

By David Swanson

From [War Is A Crime](#) | Original Article

1. President Obama's opening lines at the U.N. on Tuesday looked down on people who would think to settle disputes with war. Obama was disingenuously avoiding the fact that earlier this month he sought to drop missiles into a country to "send a message" but was blocked by the U.S. Congress, the U.N., the nations of the world, and popular opposition -- after which Obama arrived at diplomacy as a last resort.

2. "It took the awful carnage of two world wars to shift our thinking." Actually, it took one. The second resulted in a half-step backwards in "our thinking." The Kellogg-Briand Pact banned all war. The U.N. Charter re-legalized wars purporting to be either defensive or U.N.-authorized.

3. "[P]eople are being lifted out of poverty," Obama said, crediting actions by himself and others in response to the economic crash of five years ago. But downward global trends in poverty are steady and long pre-date Obama's entry into politics. And such a trend does not exist [in the U.S.](#)

4. "Together, we have also worked to end a decade of war," Obama said. In reality, Obama pushed Iraq hard to allow that occupation to continue, and was rejected just as Congress rejected his missiles-for-Syria proposal. Obama expanded the war on Afghanistan. Obama expanded, after essentially creating, drone wars. Obama has increased global U.S. troop presence, global U.S. weapons sales, and the size of the world's largest military. He's put "special" forces into many countries, waged a war on Libya, and pushed for an attack on Syria. How does all of this "end a decade of war"? And how did his predecessor get a decade in office anyway?

5. "Next year, an international coalition will end its war in Afghanistan, having achieved its mission of dismantling the core of al Qaeda that attacked us on 9/11." In reality, Bruce Riedel, who coordinated a review of Afghanistan policy for President Obama said, "The pressure we've put on [jihadist forces] in the past year has also drawn them together, meaning that the network of alliances is growing stronger not weaker." (*New York Times*, May 9, 2010.)

6. "We have limited the use of drones." Bush drone strikes in Pakistan: 51. Obama drone strikes in Pakistan: [323](#) .

7. "... so they target only those who pose a continuing, imminent threat to the United States where capture is not feasible." On June 7, 2013, Yemeni tribal leader Saleh Bin Fareed told *Democracy Now* that Anwar al Awlaki could have been turned over and put on trial, but "they never asked us." In numerous other cases it is evident that drone strike victims could have been arrested if that avenue had ever been attempted. A memorable example was the November 2011 drone killing in Pakistan of 16-year-old Tariq Aziz, days after he'd attended an anti-drone meeting in the capital, where he might easily have been arrested -- had he been charged with some crime. This weeks drone victims, like all the others, had never been indicted or their arrest sought.

8. "... and there is a near certainty of no civilian casualties." There are hundreds of [confirmed](#) civilian dead from U.S. drones, something the Obama administration [seems inclined to](#) keep as quiet as possible.

9. "And the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction casts a shadow over the pursuit of peace." In reality, President Obama is not pursuing peace or the control of such weapons or their reduction and elimination in all countries, only particular countries. And the United States remains the top possessor of weapons of mass destruction and the top supplier of weapons to the world.

10. "[In Syria, P]eaceful protests against an authoritarian regime were met with repression and slaughter. ... America and others have worked to bolster the moderate opposition." In fact, the United States has armed a violent opposition intent on waging war and heavily influenced if not dominated by foreign fighters and fanatics.

11. "[T]he regime used chemical weapons in an attack that killed more than 1,000 people, including hundreds of children." Maybe, but where's the evidence? Even Colin Powell brought (faked) evidence.

12. "How should we respond to conflicts in the Middle East?" This suggests that the United States isn't *causing* conflicts in the Middle East or aggravating them prior to altering its position and "responding." In fact, arming and supporting brutal governments in Bahrain, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Israel, etc., is behavior that could do a great deal of good simply by ceasing.

13. "How do we address the choice of standing callously by while children are subjected to nerve gas, or embroiling ourselves in someone else's civil war?" That isn't a complete list of choices, as Obama discovered when Russia called Kerry's bluff and diplomacy became a choice, just as disarmament and de-escalation and pressure for a ceasefire are choices. Telling Saudi Arabia "Stop arming the war in Syria or no more cluster bombs for you," is a choice.

14. "What is the role of force in resolving disputes that threaten the stability of the region and undermine all basic standards of civilized conduct?" Force doesn't have a role in civilized conduct, the most basic standard of which is relations without the use of force.

15. "[T]he international community must enforce the ban on chemical weapons." Except against Israel or the United States.

16. "... and Iranians poisoned in the many tens of thousands." This was good of Obama to recognize Iran's suffering, but it would have been better of him to recall where Iraq acquired some of its weapons of mass destruction.

17. "It is an insult to human reason -- and to the legitimacy of this institution -- to suggest that anyone other than the regime carried out this attack." Really? In the absence of evidence, skepticism isn't reasonable for this Colin-Powelled institution, the same U.N. that was told Libya would be a rescue and watched it become a war aimed at illegally overthrowing a government? Trust us?

18. "Now, there must be a strong Security Council Resolution to verify that the Assad regime is keeping its commitments, and there must be consequences if they fail to do so." Meaning war? What about the U.N.'s commitment to oppose war? What about the United States' violation of its commitments to destroy the chemical weapons sitting in Kentucky and Colorado? "Consequences" for the U.S. too?

19. "I do not believe that military action -- by those within Syria, or by external powers -- can achieve a lasting peace." Yet, the U.S. government is shipping weapons into that action.

20. "Nor do I believe that America or any nation should determine who will lead Syria ... Nevertheless, a leader who slaughtered his citizens and gassed children to death cannot regain the legitimacy to lead a badly fractured country." The Syrians should decide their own fate as long as they decide it the way I tell them to.

21. "[N]or does America have any interest in Syria beyond the well-being of its people, the stability of its neighbors, the elimination of chemical weapons, and ensuring it does not become a safe-haven for terrorists." That's funny. Elsewhere, you've [said](#) that weakening Syria would weaken Iran.

22. "[W]e will be providing an additional \$340 million [for aid]." And vastly more for weapons.

23. "We will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. Although America is steadily reducing our own dependence on imported oil..." That first remarkably honest sentence is only honest if you don't think about what "free flow" means. The second sentence points to a real, if slow, trend but obscures the fact that only [40%](#) of the oil the U.S. uses comes from the U.S., which doesn't count much of the oil the U.S. military uses while "ensuring the free flow." Nor is switching to small domestic supplies a long-term solution as switching to sustainable energy would be.

24. "But when it's necessary to defend the United States against terrorist attacks, we will take direct action." In Libya? Syria? Where does this make any sense, as U.S. actions generate rather than eliminate terrorism? Michael Boyle, part of Obama's counter-terrorism group during his 2008 election campaign, says the use of drones is having "adverse strategic effects that have not been properly weighed against the tactical gains associated with killing terrorists

The vast increase in the number of deaths of low-ranking operatives has deepened political resistance to the US programme in Pakistan, Yemen and other countries." (*The Guardian*, January 7, 2013.) Why is Canada not obliged to bomb the world to "defend against terrorist attacks"?

25. "Just as we consider the use of chemical weapons in Syria to be a threat to our own national security ..." We who? How? Congress just rejected this ludicrous claim. Ninety percent of this country laughed at it.

26. "[W]e reject the development of nuclear weapons that could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region, and undermine the global non-proliferation regime." By Israel which has done this, or by Iran which all evidence suggests has not?

27. "We deeply believe it is in our interest to see a Middle East and North Africa that is peaceful and prosperous," we just choose to work against that deep belief and to sell or give vast quantities of weapons to brutal dictatorships and monarchies.

28. "Iraq shows us that democracy cannot be imposed by force." This could have been true had the U.S. attempted to impose democracy.

29. "Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons." Iran's what?

30. "Arab-Israeli conflict." That's a misleading way of naming the conflict between the government of Israel and the people it ethnically cleanses, occupies, and abuses -- including with chemical weapons.

31. "[A]n Iranian government that has ... threatened our ally Israel with destruction." It hasn't. And piling up the lies about Iran will make Iran less eager to talk. Just watch.

32. "We are not seeking regime change." That's not what Kerry told Congress, in between

telling Congress just the opposite. Also, see above in this same speech: "a leader who slaughtered his citizens and gassed children to death cannot regain the legitimacy...."

33. "We insist that the Iranian government meet its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and UN Security Council resolutions." Among Iran, the U.S., and Israel, it's Iran that seems to be complying.

34. "We are encouraged that President Rouhani received from the Iranian people a mandate to pursue a more moderate course." More moderate than what? Threatening to destroy Israel and creating nukes?

35. "[T]heir own sovereign state." There's nowhere left for Palestine to create such a separate state.

36. "Israel's security as a Jewish and democratic state." Both, huh?

37. "When peaceful transitions began in Tunisia and Egypt ... we chose to support those who called for change" ... the minute everyone else was dead, exiled, or imprisoned.

38. "[T]rue democracy as requiring a respect for minority rights, the rule of law, freedom of speech and assembly, and a strong civil society. That remains our interest today." Just not in our own country and certainly not in places that buy some of the biggest piles of our weapons.

39. "But we will not stop asserting principles that are consistent with our ideals, whether that means opposing the use of violence as a means of suppressing dissent," and if you don't believe me, ask the Occupy movement -- Happy Second Birthday, you guys! I SHUT YOU DOWN, bwa ha ha ha ha.

40. "This includes efforts to resolve sectarian tensions that continue to surface in places like Iraq, Syria and Bahrain." One liberated, one targeted, and one provided with support and

weaponry and former U.S. police chiefs to lead the skull cracking.

41. "[A] vacuum of leadership that no other nation is ready to fill." All criminal outrages *should* have a vacuum of leadership. "Who would bomb countries if we don't do it?" is the wrong question.

42. "Some may disagree, but I believe that America is exceptional -- in part because we have shown a willingness, through the sacrifice of blood and treasure, to stand up not only for our own narrow self-interest, but for the interests of all." When was that? The United States certainly comes in at far less than exceptional in terms of per-capita humanitarian aid. Its humanitarian bombing that Obama has in mind, but it's never benefitted humanity.

43. "And in Libya, when the Security Council provided a mandate to protect civilians, America joined a coalition that took action. Because of what we did there, countless lives were saved, and a tyrant could not kill his way back to power." The White House claimed that Gaddafi had threatened to massacre the people of Benghazi with "no mercy," but the *New York Times* reported that Gaddafi's threat was directed at rebel fighters, not civilians, and that Gaddafi promised amnesty for those "who throw their weapons away." Gaddafi also offered to allow rebel fighters to escape to Egypt if they preferred not to fight to the death. Yet President Obama warned of imminent genocide. What Gaddafi really threatened fits with his past behavior. There were other opportunities for massacres had he wished to commit massacres, in Zawiya, Misurata, or Ajdabiya. He did not do so. After extensive fighting in Misurata, a report by Human Rights Watch made clear that Gaddafi had targeted fighters, not civilians. Of 400,000 people in Misurata, 257 died in two months of fighting. Out of 949 wounded, less than 3 percent were women. More likely than genocide was defeat for the rebels, the same rebels who warned Western media of the looming genocide, the same rebels who the *New York Times*

said "feel no loyalty to the truth in shaping their propaganda" and who were "making vastly inflated claims of [Gaddafi's] barbaric behavior." The result of NATO joining the war was probably more killing, not less. It certainly extended a war that looked likely to end soon with a victory for Gaddafi.

44. "Libya would now be engulfed in civil war and bloodshed." No, the war was ending, and Libya *is* engulfed in bloodshed. In March 2011, the African Union had a plan for peace in Libya but was prevented by NATO, through the creation of a "no fly" zone and the initiation of bombing, to travel to Libya to discuss it. In April, the African Union was able to discuss its plan with Libyan President Muammar al-Gaddafi, and he expressed his agreement. NATO, which had obtained a U.N. authorization to protect Libyans alleged to be in danger but no

authorization to continue bombing the country or to overthrow the government, continued bombing the country and overthrowing the government.

45. [S]overeignty cannot be a shield for tyrants to commit wanton murder." Says a man who reads through [a list](#) of potential murder victims on Tuesdays and ticks off the ones he wants murdered.