

# It is not what you say, rather what you do not say that counts

An exercise in knitted reverse logic

When one contrasts the standing ovation President Bush received from both Houses of Congress during his State of the Union message in the spring of 2002 with the muffled applause recently awarded him by the UN General Assembly, one can easily understand how much things have changed since Osama bin Laden's emissaries paid unexpected visits to New York and Washington, D. C. in September of 2001.

As it would be difficult to impeach a US president for being the world's biggest hypocrite, there appears little US Americans can do for still another year in order to rid themselves of what has obviously become an important embarrassment for many. Of course, one can argue that things are really not as bad as they seem, because even the smallest hypocrite at the head of the world's only hegemonic power becomes the world's biggest hypocrite by default. This said, perhaps we should delve more deeply into what truly happened at the UN and try to understand not only the President's actions, but also those of his Congress and nation.

In May 2002 several months after the fall of the Twin Towers both Houses of the US Congress voted with near unanimity for resolutions to support Israel in its continued aggression toward the people of Palestine. To the chagrin of many only a small number of US Congressmen and Senators spoke up on behalf of the Palestinians. Both congressional resolutions were passed only one month after Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia told the US President that US Americans must temper their support of Israel or face grave consequences throughout the Arab world.<sup>1</sup>

According to Kofi Annan, UN General Secretary, the problem is one of structural obsolescence.<sup>2</sup> Many UN delegates and UN observers maintain, on the other hand, that the United States government simply does not care what the world thinks and goes its own way whenever it is convenient. After all, the Cold War is over, civilian and state terror have become common place, and there is no single national government powerful enough to keep the United States government in check. In truth, the list of major international agreement the United States has rejected is long: the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on the environment, the creation of the International Criminal Court in 1998-2002, the United States' most recent invasion of Iraq, and its long standing support of Israel's flagrant rejection of UN resolutions are only a few of the more prominent reasons for discord. Moreover, the number of countries that regularly vote in agreement with the United States is abysmally low. In 2002 only nine nations of the entire 191 member UN General Assembly demonstrated agreement with the United States more than half the time. Among these were France and the United Kingdom -- the United States' most ardent critic and staunchest supporter, respectively, in matters related to Southwest and Central Asia.<sup>3</sup>

Now imagine what it must have been like for the United Nations to see the President of the United States stand before its hallowed halls and tell them that the United States' near unilateral decision to invade Iraq was performed in an effort "to defend the peace, and the credibility of the United Nations".

Peace? Credibility? What peace can emerge in the noise of silence? In his speech the

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Bumiller, 2002. (April 25) Saudi tells Bush US must temper backing of Israel. New York Times [online document] <<http://www.nytimes.com/>> (25 April 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Felicity Barringer. 2003 (September 19). U. N. senses that it must change, fast. New York Times [online document] <<http://www.nytimes.com/>> (19 September 2003).

<sup>3</sup> In 2002 the United Kingdom ranked 5th with 57.1% agreement and France 6th with 56.0% agreement. Source: American-Israeli Co-operative Enterprise. Jewish Virtual Library. Top ten countries that vote with the United States at the UN. [online document] <<http://www.us-israel.org/>> (28 September 2003) The Library/Politics/United Nations/Voting Records/

President spoke the words terror, terrorist(s), or terrorism no less than 40 times. The words Israel, Israeli(s), Zionism, Zionist, Palestine, Palestinian(s) were simply not mentioned<sup>4</sup>. Yasser Arafat won his popularity among the Palestinian, Arab, and other peoples of our planet, because he brought the plight of his people to everyone's attention through terrorist acts. Does President Bush really think he can help things by simply ignoring the Palestinian plight again?

Presidential hypocrisy and stupidity does not stop here, however. On several occasions both prior to and after the US invasion of Iraq the United States accused the United Nations of having failed for more than a decade to live up to its agreements with regard to Iraq. Ironically no arms of mass destruction have been found since the fall of Hussein, but the United States government has consistently blocked the UN from effectuating close to a dozen UN resolutions critical of Israel to which the US has agreed. Among them the oldest dates back to 1947.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it has vetoed over 35 other resolutions similarly critical of Israel since 1972.<sup>6</sup>

Exactly three years ago today Ariel Sharon, the Butcher of Sabra and Shatilla,<sup>7</sup> surrounded Haram al-Sharif with Israeli soldiers and desecrated Islam's third most important holy site -- Haram al Sharif and the Al Aqsa Mosque.<sup>8,9</sup> On October 7, 2000 the United Nations adopted a resolution condemning that action and labelled the state of Israel an occupying power. Surprisingly, the United States government abstained, rather than cast its traditional veto in favour of Israeli state terror.

... And so began the Al Aqsa intifada.

Three years later Ariel Sharon is still trying to extinguish the havoc that he wrought, and the United States government continues to shelter him from the world community for his ongoing crimes against humanity. More recently the Israeli government condemned Yasser Arafat to death or banishment, and President Bush has blamed him for Mahmoud Abbas' failure to successfully implement a roadmap for action that was doomed before it was even properly understood.<sup>10</sup> This is an extraordinary amount of blame to place on someone who has spent the past 18 months under Israeli house arrest in his battered headquarters in occupied Ramallah.

In the meantime the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a post-Haram al Sharif incident and offshoot of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, have been rated one of the world's most

<sup>4</sup> US Department of State. Foreign Press Centers. 2003 (September 23). President Bush's address to the United Nations General Assembly. Opening session of the UN General Assembly's 58th Session. [online document] <<http://fpc.state.gov/24310.htm>> (28 September 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Negotiation Affairs Department. Facts, terms, and agreements. Resolutions. [online document] <<http://www.nad-plo.org/fact/resolutions.html>> (28 September 2003). A list of resolutions passed by the United Nations with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

<sup>6</sup> American-Israeli Co-operative Enterprise. Jewish Virtual Library. U. S. vetoes of UN resolutions critical of Israel. [online document] <<http://www.us-israel.org/>> (28 September 2003) The Library/Politics/United Nations/

<sup>7</sup> International Campaign for Justice for the Victims of Sabra and Shatilla [website] <<http://indictsharon.net/>> (September 28, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Francis A. Boyle. The Al Aqsa Intifada and international law. A revised transcript of a lecture obtained from the International Progress Organisation. [online document]. <<http://i-p-o.org/intifada-boyle.htm>> Professor Boyle is a professor of international law and was legal advisor to the Palestinian Delegation to the Middle East Peace Negotiations (1991-1993).

<sup>9</sup> Archnet. Digital Library. Al Aqsa Mosque. [online document] <[http://archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.tcl?site\\_id=36](http://archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.tcl?site_id=36)> (September 28, 2003). Includes 15 photographs of the Al Aqsa Mosque.

<sup>10</sup> Stegemann, R. A. 2002 (June 28). Enemies of peace, or defenders of Palestine: Rivers on a roadmap without bridges [online document] <<http://homepage.mac.com/moogoonghwa/earth/viewpoint/mazen.pdf>> (28 September 2003).

deadliest terrorist organisations by the United States government and have joined the ranks of the world's only true check on US American hegemony -- non-state perpetrated terror.<sup>11</sup> Is this believable? Truly it is a sad state of affairs, but as always the finger of blame is pointed at those who commit terror, rather than who create the conditions that provoke its creation -- namely, its legally sanctioned, democratically elected, perpetrators.

Now, one may argue that US-UN relations are hardly representative of US-World relations, but alas, government is government, and President Bush is the lawfully elected leader of the United States. Moreover, those who sit in the United Nation's General Assembly answer to their governments' respective heads of state; many of those present at the opening of the UN General Assembly's 58th session were just those heads. So, should anyone be surprised that the US President did not receive a warmer welcome? Once again, a clear signal was sent to the US American people that something is amiss in Washington.

Indeed, the people of the United States have now received the same message twice from two very different sources: a black messenger of doom and wanted world criminal named Osama bin Laden, and the white-laced, tie-bearing membership of the world's most prominent international forum. If the US American public has still not understood, when will it ever? Moreover, what can possibly be achieved by reorganising the United Nations? Either the United States is with the world, and the United Nations is worth reorganising, or the United States is against it, and non-state perpetrated terror should have its way.... After all, someone must keep the US American government in check, and democratically speaking, if US American voters are not going to it, al Qaeda will!

The only remaining question is whether US Americans have the willpower, knowledge, and determination to give the US Senate, House of Representatives, and President what they deserve during the next US nation-wide election -- a solid thrashing at the polls. Or is it just going to be more of the same: more snacks between media clips of US soldiers being gunned down by Saddam's Iraqi fedayeen?

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<sup>11</sup> BBC News World Edition. 2003 (July 1). Profile: Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades [online document] <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/1760492.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1760492.stm)> (September 28, 2003).

Also, Center for Defense Information. 2002 (June 10). Terrorism project. In the Spotlight: al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. [online document] <<http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/aqsa.cfm>> (September 28, 2003).