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### The Unwinnable and Never-Ending Wars of the United States of America Presented at the Capitalism and Morality Symposium, Vancouver, B.C., July 29, 2017

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I begin with a quote from Marine Major General Smedley Darlington Butler in 1935.

*"War is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives. A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people. Only a small 'inside' group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes."*

Americans are citizens of a warring country; we are members of a warrior society. We the People must accept that war is a way of life in the United States.

Our country was founded on war. We have continued to wage war for the vast majority of the 241 years since our war of rebellion against a tyrannical form of government led by an absolute monarch.

The founding fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1776, went to war against the king and his redcoats until they surrendered at the Treaty of Paris in 1783, and established a republic with ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America in 1787.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the US engaged in a continuous series of wars against innumerable Indian Tribes, European powers including Great Britain, France, and Spain, and our neighbors to the south, Mexico, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

Most of these wars were based on a policy called “manifest destiny” and resulted in consolidation of the coterminous territory of the present-day United States.

But we also battled pirates in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and the Aegean, Caribbean, and Mediterranean Seas. We attacked Pacific Islanders in such diverse places as Fiji, Gilbert Island, Samoa, Japan, Formosa, Korea, and Guam, and fought a major war in the Philippines.

In the Civil War of 1861-1865, which was not really a civil war but one of succession, we killed more of each other (750,000 of our very own brothers) than all of our other wars combined.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the US of A had far fewer wars at 22, but they were arguably much more costly.

From 1903 to 1934, we engaged in regional imperialism with a series of invasions and occupations of seven countries in Middle America including Panama, Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Mexico. These incursions were driven by Presidential fiat including the Monroe Doctrine, Teddy Roosevelt's policy of "speak softly and carry a big stick", and Woodrow Wilson's platform of democratic nation-building.

Aptly called the "Banana Wars", they were supported by big business interests and carried out by the Marine Corp who actually published a manual in 1921 called *The Strategy and Tactics of Small Wars*.

In 1917, America belatedly entered President Wilson's "war to end all wars" with support of major industrialists who had profited from exporting goods during three years of fighting in Europe. However, it was overwhelmingly unpopular with the public. The US had the 14<sup>th</sup> largest army in the world before the conscription of 2.8 million men.

This conflict served to enrich segments of the industrial economy but at the expense of over 117,000 American soldiers who died on foreign soil. In 1919, federal war debt totaled \$25 billion and \$17 billion was still owed when the stock market crashed in 1929.

Marine General Butler was a two-time Medal of Honor winner during the aforementioned Banana Wars. His book "*War is a Racket*" condemned the business of war and windfall profiteering during WWI.

Indeed, this war to end all wars was followed by a 23-year period from 1918 until 1941 that was the most peaceful time since America's founding. But do not forget, nearly half of that occurred during the Great Depression.

Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941 and we declared war against the Axis powers. Over the next four years, 405,000 American military men lost their lives in Europe and the Asia-Pacific. War ended when we dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

After this second war of the world, two superpowers emerged with diametrically-opposed ideological and economic systems. A 45-year Cold War ensued with the grim consequences of a nuclear arms race. It finally ended with the collapse of communism in 1989 and dissolution of the USSR in 1991.

In the interim, American capitalism and Soviet-Chinese communism squared off in Asian countries divided by decree after WWII. Two major wars were fought: Korea from 1950 to 1953, a conflict with no winner that remains unresolved and unsolvable today; and Vietnam (plus Cambodia and Laos) from 1965 to 1973, a war that ended with the reuniting of the country under communist rule in 1975.

Other Cold War theaters where the US sent military troops included the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba and communist insurgencies in the Congo, Thailand, and Grenada. We occupied the Dominican Republic and also bombed the palace of Libyan strongman Muammar Gaddafi, participated in a civil war in Lebanon, and invaded Panama to depose a corrupt dictator.

With our main enemy and its entire economic system failing, a new boogie-man rose just in time: Iraq's Saddam Hussein, who invaded Kuwait in August 1990. A US-led coalition destroyed the Iraqi army in six weeks of military operations in early 1991.

Minor US-led interventions in the 1990s included: Somalia, 1992-1995, a civil war that remains unresolved; Haiti, 1994-1995; Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1995-1996; and Kosovo, 1998-1999. The latter two

conflicts were part of the break-up of Yugoslavia, a cobbled-together country of eight ethnic groups created after WWI.

Now let's take a step back to America's greatest generation.

We have not *won* a major armed conflict since the end of World War II in 1945 when the country established a standing army.

In his very first speech to the American people in April 1953 and again with his farewell speech in January 1961, lifelong military man and 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States Dwight D. Eisenhower, warned us of the dangers of the military-industrial complex, i.e., a standing army conjoined with a private armament industry waging war in perpetuity.

What followed a scant two years later and has continued over the next five and a half decades is a series of eight unwinnable and mostly never-ending wars started by American Presidents.

Among these eight wars: one is over and we lost it; five are ongoing; one was never finished and led to another unwinnable war; and one ended with a regime change.

The Vietnam War was started by John F. Kennedy in 1963, escalated by Lyndon Johnson who declined to run for reelection because of it, and ended with Richard Nixon's withdrawal of American troops in 1973. Our loss was confirmed with the downfall of Saigon during Gerald Ford's tenure in 1975. Over 58,000 of our boys died.

- **John Fitzgerald Kennedy's *Vietnam War* was America's first unwinnable war.**

President Johnson's decision to escalate Vietnam into a full-blown war was perhaps not his worst deed perpetrated on the American public. In 1965, LBJ embarked the country on a socialist agenda called "The Great Society" and commenced The War on Poverty.

In the 52 years since that fateful *faux pas* (definition: a "*social blunder*"), American society has not progressed. Instead, it has regressed on nearly every social metric despite many trillions of dollars spent on government entitlement programs to cure our perceived ills.

In 1966, the US government classified 28 million or 15% of Americans as living below the poverty line. By 2015, that number had risen to 43 million Americans or 13.5% in the poorhouse.

- **Lyndon Baines Johnson's *War on Poverty* is America's Second Unwinnable War.**

Not to be outdone, in September 1969, President Tricky Dick Nixon started an endless battle of his own design called The War on Drugs. The result has been devastating to American society.

Its abject failure is illustrated by a relatively harmless recreational drug, marijuana, although similar cases can be made for harder drugs. Over 25 million Americans have been arrested for possession of pot since it was made illegal in 1937. Over one hundred million Americans now admit to smoking marijuana at some point in their lives.

Marijuana is now America's largest cash crop, exceeding corn by over 60%.

The War on Drugs was escalated exponentially during the Reagan years and continued thru the terms of Bush Sr., Clinton, and Bush Jr. It has served to create international crime cartels and terrorist organizations that control growing, processing, production, manufacture, and distribution of illegal drugs thru out the world and especially to the United States.

Prohibition simply does not work because people like to get high. Yet we now spend over \$51,000,000 every year fighting The War on Drugs.

- **Richard Milhous Nixon's *War on Drugs* is America's Third Unwinnable War.**

Our next three leaders, Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr., James Earl Carter, Jr., and Ronald Wilson Reagan, did not start any unwinnable wars. Carter and Reagan both ran on platforms to limit size of the federal government but made little headway on The War on Poverty. Reagan escalated The War on Drugs.

After 17 years of Presidencies with nary a new unwinnable war, George H.W. Bush became the next culprit.

In August 1990, Iraq invaded and annexed its oil-rich neighbor, Kuwait. Saddam Hussein's actions were met with wide international condemnation, economic sanctions were enacted by the United Nations Security Council, and war preparations began.

With a UN Coalition of 34 nations led by the United States, bombing commenced in mid-January 1991, ground troops were deployed five weeks later, and the war was over in four days. American, British, and French forces pursued fleeing Iraqi troops to within 240 km of Baghdad before withdrawing. President Bush declared a cease-fire and Saddam's "mother of all battles" was over.

Or was it?

Smartly, President George Bush, Sr. had refused to allow US troops to enter Baghdad and finish off Saddam Hussein and his Republican Guard.

When asked for his reasoning, Bush said, "We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq." Defense Secretary Dick Cheney chimed in, "We'd achieved our objectives and we were not going to go get bogged down in the problems of trying to take over and govern Iraq."

These two quotes would come back to haunt another Bush-Cheney team in the mid-2000s.

- **George Herman Walker Bush's *Gulf War* became America's Fourth Unwinnable War.**

In his 1998 State of the Union Address, President Bill Clinton warned of Saddam Hussein's development of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, i.e., "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq. He signed a bill for regime change in Iraq and the last two years of his tenure were marked by routine bombing of Iraqi anti-aircraft installations.

Three other episodes during the Clinton Presidency are of strategic importance and all involve al-Qaeda: the 1993 World Trade Center car bombing; the 1998 US Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania that led to missile strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan; and the 2000 suicide bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen.

The Sudanese government actually offered to deliver bin-Laden to the US in 1996, 1998, and 2000 and also provide intelligence on militant organizations in the Middle East. However, William Jefferson Clinton ignored all these overtures and his failure to take out Osama bin-Laden led directly to 9-11.

Thus, when George W. Bush was sworn in as President in January 2001, the seeds of three unwinnable wars had already been sown by Clinton: The War on Terror, The War in Afghanistan, and The War in Iraq. But make no mistake, Bush Jr. was the man that adopted and nurtured these forever wars as he would his own progeny.

As the 21st Century was ushered in with the Y2K fiasco, America was not actively warring. But that all changed with the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 when 2605 Americans died. Nine days later, President Bush proclaimed a never-ending battle he called the “War on Terror”.

With those three words originally coined by Ronald Reagan in the '80s, America was plunged into not only an unwinnable war but a perpetual, endless, forever, Orwellian-style war.

- **George Walker Bush's *War on Terror* is America's Fifth Unwinnable War.**

Lil' Bush said this at the time of 9-11 “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”

Therefore, he invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, overthrew the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban government, destroyed al-Qaeda camps, and installed a new regime.

Initial attacks in 2001 removed the Taliban from power but subsequently, they have made a strong resurgence in many parts of the country. Since 2006, Afghanistan's opium production has grown to an estimated 90% of world supply. Note that Mexican cartels supply much of the rest.

After 13 years of war, we finally declared victory and withdrew American troops at the end of 2014. But by the next October, President Obama resumed war operations and the US will maintain two bases with nearly 10,000 military personnel in Afghanistan indefinitely. At this juncture, the Taliban occupies about 20% of a “country” led by local tribal warlords with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State controlling numerous enclaves.

Collateral to the war in Afghan territory, the US began drone strikes and incursions across the frontier in northwest Pakistan in 2004 and killed Osama bin-Laden in 2011; military actions continue there.

- **George Walker Bush's *War in Afghanistan* is America's Sixth Unwinnable War.**

The big War in Afghanistan was not enough for the powerful neocons in control of Lil' Bush's Administration.

In 2003, the United States invaded and occupied Iraq on the Clinton-generated pretense that Saddam Hussein possessed “weapons of mass destruction”. In reality, it was an excuse to finish what Big Bush did not do in 1991; i.e., remove the dictator of yet another cobbled-together “country” created at the end of WWI. Saddam's minority Sunni ruling party was destroyed, he was captured and executed, civil war ensued, a Shia government was installed, and the US withdrew troops at the end of 2011, turning the civil war over to the Iraqis.

During the Arab Spring civil wars of 2011, the United States attacked Muammar Gaddafi and his loyalists in Libya with cruise missiles. That civil war reignited in 2014 and continues.

Since the US retreat from Iraq, government forces, dispossessed Sunnis, Iranian-backed Shia factions, and ethnic Kurds have repeatedly clashed in sectarian violence in the northern half of the country. By 2014, this widespread fighting had merged with a civil war in Syria.

The chaos in Iraq that began with an American invasion in 2003 has begotten the radical Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh?), which now controls large swaths of northern Iraq and Syria. US bombings and drone strikes continue in a regional war in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Algeria, and Afghanistan.

Much like the decade-long quagmire in the putrid jungles of Vietnam, there is no end in sight for the secular civil wars in the stinking deserts of the Middle East. They are simply the next chapters in the American encyclopedia of never-ending war.

- **George Walker Bush's *Iraq War* is America's Seventh Unwinnable War.**

In January 2009 Democrat Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States ending eight years of Republican rule. He promised an end to the Iraq War in 18 months and closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention camp within a year. Neither of those events happened.

But Obama did employ disturbing Orwellian "Newspeak", by ordering the Pentagon to discard the term "War on Terror" and replace it with "Overseas Contingency Operations". He also directed the term "War on Drugs" no longer be used.

Despite his acceleration of the War in Afghanistan, Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2009, becoming the third sitting President to receive it. In a 36-minute speech, this man said "war" 44 times; he said "peace" 32 times.

By channeling Orwell's first slogan of the Party displayed on the white facade of the Ministry of Truth, Obama asked us to *believe*: "WAR IS PEACE".

But he did not bring peace.

Instead, Obama initiated his own war: A War on Capitalism.

His domestic agenda included government health care, increased entitlement programs, redistribution of wealth, higher taxes, increasingly burdensome regulation of business and free enterprise, taxpayer bailouts of banks and large corporations, creation of vast amounts of fiat money, monetization of debt, restrictions on individual rights, surreptitious spying on ordinary citizens, and lucky for us, failed attempts to restrict our right to bear arms.

After eight long years of a President who embraced a socialistic agenda, the American people elected an avowed capitalist to succeed him.

I do not need to explain the inevitable failings of socialism, collectivism, and statism to my audience today. Suffice it to say, we won this case with a regime change.

- **Barack Hussein Obama II's *War on Capitalism* was America's Eighth Unwinnable War.**

Since Ike's warning in early 1961, our elected leaders have never heeded the sage old warrior's advice against war and for peace.

Indeed, since Eisenhower's last speech as our President, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, Bush Sr., Clinton, Bush Jr., and Obama have waged unwinnable and now never-ending wars that continue to take the lives of our fine young men. The number of dead now stands at 65,913 and counting in the intervening 55 years.

In 1972, Presidential candidate George McGovern said, "*I'm fed up to the ears with old men dreaming up wars for young men to die in.*" Unfortunately, this former WWII Air Force pilot and anti-war populist, was defeated by the soon-to-be disgraced Dick Nixon in a landslide, and our warring ways have continued unabated.

*Que lastima.*

In addition to the tragic cost in lives, there is also a huge financial cost to war. Massive debt was incurred to finance the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, WWI, and WWII. Total government debt load with respect to GDP is now at 107%, and is approaching the all-time high of 119% in 1946. Although the economic crisis of 2008-2009 and subsequent monetary inflation are mostly to blame, a significant portion is directly attributable to the ongoing cost of waging the forever War on Terror, the war that Obama attempted to end by changing its name.

And now our new President, Donald John Trump, is asking for a \$60 billion bump in military spending for 2018.

In summary:

The United States of American has fought in 90 wars since its Declaration of Independence. Despite a Constitutional requirement, only five have been authorized via a formal Declaration of War by Congress: War of 1812; Mexican-American War; Spanish-American War; World War I; and World War II.

American was founded on war and there is little doubt that we will be at war for the duration of our republic.

And we will endure until the greatest nation ever on Earth crumbles under a burden of debt and financial ruin that comes from waging never-ending war.

The decorated warrior-turned-pacifist General Butler said it best:

*There are only two things we should fight for. One is the defense of our homes and the other is the Bill of Rights.*

All I am saying is: Why can't we give peace a chance?

**Michael S. (Mickey) Fulp**  
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P.S. Do not tread on me and I will not tread on you.