



MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX "Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well.

"But we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense. We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security alone more than the net income of all United States corporations.

"Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence--economic, political, even spiritual--is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

"In the councils of Government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

"We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together."

---Dwight David Eisenhower, January 17, 1961

Excerpts from his farewell address as President to the American people.

THE NEW AMERICAN MILITARISM "America has become a militaristic and aggressive nation...we have numerous contingency plans involving large joint Air Force-Army-Navy-Marine task forces to defend U.S. interests and to safeguard our allies wherever and whenever we suspect Communist aggression. We maintain more than 1,517,000 Americans in uniform overseas in 119 countries. We have 8 treaties to help defend 48 nations if they ask us to--or if we choose to intervene in their affairs. We have an immense and expensive military establishment, fueled by a gigantic defense industry, and millions of proud, patriotic, and frequently bellicose and militaristic citizens. How did this militarist culture evolve? How did this militarism steer us into the tragic military and political morass of Vietnam?"

Before World War II, attitudes "were typically isolationist, pacifist, and generally anti-military." But "America's vastly expanded world role after World War II hinged upon military power. The voices and views of the professional military people became increasingly prominent...distinguished military leaders from the war years filled many top positions in government. Generals Marshall, Eisenhower, MacArthur, Taylor, Ridgeway, LeMay, and others were not only popular heroes but respected opinion-makers. It was a time of international readjustment; military minds offered the benefits of firm views and problem-solving experience to the management of the nation's affairs. Military procedures--including the general staff system, briefings, estimates of the situation, and the organizational and operational techniques of the highly schooled, confident military professionals--spread throughout American culture."

World War II saw millions of men mature, become educated, and achieve "rank and stature during their years in uniform. In spite of themselves, many returned to civilian life as indoctrinated, combat-experienced military professionals...In 1968 the total living veterans...numbered...about 20 per-cent of the adult population.

"Today most middle-aged men, most business, government, civic, and professional leaders, have served some time in uniform. Whether they liked it or not, their military training and experience have affected them for the creeds and attitudes of the armed forces are powerful medicine, and can become habit-forming. The military codes include all the virtues and beliefs used to motivate men of high principle: patriotism, duty and service to country, honor among fellowmen, courage in the face of danger, loyalty to organization and leaders, self-sacrifice for comrades, leadership, discipline, and physical fitness. For many veterans the military's efforts to train and indoctrinate them may well be the most impressive and influential experience they have ever had--especially so for the young and less well educated."

"Closely related to the attitudes and influence of America's millions of veterans is the past and powerful complex of the defense industries....The relationship between the defense industry and U.S. military establishment is closer than many citizens realize. Together they form a powerful public opinion lobby. The several military service associations provide both a forum and a meeting ground for the military and its industries. The associations also provide each of the armed forces with a means of fostering their respective roles, objectives, and propaganda."

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"It is this influential nucleus of aggressive, ambitious professional military leaders who are the root of America's evolving militarism. There are over 410,000 commissioned officers on active duty in the four armed services. Of these, well over half are junior ranking reserve officers on temporary active duty. Of the 150,000 or so regular career officers, only a portion are senior ranking colonels, generals, and admirals, but it is they who constitute the elite core of the military establishment...."

"...the professional military, as a group, is probably one of the best organized and most influential of the various segments of the American scene....mostly service academy graduates....the top military leaders are top-caliber men."

"Their education....stresses doctrines, traditions, and codes of the military trade. It produces technicians and disciples, not philosophers." Those "who rise to the top of the military hierarchy have...demonstrated...effectiveness as leaders, planners, and organization managers....but most of all they have demonstrated their loyalty as proponents of their own service's doctrine and their dedication to the defense establishment...."

The tragedy of Vietnam, among other reasons, is a consequence of inter-service rivalry. "The punitive air strikes...following the Tonkin Gulf incident...revealed the readiness of naval air forces to bomb North Vietnam....So by early 1965 the Navy carrier people and the Air Force initiated a contest of comparative strikes, sorties, tonnages dropped...."

"...top-ranking Army officers...wanted to project Army groundcombat units into...Vietnam...to test plans and new equipment, to test the new air-mobile theories and tactics, to try the tactics and techniques of counterinsurgency, and to gain combat experience for young officers and noncommissioned officers...."

"The Marines had somewhat similar motivations, the least of which was any real concern about the political or social problems of the Vietnamese people." Short terms in Vietnam provided "'on-the-job-training'" for Okinawa based Marines.

"In 1964 there were changes in the composition of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in a matter of a few months the Johnson Administration, encouraged by the aggressive military, hastened into what has become the quagmire of Vietnam. The intention at the time was that the war effort be kept small and 'limited.' But as the momentum and involvement built up, the military leaders rationalized a case that this was not a limited-objective exercise, but was a proper war in defense of the United States against 'Communist aggression' and in honor of our area commitments."

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"Somewhat like a religion, the basic appeals of anti-Communism, national defense, and patriotism provide the foundation for a powerful creed upon which the defense establishment can build, grow, and justify its cost. More so than many large bureaucratic organizations, the defense establishment now devotes a large share of its efforts to self-perpetuation, to justifying its organizations, to preaching its doctrines, and to self-maintenance and management...."

---General David M. Shoup, Marine Corps Commandant, 1959-1963
The Atlantic - April, 1969

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