

The US Aggression Process and Its Collaborators

From Guatemala (1950-1954) to Iran (2002-The Present)

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November 25, 2007

We are living in a very dangerous period in which a predatory superpower has embarked on a series of aggressive wars in rapid succession - three on two different continents during the past decade alone. Not only have these wars violated the UN Charter, and constituted what US Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson declared at Nuremberg to be "the supreme international crime;" not only has it gotten away with its wars, despite their increasingly destructive and murderous nature; but in waging them, the United States has been able to enlist leaders of the "international community" and United Nations in support of its assaults on distant lands.[1] As the world's preeminent multilateral organization, the central purpose of which was purportedly to save humankind from the scourge of war, and to ensure that armed force not be used except for the common defence, we find the UN's role here to be troubling indeed.

This superpower's wars are opposed by a majority of the world's population, and often even by a majority of the heavily propagandized citizens of its own country.[2] But popular opinion and voter preferences, even when manifested in national elections, as in November 2006, do not determine policy in the United States. Freed at last from any deterrent of the kind the Soviet Union exercised until its demise, and the kind posed for a more abbreviated period by the civil protests that confronted it on its own streets between 1965 and 1974, the US program of "power projection" proceeds apace. Now it sets its sights on Iran, likely to produce a much wider war and one that quite possibly could involve the use of nuclear weapons.

US wars of aggression are certainly not new, nor is its leaders' brazen disregard for international law. Greece, Guatemala, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Grenada, Panama - these do not exhaust the list of US victims since World War II. What is more, the assumption that international law does not apply to the United States is longstanding. The "propriety of the Cuba quarantine is not a legal issue," former US Secretary of State Dean Acheson explained in reference to Kennedy's naval blockade of Cuba during the 1962 missile crisis. "The power, position and prestige of the United States had been challenged by another state; and law simply does not deal with such questions of ultimate power." [3] For Acheson, any US action to counter alleged threats trumps international law, and law cannot be allowed to interfere with the exercise of the "pre-eminent power" of this country. The belief that although law should apply to others, it never applies to the United States, was internalized long before Acheson's day; and it reaches straight through to the present, widely accepted abroad because the scale of US power permits its leaders to ignore the law with complete impunity.

But the aggression pace and scale has been stepped up in recent years, based on a number of factors: The collapse of the containing power, the vested interests in US power projection in the Middle East - the Israeli lobby, oil interests, the military-industrial-complex - and the ideology and politics of a militarized capitalist state.

The aggression process has always involved demonization of the target, with the establishment media regularly carrying out their propaganda service in ways that match anything achievable in a totalitarian state. In the case of the joint US-proxy army attack on Guatemala in 1954, the New York Times swallowed and disseminated the lie that the Reds had taken over that country (e.g., Sidney Gruson, "How Communists Won Control of Guatemala," March 1, 1953), just as the paper swallowed and disseminated the official line in 2002-3 that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. Equally important in both cases was the suppressed context: In the case of Guatemala, the vested interests of United Fruit Company in the ouster of the elected government, the ties of high US officials to that company (including Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles), and the fact that Guatemala was virtually unarmed and posed not the slightest

threat to the security of the United States or Guatemala's small neighbours. In the case of Iraq, major suppressions included the facts that the United States had actually supplied Saddam with "weapons of mass destruction" when he was attacking Iran, and that he failed to use such weapons during the 1991 Persian Gulf War because he recognized that the United States could retaliate in kind with overwhelming force - the disclosure of which would weaken the case that his possession of such weapons in 2002-3 posed any threat to this country or Israel, except that of self-defence.

The aggression process not only depends on the domestic media following the official line, marginalizing dissent, and causing the public to believe in the mythical threat posed by the target, it also requires neutralization of any international response that might protect the prospective victim. In the case of Guatemala, its leaders did appeal to the UN in June 1954 for protection against an already-in-process US-organized attack. But with the US's (and United Fruit investor and former spokesperson) Henry Cabot Lodge president of the Security Council, and the United States exerting intense pressure on its voting members and Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, the Security Council refused to consider Guatemala's case. Hammarskjold, who felt that the issue was precisely what the UN was formed to deal with, considered the US effort "the most serious blow so far aimed at the Organization." [4]

The decade-long US effort at "regime change" in Nicaragua during the 1980s involved a boycott, the mining of Nicaragua's harbours, and sponsorship and active support of a terrorist army on its borders, in violation not only of the UN Charter but also the Organization of American States Charter and the Rio Treaty, the latter two quite clear on the illegality of the cross-border use of military force, "directly or indirectly, for any reason whatsoever" (OAS), and with proper authorization or "self defence" the only bases for an exception (Rio). Nicaragua brought these violations to the UN and World Court, but the United States vetoed a Security Council condemnation and ignored several adverse World Court decisions against its "unlawful use of force." The Reagan administration could get away with this in part because the establishment media accepted its aggression and violation of international law, encapsulated in the New York Times's editorial that dismissed the World Court as a "hostile forum" ("America's Guilt - or Default," July 1, 1986) - a lie, but demonstrating that the editors' principles do not extend to universality of application and that they will apologize for blatant illegality and even aggression by their own state.

US Aggression after the Soviet Collapse

The collapse of the Soviet bloc in late 1989 was greeted in the West by the US invasion of Panama, which received the New York Times's immediate approval - although the Times did acknowledge that it "fuelled enduring Latin suspicions about Washington's selective respect for sovereignty," and expressed the concern that this kind of precedent might be used by less worthy powers to achieve the same effect ("Why the Invasion Was Justified," December 21, 1989).

But it is with Iraq (1990-), Yugoslavia (1991-1995; and 1999-), Afghanistan (2001-), and Iraq again (2003-) that we move into the definitive post-Soviet era, when the international community becomes a more active participant in the aggression process, and the global aggressor is either appeased, abetted - or both.

In the case of Yugoslavia, the US-led NATO bombing war of 1999, assaulting Serbia and Kosovo, was preceded four years earlier by gradually escalating bombing attacks in Bosnia to support Bosnian Muslim and Croat forces, all in violation of the spirit of the UN Charter, but approved by UN secretary-generals and the Security Council. Also notable was the Security Council's 1993 creation of an ad hoc Tribunal supposedly to bring "justice" as well as peace to Yugoslavia, but in reality a political and public relations arm of NATO, that functioned to prevent peace in pursuit of US and NATO aims there.[5] It also provided a legal and public relations cover for NATO's own crimes, most notoriously in its bringing an indictment against Slobodan Milosevic in May 1999, just as NATO was coming under attack for extending its bombing to Serb civilian facilities. This

diversionary PR operation was quickly used by the US Secretary of State and her spokesperson to justify NATO war crimes. It goes almost without saying that the UN Security Council failed to question the US-NATO bombing war against Yugoslavia, although it was in violation of the UN Charter and followed a peace conference in France designed to fail and permit the US-NATO attack to proceed.[6]

The war on Afghanistan was launched by the US and UK purportedly as an international police action and a reprisal raid against al-Qaeda targets in the aftermath of 9/11, but it also removed the Taliban regime in Kabul and carried the war to the Taliban's allies in Pakistan and elsewhere around the world. From the outset, Washington defined Afghanistan as a theatre in its new global "War on Terror," a Cold-War-like framework projected to stretch indefinitely into the future, and useful to the warrior states for disguising their actions in this era of global warlordism.[7] Although the war never received Security Council authorization, it has been prosecuted with UN support from the very start. In the week that preceded this war, the UN joined the cause with a "counter-terrorism" resolution and a hastily organized conference "to fight the scourge of terrorism" (Kofi Annan), with terrorism elevated to a "threat to international peace and security, as well as a crime against humanity" (General Assembly President Han Seung-soo of South Korea).[8] Four days before the war, in clear anticipation of the event, Annan even reappointed Lakhdar Brahimi his Special Representative to Afghanistan; Brahimi's assignment was to "initiate preparations for the development of plans for the rehabilitation of that shattered country"[9] - not one word warning about the war or taking issue with its illegality. Within the Council itself, a Counter-Terrorism Committee was established; it is now a permanent feature of Council activities. Sentiments to the effect that "armed non-State networks" such as al-Qaeda "pose a universal threat to the membership of the United Nations and the United Nations itself" are now commonplace; and efforts to combat such non-state actors have been placed at the top of the UN's agenda ever since.[10]

Before the end of 2001, the invading military forces had gotten the United Nations to sponsor the Bonn Agreement through which they installed an Interim Authority in Kabul, with Hamid Karzai as its chairman; now six years later, Karzai is the president, having won elections staged by the UN in October 2004. But as with any country in a state of perpetual war, real power within Afghanistan resides with the 40,000-strong International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the NATO-bloc's second out-of-area operation in the past decade, the first having been Kosovo. The occupation has failed to dismantle the power of the warlords, with whom the United States collaborated in the initial war effort; it has failed to do any substantial rebuilding of this "shattered country;" and its military focus and civilian-costly methods of warfare have caused substantial losses of life and helped the resurgence of the Taliban. Still, the UN has stood firm as a supporter of the occupation; and as with Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq, treats Afghanistan like a laboratory for neo-colonial nation-building, helping the occupiers at every turn "to deny the power which they wield and to evade accountability for its exercise." [11]

The aggression process involving Iraq that began in 1990 was simplified at that time by the fact that Iraq had committed an act of aggression itself in invading and taking over Kuwait in early August of that year. This gave the United States the opportunity to mobilize the UN and international community to oppose an aggression which it disapproved. (Although poor Saddam Hussein might have been misled by the earlier US support of his aggression against Iran, and by US Ambassador April Glaspie's reassuring him one week before his Kuwait adventure that the United States had "no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait." [12]) But with the actual Iraq aggression the United States quickly got UN and international support for ousting Saddam from Kuwait. Even here, however, there is solid evidence that the United States would not let Saddam escape via a negotiated settlement, but instead forced a war, which means that even in their "legitimate" case this country's leaders acted in violation of the UN Charter, which calls for all states to "bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes" (Article I). There were also serious law violations in both the slaughter of helpless Iraqi soldiers,

the use of illegal weaponry, and the deliberate destruction of Iraq's civilian infrastructure, including water and sanitation facilities, knowing that this would take a heavy civilian toll (and would be in violation of the laws of war).[13]

Following the end of the Persian Gulf War in late February 1991, the UN, under US-UK pressure, installed a very severe sanctions regime that greatly limited Iraq's imports and its export of oil. This prevented or greatly hindered the repair of the damaged water and sanitation facilities as well as its electrical plants and grid, irrigation systems, factories, schools and hospitals. This resulted in huge casualties, mainly from disease, poor nutrition and limited health care, especially among children, whose estimated 500,000 deaths from the "sanctions of mass destruction," was a price in human lives that Madeleine Albright famously declared on national TV in 1996 to have been "worth it." All of this was done under UN authority, although the US and UK were the aggressive sponsors of these genocidal sanctions.

With the Bush administration having decided to "go massive" after the events of 9/11, to "sweep it all up, things related and not" (Donald Rumsfeld),[14] and to invade and occupy Iraq as well as Afghanistan, it faced the small problem that what it intended to do would be a major violation of the UN Charter, as Iraq had neither attacked nor threatened the United States, so any non-ridiculous self-defence justification was out. The US and UK, while still making extremely implausible claims about an Iraq threat ("mushroom clouds" over American cities, hidden WMD programs, chemical and biological weapons 45-minutes from launch)[15] and providing a stream of false claims about Iraq's weapons programs, eventually fell back on Iraq's resistance to UN inspections. An attack on Iraq would be based on and justified by Iraq's defiance of UN authority! After all, we cannot dispense with the rule of law!

It is well known that the Bush administration only bothered with resort to the UN under British urging and in the interest of giving an aura of legitimacy to an attack already planned and one that had nothing to do with Iraq's "non-compliance." The UN cooperated in this make-believe scenario with intensified inspections that found nothing but refused to stop looking, to the great annoyance of US officials, whose 160,000 troops and naval armada were already positioned for an invasion and wanted the inspectors and Security Council to sanction war. When they couldn't get this, they went to war anyway, once again in violation of the UN Charter. Once again also they were helped along by the establishment US and UK media, whose members across the board quickly joined the war bandwagon, passing along WMD claims on a daily basis that were untrue or misleading, essentially blacking out dissident views and facts, mini-demonizing the French for their failure to get on board the bandwagon and Hans Blix and the inspectors for failing to produce evidence that didn't exist.

Two months before the war, aggression-hawks Kenneth Pollack and Martin Indyk were given space in the New York Times to lament the UN "inspections trap" that they alleged the Washington regime then found itself "firmly stuck in," and counselled that, instead of relying on a "futile hunt for a 'smoking gun'," the world should simply accept that "Every inspection of an Iraqi site that finds nothing reinforces the misimpression that Iraq has complied." ("How Bush Can Avoid the Inspections Trap," January 27, 2003.)[16] The day before the US launched its war, Princeton University's advocate for US lawlessness Anne-Marie Slaughter invoked the precedent of the 1999 war over Kosovo, also launched without Security Council authorization, and noted that Washington's imminent war over Iraq "could be called 'illegal but legitimate'," just as the Independent International Commission on Kosovo had found with respect to Kosovo. ("Good Reasons for Going Around the U.N.," New York Times, March 18, 2003.) The same day, the Times itself editorialized that, "For Mr. Hussein, getting rid of weapons of mass destruction is no longer an option....Mr. Hussein must be disarmed." ("War in the Ruins of Diplomacy," March 18, 2003.) This is war propaganda service that would be hard to surpass.

The UN of course never condemned the United States and Britain for this invasion in violation of the UN Charter, even though it was soon recognized in the mainstream to have been based on

lies. Not only was there no condemnation, the UN Security Council quickly voted to validate the occupation and gave the aggressor the Security Council's approval to stay in Iraq and try to bring stability to the victimized country.[17] The UN even created the Assistance Mission for Iraq to help US management there, resulting in the bombing death of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and 22 others, as the Iraqi resistance did not view the UN as a neutral party.[18] Subsequently, the UN has done nothing to condemn or attempt to bring to a conclusion an invasion-occupation that has virtually destroyed Iraq, killed perhaps a million civilians, and driven in excess of 4 million Iraqis from their homes.[19] The contrast with the UN's treatment of Yugoslavia and the US-NATO targeting there of Serbia, could hardly be more dramatic.

The Iran Aggression Process

The current round of threatening Iran dates back to the summer of 2002, a year that opened with Bush labelling Iraq, Iran, and North Korea the "axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world." Already hot on the trail of the apocryphal Iraqi WMD, and proclaiming its new national security doctrine of "pre-emption" (i.e., aggression by another name), the White House started floating allegations about a clandestine Iranian nuclear weapons program, and coupled these with statements of opposition to the "unelected people who are the real rulers of Iran," a stance that Iran's President Mohammad Khatami immediately assailed as "war-mongering" and "open interference" in Iran's affairs.[20]

The current US preparation for an attack on Iran has many of the characteristics of earlier US aggressions, and the responses of the UN, international community, humanitarian interventionists, and mass media have also been similar. The first striking similarity is the extent to which claims and tactics used earlier but eventually acknowledged to have been based on falsehoods designed to mislead and manipulate have been recycled yet again, with only marginal challenge as to their motive and accuracy. Another is how a double-standard can be applied so effectively that it passes almost without challenge: One standard for the US target (Iran), the Security Council demanding that it surrender its "inalienable" right under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes; another standard for the United States and any country that has US approval (the nuclear-weapon states of Israel, India, and Pakistan, for example; Saddam Hussein's weapons programs in the 1980s, when he was serving US interests; and even Iran's nuclear energy program in the late 1970s, when controlled by the US-client dictator Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.).

A third notable feature of the aggression process developing in regard to Iran is that another major violation of the UN Charter by the United States, another "supreme international crime," is not only taken as legally and politically unchallengeable by the UN and international community, but is also sanctioned and even given positive aid. It is true that Secretary-General Kofi Annan did plaintively point out on more than one occasion that the 2003 Iraq invasion was illegal - "not in conformity with the Charter,"[21] in the milquetoast phrase he preferred when dealing with US crimes - but he didn't suggest doing anything about it. In his first official statement after the start of the war, Annan expressed regret that "if we had persevered a little longer, Iraq could yet have been disarmed peacefully,"[22] thus repeating the disinformation that had been used by the states that launched their war in violation of the Charter under which he served.

Kofi Annan was very accommodating to US demands, but his successor, Ban Ki-moon, is even more cooperative with the Supreme International Criminal. Not only has he failed to say a word about the US threat to attack Iran, but with the United States now between its third (Iraq) and prospective fourth (Iran) supreme international crime, Ki-moon nevertheless has gone out of his way to claim that the "UN and the US have a shared objective of promoting human rights, democracy and freedom and peace and security," and to call for "a strong partnership between the United Nations and the United States." [23] Like his predecessor, Ki-moon recognizes who is the

boss, and shows no qualms over using his office to help the boss implement his UN Charter violations.

The Security Council also is cooperating with the US process. Mainly it has done this by going along with the US allegation that Iran's nuclear program poses a threat to international peace and security,[24] rather than recognizing that in threatening to take military action against Iran if it does not comply with US demands, it is the US that poses the grave threat, not Iran - a threat that would be actionable under Chapter VII of the Charter, were the Security Council able to live up to its legitimate functions and powers. This, too, is a rerun of the Security Council's effort in late 2002 and early 2003, leading to the invasion of Iraq, when the Council went along with the United States' alleged concern about Iraq's noncompliance with the Council's disarmament resolutions, and patiently voted for an "enhanced inspections regime" instead of calling the supreme international criminal's bluff and denouncing its plans for the already decided-upon invasion.[25] Going along with these pressures and demands fed into the US war-propaganda in 2002, just as it does the same today in the run-up to the planned attack on Iran.

Also helpful to the US aggression process today is the work of the IAEA and Mohamed ElBaradei, which closely parallels the earlier efforts of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and its chairman, Hans Blix. The mere existence of an inspections program, and the fact that it can be dragged out for years - on-and-off for a total of eight years in Iraq, and since 2002 in Iran - permits the United States to create the impression that there really is a grave threat and to distract attention from the real threats that it poses, including its own contribution to the spread of nuclear weapons. The inspections regimes have provided the United States with platforms to spread false allegations against Iraq and Iran, the two states that it declared its main targets in early 2002. Just as it was impossible for Blix's UNMOVIC to refute the US-UK allegation that Iraq was "in material breach" of its disarmament obligations, so, no matter how many times ElBaradei's inspectors "verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran," they will never be able to refute the Alice-in-Wonderland allegation that they still cannot "provide credible assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities,"[26] and that a clandestine nuclear weapon program must be hidden somewhere.

In Iraq's case, the United States made grandiose allegations before the Security Council that were soon thereafter proven false[27] - but with no effect on its status within the UN, or on its right eventually to lead the Multinational Force there,[28] or the believability of its sequel allegations against Iran. The United States denounces first Blix and now ElBaradei for unwarranted foot-dragging and appeasement of the targeted states. And of course the establishment media cooperate in this process by treating hyperbolic allegations about the targeted states as no different than real news about them, refusing to give context and expose the real US agenda, and failing to note that Iran's case today is following the same script that in Iraq turned out to be false.

Among the aggression process's many modalities, which combine the suppression of critical facts with the repetition of falsehoods, we note here the following:

1. That only rarely is mention made of the striking and ominous parallels between the utterly discredited US and UK mobilization campaign in 2002-2003 to rid Iraq of its nonexistent weapons of mass destruction, and the ongoing US and Israeli mobilization campaign from 2002 onward alleging that Iran is developing nuclear weapons.

2. That no mention is made that the US and Israeli threats to attack Iran are themselves violations of the UN Charter's prohibition on the threat or use of force, and that even the UN and the international community are guilty of turning a blind-eye to the illegality of these threats.

3. That no mention is made that the US-led aggressions-occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq mean that Iran is now surrounded on its eastern and western borders by massive and hostile military forces that can launch devastating strikes on Iran at any time. So that to focus at this

junction on any kind of threat - real or counterfactual - to peace and security posed by Iran is simply incongruous with reality.

4. That no mention is made of Iran's inherent right of self-defence against the very real threats posed by the United States and Israel, both the closest of allies and nuclear weapons powers. As the Israeli military analyst Martin Van Creveld noted, "The world has witnessed how the United States attacked Iraq for, as it turned out, no reason at all. Had the Iranians not tried to build nuclear weapons, they would be crazy." ("Is Israel planning to attack Iran?" International Herald Tribune, August 24, 2004.) This sentiment appears virtually nowhere in the establishment US media, which also give little credence to the Iranian leadership's repeated protest that they do not intend to produce nuclear weapons.

5. That no mention is made that Israel was the first state outside the Permanent Five to develop nuclear weapons, a capability that it possesses to this day; and that Israel remains the only state in the Middle East never to have acceded to the NPT and international inspections.

6. That no mention is made that Security Council Resolution 687 (April 3, 1991), which imposed disarmament requirements on Iraq, also recalled the longstanding "objective of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East;" and that this objective, which enjoys very broad support throughout the region, has been ignored by Israel, the United States, and Security Council.

7. That no mention is made that Iran also has long advocated a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as well as extending IAEA safeguards to all states in the region; and that every year the UN General Assembly votes by overwhelming margins to adopt resolutions to this effect, but that at the same time they are rejected by the United States and Israel.

8. That no mention is made that under the NPT, Iran - like every other non-nuclear-weapons-possessing party to the treaty - enjoys the "inalienable right...to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination" (Art. IV.1), and that the IAEA has produced no evidence that Iran is working on nuclear weapons.

9. That no mention is made that under the NPT, the United States - like every other nuclear-weapons-possessing party to the treaty - agrees to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race...and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control" (Art. VI). By continuing to improve its nuclear weapons, and to make their design more practicable, it is the United States that stands in serious violation of the NPT.

10. That no mention is made that at the last NPT Review Conference, held in New York City in May 2005, recognition of the urgency to implement this disarmament article figured prominently among the vast majority of participants - but not with the United States.[29] Instead, the conference ended in "the most acute failure in the history of the NPT" (former US weapons negotiator Thomas Graham), unable to produce even a final statement on substantive issues. Led by the US refusal, the conference was unable to admit any topic related to disarmament, "[turning] the world of nuclear proliferation into the Wild West, with complete disrespect for the rule of law" (Abolition 2000 founder Alice Slater).

11. That no challenge is raised in the UN or international community contesting the fact that the United States has taken it upon itself to decide which states may develop nuclear programs, and which may not. Iran could build nuclear power plants under the Shah, Pakistan can develop and keep nuclear weapons under Pervez Musharraf (or a likely successor-client of the US), Egypt can develop nuclear power under Hosni Mubarak, Israel and India can develop and keep nuclear weapons over four decades - but neither the Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya, nor North Korea can.

Not only is this unilateralism and politicization of the right of access to nuclear energy not challenged by the UN or the establishment media, it isn't even noticed.

12. One basis for these politicized choices is the usual demonization process, so that a target like Iran cannot be allowed to come close to developing nuclear energy for any purpose because its leaders are portrayed as religious fanatics who might use a single nuclear device to bring about some mad end even though this would entail national suicide. These fears are not based on an examination of the performance of Iran's leaders, who in their diplomatic relations with other states and UN representatives clearly behave as realistic geopoliticians. Nor is any comparison ever made with the religious beliefs of "End Times" evangelicals in the United States and their influence on US leaders and policy.

13. That the Iranian target can be accused of other crimes, with minimal evidence and context, like interference in Iraq's internal affairs by sending aid to the resistance. This allegation is very convenient, as it is impossible for Iran to refute beyond simple denial, the establishment media don't require hard evidence to report it, and it scapegoats Iran for the failures of the aggression-occupation - so attacking Iran will be part of the effort to "liberate" the Iraqis! Note also that when the United States aids insurgents opposing an occupation, as in the case of the Afghan resistance to the Soviet occupation, no question is raised about the legitimacy of such interference; but then, only the United States has aggression rights. Thus, only the United States can legitimately aid factions in the conflict over Iraq. It aids all of the factions, according to momentary strategic convenience. And it attacks anybody inside Iraq that it wants to attack.

14. That very little attention is given to the fact that the US supports the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK) and related groups such as the National Council of Resistance of Iran, whose members appear to move freely among the Western capitals, despite the US Department of State's formal designation of these groups as Foreign Terrorist Organizations at least since 1997.[30] With US aid and approval since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the MEK has continued its longstanding campaign of cross-border bombings and assassinations against Iran - causing much bloodshed among Iranians.[31]

15. That by highlighting the abuses of dissidents inside Iran, a prospective US attack on Iran is made all-the-more palatable.[32] When the lie about going to war to disarm Iraq no longer could be sustained, the selling-point shifted to the "liberation" of Iraqis from the dictatorship in Baghdad. Similarly, Western intellectuals and human rights organizations have featured the detentions and trials of different Iranian figures, combining cost-free denunciations of Iran's leadership with public displays of solidarity towards the dissidents. This has been an important mechanism by which a segment of the intellectual community, including the humanitarian interventionists and devotees of "democracy promotion," serve the imperial state while convincing themselves that they are simply aiding in the global liberation process. It has been noted, however, that this segment seems reluctant to push hard for democracy in states allied with and supported by the empire (e.g., Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Indonesia, Israel, etc., or in the United States itself). They also spend much more effort in expressing concern over the condition of the dissidents in target countries than they do over the supreme international crimes to which they may be contributing.

Concluding Note

Imagine that Adolf Hitler, having invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia and making clear plans to attack Poland, was able to get France, Britain and the Soviet Union to agree with him that Poland's build-up of its border forces posed a threat to Germany and should be subject to sanctions till it reduced those forces. A League of Nations Disarmament Commission was formed that focused on Polish weaponry on its border with Germany, expressing "concern" over Poland's possible secrecy in the placement of some of those weapons. Meanwhile, the head of the League met with Hitler, expressed admiration for his revitalization of Germany, and expressed the hope that the League and Germany could forge a "stronger partnership" for the years ahead. The famed

appeasement of Nazi Germany never went this far in the late 1930s, so that it never matched the current scene of UN and international community appeasement plus literal collaboration with the Supreme International Criminal of our day, who is threatening another major cross-border attack despite being bogged down in a quagmire in an aggression begun in 2003.

Like the League, the United Nations is never more than the cumulative actions of its members. The collapse of the Soviet bloc and Soviet Union itself (1989-1991) was greeted by much optimism at the time: Finally, the UN would live up to its historic mission of protecting the world's peace and security. But what this rhetoric really meant was that the flourishing Western bloc was freer than ever to use the UN to promote its agenda. This proved true in the 1990s, as the number and scope of Western-inspired UN operations expanded greatly. And when in March 1999, the US-led NATO bloc could not gain Russia's assent in the Security Council for its war on Yugoslavia, NATO went ahead with its war anyway, and brought in the UN after the fact.

Post-9/11, the United States and its allies have used the UN even more effectively to promote selective campaigns of "counter-terrorism" and "counter-proliferation," and to push aside aggression and disarmament. At the same time that US wars approach a lethality not seen since Southeast Asia 40 years ago, UN agencies are dispatched with mandates to pick up the pieces caused by their destructiveness, but never to counter them.

At an October 17 news conference, a reporter asked George Bush whether he "definitively believe[s] Iran wants to build a nuclear weapon?" "Yeah," Bush replied, "I believe they want to have the capacity, the knowledge, in order to make a nuclear weapon....So I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon." [33]

Notice that Bush's mobilization for World War III is not in response to Iran's actual use or even acquisition of a nuclear weapon, but simply to prevent Iran from having the knowledge of how to build one - knowledge that can be found in every peaceful use of nuclear energy the world over. Note also the transference of responsibility for the planned war from the serial aggressor onto the target, an Orwellian gambit hardly commented upon in the West. Bush's extreme position was announced only weeks after an Israeli bombing raid in northern Syria that may have been executed to destroy surface-to-air missile defence systems of the same class that Iran is also known to operate, as well as test the system's vulnerabilities. And a vote by three-quarters of the US Senate - including 30 of the Senate's 50 Democrats - expressing its sense that Iran poses a "threat to the security of the region," and calling on the White House to designate Iran's military a "foreign terrorist organization," just eight days before Bush did in fact designate Iran's military an FTO, adding to the sanctions it already imposes on Iran. [34]

It is thus quite possible that the US leaders are about to embark on their fourth aggression in a desperate hope of reviving public support for a beleaguered presidency and its reactionary program. In this case, however, the aggression would likely trigger a much wider war, even involving nuclear arms, a breakdown in the global flow of oil, economic chaos as well as mass war deaths and destruction, and a rapid spread of authoritarian rule (reaching the United States). [35] But the breakdown in the rule of law as manifested in the UN and great power acceptance of, and even collaboration with, the serial aggressions of the United States, and the inability of democratic processes in the United States to constrain the war party, make this tragic outcome unnervingly more probable.

---- Endnotes ----

[1] Although adopted by the UN Security Council, we regard resolutions such as 1244 (June 10, 1999), 1378 (November 14, 2001), and 1483 (May 22, 2003), 1500 (August 14, 2003), and 1546 (June 8, 2004), as extra-constitutional actions on the Council's part, and therefore as usurpations of the Council's functions and powers under the UN Charter, which are established as the

maintenance of international peace and security, not the ex post facto legitimization of its grave breaches. Yet, each of these resolutions assumed the conquest of sovereign states (Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, respectively) by other states led in each case by the United States.

[2] In September 2007, the Program on International Policy Attitudes asked both US and Russian citizens whether they would favour or oppose all countries agreeing to eliminate all of their nuclear weapons, if there were a "well-established international system for verifying that all countries are complying." Sixty-three percent of Russians said they would favour this, and 73% of Americans did likewise. More than two-thirds of both countries' citizens (67% Russians, 69% Americans) favour the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. Perhaps most impressive of all, no fewer than 79% of Americans and 66% of Russians believe that each of their respective countries should "do more to work with the other nuclear powers toward eliminating their nuclear weapons." As PIPA observes, "Most approve of this objective, even though they are unaware that their country has already agreed to pursue it under the Non-Proliferation Treaty." Steven Kull et al., *Americans and Russians on the Future of Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament*, November 9, 2007, pp. 16-18.

[3] Dean Acheson's remark is quoted in Louis Henkin, *How Nations Behave: Law and Foreign Policy* (Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 265-266.

[4] Dag Hammarskjold's remark is quoted in Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1949-1954* (Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 331.

[5] See Michael Mandel, *How America Gets Away With Murder: Illegal Wars, Collateral Damage and Crimes Against Humanity* (Pluto Press, 2004), pp. 117-146.

[6] Referring to the peace conference in France, former State Department official George Kenney reported shortly after NATO's 1999 war that a "senior State Department official had bragged that the United States 'deliberately set the bar higher that the Serbs could accept'. The Serbs needed, according to the official, a little bombing to see reason." (George Kenney, "Rolling Thunder: the Rerun," *The Nation*, June 14, 1999.)

[7] See Noam Chomsky, "Cold War II," *Z Magazine*, October, 2007.

[8] "Presidential Address to the Nation [about Afghanistan]," White House, October 7, 2001; UN Security Council Resolution 1373, September 28, 2001; Kofi Annan, October 5, 2001; and the Statement by the President of the General Assembly Han Seung-soo (GA/SM/274/), October 8, 2001. - Here we note the contrast between the "scourge of terrorism" and the UN Charter's "scourge of war," the latter having been pushed aside in the name of "counter-terrorism."

[9] Kofi Annan (S/2001/934), October 3, 2001.

[10] See the website for the Counter-Terrorism Committee, UN Security Council. Also see *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility*, Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, December, 2004, par. 146; and the *Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy* (A/RES/60/288), UN General Assembly, September 8, 2006.

[11] David Chandler, *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building* (Pluto Press, 2006), p. 1.

[12] Former US Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie's comment first surfaced in September 1990, when a transcript of her July 25, 1990 meeting with Saddam Hussein was produced by the Iraqi government, and released to the public. (See, e.g., "Excerpts From Iraqi Document on Meeting With US Envoy," *New York Times*, September 23, 1990.) Later asked by Senator Alan Cranston in testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee whether she actually said what the Iraqi transcript reported, Glaspie conceded "Yes." (Federal News Service transcript, March 20, 1991.)

[13] See, e.g., John Mueller and Karl Mueller, "Sanctions of Mass Destruction," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June, 1999; Thomas J. Nagy, "The Secret Behind the Sanctions: How the US Intentionally Destroyed Iraq's Water Supply," *The Progressive*, September, 2001; and Joy Gordon, "Economic Sanctions as a Weapon of Mass Destruction," *Harper's Magazine*, November, 2002.

[14] See David Martin, "Notes from an aide to Defence Secretary Rumsfeld says Iraq was considered an attack target as far back as 9/11 despite no evidence of involvement," *CBS Evening News*, September 4, 2002.

[15] "His WMD programme is active, detailed and growing," British Prime Minister Tony Blair stated when releasing what later came to be known as his "dodgy dossier" on Iraq's WMD. "The policy of containment is not working. The WMD programme is not shut down. It is up and running....Our case is simply this: not that we take military action, come what may; but that the case for ensuring Iraqi disarmament (as the UN has stipulated) is overwhelming. I defy anyone on the basis of this evidence to say that is an unreasonable demand for the international community to make." ("Prime Minister's Iraq Statement to Parliament," 10 Downing Street, September 24, 2002.)

[16] Addressing the "mystery" behind the missing WMDs, Kenneth Pollack was still counselling three months after the start of the war: "The fact that the sites we suspected of containing hidden weapons before the war turned out to have nothing in them is not very significant....[T]he failure to find weapons of mass destruction in no way invalidates the pre-war intelligence data indicating that Iraq had the clandestine capacity to build them." ("Saddam's Bombs? We'll Find Them," *New York Times*, June 20, 2003.)

[17] To repeat what we said above (see n. 1): Unless the Security Council has the power to create facts as well as laws, resolutions such as 1483 (May 22, 2003), 1500 (August 14, 2003), and 1546 (June 8, 2004) must be regarded as usurpations of the Council's legitimate functions and powers under the UN Charter. Rather than demanding that the illegal occupying US military power surrender its prize back to the people of Iraq or to an international authority, they put the occupier in charge of a country it had conquered by force.

[18] The August 19, 2003 bombing attack on the UN compound in Baghdad followed a Security Council resolution (1500) and statements by the Secretary-General and the head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq that were supportive of US Coalition Provisional Authority, headed by Paul Bremer, and of the Governing Council of Iraq, whose members had been appointed by Bremer. See, e.g., Salim Lone, "Not Too Late for the U.N.," *Washington Post*, November 19, 2003; and Salim Lone, "The new US tactics won't work," *The Guardian*, November 20, 2003.

[19] See, e.g., Gilbert Burnham et al., "Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross-sectional cluster sample survey," *The Lancet*, Vol. 368, No. 9544, October 14, 2006 (as posted by the Centre for International Studies at MIT); *Rising to the Humanitarian Challenge in Iraq*, Oxfam International, July 30, 2007; and "Iraq Refugees: A lot of talk, little action," *Refugees International*, November 14, 2007. Also see the webpage devoted to "The Iraq Situation" by the UN High-Commissioner for Refugees.

[20] "President Delivers State of the Union Address," January 29, 2002; "Statement by the President [on Iran]," July 12, 2002; "Iran: Khatami Says US 'War-Mongers' Threaten World," *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, July 14, 2002; and Dana Priest, "Iran's Emerging Nuclear Plant Poses Test for US," *Washington Post*, July 29, 2002.

[21] Kofi Annan, March 10, 2003.

[22] Kofi Annan, March 20, 2003.

[23] Ban Ki-moon, January 16, 2007.

[24] Through the present date, the Security Council's actions with respect to Iran's nuclear program have included one Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2006/15, March 29, 2006), and three resolutions: 1696 (July 31, 2006), 1737 (December 23, 2006), and 1747 (March 24, 2007). The first resolution demanded that Iran cease uranium enrichment; the latter two imposed various economic and materiel sanctions on Iran for its not having ceased to enrich uranium.

[25] See UN Security Council Resolution 1441, November 8, 2002, par. 2.

[26] See Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006) and 1747 (2007) in the Islamic Republic of Iran (GOV/2007/58), IAEA, November 15, 2007, par. 39, par. 43. - As the IAEA's current Alice-in-Wonderland report concludes (par. 43): "Confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme requires that the Agency be able to provide assurances not only regarding declared nuclear material, but, equally importantly, regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran. Although the Agency has no concrete information, other than that addressed through the work plan, about possible current undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, the Agency is not in a position to provide credible assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran without full implementation of the Additional Protocol." In short: Never. The allegations are structured so as to be impervious to refutation - or, crucially, until such time as it is too late to make a difference.

[27] See Colin L. Powell, "Remarks to the United Nations Security Council," US Department of State, February 5, 2003. To the best of our knowledge, no high representative of the Nazi state ever appeared in a comparable forum, ca. 1937-1939, and laid out Berlin's casus belli for defending Western Civilization and Aryan blood. When we take into account the status of the speaker (a US Secretary of State), the venue where he delivered his remarks (the UN Security Council), the gravity of the moment (the threat of war by the world's pre-eminent superpower), and, last but not least, the fact that upwards of 100 percent of his substantive assertions were falsehoods, surely this single event ranks at the historic pinnacle of charades.

[28] Under UN Security Council Resolution 1546 (June 8, 2004), the Council not only legitimated the US military occupation, but it placed the United States in charge of the so-called Multinational Force for Iraq.

[29] For the official documents of the NPT Review Conference in New York City, United Nations, May, 2005. And for the single most important collection of conference documents, see the Final Document of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Part II - Documents issued at the Conference (NPT/CONF.2005/57(Part II)), New York, 2005.

[30] See the 1996 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report, Appendix B, "Background Information on Terrorist Groups," US Department of State, 1997.

[31] See, e.g., Seymour Hersh, "The Coming Wars," New Yorker, January 24/31, 2005; and Seymour Hersh, "The Iran Plans," New Yorker, April 17, 2006. Also Seymour Hersh, "Shifting Targets: The Administration's plan for Iran," New Yorker, October 8, 2007.

[32] For the most highly publicized example of this phenomenon in 2007, see the open letter, "Release Haleh Esfandiari," New York Review of Books, June 28, 2007; also see the "Free Haleh!" campaign sponsored by the American Islamic Congress and many others. The Director of the Woodrow Wilson Centre's Middle East Program in Washington D.C., Esfandiari was charged with espionage and endangering the security of Iran. Eventually released by Iranian authorities in

September, she returned to the United States. We believe that the effects of these highly selective campaigns to demonize the leadership of a targeted state extend to discouraging opposition from coalescing around the threatened war. In the realm of test-marketing for a US attack on Iran and how best to get Western intellectuals to remain silent about it, so-called "solidarity" campaigns have proven particularly saleable. (See Laura Rozen, "Focus Grouping War with Iran," Mother Jones, November 19, 2007.)

[33] "Press Conference by the President," October 17, 2007.

[34] See "Advanced Russian Air Defence Missile Cannot Protect Syrian and Iranian Skies," DEBKAFfile, September 7, 2007; US Senate Roll Call Vote 00349, September 26, 2007; and "Designation of Iranian Entities and Individuals for Proliferation Activities and Support for Terrorism," US Department of State, October 25, 2007.

[35] For some current assessments of the dangerous trends within this heavily militarized capitalist state, see Gregory Meyerson and Michael Joseph Roberto, "It Could Happen Here," Monthly Review, October, 2006; Chris Hedges, *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War On America* (Free Press, 2007); Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2007); and Charlie Savage, *Takeover: The Return of the Imperial Presidency and the Subversion of American Democracy* (Little, Brown and Company, 2007).