

The U.S. as National Security State

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If a study of U.S. government actions since 9/11/01 teaches anything, it should bring into relief the overall plan of the world's sole superpower to extend its hegemony to all lands and nations, including our own. A small-scale study of this process of the U.S. evolving into a National Security State could be done in five steps. In addition to outlining those steps, the intent of the present article is to offer four essential elements needed for any solution to this problem of U.S. government dominance in foreign lands and domestically.

Step 1: The Institutional Goal of the Victors of WW II: Preserving the Victory. The idea of hegemony is that of institutional self-interest in dominance. Noam Chomsky calls it “the imperial grand strategy,” and defines it as the U.S. holding “unquestioned power.”² Andrew Bacevich calls it “Washington Rules,” and defines it as the belief that the U.S. ought to enforce its perceived norms as to how the world should behave, combined with “the sacred trinity” of global military presence, global power projection, and global interventionism.³ Regardless of the term used, it is the U.S. goal to maintain the war’s victory status as pre-eminent world power.

This may be seen as part of the culmination of the understanding of the doctrine of “American Exceptionalism” that started in with President Reagan and culminated in the Bush years—i.e. that the U.S. is not just qualitatively different (the historical meaning), but “better” or “above” others.

Step 2: (Result of step 1): Observe and eliminate any potential competition for hegemony, including that of dissident citizens. This is propagandized as “a threat to our national interests,” when really it is only to the interests of the agents doing the bidding of the state complex. Examples of this abound in just recent history:

- a) Reagan’s “War on Terror” in Central America in the 1980’s;
- b) The government and media’s rhetoric for those who question U.S. foreign policy as “anti-American” or even “terrorist.” In the old Soviet Union, the operative term for traitors was “anti-Soviet.”
- c) The 755 U.S. military bases around the world;
- d) The U.S.’s attempted coup of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in 2002;
- e) Bush’s “War on Terror” in the 2000’s—Afghanistan and Iraq;
- f) Unwarranted domestic spying by the federal government against its own citizens,

and its infiltrating progressive groups;

g) The U.S. government attacks on groups such as ACORN, war dissidents in Chicago and Minneapolis, and protestors at the Republican Convention in 2008;

h) Obama's rebranding of the "war on terror" as "challenges to America's interest," while maintaining Bush-era policies of the war on terror.⁴

Step 3 (Result of Steps 1 & 2): Use of the Idea of Supreme Emergency to preserve and increase hegemony. "Supreme emergency" is defined by political scientist Michael Walzer as a threat that causes *a fear beyond the ordinary fears of war*, and that that threat and fear may require those measures that the war convention bars.⁵

There are serious problems that occur when using this concept to expand hegemony. First, most of what governments classify as "Supreme Emergency" is at root only an expression of institutional self-interest or expediency, and is the direct result of this basic impetus toward hegemony. For example, Winston Churchill's use of the term to describe Britain's situation in 1939 was a bit of rhetoric designed to weaken the British people and government's resistance to maintaining the war convention's proscription of extreme brutality.⁶

There are many examples of the U.S. following a similar pattern, domestically. For example, after 9/11/01, Assistant Attorney General Daniel J. Bryant, in a letter sent to key senators during debate of the Patriot Act: "As Commander-in-Chief, the President must be able to use whatever means necessary to prevent attacks upon the United States...Here, for Fourth Amendment purposes, the right to self-defense is not that of an individual, but that of the nation and its citizens...If the government's heightened interests in self-defense justifies the use of deadly force, then it certainly would also justify warrantless searches."⁷ Further, President Bush used the events of 9/11/01 to claim the power to detain, without charge, any person—including U.S. citizens—he declared to be "enemy combatants" or "suspected terrorists." Additionally, he claimed the power to engage in preventive war as well as to practice indefinite detention of arrested suspects. Critically, the "Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003" empowered the state to rescind one's citizenship for providing any type of "material support" to an organization that the state has deemed to be involved with terrorism.

Barak Obama has followed his predecessor in this thinking. President Obama claims to have executive power to order the assassination of U.S. citizens. Further, he is continuing the concentration camps in Guantanamo, Iraq, and Afghanistan, along with the practice of torture, as well as escalating drone attacks (started by Bush in Afghanistan) to Pakistan and Yemen.

A second significant problem with this notion of supreme emergency is that when a hegemonic understanding of "Supreme Emergency" becomes the rule rather than the exception, as it has with the "war on terror" (often called "global civil war"), the institutional mindset of "supreme emergency" becomes the standard government way of operating. The result is predictable: if the "state of emergency" is not brought to an end, totalitarianism results. Giorgio Agamben refers to this as a "state of exception." According to Agamben, totalitarianism "can be defined as the establishment, by means of [a constant] state of exception [supreme emergency], of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination

not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system.”⁸ The Nazi jurists spoke regularly and openly of this, calling it “a willed state of exception,” done “for establishing the National Socialist State.”⁹ The United States perches precariously close to falling into this. One need only examine the USA PATRIOT Act, and/or the Bush military order of 2001 allowing “indefinite detention” and trial by “military commissions” of those noncitizens who were only suspected of some involvement in “terrorist activities,” to see how close we are to this becoming a reality in the U.S.

In the U.S. today, our “state of exception” is called “Continuity of Government” (COG) planning, and includes plans for suspending the Constitution in the event of an attack. Thanks to patrons like Oliver North, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and others, the COG calls for warrantless surveillance, warrantless detention, and militarization of domestic security. As to the latter, Peter Dale Scott documents that since 2008, we now have a U.S. Army Brigade Combat Team stationed permanently within the national boundaries of the United States.¹⁰ Scott adds that, since 2002, American citizens have lived under a U.S. Army Command called NORTHCOM. Additionally, we have also seen this militarization of the domestic U.S. in action already on the streets of Toledo, Ohio, in 2008.¹¹

The mechanism by which Supreme Emergency is established is fear, not serious threats. It involves the use of propaganda to create fear in the populous so that hegemonic plans can continue unabated. This fear is exaggerated for the populous in order to alleviate potential resistance to government self-interest in dominance. Witness, for example, the well-planted line from Condoleezza Rice: “We don’t want the smoking gun [of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction] to be a mushroom cloud.”¹² Additionally, President Bush made use of such fear tactics in a speech at the United Nations on September 12, 2002. He followed it by a similar speech in Cincinnati, Ohio in October. Finally (for now), Colin Powell’s U.N. speech presented many assertions without much evidence, all intended to “catapult the propaganda” as Mr. Bush put it.¹³ Powell’s unsubstantiated assertions, placed for propaganda purposes, included charges that Iraq was hiding their WMD programs from the world; that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons programs, and was preparing “delivery devices” to attack others by using them; that Iraq was connected to and supportive of terrorism in general; that Iraq was connected to the events of 9/11; and that Iraq was guilty of not being able to prove a negative—i.e. not being able to prove that they destroyed munitions. This now-famous “proving of a negative” that made Iraq guilty would later be used by then-Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld used to justify the U.S. inability to find WMD in Iraq after the invasion.

Step 4: The Permanent State of Emergency = Continuity in Government (COG) = the National Security State. This state has been characterized by Gary Wills as “permanent war in peace.”¹⁴ It started in 1945 with the organization of the Strategic Services Unit, until, by 1952, a full National Security State was in place.¹⁵ This state is finally established when government rule engages the following actions:¹⁶

- a) it is fixated on alleged foreign enemies and the threat they pose to the homeland;
- b) the threat is used for the justification of any military solutions to “pacifying” those enemies;
- c) it maintains political and economic power not primarily in the people, but in the military (and defense contractors);

d) it uses propaganda methods to narrow the parameters of political debate and to put fear in the populace regarding perceived state enemies (e.g. the Truman Doctrine speech of 1947: “Totalitarian regimes” anywhere in the world “undermine...the security of the United States”);

e) it uses many appeals to “national security.”

Step 5: Six Characteristics of the U.S. Version of the National Security State

a. National Security State engages in regular, unannounced, unapproved (by Congress or law) wars

i. *Drones in Yemen and Pakistan*: The U.S. first said it used targeted killing in November 2002, with the cooperation and approval of the government of Yemen.

In April of 2009, *The News*, a newspaper in Lahore, Pakistan, published figures provided by Pakistani officials indicating that 687 civilians have been killed along with 14 al Qaeda leaders in some 60 drone strikes since January 2008—just over 50 civilians killed for every al Qaeda leader.¹⁷ Further, Pakistan’s *Dawn* newspaper reported: “According to the statistics compiled by Pakistani authorities, the Afghanistan-based US drones killed 708 people in 44 predator attacks targeting the tribal areas between January 1 and December 31, 2009.” For each al Qaeda and Taliban terrorist killed by US drones, 140 innocent Pakistanis also had to die. Over 90 per cent of those killed in the deadly missile strikes were civilians, claim authorities.”¹⁸

On June 3, 2009, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) delivered a report sharply critical of US tactics. The report asserted that the US government has failed to keep track of civilian casualties of its military operations, including the drone attacks, and to provide means for citizens of affected nations to obtain information about the casualties and any legal inquests regarding them. Obama’s response was to ignore the U.N. report, and increase the drone attacks. As neoconservative architect Francis Fukuyama stated: the U.N. is “perfectly serviceable as an instrument of American unilateralism.”¹⁹ When it isn’t, the National Security State can and does ignore them. Since 1966, the U.S. has cast more vetoes in the U.N. than any other nation, with 82 vetoes. The previous record was held by the former Soviet Union, which cast a total of 121 vetoes between 1946-1989.²⁰

ii. *The Coming Wars for Oil*: From whence comes the oil of the future? Experts generally agree upon the following list: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Angola, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan, the Caspian Sea area (consisting of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), and Latin America (consisting of Venezuela, Mexico, Columbia, and Ecuador).²¹ Given these locations of oil, what are the global strategies, especially by the world’s largest military power, the U.S., for securing its own and its ally’s oil needs for the 21st century?

Under President Clinton, the U.S. secured the Caspian Sea basin oil supplies by exchanging arms and military training, along with conducting joint military maneuvers for an oil pipeline. Because of U.S. distrust of Russia, Clinton negotiated a route from Azerbaijan through Turkey and the former Soviet Republic of Georgia.²²

President Bush increased the military presence in the Caspian Sea basin after 9/11, and deployed military trainers to Georgia.²³

The trip by President Obama to Turkey—his first foreign trip as President—was an attempt to break a deadlock in building the pipeline through Turkey.²⁴

Additionally, the U.S. and NATO now have troops and military bases established in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan. These countries have agreed to supply oil and natural gas to NATO countries, thus undermining agreements and sought-after agreements involving these countries and Russia, China, and Iran. In conjunction with this, the U.S. is directly undermining the attempts of Russia, China, and Iran to continue their agreements with Central Asian countries for oil and natural gas. This is especially true with the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline to run from the Caspian Sea to India, which killed the Iranian-Pakistan-India deal to run a pipeline between them (IPI). In sum, TAPI is the finished product of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. NATO will be expected to use military power to protect the pipeline, and thus consolidates Western power in the region.²⁵

Similar U.S. machinations were undertaken with West Africa and even Latin America. For example, the U.S. has established smaller-type military bases—what the Defense Department refers to as “lily pads”—in an arc running from the Andes in South America through North Africa and across the Middle East, to the Philippines and Indonesia. These locations are consummate with the fact that the bases are located in or near the oil-producing states of the world. In Latin America, the U.S. military uses bases in Paraguay to monitor, and to be in position to move against the Bolivian and Venezuelan governments, since both countries nationalized their oil companies.²⁶

Furthermore, according to *The London Guardian*, the April, 2002 military coup in Venezuela was clandestinely supported and organized by the U.S. in response to President Hugo Chavez’s nationalizing Venezuela’s oil company, PDVSA.²⁷

The two main players on the oily world stage today, besides the U.S., are Iran and China. The role of Iran is dual: geographic and geologic. Geographically, Iran sits between three important sea shipping lanes: the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Sea of Oman, and is the geographical point of intersection for the Middle East, Asia, and the steppes of Russia. Geologically, next to Saudi Arabia (264.3 billion barrels), Iran has the largest oil reserves in the world (132.5 billion barrels). That the U.S. wants control of Iran is beyond doubt. Aside from continuing threats to Iran made by former President Bush and now President Obama, Iran is completely surrounded by U.S. military bases, in the Persian Gulf, in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, in Turkey, in Iraq, in Cyprus, in Israel, in Oman, and in Diego Garcia.²⁸ Iran itself has become an “Observer State” (along with India and Pakistan) to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Created by China in 2001, and with members including Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, these members and have pledged mutual economic and military aid.

b. The National Security State results in a Repressive State at home. When Supreme Emergency becomes the order of the day, it may be turned against domestic civilians. For example, Hitler’s February 28 “Decree for the Protection of the People” which suspended the articles of the Weimar Constitution concerning personal liberties, was never repealed.²⁹ In the U.S. similar events have come rapid-fire since 9/11/01, beginning with the USA PATRIOT Act, and George Bush’s “military order” of November 13, 2001, authorizing the “indefinite detention” and trial by military commissions of noncitizens suspected of involvement in terrorist activities. Add to these power grabs the Military Commissions Act of

2006, which grants the state a wide swath of powers, including the powers to: suspend the right of habeas corpus for those deemed “unlawful enemy combatants;” hold people indefinitely and without charge; shield administrative agents from prosecution for criminal behavior in violation of the Geneva Conventions; and permit hearsay evidence and evidence obtained by torture.

Obama himself has continued down this road, with his deepening of unchecked surveillance powers (including warrantless wiretapping of citizens, accessing personal records, monitoring financial transactions, and tracking email, internet and cell phone use), his claims that the federal government cannot be sued for illegal spying, his claims of Executive privilege to order assassinations of U.S. citizens, and his continuation of torture and Guantanamo Bay prison.

All of these actions and others are direct legislative erasing of any legal status of the individual, in some cases individual U.S. citizens.

Historically, similar structural mechanisms of governments in Rome, Spain, Portugal, and Britain all led to repressive governments which fell quickly when they began to govern through a structure of repression.³⁰ Today we see the same thing beginning to take shape in America.³¹

c. The National Security State has automatic Just Cause for any military action. This is arguably the most critical aspect of an ethical justification going to war. By this, it is generally meant that an attack from another nation is either occurring or imminent. The National Security State sees any long-range, potential threat as *casus belli*. For example, Thomas M. Nichols, Chairman of the Department of Strategy and Policy at the U.S. Naval War College, in an article published in 2003 in *Ethics & International Affairs*, crafted a list of reasons to support the Bush case that the cause for military action against Iraq was just:

“Iraq has shown itself to be a serial aggressor led by a dictator willing to run imprudent risks, including an attack on the civilians of a noncombatant nation during the Persian Gulf War; a supreme enemy of human rights that has already used weapons of mass destruction against civilians; a consistent violator of both U.N. resolutions and the terms of the 1991 cease-fire treaty, to say nothing of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions before and since the Persian Gulf War; a terrorist entity that has attempted to reach beyond its own borders to support and engage in illegal activities that have included the attempted assassination of a former U.S. president; and most important, a state that has relentlessly sought nuclear arms against all international demands that it cease such efforts.”³²

The conclusion Nichols draws from this impressive list of Saddam Hussein crimes is that “*any one* of these would be sufficient to remove Saddam and his regime...but taken together they are brief for what can only be considered a just war” (emphasis added).

Nichols is arguing from the viewpoint of the National Security State. Any other analysis would not be so hasty to conclude the necessity of an invasion. For example, the list of studies from the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, the CIA, the FBI, and other agencies should be enough to demonstrate clearly that the claims Nichols makes are very broad and general in the first instance (e.g. “a terrorist entity that has attempted to reach beyond its own borders to support and engage in illegal activities”); and insufficient in law or morality to support a preemptive attack on another nation. Nichols’ premises that

Hussein attacked “the civilians of a noncombatant nation during the Persian Gulf War” and that he “has already used weapons of mass destruction against civilians,” happened during the Gulf War of 1991, and thus are not legitimate pretexts for a 2003 invasion.³³

Perhaps most importantly, Nichols states explicitly that “any one of” the premises listing Saddam Hussein’s bad behavior is a sufficient condition for invading Iraq. This cannot be true without the value premise that “any violation of international law or U.N. mandates morally justifies an invasion of Iraq.” This normative premise is absurd because, if true, then any country may be invaded by another for a single violation of international law or U.N. mandate. Without weighting values from innocent violations to gross violations, his conclusion is a *non sequitur*. If it is the conclusion Nichols wants, then the U.S. should have invaded Israel, for instance, before we invaded Iraq, since Israel has ignored far more U.N. mandates concerning its nuclear weapons and its treatment of the Palestinians than has Iraq concerning weapons pursuits.

d. The National Security State is its own Proper Authority. The Bush administration and the American writers who supported the war made it clear that they did not believe that the U.S. needed U.N. authorization to pursue preventive war. However, simultaneously and in contradictory fashion, they all likewise stated that in attacking Iraq they were enforcing UNSCR 687 and 1441.

In March of 2003, Anne-Marie Slaughter, the dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, argued in the *New York Times* that there are “Good Reasons for Going Around the U.N.” in order to war with Iraq. Her main reasons for maintaining this included the fact that the U.S. has done it before, with Kosovo; and that the U.N. “cannot be a straightjacket, preventing nations from defending themselves or pursuing what they perceive to be in their vital national security interests.”³⁴ Ms. Slaughter concludes “that which is legitimate is also legal.” But this is a *non-sequitur* argument, as Ms. Slaughter completely ignored international law in this argument, which would clearly see the invasion as illegal. Significantly, she disregarded Nuremberg Charter, Article 6, which makes criminal invasions of other countries as “Crimes against Peace,” and the United Nations Charter, Articles 2(3), 2(4), and 51, all of which condemn the use of force against another nation without imminent provocation. Ms. Slaughter places the National Security State above the law, which is certainly not a legal or moral *casus belli*. But arguing that historical precedent makes for legality would legitimate Hitler’s invasion of France, once he had invaded other countries.

Further, the idea that the U.S. can bypass international bodies and use only its own authority to send its military into another country presumes that the National Security State trumps international law by allowing one nation to determine what is best for both itself and the world and then to act on it, whether or not it is in concert with the rest of the world. Because it excludes dialogue and more importantly the demands of universality of principle required by ethical thinking, it has no place in a moral analysis of war.

e. The National Security State does not count Civilians as Important to its Functioning. By a long and time-honored tradition in ethics and in international law, when the practice of either ignoring (by not taking into account) or intending civilian deaths becomes commonplace, whether proportional or not to the good intention of defeating the enemy, the war itself may be said to be conducted unjustly.

The Bush administration and its generals did not consider the category of discrimination to

be of importance. The Obama administration has continued this policy. This is demonstrated by two facts: first, the U.S. military spokespersons have stated directly that it does not count the civilian dead in Iraq. Second, the newly formed Iraqi government issued an order in December of 2003, with pressure from the (U.S.) Coalition Provisional Authority, that there was to be no counting of Iraqi dead civilians.³⁵ If it was truly U.S. policy to protect noncombatants and to avoid injuring or killing them, one would think that knowing how many they have killed or for whose deaths they are at least partly responsible would be something the military would want to know and engage, not suppress.

We must add two massacres to this ever-growing category of civilian abuse inflicted by the U.S. incursion into Iraq: Haditha and Fallujah. In November of 2004, the U.S. military engaged in an assault on the city of Fallujah. Among the atrocities engaged by the Americans, such as dropping a number of 500-pound bombs on the city of Fallujah, Italian television documented a story showing that the United States used both cluster bombs and white phosphorus bombs on the citizens of Fallujah.³⁶ The use of such bombs is strictly prohibited not only by the ethical principle of discrimination, but by international law. These actions, as well as the assault on Fallujah in general, violate the Geneva Convention and the War Crimes Act of 1996.

According to press reports, there are many more such incidents that occur in Iraq that never get reported, such as the civilian massacres in Balad, al-Latifya, Samara, Najaf, and others.³⁷ In Najaf alone over 200 civilians were massacred by U.S. forces.³⁸

Michael Walzer has said it best: if there is no distinction possible between the guerrillas and the civilians,

“the anti-guerrilla war can then no longer be fought—and not just because, from a strategic point of view, it can no longer be won. It cannot be fought because it is no longer an anti-guerrilla but an anti-social war, a war against an entire people.”³⁹

Haditha and Fallujah were both war crimes that the U.S. military attempted to cover up. But according to press reports, there are many more such incidents that occur in Iraq that never get reported, such as the civilian massacres in Balad, al-Latifya, Samara, Najaf, and others.⁴⁰ In Najaf alone over 200 civilians were massacred by U.S. forces.⁴¹

f. The National Security State is concerned solely with its Own Existence. Assistant Attorney General Daniel J. Bryant, in a letter sent to key senators during debate of the Patriot Act: “As Commander-in-Chief, the President must be able to use whatever means necessary to prevent attacks upon the United States...Here, for Fourth Amendment purposes, the right to self-defense is not that of an individual, but that of the nation and its citizens...If the government’s heightened interests in self-defense justifies the use of deadly force, then it certainly would also justify warrantless searches.”

Congress is not permitted to interfere with the military maneuvers of the National Security State.⁴²

What we have done in this brief analysis of the paradigm examples of the National Security State at work, is two things:

1. Demonstrate the slide into a national security state by such appeals to “threat + fear = supreme emergency.”

2. Demonstrate the slide from national security state into repressive state.

3. The slide into a repressive state coincides with a slide into perpetual war.

Stopping the slide

What can we do to prevent the U.S. from sliding into totalitarianism? Here are just a few provisionary steps.

Step 1: Recognize that radical change is required, because the state apparatus has been structured so as to continue to push to achieve and maintain complete state hegemony in the world. With this foundational mode of state structure and purpose, radical change of state structure is required. This can only be done with some kind of people's push to return the power to themselves, as we see in Egypt and Tunisia (and, arguably in Madison, Wisconsin). Without that, or without a cataclysmic world event, such as a united Arab front against American attempts at dominance, or the collapse of the world economy, state mechanisms will continue to be structured as hegemonic agencies, and perpetual war and continued assault upon citizen rights will be the ongoing and deepening *modus operandi* of the state.

Step 2: One of the ways to recognize and acknowledge the slide into a full-blown repressive state is to **maintain objectivity in analysis**. Focus on the government structure that leads to national security state. This does two things: first, it keeps the positing of "evil-doers" and those with "evil intent" to a minimum, since this cannot usually be demonstrated empirically anyway. It is a more objective, less passionate analysis. Second, it demonstrates the pattern of a movement from democracy to authoritarianism.

This type of objective analysis is easily applied to issues we have discussed above, such as the development and consequences of the National Security State in general, and/or to the development and spread of U.S.-NATO military bases to prepare for military defense of oil and gas supplies.

Step 3: Focus objective analysis on ethical prescriptions as well. Ethically speaking, objective analysis can be done by analyzing how universal ethical analyses can be. For example, using what the German philosopher Immanuel Kant termed "reversibility," one can maintain objectively that if our nation can declare a supreme emergency from a feared, temporally-distant potential threat, and attack them militarily on that basis, so can other states so engage. Or, as the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas puts it, for authentic communication between parties to take place, all affected must be able to accept the consequences of any proposed norm.⁴³

Application of such analysis might include discussion of the Crime of Aggression of Obama's drone strikes. In 1950, the Nuremberg Tribunal defined Crimes against Peace, in Principle VI, specifically Principle VI(a), submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, as:

(i) *Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances;*

(ii) *Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the acts mentioned under (i).*

A tentative definition of aggression was adopted by the U.N. International Law Commission

on June 4, 1951, which stated:

“Aggression is the use of force by a State or Government against another State or Government, in any manner, whatever the weapons used and whether openly or otherwise, for any reason or for any purpose other than individual or collective self-defence or in pursuance of a decision or recommendation by a competent organ of the United Nations”.

Another application might be the violations of the Geneva Conventions in attacking civilians, by troops or, more importantly in Obama’s case, by drones. Article 51, Section 2 proscribes “indiscriminate attacks:” those not directed at specifically military targets; those attacks or weapons that cannot be limited to military objectives and that strike civilians or civilian objects as well as military ones; and attacking military targets that the belligerent has reason to believe in advance will cause excessive and disproportionate damage to civilians or civilian objects, the latter defined simply as non-military objects.

Protocol II, “relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts,” specifically calls upon all nations to refrain from all “violence to the life, health, and physical and mental well-being of [noncombatant] persons.”

The Hague Conventions of 1899 ban the attacking towns and cities that are undefended, and collective punishment. Prescriptions to limit the conduct of war include the requirements to warn towns of impending attacks, to protect cultural, religious, and health institutions, and to insure public order and safety.

Step 4: Get Organized; Get Active!

The reason the citizens of Tunisia and Egypt are in revolution is because the U.S. National Security State has backed dictators like Mubarak for our own hegemonic interests. The people there are now taking their country back not only from Mubarak, but from the National Security State apparatus. We ought to get with it and do the same.

Conclusion. This approach represents a first attempt to formulate an alternative model for progressives to use, in place of analyses of individual events. It’s the system and the way it is structured that needs attention. This National Security system can be shown to exhaust economic resources and personnel, and to be a repressive model of government, both internationally and domestically. A new model of mutual exchange and mutually recognized moral standing is a better model for future government because it is closer to the fundamentals of a democratic society, based as it is on equality of citizens as well as their liberty.

About the Author

Dr. Robert P. Abele holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Marquette University and M.A. degrees in Theology and Divinity. He is the author of three books: *A User’s Guide to the USA PATRIOT Act* (2005); *The Anatomy of a Deception: A Logical and Ethical Analysis of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (2009); and *Democracy Gone: A Chronicle of the Last Chapters of the Great American Democratic Experiment* (2009). His latest articles on political theory and war will be published in the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Global Justice*, by Springer Press, in the spring of 2011. Dr. Abele is an instructor of philosophy at Diablo Valley College, located in the San Francisco Bay area.

Notes

1 This article is an adaptation of a transcript from a presentation given at the Project Censored Annual Awards Event, on February 5, 2011.

2 See Chomsky, Noam, *Hegemony or Survival*, p. 15, and all of Chapter 2.

3 See Bacevich, Andrew, *Washington Rules*, pgs. 12-15.

4 See “Barak Obama Declares ‘War on Terror’ is Over,” *The U.K. Telegraph*, February 4, 2011.

5 The “war convention” is Walzer’s term for the set of norms, customs, professional codes, legal precepts, religious and philosophical principles, and reciprocal arrangements that shape our judgments of military conduct—set forth most explicitly in international law. For definitions and elaboration on both “supreme emergency” and the “war convention,” see Walzer, Michael, *Just and Unjust Wars*, pgs. 44-47; 129-137; 231-232; 251-255.

6 Walzer, *ibid.*, pgs. 251-252.

7 Chang, Nancy, “The USA PATRIOT Act: What’s So Patriotic About Trampling on the Bill of Rights?” www.ccr-ny.org.

8 Agamben, Giorgio. *States of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 2.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Peter Dale Scott, “The Doomsday Project, Deep Events, and the Shrinking of American Democracy,” *Global Research*, January 22, 2011.

11 Darsha Philips, “Mayor Kicks Marines Out of Toledo and Ends U.S. Military Takeover Drill,” *Prison Planet Forum*, February 9, 2008.

12 In a CNN interview on September 8, 2002.

13 In a speech at the Athena Performing Arts Center at Greece Athena Middle and High School, on Tuesday, May 24, 2005 in Rochester, NY. See Jacob Weisberg, “Bushism of the Day,” *Slate.com*, May 25, 2005.

14 See Wills, Gary, *Bomb Power*, pgs. 57-105; 120-135; and Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules* on pgs. 12-15; 20-21.

15 Wills traces this history in *ibid*, pgs. 57-105.

16 This list is a variation of one presented by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *Brave New World Order* (Orbis Books, 1992).

17 *Harper’s Magazine*, June 12, 2009.

18 “US Drone Attacks Killed 700 Civilians, Officials Say,” *The National*, 4 January 2010; and “Over 700 Killed In 44 Drone Strikes In 2009,” *DAWN*, 2 January 2010

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