



**The Never-Ending Wars of the United States of America**  
**A Monday Morning Musing from Mickey the Mercenary Geologist**  
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**November 21, 2016**

***"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.*

Marine Major General Smedley Darlington Butler, 1935.

Americans are citizens of a warring country; we are members of a warrior society.

Our country was founded on war. We have continued to wage war for the overwhelming majority of the 240 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 and went to war against the king and his redcoats until they surrendered at the Treaty of Paris in 1783. These same men established a republic with the ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America in 1787.

Over the next 74 years, we engaged in a series of wars against many Indian Tribes and at various times, European powers including Great Britain, France, and Spain. Major conflicts included the War of 1812-1815 and the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. 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.

However, our wartime excursions were not restricted to the North American continent. We battled pirates seizing merchant ships and their crews in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and the Aegean, Caribbean, and Mediterranean Seas, attacked Pacific Islanders on Fiji, Gilbert Island, and Samoa, invaded Uruguay and Paraguay, destroyed a Japanese fleet, and burned a coastal town along the Mosquito Coast.

Following the Civil War of 1861-1865 in which we killed more of each other (about 750,000) than all our other wars combined, America initiated a second era of Indian Wars in the West from 1866-1886. At this

juncture, over 100 years of nearly continuous warring against Indian Tribes was largely over except for the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 and a few minor rebellions that occurred until the mid-1920s.

Small skirmishes in the latter half of the 1800s included naval expeditions to Formosa, Korea, and Brazil as retribution for attacks on American ships, battles for control of the Samoa Islands with German-supported natives, and repeated encounters with Mexican militias and rebels along the Texas border.

Since its founding 103 years earlier, the nation then entered its longest period without engaging in warfare, eight years from 1890 until 1898.

With no more natives to conquer, the United States of America turned its attention to military ventures outside the country.

In 1898, a 10-week conflict in Cuba when it sought independence from Spain soon spread to the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico. The US annexed these islands and that action resulted in a three-year rebellion by Filipinos for their promised but reneged upon independence. The rebels were defeated in 1902 but full independence was not granted until 1946.

I wrote about this conflict in a previous essay on America's torture of prisoners-of-war ([Mercenary Musing, August 8, 2008](#)).

From 1903 to 1934, the US of A engaged in regional imperialism with a series of invasions and occupations of seven countries in Middle America. Small wars were conducted in Panama, Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Mexico.

These incursions were driven by Presidential fiat including the Monroe Doctrine, Roosevelt's "speak softly and carry a big stick" policy, and Wilson's platform of democratic nation-building. Most were carried out by the Marines, supported by big business interests, and aptly called the "Banana Wars". In 1921, the Marine Corp published a manual, *The Strategy and Tactics of Small Wars* based on its experiences.

During the Mexican Revolution from 1910 to 1919, American troops were stationed along the border to restrict fighting to the Mexican side. Nevertheless, rebels invaded US border towns several times and we responded with numerous sorties into Mexico and two major expeditions into interior Chihuahua. In 1914, US Marines occupied Vera Cruz to stop armament shipments from Germany.

America entered WWI in 1917 when Germany unsuccessfully tried to entice Mexico into major attacks in the southwest US by promising return of territories lost in 1848 and 1853.

In urging Congress to declare war, Woodrow Wilson promised it would be "a war to end all wars. He was supported by major industrialists who had already profited from exporting goods during three years of fighting in Europe.

However, the war was overwhelmingly unpopular with the public. In 1917, we had the 14<sup>th</sup> largest army in the world before conscripting 2.8 million men. The conflict served to enrich segments of the industrial economy but at the expense of over 117,000 Americans who died on foreign soil. In 1919, the federal war debt totaled \$25 billion and \$17 billion was still owed when the stock market crashed in 1929.

United States Marine Major General Smedley Darlington Butler was a seven-year veteran and two-time Medal of Honor winner during the Banana Wars. His book, "War is a Racket", condemned the business

of war and windfall profits during WWI; the introduction of his book is quoted to start this musing.

Excepting the aforementioned regional occupations in the name of American capitalism, the 23-year period from 1918 until 1941 was arguably the country's most peaceful time since its founding. Of course, 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 personnel lost their lives in Europe and the Asia-Pacific. War ended when the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

After this war of the world, two superpowers with diametrically-opposed ideological and economic systems emerged. A 45-year Cold War ensued with the grim consequences of a nuclear arms race and increased militarization of both antagonists alongside their allies and satellites. 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 that remains unresolved today; and Vietnam (plus Cambodia and Laos) from 1965 to 1973, a war that the US lost when the country was reunited under communist rule in 1975.

Other Cold War theaters where the US sent military troops included the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba and communist insurgencies in the Congo, Thailand, and Grenada. We 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. Following the war, the United Nations initiated a full trade embargo of Iraq that resulted in economic collapse, hyperinflation, widespread poverty, and civil wars from 1991-2003. Islamic fundamentalist opposition to a permanent US military force based in Saudi Arabia led directly to the 9-11 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C.

Other 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.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> 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". In 2009, Obama objected to this term and his military underlings renamed the perpetual war "Operation Overseas Contingency".

We invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, overthrew the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban government, destroyed al-Qaeda camps, and installed a new regime. After 13 years of war, we declared victory and withdrew American troops at the end of 2014. In October 2015, Barack Hussein Obama II resumed war operations and declared the US will maintain two bases and 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 initiated drone strikes and incursions across the frontier into northwest Pakistan in 2004 and killed Osama bin-Laden in 2011. Military actions also continue there.

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

In 2003, the United States invaded and occupied Iraq on the false pretense that Saddam Hussein possessed "weapons of mass destruction". In reality, it was just an excuse to finish what the Big Bush Administration did not do in 1991; i.e., remove him as dictator of yet another "country" with tribal factions that was created at the end of WWI. His minority Sunni ruling party was destroyed, Saddam was captured and executed, civil war ensued, a Shia government was installed, and the US withdrew its 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 again attacked 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, Shia factions backed by Iran, 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 started with the American invasion in 2003 has begotten the radical Islamic State (ISIS), which now controls large swaths of northern Iraq and Syria. US bombings and drone strikes continue in a regional war with ISIS and al-Qaeda 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 these 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.

A lifelong military man and 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States General Dwight D. Eisenhower, warned us of the dangers inherent in a standing army conjoined with a private armament industry waging war in perpetuity. Eisenhower addressed this issue of a military-industrial complex in his [first speech](#) to the American people in April 1953 and in his [farewell address](#) to the nation in January 1961.

Starting with Ike's successor, John F. Kennedy, who escalated US military involvement in an unwinnable civil war in Vietnam, our leaders have not heeded the sage old warrior's advice against war and for peace.

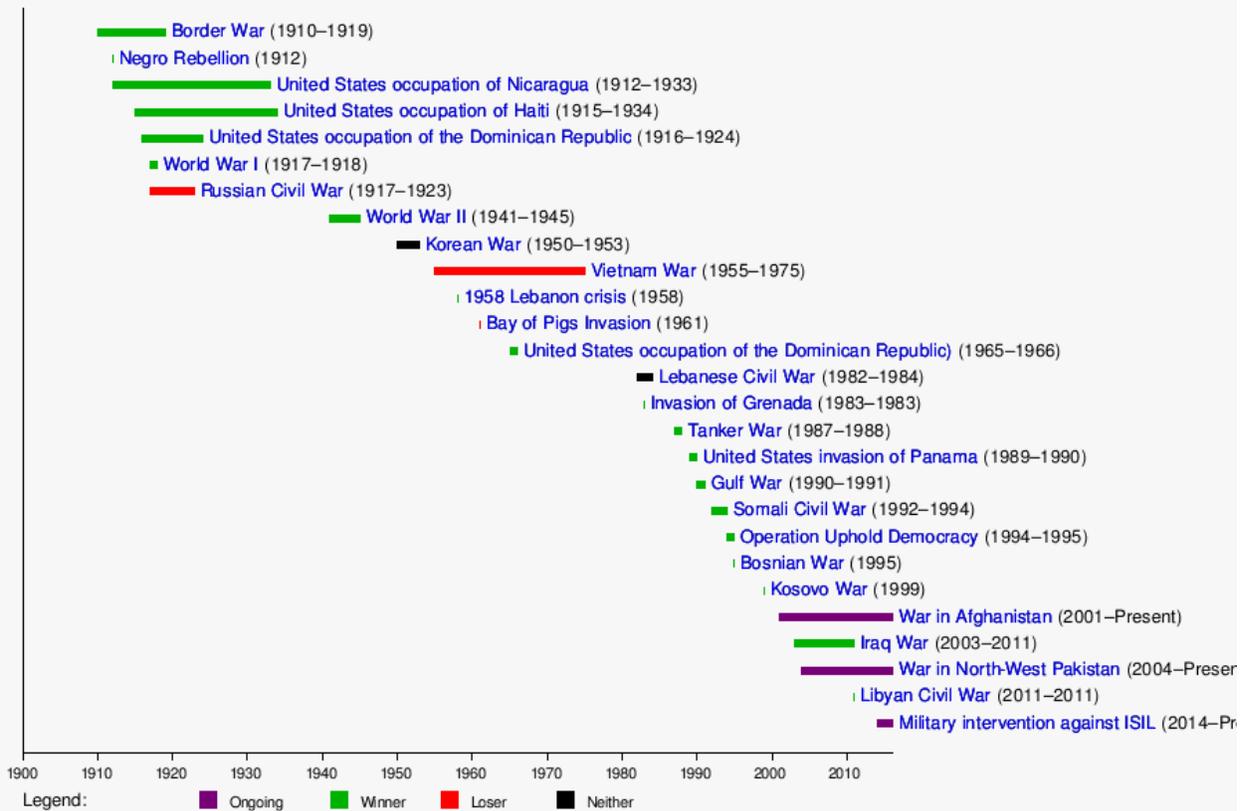
Indeed, since Eisenhower last spoke as our President, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Reagan, Bush Sr., Clinton, Bush Jr., and Obama have waged unwinnable and now never-ending wars that continue to take the lives of our fine young men. The number of dead now stands at 65,913 and counting in the intervening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

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 Tricky Dick Nixon in a landslide and our warring ways continued.

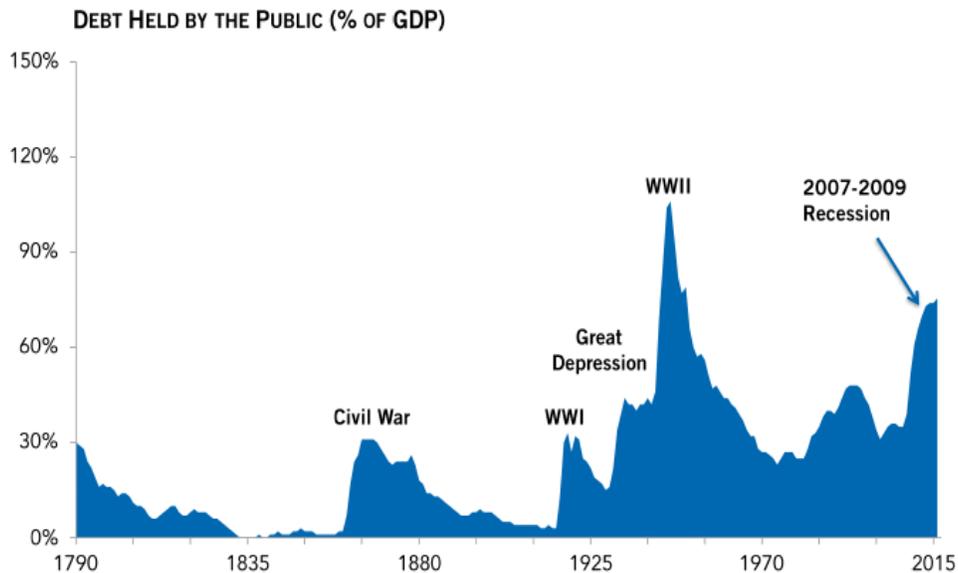
*Que lastima.*

Two sequential timelines documenting America's history of warfare are shown below (from Wikipedia):





In addition to the tragic cost in lives, there is a huge financial cost to war. The chart below shows the massive debt incurred in waging the major wars in American history. Our debt load with respect to GDP is now at its highest since WWII. Although the economic crisis and recession of 2008-2009 and subsequent monetary inflation are mostly to blame, a significant portion is directly attributable to the cost of waging the forever War on Terror:



Courtesy of Peter G. Peterson Foundation

Based on the Wikipedia compilation, the United States of American has fought in a total of 90 wars since its Declaration of Independence. 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.

I think 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 we are saying is give peace a chance](#) (The Plastic Ono Band, 1969).

Ciao for now,

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Mercenary Geologist



The [Mercenary Geologist Michael S. “Mickey” Fulp](#) is a Certified Professional Geologist with a B.Sc. Earth Sciences with honor from the University of Tulsa, and M.Sc. Geology from the University of New Mexico. Mickey has 35 years experience as an exploration geologist and analyst searching for economic deposits of base and precious metals, industrial minerals, uranium, coal, oil and gas, and water in North and South America, Europe, and Asia.

Mickey worked for junior explorers, major mining companies, private companies, and investors as a consulting economic geologist for over 20 years, specializing in geological mapping, property evaluation, and business development. In addition to Mickey’s professional credentials and experience, he is high-altitude proficient, and is bilingual in English and Spanish. From 2003 to 2006, he made four outcrop ore discoveries in Peru, Nevada, Chile, and British Columbia.

Mickey is well-known and highly respected throughout the mining and exploration community due to his ongoing work as an analyst, writer, and speaker.

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**Acknowledgement:** I thank Fred Jenkins, former Marine Reserve, retired geologist, and mentor, for interesting conversations on the business of war that were the impetus to write this musing.

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