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Trends. Double Standards on Double Standards: War With Iraq and the Middle East Peace Process

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Abstract: This Trends article discusses the nature of public statements from two national governments – the United States and the United Kingdom – in reference to a potential war with Iraq. Of special interest is the possible double standard pertaining to the differences in the international treatment of Iraq vs. the role of Israel in the Middle East Peace Process.

Public statements from the two national governments most leaning forward towards a war with Iraq--the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK)--often link two United Nations (UN) issues as commensurate, if not equivalent. These two issues are the compliance of Iraq with UN resolutions bearing on removing the former's weapons of mass destruction and the compliance of Israel with UN resolutions bearing on giving up territory in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and, perhaps, elsewhere. A related assertion from the US and UK is that without concurrent attention to and progress towards resolving both issues, advocates of robustly and muscularly resolving the Iraqi Issue can be accused of a double standard. This double standard, in turn, is often termed a pro-Israeli bias, a pro-Jewish bias, an anti-Arab bias, and/or an anti-Islam bias. Finally, while the Iraqi Issue is clearly and baldly stated, the Israeli Issue is often relabeled as "Active engagement in pursuing an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement" (Hoge, 2002).

The clear stating of the Iraqi Issue and the re-labeling of the Israeli Issue may well suggest some ambivalence or discomfort (on the part of some US and UK representatives) with the linkage of equivalence between the issues and with the associated threat of double standard by not actively pursuing both. And there may be good reason for such ambivalence and discomfort.

For example, one might argue that if one feels impelled to follow one UN resolution, one should feel equally impelled to follow all. But surely, one might discern a difference in the import and consequences of complying or not complying with various resolutions--much as most people do concerning various moral, ethical, or legal criteria.

In fact, the linkage of equivalence between the Iraqi and Israeli issues on the part of US and UK representatives may be no more than a propagandistic action to facilitate support for an Iraqi military intervention from political actors otherwise unlikely to be supportive and even likely to be extremely resistant. And the pound of flesh exacted by these political actors for their support or moderated resistance weighs in as a measure of anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish bias, pro-Arab bias, pro-Islam bias, and/or pro-Palestinian bias.

So we are left with a situation wherein some proponents of equivalence and a double standard by equivalence-default may be tarred with a bias--the converse of which may tar yet other proponents of the same equivalence and double standards by equivalence-default. With such a situation can the Iraqis and Israelis become anything other than allies? (Hoge, W. (January 8, 2003). Britain calls up 1,500 reservists for possible action against Iraq. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Milhausen, R. R., & Herold, E. S. (2001). Reconceptualizing the sexual double standard. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 13, 63-83; Reichenbach, R. (1998). The postmodern self and the problem of

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developing a democratic mind. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 26, 226-237; Ross, H. S., & den Bak-Lammers, I. M. (1998). Consistency and change in children's tattling on their siblings: Children's perspectives on the moral rules and procedures in family life. *Social Development*, 7, 275-300.) (Keywords: Double Standards, Iraq, Middle East, Peace Process.)