UN 'Uniting for Peace' Resolution Could Demand End to U.S. War on Iraq

by Mike Billington

Both the 22-member Arab Group at the United Nations, and the 57-member Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Group, have determined to introduce a resolution to convoke an emergency meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA), demanding an immediate end to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Their intention is to demonstrate the overwhelming international opposition to U.S. unilateral warfare, and to discuss means to bring about a withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq. The Non-Aligned Movement of 115 nations, and several national governments, including Russia, China, Indonesia, and Jamaica, have also expressed their support for an emergency UNGA session, under the 1950 UN Resolution 377, known as "Uniting for Peace," which allows the General Assembly to take over the responsibilities of the Security Council, in the event that the Security Council "fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security."

The Uniting for Peace Resolution was designed, ironically, by the United States, for conditions precisely like the current one, in which one or more members of the Permanent Five on the Security Council (United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China), which enjoy veto rights over any issue, are themselves the aggressors, and can use their veto to subvert any attempt by the Security Council to end the aggression.

Both the Arab Group and the OIC have published drafts of the resolutions they wish to introduce to the emergency UNGA session. The Arab Group resolution reflects the Arab League resolution passed at its Cairo meeting on March 24, calling for an immediate end to the war, reaffirmation of Iraq's sovereignty, and the return of UN inspectors and staff to run the oil-for-food program. That resolution was passed unanimously, with Kuwait abstaining.

As of this writing, no nation has formally requested that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan convene such an emergency session, as required. Once that request is made, the Secretary General will poll the 191 member-states, and as soon as half (96) respond positively, the emergency session will be held within 24 hours. (Alternatively, seven members of the Security Council itself can request that Uniting for Peace be invoked.)

The Arab League and the OIC have indicated that their member-states will make such a formal request, probably the first week of April. From numerous diplomats at the UN and in Washington, *EIR* has learned that the primary reason that the call has not already been issued, is the concern that Western countries which opposed the U.S. war before it began—especially France and Germany—have not demonstrated their support, at least not in public. The smaller nations are concerned, lest the emergency session be reduced to a "Cold War" division of the world, or take the form of the "Third World against the West," the diplomats said. They fear this might further incite the Clash of Civilizations fanatics, who are openly promoting their intention to move on after Iraq—to Iran, North Korea, China, Russia, and on and on.

Their fear also derives from the open thuggery coming from Washington, threatening countries calling for an emergency UNGA session, that they, too, may end up on the U.S. enemies list.

These same diplomats report, however, that if the European countries do not act soon, and the destruction of Iraq continues, their nations will proceed with or without the European powers.

U.S. Thuggery

On March 18, two days before the war was launched, the United States sent a démarche to its embassies, with instructions on how to handle the groundswell for invoking the Unity for Peace resolution. Several nations leaked copies of the communication to organizations supporting the Uniting for Peace effort, and Greenpeace put it on the Internet. The State Department has officially refused to deny its authenticity. Titled "Possible UNGA and CHR Sessions" (the Commission on Human Rights, CHR, also tried to pass a resolution condemning the war, but it was voted down), the démarche reads in part: "Some members of the UN General Assembly have been discussing holding a General Assembly Emergency Session on Iraq, should the Security Council not produce an additional Chapter VII resolution on the subject. We urge you to oppose such a session, and either to vote against or abstain if the matter is brought to a vote." It continues that the Security Council was still "seized of the matter," and therefore, "the GA must refrain from taking up the matter." Of course, it was

Pope John Paul II meets with Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorim to map out stopping the U.S. war on Iraq. Large groups of nations are working to invoke the 1950 Uniting for Peace Resolution 377, which would convoke the UN General Assembly, and override stonewalling within the Security Council to bring the war to an immediate end.

The world's people demand peace. Here an international peace rally in Leipzig, Germany, against the U.S. imperial war on Iraq. Peaceful demonstrations in this city in 1989 brought down the Soviet colossus.

precisely such a situation in 1950—with the Soviet Union blocking action in the Security Council at that time—which prompted the United States to introduce the Unity for Peace Resolution!

The démarche then insists that the United States intends to go to war, claiming (falsely) that it had the authority under earlier UN resolutions to do so, and then threatening, "Given the current highly charged atmosphere, the United States would regard a General Assembly session on Iraq as unhelpful and as directed against the United States. Please know that this question as well as your position on it is important to the U.S."

In the delusional world of "You're with us or you're against us," such threats are taken seriously, especially by smaller, weaker nations. Finding the courage to act requires true leadership.

The History of 'Uniting for Peace'

In 1950, UN Resolution 377 was passed into law under the tutelage of U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson. North Korea had invaded the South in June 1950. The UN Security Council acted promptly to deploy UN troops, under U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur, to repel the North Korean forces. The Soviet Union was boycotting the UN at the time, and thus was not able to exercise its veto power as a member of the Permanent Five. When the boycott ended, however, the Soviets did subsequently use their veto in votes related to the war, leading Acheson to promote the Uniting for Peace Resolution, to circumvent the Soviet veto. It was adopted by the General Assembly in November 1950, but was not actually invoked until 1956.

The 1956 Suez crisis was even more strikingly parallel to the current situation, since it was two Western members

of the Permanent Five—England and France—which were the aggressors, having invaded an Arab state, Egypt, in league with Israel! Israel first invaded Egypt on its own, but when the Security Council attempted to take the actions required under the UN Charter to end the aggression, the British and the French exercised their veto. In response, Yugoslavia, with the full support of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, invoked the Uniting for Peace Resolution, and the subsequent General Assembly emergency session demanded the immediate withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai. When that was not forthcoming, the emergency session, on Nov. 5, 1956, created the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), an armed force intended to be a buffer between the Israelis and the Egyptians (much as the Palestinians are today calling on the UN to send troops to protect them against the Israeli occupying army).

The very next day, the British and the French, rather than conceding to the will of the world's nations, invaded Egypt themselves, occupied the Suez Canal, and claimed (falsely) that the Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal was illegal under international law.

U.S. President Eisenhower recognized immediately that the British and the French were flaunting the body of international law established after World War II, while reviving their 19th-Century unilateralist, imperial policies. Eisenhower not only put his full weight behind the General Assembly's UNEF, which arrived in Egypt on Nov. 16, but he also threatened to cut off oil supplies to the invaders. Under such pressure, and exposed for their criminal activity, the invaders withdrew.

There have been nine situations in which the Uniting for Peace Resolution has been used: Hungary in 1956; Lebanon in 1958; Congo in 1960; the Middle East in 1967; and (since 1967) Bangladesh, Afghanistan, South Africa, and Palestine, several times. The most recent Res. 377 emergency session

began in 1997, dealing with East Jerusalem. This session is still standing, and was last convened in August 2002. Some Arab leaders have considered reconvening this same emergency session to address the war in Iraq, as intimately connected to the Mideast crisis.

A Necessary Step

Today, as in 1956, two members of the Permanent Five have taken it upon themselves to launch unilateral aggression, and impose a military occupation, on an Arab state, with the support of an extremist government in Israel—against the express will of the vast majority of the world's nations and people. But today the stakes are incomparably higher—due to both the power of the aggressor, including the U.S. war party's promulgation of a new strategic doctrine allowing the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries, and due to the drastic state of collapse of the world economy. As the U.S. government has, at least for the moment, fallen into the hands of forces fiercely opposed to the historic mission embedded in the U.S. Constitution, promoting instead a parody of 19th-Century British imperialism and 20th-Century European fascism, it is incumbent on all nations, large and small, to speak out and act to bring the United States to its senses.

The Uniting for Peace Resolution was designed, during a better moment in our nation's history, for just such a time. Those who argue that the General Assembly can only express opinions, without enforcement powers, are ignoring the wording of the resolution itself, and ignoring the power of ideas to move individuals, and nations, to rise above a crisis of civilization.

Documentation

UN Resolution 377 (V). Uniting for Peace, Section A

Resolves that if the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures, including in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain or restore international peace and security. If not in session at the time, the General Assembly may meet in emergency special session within twenty-four hours of the request therefor. Such emergency special session shall be called if requested by the Security Council on the vote of any seven members, or by a majority of the Members of the United Nations.

Arab Nations Changed, Shaken by the War

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Among the factors which the United States and Britain misevaluated, in preparing their war in Iraq, is the power of resistance, not only of the Iraqis but of the entire Arab world. In the year before the invasion Lyndon LaRouche repeatedly warned that it would rapidly undermine the governments of neighboring Mideast nations, inflaming the Arab masses, leading to mass demonstrations; those governments which were either supporting the war, or not explicitly opposing it in words and deeds, would be threatened with overthrow.

As the invasion entered its third week in early April, just such a process of regional destabilization had begun. Protests and demonstrations were growing daily Egypt and Jordan, the two most important Arab "moderate" allies of the United States. Both Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordanian King Abdallah II have been placed under unprecedented public pressure, and have had to "correct" their positions. Similar popular dissent has been witnessed in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia; despite repression, it continues to simmer. In such a crisis, governments must represent the will of their people, who are rightly opposing an unjust war, or they will be thrown overboard.

War planners in Washington and London must be asking themselves how could this happen. Since it did not require a Middle East specialist to foresee such developments, the real question is: Why didn't they foresee this?

The People vs. the Regime

With the outbreak of war, masses poured into the streets of Cairo, Amman, and other Arab capitals. Governments responded initially with brutal police repression and mass arrests. Egypt jailed up to 1,000 demonstrators, including two leading independent members of Parliament. They were released only on March 31. Although the authorities tried to prevent students from marching out of the university campuses onto the city streets, protesters broke therough the cordons, and demonstrations swelled in number and intensity. Particularly painful for the United States, the American University of Cairo was among the vanguard campuses in the protest. It is not Islamist radicals, but the leading families of Egypt's intelligentsia who send their sons and daughters to study there.

President Mubarak, prior to the war, had warned of its consequences, including regional destabilization. He tried to pragmatically adapt to circumstances once the bombardments