

The War in Iraq and its Disastrous Consequences

Imperialism 101 - The US Addiction to War, Mayhem and Madness - Part II

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

Part I of this article explained that the US was always a warrior, imperial nation, building it in steps and addicted to its madness. First we took it from its original inhabitants; then we expanded it beyond our borders by seizing the half of Mexico we wanted; later we established colonies abroad; and now, our method of choice is to rule the world through compliant leaders in client states everywhere serving our interests. We began doing it gradually following WW II when we emerged as the only dominant nation left standing, unchallengeable as the world's only economic, political and military superpower. Even before the war ended, we planned to take full advantage of that indomitable status once it did. We pursued it throughout the "cold war" and in the 1990s when it was over. Then came 9/11, the gloves came off in the Bush administration, and top officials in it ended any pretense of what our real aims are. The rest, as they say, is history, and the nations we target in our quest for world dominance and our own people at home pay a dreadful price. Below is a case study of our imperial madness in Iraq documenting how painful that price is.

A Case Study In Imperial Mayhem and Madness and Its Disastrous Consequences - First the Victims

If the US had a slogan or motto on how best to fight wars it might be "all's surely fair in war as well as love." The only rules we observe are the ones we make up as we go along. With that code of conduct and with total disregard for the rule of domestic or international law, designated targets can only expect their earth scorched followed by a living hell delivered in the name of democracy and liberation. Iraq, like Southeast Asia in the sixties and seventies and Nicaragua and El Salvador in the eighties, is a classic example with Afghanistan being more of the same. The people on our receiving end of our gunshots know democracy American-style is none at all.

For anyone paying attention to events unfolding in Iraq from the few credible sources available (meaning unembedded journalists, reports from our disillusioned military and leaks including high level ones), there's little doubt the situation on the ground is disastrous and getting worse - for us as well as the Iraqis. From these reports on the ground, we continue learning more of what the Pentagon and administration try to suppress, always with the full cooperation of the corporate-run media. But the truth can't be hidden, the lies are unravelling, and the charade of progress is being seen as a shamless myth.

For 26 million Iraqis, liberation American-style is none whatever. For them it's an endless living hell nightmare since the US first attacked and invaded in January, 1991. At that time we deliberately and illegally destroyed essential infrastructure like power generating stations and clean water facilities vital to the health, welfare and safety of the people. We also wantonly slaughtered many thousands of defenseless civilians and Iraqi military who

had given up the fight they wanted no part of in the first place. The likely toll was at least 100,000 killed in just a few weeks of brutal one-sided combat mostly inflicted from the air against a target country we knew was defenseless. Our initial cost was modest for an operation involving 580,000 military personnel – 146 killed (including by friendly fire) and 467 wounded. A far greater cost to US forces would show up later that's discussed below.

What followed Operation Desert Storm was a dozen years of continued air-assault bombings along with oppressive and unjustifiable economic sanctions. Combined they destroyed all the institutions of a modern civil society which Iraq was prior to 1991. They left in their wake an epic humanitarian disaster by every measure imaginable including median Iraqi income creating mass poverty. Because of the country's oil wealth, Iraq was once the most advanced and developed country in the Middle East with a per capita income of \$2,313 in 1979. By 2003, that income had declined to \$255 per capita and in 2004 it had fallen further to about \$144. It's easy to understand why based on a study by the college of economics at Baghdad University that estimated the unemployment rate to be about 70%. Even the so-called "oil for food" program did little to relieve the crisis prior to the current invasion and war. It wasn't intended to as the US plan was to inflict the greatest possible hardships on the people hoping it would encourage them to rise up and topple Saddam. In fact, it had the opposite effect despite the severity of the toll. Instead of blaming Saddam, Iraqis relied on him for whatever relief they could get. It wasn't much or nearly enough because the US allowed him little to give.

The combination of war and economic sanctions likely caused the death of at least one million by even conservative estimates including 500,000 children. Other estimates put the number as high as 1.5 million in total by the end of the nineties. When Denis Halliday resigned in 1998 as UN head of Iraqi humanitarian relief he said he did so because he "had been instructed to implement a policy that satisfies the definition of genocide: a deliberate policy that has effectively killed well over one million individuals, children and adults." He went on to say 5,000 Iraqi children were dying needlessly every month.

Conditions got far worse following the US illegal aggression beginning in March, 2003. The daily toll of death and destruction from the ongoing endless conflict is unknown precisely, but even honest conservative estimates are appalling and shocking despite efforts by the Pentagon to suppress them. The British Lancet reported in October, 2004 by their "conservative assumptions" an Iraqi toll of about 100,000 "excess deaths" post March, 2003. They then updated their earlier estimate in February, 2006 to a likely 300,000 that seven months later is considerably higher. Other assessments suggest an even greater number, up to 500,000 according to one estimate a few months ago. Whatever the true number, the US inflicted disaster on Iraq and its people is one of epic proportions in all respects.

It's destroyed a once prosperous nation and left in its wake today a surreal lawless armed camp wasteland with few or no essential services like electricity, clean water, medical care, fuel or most everything else needed for sustenance and survival. It shows up in Baghdad's morgue that can't cope with the number of corpses it gets daily while those still living can't get desperately needed care at hospitals unable to provide it. It's also there in the US-run torture-prisons where anyone can be brutalized in a kind of a ritual foreplay for no reason at all. Things aren't improving. They get steadily worse as the occupation grinds on and death squads roam at will including the US "Salvador option" ones modeled after the types used in the Reagan era against the leftist guerrilla resistance in El Salvador in the 1980s that murdered many thousands. This is what life in most of Iraq is now like, and it clearly

warrants the label genocide. It also makes all US officials at the highest levels responsible for it guilty of egregious war crimes and crimes against humanity. Will they ever be held to account for what they've done? Never, as long as the US occupier lives by the rules of victor's justice that insures none at all for the victims.

A notable sign of US-style justice happened at the end of July when the Pentagon awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (DDSM) to retiring General Geoffrey Miller who supervised the infamous US torture-prisons at Guantanamo and later Abu Ghraib. The DDSM was established by Richard Nixon's 1970 Executive Order so the Secretary of Defense could award it to officers of the US Armed Forces "whose exceptional performance of duty and contributions to national security or defense have been at the highest levels." Clearly generals or other officers in charge of torture now qualify for the award.

The Toll of Mayhem and Madness On Our Own Military Forces On the Ground and Reporters

No one should ever believe anything from government sources, especially our own. We practically invented and defined the art of disseminating lies and practicing deceit. We're at it daily, particularly in how and what we report on the war in Iraq. The military holds update briefings at its media nerve center for the war - CentCom. It's a worthless exercise there and whenever else US officials report on the war. Anyone expecting to get a true picture of conditions on the ground won't ever because the most important information known is censored or suppressed. In times of war, the first casualty is truth, and the corporate-run media is always willing to oblige to keep it that way.

The Pentagon is also ready to use its muscle to censor, shut down, or destroy any news source in the country that may reveal what it wants suppressed. It repeatedly harasses and assaults Al-Jazeera closing it down and in 2003 attacked its Baghdad offices by air killing one of its correspondents and injuring another. Previously in Afghanistan in November, 2001, Al-Jazeera's Kabul offices were destroyed by a US missile in a deliberate attempt to stop unfavorable news reports from coming out. Another time a US tank with no provocation fired point blank at the Palestine Hotel in the capitol where most non-embedded international journalists are based killing reporters from Reuters and the Spanish network Telecinco. These are just a few examples of the deadly effects of US efforts to silence honest news reporting from the country. The International Press Institute (IPI) keeps a journalist death watch count and reports that including all of 2003 76 journalists have been killed in Iraq by all assailants making this country by far the most dangerous venue in the world for members of the fourth estate. That number has now been updated by other sources that report since March, 2003 to the present 107 journalists and other media workers have been killed in this most dangerous of all places for them to work.

In spite of the danger and toll its taken, much of what Washington and the corporate-run media conceal is being reported from unembedded journalists and a growing number of unofficial accounts emerging or leaking out. They show what conditions are really like on the ground and the effect the conflict has had on US ground forces in the country. They're being increasingly stressed and terrified out of their minds, most are physically and/or psychologically traumatized or ill, many quite seriously from the deadly effects of depleted uranium (DU) poisoning and other toxins that have already disabled as many as 350,000 or more Gulf war veterans according to what can be pieced together from the little information the Veterans Administration (VA) reports (they don't explain from what or make a serious effort to find out). The psychological toll is also growing from witnessing or obeying orders to participate in the daily barbaric slaughter of Iraqi civilians including women, children, the

elderly and infirm. The result is the rate of suicides is believed to be rising to alarming levels as is the number of desertions the Pentagon reports to be about 40,000 since 2000 from all branches of the military, half of them from the Army. Over 5,500 of them are Iraq related (the Pentagon keeps this very quiet) with many dozens more joining their ranks each month. In addition, many others are refusing to return to Iraq for another tour of duty after serving there one or more times. Those who do it unannounced are being quietly discharged in most cases, while the ones going public to denounce the war saying they won't serve in it any longer face courts martial, dishonorable discharge and possible prison terms.

Little of the above information has been reported, but most disturbing of all is the true unreported daily death and injury toll of US military personnel that's far higher than the official numbers. Department of Defense (DOD) reports are now being quietly circulated indicating over 12,000 dead, not the current announced total approaching 2,700. That figure includes thousands of previously unreported deaths of US military personnel who died en route to German or other hospitals or after arriving there. There's also evidence from Military Air Transport Service (MATs) manifests that show many more bodies shipped to Dover Air Force Base than are officially reported when there are any reports at all.

The true number of serious injuries has also been grossly understated. It could be twice as high as the official numbers based on reports from the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany alone that has treated over 25,000 wounded military patients even as the DOD only officially acknowledges around 15,000 in total and then quietly at first increased the number to about 19,000. These injuries, rarely discussed, include loss of limbs, brain damage and other debilitations that will scar those affected by them for the rest of their lives if after treatment and recovery they even survive. And there's never any mention of the later physical and/or psychological pain and suffering veterans endure or how many of them had or likely will have their lives shortened as a result of the time they spent in combat theaters "serving their country."

In addition to the stress of trauma, possible death or serious injury US forces face, they must also cope with the problems of daily life on the ground making their lives difficult or too often unbearable. Many of their Forward Operations Bases don't get enough daily drinking water and other necessities such as proper food to eat regularly. It makes an intolerable situation even worse. For many there's also a lack of basic amenities like clean clothes, a daily shower and a comfortable bed to sleep in. In addition, the equipment on the ground is being consumed and not replaced including weapons, vehicles, ordinance, body armor and most everything else. Despite the multi-billions spent on this imperial adventure, too little of it is going to "the boots on the ground," because too much of it is budgeted for corporate friends of the administration feasting on huge no-bid contracts. The situation isn't improving. In fact, it's steadily deteriorating despite official denials.

By the time our forces are finally withdrawn from Iraq, as one day they will, the human disaster will be almost incomprehensible. From just a short one-time deployment during the 1991 Gulf war, hundreds of thousands of our forces sent there are now on some form of disability either from the deadly effects of DU poisoning, the stew of other toxins they were exposed to, the physical injuries they received or the permanent psychological scars they may take to the grave. But the worst is yet to come. Beginning with the Afghanistan war in late 2001 and the Iraq war from March, 2003, over 1.3 million of our military forces have served one or more tours of duty for extended periods in what are beyond question the most dangerous and toxic environments on earth. The best estimates (because the VA won't say) are that between 30 - 70% of Gulf war vets so far are now on some kind of disability. If

only that same range is applied to the 1.3 million of our military now serving or having served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, between 400,000 and 900,000 of them may end up on disability or die from exposure to the DU munitions used in these wars which we've learned are vastly more toxic than the ones used in the Gulf war. And if they manage to avoid DU poisoning, they may succumb to the effects from the many other toxic pollutants they had to live with or become scarred or maimed for life from the violent environments they had to serve in or the acts they had to commit fulfilling their duty there.

In simple terms, it's likely we can expect an eventual overall catastrophic human disaster and one being covered up because of its enormity. US high officials and Pentagon brass that planned this holocaust to both sides likely knew the human cost to our forces alone would be high but decided anyway the innocent mostly young people we sent to fight were expendable and could be written off to be replaced by new and fresh equally innocent recruits – as long as their dirty secret never gets out. The lives lost or ruined on both sides are dismissed as “collateral damage” or just a “price that has to be paid.” It's a human price and one that's paid to enrich well-connected big corporations that love wars because they're so profitable.

The Madness of War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity

Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution gives the power to declare war solely to the Congress. The Founding Fathers rightfully believed that authority so important they codified it. They wanted to assure that for the single most important issue a nation ever faces, that awesome power would never be placed in the hands of a single individual like the president. They wanted only the legislative branch to have it and only exercise it after careful, deliberative debate. That branch still has it, but for the last 65 years it's abrogated its authority and allowed Presidents from Harry Truman to George W. Bush to usurp it. The result has been the many wars we've fought since WW II along with the many we encouraged, supported and financed plus all the CIA covert mischief and abuse going on at all times.

The result is that every war this country fought in since WW II from Korea to Iraq to the one now planned and “signed off” on by George Bush against Iran and possibly Syria and Venezuela as well to oust President Hugo Chavez to begin on future so far unknown dates was and will be acts of illegal aggression. In each case the US either committed the first overt hostile act or goaded its designated target country enough to do it to provide us with a *casus belli* for the war we planned and intended to wage. We provoked the North Koreans (through our South Korean proxies) enough in 1950 to get them to respond to give us an excuse to enter a civil conflict between the North and South. We did the same thing again to Iraq (through our Kuwaiti proxies) in 1990-91. In each case, from Korea to the present, we did it against adversaries that never threatened to attack us or had any intention to. Our actions each time were planned, willful acts of illegal aggression, which is what the Nazis were tried for at Nuremburg.

The Tribunal called their crime the “supreme international crime” and specifically said: “To initiate a war of aggression....is not only an international crime, it is the supreme crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.” For the last 55 years, the US has repeatedly committed “supreme international crimes” but has yet to be held to account for any of them. In a just world, those in power during each of those illegal wars would have been put in the dock, tried, convicted and

either hanged like the most egregious Nazis or given appropriate prison terms for their crimes. The US has also violated the UN Charter that allows a nation the right to use force in its self-defense only under two conditions: when authorized to do it by the Security Council or under Article 51 that permits the “right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member....until the Security Council has taken measures to maintain international peace and security.” By attacking another nation without provocation and with no Security Council authorization, the US violated this sacred covenant. It also violated the US Constitution that says....”all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land.” The Bush administration continues to remind us of its disdain for all laws that conflict with its policies.

It should also remind responsible people that’s why the International Criminal Court was established by the Rome Statute of 1998 to which the US is a signatory. The Court’s authority became effective after receiving its required number of ratifying signatures in 2002 to be a permanent tribunal to prosecute individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide as defined by the Nuremberg Charter of 1945. However, the Bush administration refuses to participate in the Court unless its military personnel are given immunity from prosecution – an outrageous demand made for obvious reasons. As a result, no US official or military offender will be held to account before the court unless brought there against their will which isn’t likely. That’s not how things work in a world ruled by victor’s justice. Only losers pay the price in that kind of world, even when they’re victims.

Besides committing the supreme international crime of illegal aggression, the US is a serial offender in other ways. It violated international law by waging war without restraint using every weapon it chooses including illegal chemical and possibly biological agents. During the 1950s the effects of such agents were illicitly tested in selected US cities including New York and San Francisco on our own unwitting population. However, through the years post WW I, the 1925 Geneva Convention Gas Protocol and various succeeding Geneva Weapons Conventions outlawed the use of chemical and biological agents in any form for any reason in war. In addition, under various UN Conventions and Covenants that are binding international law for its signatories, the use of any weapons that cause harm after the battle including away from the battlefield, harm the environment, or kill, wound or cause harm inhumanely are illegal and banned.

Since the Gulf war in 1991, the US has routinely used illegal weapons including depleted uranium munitions in four wars that spread deadly toxic irremediable radiation over the target sites attacked and a vast area beyond them. These DU weapons are poisonous under international law and violate all the above conditions. Even the respected Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is legally non-binding to its signatories, implies a moral duty never to use any weapons as potentially harmful as DU ones or any chemical or biological agents.

In all its wars the US has also willfully violated international law by deliberately attacking non-military targets as a tactical strategy against area “resistance.” It’s also been callously indifferent to heavy civilian “collateral damage” (words that signify war crimes for some) in attacking military ones. The choice of weapons has been indiscriminate as well and include ones judged illegal and outlawed. In Iraq these have been chemical gases, questionable cluster bombs and a terror weapon called “flashettes” which explode and shoot out 1000s of nails in all directions with deadly results. Two even more deadly terror weapons have been indiscriminately used in Iraq including in civilian areas. One is the napalm-like white phosphorous bombs and shells, known as Willy Pete, that burn flesh to the bone and can’t

be extinguished by water that only makes it worse when used. The other is an updated version of napalm called Mark 77 firebombs which do about the same thing to flesh.

One other terror weapon likely also is used called a thermobaric bomb which is a modification of still another prohibited weapon called fuel air explosives (FAE) that in their original form are enormously powerful and destroy and incinerate structures and people. The thermobaric update contains polymer-bonded or solid fuel-air explosives in its payload. It's also able to penetrate buildings, underground shelters and tunnels creating a blast pressure great enough to suck the oxygen out from the spaces and lungs of anyone in the vicinity. Used against civilians, these weapons are illegal under the 1980 UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. However, George Bush arrogantly dismisses the Geneva Conventions claiming they don't apply in the "war on terror." He echoed the sentiment of his then White House counsel Alberto Gonzales (the current Attorney General) whose memo in early 2002 stated: "The nature of the new war (on terror) places a high premium on other factors such as the ability to quickly obtain information from captured terrorists.....In my judgment, this new paradigm renders obsolete Geneva's strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions." Such is the language of tyrants and those around them in high places. The Pentagon also acts with disdain for the law and freely uses whatever terror weapons it chooses against any target.

The sum of these actions and policies is that the George Bush's legacy will be based on the notion of endless illegal aggression in the "permanent state of war" his administration declared after 9/11 that now has been rebranded as "the long war" against "Islamofascism." It also sanctions the use of banned weapons against civilians, and it believes the most sacred international law is quaint, obsolete and out of date. Is it any wonder this administration has laid waste to scores of villages, towns and cities across Iraq and Afghanistan and done it not just to destroy targets but to send a message that no restraint will be shown to crush all resistance against imperial aggression. This scorched earth policy is called the "Fallujah model" which, of course, was the city in al-Anbar province of 350,000 US ground and air forces attacked full-force in November, 2004. It was done using most every terror weapon they had, other than nuclear ones, to inflict maximum destruction including to essential infrastructure like water, electrical power and hospitals to wipe out whatever resistance was there. Now the same model is being used against the people of Ramadi, the capitol of al-Anbar and a city larger than Fallujah that was surrounded and attacked by a large combined US and proxy Iraqi force beginning on June 9. The assault is still ongoing, and in the words of its US commander, it's unclear how long it will take to "pacify" the city.

What the commander meant but left unsaid was that US style pacification means mass killing and destruction like what was done to Fallujah or alternately following the "Leningrad", "Ben Tre" or "Jenin" model. Whether the plan is to break the will of the people and starve it to submission, "destroy the town to save it" or just inflict barbaric retribution in an act of vengeance and do it against innocent people there, these acts are outrageous war crimes and crimes against humanity. What the commander also didn't say is what's been coming from unembedded and leaked reports on the ground - that despite the intense and protracted effort to suppress the resistance, the US military has effectively lost control over all of al-Anbar province west of Baghdad that comprises about one-third of the country. This assessment was confirmed in August by Col. Pete Devlin, the Marine Corps chief of intelligence, who characterized the situation there as beyond repair and that US forces have lost the battle in al-Anbar. It's happened in spite of the intense fighting across areas under

US control including the tactical strategy of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The latter crimes are those the Nuremburg Charter cited to explain what Hitler did to the Jews. The UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) ruled these actions are the historical and legal precursors to the international crime of genocide as defined by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. From the 15 year unrelenting assault against the Iraqi people beginning with the Gulf war, the devastating economic sanctions, continued bombings throughout the 1990s up to the 2003 illegal war, occupation and daily crimes committed under it, the US is as guilty of genocide as were the Nazis against the Jews and all others they sought to eliminate.

Add to that the systematic use of torture at the hellhole prisons with names now well-known and many others around the world the CIA and military run or “rendition” victims to so they can learn how American justice works. It’s the same way it worked in Nazi Germany and under all other regimes run by tyrants. Victims have no rights and can be treated any way their oppressors choose. International laws that are the supreme law of the land are quaint and ignored, the notion of innocent unless or until proved guilty is a nonstarter, and knowing torture isn’t an effective way to break resistance and obtain credible information hardly matters. When you’re the world’s only superpower, can decide alone what’s lawful or not, and are on the rampage, who’ll be brave or foolish enough to challenge you? Few, in any, dare.

Is Justice Possible in A World Where Might Makes Right

The rule of law is sacred and should protect us from oppression and injustice. It doesn’t because a greater force prevails – the power of the strong over the weak, to write the laws it wants and ignore all others, to recklessly pursue its ends, to pillage and plunder because it can get away with it. It’s called the law of might makes right, ruled by the code of victors’ justice where only the vanquished are held to account and no one has rights except the powerful who make their own. It’s a world of lawlessness, disorder and endless conflict, our world, and it’s brought to us by a rogue superpower posing as a model democratic state. Those under its oppressive heel, now and in the past, know it well. For many of them it’s the curse of having too much of a valued natural resource the US wants to control and exploit. It was true for Iraq and is no different for Iran and Venezuela that also are on the US target list.

What’s clear abroad is also true in the US where sacred constitutional law and the political process are effectively dead letters. So too are long-established international laws and norms that interfere with the plans of the new rulers of the world. The power of the Executive declared it so, and the Congress (a Greek chorus posing as a legitimate legislative body) went along – while a modern-day Rome slowly burns and threatens all humanity with its fallout.

It never should have been this way nor was it intended to following WW I. Because of the frightening horror from that conflict, 63 nations, including the US, were signatories to the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 that renounced war as an instrument of foreign policy and said never again. The Pact failed to prevent WW II that began 11 years later nor has the UN formed in its aftermath been able to do be any more successful. This world body was established to maintain international order and security and to develop friendly relations among nations to strengthen universal peace. Its stated mission in its Charter was that it

was to be an international body “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.” It hasn’t done it and never will as long as it’s a wholly owned subsidiary of the reigning superstate (aka predator) that co-opts it to serve its interests and prevents it from functioning as it should. What can all humanity look forward to if the institutions established to protect us don’t work, and the only rule of law is the one of the jungle and survival of the fittest and most powerful. More on this below.

A Possible Hidden Economic Connection to the Iraq War and Future Ones Planned

The clear connection to the Iraq war, and likely ones in some form planned against Iran and Venezuela, is the ocean of oil each country literally floats on. Saddam became a target for regime change when he refused to submit and cede control of it to the US demanding he do it. Now the Iranian mullahs and its President Ahmadinejad and Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez may be next in our target queue for the same reason. Like Iraq, with only conventional weapons for defense, these two countries are no match militarily against an all out US assault unlike North Korea that may have a nuclear deterrent giving that country a degree of invulnerability only states with that type weapon have against an aggressive superpower. The US picks its targets judiciously, and like a schoolyard bully never attacks an adversary that can put up a decent fight – at least by its military.

There also may be another motive behind our belligerence besides the clear oil related one. It’s much less visible, not discussed, and well concealed beneath the radar. It relates to the notion believed by some economists that flawed and/or out of date methodologies are used to compute some of our key economic data like the gross domestic product (GDP), the total employment and unemployment figures known as the monthly jobs report, and the federal deficit. The reasoning goes that if the unemployment rate today was computed by the same methodology used during The Great Depression when it rose to 25% of the working population, the true current figure would be about 12% instead of the reported 4.7% which includes part-time workers and anyone working as little as one hour during the reporting period. It also excludes all those who wish to work but have stopped looking (discouraged workers) because they can’t find any.

A cover story just out in the September 25 issue of Business Week magazine lends credence to the notion that official published government data is manipulated and flawed to look better than, in fact, it is. The article is titled: “What’s Really Propping Up The Economy.” It states since 2001, all newly created private sector jobs (1.7 million) came from one source – the health care industry which includes the drug companies and insurers offering health insurance. This one industry today represents 12% of the workforce and \$2 trillion in annual spending (about one-sixth of the nation’s GDP and growing). The story goes on to explain that without the private sector jobs from this one source “the nation’s labor market would be in a deep coma” so that while some other sectors like construction and areas related to it added 900,000 jobs since 2001, that gain was offset by “the pressures of globalization and new technology (that) have wreaked havoc on the rest of the labor market” resulting in factories closing and shrinkage in other areas. Even information technology, “the great electronic promise of the 1990s,” turned into a bust as far as its ability to generate new jobs. Instead of creating any, it lost 1.1 million of them since 2001 and now employs fewer people than in 1998 “when the Internet frenzy kicked into high gear.”

This kind of data doesn’t reflect a healthy, expanding economy and clearly is a strong indication of one showing very disturbing signs. The current situation is still further

complicated by a failing policy of imperial overreach, massive and out-of-control federal deficits discussed below, and the greatest housing boom in history that propped up the economy, became a bubble, and is now unwinding and likely to become painful before it ends. Just how much and how fast won't be known until a future time when an assessment is made of the amount of damage done and what economic conditions are in its wake. It may show things to be lots different than the rosy way they're portrayed now by most analysts.

It may be why at least one economist (maybe an honest one) believes a more accurate calculation of the real GDP indicates it's contracting and not expanding in a healthy fashion as is now reported each quarter. And most disturbing of all is an analysis of the federal deficit, the computation of which has been miscalculated since the Johnson administration began using accounting gimmicks to hide the true costs of the Vietnam war. If the deficit were calculated based on GAAP methodology (the accounting rules required of all publicly traded corporations in preparing their financial statements), the true figure would have been \$665 billion for fiscal year 2003 and \$760 billion for 2005 instead of the reported \$375 billion 2003 figure and \$318 billion for 2005. But that greater figure expands to an astonishing \$3,700,000,000,000 (\$3.7 trillion) for 2003 and a similarly frightening one for 2005 if the annual increase in the net amount of unfunded Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and government pension obligations are included. This shadow deficit has been mounting since the Johnson years and shows that the US government in fiscal year 2003 had a negative net worth of \$34,000,000,000,000 (\$34 trillion) by one estimate.

Another economist paints an even grimmer picture than the one above. That economist, Boston University Professor Laurence Kotlikoff, prepared a recent detailed report for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis in which he stated, by some measures, the US is already bankrupt and unable to pay its creditors (the ones holding its debt instruments and due its entitlement payments). Professor Kotlikoff wrote that a country's solvency depends on its ability to honor its lifetime fiscal obligations which are the difference between all required future spending and the revenue expected to be received to do it. That gap will widen exponentially as the accumulated US sovereign and other debt obligations plus the amount of revenue needed to cover the bill for retiring Baby Boomers' unfunded liabilities of social security, medicare, medicaid, government pensions and all else rises to an incomprehensible and unmanageable \$65,900,000,000,000 (\$65.9 trillion) by the calculations he used from a study by two other professors. Professor Kotlikoff explained this figure is over five times the current US Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and double the national wealth. He added that if his analysis is right, it means the US is bankrupt, will face a fiscal calamity ahead and will have to default on its debt, entitlements and other obligations.

Professor Kotlikoff had more to say on this matter in a recent extended essay he wrote for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review July/August issue titled "Is the United States Bankrupt?" In it he stated that future US workers would need to be taxed at the rate of 55 - 80% over their working lifetimes to pay for the estimated \$80 trillion in unfunded future entitlement liabilities or more than six times the current US GDP. Whichever of his two numbers is more accurate (if either one is), Professor Kotlikoff is beginning to be heard and is gaining some adherents. They believe the US faces a potential future fiscal meltdown even though it's understood the nation's balance sheet isn't static and includes increasing assets as well as liabilities that must be figured into any bottom line calculation of net obligations. So as dire as the current and future situation may be, the true state of the problem likely won't be known precisely until the inevitable day of reckoning arrives

revealing how ugly it is.

What is known is that whichever analysis of the problem is right, the future consequences eventually will likely shake the world and change our way of life at home irrevocably at the least. So how does that relate to this country's addiction to war and the current notion of permanent or long ones. Simple. Hot wars stimulate the economy and make it grow – especially extended ones. They require lot's of spending, but so far the funding's there for them from institutional and foreign investors willing to buy our sovereign debt and the Federal Reserve always cooperative by printing up lots of ready cash. But all this comes at a price. Along with shamless tax cuts for the rich and massive corporate welfare subsidies and war-related contracts, it's caused the federal budget and current account deficits to balloon exacerbating an unmanageable fiscal problem since 2001 alone the result of George Bush's reckless policies of excess greed and imperial overreach. The latter is his new "long war" policy, and the more of them we wage, the more positive it is for the economy and corporate profits – in the short run. Without them and their spoils, the economy might not be as healthy or could even be in trouble.

So the nation may face a Hobson's choice: continue our profligate spending ways or see our fiscal house of cards collapse – a conundrum with no solution. The larger our economy gets, the more dependent it is on wars and militarism for economic stimulus. It results in more debt to get the same bang for the bucks we now spend like drunken politicians. It's an unending cycle requiring increasingly greater capital infusions without end in a sort of fiscal game of musical chairs, but one where we dare not let the music stop. Because our economy is so large, we need huge amounts of capital to maintain growth. But finding it becomes harder, and our addiction to it is like being on a treadmill we can't get off of. As a result, we may heading for an eventual day of reckoning, like the one Professor Kotlikoff envisions, no one wants to imagine or confront. It's the same problem a drug addict has needing bigger fixes for the same effect. That behavior guarantees a bad ending, eventually killing the addict. In the same way, no nation can spend and borrow beyond its means forever and always need more for the same results. Nations doing it are like out of control drug addicts and face the same unavoidable fate. They can delay the inevitable but not forever. The penalty for the sins of excess are high, painful and certain. The day eventually comes when the "piper" must be paid. It may not be next month or next year, but "pipers" are very patient and always have the final say. Richard Nixon's former chief economic advisor, Herb Stein, said it well: "Things that can't go on forever, won't." He might have added how unpleasant it is when the day of reckoning comes.

The Road to Hell Is Paved with Endless War, Its Fallout and A Future No One Wants

The US is now at a dangerous watershed moment struggling to save the tattered republic and our sacred constitutional rights. Unless we reverse the present course, our future may be the one Orwell foresaw when he wrote: "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face....forever...." Like the totalitarian state of Oceania led by Big Brother in his best known book 1984, we're waging a permanent long war; no one is safe anymore – from our own government; we're all being illegally surveilled; anyone may be forcibly taken away, detained, tortured or murdered – all to make the world safe for a brave new world order ruled ruthlessly by capital that's called democracy. It's one without a political process because the Congress gave it up to a "Unitary Executive" with the power to abrogate the separation of powers doctrine, bypass the lawmakers and courts and act as he chooses to protect the nation's security or for whatever other reason he decides.

We're now nearing a crisis because George Bush chose to invoke the wartime contingency "national security initiatives" established during the Reagan years that gives the President the power to suspend the Constitution and declare martial law. Bush did it by signing executive orders post 9/11 giving himself absolute power in times of whatever he alone decides is a "national emergency." If he assumes it, he'll become a dictator, accountable to no one, which he claims the right to do on his say alone. The only sensible recourse is for mass people action (like now ongoing for weeks in the streets of Mexico against authoritarian rule) to prevent our crossing the Rubicon and passing from a shaky republic to the tyranny of a full-blown national security police state and a future no one wants. It can happen here just as it did in ancient Rome and in Weimar Germany when the good people there lost their model democratic state. They allowed Hitler to steal it while they weren't paying attention. They bought into his demonic appeal to his divine mission as the nation's savior (sound familiar?) and his pretense to be protecting them from an outside threat that didn't exist. That history should remind us how fragile our sacred liberties are and how easily they're lost when tyrants are allowed to go unchecked and unchallenged. We're at a moment now when there's still time to act before it's too late to save a nation conceived in liberty that may soon no longer have it. Edmund Burke explained it long ago when he said: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." I'm sure today he'd remember the importance of women.

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