial complex seems enormously powerful and prevailing, it's not invincible. The grassroots movements, the alternative media, progressive, anti-war intellectuals, scholars, authors, journalists and conscious citizens can resist the forces that are driving our world to more wars and unrestricted bloodshed. As Laura Eisenhower, the great granddaughter of the U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower, noted in an interview, unity and consciousness can lead to the collapse of the military industrial complex. So, even a member of the presidential family tells us that what his great grandfather had warned against 53 years ago is not an unbreakable, undefeatable goal. It can be brought down.

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