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On the 10th anniversary of 9/11

The War on Terror: Is the World More Secure?

The U.S. is now trapped in a global war of its own making. It will be embroiled in more wars possibly in the next 10-20 years as a result of which it will create more enemies and make the use of force a long-term necessity.

By the Policy Study, Publication, and Advocacy (PSPA)
Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG)
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For 10 years, the whole world was witness to a “war on terror” that was unleashed in the aftermath of the 9/11 “terror attacks” in the U.S. The war, launched by then U.S. President George W. Bush and backed by “coalition of the willing” partners and NATO countries, dealt “shock and awe” attacks on Afghanistan (Oct. 7, 2001) and Iraq (March 20, 2003). Soon, the war spread to other countries including Pakistan and the Philippines; today, the war in its various forms and degrees of pre-emptive and unilateral armed intervention is waged in 120 countries. In these countries a “secret war” has deployed some 60,000 U.S. “elite forces” to carry out political assassinations, “rendition” or abduction of “terrorist suspects,” and other missions against suspected terrorists.

Reports of the war captured images of the impact of the explosive fury bursting out from modern warfare: human corpses; infrastructures destroyed; fear written in the faces of refugees; immeasurable social, health, and environmental tolls. Compared with the cataclysmic results, least reported is the fact that billions to trillions of dollars were reaped by U.S. and British companies and defense contractors because of the war.

Latest statistics show that in the three countries that borne the brunt of the war, at least 250,000 civilians including women and children died. Adding the injured, total casualties were estimated between 750,000 to one million. The death toll included journalists, 255, and humanitarian workers, 266. (The British medical journal, *Lancet*, which in 2006 reported that 601,000 civilians had

died in Iraq, said suicide bombings in the same country left 12,000 civilians killed between 2003-2010.) Internally-displaced persons numbered 7.8 million. Again, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan the insurgents suffered 50,893 dead compared with 31,741 soldiers killed, among them 6,000 U.S. forces.

Denied protection by the Geneva conventions on the treatment of war prisoners, hundreds of thousands of suspected terrorists or “illegal combatants” were detained for the past 10 years: 100,000 in Abu Ghraib, Iraq; 3,000 in Afghanistan (the notorious “Salt Pit” and Bagram airbase). Most controversial of these prison camps is the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, Cuba where 800 “illegal combatants” were subjected to inhumane treatment as sanctioned by U.S. higher authorities. Eventually, many of the prisoners were proven innocent and released under international pressure.

The war also bled U.S. taxpayers. Independent estimates put the financial cost of the war to the U.S. at a staggering \$6 trillion. Compare this with World War II: \$4.1 trillion.

Financing the war

Financing the war meant severe cuts to expenditures for education and other social services in the U.S. But it gave a windfall of profits as well to the war’s supporters - companies that provided the weapons and ammunition

and services like engineering, construction, training and security, counter-terrorism, repair of oil pipelines, and the building of new military installations. Some companies were involved in investment banking as well as in special services like interrogation and torture training and supplying airplanes for transporting targets of “rendition” to unknown destinations.

The top 25 war profiteers during 2003-2006 alone included Halliburton KBR, whose former CEO was U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney (\$17.2 billion); Veritas Capital Fund/Dyn Corp. (\$1.44 billion); Washington Group International (\$931 million); and Bechtel (\$14.6 billion). The Pentagon also paid \$285 billion to more than 100 defense contractors from 2007-2009 alone. Total defense contracts from 2002-2006 totaled \$1,174.70 billion a big chunk of this cornered by Lockheed Martin (\$105.7 billion), Boeing (\$89.4 billion), Northrop Grumman (\$61.8 billion), General Dynamics (\$42.5 billion), Raytheon (\$24.2 billion), and United Technologies (\$22.5 billion). Some of these major players were accused of defrauding taxpayers and as a result suits have been filed in court.

As the 9/11 marks its 10th year along with the beginning of the war on terror, the overarching question now is: Has terrorism, according to the definition of the U.S. and its allies, been defeated?

Bad news

In declaring the war against Afghanistan and Iraq, Bush pledged to put a stop to terrorism and make the world safe for democracy as bannered by his “Operation Enduring Freedom.” Reports including those from U.S. officials involved in the war, show otherwise. A research by the New York University’s Center on Law and Security and published by Mother Jones, said that the number of “terrorist attacks” from London, to Kabul, Madrid to Chechen, Kashmir region, India, Pakistan, and other countries has dramatically risen by more than one-third since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The report cites the U.S. administration’s partially-declassified National Intelligence Estimate (“Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the U.S.”), which states that “the Iraq war has become the ‘cause celebre’ for jihadists...and is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives.”

The research has been backed by British anti-terrorist experts, including Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, head

of the M15 security service who said recently: “The threat is serious, is growing and will, I believe, be with us for a generation.”

Seven years into the war campaign, the pro-war think tank, Rand Corporation (“How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa’ida”, 2008), confirmed that the war on terror is actually weakening national security. “Our analysis suggests that there is no battlefield solution to terrorism,” Rand stated. Former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski – who now advises Barack Obama – told the U.S. Senate that the war on terror is “a mythical historical narrative.” Newsweek magazine also admitted that the war is wholly unnecessary.

Long before 9/11, neo-conservatives of the Republican Party had plotted a military campaign against Iraq through “regime change”. The intent was to redraw the Middle East map making it a region friendly to the U.S., with access to oil and other vital resources fully ensured, and backed by Israel as a strong partner. In 1992, a draft Defense Policy Guidance (DPG) became a virtual blueprint aimed at ensuring U.S. global hegemony; Iraq, North Korea, and other countries were targeted for regime change. The neocons in 1997 regrouped under the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) that included George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz. In 2000 – one year before 9/11 – the same group, now at the helm of the Bush administration – warned that the U.S. public will not support a military conquest of the Middle East “absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – a like a new Pearl Harbor.” That “Pearl Harbor”, as many U.S. observers would put it, was 9/11. 9/11 and the destruction of Al Qaeda were used to justify regime change and instability in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon, and other countries. In a book published in December 2009 (War and Decision), a Bush adviser, Douglas Feith, quotes a paper submitted by then Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld calling on the U.S. president “not on taking down Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network but on the aim of establishing ‘new regimes’” in the Middle East.

Pivotal to justifying the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD) theory that the Bush regime hyped in the U.S. Congress, United Nations Security Council, and the global media. To build the WMD theory the Bush administration used “intelligence information” fed by an Iraqi defector, Rafid Ahmed Alwan

al-Janabi. Claiming to be a chemical engineer, al-Janabi (codenamed “Curveball”) said he was part of a top secret project of Saddam Hussein involving the manufacture of chemical weapons. Sold to German spies, his revelation was passed on to the British M-16 and eventually the CIA and White House. Until the defector’s unexpected confession in February this year, the WMD theory had served to back the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq despite contrary reports from UN arms inspectors and the failure to find proof of WMDs inside Iraq. Last February 15, al-Janabi finally admitted that he made up the story so the U.S. could oust Hussein (see CenPEG Issue Analysis No. 01, Series of 2011).

Hidden agenda

Woven together, these facts underlie a hidden agenda behind the war on terror that has cast a wide net throughout the world, undermining the sovereignty of many small nations, threatening the civil liberties of peoples, supporting repressive regimes, and posing a threat that, according to many observers, has become far more dangerous than its purported objective. The war allowed the U.S. to expand its military power by building new

installations in countries opened up by counter-terrorist intervention. But it has failed thus far to install stable governments: the Afghan government is riddled with corruption while warlordism has made a comeback; Iraq is pinned down by ethnic strife and insurgency.

Boosted by unprecedented increase in arms production by 123 percent since 2001, the U.S.’ war economy is nearly three times as large proportionally to the rest of the economy. Overall, however, war spending has been a direct drain to the economy gobbling up resources that should have been used for manufacturing and other productive purposes and causing job losses estimated at 2 million. Military expenditures now account for 20 percent of the federal budget and 28 percent of tax revenues. With the U.S. economy unable to recover from the devastating recession of 2008 it will make the war efforts more and more unsustainable in the long run.

The U.S. is now trapped in a global war of its own making. It will be embroiled in more wars possibly in the next 10-20 years as a result of which it will create more enemies and make the use of force a long-term necessity. Just like in the old empires, such wars will further weaken the much-touted U.S. Empire.

For reference:

Bobby M. Tuazon
Director for Policy Studies
Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG)
3F CSWCD Bldg., Magsaysay Avenue
University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. +9299526; Fax No. 355-4022
Email: info@cenpeg.org, cenpeg.info@gmail.com
www.cenpeg.org, www.eu-cenpeg.com