

ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL WAR
Norman Balabanian
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From its inception, "expansion" was the operative principle of the U.S. – and expand across the continent the US did -- at the expense of Native American tribes, Mexico, and Spain.

A 19th century American slogan was "Manifest Destiny". But when that expansion across the continent was completed and the western frontier had disappeared, then what??? Frederick Turner and Brooks Adams proclaimed in the 1890s that American "democracy" could be preserved only by a foreign policy of expansion. That is, the former practice of dislodging, dispossessing, and killing the Native Americans would have to be applied across the seas.

The first opportunity arose in the same decade, in 1898, as the Cuban people were succeeding in overthrowing their Spanish colonizers. The United States seized Cuba from a weakened Spain and went on at the same time to take from Spain: Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam. "Gunboat diplomacy" -- as a euphemism for force -- was a term coined to describe the U.S. relationship to other nations.

Fast forward to the time following WWII. It became clear to those in power that openness and democracy would not serve the goals of the powerful. Rather, some things would have to be kept secret – not just from potential enemies but from the American people. In 1948, legislation was passed creating the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Agency (NSA). These agencies operate in secret; their activities are kept hidden from the American people -- even their budgets. Their plans and activities subvert democracy.

A couple of examples of these activities.

- In 1954 the NSA decided the U.S. would subvert the elections slated for all Vietnam in 1956. "We" would not permit them to take place because the authorities did not like the anticipated outcome – President Eisenhower predicted that Ho Chi Minh would have won a Vietnam-wide election by at least 80%. The result was over 2 decades of war, resulting in a ravaged land and many dead --over 3 million Vietnamese, and almost 60, 000 Americans.
- Soon after the Nicaraguans overthrew their long-time (over 40 years!), U.S.-backed, Somoza dictatorship in 1979, the CIA trained a mercenary force (the Contras) to carry out subversive actions to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. Among the CIA activities was mining the harbors of Nicaragua – a clear international crime. When Nicaragua brought these U.S. actions before the World Court, the U.S. showed its disdain for law by rejecting the World Court's ruling against it in 1984. So much for the rule of law.
- From its inception, the CIA has been actively engaged in manipulating electoral results in many countries and in helping to overthrow legitimate governments whose crime was to act independently from the interests of American corporations. (Cases include Guatemala in 1954, Iran in 1956, Brazil in 1964, Indonesia in 1965, among others.)

Then came the tragic events of September 11, 2001. These were crimes of the highest order. The targets were symbols of American power: financial, military, and political

- The World Trade Center as a symbol of American financial power.
- The Pentagon as a symbol of American military power.
- The White House or Capitol Hill, each the symbol of American political power, was the probable intended target of the fourth plane.

In the callous American terminology created during the Gulf War in 1991, the thousands of individuals who lost their lives in the September 11 attacks constituted "collateral damage"—both passengers and those in the buildings or near them. The same terminology could apply to the countless people who lost their livelihoods. They were not specifically targeted. In such language, it could be said that the hijackers themselves constituted "volunteer collateral damage".

Individuals or organizations that conceived of and funded the operation remain at large (as of early December). How should such individuals or organizations be brought to justice? There exists just one mechanism through which this can legitimately be done: the United Nations and international tribunals established to deal with such crimes. No individual government – or coalition of governments – has the legitimacy to undertake actions of war for bringing individuals or organizations to justice. No amount of self-justified chest pounding exonerates leaders of individual governments who undertake such actions, without even disclosing relevant evidence. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, military actions carried out by the US and Britain in Afghanistan are against international law.

The United Nations was established in 1947 after the devastation of WWII, largely through the efforts of the United States. The Security Council of the UN is the relevant body to deal with the matter under discussion, just as it dealt with the Iraq-Kuwait matter in 1991. As for international tribunals, they now exist for certain specific purposes – e.g. the tribunal in The Hague before which Milosevic and various others have been and are now being judged.

Work has been underway to establish an International Criminal Court (ICC) with jurisdiction that could deal with such criminal actions as the September 11 events. At present, the U.S. is impeding this effort by its reluctance to support the ICC. In fact, there is now a bill before Congress, misleadingly titled "American Service Members' Protection Act of 2001", that would require the President to refuse to cooperate with the ICC in any way! Senators should be inundated with demands to fight that bill.

Under the circumstances that were created by the perpetrators of the September 11 tragedy, citizens should fear for the well being of the people of the United States. They should be fearful of actions by a President and an Administration whose electoral legitimacy is in question, actions that diminish American civil liberties, reward the wealthiest and leave the poorest among us much further behind.