



News & Views

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DENIAL IS NOT AN OPTION

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ARE WE OR ARE WE NOT THE GOOD GUYS

— liberating oppressed peoples, eliminating weapons of mass destruction, maintaining law and order around the world, improving the lives of the less fortunate in developing countries? So why do so many others have such a negative opinion about us?

It's not a terribly difficult question to answer, but Americans seem to be in denial.

On February 24, Glenn Kessler and Mike Allen of the Washington Post wrote: "The messages from U.S. embassies around the globe have become urgent and disturbing: Many people in the world increasingly think President Bush is a greater threat to world peace than Iraqi President Saddam Hussein."

On May 16, a Gallup International poll found that, "Majorities in all other countries think that as a result of recent military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, the world is a more dangerous place."

A BBC poll released on June 16 stated that, "Nearly two-thirds of respondents to an international poll for the BBC say they have an unfavorable opinion of George W Bush."

A few examples should help Americans understand why others have such a negative opinion about us:

INTERNATIONAL LAW: Multi-billionaire George Soros has written: "The United States has become the greatest obstacle to establishing the rule of law in international affairs."

In one way or another, we have not lived up to our obligations under the: International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966); Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (1972); Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1979); UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982); Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (1996); Kyoto Protocol (1997); Chemical Weapons Convention (1998); Biological Weapons Convention (2001); Nonproliferation and Test Ban Treaties (2002); International Criminal Court (July 1, 2002).

We have signaled to the world that the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties no longer binds

us. Under the convention, a country that has signed a treaty cannot act to defeat the purpose of that treaty even if does not intend to ratify it. Instead we have been bullying and bribing other states to sign bilateral agreements to circumvent the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

Yet, we do not hesitate to seek satisfaction from the UN and other international bodies when it is our interests that are at risk.

While threatening pre-emptive strikes on states that we believe are seeking weapons of mass destruction, we continue to increase our stockpiles of those weapons, thereby, encouraging others to attempt to do the same.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice unanimously held that Article VI of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty obligates states to "bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects." Our recently released Nuclear Posture Review makes a mockery of our commitments and the Court's ruling.

We have shown an utter disregard for international conventions on human rights by holding "illegal combatants" in a legal limbo at Guantanamo. These prisoners have been tortured, and denied rights under both American law and international law.

We rounded up hundreds of Muslims in the U.S., and kept them in jails without being charged or allowed to communicate with family or lawyers. Of the 82,000 Muslims who voluntarily registered at the request of the Justice Department, 13,000 face deportation.

Our actions have thrown the entire system of international law into chaos.

FOREIGN AID: Every dollar contributed to the World Bank, claims the U.S. Treasury Department, returns two dollars to the U.S. economy. Our foreign aid programs have enriched the elites; they have done little for the less fortunate.

According to development expert David C. Korten, "The World Bank has served as an export-financing facility for large Northern-based corporations. The IMF has served as the debt collector for Northern-based financial institutions. GATT has served to create a corporate bill of rights

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News & Views

July 4, 2003, Page 2

www.tnwf.org

protecting the rights of the world's largest corporations against the intrusions of people, communities, and democratically elected governments."

Harvard professor Amy Chua writes: "For the last twenty years the United States has been promoting throughout the non-Western world raw, laissez-faire capitalism — a form of markets that the West abandoned long ago . . . It is striking to note that at no point in history did any Western nation ever implement laissez-faire capitalism and overnight universal suffrage at the same time — the precise formula of free market democracy currently being pressed on developing countries around the world."

And even though California's model of electric utility restructuring has clearly failed, the U.S. Agency for International Development is aggressively promoting this model for developing countries.

Joseph Stiglitz, recipient of the 2001 Nobel Prize in economics, compares free trade policies promoted by the IMF to the Opium Wars in which the West used military blockades to force open markets for unbalanced trade.

IRAQ: 750 years after the Mongols destroyed Baghdad — the cradle of civilization — we have done the same. Iraq neither attacked us nor threatened us. We invaded Iraq claiming it was an "imminent threat." We are occupying Iraq in order to install a "democracy" that is to our liking, we have taken over their oil fields, and the Iraqis want us out.

Senator Robert C. Byrd, in a speech on March 19, said, "We cannot convince the world of the necessity of war for one simple reason. This is not a war of necessity, but a war of choice."

Iraq's highest ranking defector, Hussein Kamel, according to the UN transcript of his debriefing, had told the CIA, British intelligence, and UN inspectors in 1995, that Iraq had destroyed all its chemical and biological weapons. General Kamel was Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, and for 10 years he ran Iraq's nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile programs.

And even if Iraq possessed the weapons we claim they did, it would be suicidal for them to use those weapons against the U.S. or their neighbors.

Both Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and our invasion of Iraq were illegal. At our insistence, Iraq suffered 12 years of crippling sanctions, which killed a million or more Iraqis. Iraq is still paying

reparations for its invasion of Kuwait. Will we pay for our invasion of Iraq? No — we aim to profit from it.

ISRAEL: Thomas Stauffer, a consulting economist, estimates that Israel, since 1973, has cost the United States about \$1.6 trillion. A Pew survey released in early June reported that in 20 of the 21 countries polled the U.S. was considered too supportive of Israel — our double standards are obvious. The largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is in Israel — the recipient of the biggest portion of our foreign aid.

If we truly wish to rid the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction, how can we ignore Israel's? Article 14 of UN Security Council Resolution 687, passed in 1991 at the conclusion of the Gulf War, has "the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles for their delivery and the objective of a global ban on chemical weapons."

If we went after Iraq with such zeal for invading Kuwait, why have we not shown similar zeal in ending Israel's 35-year, illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza? We have given a green light to Israel's assassination of Palestinians. Our Middle East roadmap, writes Columbia University Professor Edward Said, "is not about a plan for peace so much as a plan for pacification: it is about putting an end to Palestine as a problem."

AMERICANS who couldn't be bothered by all of this need only look at our defense budget — greater than that of the next 15 countries combined, it takes away funds which would otherwise go toward education, health care, social security, infrastructure development, etc.

The "rogue states" and "axis of evil" combined spend on defense less than half of what we spend on covert operations alone. The Iraq war alone is costing us about one billion dollars per week!

To sustain this massive spending on "defense," our government has to keep making new "enemies," use them to scare us, and take away more and more of our freedoms to protect us from these "enemies." At risk is our way of life, and democracy itself.

In a democratic society we must take responsibility for the actions of our elected leaders. If we wish to preserve that which we commemorate this 4th of July, then denial is not an option.

