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## John Bolton: A Powerful Voice for America at the UN

*By Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., and Brett D. Schaefer*

Few political figures in recent history have so polarized opinion in Congress as John Bolton, the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Faced with Senate gridlock, Bolton was sent by President George W. Bush as a recess appointment to the United Nations last August. With Bolton's recess appointment expiring when the new Congress convenes in January 2007, the President recently announced that he would again submit Bolton for confirmation. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee plans to vote on Bolton's nomination in August, with a full vote of the Senate expected in September.

Over the past year, Bolton has proven a forceful advocate of American interests, a powerful voice for UN reform, and a staunch defender of the cause of human rights. He has worked closely with Congress, testifying no less than six times before House and Senate committees. Bolton has been an outspoken critic of corruption, mismanagement, waste, and inefficiency at a world body that receives well over \$3 billion a year from U.S. taxpayers.<sup>1</sup> He has shaken up an institution that has for decades been resistant to change and cast a revealing light on an elite UN establishment that has long thrived amidst a culture of complacency and secrecy.

1. "U.S. Participation in the United Nations: Financial Contributions," United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, September 8, 2005, at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/scp/2005/52983.htm>.

In three key areas, UN reform, human rights, and international security, Bolton's record has been outstanding, and he has dramatically raised the profile of issues from peacekeeping abuses to the need for increased transparency, accountability and effectiveness at the United Nations. John Bolton's commitment to both the advancement of U.S. interests and the cause of international freedom and security has been unwavering.

### International Security

The United States, along with the rest of the free world, must confront Iran and North Korea and defend Israel and its democracy while working to bring stability to the entire Middle East and Darfur. Should the president choose to renominate [Bolton], I cannot imagine a worse message to send to the terrorists – and to other nations deciding whether to engage in this effort – than to drag out a possible renomination process or even replace the person our president has entrusted to lead the nation at the United

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Nations at a time when we are working on these objectives.<sup>2</sup>

—Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH)

Senator Voinovich, who did not support Bolton's original nomination in 2005, is right to point out that another drawn out confirmation debate over John Bolton would only serve to weaken America's position on the international stage at a time when the world is facing an array of crises, from Tehran's insistence on developing nuclear weapons to Pyongyang's increasingly aggressive stance. The last thing the United States needs is a weakened ambassador on the UN Security Council as it embarks on some of the toughest negotiations since the end of the Cold War.

As Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security from 2001 to 2005, Bolton brings with him a wealth of experience in dealing with rogue regimes and the unique threat they pose to global security. He possesses a steady pair of hands at a time of great international tension. Bolton led U.S. efforts with Japan to rally unanimous Security Council support for Resolution 1695, which condemned North Korea's test-firing of long-range ballistic missiles and urged an immediate return to the six-party talks.<sup>3</sup> On Iran, Bolton has played a key role in warning the international community of Tehran's continuing enrichment of uranium and has consistently pressured the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to toughen its position on Iran's nuclear activities.

Bolton is also a figure of authority on the Middle East, and with the escalation of fighting in Lebanon and the growing threat posed by terrorist groups such as Hizbollah and Hamas, he is central to

Washington's efforts to bring long-term peace and security to a region bedeviled by terrorism and totalitarianism.

## Human Rights

As U.S. Ambassador, John Bolton has placed human rights firmly at the center of Washington's agenda at the UN. Bolton was instrumental in steering the Bush Administration away from joining the UN's new Human Rights Council, set up this year to replace the hugely discredited Commission on Human Rights, because that body was not a substantial improvement over its predecessor. The Council's lack of membership criteria rendered it open to participation and manipulation by the world's worst human rights abusers. Tyrannical regimes such as Burma, Syria, Libya, Sudan, and Zimbabwe all voted in favor of establishing the Council, in the face of strong U.S. opposition. The brutal North Korean dictatorship also gave the Council its ringing endorsement. When Council elections were held in May, leading human rights abusers Algeria, China, Cuba, Pakistan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia were all elected.<sup>4</sup> In a disheartening repetition of one of the old Commission's worst failings, the Human Rights Council decided to hold its first emergency session on Israel and adopted a one-sided resolution condemning that nation and ignoring the provocations of Palestinian armed groups.<sup>5</sup> This brief, disappointing record vindicates the Bush Administration's decision to adopt a wait and see attitude toward the Council.

While campaigning for a higher human rights standard at the UN, Bolton has also worked tirelessly to push for greater action by the UN Security Council and the international community over the

2. George V. Voinovich, "Why I'll Vote for Bolton," *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2006, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/19/AR2006071901788.html>.
3. "United Nations Security Council Condemns Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Missile Launches," Security Council, United Nations Press Release, July 15, 2006, at <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/prs/69022.htm>.
4. For background, see Brett D. Schaefer and Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., "The Right Decision on the UN Human Rights Council," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1031, April 6, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1031.cfm> and Brett D. Schaefer, "Human Rights Relativism Redux: UN Human Rights Council Mirrors Discredited Human Rights Commission," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1069, May 10, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1069.cfm>
5. "Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory," Human Rights Council, Special Session Resolution S-1/Res. I., at [http://www.eyeontheun.com/assets/attachments/documents/2714\\_Draft\\_resolution\\_on\\_HR\\_situation\\_in\\_the\\_OPT.doc](http://www.eyeontheun.com/assets/attachments/documents/2714_Draft_resolution_on_HR_situation_in_the_OPT.doc).

genocide in the Darfur region of the Sudan, which has claimed over 200,000 lives. He has played a key role in Security Council negotiations pressing for greater protection for refugees fleeing Sudanese-backed Janjaweed militias and for targeted sanctions against Sudanese officials implicated in the killing.

## UN Reform

Well-publicized scandals have greatly undermined the standing of the United Nations in the eyes of the American people. According to a March 2006 Gallup poll, 64 percent of Americans believed the United Nations was “doing a poor job,” the worst rating for the UN in its history. Just 30 percent had a positive image of the UN’s job performance.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the Oil-for-Food and procurement scandals and allegations of widespread sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers in the Congo have caused immense damage to the UN’s reputation.<sup>7</sup>

John Bolton has been at the forefront of U.S. efforts to clean up the UN. Immediately after being appointed, Bolton shook up the organization by demanding substantial revision of the draft World Summit Outcome Document that contained many provisions objectionable to the U.S. In the end, Bolton helped achieve consensus agreement on the Outcome Document, which included commit-

ments to reforming UN resource management and budget process, improving oversight, reviewing UN mandates, and reforming human resources management. He successfully led an effort to cap the UN budget at \$950 million pending progress on UN reform. In part due to Bolton’s efforts, the UN created an Ethics Office, mandated financial disclosure for UN officials, and increased resources for the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

In the face of strong opposition by the Group of 77 nations (G-77), Ambassador Bolton forged a 50-member coalition (representing 87 percent of the UN regular budget) to advance management reform. Nonetheless, G-77 opposition succeeded in delaying and ultimately blocking the reform effort.<sup>8</sup> Compounding the problem, this past June the G-77 led an effort to approve a UN budget beyond the \$950 million cap despite making little progress on UN reform, thus removing a major incentive for reform. While the U.S. did not vote against the resolution, it disassociated itself from the consensus position.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to his drive to reform the UN, Bolton has also been forthright in his condemnation of anti-Americanism in the world body, including among senior UN officials. Bolton strongly criticized a controversial speech by UN Deputy Secre-

6. “Americans’ Ratings of United Nations Among Worst Ever,” *Gallup Poll News Service*, March 13, 2006, at [http://www.eyeo-ntheun.org/assets/attachments/articles/2841\\_Americans\\_Ratings\\_of\\_United\\_Nations\\_Among\\_Worst\\_Ever.doc](http://www.eyeo-ntheun.org/assets/attachments/articles/2841_Americans_Ratings_of_United_Nations_Among_Worst_Ever.doc).
7. For information on the Oil-for-Food Program, see Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., *The Final Volcker Oil for Food Report: An Assessment*, Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 913, November 10, 2005, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm913.cfm>. For information on U.N. peacekeeping abuses, see Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., “The U.N. Peacekeeping Scandal in the Congo: How Congress Should Respond,” Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 868, March 22, 2005, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/hl868.cfm>. For an assessment of the U.N. procurement scandal, see U.S. Government Accountability Office, “United Nations: Procurement Internal Controls Are Weak,” GAO-06-577, April 27, 2006, at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06577.pdf>; and U.N. General Assembly, “Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Comprehensive Management Audit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations,” A/60/717, March 13, 2006, at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/269/62/PDF/N0626962.pdf>.
8. See Brett D. Schaefer, “A Progress Report on U.N. Reform,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1937, May 19, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/bg1937.cfm>. Only incremental progress has been made toward reform objectives since this vote, largely limited to uncontroversial measures such as replacing the information technology system, establishing a Chief Information Technology Officer, and giving very limited discretion to the Secretary-General to shift budget resources.
9. “Statement by John R. Bolton, Permanent U.S. Representative to the United Nations In Explanation of Position On Program Budget for the Biennium 2006-2007 Document A/C.5/60/L.44,” U.S. UN Press Release #140 (06), June 28, 2006, at [http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/06\\_140.htm](http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/06_140.htm).

tary-General Mark Malloch Brown<sup>10</sup> that was viewed as an attack on the U.S. approach toward the UN and an assault on Middle America. Ambassador Bolton rightly denounced the speech as “condescending and patronizing” and “a very serious affront” to the American people. Bolton called on UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to repudiate his deputy’s comments, which he called “the worst mistake” by a UN official in a quarter century.<sup>11</sup>

### Growing Support for Bolton’s Record

The debate in the Senate is expected to be ferocious, with strong partisan opposition likely. While emotions will undoubtedly run high, Bolton should be judged on his track record and his commitment to ensuring that U.S. interests are powerfully advanced at the United Nations. Positive testimonials of Bolton’s performance abound, even among his critics:

- Senator George Voinovich, who opposed the Bolton nomination last June, has now expressed his support for the U.S. Ambassador based on his performance over the past year.<sup>12</sup> In a recent opinion editorial, Voinovich noted, “My observations are that while Bolton is not perfect he has demonstrated his ability, especially in recent months, to work with others and follow the president’s lead by working multilaterally.”
- Bolton has also won the grudging respect of other UN ambassadors. The Romanian Ambassador to the UN acknowledged to *The Los Angeles Times* that “[Bolton] is having a definite impact . . . Others wish they could do things the same way,” and the Algerian Ambassador

observed that “[Bolton] has an agenda, and he’s pursuing it with a conviction that is uncommon here. . . .”<sup>13</sup>

- Even the *New York Times*, which opposed Bolton’s nomination last year, reluctantly acknowledged earlier this year that “Bolton has strongly supported reform at the United Nations. He has rightly insisted that crucial reforms should not be picked apart or watered down into meaninglessness. And he is right now to insist that there can be no yielding on the core point of shifting basic management authority from the General Assembly to the secretary general.”<sup>14</sup>

### Conclusion

During his time at the UN, John Bolton has been a hugely valuable asset to U.S. foreign policy and has proven his critics wrong. Bolton may not be the most popular man at the United Nations, but he is greatly respected and viewed by both friend and foe as a formidable advocate for U.S. interests. U.S. participation at the United Nations is not about winning popularity contests or engaging in feel-good back-slapping exercises. It is about steadfast leadership and the advancement of clear principles and ideals. It is in the U.S. national interest to have a United Nations that is free of corruption, fraud, and mismanagement. And it is in the national interest to have a world body that actually stands for human rights, that rejects terrorism, and that advances rather than hinders international security.

Bolton has not been afraid to speak his mind and upset the status quo. Nor has he been unwilling to call a dictator a dictator, expose the ram-

10. Mark Malloch Brown, “Power and Superpower: Global Leadership in the 21st Century,” address to the Century Foundation and Center for American Progress, New York, June 6, 2006, at [http://www.securitypeace.org/pdf/brown\\_remarks.pdf](http://www.securitypeace.org/pdf/brown_remarks.pdf).

11. See Brett D. Schaefer and Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., “Mark Malloch Brown is Wrong: The U.S. Should Press Even Harder for UN Reform,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1122, June 13, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1122.cfm>.

12. George V. Voinovich, “Why I’ll Vote for Bolton,” *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2006, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/19/AR2006071901788.html>.

13. Maggie Farley, “U.N. Hit By A Bolt From The Right,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 2005, at [http://www.eyeontheun.org/assets/attachments/articles/2201\\_un\\_hit\\_by\\_a\\_bolt\\_from\\_the\\_right.doc](http://www.eyeontheun.org/assets/attachments/articles/2201_un_hit_by_a_bolt_from_the_right.doc).

14. “Making The U.N. Work,” *The New York Times*, April 25, 2006, at <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/04/25/opinion/edun.php>.

pant hypocrisy of the UN's human rights apparatus, or condemn the actions of dangerous rogue regimes. Effective diplomacy requires forceful leadership and the willingness to back up tough words with action. As former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher observed in a letter of support for John Bolton, "A capacity for straight talking rather than peddling half-truths is a strength and not a disadvantage in diplomacy. In the case of a great power like America, it is essen-

tial that people know where you stand and assume you know what you say."

*Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., is the Bernard and Barbara Lomas Fellow and Director of, and Brett D. Schaefer is Jay Kingham Fellow in, the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, a division of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, at The Heritage Foundation. Peter Cuthbertson assisted with research for this paper.*