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"Are We Winning the Drone War?" This [headline from a recent syndicated column](#) falsely frames the issue. Let's take it apart.

This formulation implicitly restricts its concern for "winners" to the US. But other lives - combatant and non-combatant - also matter.

And what sort of war is it talking about, anyway? There was a time when war was declared and mutually visible, sometimes symmetrical, forces clashed. Does robotic "drone war" - with its cowardly cold-bloodedness, with its contempt for sovereignty and law, with its hegemonic aspiration - bear any resemblance?

One current model of "winning" is the Israeli mow-the-grass attack on Gaza. Israel has repeatedly used drones to maim, kill and terrorize Gaza's besieged inhabitants, demolish their homes, and disable their infrastructure.

Another model of "winning" is the Pentagon's: Target poor nations - especially those of color. Hire mercenaries (few others would kill or be killed on behalf of the 1%). Topple uncompliant regimes. Maintain or install puppets. Plant permanent military bases.

Destabilize or dismember non-capitalist economies. Pre-empt markets, pipelines and trade routes. Coerce unfair trade agreements. Exploit the cheap labor. Extract oil.

Consider the war machine's hyper-bloated budget. Despite every congressional district having an employment stake in it, that budget can't be redeemed by its illusory job creation. Besides

the callous - near genocidal - disregard for human life over there, the war machine sucks the life out of the economy here. It diverts federal taxes from necessary and job-intensive infrastructure projects. And from the under-funded social programs here that house, educate, care for or otherwise employ and empower the 99%. Resisting reform tooth and nail, the 1% relish the disparity.

This summer's Fox News Republican debates reveal how mainstream media promote self-seeking know-nothings to electoral prominence. Readily co-opted, bought-and-paid-for politicians pander to the government's unelected and opaque first branch - the Pentagon/corporate complex. Didn't Mussolini define fascism as the merger of the government and the corporations?

War as we know it allows the Pentagon gangsters to stash tens of billions in untraceable and unaccounted-for funds. War allows ghoulish multi-nationals - the "defense" industries - to accrue outlandish profit. (We might ask, whose interests are these industries defending.) As long as the blood targets remain over there, the formula is simple: more war = more profit. Why else does the Pentagon bog itself down in costly, protracted land wars in Asia? Next in its restless search for remote enemies: the pivot to the Asian Pacific.

As some wag noted, winning a war is like winning a hurricane. Nonetheless, there was a time - if only in our righteous, nationalist fantasies - when "winning a war" meant repelling the invader, the bully, the fascist. There was a time when war wasn't outsourced or automated or global or perpetual.

The drone promoters tell us drones are "precise" but fail to explain why these omniscient robots disproportionately incinerate and dismember civilians and non-combatants. Of course, such "accidental" carnage "works," generating the blowback that keeps the profit pot boiling. The thrust of mainstream media hype is that there's a lot to like about drones. Drones, the MSM informs us, are "less costly than many of the alternatives including manned bombers and boots on the ground."

Well, yeah, but drone promoters obscure a far fuller truth: violence begets violence. The pundits and politicians fail to ask cui bono, who benefits? Or, conversely, who suffers? The promoters are blind to the hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of tribal people across Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan and Pakistan forced to flee their homes and villages, dreading sudden death from above: victims whose resentment may fester - with unforeseen consequence - for decades. And

blind to the people of Gaza drone-monitored 24/7 who, trapped in their open-air prison, can't flee.

Nor are the choices quite as brainlessly narrow as presented. The drone promoters deny life-serving and thriftier alternatives to war: discontinuing arms exports and anti-insurgency training of foreign cannon fodder, no longer propping up tyrants and rogue militias, closing the 900+ overseas US military bases (and the hundreds more occupying the US), curbing the Pentagon's and the public's obscene over-consumption of the planet's scarce resources. In sum: no longer bowing to the Israel lobby - or to those of the war profiteers - de-militarizing our culture and economy. And our minds.

The promoters dismiss constructive alternatives to war: negotiating, establishing a non-nuclear Middle East - indeed, abolishing nuclear weaponry altogether, respecting UN resolutions on Palestine thus defusing widespread hatred toward the US (No, dear ones, 9/11 did not happen in a vacuum), providing non-token, non-profit-driven humanitarian aid.

And you're not likely to hear the drone promoters working to get us off the fossil fuel that the Pentagon is so keen to control. Without vast supplies of the stuff our army, navy and air force, the world's major fuel consumers, would be hard put to perpetrate its global designs. Getting off fossil fuel will slow the climate change that accelerates global disruption, migration and strife.

Read any drone war advocate, and "terrorism" will be front and center. The propagandist will never define that talismanic word. We're conditioned to believe that the only "terrorists" - whether foreign or domestic and almost invariably non-white or non-Judeo-Christian - are those who oppose the imperial war machine. Like the "war on drugs," the "war on terrorism" is phony. Whether firing Hellfire missiles or 500-pound bombs, above all else, weaponized drones are instruments of terror.

Nor do the drone advocates acknowledge the threat that both lethal and surveillance drones pose to dissent and civil liberty. Over there and here. In fact they cheer on the proliferation of the commercial drone, the perfect cover for the surveillance and crowd-controlling drone now coming home to roost. And as these vile raptors are normalized, whose side - ours or the 1% - will they serve?