

America's Transition from a Democracy to a National Security State, in Five Easy Steps

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There seems to be a formula for a superpower's intent to dominate the world: massive surveillance + use of military might in foreign wars and domestic control of citizens (e.g. armored cops; packed prisons, etc.) + control of each method by elites for their own interests = international and domestic dominance by fear and force. Domestically this is called the National Security State. It is a state which is now in place in the U.S. government.

The National Security State is a state that has the following characteristics (from Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *Brave New World Order*; Gary Wills, *Bomb Power*; and Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules*):

- 1) It is fixated on alleged foreign enemies and the “threat” they pose to the homeland;
- 2) It uses the “threat” for the justification of any military solutions to “pacifying” those enemies.
- 3) It maintains political and economic power not primarily in the people, but in the military (and defense contractors).
- 4) 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”).
- 5) It uses many appeals to “national security” as a rationale for its drive toward more expansive hegemony.

Here is how the formula works.

1) Make hegemony the goal of the state, whether domestic or foreign (Chomsky calls it “the imperial grand strategy”—see *Hegemony or Survival*, Ch. 2). It is the “We must rule” syndrome (see Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules*). Dominance is generally defined as forcing others to live by ruler-chosen patterns, and that is what hegemony is about: Washington determining the rule of other nations. This, in my view, is part of the new understanding of the doctrine of “American Exceptionalism” that started after WWII and is culminating in the Bush and Obama years. It implies that the U.S. is not just qualitatively different from other nations, but “better” or “above” others, and thus “naturally” suited to dominate others.

2) Observe (i.e. by clandestine and electronic surveillance) and eliminate any potential competition for hegemony. The practice arguably began in 1945 with the organization of the Strategic Services Unit, a secret intelligence and counter-espionage unit of the U.S. government, which was gradually absorbed by the CIA, starting in 1947, culminating in the creation of National Security Agency organization. By 1952, a full National Security State was already in place, ready for any alleged threat to the U.S.

The rhetoric of the National Security State slants the rationale for this action as “a threat to our national interests,” when really it is only a threat to the interests of the agents doing the bidding of the state complex. Examples of it abound in U.S. history. In just recent history, we can see it in President Reagan’s “War on Terror” in Central America in the 1980’s, to the U.S. war on Iraq, Libya, and Syria, to the government and media’s rhetoric concerning those who question U.S. foreign policy as “anti-American” or even “terrorist.” Add to that the fact that the U.S. has approximately 755 U.S. military bases around the world, that they attempt to topple national leaders, from Iran to Cuba to Venezuela. When they are not toppling, they are spying on world leaders, such as Angela Merkel of Germany and Dilma Vanna Rousseff of Brazil. We see it all in Obama’s alarming widening of Bush’s “war on terror,” by rebranding the “war on terror” as “challenges to America’s interest,” while maintaining Bush-era policies of the war on terror.



3) Use domestic terror—i.e. appeal to the idea of “Supreme Emergency” by an “ongoing threat”—e.g. Communism; al Qaeda; terrorism; Isil; Isis

Defined by political scientist Michael Walzer (in *Just and Unjust Wars*) as a threat that causes *a fear beyond the ordinary fears of war*. This threat and the fear it generates may “require” certain measures that the war convention bars. The “war convention” is 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.

The problem here is that most of what governments classify as “Supreme Emergency” is not only a permanent or ongoing state, but is at root only an expression of institutional self-interest or expediency, the direct result of the impetus toward hegemony. Further, under this category, “Supreme Emergency” becomes the rule rather than the exception, and then the institutional mindset of the government becomes a “State of Exception” (see Giorgio Agamben, *States of Exception*) rather than a “State of Emergency.” For example, we now know that during WWII, when Winston Churchill used the term of “Supreme Emergency” to describe Britain’s situation in 1939, it was a rhetorical phrase designed to weaken the resistance of the British people and government to maintaining the war convention’s proscription of extreme brutality.

This very practice of using Supreme Emergency to justify draconian government policies has continued today. Some examples under President Bush include Bush’s claim to have the power to detain, without charge, any person—including U.S. citizens—he declared to be “enemy combatants” or “suspected terrorists;” his claim to power of preventive war and indefinite detention; and the “Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003,” which empowers 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.

The practice of Supreme Emergency has continued under President Obama. For a few examples: Obama’s claim to have the executive power to order the assassination of U.S. citizens; his continuing the concentration camps in Guantanamo, Iraq, and Afghanistan; his failure to halt all practice of torture; and his escalating drone attacks in Pakistan and Yemen, all of which are done under the banner of “responding to terrorist threats,” or more directly, “preventing attacks against America.”

And as ever, the U.S. mainstream media act as enablers of all of this. Glenn Greenwald and the reporters for *The Intercept* present regular and substantive examples of this, as does Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. For one of the latest excellent analyses, see Greenwald, “The Greatest Obstacle to Anti-Muslim Fearmongering and Bigotry: Reality” (6/24/15).

Thus we can see that the point of “Supreme Emergency” is to keep the citizens in fear, and thus in hatred of the “different other,” whether it be a “foreign threat” or a racial threat (e.g. fear of African-Americans, Muslims, etc.) to enable foreign and domestic dominance. Any “threat” will do. The method here is to build up the “threat” while in fact, the government and its agencies see citizens and their power as enemies—i.e. as threats to State dominance.

Because this practice has now been established, U.S. citizens have grown numb to it. As a result, the government no longer even appeals to specific threats. Rather, government officials now only appeal to a vague “threat” intended to serve the purpose of keeping fear alive. For example, the FBI continues to make statements to the effect that they have “prevented x number of terrorist attacks” through surveillance, while detailing none of them. The last such “terrorist threat” was the July 4 weekend (see Fair.org, “Got to be Thwarting Something,” 7/11/15).

4) Regular, unannounced, non-Congressionally-approved wars

Use the following two-step mechanism:

a) “The National Security State has automatic Just Cause for any military action.” The

National Security State sees any state that does not cater to its dictates as an enemy, thus creating a *casus belli*. This is precisely the opposite of the ethical and legal concept of “Just Cause,” which means that an attack from another nation is either occurring or imminent.

For example, consider recent Mideast military actions, done directly or by proxy. From whence comes the oil of the future, and where is the greatest potential anti-U.S. unrest that threatens U.S. hegemony? 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, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), and Latin America (consisting of Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador).

What are the U.S. global strategies for securing its dominance in these regions for the 21st century? Among other actions, the U.S. and NATO now have troops and military bases established in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and now, critically, in Ukraine. The first four of 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 (see Rick Rozoff, “Wars Without Borders: Washington Intensifies Push into Central Asia,” *Global Research*, January 30, 2011).

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.

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.

Don’t be fooled by the recent U.S. agreement with Iran. The U.S. still has military eyes targeting Iran. It is widely known that the Bush administration nearly went to war with Iran twice during Bush’s tenure. Also, Obama himself attempted to foment a coup within Iran through proxy, through “The Green Revolution” in 2009. 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. 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. 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, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, these members have pledged mutual economic and military aid.

b) "The National Security State is its own Proper Authority."

The U.S. has a long history of doing what it wants, regardless of U.N. resolutions or International Law. But if one begins with the Bush administration and the American writers who supported the war in Iraq, they 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.

Contradictory to the U.S. position stands international law. The Nuremberg Tribunal concluded: "preventive action in foreign territory is justified only in case of 'an instant and overwhelming necessity for self-defense, leaving no choice of means, and no moment of deliberation'." By this definition attacks on Iraq, Libya, and Syria were all unjustified.

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 unilateralism trumps international law by allowing one dominant 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, the idea of any nation being its own proper authority to wage war has no place in a moral or legal analysis of war.

Finally, a violation of the U.N. Charter is concomitantly a violation of Article IV of the U.S. Constitution, which says that "all Treaties made...under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land..."

Therefore, the proper authority criterion is not met by U.S. and NATO incursions in other countries today. Further, it risks setting the world on fire with war, possibly even using nuclear weapons. (For more on this point, see Michel Chossudovsky, *Toward a WWII Scenario*, and *The Globalization of War*)

Part Two will complete and analyze this shift.

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