

American Style “Democratization”

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The Washington Post reports recently that President George W. Bush has begun meeting prominent ‘foreign dissidents’ in an attempt to highlight ‘human rights’ abuses committed around the world. Dissidents from Venezuela, North Korea, Russia and Belarus have all recently met with Mr. Bush or Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Incidentally, the *Washington Post* also reports that no such meetings took place with dissidents from US closest allies such as Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. All four are the best example (from a long list of client regimes) of brutal and undemocratic regimes with the worst human rights records in the world.

Let’s briefly describe the four countries that President Bush considers unworthy meeting their dissidents. In Uzbekistan where President Islam Karimov rules with an iron fist dissidents are tortured to death and anti-government protesters are killed *en masse* by Karimov’s security forces. In Pakistan there have been no elections since **General Pervez Musharraf** took power by coup d’état. He immediately declared himself the ‘Chief Executive’ of Pakistan, jailed and exiled every dissident in his way. Egypt is not much different. President Hosni Mubarak took over some 25 years ago and has been a client of the US since. His prison cells and torture chambers are filled with dissidents. The regime of Mubarak is the second largest recipient of US aid after Israel. Saudi Arabia, the US most trusted ally, is a totalitarian monarchy. In addition, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia are Washington destinations for torture of kidnapped citizens accused of alleged “terrorism”. Furthermore, these despots are welcomed in Washington and London as guests of honours, and their policies are conducted with the blessings and approvals of Washington and London.

By contrast, Venezuela is very high on Mr. Bush’s list of “regime change”, and President Hugo Chávez is not likely to receive an invitation to the White House soon. The current Venezuelan government of President Chávez is the most legitimate and democratically elected government in the world. President Chávez was democratically elected in 1998. He has since been re-elected in 2000 and had his presidency reconfirmed in a referendum in August 2004. His current approval rating – an outcome of his popular socio-economic reforms – at 70.5 per cent, but the US insists that Chávez is a threat to democracy. The Bush administration is also involved in propaganda war and military coup to remove President Chávez from office. Venezuela of President Chavez is not as lucky as Uzbekistan, Egypt or Saudi Arabia to be included in US phantom democracy. This example of popular democracy in Venezuela is the form of democracy that the US most feared in developing countries.

The recent US fanfare about democracy rising in the Middle East is a phantom democracy. Saudi Arabia, Mr. Bush tells us, is reforming its decades-long despotic tyranny and

corruption, by introducing a male-only 'democracy', and allowing women to obtain driver's licence. The reality is that half of the population (women) were barred from participation in this male-only democracy. And only half of the seats were allowed to be contested and the other half were reserved. In Kuwait and the other Gulf States, the Emirs and Sheikhs select their oppositions. In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak has already barred the Muslim Brotherhood Party and he will choose an opposition to participate in next year elections. In fact President Mubarak is grooming his son for the presidency. It is not democracy; it is a farce.

Any constitutional law book defines democracy as "an internal organisation of the state in which the source and exercise of political power lie with the people, enabling the governed to govern in turn through their elected representatives". However, the people have always been misled and only allowed to watch as spectators, not participants.

In his *Essays on Democracy Promotion*, Thomas Carothers, director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment Program for International Peace, and a former State Department official in the Reagan administration writes; "Where democracy appears to fit in well with US security and economic interests, the United States promotes democracy, [but] where democracy clashes with other significant interests, it is downplayed or even ignored". The history of the past sixty years or so shows that the US has always favoured dictatorial regimes to serve its own interests at the expense of human rights and democracy. For decades the US has supported and encouraged Israel's terror and oppression against the Palestinian people.

When it comes to genuine democracy, the US is enemy number one of democratic principles and international law. In 1953, the US intelligence agents, the CIA, engineered a military coup that toppled Iran's popularly elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and replaced him with the three decades-long vicious dictatorial regime of Shah Reza Behlavi. The recent elections in Iran were more transparent and superior democratic processes than the 30 January US-staged elections in Iraq or the last two US elections. However, the US and Western media continue to attack Iran

The US is never shy to lend hand to brutal dictators. On September 11, 1973, General Augusto Pinochet, with tacit support from the CIA, led a violent military and overthrew the democratically elected Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. Because of the CIA covert intervention in Chile, and the repressive character of General Pinochet's rule, the coup became the most notorious military takeover in the annals of Latin American history. Thousands of Chilean dissidents have been murdered or disappeared during the military rule of Augusto Pinochet.

On 29 February 2004, just a year after the invasion of Iraq, the US backed by Canada and France orchestrated a get together coup d'état against the popular government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti. Deliberately ignored by Western media, a democratically elected government was replaced by unelected, repressive and murderous "Interim Government" which committed hundreds of political killings and more than 700 summary executions (without charges) of political prisoners.

From the Middle East to Latin America, the US administrations play the "democracy" card and overtly or covertly support dictators and military dominated regimes that systematically repress and terrorise the local population. The US "promotion of democracy" is not against the *status quo* of dictators, but it is designed for domestic consumption in order to deceive

the public that the US is an “honest broker” interested in “democracy”. In other word, it is a cover for war and control of people’s natural resources, including oil.

It was only after the fabricated pretexts for the war on Iraq had collapsed, the Bush administration and its allies turned to imperialism most favoured propaganda, “democracy”. The pretexts keep changing so often that drew little opposition or protest against this flagrant falsification of history regarding the war on Iraq. The Bush administration continues to tell the world that the invasion of Iraq is to “build democracy” throughout the Middle East, as if democracy is another brick in a wall. One important fact to remember is that had Iraq’s Arab neighbours been democratically elected governments (like Turkey), the US and Britain wouldn’t have unilaterally mounted an illegal invasion into Iraq and committed the kind of international war crimes against the Iraqi people.

Despite the illegality of the war and the enormous war crimes committed against the Iraqi people, many people, particularly Americans, still believe that the war on Iraq was initiated because of Iraq’s possession of WMD and Iraq’s links to “terrorism”. It is now established that Iraq had no WMD since 1991 and that Iraq had no link to “terrorism”, and posed no threat to the US, Britain and their allies.

The US invaded and occupied Iraq because: 1. Iraq was a defenceless nation, destroyed by 13-years long genocidal sanctions and constant US-British bombing campaigns. 2. Iraq is a resources-rich and strategically vital nation, and 3. Iraq was and could be a formidable counter to Israel’s Zionist expansion. Hence, Iraq was the preferred target for the soon to be US president long before the 9/11 attacks on the US. Also by attacking Iraq, the US intended to send a bullying message to other nations.

According to recent reports, Bush believes that, no president is “great” president without wining one military aggression in his presidency. In 1999 Bush revealed his personal motivation to use war in order to advance his domestic political ends. When Bush was asked at New Hampshire primary event in December 1999 about Saddam Hussein, Bush told David Nyhan of the *Boston Globe*; “I’d take ‘em [Saddam] out”, and, “take out the weapons of mass destruction...I’m surprised he’s [Saddam] still there”. This comment alone should be taken as an illegal declaration of war against Iraq and violation of the US Constitution. It follows; the invasion and occupation of Iraq had nothing to do with “democracy”, “liberation” or the propaganda perpetuated by Western media, the US government and its allies of the “coalition of the willing”. Furthermore, the US invaded Iraq despite massive worldwide protests against an illegal war.

The war perpetuated by the Anglo-American axis have caused the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians, destroyed the Iraqi state and the fabric of the Iraqi society. Tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children as young as 12 years old, are languishing in hundreds of US-run prison camps and subject to unrestrained torture and abuse by US forces. In addition to the violence, the Occupation has brought Iraqis desperate living conditions - the destruction of Iraq’s health care and education systems -, ethnic divisions, and a culture of corruption.

Mr. Bush claims that “democracy is spreading” throughout the Middle East is simply a phantom to justify an illegal war against Iraq and provides a diversion for the war crimes committed against the Iraqi people. Coupled with military occupation, the US is in a process of political penetration under the rubric of “democracy”. This involves the promotion of the Iraqi elites - mostly expatriates, including religious groups, criminal elements and corrupt

Kurdish warlords – to high offices. It also involves the corruption of Iraqi and Arab media, trade unions, women organisations and other professional associations to serve the interests of US corporations and enhance US imperial agenda.

The US aim in Iraq is to prolong the Occupation, control Iraq's vital resources and rob Iraq's of its wealth and sovereignty at the expense of the Iraqi people. The form of "democracy" the US pretends building in Iraq is a form of colonial dictatorship dressed in fraudulent elections in order to re-colonise Iraq economically. The US strategy in Iraq is to rule Iraq by the proxy of an "Arab façade", serving Washington and Western interests, and suppressing any alternative popular movement that opposes US design. As pointed out earlier, democracy is never part of US imperialist agenda. If it is not so, then the US should let the Iraqi people decide on the presence of the Occupation forces. If the US is serious about the "spread of democracy" the US must accept the outcome of free and fair elections.

The January 2005 elections were illegitimate and flawed, because Iraq was and continues to be under foreign military occupation. The Iraqi people were deceived to believe that they were voting to end the Occupation. Although the US-preferred candidate (Iyad Allawi) lost, the elections still won by those groups who supported the invasion and occupation. Immediately after the elections, the first act of treason the new "government" committed is to extend the presence of the Occupation forces in Iraq, and escalate the violence against the Iraqi people. The London-based Arabic newspaper, *Al-Hayat*, reported recently that one-third (83 MPs) of the members of Iraq's 275 National Assembly have asked for a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq, accusing the Assembly itself of not caring "about the demands of millions of Iraqis".

Finally, the US strategy is doomed to fail in Iraq. Historically, Iraq is an anti-imperialism ground. The Iraqi people are politically very engaged and educated. It is almost near impossible for a pro-Occupation, pro-US policy regime to survive in Iraq. All Iraqis are united for an immediate withdrawal of foreign troops and end to the Occupation. They have enough of US perpetuated violence.

People around the world know that the American form of 'democracy' has not benefited the masses. It is an old imperialist tormentor. The invasion and occupation of Iraq have exposed the true nature of this imperialist tormentor. It is the duty of decent men and women not to remain silent and encourage the tormentor to continue tormenting the Iraqi people. Those who committed war crimes and crimes of deception should be held accountable for their actions.

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