

## *Bush's United Nations Speech Unconvincing*

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The last time—and only time—the United States came before the United Nations to accuse a radical Third World government of threatening the security of the United States through weapons of mass destruction was in October 1962. In the face of a skeptical world and Cuban and Soviet denials, U.S. ambassador Adlai Stevenson presented dramatic photos clearly showing the construction of nuclear missiles on Cuban soil. While the resulting U.S. military blockade and brinkmanship was not universally supported, there was little question that the United States had the evidence and that the threat was real.

Despite vastly improved reconnaissance technology in the subsequent forty years, President George W. Bush, in his long-anticipated speech before the United Nations, was unable to present any clear proof that Iraq currently has weapons of mass destruction or functioning offensive delivery systems.

Yet lack of credible evidence was only one problem with the president's speech.

For example, his comparison with the League of Nation's failure to stand up before Japanese, Italian, and German aggression in the 1930s is completely ahistorical. The Axis powers were heavily industrialized countries that had conquered vast stretches of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Today's Iraq, by contrast, is an impoverished Third World country that for twelve years has been under the strictest sanctions in world history and has long since been forced to withdraw from neighbors it once briefly occupied.

President Bush also asserted that Iraq was poised to march on other countries back when it seized Kuwait in 1990—a charge originally made by his father—to demonstrate the need for unilateral American initiatives. This claim, however, has long-since been disproven by subsequently released satellite photos that showed less than one-third the number of Iraqi soldiers

in Kuwait than claimed by the United States and that—rather than massing on the border as alleged—they were actually digging in to defensive positions around Kuwait City.

Virtually every delegate representing the world's nations present at the President's speech must have recognized the brazen act of hypocrisy in citing findings by the UN Human Rights Commission on Iraq, whose reports criticizing the human rights records of American allies have often been summarily dismissed by U.S. officials.

Double standards were most apparent, however, in President Bush's stress on the importance of enforcing UN resolutions.

The list of UN Security Council resolutions violated by Iraq cited by President Bush pales in comparison to the list of UN Security Council resolutions currently being violated by U.S. allies. Not only has the United States not suggested invading these countries, the U.S. has blocked sanctions or other means of enforcing them and even provides the military and economic aid that helps make these ongoing violations possible.

For example, in 1975, the UN Security Council passed a series of resolutions demanding that Morocco withdraw its occupation forces from the country of Western Sahara and that Indonesia withdraw its occupation forces from East Timor. However, then-U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Daniel Patrick Moynihan later bragged that, "The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. The task was given to me, and I carried it forward with not inconsiderable success."

East Timor finally won its freedom in 1999 after 24 years of U.S.-backed occupation. Moroccan forces still occupy Western Sahara, however, with the Bush administration supporting



Morocco's defiance of subsequent UN Security Council resolutions that simply call for an internationally supervised referendum for the Western Saharan population to determine the fate of their desert nation.

Meanwhile, Turkey remains in violation of UN Security Council resolutions 353 and 354 calling for its withdrawal from northern Cyprus, which this NATO ally of the United States has occupied since 1974.

The most extensive violator of UN Security Council resolutions is Israel, by far the largest recipient of U.S. military and economic aid. Israel's refusal to respond positively to the formal acceptance last March by the Arab League to the land for peace formula put forward in UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 arguably puts Israel in violation of these resolutions, long seen as the basis for Middle East peace. There can be no argument, however, that Israel remains in defiance of a series of other UN Security Council resolutions. These include resolutions 262 and 267 that demand Israel rescind its annexation of greater East Jerusalem, as well as the more than dozen other resolutions demanding Israel cease its violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention, such as deportations, demolitions of homes, collective punishment, and seizure of private property.

Unlike some of the hypocritical and mean-spirited anti-Israel resolutions passed by the UN General Assembly, such as the now-rescinded 1975 resolution equating Zionism and racism, these Security Council resolutions challenging Israeli policies have been well-grounded in international law.

For example, UN Security Council resolutions 446 and 465 require that Israel evacuate all of its illegal settlements on occupied Arab lands. The

United States, however, insists the fate of the settlements is a matter of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. In fact, the Clinton Peace Plan of December 2000 would have allowed Israel to illegally annex most of these settlements and surrounding areas into Israel. Even more disturbing, the U.S. decision to help fund Israel's construction of Jewish-only "bypass roads" in the occupied West Bank to connect the illegal settlements with Israel puts the United States in violation of Article 7 of resolution 465, which prohibits member states from facilitating Israel's colonization drive.

There is little doubt that the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein is in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. The regime must indeed either be forced to change its behavior or be replaced. That, however, is a decision for the Iraqi people or the United Nations, not the United States alone.

According to Articles 41 and 42 of the UN Charter, no member state has the right to enforce any resolution militarily unless the Security Council determines that there has been a material breach of its resolution, decides that all nonmilitary means of enforcement have been exhausted and specifically authorizes the use of military force. This is what the Security Council did in November 1990 with Resolution 678 in response to Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, which violated a series of resolutions passed that August that demanded their withdrawal. When Iraq finally complied by withdrawing from Kuwait in March 1991, this resolution became moot.

Although UN Security Council Resolution 687, which demands Iraqi disarmament, was the most detailed in the world body's history, no military enforcement mechanisms were specified. Nor has the Security Council specified any military

enforcement mechanisms in subsequent resolutions. As is normally the case when it is determined that governments are violating all or part of UN resolutions, any decision about enforcement is a matter for the Security Council as a whole—not for any one member of the Council.

If the United States can unilaterally claim the right to invade Iraq because of that country's violation of Security Council resolutions, other Council members could logically also claim the right to invade states that are similarly in violation; for example, Russia could claim the right to invade Israel, France could claim the right to invade Turkey, and Britain could claim the right to invade Morocco. The U.S. insistence on the right to attack unilaterally could seriously undermine the principle of collective security and the authority of the UN and, in doing so, would open the door to international anarchy.

Until the Bush administration ends its gross exaggerations of Iraq's current offensive military capabilities, double standards on human rights and UN Security Council resolutions, and ongoing threats to illegally invade Iraq, the United States simply does not have the credibility to lead the international effort to challenge Saddam Hussein's regime.

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