

Good Morning America: US Public Wakes up to the Destructive Nature of Capitalism

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Global Research, February 02, 2010
2 February 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

As 20 million Americans struggle with unemployment and 40 million depend on food stamps, President Obama's exhortation for "America to make painful choices" and to "live within its means", must sound rather sickening. The president's budget announcement calls for "austerity" in "discretionary spending" such as education and healthcare, but this frugality is not extended to the American military.

While Obama makes a big deal about earmarking \$100 billion to tackle unemployment, a much understated but much bigger deal is the allocation of \$160 billion for America's wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Combined with the regular Pentagon annual budget, that puts US total spending on "defence" (meaning aggression) at \$710 billion over the next year – 700 per cent more than what it will spend on creating jobs.

To put this largesse in another perspective, US military spending compares with a federal education budget of some \$220 billion – that is, three times more of the taxpayers' money is spent every year on invading countries, expanding global bases, blowing up villages, testing missile interceptors etc., than developing the talents of young Americans.

What these figures show is not just that the infamous US military-industrial complex is alive and well; they show that the American economy is fundamentally a war economy. While its people are struggling to maintain some modicum of livelihood – jobs, homes, healthcare, education – what is evident more than ever to them is that the year-on-year inordinate US government spending on its military is far from "discretionary". It is compulsory.

Of course, for some this war tendency of capitalism, and especially an exhausted capitalism, is nothing new. Thinkers such as Leon Trotsky have irrefutably shown that the First and Second World Wars were the outcome of a collapse in the capitalist system and consequent rise in rivalry and conflict between imperialist powers.

Unfortunately, such understanding of the belligerent nature of capitalism and the origin of many, if not most, conflicts since the Second World War (Korea, Vietnam, Chile, Angola, Nicaragua, Iraq, to name but a few) has been off-limits for the wider western public, especially in the US. This was partly due to the blackballing of any intelligent criticism of capitalism in schools, universities and the media. Thus as America lurched from one military intervention and war to another, the US public was conditioned to accept the unacceptable repetition of history first as tragedy, then as farce, as Karl Marx so eloquently put it. In other words, they didn't learn from history what the root cause of conflict and killing was, and so they were condemned to watch and suffer its heinous repetition.

Luckily for Washington and its coterie of western allies, the 45-year Cold War with the Soviet Union was a propaganda gift. The “evil empire” and its “godless expansionism” provided the perfect cloak to disguise the essential dynamic of US and western intervention across the globe, as an imperative of capitalism, to appear rather as something noble, in the “defence of freedom and democracy”.

But when the Cold War fell away with the collapse of the Soviet Union, so did the cloak disguising the nature of capitalism. No propaganda stunt has ever quite fit the enormous bill to cover the criminal, destructive tendency of an economy run by a minority for the enrichment of a minority. Wars on drugs and rogue states and, absurdly, out of humanitarian concern (Somalia in 1991) just don’t add up in the public’s eyes to justify Washington’s fiscal blitz every year on military spending and its self-appointed role as global policeman. The latest stunt – the so-called war on terror – looked promising as an ideological blank cheque for capitalism’s wars, especially in the dust of 9/11.

Not any more. While the “war on terror” becomes ever more tenuous in its logic and justifications, while ever more bloated from its financial voracity; while American military bases keep expanding on every continent against no credible enemy (see Rick Rozoff, Globalresearch.ca); and while the majority of American citizens are told to endure discretionary cuts in their livelihoods; that is why the US public is now catching up with history and joining the dots. Their hitherto cherished economy, capitalism, is the cause of their own nation’s and other nations’ destruction.

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