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War Is A Racket: The Antiwar Classic By America's Most Decorated Soldier



Synopsis

"War is a Racket" is marine general, Smedley Butler's classic treatise on why wars are conducted, who profits from them, and who pays the price. Few people are as qualified as General Butler to advance the argument encapsulated in his book's sensational title. When "War is a Racket" was first published in 1935, Butler was the most decorated American soldier of his time. He had lead several successful military operations in the Caribbean and in Central America, as well as in Europe during the First World War. Despite his success and his heroic status, however, Butler came away from these experiences with a deeply troubled view of both the purpose and the results of warfare.

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Customer Reviews

Smedley Darlington Butler was a major general in the US Marine Corps and at the time of his death was the most decorated marine in US history. He was the only person ever to be awarded the Brevet Medal and two Medals of Honor. Jesse Ventura is a former Independent governor of Minnesota, US Navy SEAL, professional wrestler, movie actor, New York Times bestselling author, and visiting fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. David Talbot is the founder of Salon.com and author of history books Devil Dog (on Smedley Butler), Brothers, Season of the Witch, and The Devil's Chessboard. He lives in San Francisco, California. " --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I chanced upon this short book - perhaps it should be called a longish essay - after I recently watched a brilliant anti-war film from BBC Films. It felt like an ideal follow-up for the film. The author is Smedley Butler, a retired United States Marine Corps Major General and two time Medal of Honor

recipient. He wrote the book in 1935 and as a military insider, exposes in typically blunt military fashion, what war is all about. Even though it is a good 80 years since the book was written, every word in it rings as true as it must have been then as we think of the wars in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and now in Syria. The book starts with the proposition that "War is a racket" and asserts that big business mops up profits of the order 1000% more during Wars than in normal times. There are many examples in the text to illustrate it. Of course, this is accepted wisdom today. Still, the author makes an interesting additional argument that, while the Government has talked about setting limits on many things during a war, there has never been a call for any limitation of losses of those who actually fight the war. There is no scheme to limit a soldier to the loss of but one eye or one arm, or to limit the loss of life such as "not more than 12% of a regiment shall be wounded in battle or not more than 7% in a Division shall be killed". The second point made in the book is that it is not only the ordinary citizens who pay the bills for war, but the soldiers and their families as well, in addition to risking their lives. Apparently, there was a prize system up to and including the Spanish-American war and soldiers and sailors actually fought for money. Even in the Civil war, they were paid bonuses prior to going to battle. In the Spanish-American war, when a vessel was captured, the sailors were supposed to share in the loot. It was only later that the 'System' realized that costs of war could be reduced and all prize money kept by simply drafting the soldier, taking away the bargaining power of his labor. They were compensated meagerly by substituting money for the medals of honor, thereby appealing to the psychological need of the boys "to be decorated". Enlistment also was accentuated through propaganda to make men feel ashamed if they didn't enlist in the army. The author does not take the easy route of just criticizing Wars. He gives a three-point prescription as to how to prevent wars as well. First, we take the profit out of war. For this, he suggests that all the officers, executives, directors, bankers, speculators and the labor of all the industries which make profits through war - like the armaments, ammunition, shipbuilding, airplane building factories, banks - to be conscripted and put on a wage of \$30 a month, which was the prevailing rate at the time the book was written. Second, he suggests conducting a limited plebiscite on whether war should be declared, but only among those who will be doing the actual fighting and dying and not the general public. Third - and this is an interesting one - he suggests that the military forces must be made sure that they are truly forces for our defence only, as they always proclaim. We must mandate that our navy operate within only 200 miles of our coastline, planes not farther than 500 miles from the coast for purposes of reconnaissance and the army never leave the territorial limits of our nation. This will make sure that they are truly only for our defence. I suppose most people would consider the author

a tree-hugging, bleeding hearts liberal but, whatever one thinks of the practicality of implementing Butler's ideas of preventing war, one cannot argue against his idealism and the deep concern he has for the ordinary folks who lay down their lives and bear the brunt of the economic consequences of wars. I do think that he hits the bullseye when he says that wars will not be fought only when the "fat cats" experience the same physical and mental pain that the "average Joe", whom he despatches to war, experiences. Maj-Gen Butler sarcastically remarks that WWI was fought "to make the world safe for democracy" but a decade after the end of the war, a look at Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia and Austria showed us how well democracy flourished in Europe. One is reminded of the same argument of promoting democracy in the 21st century in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya through wars! The book is a very easy and racy read and it must be read at least for its idealism and passion.

This is a small book and by no means a literary masterpiece, but the information therein is second to none. I always knew of the power of the military industrial complex but this was a real eye opener.

This is a wonderful pamphlet style book for anyone that is aware what really goes on in our world today. Breaks down the Military Industrial Complex with ease, demonstrates how favorable war can be to those in control who stand to either profit, or shut down a threat to themselves. The elitist global cabal that runs the world hates this type of information being spread, and to be honest this is just scratching the surface of what's going on. This is a must read, and a book that once you're done with needs to be shared with family and friends. Basically give this book away when you're finished to make sure knowledge gets spread!!! With more and more Internet censorship on the horizon, hard paper written on by a famous general is proof positive over fake news and MSM agenda about "let's go to war, it will be fun" propaganda.

'War is a Racket' is a must for everyone who analyses foreign policy in relation to its history. Our generation has inherited a poisonous chalice from the European military thought, or rather, from the West... something it seems we can't free ourselves from. Smedley Butler's 'notes' give us a valuable insight into one aspect of warfare and we can't shy away from it. It is hard to accept what we find behind 'the curtain', covering up the reasons for war, which we try to hide behind our offended self-righteousness. Mrs. Clinton dreamed of the commodities America could call its own, once Russia and its people were wiped from the map; Oil, Gas, forests... we have to re-discover the inception of these dreams. I hope that many people will have the courage to look behind the curtain

of our perception of the world... and nothing is as it seems. Alexandra Silvester.

Great for being an anti-war polemic by a seriously respected and experienced military man. Definitely worth buying and reading if above is your priority. However, not really rich with information, facts and data - just loosely argued opinions. Lacks rigour.

I heard about Smedley Butler while listening to a podcast that compared him to Captain America. Intrigued I bought the book and was so impressed I bought one for my chief as well, since he is into this kinda stuff. What amazed me was the predictions that Smedley made that came to fruition and the concepts he spoke on are still applicable today. Brilliant work. And it only takes 30 to 45 minutes of leisurely reading to read.

Not the whole speech - and edited unfortunately! The speech was better in my opinion, but a good book although I am not a pacifist - As my father said, War is a game for men to play that kills off boys, women, children and others not prepared to die.

I ordered, received and read War is a Racket: The Antiwar Classic by Smedley Butler and feel it was a good read. The General wrote this book prior to its publish date of 1935 and although his writing and style leave a lot to be desired, it is on point concerning the machine that promotes and prospers from a nation's wars of years past, only now fighter jets cost hundreds of millions, Naval ships are in the billions and tanks are no longer viable. Now it is drones and pilotless war apparatus that can be operated from afar and watched on computer monitors. We still have a lot to learn from this old war horse.

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