3

Feinstein picks up the threads from the build-up of arms before the First World War,

highlighting the role of Sir Basil Za haroff, ‘Godfather of BAe’, who sold arms to both sides. Also

from key Nazis who were protected and patronized by members of the American military after

the Second World War. Between the wars, there was a widespread revulsion against

‘merchants of death’ a nd their trad e, with an understanding that the build -up of arms had

play ed a key part in the dr ift to war in 1914, an d a motion brought in the Lea gue of Nations to

ban the sale of weapons for private profit, that was scuppered by US lobbyists in 1927. As an

article in The Times expressed this, ‘War is not only terrible, but a terribly profitable thing.’

Similarly, the US were selling to arms to India and Pakistan during the build-up to war in 1965,

and throughout the terrible Iran-Iraq war, that served as a laboratory and shop window for

arms comp anies. Feinstein shows how the complex Iran-Contra deal

4

The arms trade also needs to be understood alongside the manufacture of arms. Among other

aspects, arms factories, as well as the use of arms on battle fields , are without doubt a

superlative source of pollution and the greenhouse gas emissions causing global warming. This

is too rarely emphasized. Arguably, there’s little point trying to reduce our individual carbon

footprints unless we also reduce our wars!

Closely linked with arms manufacture is the mining and metals industry, characterized by

similarly systemic corruption, and similar pattern s of massive subsidy and debt. These l inks

need much more exp osure: military hardwa re is nearly all made from complex metallic alloys,

especially based on aluminium and steel, but involving the full range of metals, with e.g.

aluminium -lithium alloys among many known to be partic ularly polluting.

In India, t his link deserves particular scrutiny due to the resource conflicts esca lating

throughout the mineral-rich tribal areas. To what ex tent is the Maoist conflict a ‘false flag’,

manipulated civil war , oriented towards corporate takeover of land and re sources? – a war over

the raw resources for war? As Bhaghaban Majhi asks, a lea der of the adivasi movement against

the aluminium industry in Odisha – ‘How many planes and bombs will you make from the

bauxite in our mountain? Gives us an account!’

The Shadow World emphasizes the role of Israe l as ‘Shop Window’ for American arms

companies, while calling for similar studies on the arms trade in India, China, Turkey and

Southeast Asia, relatively neglected her e.

Throughout this extraordinary volume, Feinstein emphasizes ‘Blowback’ – how corrupt sales to

repressive regimes undermine democra cy in the selling as well as buyi ng countries, and feed

wars that blow back at the sellers – Afghanistan being a classic case of massive arms supplied to

a country turning against the sup erpower that promoted them. The Bofors scam cast a dark

shadow over Sweden as well as India , with a grim trail of unsolved assas sinations a nd

unpunished bribes there . Among many other key contours of today’s world , this bo ok shows

that systemic corruption is not a particularly Indian phenomenon, and is disseminated from

boardrooms and Prime Ministerial offices that uphold an aura of the most impeccable

respectability.