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## Understanding the U.S. War State

By Prof. John McMurtry

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*“It is easy. All you have to do is tell the people they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.” -Hermann Goering*

Genocide used to be a crime without a name. Although the most heinous of all crimes, the concept was not introduced into international language until after World War 2. Until then, military invasion and destruction of other peoples and cultures masqueraded under such slogans as progress and spreading civilisation.

I was shocked many years ago when I heard Noam Chomsky say that genocide was America's defining political tradition. Then I realised that the United States (like Canada to a much lesser extent) was based on destroying the lives and cultures of the 25 million or so first peoples who had lived in America for millennia. In the case of the U.S., the story continued with the forcible seizure of Texas in 1845 from Mexican farmers and indigenous peoples, and Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, California and other state territories shortly afterward in 1849. U.S. troops under the slave-owning General Zachary Taylor unilaterally invaded its southern neighbour under the false pretext of avenging American blood, and General Taylor soon vaulted into the White House as a presidential war hero. Even though a young Congressman, Abraham Lincoln, exposed the pretext, and connected it to a Anglo-British business strategy to impose free trade on the regions by financing the prior president, James Polk, into the White House as General Taylor's commander.

In 1898, once again under the false pretext of self-defence (when the U.S.S. Maine sank from an internal explosion), the Philippines, Guam, Cuba in part, and Puerto Rico were seized from their peoples by another unilaterally provoked war. This war of aggression and occupation, like so many U.S. interventions since, was preceded by a media campaign of whipping up public hysteria and war fever. Media baron Randolph Hearst made the famous remark, "You furnish the pictures, I'll furnish the war," not unlike the U.S. cable and network media daily drum-beat in recent months for war on Iraq. War is a major violence entertainment, and in close partnership with the Pentagon it can go on for months to divert the masses.

The tradition of misleading the American people by false pretexts for aggressive wars is an old one in U.S. history, but since the fascist interregnum war criminal invasions of other countries have not been accepted by public opinion. The U.S. under the control of the corporate war party now seeks to reverse this trend. By dint of the permitted 9-11 plane attacks on the World Trade Centre, an open presidential blank-check has been granted by Congress for attacking third-world countries so as to occupy their countries and control their resources. The now known blueprint of Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and others written in September of 2001 as the Project for the New American Century is clear on the plan to shape the international security order in line with American principles and interests. Armed domination of the Gulf region transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Oil looms large in this plan to rule the world for American interests. According to a report sponsored by oil corporations from the Washington Centre for Strategic and International Studies, oil is no longer a commodity to be bought and sold within the confines of the traditional supply and demand balances, but a determinant of national security and international power.

The U.S. state military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in under two years are expressions of this new supra-market policy. Before we pass over the pattern of facts at work as merely realpolitik, we should note that this armed-state project resembles fascism: not only in war criminal attacks on other countries in violation of international law, but in repudiating market relations to seize others valuable goods by armed force.

## **Facing Facts**

As demagogic glorification of genocidal invasion once again escapes naming by a flood of falsehoods and projections onto the latest U.S. Enemy, we need to remind ourselves of facts that no mass medium once discussed [the period] from October of 2002 to March of 2003. As we lay bare the ruling deceptions here, we should keep in mind the unifying principle which is not seen. U.S. state justifications always project onto the designated Enemy what the U.S. security state is doing itself. If it loudly condemns another weaker states weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological weapons, violation of international laws, or attempts to impose its will on the world by terror, then we can deduce that this is exactly what the U.S. is planning more of, but is diverting attention from by accusing others. Test this underlying principle with every international accusation the U.S. makes next, and you will find that it is invariable confirmed.

The tactic works wonderfully with a lapdog press and political class who are excited into a kind of collective delirium by choral denunciations of the foreign demon who is the designated Enemy of the Day. (I will explain why in my analysis ahead of the ruling group-mind.) So exactly does the U.S. security state project its own violent policies onto others that one can tell what vicious policy it is about to escalate next by by the intensity with which the Other is accused of the crime. This is how we can best understand the endless accusation of the Soviet Union of a plot to rule the worldbefore 1991, and how we can best make sense of the official U.S. fixation on global terrorism today. Both predications disclose the inner logic of the U.S. war states own pattern of behaviour. I sometimes wonder whether this is a deliberate strategic tactic of diversion, or a structure of paranoid delusion built into the mind-set of U.S. culture.

Let us in this light examine the principal claims and concealments of the Bush Jr. administration in its pursuit of Iraq:

The Bush administration has tirelessly claimed to be upholding international law in its pressuring of the Security Council into action regarding Iraq's violation of U.N. resolutions and international law. In fact, since its entry into office the Bush Jr. administration has sabotaged laws, covenants and monitoring protocols to protect individuals and peoples against nuclear weapons, biological weapons, chemical weapons, landmines, small arms, international ballistic missiles, torture, racism, discrimination against women, arbitrary seizure and imprisonment, mistreatment of prisoners, crimes against humanity and war crimes, military weather distortions, biodiversity loss, and international climate destabilisation. Its latest overriding of international law and due process has been the forcible usurpation of the Security Council inspections of Iraq. No rogue state in modern history has remotely matched this continuous and systematic violation of international law and procedures to implement international law.

The Bush administration's preparation and threat of military invasion against a country thousands of miles from its borders is unequivocally a war crime under international law, including Principles 1, 2 and 6(a) of the Nuremberg Charter and Article 54 of the Geneva Convention. The fact that this war crime of preparing for and planning an invasion of Iraq by U.S.-led armed forces whatever the UN decides has never been openly discussed promoted the very aggression which the U.N. is constituted to prevent.

It is not as if there were any doubt about the Bush administration's clear intention to put itself above the law as it incessantly accused Iraq of doing so. It declared from the beginning that it would go it alone with whoever was willing, and yet not a word of this declared threat to international peace and security issued from any U.N. ambassador, including Canada's Bill Graham, that this was a lawless intention and plan.

The effect on Iraqi citizens of the long-planned U.S. war of aggression against Iraq is said to be their liberation. The targeted victims since the first war on Iraq have, however, been most of all infants and children. The Bush administration's planned Operation Shock and Awe is a self-imagery of Godlike power which is more blind in hubris than in 1991 when the U.S. military assault caused mass infectious disease, child dysentery and birth mutilation by deliberate bombing of civilian electricity sources, sewage and water treatment facilities and by the deployment of nuclear waste in shells and weapons. Over 500,000 children in Iraq have already died as a consequence of the last war according to UNICEF—a figure predicted in 1991 by the New England Journal of Medicine, and substantiated in 1999 by the leading British medical research, Lancet.

Iraq's weapons of mass destruction about which the Bush regime has most pervasively trumpeted its concern were sold to Saddam at great profit by the U.S., Britain and other Security Council members. This is why Bush officials took the original Iraq report to the U.N. from the Council chair (then the military client state, Colombia), and deleted all the pages documenting these military sales before distributing the text to non-permanent members. Secretary Rumsfeld, meanwhile, has refused to work with the relevant Senate committees to expose and ensure against continued military sales to Iraq or its middlemen by U.S. armament manufacturers.

U.S. demands for Iraq's compliance with U.N. resolutions are not and have not been its true concern since far more U.N. resolutions over far more years have been ignored by the U.S. military partner, Israel. Thus continuing war crimes and crimes against humanity by Israeli administrations are still perpetrated with impunity in the illegally occupied territories of Palestine—for example, by land and property seizures and continuous enlargement of the illegal occupation, collective punishments of the population, increasing assassinations, and destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes. Twelve to eighteen UN resolutions prior to the inspections were said to have been violated by Iraq during its years of living with militarily enforced destruction of its society. Israel before, and since, has violated 64 UN resolutions with impunity. No double standard of international law has been so long-term, blatant and systematic, except by the U.S. itself.

The regime change all along demanded by the Bush administration cannot benefit the Iraqi people as promised because the projected U.S. military occupation has not been about getting rid of Saddam (who the U.S. armed and supported into power), but has ever more directly been the forced takeover of Iraq's publicly owned and controlled oil reserves. These reserves since the 1950's have (despite Saddam's U.S.-supported coup d'état) financed the most advanced social infrastructure in the Arab world, free education, and universal health care. During the demonization of Iraq over the last 6 months, its public oil revenues have enabled a government program of guaranteed food for all citizens by a publicly run distribution system which the U.N. World Food Program described as the most efficient in the world. With oil as with all else, the

greatest enemy to this empire is the civil commons of publicly owned resources which obstructs corporate market control. That the Iraqi government has, moreover, put a run on the U.S. dollar by converting its oil revenues into Euros instead of dollars is another unspeakable fact which is blocked out of all corporate media reports.

## **Watching the War Crime Unfold**

The ultimate target of the U.S. war party has long been the greatest and most accessible high-quality oil reserves on the planet. The Bush oil party has long coveted it, and U.S. military invasion has been the favoured blitzkrieg method for getting it over years of planning – with no response by the Security Council. But world public opinion has not covered its eyes like governments and the corporate media. Turkey's people were 96% against invasion of Iraq as its government considered large bribes, and Spain's people were over 90% opposed as its Falangist prime minister joined Tony the War Poodle in barking for the invasion. Over 30 million citizens from across the world demonstrated against a U.S.-led invasion in one weekend, an historically unprecedented event.

The U.S. president's response to all this has been revealing. He has told the world throughout that the U.N. itself is on trial, with him as God's judge. The Security Council has been told for months that it either agrees to a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, or it is irrelevant. If it fails, the Bush administration will take the law into its own hands and invade distant and weak Iraq as America's sovereign right. Try to remember when you heard this kind of demagoguery and defiance of international law before.

The difference has been most clearly in the use of the U.N. Pervasive aerial and ground inspections of Iraq's territory, soften-up bombings of defences in the North and South, and successful commands to destroy short-range missiles which together had largely stripped Iraq's meagre defences by mid-March. During this process, U.S. and allied demands merely escalated from immediate abolition of weapons of mass destruction to-without any media noticing- demands for total disarmament. Best to have a helpless victim. Has history ever witnessed such a corruptly one-sided scheme to destroy and loot a defenceless country?

## **The Ruling Group-Mind**

As I watched the Security Council Meeting on March 19 after military inspections of Iraq were forcibly terminated by the Bush Jr. administration's decision to take the law into its own hands, I was struck by the intimidation of the Council members. They were in thrall to a ceremony of avoidance. The hard fact that the U.S. administration had just stopped the U.N.'s due process by its decision for lawless armed attack of Iraq was blocked out of view as if it had not been decided. That this massive armed military invasion was a grave violation of international law, the supreme international crime under the Nuremberg Charter, was never mentioned. The ritual of sacrifice prevailed instead as if in collective submission to the implacable ordinance of Fate.

Formal pieties and aversion of the facts ruled. The Secretary-General was congratulated for removing the inspection teams on the instruction of the U.S. administration so that they would not be harmed by its illegal invasion. The inspectors were again and again praised for inspecting

Iraq's military possessions before the full-scale illegal invasion forcibly prevented the completion of their work. Much angst was displayed for the humanitarian catastrophe about to unfold, with none mentioning that the lawless usurpation of U.N. process by the blitzkrieg invasion of a suffering poor country would cause the mass terror. The long genocide was diplomatically sanitised by abstractions. In the case of the U.S., Britain and Spain, Saddam Hussein was held solely responsible.

Repeated ritual mantras of concern for international peace and security, alleged Iraq government violations not substantiated by the inspectors, official regrets, collective self-blaming, and much talk of rebuilding the society about to be destroyed were limned in a sleepwalk of official euphemisms. The theme that bound them all was the silence on the U.S. planned war-criminal attack in violation of the will and the legal process of the U.N. Security Council itself. Kofi Annan almost spoke out when he advised that a belligerent country is responsible under law for the costs of occupation. But the U.N. and Canada were soon ready to pay for picking up the pieces of another mass destruction of a poor society by U.S.-led forces.

I remembered all the history and accounts I had read of the Third Reich and the cowardice of official appeasement that enabled every step. The appeasement now was on the level of the mind itself. No-one dared to say what was happening. Threats and bribes by the U.S. had for months saturated the proceedings of the Council's judgement, but there were to their great credit few takers of the blood money. The Security Council had repudiated the U.S.-led war by an overwhelming rejection of any motion for it. For the U.S. now to still lead an invasion was self-evidently against the Security Council's will and decision, and thus wholly illegal. Yet there was a strange refusal to name the crime, the supreme international crime of a war of aggression against another state. One listened in vain for one explicit reference to the violation of the U.N. Charter, of the Nuremberg Charter, of international criminal law, of the Secretary-General's own previous statement that a U.S. attack without Security Council support would be illegal, and of the usurpation of the will and process of the U.N. Security Council itself.

On the contrary, Iraq was being held accountable to obey the Council's every demand to strip its meagre defences as huge U.S. and British armed forces formed on its borders. Ever louder U.S. threats of armed invasion outside the law and against Security Council vote was left to proceed as if it was a natural event. Everywhere in the media, the inevitable war was bowed before as an ordinance of destiny. It was only now a question of viewers watching U.S. forces destroy a society at will and with impunity, an ideal mass market site for the entertainment of lawless power. No-one thought to notice from within the Security Council Chamber and official global culture that every step of the mass terror against an essentially defenceless people was planned, chosen and executed in defiance of all international law by a sitting member state.

The monstrous construction had no author. Responsibility fell only on the victim. The U.S. became another onlooker at the inevitable war. Once it invaded, it became magnanimous in assigning the costs to others to pay for its mass destruction. It was now ready to co-operate with its international partners in the rebuilding of the country that it destroyed. No-one inside official society outside thought to hold the U.S. accountable for what it did. There is "no alternative" took another meaning. Now the no-alternative world the U.S. rules means criminal war invasion as an act of God.

## **The New Fundamentalism: America is God**

As you observe the criminal war invasion of Iraq, the round-the-clock commentary and pictures, and the aftermath, watch for a silent general fact. There will be no end of detailed discussion of the military operations of attack and occupation of a country rendered defenceless by Security Council demands, with much admiration and vicarious self-congratulation at the new weapons and strategic moves of the American Superpower. There will be no end of experts and commentators communicating adoringly to audiences about the high-tech assault instruments which are being tested on a third-world people to see how they work. It's a little like a high-school science experiment, advised the Pentagon Joint Chief of Staff to the militarily embedded CNN medium of public news.

The fact at the centre of the whole conflict and long in dispute will, however, soon be put down the memory hole with no one noticing. No one in the media or government will point out that the biological and chemical weapons that Iraq was declared to be hiding are not used, and did not in fact exist. No one will think to notice that this, the main justification of the war, the weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam, was from start to finish a vast and criminal big lie. No one will wonder at their own cowardly complicity in the long train of destructive deceit and war crime even as the invading armies sweep across the country and the 3000 sorties of bombs fall with no hint of a chemical or biological weapon or nuclear device. Least of all will savelings of the ruling group-mind connect back to the Third Reich's prototype of aggressive war. It is the Formula. Blame terrorists as the cause of the country's police state measures. Accuse every country attacked of being an imminent threat to it to justify the invasion. Denounce all resistance as unpatriotic. Attack and occupy the weak country with total weaponry. The formula repeats as long as it is not called out.

The group-mind cannot compute what does not fit its fixed presuppositions. So predictable outcomes follow as if prescribed by the laws of nature. The inevitable war occurs like el Nino. Only the terrible infliction of damages are thought worth perceiving or talking about. The moral debate is silenced, left to the world's peoples in the streets where only passing painted signs can speak. The co-ordinates of international law and the rogue war party in control of the White House are blocked of every discussion as if they did not exist. There will, in particular, be no discussion of this administration's illegal presidency, its ever more ruinous failure to govern effectively at any level of the U.S. economy, the environmental meltdown which it leads, or the unprecedentedly pervasive corruption of its lead corporate gang-from all of which the latest orchestrated war is the ongoing system of violent diversion. The distraction and attack rhythm of one war after another will, if it is not seen through, continue to succeed with the Formula until the world is subjugated across its civilisations. As long as the self-evident can be denied, there is nothing to stop it. Discharges of condemnation of Saddam Hussein can occupy the mind instead, until the next Enemy is wheeled into the war theatre to extend the U.S. war states rule.

In Canada, the CBC and its retinue of U.S. explainers and apologists will report the world to us so we cannot see the meaning of what is happening. The local academy will occasionally provide the choral affirmation on cue. Thus Janice Stein of the University of Toronto's Munk Centre will reassure us on CBC News coverage on March 20, the day that the U.S. crime against peace began, that We are targeting Iraq's leadership and not its civilians. All are one in America's view

of the world as itself. What cannot be discussed is the U.S. war crime itself, even to deny it. It is unspeakable – so long as the ruling group-mind remains the invisible prison of our collective life.

The moral syntax of the American group-mind is the inner logic of the problem. In this era, the group-mind is American. All its principles are presupposed as the way that God is presupposed by the religious fundamentalist – an all-powerful, all-knowing and jealous ruler of the world, which none may doubt without social opprobrium and attack. U.S. witch-hunts of those who oppose the religion of America is the creed's fanatical mode. But the creed is not confined to expression within America's church of self-adoration. It is on a crusade across the world's continents, with ruinous destabilization or armed attack of those who do not submit to its will for freedom.

The God of America is primitive. It worships itself. But there are a set of silently regulating principles at work through all the phenomena of its rule which together constitute the ruling group-mind which has imprisoned global culture within its premises since 9-11 .

### **Presupposition 1 of this ruling group-mind is that the U.S. national security state is America.**

This assertion is never directly stated because that would reveal the absurdity of the equation. But the assumption nevertheless underlies every statement that has proceeded from U.S. government offices since 9-11. This preconscious equation explains, for example, why even the U.S. government's official opposition, the Democratic Party, has abdicated from political responsibility in its fear of appearing to oppose unjustified wars against essentially defenceless third-world societies in Afghanistan and Iraq. They are incarcerated within the ruling structure of mind, more paralysed than 1930 Germans in their dread of being named as unpatriotic. This is a fear that can only be explained by the equation of the state military command and its apparatus with America. Beneath the surface phenomena of party politics rules the instituted group-mind in terms of which perception itself is constructed.

Thus the equation of America to its armed state apparatus is never publicly challenged in the official culture of the West because the equation is assumed a priori across the official leaderships of American allies. No-one who houses the false equation can tell them apart. They cannot see the demonstrable falsehoods of the war state, the overthrow of the Republic's democratic traditions, and least of all the safety of millions of innocent civilians in other countries: because they assume America and its national security apparatus are one and the same. Since they love America, and America is it, they cannot distinguish their beloved country from the criminal gang institutions of the National Security Council, the Pentagon and the CIA. As these rogue secret societies rule across the world by the force of armed terror, mass disinformation, secret narco-links and political bribery and coercion at every level, lovers of America are obliged to defend this criminal global domination as America. This absurd equation obliges them to be, in short, blind dupes. It then further misleads them into supposing that anyone who opposes a gangster state rule of the world is anti-American. One absurdity builds onto another. The disorder ends as a paranoid mass cult characterised as patriotism, just as in the 1930's with the world's most powerful industrial state. It is in this false equation at the baseline of

the group-mind that we find the kernel of the world's problem – America's self-definition as absolutist armed force unbound by fact or international law.

**Presupposition 2 is that America is the ultimate source and moving line of the world's freedom and goodness, God's material embodiment on earth.**

This assumption too is presupposed as true by definition, the prime article of faith of a fanatic religion. Full-spectrum dominance and pre-emptive attack of threats before they appear are not merely clinically paranoid delusions of power and persecution. They follow from the underlying and increasingly absolute assumption that America is God, the source of all Freedom and Goodness on the planet. The expressions of this deranged presupposition are evident in every speech of the former alcohol and cocaine addict occupying the White House, and there is no evident opposition from the parishioners of U.S. official culture.

Any indirect questioning or challenge of this first moral premise of the group-mind is attacked as a betrayal of the country and what it holds dear. American freedom comes to mean, then, only what establishes and maximizes the absolute right of the U.S. to command the world – specifically, to command as inevitable that all societies adopt an American-style market, American values and culture, and American military dominance in all areas of the globe as its vital interests. How do we test the rule of this fanatic basis of thought? It is expressed in Bush Doctrine policy documents throughout. But we can more easily discover its ruling principle at work by asking whether there is any limit placed anywhere on what the U.S. and vassal corporate states have the right to demand of other peoples and societies – including unconditional support of full-scale war against destitute societies over ten thousand miles from American borders.

Anything may go in the way of attack-dog journalism, but one hint of question of this ruling assumption that America is the moving line of the world's freedom is heresy. The assumption is thus internalised prior to censorship. Self-censorship is this regime's centre of gravity, and holds the group-mind in its prison. Those who oppose it hate freedom. Loyalty to this ultimate premise of social and political thought is what regulates the mind at a preconscious level prior to statement. It is the identity structure of the mob-mind across the world.

**Principle 3 follows as a logical consequent from Principle 2. America is always and necessarily right in all conflicts with other nations or peoples or social forces.**

This is not a truth which facts can disprove, because it is true by definition in the ruling group-mind. Disproving facts are irrelevant or of no consequence, even if by some chance they make it through the gates of the corporate media. This third regulating assumption explains why even the hardest facts soon disappear from sight if they throw doubt on America's infallible moral superiority in cases of international conflict – for example the conviction of the U.S. by the International Court for its war criminal actions against Nicaragua, along with the \$13.2 billion damages which were never paid.

Beneath the selection and exclusion of facts and perspectives which regulate editorial offices and policies, this third principle of the ruling group-mind too regulates perception and conversation beneath direct control. Before an exposing word is spoken, it is ruled out from within. It is an

intersubjective operation, like the thought-field of playing a game. Any fact or argument which calls into question America's moral superiority to any adversary is known to be hostile to freedom and the good in advance of consideration.

**Principles 4 and 5 follow suit as ultimate moral imperatives for all Americans and their allies.**

Any people or nation or social force which does not side with or opposes the U.S. government is evil (Principle 4), and so must, as an Enemy of world freedom and justice, be attacked by all means available-including pre-emptive armed force before the Enemy presents a threat (Principle 5).

Principles 4 and 5 have sharpened into patriotic absolutes with the Bush Jr. regime. Not even fabricated evidence – like the Gulf of Tonkin attack off Vietnam or the electricity cut-off of infant incubators in Iraq in 1991 – are thought any longer essential necessary to justify a military attack on another people's territory and society. As George Bush Jr. said to a West Point audience this year: "If we wait for threats to materialise, we will have waited too long." There is, therefore, no need for the threat to be real. Threats only need to be declared. That is why the attack on Iraq by U.S. and British armed forces did not require anyone else to confirm that there was, in fact, a threat from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction being used by terrorists against America. The evil is known, as with witchcraft, by the accusation itself. Once accused, the Enemy becomes such by definition – because materialisation by fact is too late. Those who question the designation side with the Enemy. You are with us, or for the terrorists. Bush's rage against French opposition to the war of aggression against Iraq thus follows necessarily. The logic of the ruling group- mind prescribes reality prior to its construction.

A self-evident baseline of entitlement is thus instituted for the rest of the world which is not spoken. America can go to war against accused enemies as it chooses on the basis of the self-propelling operations of its ruling group-mind alone. All one has to do is trigger the known stimuli which activate its value-set and its attendant emotions of rage. Since 9- 11, majority opinion support for Americas New War in any form follows from this lockstep of the group-mind. It is predictable so long as it remains unexposed to view.