

Who Wants War?

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If anyone still doubted that this administration's foreign policy would bring any kind of change, this week's debate on Afghanistan should remove all doubt. The President's stated justifications for sending more troops to Afghanistan and escalating war amount to little more than recycling all the false reasons we began the conflict. It is so discouraging to see this coming from our new leadership, when the people were hoping for peace. New polls show that 49 percent of the people favor minding our own business on the world stage, up from 30 percent in 2002. Perpetual war is not solving anything. Indeed continually seeking out monsters to destroy abroad only threatens our security here at home as international resentment against us builds. The people understand this and are becoming increasingly frustrated at not being heard by the decision-makers. The leaders say some things the people want to hear, but change never comes.

One has to ask, if the people who elected these leaders so obviously do not want these wars, who does? Eisenhower warned of the increasing power and influence of the military industrial complex and it seems his worst fears have come true. He believed in a strong national defense, as do I, but warned that the building up of permanent military and weapons industries could prove dangerous if their influence got out of hand. After all, if you make your money on war, peace does you no good. With trillions of dollars at stake, there is tremendous incentive to keep the decision makers fearful of every threat in the world, real or imagined, present or future, no matter how ridiculous and far-fetched. The Bush Doctrine demonstrates how very successful the war lobby was philosophically with the last administration. And they are succeeding just as well with this one, in spite of having the so-called "peace candidate" in office.

We now find ourselves in another foreign policy quagmire with little hope of victory, and not even a definition of victory. Eisenhower said that only an alert and informed electorate could keep these war racketeering pressures at bay. He was right, and the key is for the people to ensure that their elected leaders follow the Constitution. The Constitution requires a declaration of war by Congress in order to legitimately go to war. Bypassing this critical step makes it far too easy to waste resources on nebulous and never-ending conflicts. Without clear goals, the conflicts last forever and drain the country of blood and treasure. The drafters of the Constitution gave Congress the power to declare war precisely because they feared allowing the executive unfettered discretion in military affairs. They understood that making it easy for leaders to wage foreign wars would threaten domestic liberties.

Responses to attacks on our soil should be swift and brief. Wars we fight should always be defensive, clearly defined and Constitutional. The Bush Doctrine of targeting potential

enemies before they do anything to us is dangerously vague and easily abused. There is nothing left to win in Afghanistan and everything to lose. Today's military actions are yet another futile exercise in nation building and have nothing to do with our nation's security, or with 9/11. Most experts agree that Bin Laden and anyone remotely connected to 9/11 left Afghanistan long ago, but our troops remain. The pressures of the war racketeers need to be put in check before we are brought to our knees by them. Unfortunately, it will require a mighty effort by the people to get the leadership to finally listen.

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