

**SEPTEMBER 20**

# Dodging the costs of the warfare state

**T**he New York Times began a new week with an editorial that typifies the media mind-set of the warfare state. The Sept. 19 editorial warns of dire consequences from a growing deficit that has been boosted by tax cuts – in combination with “the pre-Katrina priorities laid down by Mr. Bush.” Those priorities include a U.S. military budget that has reached half a trillion dollars per year. But the Times editorial does not devote a single word to military spending or the Iraq war.

Why not mention the option of an American pullout from Iraq, where the U.S. war effort has already drained \$200 billion from taxpayers? Well, those who determine editorial positions at the New York Times – and the other major newspapers in the country – cannot bring themselves to call for a quick end to the U.S. military role in Iraq.

Fierce criticism of White House policies is routinely compatible with support for militarism. When the Times condemned the Bush administration’s handling of hurricane relief in a Sept. 2 editorial, the final paragraph included this unequivocal sentence: “America clearly needs a larger active-duty Army.”

Now, fiscal conservatives in Congress are squawking about what federal expenditures for the Gulf Coast will do to the deficit. Contradictions between humane rhetoric and death-machine spending are more glaring than ever. The domestic economic toll of U.S. militarism should be on the table – not swept under the rug.

The people of the United States are far ahead of politicians in Washington and top editors in the New York Times building. On Sept. 17, the Times reported the results of a poll it had just completed in tandem with CBS News. Nationwide support for the Iraq war has fallen to an all-time low. (“Only 44 percent now say the United States made the right decision in taking military action against Iraq.”) And the survey also found: “With Hurricane Katrina already costing the federal government tens of billions of dollars, more than 8 in 10 Americans are very or somewhat concerned that the \$5 billion being spent each month on the war in Iraq is draining away money that could be used in the United States.”

The enormous financial burden of continuing with U.S. military intervention in Iraq is an issue that could be devastating for the right-wing zealots who now hold state power

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along Pennsylvania Avenue. But liberal elites who refuse to call for swift withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq – whether congressional leaders of the Democratic Party or members of the New York Times editorial board – are in no position to hammer on that issue.

The public should be hearing, much more often, the kind of insights that were expressed by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1953: "Every gun that is made, every warship that is launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron."

It's up to the antiwar movement to directly address the connections between war spending and economic distress that the Times/CBS poll says are matters of concern for more than 80 percent of the public. Along the way, the largesse for the Pentagon's corporate contractors can be put in the context of militarism that is killing many Americans and many more Iraqis. This moment in history offers a crucial opportunity to widen opposition to the Iraq war – and the entire warfare state.

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*"War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death."*

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