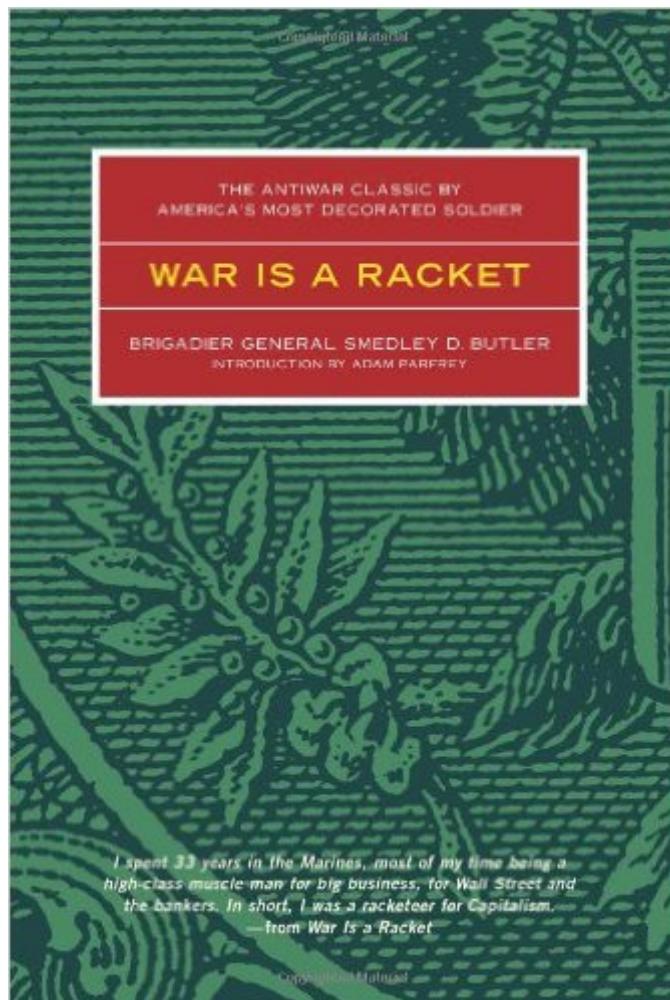


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War Is A Racket: The Antiwar Classic By America's Most Decorated Soldier



Synopsis

General Smedley Butler's frank book shows how American war efforts were animated by big-business interests. This extraordinary argument against war by an unexpected proponent is relevant now more than ever.

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Customer Reviews

EDITED from 17 Aug 03 to add book links. This book is a real gem, a classic, that should be in any library desiring to focus on national security. It is a very readable collection of short essays, ending with a concise collection of photographs that show the horror of war--on one page in particular, a pile of artillery shells labeled "Cause" and below is a photo of a massive pile of bodies, labeled "Effect." Of particular interest to anyone concerned about the current national security situation, both its expensive mis-adventures abroad and its intrusive violation of many Constitutional rights at home, is the author's history, not only as a the most decorated Marine at the time, with campaign experience all over the world, but as a spokesperson, in retirement, for placing constitutional American principles over imperialist American practice. The following quotations from the book are intended to summarize it: "I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for

American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested." [p. 10]"War is a racket. ...It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives." [p. 23]"The general public shoulders the bill [for war]. This bill renders a horrible accounting. Newly placed gravestones. Mangled bodies.

"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. Butler's central thesis is that regardless of the popular rhetoric that often accompanies warfare, it is waged almost exclusively for profit. He advances this argument in three decisive examples.

EXAMPLE 1: CORPORATE MILITARY PROFITS RESULTING FROM WAR

In an early version of "follow the money", Butler provides pre- and post-World War I data on some of America's leading corporations to demonstrate the surge in profits that they experienced from the war, often totaling several hundred percent. While some companies, such as Dupont, arguably produced goods that contributed directly to America's military victory in 1918, others such as saddle manufacturers did not. Even when these companies failed to contribute directly to the war effort, they still managed to lobby the government to retrain or expand their contracts. It's as though powerful, well connected oil services company today were to contract with the government to supply oil to the military during a foreign campaign and then deliberately overcharge it.

Brigadier General Smedley Darlington Butler is not a very familiar name when it comes to military lore in America. Butler was a two-time winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor. As a soldier he oversaw American campaigns in China, Nicaragua, Cuba and Haiti. After his retirement from military service he brought down a planned corporate coup that threatened to seize control of the White House. He supported World War I Bonus Marchers who rallied in DC looking for their promised "War Bonus." He treated all his men fairly and honestly and was respected for it. Most importantly, he realized that in his role as a military leader he was a "high-class muscle man for big business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short...a racketeer for Capitalism." This book was his effort to expose everything that he knew about the inner workings of the American War Machine. The first

sentences of Butler's book, written in 1935 and mainly referring to World War I remain true today, "War is a racket. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious." Butler then rips into war profiteers who never shouldered a rifle yet made millions in blood money. Throughout his writing Butler posits that the single focus of war is to make money for the few by trading in the blood of the many. To know that in 2004 these words accurately and eerily describe the majority of the men and women now in control of the United States of America is shameful and disgraceful. In Chapter Two "Who Makes the Profits" Butler analyzes who made money during the Wars he was involved with. He analyzes how they made their money and how much they made.

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