

Pentagon Contractors Cashing in on the Ukraine Crisis

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WILLIAM HARTUNG, williamhartung55@gmail.com,

JULIA GLEDHILL, julia.gledhill@pogo.org

Hartung and Gledhill just wrote the piece [“The New Gold Rush: How Pentagon Contractors Are Cashing in on the Ukraine Crisis.”](#)

They write: “The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought immense suffering to the people of that land, while sparking calls for increased military spending in both the United States and Europe. Though that war may prove to be a tragedy for the world, one group is already benefiting from it: U.S. arms contractors.

“Even before hostilities broke out, the CEOs of major weapons firms were talking about how tensions in Europe could pad their profits. In a January 2022 call with his company’s investors, Raytheon Technologies CEO Greg Hayes typically bragged that the prospect of conflict in Eastern Europe and other global hot spots would be good for business, adding that ‘we are seeing, I would say, opportunities for international sales... [T]he tensions in Eastern Europe, the tensions in the South China Sea, all of those things are putting pressure on some of the defense spending over there. So I fully expect we’re going to see some benefit from it.’ ...

“For U.S. arms makers, however, the greatest benefits of the war in Ukraine won’t be immediate weapons sales, large as they are, but the changing nature of the ongoing debate over Pentagon spending itself. Of course, the representatives of such companies were already plugging the long-term challenge posed by China, a greatly exaggerated threat, but the Russian invasion is nothing short of manna from heaven for them, the ultimate rallying cry for advocates of greater military outlays. Even before the war, the Pentagon was slated to receive at least \$7.3 trillion over the next decade, more than four times the cost of President Biden’s \$1.7 trillion domestic Build Back Better plan, already stymied by members of Congress who labeled it ‘too expensive’ by far. And keep in mind that, given the current surge in Pentagon spending, that \$7.3 trillion could prove a minimal figure.”

Gledhill is an analyst at the Center for Defense Information at the Project On Government Oversight. Hartung, a TomDispatch regular, is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, and the author of [Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military Industrial Complex](#).

The Davos Problem: “It is time to #TaxTheRich”

May 25, 2022

JENNY RICKS, via Asha Tharoor, asha@ashatharoor.com, [@jenny_ricks](#)

Ricks is the global convener of [Fight Inequality Alliance](#). She just wrote a [piece on Davos for Al Jazeera](#).

She writes: “Policy choices made by governments and international institutions throughout the pandemic have fallen woefully short of protecting people from the impact of multiple crises. Spiralling inflation, sky-rocketing energy bills and fuel prices, as well as high and still rising food prices, spelled disaster for so many. But the richest few, who continued to increase their wealth in the past two years, are still benefiting from the crisis. As a result, questions are being raised on the morality of an economic system that has failed to help the masses and instead supercharged inequality during a global health emergency. ...

“In the UK, where soaring energy bills forced many families to choose between heating their homes and eating, for example, the government is resisting calls for a windfall tax on the profits of oil and gas companies. It is clear that the British public would rather have their leaders tax the companies benefitting from the growing cost of living crisis than waste time discussing inequality and sustainability with CEOs actively deepening that inequality in Switzerland. ...

“In Zambia, for example, President Hakainde Hichilema is finding an increasingly frustrated citizenry asking who benefits from his economic policies, such as his recent move to lower the corporate taxation rate from 35 percent to 30 percent.

“Zambians are asking: In a mineral-rich country with huge copper reserves selling at record prices, why are the vast majority of people still living in crushing poverty? Why are we expected to bear the pain of increasing food and fuel prices? Why are the details of an upcoming IMF loan agreement, expected to usher in more devastating austerity, being kept hidden from us?

...



“The people have no patience for the speeches or meaningless policy proposals that will be produced in Davos this week. This is why people around the world, from Kenya and South Africa to Switzerland and the UK, will once again be taking to the streets to send a singular message to their leaders at Davos: It is time to #TaxTheRich.”

“How Censorship and Lies Made the World Sicker and Less Free”

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Joel Simon and Robert Mahoney—longtime defenders of press freedom and former directors of the Committee to Protect Journalists—are the authors of the new book *The Infodemic: How Censorship and Lies Made The World Sicker and Less Free*. The book investigates how [political leaders in various countries, including the U.S., took advantage of the pandemic to censor evolving public health information and flood the public with lies](#).

Infodemic is even more pressing in the wake of recent news that Elon Musk, who calls himself a “free speech absolutist,” has bought Twitter. Musk has a [history of censorship](#) of his own critics, including his employees.

JOEL SIMON, JoelSimonSays@gmail.com, [@JoelSimonSays](https://twitter.com/JoelSimonSays)

Simon is an author, journalist and press freedom advocate. He is currently a Fellow at the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University and a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Knight First Amendment Institute.

WAFSA EL-SADR, wme1@columbia.edu

El-Sadr is the founder and director of ICAP at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and an international expert on infectious diseases and public health.

This week, Columbia Global Reports hosted a conversation on censorship and the pandemic with Simon and Mahoney. At the event, Simon and Mahoney discussed their research into how governments in Iran, China, Russia, India, Egypt, and Brazil, and the Trump White House were all part of a “wave of censorship... [in which] governments hijacked the narrative and told their own story.”

In 2020, said Mahoney, “President Trump’s campaign strategy rested on a strong economy. Trump saw that the actions he would need to take to protect public health would curtail economic activity and undermine his campaign message. He didn’t have the ability to employ top-down censorship, so instead, he used ‘[censorship through noise](#),’ or ‘flooding,’ to confuse the public. He pumped out information that was inaccurate, dismissed and undermined public health experts, and attacked critical journalists who told a story distinct from his own.”

Simon noted that declines in press freedom, in the health of the information landscape, and in local journalism have been “incredibly destructive in terms of public health response.” Simon said that although the pandemic is a global crisis, “it played out in a very local way; people had local questions that required trusted local sources of information—and that’s often local journalism.”

El-Sadr said: “*Infodemic* provides a cohesive framework for understanding the ways different countries have responded to Covid-19 pandemic. It also raises a red flag, providing clear warning about how some of the measures put in place in some