



KOSOVO

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Kosovo blunder goes to court

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Much of the resentment President Bush brought upon America can be traced to his contempt for international institutions and the legitimacy they may confer. International institutions have reason to feel the same way about Bush's decisions.

On Wednesday, the United Nations General Assembly agreed to Serbia's request to have the International Court of Justice in the Hague determine whether Kosovo's secession from Serbia is legal. Seventy-seven countries voted in favor of the request. The United States was among only six countries that voted against it.

But then, Bush decided to invade and occupy Iraq without authorization from the United Nations Security Council. He also dismissed the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and rejected the International Criminal Court.

When the administration asked for and received UN authorization for its prolonged occupation of Iraq, it seemed Bush had belatedly learned his lesson about the benefits of international legitimacy. But then came Bush's rash decision last February to recognize the independence of Kosovo from Serbia despite a failure to obtain UN Security Council authorization. The Kremlin pointed to that dubious precedent when it recognized independence for South Ossetia and Abkhazia after the August war with Georgia.

There is a case to be made for Kosovo's independence. But there is no less of a case for the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia - as well as Tibet, and Taiwan, and Kurdistan, and the Tamil regions of Sri Lanka. The alternative to deciding all these cases by violence is international legitimacy. We hope this is a lesson the next US president will not have to learn all over again.