

The Enemy From Within. Chris Hedges

The war industry, a state within a state, disembowels the nation, stumbles from one military fiasco to the next, strips us of civil liberties and pushes us towards suicidal wars with Russia and China.

By [Chris Hedges](#)

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*America is a [stratocracy](#), a form of government dominated by the military. It is axiomatic among the two ruling parties that there must be a constant preparation for war. The war machine's massive budgets are sacrosanct. Its billions of dollars in [waste and fraud](#) are ignored. Its military fiascos in Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East have disappeared into the vast cavern of historical amnesia. This amnesia, which means there is never accountability, licenses the war machine to economically disembowel the country and drive the Empire into one self-defeating conflict after another. The militarists win every election. They cannot lose. It is impossible to vote against them. The war state is a *Götterdämmerung*, as Dwight Macdonald writes, "without the gods."*

Since the end of the Second World War, the federal government has spent more than half its tax dollars on past, current and future military operations. It is the largest single sustaining activity of the government. Military systems are sold before they are produced with guarantees that huge cost overruns will be covered. Foreign aid is contingent on buying U.S. weapons. Egypt, which receives some \$1.3 billion in foreign military financing, is [required](#) to devote it to buying and maintaining U.S. weapons systems. Israel has [received](#) \$158 billion in bilateral assistance from the U.S. since 1949, almost all of it since 1971 in the form of military aid, with most of it going towards arms purchases from U.S. weapons manufacturers. The American public funds the research, development and building of weapons systems and then buys these same weapons systems on behalf of foreign governments. It is a circular system of corporate welfare.

Between October 2021 and September 2022, the U.S. [spent](#) \$877 billion on the military, that's more than the next 10 countries, including China, Russia, Germany, France and the United Kingdom combined. These huge military expenditures, along with the rising costs of a for-profit healthcare system, have [driven](#) the U.S. national debt to over \$31

trillion, [nearly](#) \$5 trillion more than the U.S.'s entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This imbalance is not sustainable, especially once the dollar is [no longer](#) the world's reserve currency. As of January 2023, the U.S. [spent](#) a record \$213 billion servicing the interest on its national debt.

The public, bombarded with war propaganda, cheers on their self-immolation. It revels in the despicable beauty of our military prowess. It speaks in the thought-terminating clichés spewed out by mass culture and mass media. It imbibes the illusion of omnipotence and wallows in self-adulation.

The intoxication of war is a plague. It imparts an emotional high that is impervious to logic, reason or fact. No nation is immune. The gravest mistake made by European socialists on the eve of the First World War was the belief that the working classes of France, Germany, Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia and Great Britain would not be divided into antagonistic tribes because of disputes between imperialist governments. They would not, the socialists assured themselves, sign on for the suicidal slaughter of millions of working men in the trenches. Instead, nearly every socialist leader walked away from their anti-war platform to back their nation's entry into the war. The handful who did not, such as [Rosa Luxemburg](#), were sent to prison.

A society dominated by militarists distorts its social, cultural, economic and political institutions to serve the interests of the war industry. The essence of the military is masked with subterfuges — [using the military](#) to [carry out](#) humanitarian relief missions, evacuating civilians in danger, as [we see](#) in the Sudan, defining military aggression as “humanitarian intervention” or a way to protect democracy and liberty, or lauding the military as carrying out a vital civic function by teaching leadership, responsibility, ethics and skills to young recruits. The true face of the military — industrial slaughter — is hidden.

The mantra of the militarized state is national security. If every discussion begins with a question of national security, every answer includes force or the threat of force. The preoccupation with internal and external threats divides the world into friend and foe, good and evil. Militarized societies are fertile ground for demagogues. Militarists, like demagogues, see other nations and cultures in their own image – threatening and aggressive. They seek only domination.

It was not in our national interest to wage war for two decades across the Middle East. It is not in our national interest to go to war with Russia or China. But [militarists](#) need war the way a vampire needs blood.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev and later Vladimir Putin lobbied to be integrated into western economic and military alliances. An alliance that included Russia would have nullified the calls to expand NATO — which the U.S. had [promised](#) it would not do beyond the borders of a unified Germany — and have made it impossible to convince countries in eastern and central Europe to spend billions on U.S. military hardware. Moscow's requests were rebuffed. Russia was made the enemy, whether it wanted to be or not. None of this made us more secure. Washington's decision to interfere in [Ukraine's domestic affairs](#) by [backing](#) a coup in 2014 triggered a civil war and Russia's subsequent invasion.

But for those who profit from war, antagonizing Russia, like antagonizing China, is a good

business model. Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin saw their stock prices [increase](#) by 40 percent and 37 percent respectively as a result of the Ukraine conflict.

A war with China, now an industrial giant, would [disrupt](#) the global supply chain with devastating effects on the U.S. and global economy. Apple [produces](#) 90 percent of its products in China. U.S. trade with China was \$690.6 billion [last year](#). In 2004, U.S. manufacturing output was [more than](#) twice China's. China's output is now [nearly double](#) that of the United States. China produces the largest number of [ships](#), [steel](#) and [smartphones](#) in the world. It dominates the global production of chemicals, metals, heavy industrial equipment and electronics. It is the world's largest rare earth mineral [exporter](#), its greatest reserve [holder](#) and is responsible for 80 percent of its [refining](#) worldwide. Rare earth minerals are [essential](#) to the manufacture of computer chips, smartphones, television screens, medical equipment, fluorescent light bulbs, cars, wind turbines, smart bombs, fighter jets and satellite communications.

War with China would result in massive shortages of a variety of goods and resources, some vital to the war industry, paralyzing U.S. businesses. Inflation and unemployment would rocket upwards. Rationing would be implemented. The global stock exchanges, at least in the short term, would be shut down. It would trigger a global depression. If the U.S. Navy was able to block oil shipments to China and disrupt its sea lanes, the conflict could potentially become nuclear.

In "[NATO 2030: Unified for a New Era](#)," the military alliance sees the future as a battle for hegemony with rival states, especially China. It calls for the preparation of prolonged global conflict. In October 2022, Air Force General Mike Minihan, head of Air Mobility Command, [presented](#) his "Mobility Manifesto" to a packed military conference. During this unhinged fearmongering diatribe, Minihan argued that if the U.S. does not dramatically escalate its preparations for a war with China, America's children will find themselves "subservient to a rules based order that benefits only one country [China]."

[According to](#) the New York Times, the Marine Corps is training units for beach assaults, where the Pentagon believes the first battles with China may occur, across "the first island chain" that includes, "Okinawa and Taiwan down to Malaysia as well as the South China Sea and disputed islands in the Spratlys and the Paracels."

Militarists drain funds from social and infrastructure programs. They pour money into research and development of weapons systems and neglect renewable energy technologies. Bridges, roads, electrical grids and levees collapse. Schools decay. Domestic manufacturing declines. The public is impoverished. The harsh forms of control the militarists test and perfect abroad migrate back to the homeland. Militarized Police. Militarized drones. Surveillance. Vast prison complexes. Suspension of basic civil liberties. Censorship.

Those such as [Julian Assange](#), who challenge the stratocracy, who expose its crimes and suicidal folly, are ruthlessly persecuted. But the war state harbors within it the seeds of its own destruction. It will cannibalize the nation until it collapses. Before then, it will lash out, like a blinded cyclops, seeking to restore its diminishing power through indiscriminate violence. The tragedy is not that the U.S. war state will self-destruct. The tragedy is that we will take down so many innocents with us.

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Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for fifteen years for The New York Times, where he served as the Middle East Bureau Chief and Balkan Bureau Chief for the paper. He previously worked overseas for The Dallas Morning News, The Christian Science Monitor, and NPR. He is the host of show The Chris Hedges Report.

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