

A pervasive war mentality has invaded and occupied America

By michael payne

It's as if a giant octopus has wrapped its tentacles around the body of America and is smothering any attempts at honest dissension, rejection or even debate over the never-ending promotion of war. That octopus, the ultra powerful military-industrial complex, is the tight-knit combination of the U.S. government, the armed forces and the industrial sector.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his farewell address in 1961, warned that, "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals so that **security and liberty** may prosper together."

This was a Republican president and the former Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe that achieved victory over Hitler's powerful war machine in World War II. This famous general, because of his long military career, might have been thought to be a war hawk but he certainly was not. He was a brilliant war strategist but he knew from personal experience the horrors of war and that it was not a thing to take lightly.

Eisenhower also knew all about the military-industrial complex from his experience in the military and in leading our nation and our government. He knew exactly the dangers it posed as evidenced by his very strong, emotional remarks in that farewell address almost 50 years ago. He was issuing a warning about the perils of this massive war-making machine, fearing that, without proper restraints and controls, it would evolve into exactly the highly influential, powerful forces that it is today.

In this regard, we need to examine how the tragedy of 9/11 and the attacks on the World Trade Center have drastically changed America. As I see it, there were two separate effects that the tragedy of 9/11 had upon the people of America and subsequent actions by our government.

The first effect in the aftermath of 9/11 was the shock and horror that it brought to all Americans. This was an extremely traumatic event, like no other ever experienced within our shores. That a group of terrorists (most all, by the way, were Saudi Arabian citizens) could so brazenly enter our country and wreak such damage and suffering on this nation was unthinkable. But, while we must not and will not forget this tragic event, we cannot let it dominate our lives or our future.

And, yet, that is exactly what I believe has been happening. Ever since 9/11, our government in Washington D.C., together with the subservient national media, has aggressively promoted the war on terror and the threat of another terrorist attack to justify future military actions. The Bush administration used this strategy of fear as the basis for the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and then Iraq. Rudy, aka 9/11 Giuliani, used it in a shameful, pandering manner to try to become the GOP candidate for president. It is currently being used as the prime reason for the escalation of the war in Afghanistan.

I'm afraid that the implantation of fear into the American mind has been very successful. Just think about how many times throughout any given day, whether on the radio, cable TV channels or in newspapers, you hear and read comments about terrorists, insurgents or some potential threat to our security. It is almost non-stop and appears to have been woven into the mental fabric of America.

The military-industrial complex has fed off this tragedy for years. It has made massive profits from the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan as a result. And you can bet that it will continue to use many elements of our national media to maintain that sense of fear in the minds of Americans.

Has anyone heard of any unemployment problem among the top defense contractors; Lockheed Martin, Boeing Co., General Dynamics and others? Of course not. The massive defense industry is like no other in America as it continually feeds off the dollar pipeline that extends from the Congress and transports hundreds of billions into its coffers. Workers in the defense industry, unlike millions of their fellow Americans, can sleep peacefully at night as they are almost guaranteed lifetime jobs.

There are those who say that we are now on a course that can never be reversed, that we will be involved with a never-ending progression of wars because of the terrorist threats we face. And that, of course, typifies the drum beat of constant fear that is being promoted as a means to justify war.

But then there is the opposite view that this entire war mentality and progression of war will come to an end when the trillions of dollars that have fueled war will dry up as America is driven closer and closer to economic collapse. The irony of that possibility is this; that unnecessary war which is so very costly and damaging to our economic stability will be the very vehicle that destroys itself in the

end. Should that take place the natural result will be the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals. And a return to reasonable and rational strategies and actions for the defense of America.

This nation and our society must come to the realization that we no longer can live under a constant cloud of fear and apprehension; that is a course leading to disaster, not just in Iraq, Afghanistan or Pakistan, but here within America itself. Somehow, some way we must cleanse ourselves of this pervasive war mentality.

President Eisenhower stated, "We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes." We Americans must not let President Eisenhower's worst fears become a reality.

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[Back](#)