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The Coming End of the EU-USA Military Industrial Complex?

By Afshin Rattansi
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The hallmark of the months leading to today's EU referendum has been horrifying censorship. One can but hope that Noam Chomsky's dictum that censorship is a "brand on the imagination" and that it affects those who have "suffered it forever" does not apply.

The British electorate has been treated to a fake debate about issues that mask some of the most critical issues of our time. And that's even if the issues will not be addressed whoever wins in the early hours of Friday morning.

The Right wing case for Britain leaving the EU is as idealistic as it is bizarre. It arises from the complexities of EU-formation. The Right accurately remembers the elite liberal Left which wanted to impose fairness "from above" given their despair at electorates unwilling to fight for revolution. The Right is blinded by memory – of a misty past of speeches about "Euro-Communism" and "Social Democracy" by people who no longer matter. To the Right, all the "free market reforms" fostered by EU institutions are forgotten. Maybe, idealistic free marketeers look the other way because the results of the EU experiment are clear: free markets inevitably lead to corporate monopoly power crushing the will of the people. Free markets lead inexorably to concentrations of wealth and power. To inequality and – before the uptick – austerity.

The Left wing case for Britain remaining in the EU is not really Left wing at all. It is founded on atavism and pessimism about the working classes of Europe. To this section of society, the EU can somehow be reformed from within. They believe elite governments in Europe – already out of touch with their own electorates – can negotiate in Brussels and Strasbourg with corporations, on the same terms.

The idea of being able to reform the European Union by negotiation is fantasy. In the U.S. context, it would be a bit like a future President Bernie Sanders transplanting Washington's "K Street" of lobbyists into the West Wing for fruitful discussion about creating a fairer America. There is no negotiation to be had, except around the edges. Every aspect of the EU is targeted to one goal, to create a militarily powerful satellite of the United States that borders Africa and Eurasia, underpinned by corporate power. For every progressive law the EU has successfully passed, a hundred hurl millions into economic catastrophe.

It took months before UK politicians knew the acronym "TTIP" – so ignorant are they about the consummation of the marriage between Eurocrats and the kind of people you might meet on the ski slopes of Davos every winter. UK Prime Minister David Cameron was forced to make a statement denying that Britain's National Health Service – a chronically underfunded but visionary universal healthcare system – would be broken up and destroyed by TTIP. Will it sway today's vote? Actually, the secret deal to empower corporations to take on democratically mandated legislation in EU states may have already hit the buffers.

There's another trade deal – between Canada and the U.S. – which could formalise the power of U.S. multinationals over European legislation. We didn't hear anything about CETA before the referendum. Nor did we hear anything about the brutality of EU institutions when it came to what the UN now calls the worst refugee crisis in history.

Even famous NGO charities who are usually reticent about entering "the political" are privately askance about EU policy on refugees. One minute it's border fences, the next it's paying cash to prospective EU members to dump children fleeing wars. Where is the recognition that European

powers have been at the front of the queue baying for war, from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, from the Baltic to the Caspian? Sometimes, even in Latin America.

The liberal commentariat decries the xenophobia of right wing Brexiteers. It argues that the BREXIT club is furnished by those who want to do harm to refugees. No one can surely join a club so full of racists, they say. Presumably, it would be like people voting for Donald Trump because they didn't want an Iraq War which has killed, displaced or wounded millions.

What liberal "remainers" don't say is that they are in a club with the IMF, Goldman Sachs and a politician who carries out thousands of targeted assassinations, President Obama.

Because, Britons voting today should not be in any doubt that a vote to remain in the EU is a vote to catalyse the Lehman Brothers disasters of the future. The EU exists –pre-eminently – to forge a deregulated world with vulture funds and private equity that contaminates every aspect of relations between human beings. From cradle to grave, there will be the privatisation of public space let alone education, health and aspiration. Not only that, but there's something even more financially lucrative than the European health market : war.

War will be a privatised Europe's crowning achievement. With EU connivance, it killed hundreds of thousands in Yugoslavia in the 1990s. And that was only a precursor. For when trade deals entrench the U.S. armaments industry in EU institutions, even chemical additives in food fade into the background as an issue.

The EU will do nothing about climate change except create "markets" to trade in gruesome carbon credits. And climate change and wars for resources will give ample opportunity for EU nations to wage war for one side or another. The EU will create phantasms and spectres for people to hate. Human rights policies will be conjured to attack the enemies of U.S. corporate capital: statist nations, countries that refuse to bow down to the orthodoxy of open capital markets.

If there is hope on the horizon regardless of today's vote – it is that the rest of the world is gathering forces. China no longer looks the other way as President Obama attempts to place ever more bases around it. Together with Russia, it will not play ball with the neoliberal power-plays of Washington and its EU client bloc. And fissures are developing fast. Britain, whichever way the vote is swung, will be a member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. When it seeks urgent infrastructural capital, or when it seeks lenience from big BRICS power over steel it will have to tow the line from BRICS capitals. It's a line that will be towed at the expense of EU membership. And domestic electoral change in EU nations amidst the continuing fallout of Lehman 2008, will inevitably lead to the breakdown of negotiations.

So ironically, both sides in today's referendum will win. The EU will have to reform because the peoples of Europe will have none of the EU-US military-industrial complex. Whether what is born is called the EU or a new kind of economic bloc, tied to emerging markets, it must happen. If the UK votes out, it will merely be the beginning of the end of a failed project, like the Berlin Wall 27 years before it. It must fail because with the threat of climate change to the threat of nuclear war, humanity depends on it.

