

The Madness of U.S. Militarism

Where are today's Eisenhowers, Butlers, and Shoups?

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As a teenager in the 1970s, I recall talking to my dad about fears of nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. My dad took a broad view, suggesting that if U.S. and Soviet leaders were stupid enough to blow each other to smithereens, a billion Chinese people would be left to pick up the slack and move the world forward.

My dad was right about many things, but what he didn't realize was that U.S. nuclear war plans (known as SIOPs) often called for the elimination of the USSR and China, even if China had had no involvement in events leading up to the war. Basically, the ruling U.S. nuclear war philosophy was: If you're red, you're dead.

Daniel Ellsberg wrote about this in his book, *The Doomsday Machine*. As I wrote in my [review of that book](#):

"U.S. nuclear war plans circa 1960 envisioned a simultaneous attack on the USSR and China that would generate 600 million deaths after six months. As Ellsberg notes, that is 100 Holocausts. This plan was to be used even if China hadn't directly attacked the U.S., i.e. the USSR and China were lumped together as communist bad guys who had to be eliminated together in a general nuclear war. Only one U.S. general present at the briefing objected to this idea: [David M. Shoup](#), a Marine general and Medal of Honor winner, who also later objected to the Vietnam War."

What's truly startling is that only one U.S. military leader present, General David Shoup, objected to the SIOP that would lead to the death of 600 million people in six months. A decade later, scientists learned that such a huge nuclear exchange would likely cause a nuclear winter that would kill billions due to famine. Truly, the (few) living would envy the (many) dead.

Mention of David Shoup's name leads me to this [fine article](#): "The Marine Corps legend who tried to stop the Vietnam War," by James Clark. Shoup was a remarkable American who

helped to prevent the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 from escalating to a nuclear war. Once he retired from the Marines, he became a vocal opponent of the Vietnam War and militarism in general, a worthy successor to General Smedley Butler.



The Joint Chiefs in 1961. General Shoup is on the far right, next to General Curtis LeMay, architect of SAC and of a possible nuclear doomsday

I urge you to read Clark’s article on Shoup, who quotes Shoup’s hard-won wisdom here:

About the Vietnam War, Shoup said “I believe that if we had and would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-crooked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own.”

In the *Atlantic Monthly*, Shoup, echoing the warning of Eisenhower about the military-industrial complex, wrote bluntly about America’s war culture and its anti-democratic nature:

Somewhat like a religion, the basic appeals of anti-Communism, national defense and patriotism provide the foundation for a powerful creed upon which the defense establishment can build, grow, and justify its cost. More so than many large bureaucratic organizations, the defense establishment now devotes a large share of its efforts to self-perpetuation, to justifying its organizations, to preaching its doctrines, to self-maintenance and management.

You would think that a Medal of Honor recipient who’d proved his bravery and patriotism at Tarawa during World War II would be immune from charges of being unpatriotic or weak on defense, but you’d be wrong.

Where are today's Shoups among the U.S. military brass? Where are the leaders who are against genocidal nuclear war and who are willing to speak out against it? Where are the leaders who reject a new cold war with China and Russia? Where are the leaders with the courage to advocate for peace whenever possible in place of more and more war?

Have we fallen so far under the spell of militarism that America no longer produces leaders like Dwight Eisenhower, Smedley Butler, and David Shoup, generals who truly knew war, despised it, and wanted above all to put an end to it?

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