How the West Profits From the Slaughter in Gaza and Yemen

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Chris Hedges (CH): The book, *Making a Killing: How the West Profits from Slaughter in Gaza and Yemen*, co-authored by Andrew Feinstein, Ruth Rohde, and Jack Cinamon, along with Paul Holden and Professor Anna Stavrianakis, shines a lens into the dark machinery of the global arms trade, an arms trade which makes billions in profits. The authors estimate that $130 billion have been made from arms exports by Western nations to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates during the war in Yemen, and over $50 billion from Israeli foreign military procurements used to butcher Palestinians to sustain the Gaza genocide. This blood-soaked cash is doled out, they explain, to corrupt politicians, lobbying groups, think tanks, universities, and the media, to shape foreign policy decisions, to justify genocide and endless war. The arms trade, the authors argue, is the backbone of state power in the United States. It has created an unelected, shadowy cabal of foreign policy, corporate and military officials, along with academics and arms traders, who no matter who is in the White House, perpetuate war in the bloated Pentagon budget, which the Trump administration wants to increase to a staggering $1.5 trillion. *Making A Killing* exposes the networks that provide the weapons to facilitate the slaughter in Gaza and Yemen, it names the corporations that fabricates the bombs, warplanes, drones, ships, tanks, missiles and guns in the US, Britain and Europe, it details how these merchants of death transport their lethal products to the Middle East, it examines the cutting edge, high-tech systems of information, warfare and surveillance powered by data processing centers, cloud technologies, and artificial intelligence. These high-tech tools of war were produced by familiar corporations, such as Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and Palantir to control those slated for domination and often obliteration in the Global South. And once tested on Palestinians or Yemenis, these tools are brought back to manage and surveil us, a terrifying imperial boomerang that is abolishing our civil liberties and freedom. Why have these weapons manufacturers been permitted to produce and sell these industrial killing machines to states that openly use them to disproportionately target non-combatants in violation of international law? Why is the arms trade allowed to operate with no oversight or restrictions? Who are the CEOs, executives, politicians, lobbyists, along with the enormous asset management companies who are enriched by the arms trades? How important is the arms trade to the portfolios of the billionaire class? And how have the profits from the arms trade distorted and deformed our democracies, buying the loyalty of corrupt politicians who funnel billions of taxpayer money into the war industry.

Joining me to discuss *Making a Killing: How the West Profits From Slaughter in Gaza and Yemen*, and address these questions is Andrew Feinstein. Andrew is a former MP for the African National Congress who served under Nelson Mandela. He is the author of *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade*, which was made into an award-winning documentary. And in 2024, he stood as an independent candidate against Keir Starmer in Britain to highlight the Labour government's complicity in the genocide in Gaza. He is currently the executive director of the non-profit Shadow World Investigations. I'm going to read a lot from the book because the information is so dense and damning. And I'm going to start with Boeing – these monster bombs you write about. "Boeing also accelerated the delivery of 1,000 small 250-pound bombs to Israel on the 10th of October 2023, while also committing two million to charities to support humanitarian efforts in Israel post-7th of October. These GBU-39 small diameter bombs are designed to be low cost yet highly effective, delivering a comparatively light payload while costing around $50,000 each. With a destructive reach of up to 20 meters, the GBU 39 has become the weapon of choice for the Israeli Air Force in Gaza". And then you go on to write that the GBU-39 was used in the Rafah tent massacre in Tel al-Sultan, in which 45 people were killed, as well as other massacres. And they were made available as part of the accelerated delivery from Boeing, along with 1,800 JDAM kits to Israel, part of an older deal in 2021. So talk a little bit about the acceleration of these weapons – and we have to remember that Gaza is one of the most densely populated places on earth, more densely populated now that Israel has seized 70% of it and pushed some two million Palestinians into tent cities in the 30% that remains. But let's talk about what these weapons do, how the Israelis use them, and the huge numbers of civilians who died from them.

Andrew Feinstein (AF): You know, Chris, on the one hand we're told the technology of our warfare, of our defense sector is so advanced, especially with the involvement of all of these tech companies now. But on the other hand, when we see the way in which the bombs that you mentioned are used, they're indiscriminate, they kill far more innocent civilians than any intended target. And so you ask yourself the question, well, technologically advanced for whom? Because the reality is the way Israel uses this weaponry is in perhaps the most murderous way we've seen since the Second World War and since America in Vietnam. You know, the book started with a Gazan friend of mine telling me about the fact that his family, 21 members of his family, 14 of them under the age of 12 were killed by an Israeli bomb hitting the family home. There was absolutely no reason for them or their home to be attacked. And he said to me "I want to know who made the bomb, I want to know who made the plane. I want to know who has profited from the murder of my family". Because the reality is the equipment that the United States – and the US provide 70% of Israel's weaponry, and the weaponry the US sends to Israel is being used in the most genocidal way we have seen for generations – and the reality is that our politicians who are overseeing this, our military officials who are allowing this and our legal systems which are enabling this to take place should be the ones in the dark because they are all profiting from this ongoing slaughter. I remember many years ago, I did a piece of work for the Auschwitz Institute about how the Rwandan genocide could have been prevented when one saw this build-up – because the Rwanda genocide, the western notion of it is a whole lot of people running around with

machetes. That wasn't the case at all. The reality is the vast majority of people who were murdered in the Rwandan genocide were machine-gunned to death. And when you saw the build- up of machine guns of certain types of ammunition, if we'd had that information beforehand, it would have been fairly obvious that a genocide was going to follow, especially if one put that together with the rhetoric of the government of the time in Rwanda. And I did this work on the basis that it might be able to prevent future genocides. And I now look at what has happened in the case of Gaza and we can see with the flow of weapons from the United States, which has accelerated exponentially after the 7th of October, we have seen with the rhetoric of senior Israeli politicians, senior Israeli military leaders, that this is a genocide – and it's at that point that the world should have intervened, that the word should have said, you can't send this weaponry there, you can't make these profits out of the slaughter of at least 75,000 people so far. But the bombs from Boeing, from Lockheed, from RTX, which we know as Raytheon, from all of these companies just keep on flowing, and the profits keep on returning to the defense companies, to the financial institutions that own them, to the senior executives who are literally, as the blood flows, getting exponentially wealthier as individuals every day. And this is what we try to project in the book. First of all, how this should have been and could have been stopped by the laws that are already in place. And second of all, by the extreme profiteering that is taking place out of the indescribable suffering of the Palestinian people.

CH: The book does a very good job of showing how interconnected globally the arms industry is. I'll just pull the GBU-39 as an example. You said the trans-European arms company MBDA owns a factory in Alabama which produces wings that are fitted to the Boeing GBU-39, a key component of the bomb. Meanwhile MBDA's code of ethics, I'm quoting, "ensures fundamental freedoms and human rights are respected. Revenues from MBDA, incorporated in the US, are routed through MBDA UK in Hertfordshire, England, before being passed onto the France-based MBDA group. In 2024, MBDA distributed almost 350 million pounds in dividends to its three shareholders, BAF [BAE] Systems, Britain's biggest arms company, France's Airbus and Italy's Leonardo, another big Italian arms manufacturer". I didn't know a lot of this, but the networks are global and not just in terms of the profits that are accrued, but also in terms, and I just mentioned that example with Alabama, in terms of the component. I mean, you talk about Elbit systems and it's just got this massive global supply chain.

AF: Yeah So what this sort of global supply chain does is a number of crucial things. It effectively knits all of these countries into these conflicts. We ask ourselves the question, why is there such a consensus amongst Western political leaders in the support of Israel's ongoing genocide? With very few exceptions – you know, we can say Spain, Slovenia, one or two other countries to some extent. But it's because they're all knitted into this manufacturing process. So, the politicians are sitting there thinking, well, this is creating jobs for us, this is supposedly helping our economy. Now, the fact that defense is a really bad and ineffective way to create jobs, we'll leave aside for the moment. But that's the way that politicians would see it, in addition to which, crucially, defense companies around the world – not just in the US, but in all of the countries and many others – are amongst the biggest contributors to

political party funding, one. Two, are amongst the biggest, if not the biggest employer of senior politicians once they leave office where they get these golden handshakes when they arrive which is effectively the bribes for the decisions that they've made while they're in office like allowing a genocide to continue. So the first thing is that sort of knitting in through this production mechanism. The second is the legal accountability because what they've had to do to enable this genocide to take place and continue to take place, is to effectively destroy the entire architecture of the system of international law that was created after the Second World War. And so in order to do that they have to have a consensus across all of the Western countries who bought into this international rule of law that it can be violated. And, of course, that then enables them to operate with virtual impunity, because they are effectively handcuffing our judicial systems as well. So they have both the sort of economic incentive, but also they've created the sort of legal wasteland in terms of which they can continue in office. Because quite honestly, Chris, as someone who actually served in government, I look on what has happened for the last three plus years, and I say to myself, all of our senior politicians, all of our senior military and intelligence officials, all of our senior executives of defense companies, in a functioning world where there was a rule of law, these people would all be in jail. Instead, their positions seem as secure as ever. And that, for me, is one of the most terrifying things. So I think that's the role that this sort of very global military industrial complex has created.

CH: Well, I'm going to ask about corruption, but before I do, towards the end of the book you write about Antony Blinken. So these people perpetuate Blinken, and the Biden administration sustains the genocide, and then he leaves office and he's raking it in from –

AF: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah, so there's the example of Antony Blinken, who, of course, made this whole series of frankly repulsive statements in order to defend what Israel was doing. And now he's trying to walk back a few of them, as you know. But I mean, it's as though he thinks social media doesn't exist, that we're not going to remember all of the things that he said at the time. And he's emblematic of a whole lot of the Biden officials and, of course, of Biden himself. And then these people go into either the defense companies directly, the lobbying groups who work for the defense companies, but taking a step back to see how this works over time – William Cohen. He served in the Clinton administration, for goodness sake. And the guy has made absolute fortunes out of the current conflicts, Russia, Ukraine, and in Palestine. And he created an entire company that sort of sucks into it, a whole lot of people from, from subsequent administrations, and they serve the bidding of the defense companies. And how do you best serve the defense companies? Greater conflict. We had a situation where the CEO, which I think we cite in the book, the CEO of RTX, what most people would know as Raytheon, was saying at a meeting of shareholders after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and as the situation in the Middle East worsened significantly after 7th of October, with a big smile on his face, he says: "The current global geopolitical situation is great news for you, our shareholders". And so these are people who literally profit as blood is spilled around the world. But how do we keep up the stratospheric level of defense spending? We can't do that unless there are threats. And it's why, in my opinion, the United States of America has been at war for all but 17 years of its existence. Because this

has been a centerpiece of the way politics functions in the United States and many other Western countries now. So it requires conflict. If there's no conflict, we have to create fear towards future conflicts so that we can continue to justify these ever increasing and totally unjustifiable levels of defense expenditure and the creation of ever more expensive weapons systems like the F-35.

CH: You have some amazing figures on the F-35. They're underlined. But maybe you can run it through. I had no idea – first of all, the plane's a dud. It's constantly breaking down, and it keeps the supply chain happy, of course, but do you remember the money? I mean, it's staggering.

AF: No, it's absolutely absurd. I mean off the top of my head it's probably cost American taxpayers in excess of three trillion dollars now. The thing doesn't work. The defense inspector general a few years ago now – I'm not talking about yesterday – a few years ago already said that the main combat suite, the brains of the thing, is not fit for purpose. It doesn't work. And if you look at the way the F-35s have been used by Israel in Gaza. You know, they could have used one of the old B-52 bombers. Because it's not as though the civilian population of Palestine or Hamas or anybody else in the occupied Palestinian territories has surface-to-air missiles that could be taking these things out so that their stealth capability was of any consequence. It's actually a matter of they could have been using old B-52 bombers, but of course, B-52s cost a fraction of what an F-35 costs. So they're using the F-35s to drop the bomb. And we're told, oh, well, it makes the whole thing more sophisticated, more accurate, etc, etc. So if they're accurate, then what Israel is doing is targeting an entire civilian population. And then any conversation about war crimes isn't even moot. So they can't have it both ways. But the reality is it reminded me when Trump was in his first term, you might recall something that he probably would lie about today, but when he ran his first campaign, he claimed he was going to shut down the F-35 project because it was such a monumental waste of money, going back years and years. And it was a very popular position he took. Then as soon as he was in office, and he realized how corrupt the defense procurement system is and how he and his family and those around him could benefit from it, of course he invested more money into the F-35 program. And when he was making the announcement about this change of heart that he'd had, he was talking about the stealth capabilities of the jet. He honestly didn't realize that the stealth capability relates to the fact that it can't be seen on radars. He was talking about – and I can't remember whether he was using a Russian or Chinese pilot as an example, whoever the enemy of the moment was. And he was saying, the Russian pilot, as he flies next to the F-35, he can't see anything there, it's invisible. We've got this incredible, invisible plane. And of course, it was nothing of the sort. It's just a stealth aircraft. But they have to create this sort of Hollywood-esque furor and pomp and ceremony around it to justify the fact that American taxpayers have had 3 trillion dollars stolen from their pockets to feed this absolute nonsense. And we're going to see more and more of it because this is what we now call the defense tech companies. So not just the big defense tech companies that you mentioned like Amazon, Google and all of the others, but also the Palantirs of this world. These guys aren't great technologists. If you actually look at the quality of the technology it's not particularly awesome. What they are brilliant at is

manipulating government and turning public money, our money, into private profits. That's what these guys are genius at. So the Palantirs and the Googles and Amazons, they take ordinary things that shouldn't cost that amount of money and they make them sound like the most advanced technological thing we've ever come across, so that more can be charged for it, so that defense budgets have to go up again. And when you look at the sort of people who are actually doing this, I must say – you know Chris, as you know I've been doing this work for over a quarter of a century now on the global arms trade. And I've interviewed and investigated some of the world's worst people. I mean, I often just get home at the end of a working week and I feel as though I need to have a sanitizing shower just to get the sort of aura of these awful human beings off me. But in the last three, four years while I've been working on this book, I have never come across such egregious, evil, unpleasant human beings as these new tech people. I mean, it's no surprise to me that at least three of them grew up in my own home country of apartheid South Africa, two of whom had grandparents who actually immigrated into apartheid South Africa after the Second World War, because it was as close to Nazism as they could find. And their offspring, of course, people like Peter Thiel and Elon Musk, they learned exactly the wrong lessons from apartheid South Africa. And I think it's one of the reasons why racist white supremacy is such a top-of-the-line issue for these guys and why they are almost unapologetic white supremacists. And now what they're doing with their tech companies, they're effectively saying we, the overlords, are going to effectively dispense with all of these non-people who are of no consequence in the world. And they're being taken up, their offerings are being taken up by governments all over the world. Palantir today runs all of the data on Britain's National Health Service. I mean, entrusting Peter Thiel and Alex Karp with your most private health data? You couldn't make this nonsense up. But this is the way in which they've insinuated themselves into daily life. And why what we're seeing in Palestine and what we are then seeing reversed on us at home – because I must tell you that, you know, those who are seen in Britain to oppose the genocide, are being arrested and sentenced as terrorists. And a lot of the surveillance that is being used to do this comes from those same tech companies. So it really is coming home to roost. We are seeing not only mass slaughter in parts of the Global South, but we are seeing these companies using that same technology making more money from actually keeping us, the people who are paying for all of this, under surveillance and making sure that there's information with which to prosecute us.

CH: I want to ask about corruption. You write about Lockheed, and you write its extraordinary history of corruption ensuring unrivaled political influence in the US around the world. You mention John Murtha, who was called, what, the King of Pork, right? Lockheed ran a published, I don't know, some kind of company memo which was saying "we never forget who we are working for", praising him... And you talk about how this corruption is used to grease the palms of what you call the world's worst despots – the husband of the Queen of the Netherlands, Prince Bernard, who insured Dutch contracts. But talk about the importance of corruption as part of the process by which the arms industry ensures its profits.

AF: [00:26:53] So the trade in weapons accounts for around 40 % of all corruption in world trade, which is a terrifying number. So corruption is really built into the economics of the

trade when the numbers on deals are done. The bribes are built into those numbers. In addition to which, bribes are not just paid – if the US is selling arms to Saudi Arabia, the bribes aren't just paid to members of the Saudi royal family. There's what we call the feedback principle in which some of those bribes will come back to the US and it'll go through various mechanisms that we outline in the book into the hands of senior corporate executives of those companies, of senior politicians, senior lobbyists, etc., etc. So the whole system becomes totally corrupted. But I want to also mention another way that we talk about in which this corruption takes place today. And that's in what I call the self-dealing, the scale of which we have never seen in conflict before. So this is where we have a situation where either, to give a couple of the examples we use, you know, the Trump sons and their associates will invest in a tiny drone maker that no one's ever heard of 48 hours before the president is going to announce the bombing of Iran. And immediately after the bombing, there'll be an announcement that this small drone company that no one has ever heard of has now won this massive Pentagon contract, worth hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. So taking the investment of the Trump offspring and increasing it exponentially in the space of a couple of days. And that's just one example. There are countless examples like that. But the other form of self-dealing involves members of Congress, members of the administration. I mean, the defense secretary – how someone like that lands up in public office is something I still haven't quite got over – but his financial advisor clearly on the basis of insider information in the lead up to that bombing of Iran was trying to buy shares on behalf of Pete Hegseth in all of the companies that were going to benefit most directly from when the announcement of the bombing was made. So the companies that make the planes, the bombs and all of the other components that are required to enable those bombings. Fortunately in that instance, it didn't happen for a variety of reasons. But there are countless examples in the book of when it does happen. And if you look at the members of congress and their holdings in defense companies – they make far more money from their shareholdings in the defense industry than they do in their huge congressional salaries. And you ask yourself the question, so you think these people are making decisions, making judgments in the best interests of American taxpayers, when they know if they okay military action, they are going to personally benefit from that.

CH: And Andrew, as you make clear in the book, this is bipartisan. I mean, politically…

AF: Oh, it's absolutely bipartisan! It's absolutely bipartisan. And not just in the United States. In Britain it's the same thing. I mean Margaret Thatcher describes her greatest political achievement as being Tony Blair – because what he did was she turned the Labor party into a mirror of her conservative party, a corrupt greedy war mongering party.

CH: Which is what Clinton did to the Democratic Party.

AF: Absolutely, exactly the same thing. So it's the point at which the so-called liberals accept that greed is good and that they are entitled to their share of the spoils. And if you look at the book, because there are so many names named there and the self-dealing that they're engaged in, if we try to add it up, it's going to be an equivalence across the two major parties. There's a

very, very interesting moment now politically in the US, which, of course, you would be far more aware of than I, but after these midterms, and we have quite a few people who are describing themselves as socialists, who are describe themselves as anti-war going into Congress, are they going to walk the same path? Or are they actually going to ensure that the systemic corruption of our political system is halted? And that we build something new and different? Because to have Abdul El-Sayed in the Senate is not significant unless he can put a stop to what I can only describe as the daylight robbery of the American taxpayer that is happening through the Defense Department and the White House every single day.

CH: I just want to touch on this briefly. You write about the – is it Mahal program? Am I pronouncing it correctly? I mean, I knew about this, but I just always find it absolutely outrageous. This is where foreign mercenaries, 29 % of them from the United States, enroll in the IDF. We've actually had Americans killed in Gaza and in southern Lebanon. But if a Muslim goes off to fight in Syria or anywhere else, there's just a huge disparity in how they're treated. I mean, under the US Constitution you're not actually allowed to go fight for another country. But we're talking about thousands of mercenaries in the IDF. Just talk a little bit about that.

AF: Sure. So, what we came across as we were researching and investigating the book is that the United States of America's defense system uses a lot of mercenaries generally and has for decades and decades now. So that in itself is not new to us. The fact that there are a whole lot of foreign nationals who are fighting in the IDF, they're mercenaries. Now some of them would argue they're doing so for religious reasons, for nationalistic reasons, for their commitment to Zionism, etc. The reality is they're all mercenaries. Now, the United States of America and most countries, including my own country of South Africa, has anti-mercenary laws. But it seems as though the rule of law, domestic law, international law, is not supposed to apply when it is Israel or mercenaries on behalf of Israel committing the crimes. We have asked the Metropolitan Police in the United Kingdom, we have given them the names of individuals who've been fighting with the IDF, and I know that people have been doing the same thing in the United States of America – we cannot get them to even look into these people. It is though what they're doing is untouchable and they operate with impunity. And we don't realize that by doing this, what we are effectively doing is creating a wall in which 9/11s can happen on a repeated basis and there will be no legal consequence for that, in which anybody can go and fight for anybody else and there would be no legal consequence for them. We are effectively creating a world in which there are no laws. We're effectively creating a world that is akin to the Mad Max films. But then we still think that we can call out who we think are the bad guys. So Israel can literally slaughter over 75,000 people and Vladimir Putin, of whom I'm no fan, invades the Ukraine and his military commits some crimes in the Ukraine undoubtedly, but he is the most evil person in the world – nobody will take that seriously anymore, nobody does, because of the rank hypocrisy. And where it really comes home to roost is in relation to these mercenaries that you've mentioned we cover in the book there. Because these are people, some of whom are committed specifically to Israel, but some of them are just simply mercenaries. And they will do this anywhere in the world where they are being paid money. And we do not look at the consequences of this outside of Israel-

Palestine. And that to me is perhaps the most terrifying thing. And it's one of the reasons, Chris, why we also talk about Yemen in the book.

CH: Yeah, where they also, as you point out, use significant numbers of mercenaries, the Saudi regime.

AF: Huge numbers of mercenaries. I mean, the conflict in Yemen which of course has very sadly reignited recently, it's not about Saudi forces and Emirati forces actually doing the fighting. They're using mercenaries from all over the world, from Sudan, from various parts of Eastern Europe, etc., to fight this conflict for them in Yemen. And it's an intractable fight. Nobody is going to control Yemen. The Saudis certainly aren't, the Emiratis certainly aren't. But it's fine if there are allies, they can go ahead, they can use as many mercenaries as they want. They can violate international humanitarian law. They can commit war crimes. And there are no consequences. Why? Because we're making profit out of it and because they are our allies. The fact that they are amongst the most evil murderous people on the planet at this point is irrelevant. The fact that they're our allies is what is important. But as you know far better than I and as you've documented for so many decades now, this is the American way. But what terrifies me about Yemen and Palestine is that never before have I seen the American way transposed to Western Europe and the United Kingdom to quite the same effect.

CH: I want to ask about Elbit Systems. You write, "Elbit Systems, it's based in Haifa, the largest privately owned arms company in Israel. It supplies the Israeli military with 85 % of their drones and a significant share of their land-based equipment. Their Hermes drones have been used in the slaughter of Palestinians for years, enabling the company to market these UAVs as 'combat proven'. They were used extensively in the 2008 and 2014 assaults on Gaza, in which Israel killed 1,417 and 2,202 Palestinians respectively. It is powered by R-902W Wankel engines based on a design by UAV engines located in Shenstone in the midlands of England. It is likely the company is continuing to supply at least the components and technology for these engines". Of course, Elbit was targeted by Palestine Action. I think they had, if I remember from your book, ten manufacturing plants in Great Britain. Three of them, Palestine Action, managed to shut down, or three of them have been shut down. But Elbit Systems is huge. Talk a little bit about Elbit Systems and its tentacles into other weapons manufacturers around the world.

AF: So, in years gone by, if someone had asked me, what is the most dangerous defense company in the world? I would have probably said Lockheed Martin simply because of its size and influence and the scale of bribes it was paying. That would have been my instinct. Today, I would say it's either Elbit Systems or Palantir, and that's because of the changing nature of warfare, but it's also because of the way these companies have insinuated themselves into the process of war making across the world. So Elbit Systems, as you said, used to have ten factories in Britain, still has seven of those today. The people who took action against Elbit Systems in the United Kingdom, the group known as Palestine Action, has been proscribed as a terrorist organization in the United Kingdom. Now, it's really

important to bear in mind that they have damaged factories, that they've damaged military equipment, that there is one instance in, I don't know how many dozens of incidents in which somebody was unintentionally hurt, a security guard who's absolutely fine. I mean, it wasn't a long-term injury at all. It was a small minor injury. These people have been arrested and have been charged, sometimes with terrorism offenses, but most often not. But Britain changed the law under Keir Starmer so that you could be charged with something like in the case of these people, minor criminal damage. And when it comes to sentencing, the judge without having mentioned the word terrorism in your trial can then sentence you in terms of terrorism legislation. Which means that the sentence can be exponentially longer than it would have been under what you've been sentenced for. That when you eventually emerge from prison, you have all sorts of conditions governing your life. It becomes almost impossible to open a bank account, to rent accommodation, to get a job. They're effectively ruining your entire life. And this is the way anybody who opposes Elbit Systems is treated. And as far as we can establish, we can't say this definitively, but as far as we can establish, these measures have been taken on the instructions of Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu. They have decided that Elbit Systems needs protecting to this extent. What that tells you is that this is a company that is so integral to the global military industrial complex that the president of the United States of America and the prime minister of Israel are prepared to intervene with their British colleagues to protect Elbit Systems from a group of direct action protesters. In one instance, the "damage" done was that some red paint was thrown on a plane. The damage could be washed off in a matter of minutes.

CH: I think they also went in and disabled some drones.

AF: They did disable some drones. The most important thing that they've managed to do is they've disabled a lot of computers. So that's the most important thing that they have done. But what this indicates is that Elbit has become absolutely central to global national security as understood in the very narrow terms of a national security state – that it is crucial to the production process of a lot of the manufacture of unmanned vehicles, be that taking place in the United States of America and Britain or in Western Europe, that an enormous amount of components from those Western countries are going into Elbits products itself. It is far and away the most important company in Israel. It is regarded, even though it is privately owned primarily by an individual, it is regarded by the Israeli state as a part of the Israeli state. And the private individual who started the company is now Israel's richest person post the genocide in Gaza. So this is a company that is now at the forefront of the hyper militarism that has engulfed the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. And the leaders of all of those places are prepared to do whatever it takes to protect this company. So I can only assume that this company is also involved in the development of certain other types of technology and weaponry that we don't yet know about, but that it's so important to our countries that they will not allow any sort of protest or action to disrupt this company. We're also seeing – the final point I'll make on this, Chris – we are also seeing Elbit Systems receiving contracts in many parts of Europe to conduct sensitive communications operations for militaries in various European countries. I mean the one in which there's been some outrage is Switzerland.

CH: I want to close by asking about what you call the tech bros, the new generation of defense contractors. So this is of course Meta, Microsoft, Google and the role that they play not only in furthering the genocide but in terms of the global arms trade.

AF: So what these companies have done, just so that people are clear, in terms of the genocide, they have provided an enormous amount of data that has been used by the Israelis in their targeting decisions. And in a lot of instances, these are targeting decisions that are taken entirely by technology with no human intervention at all. And it's for this reason that we are seeing whole families wiped out. Because according to some of the tech systems and targeting systems that have been developed by these technology companies, one member of that family might have got a pizza from the same place as somebody who might have some role in Hamas. It can be as tenuous and as absurd as that. And there is no human intervention to point out that this might actually not be appropriate. And they do that for a whole lot of – I would say unethical but they would say ethical and legal reasons they do that. Now, the next role that they play that is so important is that they use quite a lot of the same skills and quite a of the same technology in order to effectively follow, I suppose is the most appropriate word, or be able to monitor, should they wish to, the activity of most ordinary citizens. And it's for this reason that the intersection of these companies with health services, with social security departments, with some of the most sensitive government functions becomes so worrying for us as ordinary citizens. Because they take these methodologies that are used in conflict for targeting purposes and they apply them to other data that they have about our daily lives and they then utilize the mixture of that data to identify people who could be a danger to the state. I know this sounds absurdly Orwellian. But this is in effect what is happening. And we are seeing, in the United States of America but also in Europe and in the United Kingdom, we are seeing people targeted through these sorts of mechanisms for their political activity and anti-terror police turning up on their doorsteps at three o'clock, four o' clock in the morning to arrest them and to conduct searches. We are seeing the same sort of stuff being used by ICE in the decisions that it is making around deportations, something that has become more and more common again in the UK and in Europe. So all of these strands that have their roots in this hyper militarism are finding their way into this deeply racist form of politics that is being practiced where anybody who thinks that Israel might not be a perfect state, that Zionism might actually be an extraordinarily dangerous and deadly ideology, can be identified with the help of these technology companies and can actually be dealt with before they become a supposed danger to anyone. And when we talk about that anyone we're talking about Elbit Systems, these tech companies themselves, and we're talking about the entire architecture of the state. To my way of political thinking what this reflects is that we're in the final death throes of neoliberal capitalism, which is so out of control which has got to the point of plundering ordinary people's pockets with such ease and on such a consistent basis that it is becoming unsustainable politically, as we're seeing with events in the midterms, in Brazil, in Serbia, in France, etc. And the only way to sustain this political system now is through using these technologies to keep a handle on individuals in our society so that we can be identified as dangerous individuals and a threat to the particular ideology that is being perpetrated at the moment.

CH: So, Andrew, as you point out in the book, these Meta and Palantir, I mean, they recruit from the CIA, but they recruit from 8200 – this is the Israeli intelligence unit, I mean from what I remember from your book, by the thousands. They're integrated, these people are actually integrated into these platforms.

AF: Oh absolutely. If you look at people who play senior and pivotal roles in these companies, many of them have military experience or intelligence experience, often in Israel. And so what we're seeing is we have historically spoken about the revolving door, which is, as we've used it traditionally, this movement of people between government and the defense contractors. But now we're talking about something that is far more dangerous than that. We are talking about people who are trained by a state that is frankly lawless and out of control, in my opinion, that is using technology to perfect the destruction of an entire people. In the case of the Palestinian people, this model is now being transposed into the process of surveillance and repression in so-called Western democracies. So we're seeing, if you will, an Israelification of the technology sector and thus of our own militarist and intelligence functions. It's at a level that I'm not sure we even predicted before. It's a level that perhaps scares me more than anything about the military industrial complex ever has. And again, I come back to the people who run these organizations. And just to think of Peter Thiel, who was asked in a recent interview whether he thought that humanity should survive and he couldn't give an answer. And then you look at his CEO, Alex Karp, who – I mean, I have a few degrees in clinical psychology from when I was trying to stay out of the apartheid military, and I watch this guy in his public appearances and I think to myself, this individual is either on a hell of a lot of hallucinogenic drugs or he has such severe personality disorders that in a caring society, we need to institutionalize him and give him the help that he so clearly needs. But instead he is playing a role at the forefront of one of these companies that is effectively bringing the Israeli way of doing war and the Israeli way of repressing the Palestinian people into all of our societies as well. So that in conclusion, it leads me to reiterate what my former boss Nelson Mandela said when he was released from prison. It wasn't just a matter that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinian people, but it is that the struggle of the Palestinian people is our own struggle for liberation in each and every one of our own societies.

CH: Great. I could not agree more. Andrew, thank you so much. And thanks to Milena, Thomas and Max who produce the show. You can find me at chrishedges.substack.com

AF: Thanks so much for having me, Chris, great to see you again.

END

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