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MICHAEL: Mr. Obama's war

Why don't anti-war Democrats support military's soldiers both straight and not?

By Terry Michael

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Liberal Democrats in [Congress](#) fought hard for open service by homosexual soldiers, persuading some Republican politicians that it was politically smart to catch up with a fast-moving culture. So now, when will the theoretically anti-war party in [Congress](#) use its constitutionally mandated war powers to legislate against President [Obama's](#) elective atrocity in [Afghanistan](#)? When will they speak out for bringing home from that corrupt hellhole all the troops, straight and homosexual, young men and women, lingering in harm's way for no discernible national purpose after routing the [Taliban](#) a decade ago?

[Mr. Obama](#) was nominated by Democrats and elected by partisans and independents precisely because he presents himself as the noninterventionist in a field dominated by "liberal internationalist" warriors like [Joseph R. Biden](#) or [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#). Inscrutably to those who thought they were electing an anti-war president, he then proceeded to form a government with a vice president and a secretary of state from the "neo-con lite" wing of the [Democratic Party](#), the foreign-policy "experts" who are part of a self-proclaimed Beltway consensus perpetuating the liberty-threatening permanent state of war [James Madison](#) counseled against two centuries ago.

That consensus has another name, the military-industrial complex, which general and Republican President [Eisenhower](#) warned against in his farewell address 50 years ago this coming Jan. 17, in the year [Mr. Obama](#) was born. [Eisenhower](#) is said to have called it the military-industrial-congressional complex in an early draft but to have decided not to gratuitously offend the branch of government at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Liberal congressional Democrats came to power in 2006 - just as [Mr. Obama](#) did in 2008 - in an electoral wave that rejected [George W. Bush's](#) war of choice in [Iraq](#). They next averted their eyes as [Mr. Obama](#) caved to the military industrial and congressional money machine, with a December 2009 West Point speech as stomach-churning for anti-war liberals and libertarians as was [Mr. Bush's](#) "Mission accomplished" stunt on the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier six years earlier.

With substantial majorities in both the House and [Senate](#), liberal congressional Democrats in 2009 abdicated their responsibility to reject [Mr. Obama's](#) war, just as in 2003 unprincipled conservative congressional Republicans colluded to pass the biggest social-welfare legislation since the [Great Society](#), [Mr. Bush's](#) budget-busting prescription-drug pander to the elderly. Like the oxymoronic "big-government conservatism" that rendered many Republicans non-voters in 2006, [Mr. Obama's](#) interventionism left millions of Democrats demoralized in 2010.

Democratic apologists will claim [Mr. Obama](#) just did in [Afghanistan](#) what he said he would do in the campaign. Such courtesans conveniently forget that he also declared he would not insist that every American be required to buy health insurance. In each case, he was engaging in heat-of-the-moment tactics of a presidential nominating campaign, not usually known for producing thoughtful public policy when it comes time to govern. Just months after taking office, [Mr. Obama](#) reversed himself on a key element of his signature domestic-policy initiative, the insurance mandate at the center of lawsuits against the implementation of health care "reform." So, what hindered him - after months of public and private hand-wringing over [Afghanistan](#) - from concluding that America had no further business in "the graveyard of empires" with a government as corrupt as can be imagined?

The year 2011 brings another anniversary in addition to the 50th of [Eisenhower](#)'s echoing of the Founders' disdain for standing armies, arms profiteering and the liberty infringement that results from fear-mongering employed to scare up popular support for spending blood and treasure. Twenty years before Ike's address, in the Feb. 17, 1941, issue of his immodestly named Life magazine, publisher [Henry R. Luce](#) christened the last 100 years of the second millennium "The American Century."

The son of Presbyterian missionaries, [Luce](#) represented the zealous strain of American exceptionalism, advocating the spread of liberal democracy with military intervention. It contrasted with the more modest view of America as an exemplar nation, encouraging adoption of our political and economic systems by imitation through indigenous movements for liberal democracy and free markets.

A debate over those two visions of the shining city on the hill is worth having today. Some countries may take exception to the "indispensable nation" status for America proclaimed by Bill Clinton in the last democratic administration, a grandiose vision now touted by his wife, the current secretary of state. Other citizens of the world may disagree and ask us to kindly mind our own damned business. But it takes at least two parties to engage in such serious discourse. Some of us therefore must ask: Where the hell are the anti-war Democrats?

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