



*From home page of Swedish Armed Forces website:
Photo with text justifying participation in USA/NATO assault on Libya.*

The Swedish Cult of America

Warring for Peace in the Service of USA/NATO

Sweden's pathological relationship to the United States has led the once peace-loving country to collaborate in so-called "humanitarian wars"

*Al Burke
22 June 2011*

The Swedish writer Margareta Zetterström has noted that war is becoming an entirely acceptable feature of her country's foreign policy. It is a development that would have been unthinkable just a few decades ago, when the Swedish people lived "in the certain knowledge that war and occupation are the worst things that can befall a country.

"But how distant that time seems today," she writes. "We have been gradually indoctrinated in acceptance of war.... This gradual inculcation of warrior culture has now continued for several decades and is beginning to bear fruit. Even otherwise reasonable individuals now praise Sweden's military involvement in Afghanistan, and gullibly recite the argument that Sweden is there to liberate women and provide children with schooling."¹

At the moment, it is Libya's good fortune to be receiving democracy and human rights with the help of Swedish warfare. It appears that Syria is next on the list, then perhaps Lebanon and eventually Iran — to begin with.

The indoctrination process that has prepared the way for this Swedish war-making continues unabated. A typical example is an opinion piece by Aleksander Gabelic, chair of the United Nations Association of Sweden, who attempts to construct a moral basis for Sweden's collaboration in the USA/NATO war against Libya.²

There is nothing new in Gabelic's incitement to war, which is based on the notion of "humanitarian intervention"; but for precisely that reason it is useful as a representative expression of the arguments that are constantly presented to promote war. Another reason to consider his line of reasoning is that the UN Association is an important voice in Swedish public debate; the positions of its chairperson on matters of war and peace are therefore likely to be taken seriously in some quarters.

An especially important question is whether or not Chairman Gabelic succeeds in the art of justifying war within the framework of an organization, the United Nations, that was established for the specific purpose of preventing or putting a stop to war. The answer is that he does not, and in that he is hardly alone.

But his reasoning, in particular everything of importance that is omitted, illustrates the pathological relationship between Sweden and the United States. That in turn is a consequence of the cult of America which has been built up over many, many years and now permeates Swedish society, not least within politics, the military and the media.

Uncomfortable thoughts

Terms like "pathology" and "cult" may ring false or seem incomprehensible in this context, especially since the processes involved usually operate on a subconscious level. For those who participate in or are influenced by the cult — a category that appears to include the majority of the Swedish population — a mental effort is probably required to let in the thought that the cult and its associated pathology even exist.

The following discussion is intended to ease that uncomfortable process. It begins with an analysis of the arguments marshalled by Aleksander Gabelic in support of Swedish war-making, most of which are standard arguments in other countries, as well. For those who get their news of the world mainly or entirely from the mainstream media, some components of the analysis will probably be hard to swallow; it is, after all, those media that are primarily responsible for instilling and maintaining the cult of America. (That the editorial gatekeepers occasionally permit a dissident voice to be heard is part of the game called "open debate".) In any event, the entire basis of the analysis can be verified with the references cited in the endnotes and other easily accessible sources. In the following discussion, quotations from Gabelic's opinion piece are indicated with *bold italics*.

1. The UN has an obligation to protect civilians. The UN principle of "responsibility to protect" was adopted after the mass killings in Rwanda and the Balkans during the 1990s, and requires the surrounding world to take action when a nation's leader cannot or will not protect the country's population.

It is of course true that the UN has an obligation to protect civilians. But the most important way to accomplish that is to prevent war, with all its horrors, unforeseeable consequences and tendencies to escalation. According to a decision of the General Assembly in 2005, however, national sovereignty may in very exceptional circumstances be overridden to permit military intervention authorized by the Security Council in order to protect a population that is believed to be suffering gross abuses by the national government. However, as peace activists including representatives of the Swedish section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom have pointed out:

"Well aware of the risk that powerful states would abuse this provision for their own purposes, the General Assembly circumscribed this 'obligation' with a number of strict conditions. First, if the national government that is responsible for protecting the population fails to do so, the surrounding world shall assist and encourage it to do so with all available peaceful means. Only then — and only if the situation poses a threat to world peace — may the Security Council authorize military intervention. The resolution emphasizes that any such intervention shall be carried out in accordance with the UN Charter. Thus R2P ["responsibility to protect"] is not above the Charter and must be subject to continual negotiation. None of these conditions have been met, which means that the attack against Libya violates international law.... The Security Council is not above the UN Charter."³

The question is: Who is to decide which populations are being abused and must be protected by means of war, and with what motives. In this context, the example of Rwanda which Gabelic cites is particularly instructive. In that case, which was vastly worse than whatever may have occurred in Libya, it was the United States with the support of France and England that prevented the UN from forcefully intervening.⁴

That and much more demonstrate that the US and its allies exercise great influence on what happens in the Security Council, and that the security of mistreated human beings is not necessarily granted a high priority. It depends — and what it mainly depends on is the United States' assessment of its own and its allies' interests.

2. The principle [of R2P] is an important element of resolutions 1970 and 1973 regarding Libya, which the Security Council has adopted with the support of the Arab League....

A not-insignificant detail in this context is that Resolution 1973 was not adopted unanimously. Five of the member-states in the Security Council abstained: Germany, Brazil, India, China and Russia. The last four, in particular, have sharply criticized the fact that the "no-fly zone" authorized by the resolution immediately became a war of aggression.

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, former president of Brazil, has strongly condemned the attacks and has stated that, "These invasions occur because the United Nations is weak. If the UN had a XXI century representation and not one of the last century, instead of sending planes to bomb it would have sent its Secretary General to negotiate".⁵ The statement was a clear rebuke of the United States' inappropriately great influence in the UN and of its refusal to first apply "all available peaceful means" before resorting to war.

Neither was the Arab League's support for the resolution unanimous. Only nine of the League's 22 member-states approved the no-fly zone, and only two of them are participating in the ongoing war.⁶ More importantly: The League consists almost entirely of US-supported dictatorships that are hardly motivated by enthusiasm for democracy.

"From the very beginning, the League has adopted conflicting positions vis-à-vis the popular revolts now rocking the Arab world," observes Walid Hassan, an Egyptian professor of international law. "While it supports the Libyan people against the Gaddafi regime, it is overtly backing oppressive regimes elsewhere, especially in the Gulf."

The Arab League is dominated by Saudi Arabia, which fears the democratic movements and has opposed them from the start according to Abdelhalim Kandil, editor-in-chief of an Egyptian weekly who adds: "Washington's Arab allies, especially Saudi Arabia and Egypt, had long used the League to legitimize US policy in the Middle East".⁷

That is confirmed by the Indian diplomat M.K. Bhadrakumar: "The plain truth is that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) commanded the Arab League to speak since they need a fig leaf to approach the United Nations Security Council."⁸

Such is the league whose support for the UN resolutions is adduced by Aleksander Gabelic and others to justify Swedish participation in USA/NATO's war of aggression.

That can be compared with the unanimous criticism that has been directed *against* the war by the African Union, which includes 53 of the 55 states on the continent where Libya happens to be located. But the voices of that organization, five times more than the Arab League's, clearly do not count. Just like Aleksander Gabelic, USA/NATO has ignored the African Union's demands that the bombing stop immediately.

2a.... and the Libyan democracy movement.

It is clear that some sort of revolt against the government is under way in eastern Libya. But after several months, it is still not clear how it began, which persons and interests are involved, how spontaneous and independent it is, etc. What is known at this stage, however, provides extremely weak support for the predominant media image of a peaceful democratic movement that has been brutally repressed by the Gaddafi government for no apparent reason. For example:

- Even though the US pushed the "no-fly zone to protect the democratic movement" through the Security Council, it knew little or nothing of the so-called movement's intentions or composition. On 17 March, i.e. the same day that the UN resolutions were adopted, the *Wall St. Journal* reported that, "The White House has been reluctant to back calls from leaders in Congress for arming Libya's rebels directly, arguing that the US must first fully assess who the fighters are and what policies they will pursue if they succeeded in toppling Col. Gadhafi."⁹

Nearly three months later, the confusion was at least as great. At the start of June, the US House of Representatives adopted a resolution by a wide margin (268-145) which rebuked the president for failing to provide a "compelling rationale" for the war against Libya.¹⁰

- During the past few decades, a large number of armed groups, mainly in eastern Libya, have attempted to overthrow the government with the support of the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, France, *et al.* The current revolt appears to be largely a continuation of those efforts, which have been anything but peaceful.¹¹
- Included among the rebels are many members of Al Qaeda, which has been designated as the principal enemy in USA/NATO's so-called war against terrorism. "Americans, Britons and the French are finding themselves as comrades in arms with the rebel Islamic Fighting Group, the most radical element in the Al Qaeda network. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton admitted the risks of the unholy alliance in a congressional hearing, saying that the Libyan opposition is probably more anti-American than Muammar Gaddhafi."¹²

- The revolt's military leader, Khalifa Haftar, has been a CIA asset since 1988, at least. During the past twenty years he has dwelt in the shadow of CIA headquarters in Virginia without any visible means of support. Other rebel leaders have similar backgrounds.¹³
- USA/NATO military personnel in the guise of "advisors" have been observed among the rebel troops and have most likely been involved from the very beginning.¹⁴ It was in this way that the catastrophic invasion and occupation of Vietnam began.
- At the same time that the US was working for approval of the Security Council resolutions for the stated purpose of protecting civilians against aerial attacks, the superpower's chief military officials acknowledged that there was no evidence that any such attacks had occurred. At a press conference on March 1st, Minister of War ("Defense") Robert Gates replied as follows to the question of whether or not reports of aerial attacks on civilians had been confirmed: "We've seen the press reports, but we have no confirmation of that." Admiral Michael Mullen, head of the US joint military forces, confirmed: "That's correct. We've seen no confirmation whatsoever."¹⁵
- "[The rebels] are in the CIA's pocket. It's a CIA operation, not a legitimate protest of the Libyan people," asserts Paul Craig Roberts, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration.¹⁶

There is much more of the same that could be added, but this small selection should suffice to demonstrate that the simple picture of the Libya conflict that has been painted by Swedish and other media, and upon which Aleksander Gabelic uncritically bases his enthusiasm for war, is grossly misleading.

Despite that, despite all the questions and ominous bits of information, the label of "democratic movement" has been pasted on the armed revolt in accordance with the standard propaganda procedure — just as previously with the bloodthirsty *contras* in Nicaragua, the KLA in Kosovo and many more. Apart from the label, however, there is nothing which indicates that a longing for more democracy is the driving force of the revolt, and even less so for USA/NATO's support for the rebels.

The example of KLA is especially illuminating in this context. That violent movement had long been branded as terroristic by USA/NATO — until the Western powers switched policy and decided that KLA could be useful for military and propaganda purposes. Presto, KLA was transformed overnight from "terror group" to "liberation movement" and, as usual, the dominant western media following along without missing a beat in the new tune.

That history now appears to be repeating itself in Libya; the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (see above) is on the United States' list of terrorist groups.¹⁷

3. The no-fly zone is a complement to decisions on sanctions, a weapons embargo, frozen assets and travel restrictions on the Libyan leadership.

As noted above, the "no-fly zone" immediately became a full-scale war in coordination with an armed revolt on the ground whose leaders have close and long-standing links with the CIA and its equivalents in various NATO member-states. It is obvious that USA/NATO never intended to restrict itself to a no-fly zone; the purpose

from the start was to get rid of a national leader who has long stood in the way of the Western powers' plans for the region. What is happening now is merely the latest in numerous attempts during the past four decades to overthrow the Gaddafi regime.¹⁸

This time, however, it has been possible to exploit the "Arab spring" as a cover, and a pair of UN resolutions have been arranged to provide a fig leaf of international law for the assault. As usual, these devices have been used by allies around the world to sell the war to sceptical or reluctant populations, just as Aleksander Gabelic, the Conservative foreign minister Carl Bildt, the Social Democratic diplomat Jan Eliasson and many others are now doing in Sweden.

That charade is easy to decipher, however, and many have done so. Among them is former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan who, according to the *Financial Times*, "fears the west's actions have gone beyond the UN mandate". Instead of remaining neutral in order to protect the civil population, observes Annan, USA/NATO has joined one side of a civil war. That view is shared by the International Crisis Group, an NGO based in Brussels with strong ties to the Western establishment which has reported that, "Unlike events in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt, the confrontation that began in mid-February between the popular protest movement and Qaddafi's regime followed the logic of civil war from a very early stage."¹⁹

In addition, Kofi Annan emphasizes that, "The coalition's leaders needed to remember that the resolution was not passed unanimously."²⁰ That is especially appropriate, given that the ten countries which voted for Resolution 1973 represent less than eight per cent of the global population, while the five that abstained represent nearly half of all humans on Earth.

Others have expressed themselves less diplomatically, former Brazilian president Silva da Lula for example (see item 2, above). Tom Engelhardt, a US political analyst observes that, "It went from no-fly-zone to no-fly-no-drive-zone before a US cruise missile was launched or a French jet took off."²¹

Since then, the war has steadily escalated with the now openly proclaimed intent to overthrow the Gaddafi regime — a purpose that is not mentioned with a single word in the UN resolution. "To claim that 'regime change' is subsumed under the goal of 'protecting civilians' is to define that objective so broadly as to render it meaningless," notes Glenn Greenwald, a US writer and constitutional lawyer.²²

And it is no small effort that is being made. By mid-June, USA/NATO had carried out over 4000 aerial attacks that have caused substantial damage to Libyan citizens and their property. All indications are that this is just the beginning, as the attackers have proclaimed their intention to continue and to escalate their war "until the job is done".

There are no systematic data on the war's casualties to date. Both sides have reported hundreds, perhaps thousands of deaths and many more wounded, with the customary destruction of personal property and infrastructure. In its thus far unsuccessful attempts to bomb Gaddafi to death, USA/NATO has annihilated various family members, including one son and four small grandchildren.

At the start of June, Human Rights Watch reported to no great surprise that both sides had committed serious offences.²³ Among the worst afflicted, as usual, have been the civilians that the "no-fly zone" was supposed to protect. Primarily for that reason, two French lawyers have announced plans to initiate legal proceedings against President Sarkozy for crimes against humanity, and to represent victims of the war. One of the lawyers, former cabinet minister Roland Dumas, points out that instead of protecting

civilians, the war alliance was killing them in “a brutal assault against a sovereign country”. USA/NATO has “carried out their military action against civilians with the artificial — very artificial — cover of the United Nations,” states Dumas.²⁴

In short, the war of aggression in the guise of a no-fly zone is much more than a mere complement to other sorts of attack on Libya. The war is obviously the major component whose stated principal purpose is to overthrow the Gaddafi regime.

One may therefore question why Aleksander Gabelic chooses to characterize the war as a mere “complement”. Whatever the motive, the effect of that wording is to play down the extent and devastating consequences of the crime.

4. Gaddafi's evil deeds are being investigated by the International Criminal Court.

It is correct that ICC, the International Criminal Court, has accused Muammar Gaddafi of crimes against humanity. Thus far, however, the prosecutor has not presented any credible evidence. “Despite referring to ‘multiple sources’ not a single one of these is cited”, reports a British blogger who in vain has asked the ICC to supply the basis of the accusations.²⁵

It appears that the ICC’s “evidence” consists of unsubstantiated statements by the rebels and USA/NATO, which hardly inspire confidence in the circumstances. Stories of mass rapes, which according to standard practice have been uncritically bruited about by the world press, have been questioned by a UN investigator in Libya: “According to Cherif Bassiouni, the rebels and the government forces accuse of each other of rape strategies, and he believed that this in itself created a mass hysteria.” Neither could Amnesty International find any evidence of mass rapes during an inspection visit to Libya.²⁶

A more fundamental question is why the ICC has not lifted a finger against US collaborators in, for example, Bahrain, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, who are infamous for deeds that are at least as inhuman.

Lawrence Davidson, a US professor of history, has explained the background: “If you look at the record of ICC prosecutions, all of them have to do with smaller states, mostly African, who have relatively little power and no great power patrons. Yet this skewed record gets worse, for the United States and other great powers, which are not even a party to the Rome Statute, have found a way to turn the Court into a weapon to be directed at their assumed enemies. They have done so by taking advantage of the treaty clause requiring the ICC to pursue cases referred to it by the UN Security Council.”

Like Libya, the United States and four other states in the Security Council that approved the decision to refer Libya to the ICC have not accepted the court’s jurisdiction. “So here we see the US among those forcing Libya to accept the jurisdiction of the ICC, when it refuses to do so itself,” observes Davidson²⁷

That is a problem which the US and other countries with veto power in the Security Council do not have to worry about, since they can block any attempt to force the ICC’s jurisdiction on themselves or their allies. Further, the US has “negotiated” bilateral agreements with over 100 states which prohibit those states from reporting any US citizen to the ICC.

It is thus a matter of double standards at several levels, where the ICC and the UN are used as instruments in the USA/NATO policy of war. And double standards are, of course, no standards — merely the raw exercise of power.

5. Despite this, and despite the fact that Gaddafi is using cluster bombs on the civil population, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom [WILPF] and others have cast suspicion upon the concept of responsibility to protect.

It is not just now that "WILPF and others" have questioned the practical implications of responsibility to protect (R2P). As a means of power, it has always been disputed due to the grave risks that are currently being confirmed in Libya.²⁸

James Bissett, former Canadian ambassador to Yugoslavia and Albania, has explained the basic problem in a critique that could as well be directed to Sweden: "Canada's air force is once again bombing a country presenting no threat to the safety or security of our country. In fact, we are at war. There has been no declaration of war. There has been no serious attempt to intervene peacefully to help resolve the conflict. There has been no debate in our Parliament. There was no suggestion of sending a mission to Libya to assess the situation on the ground....

"What is taking place in Libya today is a civil war and we find ourselves playing the role of air force for the rebels. Unfortunately, we really have no idea of who they are or what they represent.... All of this fiasco has turned out to be a colossal mess and is unlikely to end well. This is not unusual when the excuse for intervention is based primarily on so-called humanitarian reasons.... The R2P concept is too easily hijacked by leaders who see an opportunity to gain political mileage at home by playing the role of protecting the rights of suffering victims in far away places."²⁹

Noam Chomsky has pointed out that there is a simple test to determine if the stated noble intentions of R2P can be taken seriously: "Do the authors call for humanitarian intervention and 'responsibility to protect' to defend the victims of their own crimes, or those of their clients? Did Obama, for example, call for a no-fly zone during the murderous and destructive US-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006, with no credible pretext? Or did he, rather, boast proudly during his presidential campaign that he had co-sponsored a Senate resolution supporting the invasion and calling for punishment of Iran and Syria for impeding it? End of discussion. In fact, virtually the entire literature of humanitarian intervention and right to protect, written and spoken, disappears under this simple and appropriate test."³⁰

As far as US Congressman Dennis Kucinich is concerned, the matter is very clear: "Humanitarian intervention has quickly given way to covert operations, regime change, and unending civil war. The US/NATO have taken sides in a manner that puts politics ahead of protecting civilians and undermines the argument that the United States and NATO attacked Libya to avert a humanitarian disaster. It is beginning to appear that the potential of a massacre was not a justification for action, it was a pretext."³¹

In a tragicomic development, USA/NATO has threatened the rebels with punitive measures if they continue to attack civilians, as Human Rights Watch and others have reported (see item 3, above). This, despite the fact that, according to the constituting propaganda, the rebels are part of the civil population that the war was launched to protect. In any event, the fact that the conflict is a civil war has thus been confirmed. As for the rebels, they do not seem to be excessively receptive to moral lectures from their foreign comrades in arms. "We object to being threatened by our allies. They

are taking part in military action only at our invitation," snapped a leader of the "democratic movement".³² This probably gives a hint of what awaits Libya's civilian population if USA/NATO succeeds in getting rid of Gaddafi.

With regard to the cluster bombs that have thus far claimed victims in the war, Human Rights Investigations has concluded that it is the United States, not Libya which has used them. That is hardly surprising, given that the US has refused to endorse the international Convention on Cluster Munitions, a stance that of course has weakened the entire effort to eliminate such weapons which according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights "inevitably lead to civilian casualties."³³

6. To oppose military intervention as a last resort when people are being murdered indicates an unwillingness to see the reality in which millions of people live. The thought that others do not need the freedoms and rights that we take for granted is alien to the UN Association of Sweden.

This sort of emotional blackmail is commonplace in such contexts. The obvious intent is to exploit the sense of responsibility, empathy and sympathy of decent people in order to win support for war. For, who wants to be suspected of an "unwillingness to see the reality in which millions of people live" or of denying them "the freedoms and rights that we take for granted"?

As indicated by the foregoing information and much more, however, there is reason to question both Aleksander Gabelic's portrayal of the Libyan conflict's reality and his simple faith in war as the salvation of mistreated populations.

Professor Richard Falk, one of the United States' foremost authorities on international law, believes there is no assurance that military intervention will "lessen the suffering of the Libyan people or bring to power a regime more respectful of human rights and dedicated to democratic participation. The record of military intervention during the last several decades is one of almost unbroken failure if either the human costs or political outcomes are taken into proper account."³⁴

The courageous peace activist Malalai Joya has described how the protracted war in Afghanistan has impacted the assaulted population's rights and freedoms: "Day by day [USA/NATO] is bombing from the sky and killing innocent civilians — most of them are women and children — even bombing our wedding parties.... In my own province last year, these occupation forces — American troops — they bombed 150 civilians in one day, even used white phosphorous. And also most of them were women and children. In Kunar province recently, 65 innocent civilians have been killed by these occupation forces. Again in the same province, in another village, nine children have been killed when they were collecting wood and they were bombed and brutally killed. This list can be prolonged, a list of these massacres."³⁵

All indications are that developments in Libya are heading in the same direction. The war has already caused death, suffering and destruction on a large scale. Yet, it is difficult to detect any willingness of Aleksander Gabelic and other "humanitarian" warriors to open their eyes to that very real reality.

7. To be a member-state of the UN involves responsibilities. It is of value that Sweden, which has made significant contributions to development and human rights, can also contribute to the UN's military effort in Libya.

To be a UN member-state involves responsibilities to uphold the fundamental ideas and values that are enshrined in the UN Charter. It is therefore important to keep in mind that: the UN consists of more than the Security Council; and the most important responsibility of all is for every member-state to everything possible to prevent or put an end to war.

As several of the above-cited observers have pointed out, The Security Council's strenuous efforts to prevent war in Libya have been notable by their absence. The United States and its allies have instead rejected proposals for mediation and investigation. They wanted war and they got what they wanted, as usual.

This sorry episode illustrates a basic fact which seldom or never receives proper attention in Swedish public debate, i.e. that the Security Council is dominated by the United States and diverse vassal-states. It has always been thus, and the pattern has become even more distinct since the end of the Cold War. The standard reference on the subject is *Calling the Shots: How Washington Dominates Today's UN* by Phyllis Bennis, who is herself a US citizen.³⁶

In the case of Libya, the US and nine allies, which together account for barely eight per cent of the global population, have forced through a resolution on a "no-fly zone" against the better judgement of five Security Council members that represent nearly half of all humans on Earth.

Why China and Russia did not exercise their vetoes against the war is a question that probably has several answers. One possible explanation is the general awareness that the USA would never call off a planned war for the sake of such a little thing as the UN Charter. As in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, it would in all likelihood have launched the attack, presumably with an addendum to the propaganda which explained how the weaklings in the Security Council had *forced* the USA to lead the assault on the moment's designated Hitler in the name of democracy, women's rights and all good things.

In Sweden one could confidently anticipate an outraged chorus of USA loyalists in politics and the media who would express their shame and dismay over the weaklings in the Security Council who had "weakened the UN" with their pathetic refusal to arrange for the imperilled population "the rights and freedoms that we take for granted" by means of bombs, white phosphorus, depleted uranium, etc.

Leading figures in the United States have in fact expressed open contempt for the UN and its fundamental principles. Among them is John Bolton, ambassador to the UN for President George Bush II, who has stated that: "There is no such thing as the United Nations. There is only the international community, which can only be led by the only remaining superpower, which is the United States, when it suits our interest and we can get others to go along... When the United States leads, the United Nations will follow. When it suits our interest to do so, we will do so. When it does not suit our interests we will not."³⁷

Most US politicians and officials do not express themselves so bluntly, of course, and charming presidents like Clinton and Obama may inspire trust with their pretty speeches on co-operation and peaceful intentions. But the basic attitude expressed by the boorish Bolton is clearly reflected in the superpower's actual behaviour. It is also evident in important US policy documents which consistently stress that the UN is to be kept subordinate to the USA, not the other way around.

It is not difficult to predict the outcome of the Libya issue if it had instead been decided by the General Assembly, where the USA has only one vote and no veto. In that part of the UN, where all the people of the Earth are represented, US policies have been condemned with over 98 per cent majorities in such matters as Israel's many violations of international law and UN resolutions, and the USA's economic warfare against Cuba. But the General Assembly appears to belong to that UN which according to John Bolton does not exist. (One may well ask if Aleksander Gabelic and the UN Association of Sweden are of the opinion that the General Assembly exists and, if so, what significance it has.)

The case of Israel illustrates that a member-state can ignore UN resolutions if it has a powerful patron on the Security Council. So it is with, among many other things, Resolution 242 which calls upon Israel to withdraw from the areas that it captured with the so-called Six-Day War. "The United States played a key role in drafting the resolution, and then effectively ignored its implications for the next forty years," observes US foreign policy expert Steven M. Walt.³⁸ To paraphrase Orwell: Some UN resolutions are more equal than others.

In any event, the fact is that when Aleksander Gabelic and kindred spirits issue reminders about the responsibilities of UN membership, what they seem to have in mind are responsibilities to the US bloc in the Security Council — which, as noted above, is thoroughly corrupted by the superpower's abuse of power, including its flagrant and repeated violations of international law and human rights.

Peace researcher Johan Galtung has explained what a genuinely obligating decision of the Security Council would be like: "A resolution protecting civilians in all wars, including a no-fly zone over Gaza, Bahrain, Pakistan, Afghanistan, would have been historical. But on the same day Resolution 1973 was passed, NATO made headlines for killing more civilians in Afghanistan — a daily routine, it seems... What is happening now is intervention supporting one side against the other. This is normally called war."³⁹

8. The recent arrest of Ratko Mladic reminds us of the danger of reacting to assaults too late. It is high time to learn from the mistakes of history.

It is entirely consistent of Aleksander Gabelic in this context to make a connection with the massacre at Srebrenica, Bosnia in 1995, for which the Serbian general Ratko Mladic is accused of being chiefly responsible. That event serves as the cornerstone of the argument that has been constructed to justify "humanitarian intervention".

At this point, the narrative about Srebrenica is so deeply etched in the collective consciousness that Gabelic can refer to it without explanation and expect that everyone knows what happened and who is guilty — the wicked Serbs, with Mladic at the forefront. The problem is that what "everyone knows" is the product of a murderous propaganda campaign with many similarities to Gabelic's incitement to more Swedish war-making. That propaganda campaign has been designated as among the most successful of its kind in world history by, among others, Australian author Phillip Knightley whose book *The First Casualty* is a standard work on the subject.

According to Knightley, reporting on the Balkan wars in the dominant British media consisted primarily of "Lies, manipulation, biased reporting, propaganda, sheer fabrication, distortion, buried information, slanted news and gullibility."

As always, there were some honourable exceptions concedes Knightley, who nevertheless observes that the few journalists who dared to challenge the conventional wisdom were savaged by colleagues and warmongers alike: "If one expressed so much as the slightest doubt about the latest tale of atrocities, or gave the slightest indication that one disagreed with the government's policy... one was regarded as virtually a traitor."⁴⁰

It was the same in Sweden, where the process included an exceedingly nasty witch hunt against Balkan expert Diana Johnstone whose book, *Fools' Crusade*, refuted the war propaganda that also predominated in Swedish media. For the sin of publishing an article about Johnstone and her book, *Ordfront Magazine's* chief editor was driven from his job with a hysterical attack on democracy and freedom of speech that was led by *Dagens Nyheter*, Sweden's leading daily newspaper.⁴¹

As a consequence of all that, it is more or less impossible in Sweden to conduct a sensible discussion about Srebrenica and the Balkan wars — at least not in the public arena, which still today is strictly monitored by thought police who either participated in the propaganda campaign or have been influenced by it.

There is not nearly enough room in this space to sort out that unpleasant mess. For those who wish to learn more about the subject, there are a number of useful sources.⁴²

For those who lack the time or interest to deepen their knowledge of the subject, there is one important rule of thumb: Never assume that what is published in Swedish media about Srebrenica, Serbian leaders and the Balkan wars is well-nuanced or compatible with the truth. Most of it merely regurgitates USA/NATO propaganda.

For the same reasons, a healthy scepticism should greet every attempt to incite so-called humanitarian intervention by reference to Srebrenica. When USA/NATO finally launched its assault on Serbia in clear violation of international law, it was on the basis of alleged mistreatment of the civilian population in Kosovo. In a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, her compatriot Dietmar Hartwig has described how he, as head of the European Union's delegation in Kosovo, assessed the situation on the eve of the bombing war that began on 20 March 1999:

"Not a single report submitted in the period from late November 1998 up to the evacuation on the eve of the war mentioned that Serbs had committed any major or systematic crimes against Albanians, nor there was a single case referring to genocide or genocide-like incidents or crimes. Quite the opposite, in my reports I have repeatedly informed that, considering the increasingly more frequent KLA attacks against the Serbian executive, their law enforcement demonstrated remarkable restraint and discipline.... There were huge 'discrepancies in perception' between what the missions in Kosovo have been reporting to their respective governments and capitals, and what the latter thereafter released to the media and the public. This discrepancy can only be viewed as input to long-term preparation for war against Yugoslavia. Until the time I left Kosovo, there never happened what the media and, with no less intensity the politicians, were relentlessly claiming. Accordingly, until 20 March 1999 there was no reason for military intervention, which renders illegitimate the measures undertaken thereafter by the international community.... The truth was killed, and the EU lost reliability."⁴³

Now it is happening again in the case of Libya. The truth is being killed, and Sweden continues to lose credibility as a peaceful nation as a result of its collaboration in USA/NATO's war of aggression. Thus, one may indeed conclude that "it is high time to learn from the mistakes of history".

Pathological relationship

There is much more that could be added to this response to Aleksander Gabelic's incitement to an even heavier investment in Swedish warfare in the service of USA/NATO. But the small sample presented here should suffice to indicate the conspicuous shortcomings of his argument. Just about everything that militates against such collaboration — and it is a great deal — is omitted, while that which is included consists primarily of poorly documented assertions, empty phrases, misleading half-truths, emotional blackmail, etc.

Unfortunately, this is nothing unusual in the public debate on these fateful questions. On the contrary, it is a sadly typical example of the ongoing indoctrination in the acceptance of war to which Margareta Zetterström refers (see introductory paragraphs). That in turn suggests a number of vital questions, including:

How is it possible that this sort of grossly misleading incitement to war has been granted so much space in Sweden, with its venerable peace tradition and a population that is among the most well-educated and well-read in the world?

Why is it so difficult, with comparatively few exceptions, to convey the sort of information presented here in the most important arenas of public debate? To take one of countless similar examples: The editors of *Svenska Dagbladet*, the major newspaper in which Gabelic's opinion piece appeared, refused to publish a condensed version of this response. Instead, they published yet another piece by Gabelic who, with the same sort of reasoning, urged the Swedish people to approve even more war-making. ("Sweden is needed in more conflicts", 2011-06-17).

What will become of a nation whose people are lulled into a false conception of the surrounding world, in which the only superpower's violent attempts to establish a global hegemony are routinely interpreted as efforts on behalf of human rights?

How is it possible for opinion-makers like Aleksander Gabelic and most of the Swedish press corps to get away with shutting their eyes (or pretending to shut their eyes) to the long and copiously documented history of the United States' serious crimes against international law and human rights, typically conducted behind an easily penetrated smokescreen of war propaganda like that employed by Gabelic?

What will be the long-term consequences of Sweden's incorporation via NATO into the US war machine?

These and related questions are interwoven, and the serious problems that they suggest have a common source — Sweden's pathological relationship to the United States.

The significance and implications of that pathology will be discussed in future instalments of a planned series on the Swedish cult of America.

* * * * *

Endnotes...

Endnotes

1. "Humanitära krig— finns de?". *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2011-05-21
2. "FN har en skyldighet att skydda civila". *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2011-05-30
3. "Svensk militär bör lämna Libyen". *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29 maj 2011
4. Lasse Berg, "Folkmord i vår tid". *Dagens Nyheter*, 2004-01-25
5. "Lula highly critical of the UN action against Libya". *Télam* (Argentina), 2011-03-22
6. Pepe Escobar, "Exposed: The US-Saudi Libya deal". *Asia Times*, 2011-04-01
7. Adam Morrow & Khaled Moussa Al-Omrani, "Two-Faced Arab League Losing Ground". *Inter Press Service*, 2011-04-23
8. M.K. Bhadrakumar, "African dissent on no-fly zone counts". *Asia Times*, 2011-03-14
9. "Egypt Said to Arm Libya Rebels." *Wall Street Journal*, 2011-03-17
10. "Barack Obama rebuked by House for using troops in Libya". *Associated Press*, 2011-06-03
11. Peter Dale Scott, "Who are the Libyan Freedom Fighters and Their Patrons?". *Global Research*, 2011-03-25
12. Yoichi Shimatsu, "Attack on Libya: Why Odyssey Dawn Is Doomed". *New America Media*, 2011-03-20
13. Patrick Cockburn, "The shady men backed by the West to displace Gaddafi". *The Independent* (UK), 2011-04-03
14. Kim Sengupta & David Randall, "Western military advisers become visible in Benghazi". *The Independent* (UK), 2011-04-03
15. " 'No Confirmation whatsoever' according to the Pentagon that Gadhaffi 'Fired on his Own People'." *Global Research*, 2011-06-03
16. "US To Recoup Libya Oil From China". *Press TV* (Iran), 2011-04-16
17. Yoichi Shimatsu, "Attack on Libya: Why Odyssey Dawn Is Doomed". *New America Media*, 2011-03-20
18. Richard Lance, "Four Decades of US-UK Attempts to Topple Gadhafi". *Media Lens*, 2011-04-27
19. "Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East: Making Sense of Libya". *International Crisis Group*, 2011-06-06
20. Alec Russell, "Kofi Annan hits at west over Libya". *Financial Times*, 2011-05-13
21. Tom Engelhardt, "An Intervention That Escalated Before It Even Began". *TomDispatch.com*, 2011-03-24
22. Glenn Greenwald, "Mission Transformation in Libya". *Salon.com*, 2011-04-16
21. "Båda sidorna bryter mot reglerna". *TT/Dagens Nyheter*, 2011-06-06
24. "French lawyers to sue Sarkozy over crimes in Libya". *Voltaire Network/Global Research*, 2011-05-31
25. Andy Dilks, "The 'International Criminal Court': Prosecuting Gaddafi with Questionable Evidence While Ignoring NATO-Israeli Atrocities". *Global Research*, 2011-05-17
26. "Osäker bevisning kring massvåldtäkter". *AFP/TT*, 2011-06-10

27. Lawrence Davidson, "Undermining International Law".
Information Clearing House, 2011-06-05
28. Humanitarian intervention, its history, deficiencies and devastating consequences are documented in *Humanitarian Imperialism* by Jean Bricmont.
New York & London: Monthly Review Press, 2006
29. James Bissett, "Humanitarian Intervention— Again?".
Canadian Centre for Policy Studies, 2011-03-30
30. Noam Chomsky, "On Libya and the Unfolding Crises", *ZNet*, 2011-03-31
31. "Kucinich's Lonely Fight Against Obama's Libya War", Robert Dreyfuss.
The Nation, 2011-04-12
32. Kim Sengupta, "We'll turn our guns on Libyan rebels if they attack civilians, Nato threatens". *The Independent* (UK), 2011-06-09
33. Human Rights Investigations, "Cluster Bombing of Misrata Committed by US Forces, Not Qadhafi". *Global Research*, 2011-05-27
34. Richard Falk, "Kicking The Intervention Habit". *Al-Jazeera*, 2011-03-10
35. "Hope in Afghanistan: An Interview With Malalai Joya". *Truthout.org*, 2011-06-08
36. Phyllis Bennis, *Calling the Shots: How Washington Dominates Today's UN*.
New York: Olive Branch Press, 1996
37. Roland Watson, "Bush deploys hawk as new UN envoy". *The Times* (UK), 2005-03-08
38. Stephen M. Walt, "Is Congress clapping for apartheid?" *Foreign Policy*, 2011-05-25
37. Johan Galtung, "The West's War Against Gaddafi". *IPS/Global Research*, 2011-04-06
40. Excerpts retranslated from the Swedish edition of *The First Casualty*:
Phillip Knightley, *Krigets första offer är sanningen*. Stockholm: Ordfront, 2004
41. Al Burke, *All Quieted on the Word Front*. Nordic News Network, 2005
42. Selected references on Srebrenica and the most recent Balkan wars:
 - a) Edward S. Herman, ed. *The Srebrenica Massacre — Evidence, Context, Politics*.
In PDF format at: http://www.srebrenica-report.com/Srebrenica_Book.pdf
 - b) Diana Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, Nato, and Western Delusions*.
New York & London: Monthly Review Press, 2003
 - c) John Laughland, *Travesty: The Trial of Slobodan Milosevic and the Corruption of International Justice*. Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007
 - d) Peter Brock, *Media Cleansing: Dirty Reporting, Journalism and Tragedy in Yugoslavia*. Los Angeles: GM Books, 2005
 - e) George Bogdanich & Martin Lettmayer, *Yugoslavia: The Avoidable War*
(documentary film). Frontier Theatre, 2000
43. Dietmar Hartwig cited by Noam Chomsky in "On Libya and the Unfolding Crises".
ZNet, 2011-03-31