**War is a Racket**

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Major General Smedley Butler was the most decorated American military man of his time. After his retirement, he realized the truth about the wars he had fought. To convey this knowledge to the American people, in 1935, he wrote, “War is a Racket,” a short book about the real reasons behind American wars.

In his book, Butler discussed how business interests commercially benefit from warfare. The book is based on World War I, giving examples of how industrialists made money at the expense of suffering soldiers. Public funds went into the pockets of industrialists to make windfall gains. He sums up war as: “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.”

He then explains the motivations behind each one of America’s wars in the early part of the twentieth century. How each war was about expanding US business interests in the region. Noam Chomsky in his 2010 book, “How the World Works” independently made the same claim that the wars that the US have to be understood from the motivation of establishing dominance, or else they look like a series of foreign policy disasters.

The practice of war, as sanctioned by the Quran and sunnah has not been seen since the Rashidun Caliphate, even in the Islamic world.

Butler states: “I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912 (where have I heard that name before?). I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.” Butler describes the horrors of war, which the soldiers face and which no one else knows about. His descriptions are very graphic with mice-infested trenches being the least of them. He enumerates frivolous contracts being awarded to dispense money to industrialists, all in the name of war.

Butler ended his book with suggestions for ending this exploitation in the name of war:

“It can be smashed effectively only by taking the profit out of war. The only way to smash this racket is to conscript capital and industry and labor before the nation’s manhood can be conscripted. […] Let the officers and the directors and the high-powered executives of our armament factories and our steel companies and our munitions makers and our ship-builders and our airplane builders and the manufacturers of all other things that provide profit in war time as well as the bankers and the speculators, be conscripted – to get $30 a month, the same wage as the lads in the trenches get.”

He then suggested that the decision to fight a war must be made by a limited referendum. The voters must be the ones who would go to war.

Butler finally concluded his book with the suggestion that the military should be limited to the role of self-defence. The United States Navy should be limited, by law, to operate within 200 miles of the coastline. The Army should be restricted to the territorial limits of the country. This would ensure that war if fought, can never be one of aggression.

Butler drew conclusions which are perfectly in line with the Islamic just war principle. He drew the same conclusions that the Quran propounds, after over forty years of fighting wars for the military. Islam restricts war to a defensive act and makes it obligatory for all able-bodied men to fight.

However, the practice of war, as sanctioned by the Quran and sunnah has not been seen since the Rashidun Caliphate, even in the Islamic world itself.

What Butler wrote in 1935 was replayed in the 2000s in Afghanistan during the War on Terror. Based on the public data obtained through publicly listed corporations, senate hearings and the news, the Pentagon spent a whopping USD 14 trillion on the Afghanistan operation. It is estimated that between 30-50 per cent of that went to private companies, generally military contractors. This means USD 5-7 trillion went to the pockets of corporations, enriching their CEOs, shareholders and employees. The greatest beneficiaries are said to be: Robert Stevens, CEO of Lockheed Martin; Stephen Orenstein who owned Supreme Group B V, which supplied food to the military, Erik Prince, a former Navy SEAL and the CEO of the infamous Blackwater; David Packouz and Efraim Diveroli of AEY Inc. who became arms dealers for the Pentagon in their 20s; Fahim Hashmi an Afghani businessman; and last but not the least, the 31 congressmen and congresswomen who own significant shares in corporations such as Lockheed Martin etc. These US congress member shareholders completed the loop of war profiteering.

The toll of the wars of the last 20 years against the Islamic world seems to have taught the US to fight unmanned proxy wars. The war in Ukraine is an example of that. Ukraine is already heavily indebted. Any benefit it accrued from joining NATO and aligning itself to the so-called “free world” of capitalism has been more than neutralized.

Avoiding war by staying neutral is a wise strategy.

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