

Perpetual War

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Because the world spends roughly a trillion dollars each year on armaments, it follows that very many people make their living from war. This is the reason why it is correct to speak of war as a social, political and economic institution, and also one of the main reasons why war persists, although everyone realizes that it is the cause of much of the suffering of humanity.

We know that war is madness, but it persists. We know that it threatens the survival of our species, but it persists, entrenched in the attitudes of historians, newspaper editors and television producers, entrenched in the methods by which politicians finance their campaigns, and entrenched in the financial power of arms manufacturers – entrenched also in the ponderous and costly hardware of war, the fleets of warships, bombers, tanks, nuclear missiles and so on.

In his farewell address, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned his nation against the excessive power that had been acquired during World War II by the military-industrial complex: “We have been compelled to create an armaments industry of vast proportions,” Eisenhower said, “...Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in American experience. The total influence – economic, political, even spiritual – is felt in every city, every state house, every office in the federal government. ... We must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. ... We must stand guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted.”

Eisenhower’s words echoed those of another US President, George Washington, who warned against “overgrown Military Establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty.”

The military-industrial complex needs enemies. Without them it would wither. Thus at the end of the Second World War, this vast power complex was faced with a crisis, but it was saved by the discovery of a new enemy – communism. However, at the end of the Cold War there was another terrible crisis for the military establishment, the arms manufacturers and their supporters in research, government and the mass media. People spoke of the “peace dividend”, i.e., constructive use of the trillion dollars that the world wastes each year on armaments. However, just in time, the military-industrial complex was saved from the nightmare of the “peace dividend” by the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

No matter that the attacks were crimes committed by individuals rather than acts of war, crimes against which police action rather than military action would have been appropriate. The Bush Administration (and CNN, Fox, etc.) quickly proclaimed that a state of war existed, and that the rules of war were in effect. The Cold War was replaced with the “War on Terrorism”.

To a large extent, this over-reaction to the events of 9/11/2001 can be interpreted in terms of the needs of the military-industrial complex against which Eisenhower had warned. Without a state of war and without enemies, this vast conglomerate of organizations and pressure groups would have languished.

If the aim of the “War on Terror” had been to rid the world of the threat of terrorism, acts like illegal assassination using drones would have been counterproductive, since they create many more terrorists than they destroy. But since the real aim is to produce a state of perpetual war, thus increasing the profits of the military-industrial complex, such methods are the best imaginable. Urinating on Afghan corpses or burning the Koran or murderous night-time raids on civilian homes also help to promote the real goal “C perpetual war.

Even the events that initiated the “War on Terror”, seem to have been made worse than they otherwise might have been, in order to give a better excuse for invading Iraq, attacking Afghanistan, and attacking civil liberties. There is evidence that a number of highly placed officials in the US government knew as early as April 2001 that the World Trade Center might soon be attacked. The testimony given by CIA insider Susan Lindauer is very explicit about this point. There is also evidence that charges of thermite were placed on steel structures of several buildings, to melt the steel and ensure their collapse. Molten steel and traces of thermite were found in the ruins before these were sealed off from public scrutiny by the FBI.

The collapse of Building 7 (which was not hit by the aircraft) is particularly suspicious. Larry Silverstein, the leaseholder of the World Trade Center, said shortly afterwards in a PBS interview: “I remember getting a call from the fire department commander telling me that they were not sure that they would be able to contain the fire...” (and he said that) “I think that the smartest thing to do is to pull it.” The phrase “pull it” is one used to speak of controlled demolition, and the subsequent free-falling collapse of Building 7 had all the earmarks of this process.

For those who belong to the military-industrial complex, perpetual war is a blessing, but for the majority of the people of the world it is a curse. Since we who oppose war are the vast majority, can we not make our wills felt?

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