

Oh What a Lovely War!

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Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Was this the title of a British film? or a popular song of the 40s? Either way, I know the phrase originated in the imperial West, the humanitarian West, the West that monitors human rights and establishes international criminal courts to try all but its own citizens.

Our latest image of a 'lovely war' is not the sleek and silent bombers flying over north Africa. Nor is it the political accord rammed through the UN by a club of self-interested nations.

No. It's the sight of night revelers in American streets after their noble president announced the extra-judicial killing of the Al-Qaeda leader. Public cheers which met this attack prove what I have always argued and few will accept: namely, Americans adore war.

First, the death of Osama Bin Laden does not mark the end of war. It only allows Washington to claim success with a totally failed strategy it launched 10 years ago to capture the man they blamed for the 9/11 attacks. More significantly, what has this one death cost the world? Unknown trillions of dollars in government expenditure, the murder of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, Afghans, Pakistanis, Yemenis, and Muslims in the US's undeclared war against Al-Qaeda; not to forget the 6,000 plus American soldiers and the tens of thousands of maimed veterans.

Add to the calculation of 'success', the total devastation of two countries, Iraq and Afghanistan, with the future of millions of their citizens swept away in the chaos. Then there is the cost in American principles: Washington's policies in its terror war betrayed a once respected standard of justice; it exposed how routinely torture is practiced by American authorities; it made racism against Muslims part of everyday American life; it gave us the infamous Patriot Act and other legalized means of curbing US civil rights. The USA beefed up its CIA and other intelligence agencies to fight non-existent threats represented by Bin Laden.

Significantly, as Washington is quick to assure us, this celebrated murder does not end the terror war. We are told it raises new threats, requiring continued vigilance and heightened security measures. Instead of being reprimanded for their failures, US intelligence services are hailed for their success. And, according to May 12's Washington Post, applications to join the American intelligence services have skyrocketed following the murder of Bin Laden, an act which some denounce as a war crime.

What success? Ten years and incalculable losses in the effort, these agents are champions of justice? Yes, believe it. And the war-loving American public is pressed to demonstrate its pride in its intelligence work and combat efforts. "We got him. We won."

The phrase is burned into Americans from childhood, whether watching Tom and Jerry cartoons, cheering Bruce Willis-style heroes, or playing computer games. "We got him." No other activity consumes the American public from childhood to death like war: whether our toys, combat sports, Batman fantasy figures, mafia and espionage thrillers, Nintendo games, novels, or intellectual productions like the celebrated 'Civil War' TV series. War is part of entertainment for Americans, fundamental to conditioning the concept of heroism. War defines who is a 'good guy'. War offers everyone the thrill and glory of battle.

Don't tell me you marched against the war in 2003. Or that you did not vote for George W Bush. It doesn't matter that (at the most) .05 % of the US public doesn't support war. All Americans, including lofty-minded university 'liberals', are beneficiaries of the US war machine and war culture. All share similar heroes, all celebrate war literature, and all benefit from an economy dependent for growth on constant war.

Spontaneous cheers erupted when the US president—'leader of the free world'—announced Bin Laden's murder. Think about it and you surely must agree how this exposes the true nature of Americans.

Note how the raw emotional pleasure of war has its corollary in intellectual debates. Witness the days of media commentary on that 'military operation'. However eloquent the speeches, it is part of war's enduring entertainment value. Admit this and you open the door to change. Not Obama's "change" but real change.

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