

THE NEW AMERICAN MILITARISM AND ITS IMPACT ON WORLD POLITICS

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Abstract

The author explores the relationship between war and peace via US foreign policy. It asserts that in a globalized world, war is measured by its profitability while peace is actually seen as an obstacle to profitability, and is thus consequently shunned. The article ends with the prediction that high levels of military spending will lead to the downfall of any empire or superpower. As the Soviet Union showed increased militarism ends, virtually inevitably, in demise. The same prediction is made for the USA, but since the USA's economy is run by far more efficient means (capitalism) and penetrated the global market, in contrast to the Soviet Union, the USA's demise will probably come in 2025 or 2030.

Keywords: American Militarism, World Politics, Diplomacy, Security, Peace.

Introduction

This article explores the relationship between war and peace via US foreign policy. It asserts that in a globalized world, war is measured by its profitability while peace is actually seen as an obstacle to profitability, and is thus consequently shunned.

This has huge implications for concepts like *territoriality*, (military) *victory*, *diplomacy*, *security*, *peace*, and the *nature of war* itself. For instance, war has been completely transformed, whereas in the past war was historically about taking another nations territory; territory is no longer the goal of war. Victory itself is no longer the object of fighting, as wars (esp. by the USA) have merely been continued rather than fought to victory.

The reasons for this are almost always financial, as victory would mean the end of war, but that is shunned since it would also mean the end of lucrative profits. See the for example, the *War on Terror*, which top US policy makers have proclaimed as a long war without any end in sight.² *Diplomacy* is likewise another concept that has been turned upside down, whereas historically diplomacy meant using non-military means of resolving conflict and war, nowadays diplomacy has been subverted as it is largely conducted by the

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Pentagon that has a budget 20 times that of the State Department, which has been totally relegated in its historical task of finding diplomatic solution to end conflict. *Peace* has also been turned upside down, meaning that a condition of peace is maintained throughout the world by waging war. Obviously peace was meant to be achieved primarily by peaceful means and not by war. But again, peace is not lucrative, as there is no money in it; therefore, war must replace it.

The article ends with the prediction that high levels of military spending will lead to the downfall of any empire or superpower. As the Soviet Union showed increased militarism ends, virtually inevitably, in demise. The same prediction is made for the USA, but since the USA's economy is run by far more efficient means (capitalism) and penetrated the global market, in contrast to the Soviet Union, the USA's demise will probably come in 2025 or 2030.

The Changing Face of War

Despite the fact, it is because the USA does not look like a militarized country that Americans find it hard to acknowledge that Washington is constantly at war, that it garrisons much of the planet, and that the norm for the US is to be at war somewhere (usually at many places simultaneously) at any moment in time. Furthermore, the means to fight wars have been both quantitatively and qualitatively enhanced, in this sense, more has become the order of the day for the USA.

The USA's citizens should also ask themselves what it means when the most military-obsessed administration in its history, which, annually submits ever more expanded Pentagon budgets to Congress, is succeeded by one headed by a president who ran, at least partially, on an antiwar platform, and who then approved of an even larger Pentagon budget?³

The US military has robot assassins in the skies over its war zones, 24/7, and the "pilots" who control them from thousands of miles away are ready on a moment's notice to launch missiles—"Hellfire" missiles at that—into Pashtun peasant villages in the wild, mountainous borderlands of Pakistan and Afghanistan?

All of this leads to the paradoxical situation that despite tremendous expenditures for all sorts of weapon systems and means to wage war, in order to make the USA safe and secure, the opposite has actually happened. Since "War is now the American way, even if peace is what most Americans experience while their proxies fight in distant lands. Any serious alternative to war, which means

our “security,” is increasingly inconceivable. In Orwellian terms then, war is indeed peace in the United States—and peace is war.”⁴As Engelhardt wrote so eloquently:

When it comes to war (and peace), we live in a world of American Newspeak in which alternatives to a state of war are not only ever more unacceptable, but ever harder to imagine. If war is now our permanent situation, it has also been sundered from a set of words that once accompanied it. It lacks, for instance, “victory.” After all when was the last time the United States actually won a war (unless you include our “victories” over small countries incapable of defending themselves, like the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada in 1983 or powerless Panama in 1989)? The smashing “victory” over Saddam Hussein in the First Gulf War only led to a stop-and-start conflict now almost two decades old that has proved a catastrophe.⁵

Here, we can see the immense changes of war and the way war is nowadays being fought. War is now no longer fought for a (military) victory but rather it is simply sustained, and, therefore; wars become endemic long term conflicts with no real end in sight. Once they die down they can easily flare up again; in that sense, they are like civil wars that may get quiet for a while but may then pick up again where they left off in terms of the fighting. To put this into a historical perspective for the US:

Keep heading backward through the Vietnam and Korean Wars, and the last U.S. military was truly victorious in 1945. But achieving victory no longer seems to matter. War American-style is now conceptually unending, as are preparations for it. When George W. Bush proclaimed a Global War on Terror (aka World War IV), conceived as a “generational struggle” like the cold war, he caught a certain American reality. In a sense, the ongoing war system can’t absorb victory. Any such endpoint might indeed prove to be a kind of defeat.⁶

Even more interesting and perhaps disturbing is the fact that war has no longer anything to do with the taking of territory, or even with direct conquest. Moreover, war is increasingly a state of being, not a process with a beginning, an end, and an actual geography.⁷ In that sense, war is much like the phenomenon of *globalization*. It is hard to find its beginning, and equally impossible to find its end; it is also devoid of territoriality, and its conquest is not direct anymore, it has for all intents and purposes become instead financial.

How the Meanings of Security, Peace, and Diplomacy have Fundamentally Changed

All of this also has a huge impact on the meaning of security: “its traditional meaning has ... moved from a state of being (secure) to an eternal immensely profitable process whose endpoint is unachievable. If we ever decided we were either secure enough, or more willing to live without the unreachable idea of total security, the American way of war and the national security state would lose much of their meaning. In other worlds, in our world, security is insecurity.”⁸

What has happened to the concept and idea of peace, much like security it has been turned upside down. As analyzed by an astute observer:

As for “peace”—war’s companion and theoretical opposite—it, too, has been emptied of meaning and all but discredited. Appropriately enough, diplomacy, the part of government that classically would have been associated with peace, or at least with the pursuit of the goals of war by other means, has been dwarfed by, subordinated to, or even subsumed by the Pentagon. In recent years, the U.S. military with its vast funds, has taken over, or encroached upon, a range of activities that once would have been left to an underfunded State Department, especially humanitarian aid operations, foreign aid, and what’s now called nation building.”⁹

Even diplomacy is no longer what it used to be. It has completely transformed itself into something different, than what it stood for traditionally. Diplomacy has been militarized! For instance, the *State Department’s* embassies are now bunkers and military style headquarters for the prosecution of war policies.

The problem with peace is that there’s no money in it. World driven by *globalization* is always about money! Anything that does not produce enough money will be ultimately left by the wayside, as profitability, shareholder value, and derivatives are the new gods of the post-modern age. This type of turbo or casino capitalism has no use for peace, since peace can’t increase profits or the shareholder value of stocks around the world. Indicative of this are the US policies: as the USA invests nearly a trillion dollars in war and war related activities but invest nothing in peace. Therefore, there is one resounding message to all of this: **War is measured, in a globalized world, by its profitability while peace is actually seen as an obstacle to profitability,**

and is thus consequently shunned. This in a nutshell, summons up US foreign and domestic financial and global policy towards both war and peace. As an observer remarked, almost sarcastically: “The very idea that there might be peaceful alternative to endless war is so discredited that it’s left to utopians, bleeding hearts, and feathered doves.”¹⁰ Peace is then just a rhetorical flourish embedded, like one of our reporters, in wars around the world, who present war more as if they are reporting a live sports event on our TV screens. Even the once seemingly appropriate “peace dividend” that was somewhat seriously discussed when the Soviet Union collapsed, is nowadays nothing but a phrase from not just a different era but seemingly also a different world. It is now totally out of touch with the world we are living in, where suicide bombers may detonate themselves globally anytime and anywhere, where a *War on Terror* is still ongoing without any end in sight.

Even to imagine that the mighty USA would divest itself somehow of its tremendous arsenal of all sorts of deadly high-tech weapons seems to be bordering on the ridiculous. In such a world, politicians of all types can talk endlessly about peace, but it will always amount to an exercise in futility, for the bitter reality is that peace does not sell.

How Globalization has Changed War

Globalization has been defined as the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets. If we then look at the conduct of war since the demise of the Soviet Union and thus bipolarity we can see just how much *globalization* has affected and changed the conduct of war.

Wars, as already mentioned, are no longer fought to secure territory. For the longest time in history, wars had one principal goal and that was to conquer territory. For the nation, state or kingdom that takes territory and adds it on to its own territory would become generally more powerful and wealthy. This was true of all wars until the end of the 2nd World War were the Soviets added additional territory on to their empire by subjugating Eastern Europe.

But World War 2 was to be the turning point in this sense. From then on wars were not really fought for increasing a state’s territory. The few exceptions made the rule, which would include Israel’s taking of Arab territories in the 1948 and 1967 wars. Something significant happened after World War 2

and it was that *globalization* came up in the form of US “free trade” policies that were supported throughout the Western world. G.A.T.T., the World Bank, the I.M.F. and later the W.T.O. (the successor to G.A.T.T.) made sure that *globalization* was the new phenomenon that would sweep most of the world. This only increased after the demise of the Soviet Union, when Washington declared, mostly via Francis Fukuyama, that *liberalism*, meaning “free trade” and *democracy* were now the way history would unfold. This type of *globalization* also referred to at time as *Americanization* of the world, or casino and turbo capitalism became the order of the day globally. Thus being a profound change for the conduct of war. War itself was now more than ever a huge business. The Cold War was immensely lucrative for Wall Street as trillions of dollars were invested and made by producing and selling all sorts of weapons, both domestically inside the USA and to its export markets globally. It is therefore no secret that the US economy was for all practical purposes, ever since it joined the 2nd World War in 1941, a war economy. This is explained under the heading: “The US Needs War Every 4 Years To Maintain Economic Growth” “This is not a secret,” explains Kris Roman, director of geopolitical research center Euro-Rus, “The whole [US] economy is built on the military theme: to maintain its economic growth, the United States needs a war every 4 years, otherwise the economic growth slows down.”¹¹ It is also clear that war is seen as good business by the ruling elites in Wall Street and their counterparts in Washington.¹²

Militarization is Now a Way of Life in the USA

Reuters notes that: \$8.5 trillion in taxpayer money doled out by Congress to the *Pentagon* since 1996, the first year it was supposed to be audited, has never been accounted for. That sum exceeds the value of China’s economic output last year.¹³

Yet for the first time public surveys show, at the end of 2013, that American citizens believe that the war in Afghanistan should have never started. The *Washington Post* subsequently revealed: “Fully 66 percent of Americans say the battle, which began with nearly unanimous support, has not been worth fighting”.¹⁴ While concurring in a separate *Associated Press-GfK* poll, “57 percent of Americans said the United States did “the wrong thing” in going to war with Afghanistan, with mixed feelings toward keeping troops in the country past 2014.”¹⁵ Interestingly enough a website reiterates: “The same is true in Iraq. American people don’t want to go to war against Syria, Iran or anywhere else.”¹⁶ The report asserted further:

But D.C. politicians do a lot of fundraising from defense contractors and make a lot of money from inside trading related to military spending.

And war helps distract people from the economic mess that the politicians are largely responsible for (the old distraction trick.)

And so – as the L.A. Times, Mother Jones and Counterpunch report – Washington has just passed a budget which will strip away the so-called “sequester defense cuts”, and gear up for a new series of wars.

As usual, government policy will make the rich richer and everyone else poorer.

It will keep the bloated defense industry fat and happy ... while making everyone else poorer, and gutting the civilian economy.¹⁷

It stands therefore exposed that the voice of the people, “in the home of the free and the land of the brave”, means nothing when it comes to *Wall Street* and *Pentagon* profits. Democracy is thus dethroned when it comes to the supremacy of the military-industrial complex and its *Wall Street* financiers. Corporate America’s rule of the few, which means in essence the plutocracy, over the many, is thus the order of the day. This is brilliantly exposed in Michael Moore’s documentary *Capitalism – A Love Story*, which takes a scrutinizing look at how the USA was once a thriving nation, where the rich, back in the 1940s, paid taxes up to 90% on their incomes.¹⁸

What will the Future Bring? Peace or War

It is asserted and shown from the outset that the main problem with peace in a globalized world economy is that peace does not sell! Meaning that peace will not be profitable to businesses, increase shareholder value, or the value of derivatives on the stock markets of the world. This is always going to be true in a world where *globalization* and *casino capitalism* reign supreme.

To answer our question, whether the future will be more peaceful or a continuation of the “War on Terror”, or whether other forms of war will dominate world politics, we need to look at the only remaining superpower the USA, and its pervasive military-industrial complex. It is this modern institution that will give us the necessary insights into answering our crucial question. If history is a guide in helping us then we must also focus on the demise of the other superpower: the former Soviet Union. While it was not exclusively the arms race, and thus militarization of the S.U., that caused it to collapse at the end of 1991; if we are to find the dominant reason why the collapse of this

superpower occurred. Then, it is clearly to be found in what can be called a type of military imperial overstretch.

A website describes why the downfall of the Soviet Union was virtually inevitable?

.. there were more immediate causes for the collapse. In the middle 1980's about seventy percent of the industrial output of the Soviet Union was going to the military. Oleg Gordievsky, a KGB official who defected to Britain, asserted that at least one third of the total output was going to the military. British intelligence could not believe such a high figure but later Western intelligence sources estimated that it was at least fifty percent. One can only imagine what a severe shortages of industrial goods there were for the rest of the economy.¹⁹

Economic management was another pitfall for the Soviet Union. In a command economy the state or government tries to plan everything via its bureaucracy, whereas in the West the “free market” economy principle was applied, which was by and large based on the universal law of supply and demand. This proved to be far more efficient than the Soviet model, where bottlenecks and shortages both in the agricultural and industrial sectors were common.

The Soviet model was also riddled with corruption and had a huge black market economy that was tolerated by the authorities in order to satisfy public demand. Another crucial deficiency was that the Soviet model gave no incentives to its workers, rather it taught them to do a sham job and practice getting by more than anything else. There was a common saying in both the Soviet Union and the East Bloc countries that criticized the inefficient Soviet economic model: “They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work”. More than anything else this showed just how flawed the Soviet command economy had become by the 1970s. By the time that Gorbachev was in power (starting in 1985), millions of Soviet workers didn't even bother coming to work anymore, and; alcoholism cost the Soviet economy billions of rubles every year, since workers that did actually come to work were often drunk. This is why Gorbachev started his anti-alcoholism campaign, but it was to no avail as people preferred drinking over almost anything else.²⁰

Yuri N. Maltsev worked as an economist on Mikhail Gorbachev's economic reform team, comparing prices in the S.U. to those in the USA, during the Gorbachev era, he asserts:

(P)rices for basic goods in the Soviet Union were already extremely high. A person had to work 12 times longer there to buy beef than here, 18 to 20 times longer for poultry, seven times longer for butter, three times longer for milk, 16 times longer for a color television, and 180 times longer for a car. With the new price hikes, the required work hours multiplied by two or three times. It is easy to understand why one fifth of the population lived at the poverty line, below which meant serious malnutrition. The government said 85 percent of the new revenues would go back into raising the wages of workers and peasants, but, in fact, most of it went into government coffers to pay the military and run failed state enterprises.²¹

When analyzing why the Soviet Union ultimately collapsed we can see the detrimental effects of military imperial overstretch. One has to ask the question whether the USA can sustain its huge defense expenditures without also undergoing severe strain on its economy. While it is undoubtedly true that the US economy is more efficient than the Soviet one was, there can still be no doubt that negative effects will take its toll on the US economy as well. For example, Alfred McCoy reminds us of the fate of empires in decline:

Despite the aura of omnipotence most empires project, a look at their history should remind us that they are fragile organisms. So delicate is their ecology of power that, when things start to go truly bad, empires regularly unravel with unholy speed: just a year for Portugal, two years for the Soviet Union, eight years for France, 11 years for the Ottomans, 17 years for Great Britain, and, in all likelihood, 22 years for the United States, counting from the crucial year 2003. ...

Available economic, educational, and military data indicate that, when it comes to U.S. global power, negative trends will aggregate rapidly by 2020 and are likely to reach a critical mass no later than 2030. The American Century, proclaimed so triumphantly at the start of World War II, will be tattered and fading by 2025, its eighth decade, and could be history by 2030.²²

Ultimately the question is not whether the United States will lose its unchallenged global power, but just how precipitous and wrenching the decline will be.

Economic Decline: Present Situation

Today, there are 3 main threats that exist to America's dominant position in the global economy: (1) loss of economic clout thanks to a shrinking share of world trade, (2) the decline of American technological innovation, and (3) the end of the *dollar's* privileged status as the global reserve currency.²³

*By 2008, the United States had already fallen to number three in global merchandise exports, with just 11 percent of them compared to 12 percent for China and 16 percent for the European Union. There is no reason to believe that this trend will reverse itself.*²⁴

All these negative trends are encouraging sharp criticism of the *dollar's* role as the world's reserve currency. "Other countries are no longer willing to buy into the idea that the U.S. knows best on economic policy," observed Kenneth S. Rogoff, a former chief economist at the *International Monetary Fund*. In mid-2009, with the world's central banks holding an astronomical \$4 trillion in U.S. Treasury notes, Russian president Dimitri Medvedev insisted that it was time to end "the artificially maintained unipolar system" based on "one formerly strong reserve currency."²⁵

Simultaneously, China's central bank governor suggested that the future might lie with a global reserve currency "disconnected from individual nations" (that is, the U.S. *dollar*). Take these as signposts of a world to come, and of a possible attempt, as economist Michael Hudson has argued, "to hasten the bankruptcy of the U.S. financial-military world order."²⁶

The bottom line of all these statistics is that it will be increasingly difficult for the USA to maintain its leadership role as the unchallenged only remaining superpower. At some point in the not too distant future, perhaps 2025 or 2030 the USA's economy will start to feel the increasing strain of its excessive defense expenditures, just like the Soviet Union did in the late 1980s.

The reason the USA has been able to postpone its rapid decline has been due to the fact that its economy was generally managed far more efficiently than that of the Soviet Union's and because it was integrated with the global capitalist market and flooded it with imported goods, so that its wreckage did not show up directly in shortage of consumer and producer goods.²⁷

But as the famous saying goes: “what goes up must come down”. This is the sheer logic of overspending, in this case on a huge military-industrial complex. Accordingly Lloyd Dumas in his 1986 book, *The Overburdened Economy*, makes a convincing case that the U.S. as well as the S.U. has been economically devastated by the counter-productive effects of military spending.²⁸

This also has consequences for the future role of the USA in world politics. It would indicate that the USA will find it increasingly more difficult to sustain such high rates of military expenditure on the one hand, and keep on fighting a “war on terror” on the other hand. The dilemma will be whether to continue down the road of ruin – just like the Soviets did and to face the predicament that comes with it, or whether the USA will start to withdraw more from world affairs, and thus also have to end the “War on Terror”.

There are unfortunately two scenarios left to contemplate: (1) would be that the leaders of the USA continue to overspend on their gigantic military-industrial complex or the alternative (2) would be that they anticipate the danger of this and start to reduce huge military expenditures and begin withdrawing more from global politics by choosing to terminate the “War on Terror”, and start to confront their huge domestic problems instead of maintaining the role of the world’s policeman. Unfortunately, if history is any guide, then the 2nd alternative option is not likely to be used by US elites; rather they will continue with their downward spiral, which also means that unlike the Soviets they will not accept a diminished role in world politics and will try desperately to remain the only superpower regardless of the consequences. These consequences are likely to give us more proxy wars, in the so-called 3rd world, where basically all the strategic resources (oil, gas, and precious metals) are located. This means that peace is going to be increasingly a rare condition in the world and that proxy wars, mostly by the USA and other Western countries, will continue to plague this planet.

Despite being voted against in the Security Council on December 1:14, 2017, US have not showed any willingness to rescind her decision to shift US embassy to eastern Jerusalem. The UN General Assembly vote against the US decision by 128:8 has even not been an eye apart for the US. USA still persists in choice of belligerence and militarized diplomacy.

NOTES

- ¹ When the author refers to the transformation of war he is strictly speaking of the advanced Western countries and how war has completely changed when they engage in it. This means that for example, in some 3rd world countries war can still be about *territorial* gain, and that military *victory* may still be the primary goal of wars waged by these nations. It may also mean that their concepts of *diplomacy* and *peace* may not have turned upside down.
- ² Shortly after 9/11 Vice President Dick Cheney declared that the War on Terror will last a very long time, it could probably last generations. (A generation is usually seen as a 30 years in duration.) See: James Stern gold, *Cheney's grim vision: decades of war / Vice president says Bush policy aimed at long-term world threat*, SFGATE.com, <http://www.sfgate.com/politics/article/Cheney-s-grim-vision-decades-of-war-Vice-2812372.php>, accessed: 27th, Jan., 2016.
- ³ Ibid, p. 10.
- ⁴ Ibid, p. 13.
- ⁵ Ibid, pp. 13-14.
- ⁶ Ibid, p. 14.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid, p. 14.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 15.
- ¹¹ "The US Needs War Every 4 Years To Maintain Economic Growth", zerohedge.com, ABC Media, LTD, <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2015-07-04/us-needs-war-every-4-years-maintain-economic-growth> Copyright ©2009-2013 ZeroHedge.com/Submitted by Tyler Durden on 07/04/2015. (Retrieved: 14,01,2016). See also: "U.S. Needs War Every Four years to Maintain Economic Growth – Belgian Analyst", sputniknews.com, 29.06.2015, cited from: <http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150629/1023987534.html>, (Retrieved: 14,01,2016).
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- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Capitalism – A Love Story, by Michael Moore, 2009, 127 min.
- ¹⁹ "The Economic Collapse of the Soviet Union," <http://www.sjsu.edu/>, <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/sovietcollapse.htm>, (Retrieved: 14, 01, 2016)
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- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² MCCOY, ALFRED: "How America will collapse (by 2025)," <http://www.salon.com/>, cited from: http://www.salon.com/2010/12/06/america_collapse_2025/, (Retrieved: 14,01, 2016).
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ *WHY DID THE SOVIET UNION COLLAPSE?*, realussr.com, <http://www.realussr.com/ussr/why-did-the-soviet-union-collapse/>, accessed: 27, Jan., 2016.
- ²⁸ Ibid.