Richard Barnet, ROOTS OF WAR:

......a conviction that the US has committed monumental crimes in Indochina and that these crimes are likely to be repeated unless we gain a much deeper understanding of what we have done as a nation and why.......

...the struggle of domestic political, economic, and social forces within a nation is the primary determinant of the national interest....(i.e.) foreign policy is more an expression of our own society than a programmed response to what other nations do.....

......why those who have been in charge of defining and meeting the threats facing the United States have determined that the national interest must be pursued by war and preparation for war.

If we are to recover our sanity as a nation and to earn again the decent opinion of those with whom we share the planet.....Americans must engage in serious self-examination of those drives within our society that impel us toward destruction.

It is the institutions in a society with the power to decide which are the most important threats and what should be done to meet them that determine whether a nation goes to war. For more than a generation American society has been organized for war rather than peace. It is still organized for war.

...We have analyzed the three main roots of war:

1. the concentration of power in a national security bureaucracy which increasingly comes to play by its own rules without regard to what it does to the country it is supposed to be defending.
(The US cannot be organized for peace until the excessive power of that bureaucracy is broken:

a. shrink the military bureaucracies in size so that the balance of power in government once again passes to those agencies which are in the business of building and healing instead of killing and destroying

b. reestablish some form of popular control over the national security managers. Congress must assert the constitutional prerogatives it gave up in the area of foreign affairs.

c. Change the system of rewards and introduce the notion of personal responsibility for official acts----serious discussion of war crimes is so important)

2. The capitalist economy and the business creed that sustains it......the growth game---attempting to solve problems of poverty, unemployment, and maldistribution by an ever increasing GNP—requires the production of more goods each year than Americans can afford to buy and the consumption of more materials than we can produce domestically.....as long as the American economic imperative is growth, the pressures toward economic expansion and military presence abroad will be irresistible.

The US has staggering problems of maldistribution of wealth which must be solved before this country can afford a significantly less interventionist foreign policy. As long as social conflict is managed by economic growth ....American foreign policy will remain in an imperial straitjacket....dependence on foreign raw materials means that certain foreign policy options are for all practical purposes foreclosed.
3. The vulnerability of the public to manipulation on national security issues....because they have been willing to accept uncritically the myth of the national interest—i.e. the definition advanced by the national security managers---they exercise almost no control over the commitments the managers make in their name....supposedly the beneficiaries of national security policy, they become its hostages.

Barnet was calling on the institutions and processes of democracy to assess the national security state and its consequences for republican not to mention democratic values.

The breakdown in the Cold War consensus caused by the Vietnam debacle was not resurrected despite the Reagan administration’s efforts in the Middle East and Central America. The subsequent collapse of the Soviet system left the US of the ‘90s searching for an imperial identity.

As Chalmers Johnson points out,

“The aftermath of September 11, 2001, more or less spelled the end of globalization. Whereas the Clinton administration strongly espoused economic imperialism, the second Bush government was unequivocally committed to military imperialism. The Bush administration’s adoption of unilateral preventative military action undercut the international rules and norms on which commerce depends----the overemphasis on militarism and unilateralism in the US has radically weakened the effectiveness of international law, eroding the façade of legality that supports the WTO rules.”