Resolution 2334 and Potential Teachable Moments

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The United States, even as it seeks to counter UN Security Council Resolution 2334's flouting of international law and undermining of chances for Arab-Israeli peace, may yet be able to turn elements of the resolution to something positive.

The resolution, choreographed by the Obama Administration and passed with Obama’s abstention, is a relatively short document long on anti-Israel hypocrisy and lies. The most significant lie is the assertion, despite much international law to the contrary and nothing in international law in support of it, that all the land administered by Israel beyond the pre-1967 armistice lines is Palestinian Territory and that Israel has no legitimate claim to any of it.

Among 2334's many hypocrisies, it declares that it is “Reaffirming... [Security Council] resolutions 242 (1967), [and] 338 (1973)...” In fact, it is an attempt to nullify those resolutions. The first calls for the negotiation of new, “secure and recognized boundaries,” does not pre-judge ultimate disposition of the territory, and makes no reference to any of it being “Palestinian,” while the second, 338, calls for implementation of the first.

SCR2334 also states that it is “Guided by... the Charter of the United Nations...,” but it is in violation of the Charter as the Charter reaffirms Jewish rights in the territory that 2334 asserts to be Palestinian. In addition, the resolution misrepresents the contents of the Quartet Roadmap, claiming Israeli obligations that, according to the Roadmap, were only to become operative if the Palestinians took steps with which they never complied.

But the hypocrisies associated with 2334 extend beyond the document itself. The document, while exclusively attacking, indicting, and demanding action against Israel, does refer to the Palestinian Authority’s responsibility regarding “confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantling terrorist capabilities...” And elsewhere it condemns, in addition to acts of terror, “acts of provocation, incitement and destruction,” and calls for refraining from “incitement and inflammatory rhetoric.” After the passage of 2334, a number of Western leaders justified their support for the resolution, or, in America’s case, its abstention, by noting the resolution’s supposed “balance,” its condemning terror and incitement in addition to its advancing anti-Israel declarations.

Secretary of State Kerry reported that the United States had insisted it would withhold its veto only if the resolution were balanced and that its “references to incitement and terrorism” met that standard. Statements in a similar vein were put forward by Samantha Power, American ambassador to the UN. British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson justified his nation’s vote in favor of the resolution by likewise citing its “balance,” and the prime minister and foreign minister of New Zealand defended their nation’s sponsorship of the resolution with virtually the same claim of “balance.”

But the wording in 2334 that provides the transparent fig-leaf of “balance” may yet be put to good purpose. The resolution calls for “the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the implementation of the provisions of the present resolution.” The Obama Administration and the nations that voted for the resolution clearly anticipated that these reports would consist entirely of a catalogue of any Israeli construction beyond the pre-1967 armistice lines as well as updates on the implementation of anti-Israel steps called for in the resolution.

But the United States can insist that these quarterly reports contain a comprehensive review of Palestinian “provocation, incitement and destruction,” “inflammatory rhetoric,” and supporting of rather than “confronting of those engaged in terror” in the intervening months.

Not only Hamas but the Palestinian Authority spews forth, in its media, mosques and schools, virtually unending assertions that Jews have no legitimate claim to any of the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean but are merely alien usurpers whose presence must be extirpated. It also seeks to provoke and incite violence with declarations such as the claim that Israel is working to destroy the Muslim holy sites on the Temple Mount, that the Jews, in the words of Mahmoud Abbas, are desecrating the area with their "filthy feet," and the call for Palestinians to throw themselves into protecting the holy sites by any means.

The Palestinian Authority praises terrorists who have stabbed, shot and otherwise slain Israelis, insists that they are to be emulated, names public institutions in their honor, financially supports terrorists and their families, and provides lucrative government positions to those who are released from Israeli jails.

Despite Mahmoud Abbas's assertions that he will never recognize the legitimacy of a Jewish state within any borders, and his oversight of a constant litany of anti-Israel invective, provocation and incitement - a record consistent throughout his leadership of the Palestinian Authority, President Obama invariably characterized Abbas as a "moderate." The man who was so fond of referring to "teachable moments," by which he meant moments he chose to invoke to instruct others, remained unswervingly ineducable when it came to listening to and learning the Palestinians' objectives as articulated and acted on by their leaders.

Nor has the general public been able to absorb as teachable moments Palestinian incitement, provocation and support for terror because almost all media have virtually ignored the subject and failed to inform the public about it. Some leading media outlets, such as the New York Times, have even ridiculed Israel for making note of the issue and suggesting it is a problem.

But the quarterly reports called for in 2334 can be used by America's newly appointed United Nations ambassador, Nikki Haley, and her staff to important effect. They can insist on the reports' inclusion of a comprehensive catalogue of Palestinian incitement, provocation and promotion of and support for terror - a catalogue that can be measured against information gleaned from monitoring sources such as Palestinian Media Watch. They can in this way use their UN platform to bring into focus, finally, teachable truths that for far too long have been ignored and gone unlearned, thereby potentially helping address the major obstacle to genuine peace.