

About War and Peace: Will the Wrong Fail and the Right Prevail?

By: Antonio C. Cabral

An ancient Mexican proverb warns “El que con lobos anda, aullar aprende.” Commonly it’s used to caution that if one hangs out with or listens to the wrong people, one will learn to imitate them.

In today’s public discourse war hawks and neoliberals have steered the public discussion to what Noam Chomsky calls distracting issues that have silenced opposition to U.S. foreign policy in general and in particular to the U.S. illegal Middle East wars.

That pro-war strategy has worked because most community leaders, activists and common folks limit their public actions and discussions to local issues while ignoring the ‘Elephant’ in the room: The Middle East wars that have killed and wounded thousands of innocent people in addition to costing U.S. taxpayers \$5.6 trillion since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 according to the Watson Institute at Brown University (www.brown.edu/costofwar). Other centers, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies (www.csis.org), project that by the end of 2018 these wars will have cost us \$7.6 trillion.

Logically, then, when the U.S. public asks for more affordable housing and healthcare, improved sidewalks, public parks, etc. and the usual obfuscating response from elected officials is that funds are limited, they must be reminded of those \$7.6 trillion and also of their obligation as representatives of local taxpayers to speak out against those illegal wars not only because they keep draining our tax funds but also because they keep earning us the hatred of people throughout the world.

The fact that these wars are illegal is an undeniable truth shamelessly ignored for 17 years by politicians of both parties.

However, there’s hope that this dark chapter in our history may end.

On February 28, 2018, a group of Senators, including Bernie Sanders, introduced a bipartisan joint resolution to end

U.S. military involvement in Yemen pursuant to the War Powers Resolution of 1973. The Senators also called such intervention a violation of Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution that gives the authority to declare war only to Congress and not to the President.

Local voters and elected officials should demand approval of that Resolution by both houses of Congress and that all those wars be ended now.

Another relevant issue missing from today’s public discourse is the U.S. intervention in countries south of us that has cost thousands of lives and forced millions to flee to the U.S. as undocumented immigrants.

Just two recent relevant examples:

In 2009 a bloody military coup took place in Honduras that ousted the democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya. Hillary Clinton, then Secretary of State, supported Zelaya’s ouster that resulted in an increase in political repression, the murder of opposition political candidates, peasant leaders and LGBT activists and femicides forcing thousands

of Hondureños to flee north. Another example is the 2012 so-called ‘peaceful’ coup that ousted Paraguay’s President Fernando Lugo, again with U.S. support, that also resulted in mass migration north. The wealthy oligarchy wanted to remove Mr. Lugo, an ex-Catholic priest and bishop, ever since his 2008 election by the poor and landless peasants whom Lugo was trying to help. Clinton admitted in her autobiography ‘Hard Choices’ her role in overthrowing Latin America governments. We can expect the

same intervention under Trump’s Administration.

Therefore, the public discourse and actions by activists and people of conscience must include the cause and effect of U.S. foreign policy.

Unfortunately, our civil society in general and Latinos/Chicanos in particular, historically, have been convinced that we should not criticize U.S. foreign policy and wars. This dan-



Source: bit.ly/noWar_Postor



American anti-war activists have waged numerous protest rallies in a number of cities across the US to voice their opposition to another potential US military intervention in Iraq. Source: bit.ly/noNewWar

gerous reality has existed for decades and has led to the broader community remaining silent and even imitating the war hawks' behavior and jingoism.

One personal example:

In 1969 I was a member of San Antonio's Federation for the Advancement of the Mexican American (FAMA) and served as editor of its newspaper La Nueva Raza. Our office was on West Commerce Street across from what used to be David Crockett Elementary School. During one of our functions, Jake Johnson, a State Representative, was among our visitors. Johnson had a reputation of being a Democratic liberal who supported all of the Latino social causes. I walked up to him and asked, "Mr. Johnson, why don't you ever mention publicly our invasion of Vietnam and that horrible human tragedy taking place for both sides?" Johnson became red-faced with anger and hollered at State Representative John Alaniz, a FAMA supporter, "John, will you straighten out this guy? I'm busting my ass in Austin fighting for your people and he dares ask me why don't I speak out against the Vietnam War?" Johnson's dismissive reaction didn't surprise me but I was surprised when Alaniz responded, "It's OK, Jake, he's too young to know better."

The unwritten rule that Johnson and Alaniz endorsed even then was: Chicanos/Latinos can be involved in local issues but must never oppose the U.S. interventionist foreign policy. I had just completed service in the Marines but I was still expected to not condemn that infamous war.

I mention this incident only to emphasize my central point: We must end the self-censorship about war. All people of conscience must resist against the never-ending Middle East wars and counterproductive interventions in Latin America.

The only beneficiary of such costly and bloody adventurism is the military-industrial complex as five-star general Dwight

Eisenhower warned us in his January 1961 farewell address as President:

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinerywith our (social) goals...."

Some activist groups have confronted that danger. One is the organization Iraq Veterans Against the War (www.ivaw.org) that on January 15, 2005, adopted a resolution that reads in part, "Whereas the primary motivation for the prolonged occupation of Afghanistan isfor the control of oil and natural gas resources in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea....Be it resolved that IVAW ...calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces in Afghanistan and reparation for the Afghan people"

Similarly, the decades-old Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) published in its newspaper, The Veteran, in the fall of 2014 an editorial opposing the bombing of Iraq and Syria explaining how leaders are covering up the truth about those wars as they did during the Vietnam War.

We are living a dangerous period of our history that demands that people of conscience, free of self-censorship and fear, speak out and openly oppose these wars.

Failure to do so now signals the world that we have succumbed to the wrong people by imitating the wolves among us.

Bio: Antonio C. Cabral is based in San Antonio. His works are published in Mexico and the U.S. He's writing a book about his involvement in labor and community movements in San Antonio from 1968 to 2004.

The Costs of War Project

Overview

The Costs of War Project, housed at Brown University, was launched by a group of scholars from around the US to document the hidden or unacknowledged costs of the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and related violence elsewhere in the "war on terror." The project has issued, among other reports, the most comprehensive recent estimates of the human toll and US budgetary costs of these wars.

Human Toll

- **Direct Violence:** Over **370,000 people** – including US soldiers, contractors, allied security forces, and civilian bystanders – have died due to direct war violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.
- **Indirect Violence:** At least **800,000 additional people** have died indirectly as a result of the wars, including through such phenomena as dislocation and loss of livelihood and the destruction of health care and sanitation systems, each of which have led to higher rates of disease, malnutrition, and resulting higher mortality rates.

Budgetary Costs

- **Direct Costs:** Through 2018, the US federal government has spent or been obligated to spend **\$5.6 trillion** on the post-9/11 wars, including medical and disability payments to veterans over the next forty years.
- **Massive Debt:** This spending has largely been financed by borrowing. Unless the US changes the way it pays for the wars, future interest will **exceed \$8 trillion** by the 2050s.

Additional Costs

There are many other unacknowledged consequences of the choice for war, including environmental damage, fueling sectarianism across the Middle East, strengthening authoritarian forces and leading to historically high levels of corruption in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria. You can find this information and more on our site, www.costsofwar.org.

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