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Peace on Earth? Not until the U.S. stops selling arms and making war

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Reviewing the bidding on the United States at the end of 2015, I conclude that we are a killer nation, at home and abroad.

The segment of our society that benefits most from this role, again, at home and abroad, is the arms industry. At home, it sells the guns that are used, virtually without control, to slaughter innocent groups of people, including in churches and schools. Our corrupt and conscienceless federal and state legislators lack the courage and brains to stop it. And this is not just about the National Rifle Association; it is also about the arms manufacturers and dealers that finance the NRA so that it can exercise influence in Washington and state capitals.

Overseas, we are considered killers. Other countries can only pray to their chosen god or gods that the United States does not decide to work its will on them, whether it be to impose a form of government we think they should adopt or to cite some supposed wrong they have committed as an excuse to pour bombs down upon them or send drones to kill their leaders.

Like it or not, that is our reputation. Most foreigners I meet think we are crazy. Virtually all think we are a danger to world society.

Some of our so-called allies take our side in an attempt to exercise some sort of control over our homicidal tendencies. I put the British in that category.

Some countries just want to stay away from us, and, most of all, not to depend on us for anything. An example is India. U.S. government and private arms salesmen have worked for years to make India a big client for American weapons. India has chosen instead to smile at Americans but to continue to buy its arms from Russia — the Russia led by the notorious Vladimir V. Putin, as opposed to the America led by the adorable Barack H. Obama. Could it be that India is aware that American arms are invariably accompanied by American military advisers to train and support their foreign customers?

So where are we as 2015 draws to a close?

We are in Afghanistan, where we started in 2001 right after 9/11. We are in Iraq, where President George W. Bush took us on false premises in 2003 to get himself re-elected as a wartime president.

We have lost 2,332 troops in Afghanistan over the past 14 years — another six last week — and 4,425 in Iraq. We still maintain thousands of troops in each country, a tribute to our having put into place governments that cannot sustain themselves. U.S. special forces have just helped the Iraqis retake Ramadi, which we have fought for before, this time from the Islamic State group. Last time it was the Sunnis who rose up there. In Afghanistan we are fighting again to hold onto places that otherwise would fall to the Taliban and which may, in fact, fall to the Taliban despite our efforts.

Why are we doing this? I thought the argument Ronald Reagan made in 1986, that if we didn't fight the Communists in Nicaragua we would have to fight them in Harlingen, Texas, was as dead as the charlatans who governed us at that time. Does anyone really believe that whether Ramadi in Iraq or Sangin in Afghanistan is in "friendly" hands makes any difference to Americans? Even to ask that is to imagine that the Abadi government in Iraq and the Ghani government in Afghanistan are "friendly" hands, a Washington fantasy as close to credibility as a Ted Cruz or Hillary Clinton campaign ad.

I suppose Mr. Obama's efforts to finish his term without seeing Afghanistan or Iraq collapse into total chaos can be put down to some sort of obsessive compulsive disorder or campaign loyalty to his former Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton. It is long past time that we should have taken the position that we'd done all we could in Afghanistan and Iraq and brought our troops home.

What else have we done? We wrecked Libya. Moammar Gadhafi was an egomaniacal pest, even though he eventually relinquished his nuclear-weapons program. But what has taken his place, in large part due to decisions by Mr. Obama's government, including Ms. Clinton, is two aspiring "national" governments and many lawless local militias, now including the Islamic State, as well as uncontrolled migration to Europe.

In support of our ally and major arms purchaser, Saudi Arabia, we have helped to destroy Yemen. The Saudis have bombed it into the Stone Age, and I have yet to hear anyone in the White House or the Pentagon say there are no U.S. pilots in Saudi cockpits. Yemen already was the poorest country in the Middle East.

U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict also puts us right in the middle of the Sunni-Shiite conflict within Islam. There is just no reason in the world for us to be involved in an intra-Islamic conflict. The reason we are is American arms manufacturers' commitments to after-purchase support of weapons they've sold to Saudi Arabia. I don't think we sold them the swords they use to cut off the heads of accused criminals.

The United States also has used the absence of government in Somalia and the venality of the government of Djibouti to establish a military outpost in Djibouti. There are now thousands of U.S. troops, fighter bombers and a drone base there, with no good reason. This represents an unneeded, Pentagon supply-driven intervention in Africa.

We should bring our forces home. There will be no peace on Earth until we do. Let us not be killers.

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