

C-Span
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To The Editor:

This AM , February 11, 1998, I heard on C-Span that the president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein , only understands force. This is a dangerous assumption.

President Hussein has not had his original problems with Kuwait addressed. Also, not addressed is the preinvasion role of the United States government with Iraq.

Our representative, April Glaspie, told President Hussein that we were not interested in local border disputes, then.

Catholic bishops stated on C-Span, January 30th that they are against our present use of force for our presently stated reasons in the current crises.

The bishops recommended that sanctions be lifted against Iraq and that President Saddam Hussein be given a hearing.

President Hussein claimed that Kuwait was manipulating world oil price and that Kuwait was siphoning Iraqi oil at its borders.

The Catholic bishops say that Iraq must have had a cause to invade Kuwait that has not yet been addressed.

Yet our response was to amass an attack force with President Bush's, "This aggression will not stand."

What is the responsibility of the United States for the present situation in Iraq?

Had the Bill of Rights been foremost in U. S.'s policy, or at least as dominant in diplomacy as "raison d'etat" (right of the nation/state or state's interest) events may have taken a different turn.

When it became known that the president of Iraq was using chemical warfare against the Kurds in the Northern section of Iraq, our government did not find it necessary to indict Hussein, then, in the world court or the world forum of the United Nations.

Had this act been declared against the Charter of Rights of the United Nations and Iraq expelled and its leader declared a war criminal for crimes against humanity, dissidents in Iraq should have had support from the world community for his capture or demise.

Later the dissidents expected support from the United States and were cruelly disappointed when they had none. It had to be experienced as a double cross, when we had led them to believe in our help.

Nations with a tradition of royal rule or military dictatorships have a traditionally suppressed public.

They have limited recourse but to follow the leader.

The leader, in turn, has no wish to bring in an outside authority to arbitrate his judgment/rule.

Every sovereign state has protections against intrusion by an external force/authority in the internal affairs of state.

This is a matter of national sovereignty.

But, we have found that national sovereignty has to be questioned and challenged and give way when acts offend member nations and defy international law.

Transgression over borders is an overt act.

Transgression against individuals within a border may be a covert act, but may be found out and may or may not be threatening in character to border states - but transgression against human rights is threatening to world order and peace. Civil rights violations have to be censured by the world community if we are to have a world of cooperative countries organized and united by a charter of acceptable principles and civil codes of conduct.

Not only has the government of Iraq and its leader, President Saddam Hussein committed wrongs, but the government of the United States and its leader, President George Bush, failed to take steps when the basic human right to life was taken from the Kurds before the overt act of transgression against the borders of Kuwait.

Why was this transgression against the Kurds overlooked?

Was it because it was internal?

Or, was it because our interest in the Gulf region was mainly over control of oil?

Which comes first?

Life or economic interests?

When President Saddam Hussein was, without intervention, to become controller of 2/3rds of the world's oil supply, then motivation for armed intervention heightened along with demonization of the Iraqi leader.

Preinvasion of Kuwait, the Iraqi leader was given the respect of a head of state, addressed with honorable title.

Postinvasion of Kuwait, the Iraqi leader was demonized for our reasons of statecraft.

Prime Minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, of the old school of crime and punishment, helped President Bush focus his mind and fortify his will. But it was his own old style patronizing attitude that President Bush used when referring to his opponent that served to polarize Hussein to the extent and kind of his resistance.

Now, we have committed war crimes against our own people. Our former Iraqi opponent has committed crimes against his people. Both are human rights violations.

George Mason, speaking on the institution of slavery, was concerned about the effects of that practice on the children of the owners of slaves: I paraphrase: We are teaching them to become petty tyrants.

The U. S. and the U. N military and political leaders need to be concerned about the effects on our soldiers of the practice of using high and low technology (vehicles used as loaders) to kill others of lesser means, training, and will : We are teaching them to become subhuman, without compassion for the victims. We must not. They will suffer lifelong consequences.

Following President Bush's leadership in demonization of the enemy (a form of absolute judgment, before death), the air force commander used similar terms to motivate his airmen to attack and kill a retreating army, resulting in the "highway of death".

The air force commander in turn was following General Schwarzkopf's zealous determination (or orders) to destroy "the enemy's equipment" of war - nevermind the young men on the Iraqi side who were manning the equipment. Speaking of equipment in this sense is like speaking of collateral damage when speaking of civilian deaths.

Seven years ago from February 8th, I suffered the greatest angst when my son was called back in the Marine Corps for Gulf war service.

I had followed closely the unfolding of events and, some of what was not clearly thought out then is not clearly thought out, now.

One is the statement that we cannot assassinate a head of state. This is in peace time. There is an exception in a declared state of war.

President Clinton is mounting a force with the purpose of a possible strike against Iraq, but only Congress can declare war according to the War Powers Act unless it is in response to an emergency. I have not checked the War Powers Act, but this is my impression as I write.

If sanctions against Iraq were lifted, then, would President Hussein still forbid weapons inspectors into his country?

We should acknowledge some responsibility for giving Iraq wrong signals before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

I suggest that the U. N. Security Council or appropriate world agency serve papers on the Iraqi leader to hear his case and to ask for compliance to acceptable code of conduct. If violated, then steps by the U N may be taken. If the commitment of the U. N. is serious then internal dissidents should have support.

How can the United States be taken seriously except by military threat, if, in our international agreements, we have double standards for what we are willing to comply with and what we expect others to comply with?

Our military predominance has exceeded our statesmanship and humility as spokesperson for one nation, not all nations and all perspectives.

We are not the example of democracy we purport to be to the world.

Maybe, we, the United States, only understand force.

The Russian General Ivan Babichev risked being courtmartialled when he defied a command to march his army into Chechnya. Maj. Gen. Babichev refused to attack the women and children and old people blocking the road because "it would violate the constitution."

I know my son had the opposite viewpoint from my own and wanted to serve. The war ended before he could. The young soldier who did serve and saw the whites of his "enemy's" eyes before he dealt him his final blow, realized his enemy was offering his life for his country like he, himself, was, but it was kill first or be killed. Such experiences do not go away.

Many survivors of war carry guilt for being alive because many of their company and former "enemies" did not survive.

We must not sacrifice young people loyal to and bound by other traditions for our anger that their leader will not submit to our ways. We have to find other means.

It is said by Mr. Livingstone that chemical warfare is the poor man's nuclear weapon.

If we corner President Saddam Hussein, more than oil may be released. Fear is fear and when all appears, lost, what more is there to lose?