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## The National Security State's Embrace of Dictatorships

by Jacob G. Hornberger  
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The *New York Times* published an article on December 25 that exposes a harsh reality about U.S. foreign policy to mainstream Americans. The article, entitled “Bahrain, a Brutal Ally,” focuses on one of the principal dark sides of U.S. foreign policy: the U.S. national-security state’s ardent support of brutal dictatorships, this one being Bahrain.

Why is the U.S. government supporting the brutal dictatorship in Bahrain while opposing, say, the brutal dictatorship in Syria?

The answer is very simple. The dictatorship in Bahrain, where the U.S. military has one of its largest naval bases, is pro-U.S. The dictatorship in Syria is independent of the U.S. government at best and anti-U.S. at worst.

Among the worst consequences of having engrafted the national-security state onto our constitutional order has been the blind faith that Americans have placed in it. That blind faith has caused all too many Americans to delude themselves about the real nature of U.S. foreign policy.

Most Americans view the national-security state (e.g., the military and the CIA) as a “force for good” around the world. Yet, how can any regime that supports and partners with brutal dictatorships be a “force for good” in the world? Brutal dictatorships are a bad thing. In fact, one

might easily argue that they are evil. It goes without saying that supporting things that are bad or evil is not good.

What brutal dictatorships has the U.S. national-security state supported since its establishment in 1947? The list is a long one.

There is Iran, where the national-security state destroyed Iran's experiment with democracy in 1953, which is the root cause of the difficult relations between the United States and Iran today. That was when the CIA ousted the democratically elected prime minister and installed the brutal dictator known as the shah of Iran. The CIA then helped train the shah's domestic police, military, and intelligence forces in the art of maintaining brutal control over the citizenry through torture, indefinite detention, and other tyrannical measures.

There is Guatemala, where the national-security state ousted the democratically elected president of the country and installed a series of brutal pro-U.S. military dictators.

There is Cuba, where the U.S. government supported the brutal dictator, Fulgencio Batista, who preceded Fidel Castro in power.

There is Nicaragua, where the U.S. government supported the brutal Somoza regime.

There is Argentina, where the U.S. government supported the brutal military dictatorship that subjected the Argentine people to a dark decade of torture, indefinite detention, disappearances, and murder.

There is Chile, where the U.S. government supported the ouster of the democratically elected president and the installation of a brutal military dictatorship headed by Augusto Pinochet, which proceeded to murder, torture, detain, and disappear thousands of Chileans and two young American journalists.

There is Egypt, where the U.S. government supported the brutal military dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak.

There is Pakistan, where the U.S. government supported the brutal military dictatorship of Pervez Musharraf.

There is Iraq, where the U.S. government supported the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

There is Libya, where the U.S. government partnered with the brutal Qaddafi dictatorship to torture people on its behalf.

Indeed, there is Syria — yes, Syria — where the U.S. government employed the brutal Assad dictatorship that it is now opposing to torture Canadian citizen Maher Arar on its behalf.

The list goes on and on, in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. And it's not just an aberration. Support of brutal dictatorships has long been an integral part of the U.S. national-security state. In fact, the national-security state actually trained many of the Latin American torturers in the art of torture at its infamous School of the Americas, which even had its own written torture manuals.

Meanwhile, when the question is asked, "Why do people hate us?" many mainstream Americans continue to automatically mold their minds to the official line of the U.S. national-security state: "They hate us for our freedom and values." They simply block out of their minds the possibility that people who have suffered horribly under brutal dictatorships, including arbitrary arrest, torture, indefinite detention, murder, disappearances, censorship, and other such things, might hate the United States for having supported and even enabled their tyranny. Such Americans just keep repeating to themselves that the military and the CIA are over there defending "our rights and our freedoms" and "spreading democracy."

It's just one of the horrible things that the national-security state has done to the minds of the American people.