

Beyond Munich: The UN Security Council Helps Disarm a Prospective Further Victim of U.S. Aggression

By [Edward S. Herman](#) and [David Peterson](#)

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Imagine that when Hitler was threatening to invade Poland, after having swallowed Czechoslovakia—with the help of the Western European powers' appeasement of Hitler at Munich in September 1938—the League of Nations imposed an arms embargo on Poland, making it more difficult for the imminent victim to defend itself, and at the same time suggested that Poland was the villainous party. That didn't happen back in 1939, but in a regression from that notorious era of appeasement something quite analogous is happening now.

Here is the United States, still fighting a brutal war of conquest in Iraq, which it is now doing with UN Security Council approval, with open plans and threats to attack Iran and engage in "regime change," gathering aircraft carriers off the coast of Iran, already engaging in subversive and probing attacks on the prospective target, and the UN Security Council, instead of warning and threatening the aggressor warns, threatens and imposes sanctions on the prospective victim!

The way it works is that the United States stirs up a big fuss, proclaiming a serious threat to its own national security, and expressing its deep concern over another state's flaunting of Security Council resolutions or dragging its feet on some point of order such as weapons inspections—we know how devoted the United States and its Israeli client are to the rule of law!

In the Iraq case, this noise was echoed and amplified in the media, often splashed across headlines and drummed up in editorial commentary. In turn, elite opinion in the United States and Britain coalesced around the beliefs (a) that a WMD-related crisis really existed in Baghdad and (b) that it required the Security Council's special attention. Straight through March 19-20 2003, Iraq, the prospective target of a full-scale attack, decried the absurdity of this U.S.-U.K. noise, and filed regular communiqués with the Security Council and Secretary-General documenting the U.S.-U.K. aerial strikes on its territory,[1] including the "spikes of activity" period from September 2002 onward.[2] The vast majority of the world's states and peoples also rejected the war propaganda—including the largely voiceless U.S. public, where in the weeks before the war, two-thirds of non-elite opinion stood firmly behind multilateral approaches to defuse the crisis, foremost of which was permitting the UN weapons inspections to take their course.[3] But then, as now, pretty much the entire world recognized the U.S.-U.K. hijacking of the Security Council, and its strategic

misdirection away from a defense of the actual target of the threats (Iraq) onto the execution of the policy of the states making those threats while playing the role of Iraq's potential victims (the U.S. and U.K.).

So the aggression planning proceeded then and does now with the cooperation of the UN and international community. In the Iraq case, the Security Council allowed itself to be bamboozled into restarting the weapons-inspection process, accepting this as the urgent matter, rather than the war-mobilization and threat of aggression by the United States and its British ally. Although the Security Council did not vote approval of the U.S.-British attack, it helped set it up by inflating the Iraq threat and failing to confront the real threat posed by the United States and Britain. Then, within two months after "shock and awe," the Security Council voted to give the aggressor the right to stay in Iraq and manage its affairs, thereby approving a gross violation of the UN Charter after the fact.

Now, four years later, the Security Council has outdone itself. Not only has it failed to condemn the U.S. and Israeli threat to attack Iran—the threat itself a violation of the UN Charter,[4] and one made ever-more real by the U.S. invasions of neighboring Afghanistan and Iraq during this decade alone, now followed by a huge U.S. naval buildup near Iran's coast to levels not seen since the U.S. launched its war on Iraq four years ago in what the *New York Times* just called a "calculated show of force." [5] But even worse, the Council has aided and abetted these potential aggressors by adopting three resolutions in the past eight months under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, each of which affirms that Iran's nuclear program is a threat to international peace and security, and reserves for the Council the right to take "further appropriate measures" should Iran fail to comply—that is, should Iran not cave-in to U.S. demands on exactly the terms demanded.[6]

Since July 31, the Council has demanded that Iran "suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development"[7]—despite the fact that Iran's right to engage in these activities is guaranteed under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.[8] Since December 23, it has identified the existence of Iran's nuclear program with so-called "proliferation sensitive nuclear activities"[9]—despite the fact that the International Atomic Energy Agency has never shown Iran's program to be engaged in any kind of activities other than peaceful ones. Indeed, in the December 23 resolution, the Council used the phrase "proliferation sensitive nuclear activities" no fewer than eight different times to describe Iran's nuclear program, the clear—and perfectly *false*—allegation being that for Iran to do research on and develop its indigenous nuclear fuel capabilities places Iran in violation of its NPT commitments.

But perhaps most egregious of all, the March 24 resolution prohibits Iran from selling "any arms or related material" to other states or individuals (par. 5), and calls upon all states "to exercise vigilance and restraint" in the sale or transfer of a whole list of weapons systems to Iran, "in order to prevent a destabilizing accumulation of arms..." (par. 6).[10] As the editorial voice of *The Hindu* immediately recognized, the first term is critical "not so much

because the Islamic Republic is a major vendor of weapons even to Hamas or Hizbollah but because it gives the U.S. an excuse to intimidate or interdict all Iranian merchant shipping under the guise of 'enforcement'." [11] Likewise with the second term, which, if history is any guide, Washington will interpret as a strict prohibition on weapons sales to Iran, thus depriving the potential victim, faced with attack by one or more nuclear powers, of the right to obtain even non-nuclear means of self defense. This of course has been a standard U.S. tactic over many years, even against puny victims— Guatemala in 1954 and Nicaragua in the 1980s, among other cases. But now the United States has succeeded in getting the Security Council to help it impede the self-defense of yet another target of aggression. In this truly Kafkaesque case, the state targeted for attack (Iran) has been declared a threat to the peace by the Security Council, at the behest of a serial aggressor openly mobilizing its forces to attack the "threat." [12]

It should be recognized that the treatment of Iran 's nuclear program, and the Security Council's cooperation in this treatment, is the ultimate application of a global double standard, enforced by an aggressive superpower now able to get away with both hypocrisy and murder. Only the United States and its allies may possess nuclear weapons. They alone may threaten to use nukes. They alone may improve their nukes and delivery systems. Only client states such as Israel may remain outside the NPT indefinitely and without penalty. The United States may ignore its NPT obligation to work toward nuclear disarmament. It may even renege on its promise never to use nukes against nuke-free states that joined the NPT. But no matter. By sheer fiat-power, no other state may acquire nukes without U.S. consent. Nor as the case of Iran shows may a state engage in its "inalienable right" to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes unless and until the United States approves.

We are in the midst of a crisis within the post-war international system, as a serial aggressor is now able to mobilize the Security Council, tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security, to declare the state that it threatens with war a menace to the peace and to help the aggressor disarm its target. This carries us beyond Munich .

Edward S. Herman is an economist and media analyst, co-author with Noam Chomsky of Manufacturing Consent; David Peterson is a Chicago-based researcher and journalist.

Notes

* A shorter, standard op-ed length version of this commentary was drafted and submitted very widely across the major U.S. print media—and found to be 100 percent unpublishable.

1. For an extensive list of documents filed at the United Nations by the Iraqi Government over the period August 29, 2001, through March 26, 2003, see David Peterson, "[No Memo Required](#)," ZNet, July 1, 2005.

2. See David Peterson, "[Spikes of Activity](#)," ZNet, July 5, 2005; and David Peterson,

[“British Records on the Prewar Bombing of Iraq,”](#) ZNet, July 6, 2005.

3. See Steven Kull et al., [Americans on Iraq and the UN Inspections](#), Program on International Policy Attitudes, January 21-26, 2003.

4. See, e.g., [Chapter I, Article 2](#): “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations” (par. 4).

5. [“USS John C. Stennis Now Operating in Persian Gulf,”](#) Navy Newsstand, March 27, 2007; [“Russian intelligence sees U.S. military buildup on Iran border,”](#) RIA Novosti, March 27, 2007; and Michael R. Gordon, [“U.S. Opens Naval Exercise in Persian Gulf,”](#) New York Times, March 28, 2007.

6. See [Chapter VII](#). —We believe it essential to understand that for the Security Council to adopt a resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter means above all that either a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace, or an act of outright aggression has occurred. Otherwise, there is no point to the Council’s resort to its Chapter VII functions and powers. Regardless of what the Council’s other members may believe about the import of the Iran resolutions, their assent to these resolutions grants an enormously powerful and dangerous tool of coercion to the United States .

7. [Resolution 1696](#), July 31, 2006, par. 2.

8. See the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#), the Preamble, and Articles I, II, and IV.

9. [Resolution 1737](#), December 23, 2006, par. 2.

10. [Resolution 1747](#), March 24, 2007, par. 5, par. 6.

11. [“Stepping towards the precipice,”](#) Editorial, *The Hindu*, March 27, 2007.

12. See Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, [“Hegemony and Appeasement: Setting Up the Next U.S.-Israeli Target \(Iran\) For Another ‘Supreme International Crime’,”](#) ZNet, January 27, 2007.

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