

Permanent War and the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex By Steven Jonas

July 19, 2017

Introduction

Permanent War

is built into the fabric of the U.S. economy. This column focuses on bringing back a column about the first post-Cold War enterprise, the BushCheney War on Iraq, designed to perpetuate this state well into the 21st century, with Russia as principal enemy. Trump would not be able to change that situation even if he wanted to. Today, he seems to have fully signed on to Russia-is-the-enemy US ruling class needs.

I wrote my first column on this theme back in 2003, some months after the original Bush/Cheney invasion . This column is based in part on an update I did of that original, published in 2007. The topic continues to be relevant in light of Trumpite foreign policy and budget emphasis. It is also relevant because there are certain forces on the Left who seem to think that Trump is (or least was) a "peace" candidate. Rightists, Trumpites or not, don't seem to get into that subject (peace) much. But then there are those leftists who are certain that if Hillary Clinton had been elected, the United States would already have likely engaged in a nuclear war (at least to read some of their words it surely sounds as if they believe/believed that) and I wouldn't be writing this column. Then there are certain "authorities" date the beginning of the current Permanent War policy to the beginning of the Obama Administration.

But

actually, the policy, about which we were famously warned by, of all people, Dwight D. Eisenhower, got well underway during the Viet Nam War and has been maintained at one level or another ever since. This was fairly easy to do whether the U.S. was engaged in a long hot war (Viet Nam), a short hot war (Iraq/Kuwait, into which Saddam Hussein was apparently lured by an intentionally false "it's-ok-if-you-do-that" message delivered on behalf of George H.W. Bush by the then-U.S. Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie), a long semi-hot war (Nicaragua), but most especially by the Cold War. The latter (1946-92) was the longest part of The Seventy-Five Years War against the Soviet Union, 1917-1992.

But

by the early 2000s, things seemed to winding down. The Cold War was won. Saddam had been driven out of Kuwait 10 years earlier. Although the United States had 700-plus bases around the world, that policy, in place really to protect U.S. imperial interests, publicly seemed to be less and less justifiable. But then came 9/11. And Bush/Cheney, who according to former National Security Advisor Clarke, had been looking for an excuse to invade Iraq since they took office, found one (even though there was no connection between Saddam and Osama bin Laden, as much as William Safire tried to make one up): the mythical "weapons of mass destruction." Mythical, you say? Well in the run-up to the war there was a U.N. nuclear weapons inspector on the ground in Iraq, named

Hans Blix. According to him, he was given carte blanche to inspect, by Saddam. Blix said a) he found nothing and b) offered to share all of his findings with the CIA. He never heard back.

So, what was the Iraq invasion really all about? Well in 2007, I undertook a speculation on that subject. The bulk of the balance of this column is a reprise of that one.

From 2007:

The CheneyBush War Policy is becoming curiouser and curiouser. "Things are getting better in Iraq," they say, when they are clearly getting worse. "We must fight on to 'victory' " they say, without ever defining what they mean by "victory," and when virtually every other military and political authority on the matter says that no matter how you define it, "victory" is impossible. [Note; Golly gee. I guess that those authorities were right.] They and their surrogates in the Congress and the Privatized Ministry of Propaganda [that was the Fox"News"Channel then, and still is] label any critics of their policies as traitors. (Yes, "aiding and abetting the enemy" is one of the components of "treason.") So, the conclusion that most observers come to is that they are in la-la land, that they are totally delusional, victory will never be achieved. Well, there is another possible explanation: things in Iraq are going exactly the way they planned them to go.

Let's connect the dots:

- As is very well known, Bush/Cheney lied the U.S. into war. There were no WMD and they knew it. There was no Hussein/al-Qaeda link, and they knew it. Even if the famous "Prague meeting" did take place between representatives of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, it is most likely that Hussein's man told bin Laden's man "no" very firmly (and likely in not quite so polite language), for a variety of reasons, ranging from Hussein's secularism to his strong desire not to give the Georgites any excuse for real to invade his country (which, as it turned out, in practice they didn't need one anyway).

- There was no post-war planning, as is also well known. The U.S. State Department had a proposed one, and all 2,200 pages of it were just ignored. There was the much-traveled story that Rumsfeld threatened to fire anyone on his staff who even talked about post-war planning.

- There was massive looting of the major Iraqi archeological museums that could easily have been prevented. But also, it could have part of a plan (well, a different kind of plan) to develop permanent chaos. That would explain the staffing of Paul Bremer's pro-consulate by totally unqualified, very young, Republican political operatives: not accidental or careless, but purposeful: let's do whatever we can to gum up the

infrastructure even further than it is already gummed up by Saddam and our invasion.

- There were numerous missed opportunities for declaring victory and leaving, from the holding of elections, to the forming of a government, to the swearing in of the Parliament. All opportunities were ignored. (The U.S. was eventually forced out of Iraq by the failure of G.W. Bush, to negotiate a status-of-forces agreement with the Iraqi government to maintain U.S. forces in Iraq indefinitely. It happens that when Barack Obama withdrew the final U.S. forces, he was simply complying with the agreement Bush had signed.)
- A high-level body headed by none other than James Baker, the man who made Bush President, issued "The Iraq Study Group Report" in late 2006. It provided a perfect cover for withdrawal to begin in 2008. Cheney/Bush disposed of it before the ink was dry.
- Most of us on the Left thought the true goals of the invasion were oil and bases. If that were true, they were achieved, as confirmed by the news that the Iraqi cabinet has come to an agreement over the distribution of oil exploration and operational rights and revenues. And Bush was escalating.
- At various times, the major Muslim countries offered to provide cover for an American departure, especially if it were attached to a real settlement of the Palestine/Israel problem. They were not taken up on those offers.

And so (back to the present time), it seemed very likely back then that the goal was Permanent War. As I (and numerous others) have written on numerous occasions, the U.S. economy has become heavily dependent on the subsidized military-industrial complex and the inordinately large amount of Federal spending that supports it. Bush/Cheney made a fetish of Permanent War, but certainly Obama bought into it, although at a (somewhat) reduced level. As did Hillary Clinton, both as Secretary of State and Presidential candidate. On the other hand, Trump mouthed words. And certainly to some of those who would otherwise be critics of his, his "peace" talk sounded good. But the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex, by far and away the world's largest, always needs an enemy of sorts to justify its existence.

Which one it will be is still uncertain. China is too big and has huge U.S. entanglements of one sort and another. Iran seems to be the candidate-of-the-week right now. But it is rather small and the U.S. partners in the peace deal are not going to pull out it even if the U.S. does. (Mercedes-Benz and BMW were both in Tehran to begin setting up dealerships the day after the deal was signed. Air-Bus has signed a very large contract to modernize Iran Air.) Which leaves, of course, the old reliable-for-that-purpose, Russia. And we all know that there are both known and unknown difficulties for that one, for a Trump Administration. But they do have to have one, and Russia is looking better and better for that purpose, the fantasies of the " 'Russia-gate' is a myth" folks, on both the Left and the Right, to the contrary notwithstanding. The ruling class rules, and the MIC is central to its interests. If Trump really tries, or has to to protect his own skin, to get in the way, he will be gone sooner than you can say, "Jack Robinson."

Post Script

I was just about to post this one today (6/27/17) when the news came over the wires that Trump has discovered that the Syrians are preparing another "gas attack." (That there was ever a first one has been thoroughly disproved by the great Seymour Hersh.) Trump, apparently without any of the usual staff work being done for an announcement of this sort at either State or Defense, endorsed by the ever-reliable war-hawk over at the UN, Nikki Haley (wait a minute; I thought that it was Clinton who was the war hawk) has issued "strong warnings" against Syria. Oh boy! And the Russians are not taking this one lightly.