

# **U.S. Foreign Policy -- A Study in Hypocrisy**

**By William Blum**

My experience in writing and speaking about what U.S. foreign policy has really done in and to the world is that it's often like telling people that I was abducted by aliens, except that many of those people would sooner believe the abduction story.

For those of you who are not heavily into alien abduction stories, let me try to set the proper atmosphere by mentioning two of the laws of politics which came out of the Watergate scandal of the 1970s. (It doesn't matter if you don't know much about Watergate; the laws are still understandable.)

The First Watergate Law of American Politics states: "No matter how paranoid you are, what the government is actually doing is worse than you imagine."

The Second Watergate Law states: "Don't believe anything until it's been officially denied."

Both laws are still on the books. Keep them handy in your head.

Now, I'd like you to imagine a few things. First, imagine that the President is speaking to a group of you and your friends, and he begins to preach the virtues of vegetarianism, extolling the benefits to your health and to the environment. Then, suddenly, he pulls out a nice juicy hamburger and takes a big bite of it.

I'm sure that even the least cynical amongst you would have no problem seeing a contradiction.

## **Elections**

Imagine now that the President begins speaking about the virtues of elections, declaring that no progress can be made in the underdeveloped world without elections, equating elections with democracy, and democracy with elections, making it clear that the promotion of free and fair elections is a basic tenet of American foreign policy.

How many of you would see a contradiction there? Not many, I would think. Yet you should. For the United States has seriously interfered in elections all over the world for decades, and has overthrown several governments which came into power through free and fair elections, as in Chile, Australia, Bulgaria, Brazil, Nicaragua, and British Guiana.<sup>{1}</sup> First it was the CIA that was in this nasty business, then the National Endowment for Democracy. How many of you have heard of the National Endowment for Democracy? More about them later.

## **Drugs**

Now I would like you to imagine that the President, or any other American government leader, stood before you and launched into an attack upon drugs -- all the evils, real and alleged, about narcotics, and how so many different agencies of the U.S. government are engaged in a world-wide campaign to wipe this evil off the face of the earth. This is a line you've all heard many times from many different people in authority.

And this should be viewed no less cynically than the remarks about vegetarianism and elections. For the U.S. government has been deeply involved in facilitating drug trafficking in many corners of the world, including the United States, for almost 50 years, whenever it served a larger foreign policy agenda.<sup>{2}</sup>

## **Terrorism**

Next on your imagination list is terrorism. Now, surely American leaders are against terrorism -- categorically, no ifs or buts, no exceptions. ... Of course they're not.

In 1998, the State Department issued a report listing Cuba amongst those nations alleged to "sponsor terrorism". Curious about this, I called up the State Department and was connected to what they called "The Terrorism Desk", where a man told me that Cuba was included because "They harbor terrorists."

"So does the United States," I replied. "The Cuban exiles in Miami have committed hundreds of terrorist acts, in the U.S. and abroad."

The gentleman exploded. "Sir," he cried in a rising voice, "that is a fatuous remark and I will not listen to such nonsense!" And he hung up.

It's always fascinating to observe how a True Believer reacts to a sudden, unexpected and unanswerable threat to his fundamental ideological underpinnings.

The Cuban exiles are in fact probably the longest lasting and most prolific terrorist group in the world, and they're still at it. In the past year or so they've been busy bombing hotels in Havana, all directed from Miami.{3}

Cubans are not the only terrorists enjoying safe haven in the United States. There are Haitians, Salvadoreans, Guatemalans, Indonesians, and others guilty of terrible crimes against humanity, walking around free as can be in the United States. They were, and perhaps still are, allies of U.S. foreign policy objectives.{4}

Take the example of Former Guatemalan Defense Minister Hector Gramajo. In 1995 a U.S. court ordered Gramajo to pay \$47.5 million in damages to eight Guatemalans and a U.S. citizen for his responsibility in the torture of the American and the massacre of family members of the Guatemalans (among thousands of other Indians whose death he was responsible for). Gramajo was served a court summons in 1991 as he graduated from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, where he had studied on a scholarship provided by the U.S. government. The judge stated that "The evidence suggests that Gramajo devised and directed the implementation of an indiscriminate campaign of terror against civilians." It was only following the court judgement that the Defense Department withdrew Gramajo's invitation to speak at a military seminar.{5}

For many years, and in many ways, the United States has worked with and helped such terrorists in numerous countries. Washington has taught them how to bomb, how to torture, how to assassinate, even provided them with terrorism manuals.{6}

One commonly accepted definition of terrorism is: Violence directed against civilians in order to intimidate or coerce a government or its citizens in furtherance of a political objective. The 40,000 American bombing sorties of the Gulf War and those since have claimed the lives of many thousands of Iraqi civilians in an attempt to influence the government of Saddam Hussein or induce his overthrow. Likewise the American

bombings of civilians in Panama, Libya and Grenada in the 1980s directed against *those* governments.

Imagine that the cold war is still going on, and the Soviet Union, citing some very minor pretext, filled the skies with bombers over, say, Greece, bombing the civilian population, killing hundreds or thousands, making thousands more homeless ... without having been first attacked by Greece, or threatened in any way by Greece. If this, at the time, had been called an act of terrorism, who would have objected? Well, the scenario I just described is exactly what the United States did to Panama in 1989.{7}

The difference between an individual terrorist and a government in some cases may be simply that the former has a bomb but doesn't have an air force.

And many more examples of acts of terrorism by the U.S. government can be cited, even the more classic kind -- in 1985, in an attempt to assassinate a certain Muslim leader in Lebanon, the CIA arranged for a car bomb to go off. The bomb went off, and killed 80 people, but not including the Muslim leader.{8}

## **Human Rights**

Finally, there's human rights, one of the most repeated official slogans of recent years. But it's repeatedly ignored when it stands in the way of other goals or needs more important to Washington. When U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was asked if it wasn't hypocritical to punish Burma for human rights violations while refraining from sanctions against China for similar actions, she replied, "We have consistent principles and flexible tactics."{9}

When it comes to human rights, we must consider that it would be difficult to name a brutal right-wing dictatorship or a gross violator of human rights of the second half of the twentieth century that was not supported by the United States. And this includes, believe it or not, the notorious Pol Pot of Cambodia. Many of these dictators were not merely supported by the United States, they were put into power and kept in power against the wishes of the populace.{10}

For those of you who may be having difficulty swallowing what I've said so far, please consider the case of Gulf War Syndrome. Many thousands of American soldiers came

home from the Gulf War with unusual, debilitating ailments, but the Pentagon denied that they had been exposed to chemical weapons. Years went by while the GIs suffered terribly, and the Pentagon, inch by inch, was forced to move away from its denial until finally it had to admit that, yes, chemical weapons depots had been bombed, and there were probably releases of the deadly poisons. This took a few years. The Pentagon brass also did not warn American servicemen of the dangers of the depleted uranium weapons they were using. The people of Iraq have found that out themselves the hard way with what is claimed to be an epidemic of cancers.{11} If the Pentagon had admitted right away what it knew all along, the soldiers might have had a proper diagnosis early on and received appropriate care sooner. The cost in terms of human suffering was incalculable.

The moral of this story is that if the U.S. government does not care about the health and welfare of its own soldiers, how can it be argued, or believed, that it cares about foreign peoples?

Free elections, drug trafficking, terrorism, human rights, people's lives ... and I could just as easily throw in the other platitudes that American leaders know will elicit Pavlovian reactions from the public -- respect for international law, peace, freedom, justice, democracy ... But I'm not making any of this up, it's all been well documented, much of it is in my book.

So what is it I'm saying here -- that the U.S. government does not care at *all* about any of these nice things?

No, I'm saying that these nice things are not *principles* of American foreign policy, not ideals or goals of policy in and of themselves. All else being equal, Washington policymakers, I'm sure, would love to take the high moral ground on all those issues. But all else is not equal. All else is almost never equal.

## **Overthrowing Governments**

Since 1945, the United States has attempted to overthrow more than 35 foreign governments, and to put down more than 20 popular revolutions being waged against repressive regimes. American officials, who would not dare to interfere in matters of state of Kansas, do not hesitate to do so in the affairs of other nations.{12}

Careful study of these numerous interventions show clearly that the engine of American foreign policy has been fueled not by a devotion to any kind of morality, nor even simple decency, but rather by the necessity to serve other masters, and I've broken this down to four such imperatives:

- 1) making the world safe for American transnational corporations;
- 2) enhancing the financial statements of defense contractors at home who have contributed generously to members of congress;
- 3) preventing the rise of any society that might serve as a successful example of an alternative to the capitalist model; and
- 4) extending political and economic hegemony over as wide an area as possible, as befits a "great power".

During the cold war, these policies were carried out under the waving banner -- under the pretext one could say -- of fighting a moral crusade against what cold warriors convinced themselves, the American people, and much of the world, was the existence of an evil International Communist Conspiracy. Did the International Communist Conspiracy actually exist? If it actually existed, why did the cold warriors of the CIA and other government agencies have to go to such extraordinary lengths of exaggeration? If they really and truly believed in the existence of a diabolic, monolithic International Communist Conspiracy, why did they have to invent so much about it to convince the American people, the Congress, and the rest of the world of its evil existence? Why did they have to stage manage, entrap, plant evidence, plant stories, create all kinds of imaginary fears?

It was always a fraud; there was never any such animal as the International Communist Conspiracy. There were, as there still are, people living in misery, rising up in protest against an oppressive government, a government usually supported by the United States. To Washington, this was proof that the Soviet Union (or Cuba or Vietnam, etc., functioning as Moscow's surrogate) was again acting as the proverbial "outside agitator" -- the seemingly magical power of communists everywhere who, with a twist of their red wrist, could transform peaceful, happy people into furious guerrillas.

Of course, now American propagandists can't even pretend that such a conspiracy exists to use as a pretext for intervention, so they have to come up with new enemies all

the time. America cherishes her enemies. Without enemies, she is a nation without purpose and direction; without a mission. So one month it's North Korea, the next month Libya, or Iraq, or Iran, or Sudan, or that old reliable, Cuba. The Pentagon and the CIA need enemies to justify their swollen budgets, to give themselves a mission in the aftermath of the Soviet Union, and to aggrandize and protect their jobs. And in place of the International Communist Conspiracy, Washington now often claims it is fighting a War Against Drugs, which as we shall see, is almost as phoney.

Another justification for intervention often expressed by the United States has been the supposed need for "stabilizing" a particular country or region. But in judging how much merit there is in such a claim, it helps to keep in mind that Cuba is one of the most stable nations in the world. The same government for almost 40 years, no civil war, no ethnic conflicts, no provinces which want to secede ... yet Washington would love to overthrow the whole system. Cuba must have the wrong kind of stability.

## **Cuba**

Of the four imperatives guiding U.S. foreign policy, which I described above, probably the most important during the past half century has been preventing the rise of any society that might serve as a successful example of an alternative to the capitalist model. And the best example of this is Cuba. How else to explain 40 years of unmitigated hostility from the most powerful nation in the world against a tiny island nation? Have you heard of the motto of the CIA: "Proudly Overthrowing Fidel Castro Since 1962." I call my Cuba chapter "The Unforgivable Revolution".

During President Clinton's time in office, the sentiment was proclaimed on so many occasions by the president and other political leaders, and dutifully reiterated by the media, that the thesis: "Cuba is the only non-democracy in the Western Hemisphere" is now nothing short of received wisdom in the United States.

Let us examine this thesis carefully for it has a highly interesting implication.

During the period of the Cuban revolution, 1959 to the present, Latin America has witnessed a terrible parade of human rights violations -- systematic, routine torture; legions of "disappeared" people; government-supported death squads picking off selected individuals; massacres *en masse* of peasants, students and other groups, shot

down in cold blood. The worst perpetrators of these acts during all or part of this period have been the governments and associated paramilitary squads of El Salvador, Guatemala, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Uruguay, Haiti and Honduras.

Not even Cuba's worst enemies have charged the Cuban government with any of these violations, and if one further considers education and health care -- both of which are guaranteed by the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and the "European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" -- areas in which Cuba has consistently ranked at or near the top in Latin America, then it would appear that during the near-40 years of its revolution, Cuba has enjoyed one of the very best human-rights records in all of Latin America.

If, despite this record, the United States can insist that Cuba is the only "non-democracy" in the Western Hemisphere, we are left with the inescapable conclusion that this thing called "democracy", as seen from the White House, may have little or nothing to do with many of the most cherished human rights. Indeed, numerous pronouncements emanating from Washington officialdom over the years make plain that "democracy", at best, or at most, is equated solely with elections and civil liberties. Not even jobs, food and shelter are part of the equation.

Thus, a nation with hordes of hungry, homeless, untended sick, barely literate, unemployed, and/or tortured people, whose loved ones are being disappeared and/or murdered with state connivance, can be said to be living in a "democracy" -- its literal Greek meaning of "rule of the people" implying that this is the kind of life the people actually *want* -- provided that every two years or four years they have the right to go to a designated place and put an X next to the name of one or another individual who promises to relieve their miserable condition, but who will, typically, do virtually nothing of the kind; and provided further that in this society there is at least a certain minimum of freedom -- how much being in large measure a function of one's wealth -- for one to express ones views about the powers-that-be and the workings of the society, without undue fear of punishment, regardless of whether expressing these views has any influence whatsoever over the way things are.

It is not by chance that the United States has defined democracy in this narrow manner. Throughout the cold war, the absence of "free and fair" multiparty elections and

adequate civil liberties were what marked the Soviet foe and its satellites. These nations, however, provided their citizens with a relatively decent standard of living insofar as employment, food, health care, education, etc., without omnipresent Brazilian torture or Guatemalan death squads. At the same time, many of America's Third World allies in the cold war -- members of what Washington still likes to refer to as "The Free World" -- were human-rights disaster areas, who could boast of little other than the 30-second democracy of the polling booth and a tolerance for dissenting opinion so long as it didn't cut too close to the bone or threaten to turn into a movement.

Naturally, the only way to win cold-war propaganda points with team lineups like these, was to extol your team's brand of virtue and damn the enemy's lack of it, designating the former "democracy" and the latter "totalitarianism".

Needless to say, civil liberties and elections are not trifling accomplishments of mankind. Countless individuals have suffered torture and death in their pursuit. And there would be ample credit due Washington if, in fact, in the post-World War II period, the U.S. had been using its pre-eminent position in the world, its overwhelming "superpower" status, to spread these accomplishments -- to act as the unfailing global champion of free and fair elections, multiple parties, a free press, a free labor movement, habeas corpus, and other civil liberty icons. The historical record, however, points in the opposite direction.

As mentioned above, American policies have habitually supported dictatorships, which have been very accommodating to U.S. foreign policy objectives in return for American military might that kept them in power.

Some of you are perhaps thinking that all that I've said so far MAY have been the way it was during the long dark night of the cold war, but that's now all over and done with. But I would say that nothing much has changed. I do not even believe that the cold war is over. Of course if the cold war is defined as a worldwide conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, then, certainly, the cold war is over. But if the cold war is seen not as an East-West contention, but rather a North-South contention, primarily as an American effort to prevent the rise of any society that might serve as a successful example of an alternative to the capitalist model, then that certainly is still going on.

Since the supposed end of the cold war, including right now, even as you read this, American special operations forces, like the Green Berets, are being deployed in

virtually every country in Latin America and many other parts of the world. One of the prime functions of these special operations forces is to help prepare the host governments to suppress domestic opponents, real or potential.{13}

## **School of the Americas**

For a number of years now, there have been protests outside of the School of the Americas in the state of Georgia because so many of the school's graduates have been involved in very serious human rights abuses in Latin America, often involving torture. The U.S. military insists that it teaches its students to respect democracy. However, it must be noted that wars between nations in Latin America have been extremely rare. The question which thus arises is: Who are these military officers being trained to fight if not the army of another country? Well, who's left? Who else but their own citizens? Over the years, the United States has trained thousands of Latin American officers to suppress their own people, to stifle dissent, to choke off anything that looks or smells like a socialist movement; in short, to make the country safe for American geo-political and economic ends.{14}

The U.S. has been supplying large amounts of military hardware and training to the armed forces of Mexico, Colombia, and Peru, which routinely murder their own citizens, either singly or in bunches, torture them, disappear them ... the usual scenario; and as usual these violations of human rights do not noticeably impede American foreign policy decisions. Why? Because in each of these countries -- as well as others outside of Latin America like Turkey and Indonesia -- there are, or have been, left-wing movements in opposition to the government. And a left-wing movement that takes power means, to Washington, a government that will not lie down and happily become an American client state, that will not welcome foreign investment with open arms, that will not be unconcerned about the effects of such investment upon the welfare of its own people, a government that will not allow American bases on its soil. US officials refer to such governments as "unstable", and like to intervene to bring "stability" to them. These are the exact words they use.

Thus it is that such movements can not be allowed to come to power. And if they're already in power, they can not be allowed to remain so, or at least life has to be made very difficult for them, like with Cuba. And this has been exactly the basis of American foreign policy for this entire century, both before and after the existence of the Soviet

Union -- from Colombia, Panama and the Dominican Republic in the first decade of the century, to Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Haiti in the last decade.

Now if you don't want to label these present policies as "cold war", that's okay, but I think it's important to recognize the continuum of such policies. For many years, the official excuse given by Washington for interfering in the affairs of other nations was that the U.S. was "fighting communism". Now that that pretext is difficult to use, what is often said instead is that the United States is "fighting drug trafficking". That excuse is given for supplying the government of Colombia large amounts of military hardware and training its troops, even though the government and its paramilitary allies (semi-private armies) have been very heavily involved in dealing drugs themselves and protecting drug manufacturers.{15}

## **The Media**

One would think that such contradictions -- and the ones pointed out at the beginning -- are so obvious that American policymakers would not dare to use these pretexts. But they do, knowing that the press and congress are not going to be too hard on them. We are, after all, not speaking of anything as important as a sex scandal. Buried in a story about U.S. aid to Colombia to "fight drugs", you will occasionally find a sentence or two about the Colombian government's involvement in drugs. But you will not see any headlines proclaiming "U.S. policy in Colombia contradicts itself." There will not be a congressional investigation into such a fraudulent policy. Everyone is content to not rock the boat. Their careers depend on it. And the public remains blissfully ignorant, except for those few who make it a point to closely watch what the government is doing. They write articles which appear in relatively obscure publications, they spread the word all over the internet, they even write books. But until it becomes a repeated headline in the *New York Times* and part of the evening TV news night after night, you're not going to see much change in policies.

It used to be very rare that the details of U.S. interventions appeared in public, except in little-known and/or foreign leftwing publications, which the U.S. mass media could easily ignore. Consider this: During the early 1950s, the CIA instigated several military incursions into Communist China. In 1960, CIA planes, without any provocation, bombed the sovereign nation of Guatemala. In 1973, the Agency encouraged a bloody revolt against the government of Iraq. On each occasion, no announcement of any kind

was made in Washington. In the American mass media nothing was even hinted at. Therefore, in the American mind, these events did not happen.

But in the mid-1970s, sparked by Vietnam and Watergate, this ease of coverup began to fade.

It was a remarkable period. The Pike committee in the House, the Church committee in the Senate, and the Rockefeller Commission, created by the White House, were all busy investigating the CIA. Seemingly every other day there was a new headline about the discovery of some awful thing the CIA had been doing for years. The Agency was getting a very bad name, and it caused the powers-that be much embarrassment.

## **The National Endowment for Democracy**

Something had to be done. What was done was not to stop doing these awful things. Of course not. What was done was to shift many of these awful things to a new organization, with a nice-sounding name -- The National Endowment for Democracy. The NED. The idea was that the NED would do somewhat overtly what the CIA had been doing covertly for decades, and thus, hopefully, eliminate the stigma associated with CIA covert activities.

It was a masterpiece. Of politics, of public relations, and of cynicism.

Thus it was that in 1983, the National Endowment for Democracy was set up to "support democratic institutions throughout the world through private, nongovernmental efforts". Actually, it's funded by Congress and NED engages in much of the same kinds of interference in the internal affairs of foreign nations which were the hallmark of the CIA.

The NED has financed, advised and supported in many ways political parties, election campaigns, unions, student groups, book publishers, newspapers, other media, even guerrillas in Afghanistan, and, in general, organizations and individuals which are pro-capitalist and anti-socialist.

For example, for the 1990 elections in Nicaragua, NED poured in millions of dollars to subvert and defeat the Sandinista government. They helped organize the opposition, UNO, building up the parties and organizations that formed and supported this coalition,

supplying all their needs, from office furniture to cars, and all kinds of election experts coming down from the United States. UNO was the only political party to receive U.S. aid, even though eight other opposition parties fielded candidates. And the winner was ... UNO. President Bush called it "a victory for democracy".

In the 1980s and the early 1990s, NED was active in Haiti, working against Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide -- a charismatic priest whose congregation was the poor -- and other progressives. Between 1990 and 1992, NED further increased the U.S. national debt by granting 250,000 dollars to the Cuban-American National Foundation, the ultra-fanatic anti-Castro Miami group, which, as the *New York Times* revealed in July, heavily financed Luis Paucity Carries, one of the most prolific and pitiless terrorists of modern times.

NED has also been very active in Eastern Europe. In June of 1990, the Bulgarian Socialist Party won a free and fair election and assumed power. Then, the NED and other arms of the U.S. foreign policy machine went into action, financing and advising opposition forces in the art of creating chaos, using paralyzing labor walkouts and protest actions of various kinds. The president was soon forced to resign. He was replaced by someone from the opposition.

For Washington policy makers, the important thing, the ideological bottom line, was that the Bulgarian Socialist Party could not, and would not, be given the chance to prove that a democratic, socialist-oriented mixed economy could succeed in Eastern Europe while the capitalist model was failing all around it.

Nor, apparently, would it be allowed in nearby Albania.

In 1991, a Communist government won overwhelming endorsement in elections there, and once again, NED stepped in with its money and its destabilization experts. To make a long story short, the new government collapsed within three months.

And in 1996 NED had its team in place in Mongolia to help elect a government that was expected to be more hospitable to transnational corporations. In the last year, NED has been organizing in Haiti to create political forces which can offer an alternative to the progressive and moderately anti-imperialist agenda of Aristide and his followers. Amongst the groups that NED has been working with in this endeavor, are several far

right-wing offspring of the Duvalier dictatorship, which was a serious practitioner of human rights violations and supported by the United States for decades until ousted in the 1980s.

A man named Allen Weinstein, who helped to establish NED, was quite candid when he said in 1991: "A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA."

The NED, like the CIA before it, calls what it does supporting democracy. The governments and the movements who are the targets of NED's policies call it destabilization.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about NED is that you'd have to look long and hard in the American mass media to find anything of what I've just told you of its activities abroad. So it's worked ... NED can get away with all kinds of dubious actions for which the CIA used to be condemned.{16}

## **The "Unsavories"**

In response to charges that the U.S. government has worked closely with human rights violators, including those guilty of terrorism and the murder of Americans, we have been told repeatedly and officially in recent years that the CIA has no choice but to associate with such "unsavory" persons if it wishes to obtain certain important information in foreign countries. Well, not to put too fine a point on it, this is humbug. It should be clearly understood that these unsavory people are not simply informants. Consider the following points:

To the CIA and the U.S. military these men are America's allies on the same side of a civil conflict.

American propaganda insists that these men are fighting for freedom and democracy.

The U.S. champions their cause, for it is America's cause as well.

The U.S. selects them to attend American military schools and bestows graduation certificates upon them.

The U.S. wines and dines them in the United States, gives them gifts, sets them up with prostitutes.

The U.S. trains them and gives them their uniforms.

The U.S. teaches them methods of torture and methods of assassination.

The U.S. provides them with information about individuals from the CIA's mammoth international databases. Many of these individuals then wind up tortured and murdered.

The U.S. covers up the atrocities of these unsavories.

The U.S. facilitates and covers up their drug trafficking.

The U.S. socializes with them. They are America's friends.

The payments, benefits and support the U.S. showers upon these "unsavories" necessarily bring the United States more than information -- they bring influence and control. The question to be then asked is: For what ends is this influence and control used?

If in fact the United States must take sides in a civil war, why must it always be on the side that is far and away the greater violator of human rights, the side of the unsavories?

## **Extremism**

It's ironic, but the far right in the United States is more open to believing the worst about American foreign policy than are most liberals. I think it's because those on the far right, being extremists themselves, do not instinctively shy away from believing that the government is capable of extreme behavior, at home or abroad. The left and the right share a profound cynicism about our government's very intentions.

But those in between the two poles have a hard time accepting such views. They may think that a certain aspect of U.S. foreign policy is a mistake, a blunder, doing more harm than good, is self defeating, and so on, but they don't cross the line to believe that the U.S. does not really care at all about the welfare of the foreign people involved.

U.S. foreign policy can seem awfully complicated and confusing at times, but I maintain that one can get a much clearer understanding of it if one looks for things like the four imperatives I've named, and not look for any moral motivation at all. Even a casual reading of history tells us that when it comes to the behavior of great powers, things are seldom what they seem, or what the world is told to believe.

Government leaders and the media decide what the issues and questions to be discussed are, they decide how many sides there are to each question, and what type of coverage is balanced, and the public typically swallows this. Even many of those who think they're being critical or dissenting -- they're only operating within the narrow confines of the debate as defined by others. Take the question of expanding NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, composed of Canada, the U.S. and 14 West European nations). The questions people in the West have been offered are: Should Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic be allowed into NATO? Should others be allowed in later? How much will it cost? Which nations will pay for it? And so on.

But who raises the question of whether NATO should exist at all?

Just imagine that NATO didn't exist. Imagine that NATO had never existed. Imagine that the world was exactly the way it is right now, but that there was no NATO. ... What argument could anyone give for the creation of such a body?

But NATO is a given. And so is the World Trade Organization. And the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). All the components of what former US president George Bush called the New World Order. You didn't have any real say about any of them, did you? None of us did. They all exist to smooth the way for the globalization of capitalism, to make it easier for the transnational corporations to invest, buy and sell in every corner of the world without being worried by national boundaries or national laws, and without being overly impeded by concerns about the environment or workers' rights. Everything in sight is being deregulated and privatized for these corporations. The world is being made safe for the transnationals.{17}

And NATO is quickly becoming the military arm of globalization. The United States and its allies in Western Europe are more and more bypassing the United Nations, because the UN is full of countries that don't think right -- they don't think like Americans or British or Germans or French. Many of them actually think it's a violation of international law when the U.S. and Britain bomb Iraq without any military provocation and without approval of the UN's Security Council. And Russia and China have a veto power in the Security Council. That just won't do. So watch NATO expand, not just in the number of its members, but in its self-granted powers to intervene, even outside of Europe.

Just as NATO is not seriously examined or questioned by the media, so too are many other aspects of US foreign policy. Take the announcement in early 1999 by U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen that \$6.6 billion is to be spent on a national missile defense system -- a revival of President Reagan's discredited Star Wars system. Can you imagine the social good that could be done with \$6.6 billion dollars? And how did Cohen defend this expenditure? He cited only one threat -- from North Korea.<sup>{18}</sup> North Korea! A country that can't feed its own people is going to wage a missile attack upon the United States? What possible reason -- other than a desire for mass national suicide -- could North Korea have for launching such an attack? There is absolutely no rational, sane reason to think that such a threat exists. But the average person, reading of Cohen's announcement, finds it very difficult to believe that one of their "leaders" could just step forward and publicly proclaim a crazy falsehood. They assume there must be *something* to what the man says.

What there is to it is primarily the second of the four imperatives of American foreign policy discussed above -- enhancing the financial statements of defense contractors at home who have contributed generously to members of congress. There is also another factor worth repeating -- The Pentagon needs enemies and major projects to justify its swollen budget, to give itself a mission in the post-cold war world, and to aggrandize and protect the jobs of its officials and military officers.

## **What to Do**

The question I'm most often asked is how to change the kind of behavior of U.S. foreign policy that I speak and write about. It's a very difficult question. It often seems that the bad guys have all power and all the wealth. And when all else fails, they have the police and the military. I think the two greatest barriers to social change anywhere in the world are:

- (1) the overwhelming tendency of police and soldiers to follow orders; and
- (2) the ease in which the vast majority of any population can be taught to believe whatever the ruling class would like them to believe.

But in all the movements for change that are active now, the individuals and the organizations have become much more sophisticated. From the sixties on, they've learned a lot about how power works. They've learned how to see behind the official lies. They've learned how to use technology to compile an enormous amount of

information, current and historical; how to put two and two together to come to conclusions which the mass media rarely mention, even when they're obvious; and to share it all with the world on the internet and elsewhere. This is a potent weapon for activists.

Noam Chomsky has written:

I don't have faith that the truth will prevail if it becomes known, but we have no alternative to proceeding on that assumption ... ideological managers act in ways that indicate that they share this belief. This is shown, for example, by the substantial efforts to conceal the obvious. After all, it would be easier just to tell the truth.

So I hope that I've made some of you think along pathways that are new to you. And to encourage you to look for alternative sources of news, information and analysis, in addition to what you're fed by the daily press and television. There's a whole other world out there, with a whole other kind of thinking. Go and explore it.

## NOTES

{1} William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*, see "elections" in index

{2} <http://members.aol.com/bblum6/drugs.htm>

{3} <http://members.aol.com/bblum6/cuba.htm>

{4} *Covert Action Quarterly* [CAQ] magazine (Washington, D.C.), #65, Fall 1998, p.45; *Miami Herald*, October 21, 1998, p.11A

{5} Guatemalan Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Update, April 21, 1995

{6} CAQ, #61, Summer 1997, pp.29-38

{7} *Killing Hope*, Panama chapter, not on my website, but available elsewhere on the internet, I believe

{8} Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987*, (New York, 1987), pp.396-7

{9} *Washington Post*, April 23, 1997, p.4

{10} *Killing Hope*, passim

{11} *Metal of Dishonor: Depleted Uranium: How the Pentagon radiates soldiers and civilians with DU weapons*, (International Action Center, New York, 1997)

{12} *Killing Hope*, passim

{13} *Washington Post*, July 12, 13, 14, 1998

{14} School of the Americas Watch, <http://www.soaw.org/index.html>

{15} Colombia Support Network, <http://www.igc.apc.org/csn/>

{16} For further information about the NED, see William Robinson, *A Faustian Bargain* (1992), passim

{17} New World Order, see <http://cyberjournal.org>

{18} *Washington Post*, January 21, 1999