To Celebrate Independence, We Must Have Sovereignty

by Phyllis Schlafly July 7, 2004

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The handover of power to Iraq by the victorious American forces has stimulated public discussion about a word that seems to have fallen in disfavor in the last few years: sovereignty. That means the ability of a government to act without being subject to the legal control of another country or international organization, restrained only by moral principles.

Sovereignty was transferred to Iraq on June 28, but when the question came up at a Senate hearing as to whether Iraq can the order U.S. troops to leave, the official answer was: not yet. Iraq won't become truly sovereign until it can do that, which won't happen until elections establish a permanent government.

The United States Constitution is based on the premise that we are a sovereign nation and we don't obey any power unless authorized in the Constitution. The Europeans, on the other hand, are rapidly abandoning their national sovereignty in favor of an international bureaucracy called the European Union.

EU spokesmen are using "unilateralism" as a smear word to show their disdain for America's stubborn adherence to sovereignty. They assert the ridiculous proposition that U.S. actions cannot be legitimate without United Nations approval.

The enemies of sovereignty are squeamish about the term world government. They like the softer slogan global governance, which harbors undefined concepts such as human rights, sustainable development, and international justice.

Unhappily, it's not only non-Americans who are trying to replace U.S. sovereignty with global governance. Bill Clinton told the United Nations that he wanted to put America into a "web" of treaties to set the ground rules for "the emerging international system."

Clinton's chief foreign policy adviser was notorious for his article Time magazine article (July 20, 1992) entitled "The Birth of the Global Nation." Talbott opined that "national sovereignty wasn't such a great idea after all," and he predicted that "Nationhood as we know it will be obsolete, all states will recognize a single, global authority."

After Clinton failed to get congressional authorization for his war on Yugoslavia, his Secretary of State Madeleine Albright rationalized it by demanding that Yugoslavia surrender its sovereignty. She said: "Great nations who understand the importance of sovereignty at various times cede various portions of it in order to achieve some better good for their country."

Clinton signed the International Criminal Court treaty, which would have locked us into a global judicial order. He urged us to accept the Convention on the Rights of the Child would have set up a global committee to monitor the way parents raise their children.

He and Al Gore were big fans of the Kyoto Protocol to the Convention on Climate Change, which would have set up a global tribunal to control our energy use. Bill and Hillary demanded the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which would have created a global commission of feminist "experts" to regulate gender issues in our laws, customs, education and wages.

The Convention on the Law of the Sea would have created an International Seabed Authority to control and distribute the mineral riches under the seas. Each one of these Clinton-supported treaties would have grabbed a big slice of our sovereignty, but fortunately they were never ratified.

The World Trade Organization, which Clinton did get us to join, is a good example of how trade agreements can morph into global control. WTO Is not "free trade" but a global bureaucracy and quasi-judicial system that manages world trade and has ruled against the United States a dozen times.

Likewise, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was sold to the American people as free trade among the three major North American countries. It spawned an international tribunal that has repeatedly overruled American law and courts, most recently to allow the immediate entry of thousands of Mexican trucks in violation of U.S. environmental law.

Some people are now trying to expand the 3-nation NAFTA into the 30-nation FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), which is an attempt to force us under a Western Hemisphere bureaucracy modeled on the European Union. President George W. Bush signed the Declaration of Quebec City on April 22, 2001, which was a "commitment to hemispheric integration" larded with favorite UN doubletalk such as "interdependent," "greater economic integration," and "sustainable development."

A new book called "The Case for Sovereignty" by Cornell Professor Jeremy A. Rabkin convincingly explains why the maintenance of American sovereignty, rather than yielding authority to various international institutions, is essential not only for our own security but is beneficial to the peace of the world. He shows that sovereignty is compatible with international trade but not with international regulation of trade.

Our Declaration of Independence is, in essence, a declaration of American sovereignty. Our freedom depends on it and on avoiding European mistakes. Americans must never accept any governing authority higher than the U.S. Constitution.