The Information-Industrial Complex

by **The Corbett Report**
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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8g-3REl2pQ

When WWII ended and the American deep state welded the national security establishment into place with the National Security Act, the world entered into a new era: the era of the military-industrial complex. But when the Cold War ended and the "Clash of Civilizations" became the new existential threat, the deep state found an opening for another paradigm shift. As the all-pervasive threat of terrorism became the carte blanche for total surveillance, the powers-that-shouldn't-be found the organizing principal of our age would not be military hardware, but data itself. Welcome to the age of the information-industrial complex.

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Of all the things that President Dwight D. Eisenhower did during his years in office, it is for a single phrase from his farewell address that he is best remembered today: "the military-industrial complex."

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential

for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist."

It is not difficult to see why these words passed so quickly into the political lexicon. Think of their explanatory power.

Why did the US use inflated estimates of Russian missile capabilities to justify stockpiling a nuclear arsenal that was more than sufficient to destroy the planet several times over?

The military-industrial complex.

Why did America send 50,000 of its own to fight and die in the jungles of Vietnam, killing untold millions of Vietnamese (not to mention Cambodians)?

The military-industrial complex.

Why did the US use the public's fear and anger over 9/11 and a phony panic over non-existent weapons of mass destruction to justify the illegal invasion and [trillion-dollar](#) occupation of Iraq?

The military-industrial complex.

Why did Nobel Peace Prize laureate Obama expand the fictitious "war on terror" into Pakistan and Yemen and Somalia, refuse to close Guantanamo despite his earlier promises to the contrary, commit US forces to "kinetic military action" in Libya without so much as [seeking Congressional approval](#), and launch a new era of [covert drone warfare](#)?

The military-industrial complex.

Why has Trump not only continued but further [expanded the US military presence in Africa](#), increased US aid to [Israel](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#), [actively enabled](#) the war crimes in Yemen that have led to the [largest cholera outbreak in human history](#), and [killed more civilians](#) in his first six months in office than former drone-king Obama killed in his entire eight-year

presidency?

The military-industrial complex.

When you think about it, it's rather remarkable that such a phrase was ever uttered by a President of the United States, much less a former five-star general. Could you imagine any modern-day President talking about something like the "military-industrial complex" and its attempted "acquisition of unwarranted influence" without immediately dismissing the idea as a conspiracy theory? Over the decades there has been much speculation about Eisenhower's use of the phrase, and what precisely he was warning against. Some have argued that the phrase was prompted by Eisenhower's discovery that the Rand Corporation was grossly misrepresenting the Soviet's military capabilities to John F. Kennedy, who ended up using the Rand invented (and completely fictitious) "[missile gap](#)" threat as a cornerstone of his 1960 presidential election campaign.

Whatever the case, it is perhaps time to revisit Eisenhower's most famous speech. What Eisenhower is ultimately describing is the rise of American fascism; the merger of government and corporate power. What term can better capture the nature of early 21st century American political life? Is there any longer any doubt that the military-industrial complex has reached its ultimate expression in firms like Blackwater (aka "Xe" aka "Academi") and its military contractor brethren? Is there any other word but "fascism" to describe a state of affairs when a Secretary of Defense can commission a study from a private contractor to examine whether the US military should be using more private contractors, only for that same Secretary of Defense to leave office and become president of the company that conducted the study, only to leave that company to become Vice President of the US and begin waging a war that relies heavily on no-bid contracts awarded to that same company based on the recommendation that it made in its original study? Yet this is precisely the [case of Dick Cheney](#)

[and Halliburton](#). It would be difficult to think of a more blatant example of the military-industrial complex fascism that Eisenhower was warning of.

But as it turns out, there was another warning about fascism embedded in that [farewell address](#) that has received far less attention than the "military-industrial complex" formulation, perhaps because there is no catchphrase hook to describe it:

"Today, the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields. In the same fashion, the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution in the conduct of research. Partly because of the huge costs involved, a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity. For every old blackboard there are now hundreds of new electronic computers."

Given that this warning came in 1961, before the age of communications satellites or personal computers or the internet, it was a remarkably prescient observation. If scientific research half a century ago was dominated by federal grants and expensive computer equipment, how much more true is that for us today, half a century later?

So what is the problem with this? As Ike [explained](#):

"Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite."

Here, again, the warning is of fascism. But instead of the military-industrial fascism that dominated so much of the 20th century, he was describing here a new fascistic paradigm that was but barely visible at the time that he gave his address: a scientific-technological one. Once again, the threat is that the industry that grows up around this government-sponsored

activity will, just like the military-industrial complex, begin to take over and shape the actions of that same government. In this case, the warning is not one of bombs and bullets but bits and bytes, not tanks and fighter jets but hard drives and routers. Today we know this new fascism by its innocuous sounding title "Big Data," but in keeping with the spirit of Eisenhower's remarks, perhaps it would be more fitting to call it the "information-industrial complex."

The concept of an information-industrial complex holds equally explanatory power for our current day and age as the military-industrial complex hypothesis held in Eisenhower's time.

Why is a company like Google going to such lengths to capture, track and database all information on the planet?

The information-industrial complex.

Why were all major telecom providers and internet service providers [mandated by federal law](#) to hardwire in back door access to American intelligence agencies for the purpose of spying on all electronic communications?

The information-industrial complex.

Why would government after government around the world target encryption as a key threat to their national security, and why would [banker](#) after [banker](#) call for bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies to be banned even as they plan to set up their own, central bank-administered digital currencies?

The information-industrial complex.

The effects of this synthesis are more and more felt in our everyday lives. Every single day hundreds of millions of people around the world are interfacing with Microsoft software or Apple hardware or Amazon cloud services running on chips and processors supplied by Intel or other Silicon Valley stalwarts. Google has become so ubiquitous that its very name

has become a verb meaning "to search for something on the internet." The 21st century version of the American dream is encapsulated in the story of Mark Zuckerberg, a typical Harvard whizkid whose atypical rise to the status of multi-billionaire was enabled by a social networking tool by the name of "Facebook" that he developed.

But how many people know the flip side of this coin, the one that demonstrates the pervasive government influence in shaping and directing these companies' rise to success, and the companies' efforts to aid the government in collecting data on its own citizens? How many know, for instance, that Google has a [publicly acknowledged relationship](#) with the NSA? Or that a federal judge [has ruled](#) that the public does not have the right to know the details of that relationship? Or that Google Earth was originally the [brainchild of Keyhole Inc](#)., a company that was set up by the CIA's own venture capital firm, [In-Q-Tel](#), using satellite data harvested from government Keyhole-class reconnaissance satellites? Or that the former CEO of In-Q-Tel, Gilman Louie, sat on the board of the National Venture Capital Association with Jim Breyer, head of Accel Partners, who provided $12 million of [seed money for Facebook](#)? Or that, in 1999, a [back door for NSA access](#) was discovered in Microsoft's Windows operating system source code? Or that Apple founder Steve Jobs was [granted security clearance](#) by the Department of Defense for still-undisclosed reasons while heading Pixar in 1988, as was the [former head of AT&T](#) and numerous others in the tech industry?

The connections between the IT world and the government's military and intelligence apparatus run deep. In fact, the development of the IT industry is intimately intertwined with the US Air Force, the Department of Defense and its various branches (including, famously, [DARPA](#)), and, of course, the CIA. A cursory glance at the history of the rise of companies like Mitre Corporation, Oracle, and other household electronics and software firms should suffice to expose the

extent of these relations and the existence of what we might dub an "information-industrial complex."

But what does this mean? What are the ramifications of such a relationship?

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