

Revolving Wars: Towards An Age of Constant and Perpetual Conflict

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

We have entered an age of constant conflict....Only the foolish will fight fair. Lt Col Ralph Peters

It seems to be a worldwide given that senior politicians and military personnel make use of the revolving door when they retire from politics, and mostly it involves getting highly-paid directorships in arms manufacturing and other defence-related businesses. Britain's record is as good as it gets – depending on your interpretation of 'good'.

[For example](#): Lord Reid, Defence Secretary to G4S; Michael Portillo, Defence Secretary to BAE Systems; Air Chief Marshal Sir Glenn Torpy, chief of staff to BAE Systems; Admiral Sir John Slater, to Lockheed Martin UK; Major-General Graham Binns to Aegis Defence Services; Sir Kevin Tebbit, MoD permanent under-secretary to Finmeccanica UK, owner of Westlands; David Gould, MoD procurement to Selex Systems, part of Finmeccanica; and Lady Taylor, defence equipment minister then minister for international defence and security until May 2010. In December 2010 she joined the arms contractor Thales. This last revolver is particularly indefensible, seeing that as the procurement minister she oversaw a huge budget deficit, much of it caused by a contract with Thales.

According to [research](#) done by the Guardian, senior military officers and Ministry of Defence officials have taken up more than 3,500 jobs in arms companies over the past 16 years. Let's not forget the civil servants who follow the same route.

And what of the rule that prohibits them from taking a post related to their governmental responsibilities too soon after leaving office? (Mind you, other members of the great and good also benefit from revolving doors. Archbishop Rowan Williams, giving his final sermon in Canterbury Cathedral before retiring, exhorted his flock to give more respect to the elderly (apparently including those in their late fifties) who are ignored, marginalised and unable to gain or keep a job consistent with their qualifications and experience. Then he tottered off to a comfortable 'retirement' (housing and servants included) as Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge.)

But, with such a well-trodden path from Defence to Arms, it is no wonder that to a man and woman they're all gung-ho for war, wherever it might be – all in the name of defending our country's interests of course. It is also no wonder that we are now engaged in a revolving war.

Prime Ministers don't help. David Cameron likes travelling abroad with an escort of arms manufacturers and dealers, taking them to Cairo's Tahrir Square only days after Mubarak fell. [Late last year](#) he was in Saudi Arabia, UAE and Jordan, drumming up business for arms

manufacturers while telling the world he is on the side of peace and democracy, neither of which he appears to care for when money is on the table.

None of these people recognise that international law says a state can only wage war on another state if the second state has *physically* attacked the first – not threatening the state or their interests or by possessing weapons of mass destruction – which we sold them. They get round all that by drafting a UN resolution which allows them to ‘intervene’ in the name of peace. Or they do it under the umbrella of Nato, which seems to have greatly increased the area covered by the North Atlantic. Or they give themselves fancy titles like ISAF (International Security Assistance Force). And they hope that no one notices that all of this is illegal, that they are interfering in countries that are truly no threat to our safety but *are* often resource rich.

Since 9/11 and the illegal ‘war on terror’ no war is ever won nor does it actually end. It simply migrates. So we went into Afghanistan, then Iraq, then turned our attention back to Afghanistan. Drones took the war into the Yemen and Pakistan, then into Somalia. We took sides in Libya, provided ‘support’ including illegal boots on the ground and arms to the rebels, and reduced much of Tripoli and Misrata to rubble with air strikes. We took sides again over Syria, supporting the rebels (a dodgy term this, seeing that many of the fighters hold non-Syrian passports) against ‘the regime’ although we haven’t yet sent in troops. There are constant mutterings about Iran. And now Mali – and more innocent civilians will be killed, not by their own people but by French air strikes.

President Hollande is worried about Islamists ‘on Europe’s doorstep’. Unless Europe has expanded since I last looked, his geography is a little at fault. I’d interpret ‘on Europe’s doorstep’ as being something that was literally on the border of a European state, which Mali isn’t, although it had the misfortune of being a French colony. But on our doorstep? No.

Admittedly Europe in its imperial and colonial heyday treated Africa as its backyard, much as the US has treated South and Central America. Most people’s backyards used to contain the outside toilet and a vegetable patch. In the colonial backyards we still dump our rubbish but instead of potatoes we did, and still do, dig for gold, diamonds, oil and other goodies to put on the corporate plate.

Of course the UK was only ‘helping’ France by providing transport planes, planes which had to be diverted from their commitments to Afghanistan, because we really don’t have the equipment to fight all these wars. No troops on the ground, oh no, no! Ah... well... maybe some to help train the government forces. Haven’t we heard that before? Where next? Which country will be accused of housing ‘Al Qaeda’ or other ‘Islamist rebels’? Hardly had one asked the question when the crisis in Algeria reared its head. We have to get involved now – after all we have nationals working at the In Amenas gas plant, prompting Hilary Clinton to come out with the very silly statement that, as hostages’ lives were in danger, ‘utmost care must be taken to preserve innocent life.’ When did that ever truly bother Western leaders as they sent in the drones? But, of course, it is only *our* innocent lives that matter.

So, from Mali to Algeria, to the whole of North Africa? Cameron, Prime Ministerial as ever, said that a diplomatic response would not be enough to tackle the growing terrorist threat in North Africa, and that Britain faced ‘a large and existential threat from organisations like Al Qaeda in the Magreb’. Didn’t Tony Blair tell us that Saddam posed a ‘real and existential

threat to Britain'? Has it not occurred to people like Cameron and Clinton that much of the problem (apart from the West's desire to control other people's resources) has been their love of sending in the troops rather than diplomats? One thing you can be sure of - those dreaded people we are waging war upon will probably, at some point, have been supplied with our weapons.

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