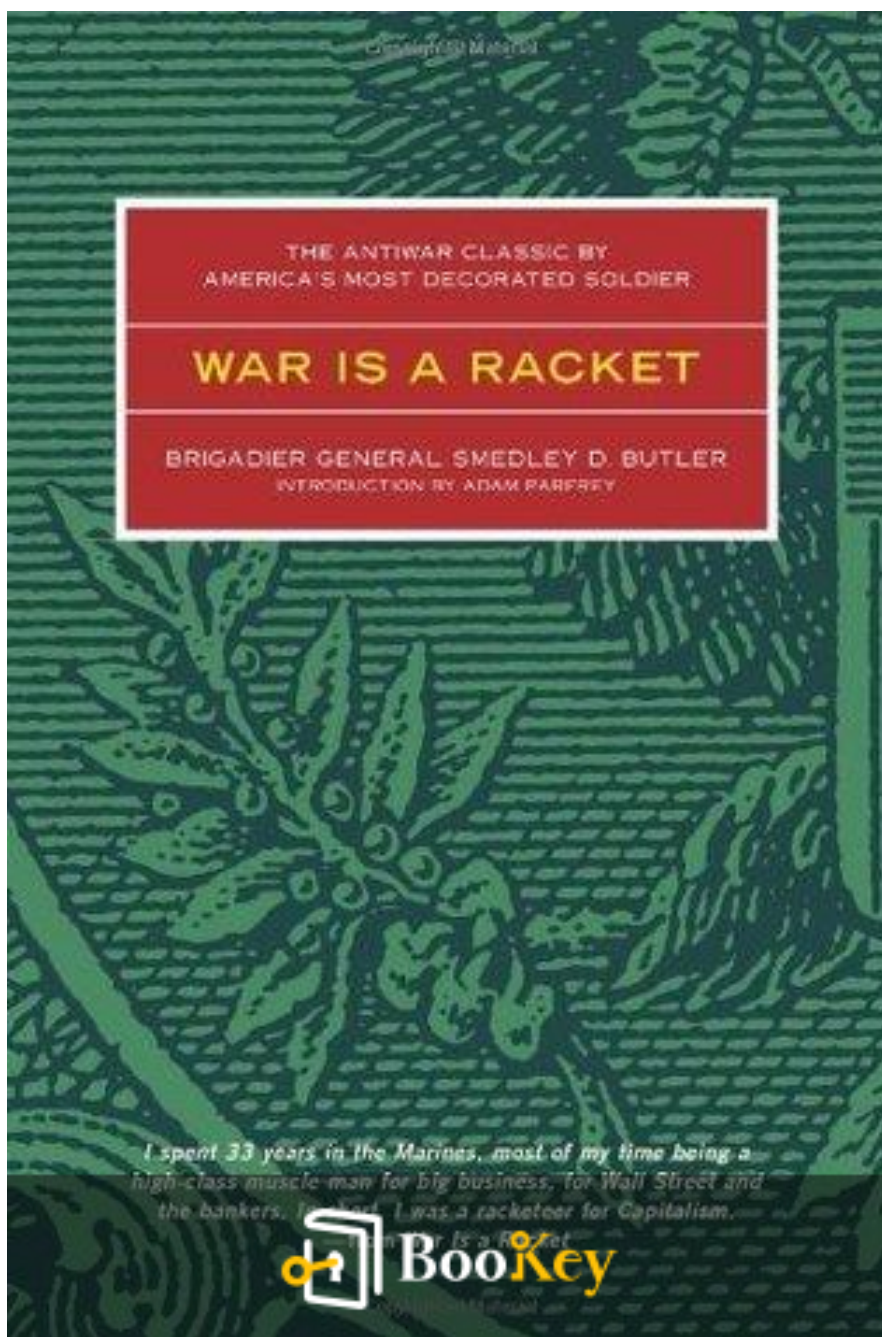


War Is A Racket PDF (Limited Copy)

Smedley D. Butler



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War Is A Racket Summary

"Unmasking Profiteers Exploiting Soldiers for Corporate Gains."

Written by Books1

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About the book

In "War is a Racket," Smedley D. Butler, a decorated Marine Corps Major General and outspoken critic of military and corporate power dynamics, unravels the deeply entrenched interests that profit from warfare at the expense of humanity. With his candid and penetrating insights, Butler delves into the insidious layers where politics, commerce, and warfare intersect—revealing how national conflict is often molded into a lucrative enterprise rather than a pursuit of justice or security. Drawing on his military experiences and keen observations, Butler's work pulls back the curtain on the moral complexities and disillusionment of war, urging readers to confront the disconcerting realities that lie beneath the patriotic façade. As relevant today as when first published, "War is a Racket" challenges us to reconsider the economic and ethical costs of global conflicts, serving as both a wake-up call and moral compass for a society teetering between progress and profit.

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About the author

Smedley D. Butler was a distinguished and highly decorated Major General in the United States Marine Corps, lauded for his exceptional service spanning nearly four decades. Born on July 30, 1881, in West Chester, Pennsylvania, Butler hailed from a family with a strong military tradition. Over his illustrious career, he became renowned for his leadership and bravery in several key military campaigns, including the Boxer Rebellion, the Banana Wars, and World War I, earning him two Medals of Honor. Post-retirement, Butler emerged as an articulate and vocal critic of U.S. military policies and capitalism, famously describing war as a profiteer's playground in his seminal work, "War is a Racket." His transition from revered military officer to influential peace advocate underscores the complexity of his legacy and highlights his enduring impact on both military history and public discourse on war and ethics. Butler passed away on June 21, 1940, but his insights continue to resonate as a testament to his commitment to truth and justice.

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Chapter 1 Summary: War Is A Racket

Chapter One: War Is A Racket

War, described as "a racket," is presented as one of the most nefarious and lucrative endeavors in history. Despite its destructive nature, benefiting a select few at the expense of the masses, war continues to thrive. This profitability stems from the manner in which only a small insider group is aware of its true purpose, leveraging the chaos for substantial financial gain while millions suffer. During World War I, this reality was evident as approximately 21,000 Americans became new millionaires, profiting without personally experiencing the horrors of the battlefield.

Conquests in war often lead to territorial gains, which are then exploited by the same elite few for additional profits, while the general populace bears the heavy costs. These costs go beyond financial burdens, resulting in countless lives lost, fractured families, and widespread economic instability. The long-term repercussions include crippling taxes and societal depression.

The author, a retired soldier, reflects on his suspicions about the true nature of war, something he only fully understood after leaving military service. As tensions rise with nations like France, Russia, Italy, Austria, Poland, and Germany seemingly aligning for inevitable conflicts, the author speaks out

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against those who instigate wars from the safety of their homes, driven by the allure of profits.

The chapter highlights the military buildup around Europe, drawing attention to figures like Mussolini, who openly views war as a noble endeavor that galvanizes human energy, and Hitler, whose aggressive rearmament makes Germany a threat to peace. Meanwhile, in the Orient, diplomatic maneuvering continues as events like the shifting allegiances during the Russo-Japanese War demonstrate the fickle nature of international relationships.

The author criticizes the economic motivations behind the rising tensions with Japan, questioning the value of the "open door" policy with China and the monetary investments in the Philippines compared to the potential staggering costs of a war with Japan. The looming conflict promises profits for a few —munitions makers, bankers, manufacturers— but brings devastation to countless others.

Reflecting on America's history, the author recounts the rise of American imperialism post-1898, which saw the national debt soar due to foreign entanglements, leading to unnecessary economic burdens that far outweighed any supposed gains from increased trade. The author concludes that the pursuit of war, much like other criminal rackets, enriches a privileged few while leaving the majority to pay the ultimate price. Thus, it



is argued that avoiding foreign entanglements would have been more beneficial, both economically and ethically, for the American public.

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Chapter 2 Summary: Who Makes The Profits?

Chapter Two: Who Makes The Profits?

This chapter delves deep into the financial aftermath of World War I, scrutinizing how businesses capitalized on the war effort. The participation of the United States in WWI cost an enormous \$52 billion, equating to a significant financial burden for every American citizen. Despite the sacrifice, companies reaped astronomical profits far exceeding the standard peacetime gains of 6-12%. Amidst patriotic fervor and national duty rhetoric, a select few profited immensely.

The du Pont family, renowned for manufacturing gunpowder, showcased staggering increased earnings during the war, witnessing an upsurge from modest annual profits of \$6 million to \$58 million, a near 950% increase. Similarly, Bethlehem Steel soared from \$6 million to \$49 million, while United States Steel's profits more than doubled from \$105 million to \$240 million. Even businesses in industries not directly involved in warfare, such as copper companies like Anaconda and Utah Copper, saw profits multiply due to the high demand during wartime.

The essence of the chapter revolves around the idea that war was a financial boon for certain companies. Industries beyond steel and munitions also

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exploited the situation: Central Leather saw a 1,100% profit boost, General Chemical a 1,400% increase, and International Nickel achieved a remarkable 1,700%.

Bankers, traditionally discreet about their gains, were major beneficiaries though their profits were shrouded in secrecy. Profit through resourcefulness or manipulation was a recurrent theme; shoe companies overestimated demand, selling excessive amounts to the government, resulting in a surplus well beyond the needs of soldiers.

The narrative exposes numerous questionable business practices and decisions, as seen with mosquito nets never sent to France, oversized wrenches for non-existent nuts, and aircraft engines never deployed. Abundant resources like leather led to unnecessary cavalry equipment, despite being unsuitable for modern warfare.

Citing Senate documents, the narrative shows that outrageous profits were not limited to large firms. Several industries, such as meat packing, textiles, and coal production, reported exorbitant returns, with some coal companies realizing profits as high as 7,856%.

A Senate committee, spearheaded by the Nye committee, highlighted these wartime corporate excesses and sparked discussions on curbing future war profits. However, the proposals lacked corresponding measures to protect

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soldiers' welfare or limit their wartime losses.

In conclusion, the chapter paints a vivid picture of how war, molded by both patriotic appeals and profiteering, created vast wealth for a few, while leaving the larger populace burdened by financial and personal losses. The juxtaposition of copious profits against the backdrop of human sacrifice emphasizes the skewed distribution of wartime benefits and losses.

Key Point	Details
War Costs	WWI cost the US \$52 billion, significantly burdening American citizens.
Profiteering	Selective companies gained astronomical profits, well beyond the standard peacetime profits of 6-12%.
Major Beneficiaries	<div>Du Pont: Profit rose from \$6 million to \$58 million (950% increase).</div> <div>Bethlehem Steel: Profit rose from \$6 million to \$49 million.</div> <div>United States Steel: Profit rose from \$105 million to \$240 million.</div> <div>Anaconda & Utah Copper: Benefitted from increased demand.</div>
Industries' Profit Increases	<div>Central Leather: 1,100% increase.</div> <div>General Chemical: 1,400% increase.</div> <div>International Nickel: 1,700% increase.</div>



Key Point	Details
Bankers' Role	Bankers benefited significantly from the war, though profits were less publicized.
Questionable Practices	Shoe companies overselling to the government. Unnecessary surplus of resources. Misallocated products like oversized wrenches and unused aircraft parts.
Excessive Profits in Various Industries	Meat packing, textiles, and coal made excessive profits, with coal companies seeing profits up to 7,856%.
Senate Involvement	Nye committee highlighted corporate excesses but lacked measures to protect soldiers.
Conclusion	War resulted in vast wealth for a few and significant burdens for many, contrasting profits with human sacrifice.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: War is a financial boon for select companies.

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing on a precipice where the scales of justice tip only in favor of a privileged few. This chapter serves as a stark reminder for you to critically examine the narrative spun during times of conflict. It's easy to get swept up in patriotic fervor, blinded by the romanticized notion of national duty. Yet, beneath the surface lies a disturbing reality — war, for some, is seen not as a tragic necessity, but as an unparalleled opportunity for financial gain. Those who grasp the reins of power within industries such as steel, chemicals, or banking stand to gain immensely, as the chapter illustrates with shocking clarity. This call to awareness urges you to dig deeper, question prevailing narratives, and seek transparency in economic disparities intensified by war. Let it inspire a vigilant mindset, ensuring that profit doesn't overshadow humanity, and that the cost of conflict doesn't solely fall upon the unsuspecting many, but rather calls into account those who profit from the world's grief.



Chapter 3 Summary: Who Pays The Bills?

Chapter Three, titled "Who Pays The Bills?" from the book, delves into the hidden costs of warfare, focusing on who truly bears the financial and human burdens. The chapter argues that while wars generate significant profits for industries and bankers through mechanisms such as government bonds, the average citizen, particularly soldiers and their families, endure the gravest costs.

The chapter begins by outlining how taxation indirectly supports these profits. During wartime, citizens are encouraged to purchase government bonds, which the bankers manipulate to secure profits. They buy these bonds back at depreciated values after scaring the public into selling them, eventually profiting when bond prices are boosted by government propaganda.

However, the chapter asserts that the gravest aspect of the cost is borne by soldiers, who pay not just with money but with their lives and health. The author highlights the tragic fate of veterans who return mentally and physically scarred. Many live in government hospitals with severe injuries or mental illness, the result of being conditioned in war to embrace violence unconditionally and then discarded without support or guidance to reintegrate into civilian life.

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The soldiers' sacrifice is further illustrated through descriptions of their experiences: leaving family, surviving harsh conditions, enduring psychological and physical harm, and then, upon their return, being financially exploited again via mandatory bond purchases. Even the nominal wages they earn are siphoned away to cover dependents and insurance.

Comparing this to earlier conflicts, the chapter explains how the recruitment and incentivization of soldiers have evolved over time. Where once prize money or enlistment bonuses were offered, the modern soldier is drawn in through medals, propaganda, and the notion of patriotic duty. This shift allows for reduced expenditure on military personnel, casting the financial savings onto service members instead.

The piece is critical of war propaganda, which manipulates notions of patriotism and divinity to convince young men to fight without understanding the economic gains underpinning these calls to arms. These narratives pit man against man under the guise of noble causes while profiteers lucratively stand aside, untouched by the ravages experienced by those on the front lines and at home.

Ultimately, the chapter paints a stark contrast between the glossy ideals often associated with war and the grim realities faced by those who serve and their families. These individuals pay the true costs, both financially and emotionally, while profits mount for industries that partake in and perpetuate



the war economy. The lasting impacts on soldiers and their loved ones underscore a profound critique of how wars are financed and the rationale behind them as experienced by those who unwittingly support them.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The Real Cost of War Paid by Soldiers and Their Families

Critical Interpretation: Picture yourself standing on a vast battlefield, not as a soldier, but as someone reaping the rewards from afar, untouched by the devastation below. If Chapter Three drives home one pivotal insight, it's that the true cost of war isn't measured in dollars or sense but in the lifeblood of soldiers and the tears of their families. When you realize how profits gleaned from conflict come at immeasurable human expense, it reshapes your perspective to value peace and justice over fleeting gain. Imagine how transformative it would be if everyone embraced this truth, striving for a world that honors the sacrifices of these unseen heroes by seeking avenues of peace. By advocating for policies that prioritize human welfare over industry gains, you become an inherent part of change, ensuring that no other family needs to bear the brunt of distant profits when it comes to pieces of their very soul.

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Chapter 4: How To Smash This Racket!

Chapter Four of the book titled "How to Smash This Racket!" presents a detailed critique of the profiteering embedded in the institution of war and proposes a radical reform to dismantle it. The chapter argues that war is essentially a racket where a select few profit at the expense of many, and this cycle can only be broken by removing the financial gains from conflict.

The author suggests a revolutionary approach: conscript capital, industry, and labor before drafting young men into war. This means those who profit from war, such as the executives of armament factories, bankers, and speculators, should be conscripted to earn the earnings equal to that of a soldier in the trenches, approximately \$30 a month at the time the book was written. By equalizing wages, it is implied that once war becomes financially unattractive, it will cease to be a viable endeavor.

Furthermore, the chapter proposes that a restricted plebiscite should determine whether the nation goes to war. This voting privilege should be assigned only to those who would directly participate in combat, rather than individuals who stand to gain from war but never bear its risks. This approach roots in historical voting regulations, advocating for the registration and examination of potential draftees to form a body eligible for this critical decision-making process.

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Lastly, the chapter discusses the reformation of military forces to ensure they are purely defensive. The author criticizes the lobbying tactics used to expand military budgets under the guise of national defense, expressing skepticism towards naval maneuvers conducted far from national shores, which, in fact, provoke international tension. The chapter suggests legal

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Chapter 5 Summary: To Hell With War!

In Chapter Five, titled "To Hell With War!" the narrative stems from Major General Smedley Darlington Butler's strong anti-war stance. Butler, a highly decorated U.S. Marine Corps officer, uses his personal and historical insights to critique the reasons behind wars and the consequences of such conflicts. He reflects on the U.S. entry into World War I, highlighting President Woodrow Wilson's contradictory actions, where despite his campaign promise to keep America out of the war, he declared war on Germany five months after being re-elected. Butler attributes this sudden shift not to a change in public opinion, which was never consulted, but to economic interests. A commission representing allied nations convinced American leaders that without U.S. intervention, their defeat would lead to an inability to repay substantial debts to American economic entities.

Butler argues that war efforts, including U.S. involvement, were veiled under the guise of noble causes like making the world safe for democracy. However, the post-war world, he observes, was no closer to peace or democracy, and the First World War failed to achieve its promise of being the war to end all wars. Disarmament conferences are criticized as ineffective, often influenced by those who benefit financially from war. He points out the hypocrisy and futility of such gatherings, where nations typically seek more armaments rather than genuine disarmament.



Furthermore, Butler foresees a future where wars will be fought with deadly chemicals and gases, predicting an escalation in the destructive capacity of warfare due to advancements in science and technology. He contends that scientists, if redirected to constructive efforts, could enhance global prosperity, making peace more profitable than war.

Butler concludes with a resounding call for the end of war, asserting the destructive nature of warfare not just in terms of human lives, but also in terms of moral and economic costs. Through his experiences and observations, he passionately advocates for peace, underscoring the futility and hypocrisy of war-driven motives, and calls for collective global disarmament as the only viable path to prevent future conflicts.

