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Is The USA Addicted To War?

First Consider The Evidence, Then Draw Your Own Conclusions

By: Evan Augustine Peterson III, J.D.

0/20/05 "ICH" - - Let us consider the possibility that the USA has become addicted, in an economic sense, to war. While the evidence offered below is by no means exhaustive, it is directly relevant and highly probative. Therefore, the reader should consider ALL of the evidence in Exhibits A through D before judging whether or not a prima facie case has been made that America is economically addicted to war.

EXHIBIT A: US Military Budget Will Equal Rest Of World's Combined "Within 12 Months."

A new study by the Price Waterhouse Cooper corporate-finance group concluded that the USA's military "defense" budget:

(A) reached \$417.4 billion in 2003;

(B) equaled nearly half - 46% - of the rest of world's ("ROW") combined military expenditures in 2003; and

(C) is growing so fast that it will equal the ROW combined "within 12 months." [1]

Hence, the American military-industrial complex is poised to monopolize the global armaments industry. And yet the War Party's leaders and the Pentagon's brass deem these astronomical expenditures so inadequate that they're requesting considerably larger expenditures to sustain - or expand - their romanescque Pax Americana Imperium. [2]

Americans should be asking themselves WHY they're being advised that they cannot feel safe after they've made grossly disproportionate investments, by global

standards, in what is by far the world's largest military? What do these exorbitantly expensive forces exist to do? Could it be that war's tangible rewards are so much greater for militarists than they are for the average citizen that the militarists are exaggerating the need for a "Global War On Terror" merely to justify their empire?

EXHIBIT B: The Far-Flung Global Empire Of American Militarism.

What's all that money buying, aside from endless overkill through the defense contractors' cornucopia of hi-tech weaponry? It's buying a far-flung empire of 1,700 bases upon which the sun never sets! Unbeknownst to most Americans, the Department of Defense ("DOD") currently lists 725 official US military bases outside of the country, and another 969 inside the 50 states (not to mention numerous secret bases).

According to UCSD Emeritus Professor of International Relations Chalmers Johnson, this vast military empire constitutes proof that the "Unites States prefers to deal with other nations through the use or the threat of force rather than through negotiations, commerce, or cultural interaction." [3] Dr. Johnson correctly concludes that American power has shifted from the people to the Pentagon with such dramatic finality that "a revolution would be required to bring the Pentagon back under democratic control."

Eight factors have caused this anti-democratic power shift: the culture of American ultranationalist militarism is deeply entrenched; the enormous military budget has been used for gross over investment in offensive - not defensive - war making capabilities under the pretext of "national security"; the worldwide archipelago of military bases is being misused to expand the neocolonialist Pax Americana Imperium; Byzantine layers of bureaucracy and secrecy inside the government-military-industrial complex allow it to perpetrate illegalities and evade public scrutiny with impunity; the DOD commands a large private army of mercenaries to conduct secret black-ops actions that remain ethically and legally unaccountable; the DOD has successfully manipulated "national-security crises" as a pretext for centralizing the independent intelligence services under its propaganda-spewing control; the State Department's statesmen have been replaced by career soldiers, oil barons, and arms barons, who think the militarization of US foreign policy is desirable; the federal government's practically-nonexistent ethical code unwisely permits close ties between high-level politicians and arms-industry executives. [4]

EXHIBIT C: The Carlyle Group, The Bush Family, The War Party, And World Leaders.

For at least the last twelve years, George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush have been engaging in war-profiteering through the CARLYLE GROUP ("CG"). CG is

a consortium of wealthy conservatives who operate worldwide as a merchant banking firm. CG is also a major player in the defense and telecommunications industries. CG has been averaging a whopping 34% return for its investors over the past 15 years, and its current estimated worth is \$18 billion. Largely through war-profiteering, CG's worth soared from \$12 billion to \$18 billion between 2000 and 2005.

So who's involved in the Carlyle Group? Among many others: former President George H.W. Bush (CG's adviser from 1993 to October 2003, and current investor); Bush I Secretary of State James Baker (CG's \$180 million partner); General Colin Powell before he was Bush II's SOS; Reagan Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci (CG's chairman); Bush I National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft; former conservative British Prime Minister John Major (head of CG's European operations); and the former right-wing presidents of the Philippines and South Korea.

In the typical revolving-door style that has made postmodern Washington an ethics-free zone, the Carlyle Group is managed and staffed by former Republican employees of the CIA, the State Department, and the DOD. The Saudi royal family also is - and the Bin Laden family recently was - a major investor in CG. Additionally, many prominent international bankers are CG investors.

But wait! What about George W. Bush? He was a director in the Carlyle Group's subsidiary, Caterair, before he managed the Texas Rangers baseball team. Then, as Governor of Texas, he induced the board of the Texas teachers' pension fund - the members of which he appointed - to invest \$100 million in CG. Finally, GWB stands to inherit a multimillion dollar portion of whatever his father reaps through his consultations with, and investments in, CG. That might explain why GWB was so adamant both that his illegal elective war against Iraq MUST commence in March 2003, and that the estate tax MUST be repealed (which his party did in April 2005). Now when Poppy Bush dies, he can receive 100% of that blood-soaked windfall inheritance. [5]

EXHIBIT D: The War-Profiteering Leviathans Bechtel And Halliburton.

BECHTEL is a gargantuan multinational construction firm. The US-based Bechtel's war-profiteering activities are so prodigious that they're the stuff of legends. Knowledgeable defense experts have characterized Bechtel as "more powerful than the US Army." After 9/11, George Schultz, the Bechtel CEO and former Secretary of State, lobbied vigorously for the invasion of Iraq. The Bush administration rewarded Schultz by granting Bechtel exclusive no-bid, gold-plated contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq, then reducing Iraq's infrastructure to rubble during its "shock and awe" blitzkrieg.

These Iraq War contracts enabled Bechtel to reap record profits of \$17 billion in 2003, and \$17.4 billion in 2004. The firm was founded by the San Francisco-based Bechtel family, who are old friends with the Saudi-based Bin Laden family. These two families have worked together on many construction projects in the Mideast. Indeed, they're currently collaborating on a \$20 billion deal with the Saudi government to excavate two new ports. Furthermore, the Bin Laden family owns a \$10 million stake in Bechtel Corporation's investment subsidiary, The Fremont Group. Of course, the Bin Laden's are also old friends with the Bush family. It's a small world, after all. [6]

HALLIBURTON has vaulted to the forefront as the USA's premier - and most corrupt - war profiteer. Before revolving-door gamesman Dick Cheney became Bush II's running mate in 2000, he was receiving a multimillion dollar salary as Halliburton's CEO. Upon becoming Vice President Cheney, he oversold the invasion of Iraq by falsely alleging that an imminent threat was posed by Iraq's nonexistent WMD arsenal. Since the invasion, his cronies at Halliburton have reaped profits of at least \$18 billion from their Iraq War contracts. And Halliburton's revenues increased by 80% between 2003 and 2004.

Meanwhile, Halliburton was perpetrating countless acts of fraud, stealing multimillions through over billing, and taking millions in kickbacks to its executives. For instance, the Defense Contract Audit Agency recently concluded that Halliburton over billed US taxpayers by \$212.3 million for fuel transportation in Iraq. And Halliburton is currently under investigation by both the FBI and the Securities Exchange Commission for numerous illegalities. Nevertheless, Halliburton and its subsidiary KBR continue to receive lucrative no-bid, gold-plated defense contracts from the Pentagon.

Noting this blatant cronyism, CorpWatch disgustedly concludes that "Halliburton's agenda is so merged with that of the Bush administration that questions raised by auditors, inspectors-general, and other independent agencies - not to mention corporate accountability groups - languish silently in Congress and the White House." [7]

Furthermore, these same major defense contractors - the Carlyle Group, Bechtel, Halliburton, and their subsidiaries - donated millions to the Republican Party and the Bush-Cheney campaign. Additionally, they paid for extravagant parties at the 2004 political conventions and the 2005 presidential inauguration. In short, war is a lucrative business that pays the elite war-profiteers and the Washington bribe-ocrats handsomely, while it impoverishes the taxpayers, drains the federal coffers, decimates the target nations, and kills the combatants and their innocent victims hideously.

Overarching Conclusions: 21st-Century America Is Repeating Imperialism's

Historical Pattern Of Economic Addiction To War.

Warlust eventually ravages nations just like a highly-addictive narcotic ravages people. Warfare's savagery inflicts destruction on prey nations immediately, whereas it destroys predator nations mediately. War initially produces a stimulative "high" for the predator's domestic economy. Leaders in predator nations ignore this opiate-like economic addiction to war because it serves to enrich their upper classes. Warfare is instantaneously lucrative for the military-industrial complex's depraved war-profiteers, but can cause an entire region's economy to become depraved war-addicts over time. For instance, the Pentagon's Base Realignment and Closure Commission ("BRAC") recently issued its report on military base closings.

In response, US Senators insisted that they CANNOT close any military bases in their states, because bases provide jobs and generate income for local economies (e. g., \$42 billion annually for California's economy). And US Representatives like House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) insisted that their districts CANNOT survive without the income generated by military bases (e. g., \$18 billion annually for San Diego's economy).

In other words, most states and large cities cannot survive without taxpayer-funded monetary injections from military bases, and this vast archipelago of bases cannot be justified without an endless succession of wars, so our regional economies are addicted to war. Hence, BRAC proposed closing only 33 out of 1,700 bases. And no bases will be closed in Chairman Hunter's militarily-dependent district, San Diego.

That's 1,000 less base closures than is necessary to provide adequate funding for America's indispensable social safety-net programs. And a reduction to 700 bases would still allow the USA to have three bases in each of the 50 states, and at least one in every nation in the world. Folks, that's more than enough! [8]

Consider that the economic "high" from an addiction to war is always a Faustian bargain. It compels the addicted nation to start an endless succession of destructive wars in order to avoid severe withdrawal symptoms, which otherwise would appear in the form of recessions and depressions. Penultimately, it forces the working class to pay the highest price in blood and treasure. Their children become cannon fodder and their taxes are squandered to finance military adventures. Militaristic nations always collapse because their criminal acts of aggression are not only morally indefensible but also economically unsustainable. Ultimately, war destroys empires as well as it does people. [9]

Maybe the progressive journalists who "speak truth to power" should bestow a more accurate name on the DOD: the "Department of Aggression" ("DOA").

The Bottom Line: Might As Well Face It, We're Addicted To War.

One certainly need not be a pacifist to recognize that the Exhibits A-D provide powerful evidence that the USA is economically addicted to war. If so, this would explain why our political system is dominated by the ultra-militarist War Party and the crypto-fascist Bush family (i.e., the pushers), while our economic system is dominated by the military-industrial complex and its mafiosiesque war-profiteers (i.e., the kingpins).

Finally, if the USA is economically addicted to war, that raises some important moral questions. Readers of good conscience should be asking themselves: "Am I willing to engage in loving acts of nonviolent noncooperation with evil in order to stop my nation's wars of aggression? Or will I watch in craven silence as this nation descends - like the Bush family's multigenerational war-profiteers - into a vampiric career of bloodthirsty murderousness? If it's the latter, won't I be sending America's children the depraved message that it's permissible to murder people, so long as it's profitable? Which destiny am I going to choose -- nonviolent redemption or militaristic perdition?" [10]

In short, we've proved in Iraq that violence only begets more violence, and war more wars. It's time to show the world the force of our example, not the example of our force.

ENDNOTES

[1] Guy Anderson's 5-4-05 Janes Defence Industry article, "US Defence Budget Will Equal Rest Of World's Combined Within 12 Months":
http://www.janes.com/defence/news/jdi/jdi050504_1_n.shtml

[2] Siobhan McDonough's 5-15-05 GU article, "Senate Panel OK's Defense Spending Boost" [The USA's "defense" budget will be at least \$500 billion in FY 2006.]: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,1280,-5006745,00.html>

[3] UCSD Professor Emeritus Chalmers Johnson's book, *The Sorrows Of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, And The End Of The Republic* (Metropolitan Books, 2004).

[4] Ibid. Also see these essays about militarism and nationalism:

A. Norman Solomon's 5-16-05 CD essay, "News Media And The 'Madness of Militarism'": <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0516-21.htm>

B. Howard Zinn's 5-16-05 CD/TP essay, "The Scourge Of Nationalism":
<http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0516-29.htm>

[5] These articles provide the factual details about the Carlyle Group.

A. HereInReality's article, "The Carlyle Group: Former World Leaders

And War-Profiteering" [Articles and videos about CG.]:

<http://www.hereinreality.com/carlyle.html>

B. AngelFire's "Meet The Carlyle Group" [Similar to 5A, but better organized.]: <http://www.angelfire.com/indie/pearly/htmls/bush-carlyle.html>

C. Naomi Klein's 10-13-04 GU article, "Why War? Bush Special Envoy And Carlyle Group In Scandal Over Iraq Debt Relief" [In 2004, a Carlyle partner with a \$180-million share, James Baker III, functioned both as the USA's debt-envoy to Iraq to achieve international debt relief and as the Carlyle Group's stealth representative for debt-collection from Iraq on war reparations owed to Kuwait, which is a classic conflict of interest.]:

<http://www.why-war.com/news/2004/10/13/bushspec.html>

D. William Thomas' must-read 2004 WT article, "Inside The Bush-Carlyle Group Empire":

http://www.willthomas.net/Convergence/Weekly/Bush_Carlyle_Group.htm

E. Jamie Doward's 3-25-03 Rense/TO article, "Bush Sr's Carlyle Group Gets Fat On War And Conflict" [Backs up his title with probative facts from Dan Briody's expos book, Iron Triangle: Inside The Secret World Of The Carlyle Group.]: <http://www.rense.com/general36/FAT.HTM>

F. Christopher Bollyn's 11-3-01 PP/AFP article, "War Is Sell: Washington's Power Elite Are The Beneficiaries of War" [Reports that the Bush family is getting financially fat off of Dubya's "War on Terror," because 30% of CG's investments are in defense-related companies, while two-thirds of CG's investments are in defense and telecommunications.]:

http://prisonplanet.com/washingtons_power_elite_are_the_beneficiaries_of_war.html

G. LT has collected the "Carlyle Group Articles," ranging from 2001 to mid-2004: http://linkthing.com/screed/carlyle_group_cluster.html

[6] Jeffrey St. Clair's 5-9-05 CP essay, "Straight to Bechtel: More Powerful Than The US Army" [Excerpted from his forthcoming book, Grand Theft Pentagon: How War Contractors Rip Off America And Threaten The World (Common Courage Press, July 2005).]: <http://www.counterpunch.org/stclair05092005.html>

[7] These articles address Halliburton's sleazy cronyism and war-profiteering.

A. Andrea Buffa and Pratap Chatterjee's 5-17-05 CD/CW essay, "Houston, We Still Have A Problem": <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0517-33.htm>

B. Scott Parkin's 5-10-05 CP essay, "Pride Cometh Before A Fall: Taking

Direct Action Against Halliburton":

<http://www.counterpunch.org/parkin05102005.html>

C. The Committee on Government Reform Minority Office's 5-2-05 article, "Halliburton Asked To Explain Discrepancies Between Testimony And Indictment

<http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov/story.asp?>

[ID=3D839&Issue=3DIraq=3DReconstruction](http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov/story.asp?ID=3D839&Issue=3DIraq=3DReconstruction)

D. The Committee on Government Reform Minority Office's 4-11-05 article, "DOD Audit Reports On Halliburton" [Government auditors find that Halliburton fraudulently over billed US taxpayers by \$212.3 million on its Iraq oil contract.]:

<http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov/story.asp?>

[ID=3D846&Issue=3DIraq=3DReconstruction](http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov/story.asp?ID=3D846&Issue=3DIraq=3DReconstruction)

[8] These essays address the politics and economics of military base closings.

A. Barbara Starr's 5-13-05 CNN article, "Lawmakers Scramble To Save Bases": <http://www.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/05/13/base.closings/>

B. Associated Press' 4-25-05 CNN article, "Base Closing Have Enormous Political Ramifications: Republicans Have as Much To Lose As Democrats": <http://www.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/04/25/base.closings.ap/index.html>

[9] The following two essays have been excerpted from BU Professor of International Relations Andrew Bacevich's outstanding book, The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced By War (Oxford U. Press, 2005).

A. Andrew Bacevich's must-read 4-21-05 CD/TD essay, "The Normalization of War" [Correctly describes the symptoms, and diagnoses the causes, of America's descent into militarism and perpetual war.]:

<http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0421-25.htm>

B. Andrew Bacevich's 4-22-05 CD/TD essay, "New Boys In Town" [Explains the neocons' disastrous role in ratcheting up America's addiction to war. They're the warmongering public-relations division of the military-industrial complex.]: <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0422-34.htm>

[10] In addition to son George W. Bush and father GHWB, GWB's paternal uncle , "Bucky" Bush, is a war profiteer, as were his paternal grandfather, Prescott Bush, and his maternal great-grandfather, George Herbert Walker. Is this America's destiny too?

A. Evan Augustine Peterson III's 2-28-05 TPV essay, "On Bush Nepotism And

American War-Profiteering" [Reports that: (1) the American war machine feeds big business, as illustrated by the fact that entire military-industrial complex is profiting mightily from its wars; and (2) certain relatives within Bush Family -- including Dubya's uncle, William "Bucky" Bush -- are making substantial windfall earnings off of Mr. Bush's elective wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In short, war is business as usual for the Bush family war-profiteers specifically and the US military-industrial complex generally.]:

http://liberty.hypermart.net/voices/2005/print/On_Bush_Nepotism_And_American_War-Profiteering_.htm

B. Evan Augustine Peterson III's 2-6-05 NFPNZ essay, "Of Militarism, Fascism, War And National Consciousness: Any Authentic Pilgrimage Toward A Nonviolent Society Requires A Clearer Understanding Of The Beast Within" [Concise explains from a social sciences perspective the genesis of American militarism, the possibility that we are devolving into fascism, and the alternative possibility of becoming an authentically nonviolent society.]: <http://nuclearfree.lynx.co.nz/of.htm>

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