

## The Military Industrial Complex

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First I wanted to say that I prepared some notes for this talk and when I practiced reciting them in front of my computer it took close to six hours. So I really hope you will forgive me for reading some of this so that you do not have to bring sleeping bags and prepare to spend the whole weekend at this event. I want to thank you for inviting me to Purdue. Harry Targ and I both had to face our technophobia and he never waivered. It is a return that I wish could do in person since I did teach here for 2 years.

My personal history at Purdue came after I had been heavily involved in Ann Arbor in creating the Teach-In movement to protest the war in Vietnam. Purdue was less fertile for protest but a small group, including

Bob Perrucci in Sociology, organized a silent noon vigil commemorating the deaths on all sides of that war. The ROTC was assigned to photograph us. My Dean at the Krannert Graduate School insisted that Purdue pay the costs of my attending an International Teach-In in Toronto, probably never at the time considering that this was not just another prestigious conference. Shortly after that I was invited to debate a Purdue political scientist about the war. In that debate I read to him the detailed plan of the North Vietnamese to infiltrate and take over South Vietnam and asked him whether it was so bad that we should sacrifice American lives to defeat it. He responded that it was pure tyranny and we had to pay the price. I then revealed that what I had read was actually the US plan for pacification of the villages. There was some embarrassment. Shortly after that I got some crank phone calls threatening to kidnap my two kids, one and five years old at the time.

One day my Dean invited me to talk. He told me that I had proven myself as an excellent research scholar and as a teacher, but, he did not think that I fit into the long range plans of the School. I agreed with him, and wound up at Berkeley. ONLY 25 YEARS LATER WHEN A former PURDUE COLLEAGUE WAS WRITING HIS MEMOIRS AND WANTED TO VERIFY SOMETHING ABOUT THAT TIME, DID I LEARN what had happened. THE DEAN HAD RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE SCHOOL BENEFACTOR. That letter was IN RESPONSE TO A LETTER I HAD PUBLISHED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES. The benefactor's letter HAD NOTED THAT PROFESSORS SHOULD NOT SPEAK PUBLICLY OUTSIDE OF THEIR AREAS OF EXPERTISE AND (don't laugh) SHOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE ASSOCIATED WITH A RADICAL NEWSPAPER LIKE THE NEW YORK TIMES. THE STORY HAS SOME IMPLICATION FOR today's TOPIC.

THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX IS NOT JUST SOME ELITE GROUP OF GENERALS AND WEAPONS CONTRACTORS EXISTING OUT THERE. CORPORATIONS NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN WEAPONS ARE HIGHLY INVOLVED. SO ARE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. SO ARE MEDIA OUTLETS THAT CONSTRUCT a mythical REALITY THAT CORPORATE GROWTH IS WONDERFUL AND THAT MILITARY ESCAPADES ARE JUST, SACRED and not to be criticized. FINALLY, the incident shows THAT ORDINARY PEOPLE GET HURT WHILE CERTAIN INTERESTS ARE PURSUED. The image of a military industrial complex I hope to convey is depressing. But I promise to come, finally to what I believe are some really hopeful signs.

FAST FORWARDING TO A CURRENT PROJECT OF THE military-industrial COMPLEX, THE AFGHANISTAN ESCALATION.

*AFGHANISTAN BECAUSE OF windswept desserts AND steep MOUNTAINS HAS BEEN INHOSPITABLE TO ANY BUT ITS LOCAL TRIBES OF HERDERS. BUT ITS LOCATION AS THE GATEWAY CONNECTING EUROPE, ASIA AND THE Middle East has made it a target for many conquests, all failures. They include Alexander the Great in 328 BC. Then the Huns, Turks, Arabs and Imperial England .*

British departure left a formal agreement that Afghanistan was a confederation of separate tribal entities.

*The British attempted to retain control via the selection of Maliks or tribal leaders. Governments and inter-governmental organizations like NATO are uncomfortable with tribes and prefer to have central governments-- even if these governments are no more than a militarized Green zone with posh facilities, some wealthy locals and a place for free trade agreements and military bases. In Fallujah, just west of Baghdad, waiters in white shirts, black pants,*

and black bow ties serve dinner to the American officers in their heavily guarded compound, and in 2003 the first Burger King appeared inside the enormous military base at Baghdad International Airport.

*Increasingly this is the* model for contemporary war. All people live in villages and communities of some form that help to give meaning to their lives. Increasingly, transnational corporations have moved into all of these settings, using their raw materials, exploiting their land, mining their minerals, clear-cutting their forests, replacing their local entrepreneurs, commandeering their work force, contaminating their habitats, building their airports and selling them weapons. It is a world in which Disney and MacDonald collaborate to make millions on cheap plastic toys assembled by young Vietnamese women, working 12 hour days in unventilated sweatshops and earning not enough to

feed their families. It is a world where farmer suicides in India and the US are at all time highs. in which the lack of options force parents to sell their children.

There are now 27 million slaves in the world, more than the number that existed during the total period of slavery in the US. American aid does not help create thriving economies. It is forced upon client governments to hire, or to lure, big corporations who exploit the area. When there are demands to pay a living wage or to deal with environmental havoc, they have adopted the use and run philosophy, deserting their host and moving on to a still more desperate country.

Increasingly, progress is defined by the ability of modern states that operate in service to this corporate expansion and alone provide the military capabilities necessary to make sure that the rules continue to expand the wealth of an elite group.

The concentration of wealth is staggering. The world's 800 billionaires have more than the poorer half of the entire world's population.

The difficulties of imposing this reality on the rest of the world are highlighted in Afghanistan. While the events of 9-11 offered a rationale that the US was attacked by foreigners, the response has little to do with the actual protection against terrorist attacks. Al-Qaida is estimated to have fewer than 150 people in its central group, mostly hidden in caves. Its only power to inflict harm is through the imitation of wannabes spread through much of the less developed world and inspired primarily by the presence of military occupations in Iraq, Afghanistan and in Palestine.

The exorbitant amount of money spent on homeland security involving the entire network of

intelligence gathering operations has failed to find one Al-Qaida cell or to convict one Al-Qaida member in the United States. But fear appeals have been used to generate an industry and an ideology for mistreatment of immigrants.

The Taliban's rise to power and influence came as a result of US military and propaganda efforts to incite Muslim dissent across borders into the former Soviet Union. They are not aliens in Afghanistan, but rather members of the same tribes and families who fade into the countryside and disappear by day even while some are militarily active by night. The Karzai government, by all accounts corrupt, is barely recognized outside of the capital. The Taliban leadership, which once effectively banned opium for religious reasons, now competes with other warlords for this only viable economic activity left after years of war torn destruction. 3% of the profits from the drug trade support the Taliban. 97% go to support the

activities of the warlords and police on the side of the US (at least some of the time). The idea that we are in Afghanistan to oppose fundamentalist repression of women sounds shallow. More women die in childbirth in Afghanistan than anywhere else in the world.

Malalaya Joya of the leading Afghan women's group has come out strongly against oppression of women by the Taliban and by the Warlords,-- but mostly by the US war which kills them and prevents them from solving their own problems.

It is not that the defense planners lack this information. Gen. McChrystal has been quietly pushing the line that we must talk to the Taliban, that killing civilians makes things worse and that a diplomatic solution is inevitable. Precisely how one conducts a war without killing civilians, without killing children, has not been resolved. But the alternative proposition offered by many in the military-industrial elite is that we are involved in a "long war" that will

last for generations. Perhaps such a Third World War has begun. The United States has invaded Africa. US troops have entered Somalia, extending their war front from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Yemen and, now, the Horn of Africa. In preparation for an attack on Iran, American missiles have been placed in four Persian Gulf states, and "bunker-buster" bombs are said to be arriving at the US base on the British island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

In Gaza, the sick and abandoned population, mostly children, is being entombed behind American-supplied walls in order to reinforce a illegal siege. In Latin America, the Obama administration has secured seven bases in Colombia, -- a nation with the worst human rights record on the continent -- from which to wage a war of attrition against the popular democracies in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay. Meanwhile, the Secretary of "Defense" Robert Gates complains that "the general [European]

public and the political class" are so opposed to war they are an "impediment" to peace. This is truly Orwellian. Gates speaks for interests for whom a long war is a celebration. For like the Cold War, it gives meaning to their lives, their careers, and their belief in the ultimate superiority of the system that has treated them so well.

If we want to ask why wars like the one in Afghanistan are happening, it may be useful to start by asking who benefits from the system of war. The best research available indicates that there is indeed a powerful elite. It is better to define them by plotting their network of interconnections than by naming particular individuals, tempting as that may be.

I can offer one example starting with the network of one individual, another with one company.

- 1) Gordon England. Was appointed Secretary of the Navy in May 2001. In this position Mr. England led America's Navy and Marine Corps and was responsible

for more than 800,000 military and civilian personnel and an annual budget of more than \$120 billion. He joined the Department of Homeland Security in January 2003. Prior to joining the administration of President G W. Bush, Mr. England was executive vice president of General Dynamics Corporation where he was responsible for two major corporate sectors: Information Systems and Technology, and International Contracting. Previously, he had served as executive vice president of the Combat Systems Group, president of General Dynamics Fort Worth aircraft company (later Lockheed), and was the principal of a mergers and acquisition consulting company. Such corporations are also connected with one another. One can track the Board memberships of England's General Dynamics colleagues as well as the accounting and law firms that serve GD. Among the GD board are retired generals and admirals, directors of major financial firms (Morgan Chase), food industry (Sara Lee), and pharmaceuticals (Schering Plough). The web of interconnections goes

further. With high level government and corporate officials one finds multiple links to certain financial institutions, law firms, accounting firms, and trade organizations like the Petroleum Institute or Pharma. They are linked to media corporations, to research centers and think tanks. People in these powerful networks are sought after for boards of Universities and major medical centers where they can help to attract donors and assure the supply of trained persons to run the greater society.

## 2) The Bechtel Group

The Bechtel Group is one of the world's largest engineering, construction, and project management companies, including 19 joint venture companies and numerous subsidiaries. Based in San Francisco since 1989, four generations of the Bechtel family have led their business through more than 22,000 projects in 140 nations on all seven continents. The building of the American railroad system, the Hoover Dam, BART

transit in San Francisco and, presently, the management and operation of Los Alamos National Laboratories in partnership with the University of California. The company plays a major role in the nuclear sector, with its early involvement in the Manhattan Project and its construction or design of over half the nuclear power plants in America. It is also one of the premier water-privatization companies in the world.

The company has a long history in the Persian Gulf. Since World War II, Bechtel has built oil refineries and pipelines, as well as major infrastructure such as highways and airports. During the 1980s, a subsidiary of Bechtel had a major Saudi Arabian client that invested \$10 million in the company, Bin Laden Construction.

The US government is the biggest financier of Bechtel. From 1990 to fiscal year 2002, the company received more than \$11.7 billion in U.S. government contracts—the sixth largest amount of the

approximately 70 companies with contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan. That means 5 other companies made more.

Bechtel's ties to the government facilitate this process. The company's relationships with U.S. policymakers and officeholders began when Stephen Bechtel partnered with John McCone, who later became head of the CIA under President Kennedy. In the 1970s, Bechtel hired numerous government officials including Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Casper Weinberger (who in 1980 left the company to become President Reagan's Defense Secretary, -- former Atomic Energy Commission chief Robert Hollingsworth, former Marine four-star general and NATO commander Jack Sheehan, and Richard Helms, who consulted on Iranian and Middle Eastern projects in 1978 after serving as CIA director and ambassador to Iran. Helms is well known for his involvement with the attempted assassination of Fidel Castro and the overthrow of Chilean leader Salvador Allende (Peterson,

2006). The exchange has been in both directions -- government officials moving into Bechtel positions and Bechtel officers moving into government and back to Bechtel to become consultants to government.

The highest profile officeholder was George Shultz, former treasury secretary to Nixon. Shultz bounced back and forth between an executive vice president position in Bechtel to the position of Secretary of State under Reagan and back to Bechtel's board of directors. Shultz involvement with Iraq is long and deep. Secretary of State, Shultz sent Donald Rumsfeld to meet with Saddam Hussein to advocate for the building of a pipeline from the oilfields of Iraq to the port of Aqaba in Jordan. Also as the chairman of the International Council of JP Morgan Chase, Shultz loaned \$500 million to Saddam Hussein to buy weapons and Bechtel was one of the companies that sold the weapons. As chair of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, Shultz wrote a piece printed in the Washington Post entitled "Act Now; The Danger is

Immediate,” advocating a preemptive strike on Iraq.

The company is but one example of the rise of disaster capitalism. It benefits first from destroying countries and then again from re-building them.

Bechtel Groups and its employees have been among the biggest political donors in the construction industry. The company and its workers contributed at least \$446,000 to federal candidates and party committees in the 2008 election. Do contributions matter. Well, yes. The contributions to politicians by the financial sector in 2008 led to the prompt congressional approval of the bailout, at 235 thousand percent return on their investment.

There are places where the wealthiest and most powerful people in the world do meet, sometimes in secret, sometimes in public venues. Among the ones kept secret are the Bilderburg group, a transnational elite that takes over a 5 star hotel, at least annually,

covers every detail of security and media control and is not reported upon. One British journalist, who *unsuccessfully* attempted to raise the question of why its meetings needed to be so secret, quickly lost his job. The Skull & Bones society, which has a public showing in movies and conspiracy theories, incorporates young male future world leaders at Yale University involving the often-bizarre rituals of a secret society. They have been home to the Rockefeller, Taft, Harriman and Bush families and have provided an inordinate number of cabinet officials, Presidents, CEO's of corporate dynasties and CIA directors.

The Bohemian Club has a membership sufficiently exclusive that the president of IBM had to be vetted for more than two years before he could be admitted. They meet annually in an idyllic site near the Russian River in California with all staff services hired specifically for the occasion. They consume large quantities of alcohol, engage in lakeside chats, and some bawdy and lewd theatrical rituals, all of

which emphasize the heavy burden they share as those who shape the future of the world for the rest of us who would go astray without them. Since 1923, all Republican and several Democrat Presidents have been members. The club makes no policy decisions but establishes a sense of camaraderie, which helps them to conduct business when they later show up in their roles in the chamber of commerce, the World Trade Organization, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Tri-lateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations. As with all other centers of imperial power they share certain basic beliefs. In this case, two basic beliefs are: First, that the global corporate growth is an ultimate goal, and second, that they know what is best for others. How they actually fulfill this agenda, as with other imperial dynasties, is through the presence of loyal courtiers, or mandarins or, in the US, think tanks.

IF Time permits

MY PERSONAL STORY AS ENV'T. EXPERT

The experts on consolidation have helped to centralize ownership of the media, such that 6 companies own almost all of the media outlets, print, TV and radio. Controlling the flow of information is important not just for the details on a particular event but also for the ways that we construct what we believe to be reality. They have mobilized communication technologies based on rather basic psychological principles; address peoples underlying needs and, repeat the message endlessly. We have been sold a construction in which we value our lives by what we consume. When we could no longer increase family income so our children might consume more, (since about 1970). We were sold the message that we could continue to consume with credit. We are sold candidates who are designed and marketed by some of the same companies that market junk foods. They have developed corporations for *perception management* that are

designed to work, on a daily basis, with media outlets to provide corporate and military releases in a seamless flow of what passes for news.

They have sold us the myth of democracy. For the elite it is important that we believe that we have the power to choose our candidates. Their fondest wish is that the poor should believe we have a democracy --and their greatest fear is that we might actually get one.

Can we afford the human costs of this complex?

Well, yes we can surely recruit soldiers as long as people are displaced . Retired marine Sergeant Martin Smith reflected upon the poor and poorly educated recruits he trained, -- “a recovering meth(amphetamine) addict, a young male who had prostituted himself to pay his rent, an El Salvadorian immigrant serving in order to receive a green card, a single mother who could not afford her child's

healthcare needs as a civilian, and a gay teenager who entertained his platoon by singing Madonna karaoke in the barracks. They were a cross-section of working-class America hoping for a change in their lives from a world that seemed utterly hopeless.”<sup>i</sup>

But what of the personal costs of violence inflicted upon people, the blind or legless veterans or those homeless, disturbed veterans panhandling for a meal or a fix. What of the 1 in 3 women who have been sexually assaulted or harassed in service, the soldiers who commit suicide, the families separated, the spouses of veterans still suffering from untreated outbreaks of nightmares or violence. What of the soldiers whose claims of illness are disputed or those who have been unwitting subjects in tests of toxic weapons. In the Persian Gulf war the Pentagon denied the Gulf War syndrome, avoided treatment, and then finally had to admit that 100,000 soldiers had been exposed to Sarin gas. What of the people

who are collateral damage in an era when most casualties of war are not soldiers? And what of the children still being maimed by land mines long after hostilities have ended.

The fact is that the war planners exist in world of a giant global game. The wealthiest are notoriously absent from military combat. They think as game theorists where winning and competitive advantage are what is critical and every loss is a fact to be managed so that support for the game continues. Their language is a emotionless technocratic one – killing people is engagement. Counterforce capabilities and smart bombs are the words that assure a mastery over the anxiety that might be caused by the images of radiated flesh, dying child victims or incinerated cities. Instead , we have "clean bombs" or just "devices," "collateral damage," and "surgical strikes." But the images of macho bravado and extraordinary male potency break through. The Harrier II is described as "an exceptional thrust to

weight ratio... with vectored thrust capability that makes the unique rapid response possible. It is "Designed to maximize runway cratering by optimizing penetration dynamics and utilizing the most efficient warhead yet designed." To talk about its capacity for killing is to be considered feminine and a sure sign that you will not be invited to future discussions by experts. As long as the human costs are numbers, we seem able to bear them.

**Can we afford the economic costs ?**

**Economists Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, Iraq alone will be a \$3-trillion war. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, though expensive, account for only half of the increases since 1998.**

**In his 2011 budget, President Obama proposes to spend a total of \$5 trillion on the military between 2010 and 2017, 5 % more in real terms than the Bush administration authorized between 2002 and 2009.**

Washington's deficit (will reach a head-spinning \$1.6 trillion this year. The huge sum will be borrowed, mostly from China and Japan, to which the U.S. already owes \$1.5 trillion. Debt service will cost \$250 billion.

To spend \$1 trillion, one would have had to start spending \$1 million daily soon after Rome was founded and continue for 2,738 years until today.

Obama's total military budget is nearly \$1 trillion. This includes Pentagon spending of \$880 billion. Add secret black programs (about \$70 billion); military aid to foreign nations like Egypt, Israel and Pakistan; military "contractors" (mercenaries and workers); and veterans' costs. Add \$75 billion for 16 intelligence agencies with 200,000 employees.

It costs a lot to run 702 overseas bases in about 130 countries and another 6,000 bases in the United States and its territories. Some of these bases are so

gigantic they require as many as nine internal bus routes for soldiers and civilian contractors to get around.

The costs can only be borne by starving human services and increasing debt. So far this is what we see happening.

So, Is there any hope for positive outlook for a transformation to peace?

I think yes --for several reasons. First the corporate system that this military is designed to protect is in crisis. The central players are still squeezing all they can to maximize their profits. The system in place since the seventies could no longer depend upon new areas of wasteful consumption. It came to depend upon one successive bubble after another in which profits accrued from bets on what growth might provide in the future. With money no longer backed by anything real, the Feds could keep that game going by playing with interest rates. But we do not really need more private vacation homes, or yachts or

kitchen gadgets or fast unhealthy foods, or war game toys. We do need to have jobs that have some meaning. We do need more time to spend with our families and friends. We do need an environment free from toxic hazards and from fear of violence. We know that we cannot get this without acknowledging the entire human family has the same needs as our own and we do not expect that the military – industrial=media –educational- energy- and computer complex will deliver this. What Paul Hawkins has labeled Blessed Unrest is surging into a vast wave of efforts, some as small as sharing a vegetable garden with neighbors or volunteering to work with seniors or with kids. Some are large enough to provide micro-finance to poor women, some working with indigenous healers to improve AIDS outreach in Africa. Some are speaking up at meeting of veterans demanding services they are due-- and many are using social networks to roll back the blanket of mainstream media over the tragic

consequences of war and of a culture of violence. Some are challenging the activities and lies of military recruiters. Some are finding the courage to mention, at discussion of education cutbacks, the matter of where the money is actually going. And some of you are striving to figure out how all of this may become an organized and unstoppable movement. So for those of us who would. We have not let the powerful complex convince us that people are either without compassion or without power. Those assets are deeper than we imagine. Something quite tangible is emerging as a force to challenge the belief that the military-industrial complex is invincible. I invite you all to be part of it.

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