

The Real Problem is That it is Illegal for One Country to Invade Another Country

Posted by

Monday, 30 October 2006 01:50 - Last Updated Monday, 30 October 2006 01:50

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Toronto Star ~Linda McQuaig~ Much has changed in the way the mainstream media deal with the war in Iraq. Most commentators now acknowledge the war is a disaster and will hurt the Republicans badly in the upcoming U.S. midterm elections. But one thing hasn't changed ? the willingness to believe that the motives for war, however misguided, were basically honourable. So the criticism centres instead on the Bush administration's inept handling of the war. Canada's own Michael Ignatieff, the Liberal leadership front-runner, tries to slough off his former enthusiastic support for the war by now saying he hadn't "anticipated how incompetent the Americans would be."

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By **Linda McQuaig**

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But incompetence is a side issue. The real problem is, and always has been, that it is illegal ? not to mention immoral ? for a country to invade another country, in other words, to wage a war of aggression.

The fact that Iraq is the last unharvested oil bonanza on earth, in an era of increasingly fierce global competition for dwindling oil reserves, only makes U.S. motives all the more suspect.

As the Nuremberg Tribunal concluded after World War II: "War is essentially an evil thing ... To initiate a war of aggression, therefore, is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."

If the U.S. had a genuinely open media, there would be a ferocious debate raging about how to deal with the fact that Washington initiated a war of aggression that has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands ? possibly hundreds of thousands ? of Iraqis, and almost 3,000 Americans.

U.S. troops should be removed now.

As former Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern argued in Harper's, the withdrawal should be accompanied by a payment of about \$17 billion to compensate the Iraqi people for the immense suffering caused by the invasion. McGovern sets out in detail how the money should be allocated. He calculates that a U.S. pullout, even with a \$17 billion payment, would save the U.S. \$200 billion over the next two years, and help restore America's reputation.

This should please everyone except those ? like Dick Cheney's old firm Halliburton ? who have profited handsomely from war and "reconstruction." Halliburton's energy services revenues were up 31 per cent in the most recent quarter. "Iraq was better than expected," Jeff Tillery, an energy analyst, was quoted in an Associated Press story last week.

The Bush administration won't pull out of Iraq because it doesn't want to abandon the 14 permanent U.S. military bases it's building there ? or the oil.

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The Iraqi government is under pressure to pass a new law to open up Iraq's vast oil reserves to foreign investment and ownership.

None of this is mentioned in the media's endless commentary on the war. What would wildly lucrative profits for Big Oil have to do with the U.S. involvement in Iraq?

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