

Ambassador John Bolton: Either Iran will acquiesce or it will face dire consequences

John Bolton's message was not well received at Oxford University

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Taunted and jeered, Bolton bolted

Michael Carmichael

"John Bolton is the kind of man with whom I would want to stand at Armageddon, if it should be my lot to be on hand for what is forecast to be the final battle between good and evil in this world."

Senator Jesse Helms (Republican, North Carolina, retired)

Facing an increasingly hostile group of law students in an Oxford seminar that had somehow gone dreadfully wrong, beads of sweat began to pop out on John Bolton's furrowed brow. Amidst a rising chorus of taunts, jeers, hisses and outright denunciations, Bolton was swiftly surrounded by his entourage of three American security agents and whisked out the door of the seminar room at Oriel College on Friday, the 9th of June.

Pursued by vocal recriminations from angry and frustrated American students who led the incisive questioning and the equally incisive jeering — with taunts like, *"You should be doing a better job!"* Bolton bolted. He turned sharply on his heel and took flight out the door and then fled down the mediaeval passageway and into the relative safety and calm of his bullet-proof diplomatic limousine, Bolton swiftly headed out of Oxford, rudely foregoing the well-established tradition of lingering to talk with interested members of the audience.

Bolton's swift exit contrasted sharply with Oxford appearances by two other American politicians earlier this term. Both John Podesta and Richard Perle enjoyed lingering for discussions with Oxford audiences after their talks. John Bolton would have none of it, and the reason was obvious. Throughout the questioning, the audience became increasingly hostile and combative towards his neoconservative agenda.

Numbering over one hundred and consisting of a large contingent of Americans intermingled with British and international students, the audience was eager to hold Bolton accountable for the neoconservative arguments he put forward in his talk. The keen attitude of the audience infused Bolton with a noticeable reticence to remain and exchange viewpoints even though it is a time-honoured Oxford tradition. Bolton's performance was tantamount to arriving late for dinner, wolfing one's food and then leaving abruptly before the cigars and Amontillado.

Bolton had been invited to Oxford for a one-hour seminar organised by The Law Society. His talk would be followed by the routine question and answer session.

Upon his arrival, Bolton announced that his talk would not be a free and open discussion but strictly limited to his few selected topics: UN reform, scandal and the next Secretary General. Predictably, Bolton launched into his standard speech — little more than a right-wing denigration of the UN as riddled with corruption in the form of the Oil for Food scandal.

Bolton began his broadside with an examination of the principle of 'sovereign equality,' whereby every nation has exactly the same voting rights as every other member of the General Assembly. He adopted an unsophisticated book-keeper's perspective, stating that the contributions made by the USA dwarfed those of many other nations. He argued unconvincingly that even those forty-seven members who paid the bare minimum had the same voting power in the General Assembly as America. This observation failed to impress the audience who were more than well aware of America's financial and economic superiority to the debt-ridden nations in the third world – a superiority accumulated through trade negotiations designed to extract capital from the poorest nations and transfer it to the wealthiest.

Bolton's panacea for the bureaucratic inefficiency was simple. At its core, he implied that a group of sharp-eyed book-keepers backed by accountants, auditors and a hardened core of dues-collectors should run the United Nations along strict financial guidelines as if it were a private club with a dining room and golf course rather than the world's premiere organization mandated to prevent armed conflict between sovereign nations, foster economic development, enhance social equality and cultivate international law. If Bolton is aware of the principles defining the mission of the United Nations, he made no mention of them whatsoever. His sole focus was a totally transparent harangue on the disparity of dues, a tissue of an argument that would not have convinced a fifteen year old – much less Oxford law students.

Turning to his case for corruption, Bolton launched into a literal diatribe about the Oil for Food programme that he described as a substantial scandal. The background to this is important: led by Bolton, neoconservative critics of the UN attempted unsuccessfully to make a criminal case against Kofi Annan and members of his family through the Oil for Food investigation, but their efforts largely were wasted. The investigation did discover some relatively minor official corruption involving a paltry \$150,000 paid to one individual. The largest amount of corruption appears to have come in the form of kickbacks and bribes to the government of Iraq by oil companies seeking cheap oil. Of the kickbacks paid to the government of Iraq, 52% came from the US in the form of bribes for cheap oil, a figure that is more than the rest of the planet of 190 nations combined. While a partisan Republican Senator, Norm Coleman of Minnesota, made allegations against one high profile figure, George Galloway a British MP, they have been refuted. The investigation is ongoing, but of 54 internal audits only one has been made public. Bolton did not mention any of these details, nor did he provide any substantive evidence for his charge of serious levels of official corruption at the UN.

Neither did Bolton call attention to the fact that the Oil for Food case pales into insignificance when compared to the massive scandals engulfing American operations in Iraq involving tens and possibly hundreds of billions of dollars or the Abramoff millions and the Enron scandal soaring into billions of dollars. Weak, prejudiced and hostile in its intent, Bolton's case against the UN failed to impress his keen academic audience of law

students. Bolton failed to get an indictment from this grand jury.

The final part of Bolton's talk dealt with the next Secretary General of the UN who will take office later this year. He criticized the obligatory rotation of the office, arguing for a review of the rules governing selection of the Secretary General. Although making comments about the need for balance and fairness, Bolton observed that the next Secretary General should come not from Asia but from the ranks of Eastern Europe – a favourite region for Bolton who champions the increasing integration of Eastern European nations and leaders into the American sphere of influence. Bolton left the impression that he is deeply involved in the selection process for the next Secretary General. From his remarks, it is clear that he is making every effort to influence this selection by anointing an Eastern European functionary loyal to the neoconservative agenda of George Bush, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld.

Perhaps most dramatically, Bolton presented a stark message to his Oxford audience: the UN exists to institutionalize inequalities of power, wealth and national security. In his view, the UN should be a club for powerful nations to manage their relations with poor nations by denying them any real power. As an agent of corporate wealth and institutional power, in his Oxford remarks Bolton focused exclusively on justice for capital and repudiated the notion of a democratic basis for the UN. Bolton demanded that the UN should remain a gated community devoid of power-sharing with its small clique of five Security Council members wielding veto power over the remaining 190 members.

During the question period, Bolton recognized a law student who politely asked him to justify the application of a double standard in the Middle East that favors Israel over Syria or other Muslim nations. Detecting the student's accent, Bolton pointedly asked, "Where are you from?" The student was Syrian. On that note, Bolton refused to answer the question, and instead he criticized Syria for what he deemed to be its unwarranted interference in the Middle East and Lebanon even though they withdrew their final 15,000 troops last year. From a historical perspective, it is ironic that Bolton would have cited this case, for Syria was invited to provide security operations in Lebanon by the Maronite Christians with the tacit approval of the United Nations and the support of the Arab League. The hypocrisy at the heart of his own case – since he represents a hegemonic power with more than one hundred and thirty thousand uninvited troops on the ground in Iraq, thousands more uninvited troops in Afghanistan and which now threatens to launch a new war against Iran – was lost on Bolton. But, Bolton's hypocrisy was not lost on his perceptive audience who now zeroed in on him with a barrage of pointed questions.

The next question to Bolton was why should the UN be based on dues paid and the wealth and power of its members i.e one nation, one vote — instead of population, which would mean — one man, one vote. Detecting another foreign accent, Bolton asked, "Where are you from?" The student was from India. Bolton said that any alteration in the current articles of the UN charter to reform on a demographic basis would change the nature of the institution, and he indicated that principle, i.e. democracy and one man, one vote – remained totally unacceptable to the United States as a basis for the United Nations. Quite.

In what was rapidly becoming his interrogation, a woman from America questioned Bolton about the need for a balanced approach where America would represent the best interests of the world at large rather than its own particular regional self-interest. At that point, Bolton fumbled. In a clumsy and misguided attempt to turn the tables on his adroit and incisive challengers, Bolton threw out a question of his own. He called for a show of hands of those

in the audience who were British. Bolton then asked how many of them wanted the British Ambassador at the UN to represent the interests of Britain. Only one or two hands were raised. Then he asked to see a show of hands of those British subjects who wanted the British Ambassador at the UN to represent not only the interests of Britain but also the collective interests of the other members as well. At least a dozen hands went up into the air. Stunned, Bolton was dumbfounded and said rather witlessly, "I would have gotten a different result in America."

At that point, the crowd was warming to the battle unfolding before them and led so capably by the incensed Americans in the audience. With their voices rising in taunts and jeers and more than a dozen hands demanding to be recognized to put more questions to him, Bolton's attention turned to his phalanx of security agents who surrounded him drawing the question and answer session to an abrupt close. In retrospect, Bolton's was a disgraceful performance, one committed to an *ancien regime* of property, monetary wealth and military power in diametrical opposition to the democratic rights of humanity. John Bolton showed himself to be a behemoth of corporate greed and corrupt political influence in world diplomacy. My view is that his appointment to the Ambassadorship of the United Nations was tantamount to appointing Vito Corleone to head the FBI.

The primary purpose of Bolton's visit to Britain was not made public, but it was clear nevertheless from his public remarks. With a history of trips to Europe to demand the sackings of officials for whom he has a personal dislike, Bolton's visit to Britain was obviously to demand the sacking of the Deputy Secretary of the UN, a British subject, Mark Malloch Brown. Bolton appeared on the influential BBC4 *Today* programme, where he was interviewed by Jim Naughtie. Deputy Secretary of the UN Brown was his first target. Brown's speech critical of US policy *vis a vis* the UN had clearly irritated Bolton. Brown had criticized the US for using the UN to take care of many foreign policy problems while US officials hypocritically attacked it back home in red state America. By pointing this out, Brown touched a sensitive nerve in Bolton's neoconservative brain. Then Bolton falsely accused Brown of criticizing the American people – a sheer fabrication. Then, Bolton lashed out at Brown for making remarks that would injure the UN. Coming from Bolton, this appraisal sounded more like a threat than serious criticism. In explaining the US position on the UN, he stated, "I think that the administration has told the truth about the UN – the good, the bad and the ugly," a strange choice of metaphors for a man with as controversial a reputation as Bolton.

Naughtie turned to the Iran crisis, and Bolton reiterated the official White House line: the situation remains under negotiation but volatile. Either Iran will acquiesce to the demands placed upon it, or it will face dire consequences including military intervention. Leaving no doubt that Bush and Bolton propose unilateral action, Bolton confirmed that Iran would be a test case to determine whether the UN Security Council could be effective in the war against terrorism.

When interviewed on the same day by the *Financial Times*, Bolton rejected the concept that the Bush administration was holding out the possibility of a "grand bargain" with Iran. In Bolton's mind, the terms of the negotiations are focused exclusively on the Iranian nuclear programme and do not encompass diplomatic recognition or the normalization of relations. Far from *detente*, Bolton's definition of the process is simple: the US is threatening Iran with war unless they submit to terms which Iran finds unattractive – the cessation of what they state is peaceful research into nuclear energy.

Given his very public actions as exemplified by his statements in the UK and the US, Bolton should now be considered to be functioning as the US Secretary of State. It would not be surprising to see him elevated to that post in the event of Condoleezza Rice leaving the State Department or upon the election of a new Republican administration in 2008.

John Bolton has a fascinating back-story. A Lutheran from Baltimore, Bolton studied law at Yale. The extreme right-wing presidential campaign of Barry Goldwater politicized him, and in the late 1970s, he emerged as a top legal advisor to the extreme racist Republican, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. A description of Bolton's political extremism records, "A veteran of Southern electoral campaigns, Bolton has long appealed to racist voters." (*John Bolton, Right Web*) During the 2000 Florida vote fiasco, Bolton played a high profile partisan role. Working under Jim Baker, Bolton led the so-called "white collar riot" that brought a halt to the counting of ballots in Florida.

Throughout the 1980s, Bolton was a leader of Republican Party efforts to undermine voting rights for minorities. Forming an alliance with James Baker, Bolton served in both the Reagan and Bush 41 administrations. During the Clinton years, Bolton served as an assistant to Baker when he worked as Kofi Annan's envoy in the Western Sahara. It is somewhat ironic that Bolton is now the principal critic of Annan. Additionally, Bolton spent time at the usual right-wing and neoconservative institutions including: the American Enterprise Institute; Project for the New American Century; Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs and the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf. Before his appointment as US Ambassador to the United Nations, Bolton served as Undersecretary of State for Arms Control.

In the mid-1990s, Bolton was involved in a political money-laundering scandal that opened a channel for funds from Taiwan to Republican candidates. (*ibid.*) Prior to his appointment as UN Ambassador, Bolton was deeply involved in the Bush administration's overt campaign to undermine international law. Bolton masterminded the systematic abrogation of several key international treaties including: the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention; the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty; the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. During his work for the Reagan administration, Bolton supported the Nicaraguan contras and sought to deny federal investigators access to key evidence in the Iran Contra scandal. (*John Bolton, Officialssay*)

Personal scandals have also tarnished John Bolton. A woman accused him of hostile intimidation that led to a case of sexual discrimination. Larry Flynt published evidence that Bolton's first marriage had collapsed after he forced his wife to have group sex at Plato's Retreat during the Reagan administration. (*Rawstory*)

When Bush nominated him for the UN Ambassadorship, Bolton suffered intense scrutiny. He failed to get the endorsement of the Foreign Relations committee, and a ranking Republican, George Voinovich of Ohio, openly opposed him. When the nomination came to the floor of the Senate, the Democrats launched a filibuster. When a small group of Republicans attempted to invoke cloture to stop the debate, the motion failed for lack of support. During a congressional recess, Bush was forced to appoint Bolton in what is called a "recess appointment." This weakens Bolton's stature, and the law demands that his appointment must be renewed early next year by the Senate in spite of how embarrassing it will be for him.

An embarrassing incident occurred last month that confirms the suspicions of Bolton's polite

Syrian questioner at Oxford. In remarks to B'nei Brith International, the Israeli ambassador to the UN identified Bolton as "a secret member of Israel's own team at the United Nations," underlining his confidence in Bolton by stating, "Today the secret is out. We really are not just five diplomats. We are at least six including John Bolton." (Haaretz)

During his Oxford harangue, Bolton said that America is a democracy where people vote for change and the policies they admire. His own role in the racist politics of the South, the cessation of vote counting in 2000 and the obstruction of the Iran Contra investigation transforms every word he ever says claiming America as a model of democracy into the *ne plus ultra* of political hypocrisy. George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Perle, Condoleezza Rice and John Bolton are a comfortable clutch of hypocritical politicians, and their approval ratings now demonstrate that they are not the agents of democracy. Quite the opposite, the democratic disconnection – the increasing disparity between popular opinion and government policy – in Bush and Bolton's America is a scandal of global proportions that could well be driving the United States over the precipice and into the abyss of failed and failing states.

On a hot day in a crowded seminar fuelled by intense questioning, Bolton perspired heavily.

Michael Carmichael became a professional public affairs consultant, author and broadcaster in 1968. He worked in five American presidential campaigns for progressive candidates from RFK to Clinton. In 2003, he founded The Planetary Movement, a nonprofit public affairs organization based in the United Kingdom. He has appeared as a public affairs expert on the BBC's Today, Hardtalk, and PM, as well as numerous appearances on ITN, NPR and European broadcasts examining politics and culture. He can be reached through his website: www.planetarymovement.org

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