

U.S AGGRESSION ON IRAQ AND THE SENATE RESOLUTION

Reference to be provided by Prof. Khurshid

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The National Assembly initiated discussion on the US-British war of aggression against Iraq and could neither conclude the debate nor come out with a consensus resolution. The Senate met for five days and 62 Senators expressed their views on invasion of Iraq condemning the merciless bombing and massacre of innocent civilians by the US-British forces. Of course the tone and temper of criticism varied from senator to senator, reflecting their personal response and political background. Yet there was a consensus on this war being unjust and unjustifiable. Some of the Senators belonging to the PML (Q) and its allied parties also expressed their views quite vehemently, in very strong terms. Yet the effort of the treasury benches was to keep the resolution very mild. On the other hand the opposition parties condemned the war in very strong terms and also wanted the resolution to be much stronger than what was acceptable to other parties. The choice before the Senators was either to conclude the session without any resolution or bring two resolutions - one strong and one mild and the other to try to work out a consensus resolution which may not fully reflect the real anger and disgust of the Pakistani nation, yet may convey to the world the message of total disapproval of this war and articulate in unambiguous terms the demand for immediate cessation of hostilities.

There were five points on which there was complete consensus within the debate in the Senate and they were as follows:

1. That this war has been imposed by USA and Britain in total violation of the UN Charter, and as such it lacks legality. Absence of legality makes the war an act of aggression.
2. That there is universal abhorrence against the indiscriminate use of fire power against innocent people and this fact deserves to be noted and condemned.
3. That the UN must be invoked to take immediate steps to bring to an end hostilities and initiate diplomatic process under UN Charter.
4. That the popular protest against this unjust war is a silver lining and Pakistan must identify itself with this global movement and take steps to further strengthen it to pressurize the perpetrators of war to stop hostilities.

Finally to express solidarity with the people of Iraq in their heroic resistance.

An effort was made to capture all these five points in the consensus resolution. I have no reservation in accepting that it represents the lowest common denominator between the treasury benches and opposition parties. While presenting the resolution I also made it clear in my introductory remarks that we wanted the resolution to be stronger. But we finally preferred to

come out with a Consensus Resolution which conveyed in clear terms the message and feelings, even though in respect of choice of the words we had to concede to adopt expressions which apparently lacked the punch. It was a price we had to pay to have a common stand. The resolution was moved by me on behalf of 23 Senators representing all the parties in the Senate. It is correct that we spent two days negotiating not only on substance but also on words. We, however, preferred to give a message to the world that the Pakistani nation totally disapproves what the US-British alliance has done in Iraq and identifies itself with all those governments and people who are opposing this immoral and unjust war. If the text of the resolution is read in this context, it would enable the readers to have a better understanding of the efforts of the Senators.

Text of the Resolution:

"The Senate of Pakistan expresses its shock and dismay over the attack by the U.S. British and allied forces against Iraq in clear violation of the UN Charter. The Senate strongly deplores the military attack against Iraq by use of indiscriminate firepower against innocent civilians and demands that the UN Security Council must take an immediate initiative to stop hostilities and seek a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the problem.

The senate supports the protest of all peace loving countries of the world against this conflict and resolves that world opinion be mobilized to pressurize through all possible means the countries engaged in the conflict for immediate cessation of hostilities.

The Senate of Pakistan expresses its solidarity with the people of Iraq.

I would like to reaffirm, as I did while proposing the resolution, that the MMA Senators are committed to pursue the line that has been adopted by their party in all its statements and million marches. We have not compromised on our objectives and principled position.

It also deserves to be placed on record that the newly formed Joint Opposition Committee in the Senate in its first meeting (T* April, 2003) expressed the viewpoint of the opposition in these words: "The Committee also condemns in strongest terms the naked aggression of U.S. British and allied forces against a sovereign Muslim state Iraq. This war which has been arbitrarily and illegally imposed upon the people of Iraq is in violation of the UN Charter and constitutes a war against humanity. Thousands of civilians have been killed or injured in 13 days of merciless bombardment and military onslaughts. The committee demands immediate cessation of hostilities in Iraq and withdrawal of the allied forces from Iraq's sovereign territory. The Committee also demands that Pakistan Government should take a firm and unequivocal stand on this war of aggression and play its role in the Security Council to mobilize the UN to bring this war to an end."
