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“Dark Clouds or Sunshine? The Black Economics of War”

We awakened last Thursday to an “Invasion” headline—Russian into Ukraine. The war news cast a dark cloud. No doubt, wars can have dire military and political aspects and consequences. Let us focus here on the Black economic aspect.

But before we explore the economics of war, Black Americans should remind ourselves of the following realities. Namely that nations choose and rotate their enemies with the hope of achieving more solidarity at home. Quite simply, a people can become more united when they face a common enemy. During the Trump Administration, China was the avowed enemy with whom the US fought an economic war mainly through trade. Now the Biden Administration has found its enemy for the nation in the form of Russia.

Arguably, in a world full of international players who can create a global disaster with nuclear weapons, war is not entered into

haphazardly and without considerable negotiation to ensure against such disaster. Remember all of the negotiations leading up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine? Were those negotiations a cover for determining the nature and scope of the war to come?

Now to the economics. In today’s world, Black Americans should recognize that war is very much an economic opportunity. The national economy, major industrial concerns, large risk management enterprises, small contractors, and soldiers all stand to benefit economically from US wars.¹ Unfortunately, mainly due to Black America’s role in the US economy, our best opportunities to benefit from war are primarily at the small contractor and soldier levels.²

Those who remember the Great Muhammad Ali and his fight for “Conscientious Objector” status during the Vietnam War—when some of the best and most important

¹In support of this statement see: “Economic Consequences of War on the US Economy” from the Institute for Economics & Peace (2011), [The-Economic-Consequences-of-War-on-US-Economy_0.pdf \(economicsandpeace.org\)](#) (Ret. 022522); and Linda J. Bilmes (2021), “Where Did the \$5 Trillion Spent on Afghanistan and Iraq Go? Here’s Where,” *The Guardian*; [Where did the \\$5tn spent on Afghanistan and Iraq go? Here’s where | Linda J Bilmes | The Guardian](#) (Ret. 022422). Also consider that internal research at BlackEconomics.org revealed that the cultural

capital acquired during military service can improve economic life outcomes for soldiers.

² Besides Worldwide Technologies, BlackEconomics.org is unaware of large Black-owned and controlled firms that benefit significantly from US military operations. Given the volume of small Black American (nonemployer) firms, it is possible that some may capture opportunities to serve as contractors for the US military. As highlighted in footnote 1, soldiers of war and their beneficiaries can benefit significantly from war.

years of his fighting career were stolen—know that some Black Americans have long countenanced no thought for fighting in America’s wars. Why? Because we know that soldiers—especially Black soldiers—are tools of autocrats and plutocrats who set America’s war agenda. Inevitably, Black American soldiers are praised for their service and used up in foreign wars, and then abused socially and economically when they return home.

However, new war technologies and medical advances have reduced prospects for death during wars.³ This means that Black Americans, like poor White Americans, take a calculated risk when going to war.⁴ Today, soldiers face a smaller probability of coming home in a coffin. On the other hand, if they survive war, then they can attempt to leverage their military experience to gain opportunities to increase their education and to accrue financial assets and a series of life-long social benefits.

It is common knowledge that about 17 percent of US military personnel are Black Americans. Consequently, Black Americans

play integral roles in many aspects of military operations. Importantly, Black Americans can use and build on the knowledge gained through military service to not only secure employment after military service, but to also shape up a Black American pseudo military force for our areas of influence (communities) today—and, potentially, to serve in future independent Black American territories.

It is too early to say whether the US will be drawn directly and fully into war because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, Black Americans should consider viewing the possibility of war as a potential economic opportunity: Either to benefit from the war directly as a contractor or soldier; or to benefit from accelerated growth in selected sectors or in the overall US economy.

An economic sun can certainly shine through dark war clouds.

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³ See University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (2020), “US Military Improves Mortality Since World War II, But There Have Been Alarming Exceptions,” [US military improved mortality since World War II, but there have been alarming exceptions -- ScienceDaily](#) (Ret. 022522).

⁴ Even in death, there are economic opportunities for the beneficiaries of deceased Black soldiers who automatically receive a USD 100,000 death benefit and other important financial and social benefits.