

Shaping Global Superiority Abroad and Elections at Home

By Arnold August, March 2012

The defining role of the “military–industrial complex” in U.S. domestic and foreign policies is well known and acknowledged. It was, in fact, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, also known as Ike, who, in a 1961 speech, warned against the “unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military–industrial complex.”¹ This concept refers mainly to those industries and industrialists that stand to gain from the military buildup — for example, weapons manufacturing, reconstruction (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya), energy, transport, fuel and other businesses necessary to the military. Irrespective of what Ike’s intentions were in bemoaning the “military–industrial complex,” even the *Washington Post*, through the pen of his granddaughter, feels that Ike’s warning — 50 years later — is being ignored.² Andrew Bacevich, a retired U.S. Army colonel and current professor of history and international relations at Boston University, recently published a revealing and courageous book. He takes the reader, in a stepwise manner, through his experience over the years, leading him toward eventual opposition to the ingrained “worldview ... that American power manifested a commitment to global leadership [in the positive sense].” He explains how his “habits of conformity” and “myopia” confronted the following: “Asserting independence required first recognizing the extent to which I had been socialized to accept certain things as unimpeachable.”³ Regarding the military–industrial complex, Bacevich writes:

Regardless of what threats actually exist, semi-warriors, some in uniform, others wearing suits, concur in the need to sustain high levels of military spending. Even as they sometimes make a showing of bemoaning a stupendous profligate military–industrial complex, they routinely write off tens of billions of wasted taxpayer dollars.⁴

Making huge profits out of war is as old as the birth itself of the Thirteen Colonies, and even *prior* to its establishment as a republic. For example, before the Declaration of Independence,

the richest men in Massachusetts following King George’s War (1744–48) fell on those who managed, financed, and

supplied the campaign launched from New England against the French in Canada.... The Revolution [Declaration of Independence] realigned status and wealth in the thirteen former colonies with a vengeance, literally.... Once again wartime finance and supply responsibilities fulfilled their lucrative potential.⁵

The author of the above lines also points out that the six waves of inflation (one of the side effects of wartime spending) that had hit the U.S. at the time of his book's publication (2002) have swept the U.S. "from Bunker Hill [one of the initial battles of the U.S. War of Independence] to the Vietnam buildup."⁶

Along with the "military-industrial complex," the pivotal role of money in U.S. elections is also common knowledge. This is amply documented; consider, for example, how the business community dealt in its favour by the election of Ronald Reagan's vice-president, George Bush Senior, elected in 1988.⁷ The U.S. political science professor goes on to write about the 1992 elections and how "candidate Bill Clinton and his surrogates kept chanting one word like a mantra: 'change.'"⁸ The title of another U.S. work, to which a series of experts on elections contributed, tells it all: "Loser Take All: Election Fraud and the Subversion of Democracy, 2000-2008." For example, in the famous, highly contested Bush 2000 presidential election, one of the authors points out that the Supreme Court, in the case of Bush vs. Gore, became the "election terminator" with an "unappealable final decree on what our elections mean."⁹ Practices such as Gerrymandering are also publicly recognized and even accepted as "normal" in U.S. elections. This practice is based on a law adopted 200 years ago by Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry (thus the term "Gerrymandering" based on his name, Gerry, and the word "salamander" as a result of the salamander-like shape that one of the electoral districts took after it was redrawn). This law was passed by the Governor and allowed for the redrawing of electoral boundaries to assist his Republican Party in state legislative elections. Both parties participate in this activity, which has become "one of the most enduring legacies in US politics."¹⁰

¹ Eisenhower, Dwight D. 1960. "Public Papers of the Presidents." Military-Industrial Complex Speech. At <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/indust.html>, p. 1035-40.

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- ² Eisenhower, Susan. 2011. “50 Years Later, We’re Still Ignoring Ike’s Warning.” Washington Post (January 16). At <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/14/AR2011011404915.html>>.
- ³ Bacevich, Andrew L. 2010. *Washington Rules: America’s Path to Permanent War*. NY: Metropolitan Books, p. 7–11.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 28.
- ⁵ Phillips, Kevin. 2003. *Wealth and Democracy*. NY: Broadway Books, p. 10–12.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 9–10.
- ⁷ Ferguson, Thomas. 1995. *Golden Rule: The Investment Theory and Practice of Competition and the Logic of Money-Driven Political Systems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 241–74.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 275.
- ⁹ Miller, Mark Crispin. 2008. *Loser Take All: Election Fraud and the Subversion of Democracy, 2000–2008*. Brooklyn: Ig Publishing, p. 211.
- ¹⁰ Ariosto, David. 2009. “Redrawing the Lines — Almost 200 Years of Gerrymandering.” CNN Politics (February 11). At <<http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/11/gerrymandering/index.html>>.