

A Constant Reminder to a Constant War. Militarism in American Society

By [Andre Bermont](#)

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The wars in the Middle East continue to rage unabated. Over the weekend a Russian war plane was struck down by an Al Qaeda affiliated group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, and once again stoked fears of widening the struggle in Syria between US and Russian proxy forces. It is yet another reminder of the ongoing and seemingly endless wars being waged in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere around the globe.

Our transition into this never-ending war paradigm, fashioned out of the events of the post 9/11 era, seeks only to benefit and further cement the pre-existing alliance between the US military and the proliferating arms industries; collectively known as the military industrial complex. This partnership represents the systematic convergence of the capitalist system and the modern American military establishment that was formed after the world conflicts of the first half the 20th century.

Ironically enough – one of the greatest leaders to emerge out of the American military institution was also one of its greatest critics. That of the former Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces during World War II and later President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

President Eisenhower's farewell address in January 1961 first propagated the dire warning of the ills of the military industrial complex. In his address, Eisenhower indicated that due to the continuous nature of world conflicts and America's participation therein, the US government had "been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry" resulting in more expenditure on "military security than the net income of all US corporations." [1]

This notion of a permanent armaments industry was at the time new to the American experience. Eisenhower was in a unique position to not only witness its creation during the militarization period of World War II, but also to observe its everlasting foundation during the advent of the Cold War. Tensions between the US and the Soviet Union produced a decades long arms race unprecedented in the history of the world. During this time the convergence between the military establishment and the armaments industry changed the very facet of American society and imbued the nation in an insatiable fixation on war.

The collapse of the Soviet Union did very little to stem the tide of militarization as new wars in the 21st century reasserted the need to increase defense spending. Between 2002-2011, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, sales among the top 100 arms companies grew by 51%.[2] Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Raytheon, the worlds top three arms manufacturers in respect to net worth, had a combined annual revenue of over \$95 billion USD in 2014 alone.[3]

Eisenhower fretted over the “unwarranted influence” potentially garnered by the military industrial complex leading to a disastrous path of “misplaced power” in the councils of government. This is explicitly evident in the intimate business dealings between the US Department of Defense (DoD) and the largest arms manufacturer, Lockheed Martin. By far its principal customer, US government military expenditures account for 60% of the \$45Bn USD revenue it receives in a year.[4] Lockheed Martin’s contracts and influence within the US government is certainly perpetuated by its extensive lobbying, amounting to \$241,738,668 USD between 1998-2017; according to [opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org). [5]

As Eisenhower no doubtfully realized, America’s relationship with war making allowed it to better pursue its political and military objectives abroad in tandem to realizing its economic agenda at home. He spoke of the “prospect of domination of the nation’s scholars by federal employment” along with the influence of money “to be gravely regarded.”[6] With America’s ever expanding military role, it comes to no surprise that the DoD became one of the country’s largest employer with nearly two million personnel.[7] Lockheed Martin, according to their official site, has either core factories or one of its many subsidiary companies in all 50 US states while touting to employ 115,000 people.[8] The so called “revolving door” phenomena, where government and private employment mix is also a deeply ingrained ritual. An article released by the Huffington Post in 2012 stated that upwards to 70% of retired US generals enter into contracts with arms manufacturers or defense related consultancies.[9]

Advances in technology also play a pivotal role in the sweeping changes in America’s industrial-military posture. Recent developments in aerodynamics, chip processing speed, automation, AI and machine learning along with expansions in telecommunications and the internet are spurred by massive R&D investments by the military establishment. The defense advance research projects agency or DARPA is one of the leading research institutes in the world and comprises renowned academics, private and governmental partners. Its sole mission is to “make pivotal investments in breakthrough technologies for national security.”[10] DARPA’s advances are often kept secret and its intentions are frequently debated by the public at large.

The incorporation of militarism into American society is staggering. From the onset of the post-war era, civilian life was forever transformed and molded to meet the growing demands of the military industrial complex. Its take over was systematic yet subtle, hidden behind the veil of democracy and American exceptionalism. Whether or not the state’s hijacking by the military establishment was deliberate or just a manifestation of empire building, the results become the same; a captive public policy by scientific-technological elites.

According to Eisenhower, “Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”[11]

In a world fraught with uncertainty – a constant reminder is needed for a society in constant war.

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Andre Bermont is the Editor-in-Chief for cuibononews.com, a news aggregation and content

website.

Notes

[1] Eisenhower, Dwight. Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17th 1961. Speech transcript.
https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/farewell_address.pdf

[2] Weigley, Samuel. 10 Companies Profiting Most from the War. USA Today. March 10th 2013, updated March 10th 2013
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2013/03/10/10-companies-profiting-most-from-war/1970997/>

[3] Pai, Priyanka. Top 10 Largest Weapons Manufacturing Companies in the World. Tharawat Magazine. July 14th, 2015.
<https://www.tharawat-magazine.com/facts/top-10-largest-weapons-manufacturing-companies/#gs.Boff2MI>

[4] King, Nicholas. Lockheed Martin Corp. Corporate Philanthropy. April 29th, 2014. <http://www.corporatephilanthropyreport.com/m-article-detail/lockheed-martin-corp.aspx>

[5] Top Spenders. Open Secrets, Center for Responsive Politics.
<https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/top.php?showYear=a&indexType=s>

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https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/farewell_address.pdf

[7] United States Department of Defense (Official Website). Modified January 27th, 2017.
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[8] Who We Are. Lockheed Martin Official Website.
<https://www.lockheedmartin.com/us/who-we-are.html>

[9] Johnson, Luke. Report: 70% of Retired Generals Took Jobs with Defense Contractors or Consultancies. Huffington Post. November 19th, 2012. Last updated November 20th, 2012.
http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/defense-contractors-generals_n_2160771

[10] About DARPA. DARPA Official Webpage. <https://www.darpa.mil/about-us/about-darpa>

[11] Eisenhower, Dwight. Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17th 1961. Speech transcript.
https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/farewell_address.pdf



[The Globalization of War: America's "Long War" against Humanity](#)

Michel Chossudovsky

The "globalization of war" is a hegemonic project. Major military and covert intelligence operations are being undertaken simultaneously in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and the Far East. The U.S. military agenda combines both major theater operations as well as covert actions geared towards destabilizing sovereign states.

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