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John Bolton and US Lawlessness

by Jon Basil Utley

The Bush administration's international lawlessness did not come from nowhere. Its intellectual foundations were laid long before 9/11 by neoconservative intellectuals such as United Nations Ambassador **John Bolton**. Now, with his Senate renomination hanging by a thread, he should be outed as a primary architect of the neocon nest at American Enterprise Institute. At the United Nations, he represents the neoconservatives who stand for everything that is hated about America – to paraphrase Winston Churchill, never have so few made so much disaster for so many.

Way back when Bush was still cutting brush in Texas in 1999, **Bolton said**, "It is a big mistake for us to grant any validity to international law even when it may seem in our short-term interest to do so – because, over the long term, the goal of those who think that international law really means anything are [sic] those who want to constrict the United States."

John Bolton helped put into reality the musings of neocon founding father Irving Kristol, who wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* Aug. 2, 1996, "With the end of the Cold War, what we really need is an obvious ideology and threatening enemy, one worthy of our mettle, one that can unite us in opposition." Long ago, I used to joke that they were looking for enemies worthy of American power, the Muslim world and China. Well, they have achieved half of their goal, and China is still in their sights.

Bolton was a major propagandist for all the lies that led us into the Iraq war. He is also a bosom buddy of the **Likud Lobby**, those who have done so much to destroy goodwill for America all over the world and make hypocrites of us when we talk of promoting democracy, human rights, and freedom.

During his nomination fight last year, 67 former top U.S. diplomats, State Department officials, and staffers of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency **sent a letter to Congress** [.pdf] stating the reasons for their opposition to the appointment. Of the signatories, 50 served under Republican administrations.

Bolton should not be approved by the U.S. Senate now that his (unconfirmed) temporary appointment is expiring. His removal would tell the world that America does care about the rule of law, that we do have **"a decent respect [for] the opinions of mankind,"** as our Founding Fathers wrote in our Declaration of Independence.

The current dispute over the Geneva Conventions is a natural consequence of Bolton's lead on international law. An assault on the U.S. Constitution itself is not far behind: witness administration and neoconservative demands to allow warrantless surveillance, abandon due process, gut the Fourth Amendment, and imprison citizens without legal recourse (**because of "evidence" obtained by torture**). As John Bolton might put it, *It is a big mistake for us to grant any validity to constitutional law – because, over the long term, the goal of those who think that constitutional law really means anything is to constrict the American empire.*

Anatol Lieven of the **New America Foundation** has written how incredible it is that America, which has


most benefited from the international rule of law, is bent on "kicking to pieces the hill of which it is king," the "rule-based liberal capitalist order." Now we have the dispute over torturing prisoners of war and the Bush administration's undermining of the Geneva Convention. In the past, smarter U.S. policymakers got the UN to approve and bestow "legality" on American ventures, such as the first Gulf War (foreigners even ended up paying most of its costs). An analogy might be that of the richest man in town arguing that he had his own bodyguards and would no longer be subject to the town's laws. Would he really be safer?

Listening to conservative talk radio we can hear red-state rednecks saying that we don't need allies, foreigners can go to hell, nuke Mecca, and America can and should do anything it wants in the world. The intellectual foundations for such views were provided by John Bolton and his ilk.

The United Nations figures prominently in the Armageddonites' fantasies for ending the world. For them, it represents "evil." Many of them would agree with Venezuela's Hugo Chávez that the devil speaks from the podium, though, of course, they wouldn't have George Bush in mind. They hate the UN and want Bolton to wreck it. Whether he succeeds at that or not, denying Bolton a Senate confirmation would show the world that neocons and "cowboys" face strong resistance to their domination over American foreign policy.

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