

How Can the US Accuse Any Nation of Violating ‘Rules-Based International Order’?

Washington's hypocrisy knows no bounds

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Sometimes the hypocrisy of the US government, especially when it comes to foreign affairs, it just too much to let pass.

The latest example of this is the Ukraine crisis, where the US pretty much stands all alone (unless you count Britain’s embattled and embarrassed Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who parrots US policy like a trained bird), accusing Russia not just of preparing for an “imminent invasion” of Ukraine, but of violating international law and “rules-based international order,” as Secretary of State Antony Blinken likes to put it.

The Biden administration’s top diplomat has repeatedly blasted both Russia for threatening Ukraine with an invasion by moving troops and equipment to its border and to the border between Ukraine and Belarus, Russia’s ally to the west, and China for its threats to Taiwan and for a rights crackdown in Hong Kong, a Chinese Special Administrative Region that had been promised 50 years of “no change” but was put under new vastly stricter national security laws following violent student protests and university occupations in 2019-20.

But how can the US make such accusations against the Russians and the Chinese governments when the US for nearly eight years, has been bombing, launching rocket and drone attacks, and sending troops, under both CIA and Pentagon control, against both ISIS and Syrian government troops and aircraft — even attacking and killing Russian mercenary troops at one point, who, unlike the US, were in Syria at the request of the Syrian government.

US military actions in Syria are completely outside of any “rules-based international order.” They are the actions of a lawless rogue nation.

International rules, when it comes to warfare, are crystal clear, enshrined in the United Nations Charter, which is an international treaty signed and ratified by the US government along with most other nations of the world and incorporating all the laws of war. The primary

law, violation of which is described as the gravest war crime of all “because it contains within it all other war crimes,” is called a Crime Against Peace. That law states that no nation may attack another except if that nation faces an “imminent threat” of attack.

There are no codicils expanding on or getting around that proscription.

The US has committed that Crime Against Peace countless times over the years since the establishment of the UN Charter. It did so in Vietnam, in Laos, in Cambodia, in Yemen, in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Syria, in Somalia, in Sudan, in Haiti, in the Dominican Republic, in Nicaragua, in El Salvador, in Cuba, in Niger, in the Congo, in Panama, in Grenada — indeed in so many places I can’t hope to name them all. Suffice to say that my whole life (I was born in 1949), my country has been a violator of the UN Charter’s ban on launching illegal wars.

Rules-based order? What the F**k is Blinken talking about? The US makes its own rules. In fact, whenever the US launches some illegal invasion, Special Forces raid or air attack against a country, the biggest complaint we hear in the US is that the president has ordered up and launched a war “without Congressional approval.”

The implication is that if Congress approves an illegal war or act of war, that makes it legit.

It doesn’t. It doesn’t even make it Constitutional, because the Constitution by law, every treaty that the US agrees to becomes a part of the US legal code, and that includes the UN Charter, which was largely written by the US, and was ratified by the Senate.

What makes it worse when the US makes such accusations against Russia and China is that it is accusing two countries which, as objectionable as their actions or threats might be, at least have a better argument for the legality of their actions than does the US.

Let’s start with China. The government in Beijing stands accused by Blinken and the US government under a series of presidents, with threatening Taiwan, an island that historically was a part of China, then, from 1895 to 1945 a colony of Japan, then briefly part of China following World War II, but which became functionally independent in 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party won its revolution on the mainland, founding the People’s Republic of China, and the remnants of the Nationalist Party and its army fled to Taiwan, murdering tens of thousands of local Taiwanese and Hakka Chinese people, and establishing a brutal dictatorship under Nationalist leader and major domo Chiang Kai-Shek. China has never acknowledged the independence of Taiwan, and Taiwan’s government, at least until the 70s, was claiming to be the “real” government of all of China.

The US initially recognized Taiwan, after the Chinese Communist revolutionary victory in 1949, as an independent country, but Richard Nixon, in a slick *realpolitik* maneuver masterminded by his National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in order to recognize China and drive a wedge between that country and the Soviet Union, agreed to cease recognizing Taiwan as an independent nation, downgraded the US embassy from the island to the status of a consulate, with the Embassy in Beijing. In other words, at that point, from the US point of view at least, Taiwan’s legal status became an internal affair of China’s, not an international affair subject to the protections of the UN Charter.

The same applies to the Chinese crackdown on rights in Hong Kong. Since July 1997, Hong Kong ceased to be a British colony, and reverted to being part of China. Now it’s true there

were negotiations between the Beijing government and departing British government in the years preceeding that handover. During those years of transition, Hong Kong's appointed colonial Governor Chris Patten, former head of the British Conservative Party, carefully avoided allowing Hong Kongers to gain long-sought universal suffrage to elect all members of the territory's legislative council, Legco, before the British departure (a move which would at least have left the Beijing facing a local government that actually represented all the people of Hong Kong, instead of Legco representatives representing various business sectors like banking, the legal profession, the retail industry, property owners, etc).

China agreed during those negotiations to gradually increase the number of Legco members elected from geographic constituencies, and to leave basic freedoms of speech, press, etc. untouched "for 50 years." But when students rose up to protest the arrests of Hong Kong residents and their deportation to face trials in China, it set in motion a confrontation between democracy advocates in Hong Kong and authoritarians in Beijing, and ultimately to a new Beijing-imposed national security law for Hong Kong that has turned the city into essentially just another bit of China. But again, while it was certainly a draconian over-reaction to legitimate local protests, that action by China is not a violation of international law — just violation of an agreement between a departing (and loathed) colonial power, a legacy of the European Opium War against China, and a new vastly more powerful China. It's a bit like the US's brutal crackdown on immigrants at the Mexican border or on Native defenders of water rights in North Dakota. Disgusting, and perhaps criminal under US law, but hardly a violation of some kind of "rules-based international order." Indeed, Native American nations that had treaties with the US and were promised sovereign lands forever in those treaties actually have a better ground to challenge US abuses before the UN than people do people in Hong Kong or Taiwan, where the issues are clearly, from an international law perspective, would appear to be internal Chinese domestic ones.

As for Russia, in the 204 plebiscite in Crimea following the coup in Kiev, some 97% of the population there voted that they wanted to leave Ukraine and return to being part of Russia, as the peninsula had been until 1954, when new Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, as a gift to the region he had grown up in, transferred Crimea from the Russian Soviet to the Ukrainian Soviet. The US has criticized that plebiscite as somehow fraudulent (Crimea is about 85% ethnic Russian). With 85% of eligible people voting, that plebiscite provided Russia with what it considered to be the justification for reclaiming jurisdiction over Crimea. Russia's action, criticized by the US as "aggression," was in fact less of a violation of democratic norms though than the massive disenfranchisement of blacks and other people of color in Republican-run "red" states of the US — a process that is now being accelerated to warp speed with the approach of the 2022 off-year Congressional elections. If the Biden administration really cared about justice and democracy it would be laser-focused on defending voter rights in the US, not on shipping deadly weapons to Ukraine.

If the US government cared about following a "rules-based international order," then it would pull all US military forces out of Syria, pull the US Navy out of the Persian Gulf, stop using drones to kill people in Yemen, Somalia, and elsewhere, stop sending US Special Forces wherever the president wants to send them, and rejoin the World Court, agreeing to respect its adjudication of violations of international rules and laws.

Then we wouldn't have to listen to all the hypocritical crap uttered by Biden, Blinken and their ilk.

Someday, I'm sure there will come a reckoning, when US leaders will finally be held to

account for their long record of crimes against humanity. Until then, we will have to endure all this epic hypocrisy.

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