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# Iraq is not Vietnam. But ...

**M**any politicians and pundits have told us that "Iraq is not Vietnam." Certainly, any competent geographer would agree.

Substantively, the histories of Iraq and Vietnam are very different. And the dynamics of U.S. military intervention in the two countries — while more similar than the American news media generally acknowledge — are far from identical.

Iraq is not Vietnam. But the United States is the United States.

War after war, decade after decade, the U.S. news media have continued to serve those in Washington who strive to set the national agenda for war and lay down flagstones on the path to military intervention.

From the U.S. media's fraudulent reporting about Gulf of Tonkin events in early August 1964 to the fraudulent reporting about supposed Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in the first years of the 21st century, the U.S. news media have been fundamental to making war possible for the United States.

We need to confront the roles of the corporate media in helping to drag the United States into one war after another. In a country with significant elements of democracy, it matters what people think. The propaganda functions of media are crucial for the war makers.

There are exceptional news reports. By definition, they're exceptions. What matters most is the routine coverage that bounces around the national echo chamber. Repetition is the essence of propaganda. And the messages of the warfare state are incessant.

Several decades ago, Dwight Eisenhower warned about a "military-industrial complex." He was the last president to acknowledge its existence. The more that the military-industrial complex has gained strength, the less it has been acknowledged in media and politics.

Last year, while doing research for my book "War Made Easy," I read the annual reports of many military contractors for the Pentagon — small, medium and large cor-

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porations. Those annual reports were clear: War is very profitable for our company. We expect more war, and that will mean a cornucopia of profits. On the other hand, a falloff of war would severely damage our profits. But not to worry.

In the midst of what Martin Luther King Jr. called "the madness of militarism," today we must demand real journalism — and confront the manipulations of news media.

The lifeblood of democracy is the free flow of information for the body politic. Corporate media and inordinate government power are responsible for deadly blockages.

Those blockages are causes and consequences of a political culture that's oriented toward death. The priorities reflected in a routine U.S. military budget of half a trillion dollars per year are lethal. Pentagon firepower kills. So does economic injustice.

With repeated use of violence more massive than any other entity on the planet can dream of mustering, Uncle Sam is the globe's dominant serial killer. This reality, so obvious to most of the world, is hidden in plain sight across the U.S. corporate media spectrum.

The United States is the United States. And that's the ultimate continuity between the Vietnam War and the U.S. war effort in Iraq today.

*This article is adapted from Norman Solomon's keynote speech at the annual awards ceremony of Project Censored on Oct. 22, 2005, at Sonoma State University in California. Solomon is the author of the new book*

*"War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death."*

*For information, go to: [www.WarMadeEasy.com](http://www.WarMadeEasy.com)*