



Good War and Bad Peace: Perpetual War and the Erosion of Liberty

In a letter written in 1783, Benjamin Franklin said, “In my opinion, there never was a good War, or a bad Peace.”

That kind of talk today probably would get Ben branded a terrorist or an associate of al-Qaeda, ISIS, or the latest enemy in the perpetual War on Terror. Lindsey Graham definitely would tell him to shut up and then send him to Gitmo.

When one kills context, he makes an orphan of understanding. With that in mind, it is enlightening to read Franklin’s declaration in its entirety.



I join with you most cordially in rejoicing at the return of Peace. I hope it will be lasting, and that Mankind will at length, as they call themselves reasonable Creatures, have Reason and Sense enough to settle their Differences without cutting Throats; for, in my opinion, there never was a good War, or a bad Peace. What vast additions to the Conveniences and Comforts of Living might Mankind have acquired, if the Money spent in Wars had been employed in Works of public utility! What an extension of Agriculture, even to the Tops of our Mountains: what Rivers rendered navigable, or joined by Canals: what Bridges, Aqueducts, new Roads, and other public Works, Edifices, and Improvements, rendering England a compleat [sic] Paradise, might have been obtained by spending those Millions in doing good, which in the last War have been spent in doing Mischief; in bringing Misery into thousands of Families, and destroying the Lives of so many thousands of working people, who might have performed the useful labour!

Can we, Franklin’s 21st century countrymen, settle our differences without cutting throats? It doesn’t seem so. The coming of every new crisis, it seems, brings a new enemy — someone new to hate and someone whose very existence threatens our own.

Take this gem from Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) for example. During an appearance on Fox News Sunday, Graham explained to the host that permitting ISIS to exist is tantamount to bringing beheadings and riots to every city in the United States.

“When I look at the map that Gen. Keane described, I think of the United States. I think of an American city in flames because of the terrorists’ ability to operate in Syria and Iraq,” Graham declared.

Of course, fear is the coin of the realm in Washington, D.C., particularly within the sector that depends on war and the manufacture of materiel to fight it for the money that funds the perpetuation of their own petty empires.

As this author explained last month in an article exposing the all-but-ignored incestuous relationship between media, the military, and lawmakers:

It would appear that expansion of the “War on Terror” is less a foreign policy trajectory and more



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of a marketing tactic of the immense (and every expanding) military-industrial-intelligence complex and the corps of congressmen that act as salesman staking out new territories for the deadly inventory manufactured by the defense contractors. This expansion of the market makes money, much of which finds its way into the campaign coffers of dozens of influential lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

In today's political climate and in the post-NDAA world, it is an actionable offense to suggest that war is bad or that we shouldn't go around (metaphorically) cutting the throats of our erstwhile enemies; and the punishment for such an offense is indefinite detention until the president decides you are no longer a threat to the security of the homeland.

There's something very 1984-esque about the decades that have followed World War II. Peace is war and war is peace. That is to say, Americans are told that in order to keep the peace at home, we have to take the war to the militants abroad who but for our constant bombing would be invading our country and carrying out jihad in the establishment of some global caliphate that is the alleged aim of these groups.

There is no mention, however, of the fact that perhaps it is the drone war and the armed intervention by the U.S. military or paramilitary (CIA, for example) that is fomenting this hatred and is propelling the drive to savage anything American.

Speaking specifically of the current war against ISIS, ISIL, or whatever the *nom de jure* is, former congressman and presidential candidate Ron Paul described the vicious cycle carrying us into one unwanted, unpopular, unconstitutional "war" after another.

The Syrian jihadists supported by the western powers and, for some baffling reason, Turkey, ran amok. A previously unknown band of gunmen known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant were trained and armed in Jordan by CIA, then turned loose on Syria.

ISIL became ISIS, then the by now notorious Islamic State (IS) which has been rampaging across northern and central Iraq. What makes IS so effective is that the major portion of its leaders and soldiers are veterans of President Saddam Hussein's army, notably the Republican Guard. With IS is the last surviving Saddam insider, Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri.

When the US first invaded Iraq, Saddam predicted it would face the "Mother of all battles." Westerners laughed. Eleven years later, the laughter has been silenced. Iraq continues to fight on and it is no longer safe for foreign oil companies. Saddam's revenge.

The Islamic State is the perfect example of Nietzsche's over-used maxim, "What does not kill us makes us stronger." It has risen from the ruins of Iraq and Syria to challenge the American Raj.

"Light" bombing by the US in Iraq won't stop the IS. Pentagon chiefs now say US air power and special forces must go into Syria. This is standard Obama procedure: inching forward and launching trial balloons to test public opinion. But it's clear the American public does not want new wars no matter what the pro-war media and bought Congress may say.

In a masterful article published in August, Mike Marion discussed the lurking, lasting danger of this rapidly accelerating war machine:

War has steadily eroded American liberty and has nearly eliminated the Bill of Rights. The deceptively named Patriot Act led to the most expansive surveillance apparatus in world history. The NSA collects billions of phone calls, emails and cell phone location records every month



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without a warrant or even probable cause. The notion of being secure in one's person and property from government intrusion is virtually gone.

The massive cost of war requires Americans to pay an ever-increasing tab. The Federal Reserve causes inflation to fund unaffordable wars, which secretly picks the pockets of every American. Each person in the US is tethered to an ever-growing \$17.6 trillion in debt (much of it war related) and must pay for the hundreds of billions of dollars in annual interest on war debt. The US has still not paid off its debt from the first World War.

Bookending the above information with another quote from a Founding Father demonstrates how wary of war were those who understood government best. James Madison wrote:

Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.

No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.

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