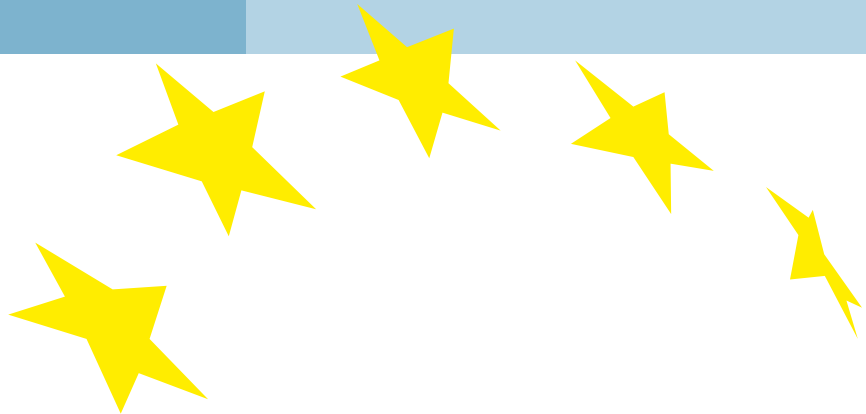


The US and the EU at the UN: Making the Most of the Ban Years

Transatlantic Thinkers



TRANSATLANTIC THINKERS, PART 4

The transatlantic relationship is not over, as has sometimes been suggested in recent years – but it has changed. There is still consensus in Europe and the US that the urgent global challenges confronting us today can only be met in a joint effort. The goal is to identify specific fields for strategic cooperation and formulate effective and coherent policy options towards them.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung aims to help in this process. As part of its long-standing project work on “Europe’s Global Responsibilities”, it has made a major effort to foster transatlantic ties. One of the measures taken is the annual “**Brussels Forum**” (an initiative launched jointly with the main organizer German Marshall Fund, Daimler-Chrysler, Monitor, Fortis and the Belgian government) which aims to bring together the best and the brightest from the spheres of politics, industry, and ideas on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the run-up to this major event in late April 2007, we would like to outline the main opportunities for a common transatlantic agenda. **Our new paper series “Transatlantic Thinkers”** provides a fresh perspec-

tive on these opportunities, touching upon topics such as energy security, climate change, civil liberties in an age of terror, trade relations and many others. These short papers are “mind-challenging” in the best possible sense – sharp, precise and provocative. Often, we will form “Transatlantic Doubles”, pairing up prominent voices from both sides of the Atlantic to collaborate on one issue.

In the fourth part of our series, Thorsten Benner (Co-founder and Associate Director of the Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin) and Edward Luck (Professor and Director of the Center on International Organization at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University) analyse the implications of the leadership change at the United Nations. They examine the approaches toward the world organization taken by Europeans and Americans in recent years – and provide pointed recommendations on how closer transatlantic cooperation at the United Nations can help to make the most of the “Ban years”.

The US and the EU at the UN: Making the Most of the Ban Years

By Edward C. Luck and Thorsten Benner*

Quite literally, the EU and the US are the United Nations' largest stakeholders. Together, they account for more than three-fifths of the UN's regular budget and a larger share of its peacekeeping and humanitarian spending. This gives them both a prominent voice in and a special responsibility for its future course.

With the UN's leadership transition complete, the advent of the Ban Ki-moon era provides both the need and the opportunity to renew the transatlantic commitment to a stronger, more focused, and more effective UN.

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Neither side of the Atlantic has been shy about assigning new tasks – whether in peace and security, human rights, humanitarian affairs, or sustainable development– to the world body. Yet they have been remarkably ineffective in recent years at achieving the kinds of reforms that would enhance the UN's capacity to carry out these expanding mandates. So reform might well encompass the US and EU strategies towards the world body as well. The US ran into fierce opposition to much of the “lasting revolution of reform” agenda urged by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, even as it came to realize that it needs the UN more than many in Washington had cared to admit. The EU, for the most part, lacked a coherent vision for the future of the UN, was weakened by internal divisions, and did little to forestall the destructive new cold war at the UN between the US and the bloc of developing countries. As a consequence, the US and the EU have realized few of their objectives while contributing much less politically than financially to the overall success of the organization. This needs to change for the sake both of the transatlantic partnership and of the UN.

INTRODUCTION

This paper reviews the prospects for US and EU leadership at the world organization. Though it notes the considerable obstacles that need to be overcome, it urges a fresh start and proposes a series of steps for renewing transatlantic cooperation and for reinvigorating the United Nations to meet the historic challenges and opportunities ahead.

I: The US and the UN: An Enduring Odd Couple

Hope springs eternal. With the appointment of each new UN Secretary-General, with the election of each Democratic Congress or President, progressive pundits are prone to see an opportunity for a markedly more productive era in US-UN relations and, with it, for the reform and renewal of the world body¹. We are now at such a point. There are sound reasons for optimism, but, as this paper relates, of only the more tempered and nuanced variety.

I a) Ban Ki-Moon and US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad: Stars in Alignment?

First, the good news. Ban Ki-moon, the new Secretary-General, was selected with US support but hardly as Washington's handpicked candidate. In a recent interview, John Bolton, the US Permanent Representative to the UN at the time, commented "that of the candidates who were available who were politically realistic he was the best choice."² Though hardly a ringing endorsement, the distance implied in Bolton's cool and calculated assessment will work far better in the UN's

currently polarized politics than would his warm embrace of the new Secretary-General. Indeed, the ease and speed with which Ban's candidacy gained consensus support in the Security Council were as unexpected as they were reassuring. Few steps requiring inter-governmental agreement have come so readily around the world body in recent years.

At the UN, personalities do matter, as Bolton's controversial tenure in New York so vividly demonstrated. His likely replacement, Zalmay Khalilzad, has a reputation for high order diplomatic, as well as political, skills. In his confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he asserted that the UN "stands as the most successful collective security body in history." Clearly, he and Ban will

¹ For a recent example of such budding spring-time optimism, see Derek Chollet, "UN, Rediscovered," *The National Interest*, no. 88 (March-April 2007).

² "Exit Interview: A Conversation With ... John Bolton," *The American Interest*, vol. II, no 4 (March/April 2007), p. 53.

have more in common than John Bolton and Kofi Annan ever did. A more workmanlike relationship between the US Mission and the 38th floor has already emerged during the interregnum.

There is reason to believe, as well, that the Bush Administration has learned some lessons from its decidedly mixed performance at the UN, especially during its first term.

The Organization proved to be much more relevant and resilient, including in strategically important places like Iraq, Iran, the Middle East, and North Korea, than the more neo-con elements in the Administration had wanted to accept. Since the early weeks of the war in Iraq, the US has been actively engaged in trying to get the Security Council involved in one priority issue after another on America's national security agenda, including on counter-proliferation and counter-terrorism, in addition to high profile humanitarian crises, such as Darfur.

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Indeed, these past four years have been the most active period in US diplomacy in the Security Council since the Organization's founding sixty-two years ago.

There is, in short, no reason to fear the US abandoning the world body. Forged by pragmatism as much as by idealism, the US-UN marriage formed in 1945 has proven as lasting as it has loveless. The most acute threats to the relationship have come from periodic legislation, mostly inspired by Republican Senators and Representatives, to withhold assessed dues from the UN unless certain conditions are met. In that regard, the results of the November 2006 elections, which returned a Democratic majority to both Houses and permitted the assumption of key committee chairmanships by UN supporters, qualify as another encouraging development. None of the leading candidates of either party for the Presidency in 2008, moreover, has taken an anti-internationalist stance. So far, so good.

I b) A Rather Lukewarm Embrace

Beyond the narrow confines of the Security Council, Washington's ardor for the rest of the world body is markedly more subdued and selective. Support for most of the UN system's humanitarian, functional, and development work remains relatively strong. Enthusiasm for the processes and products of the larger inter-governmental bodies, on the other hand, is as low as ever. Republicans and Democrats are equally frustrated with the slow pace of UN reform.

Bipartisan calls for UN reform are likely to grow, not diminish, as Washington comes to imagine and value what an effective and well managed UN could accomplish. For Americans, criticizing public institutions is a way of showing we care about them. Our friends should worry when we cease demanding better UN performance.

Neither history nor prevailing geopolitics promises much relief from those deeply ingrained patterns of ambivalence that have long defined the relationship.³ True, Democrats tend to give the UN somewhat higher marks than do Republicans in opinion surveys and they are less like-

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ly to withhold assessed dues as a means of influencing the Organization. But how did the UN fare the last time Democrats controlled the White House and both Houses of Congress, in 1993-1994? Not well at all. When Bill Clinton entered the White House in January 1993, the first big surge in UN peacekeeping operations was already well underway, having been launched during President George H.W. Bush's term. The latter had also paid off much of the accumulated US arrearages to the UN. Despite talk of "assertive multilateralism," President Clinton 1) undertook a restrictive review of conditions for US participation in UN peacekeeping (PDD-25), 2) perversely cautioned the General Assembly during his first appearance at its rostrum that "if the American people are to say yes to U.N. peacekeeping, then the United Nations must know when to say no," 3) blamed the UN for the loss of US rangers in Mogadishu even though they were under direct US, not

UN, command, and 4) signed the bill placing a cap on US peacekeeping payments well below the level assessed by the UN, thereby insuring the accumulation of record arrears. All of this, it should be recalled, was accomplished during the two years he worked with a Democratically-controlled Congress. So hold the champagne.

Today, the UN is in the midst of a second great wave of new peacekeeping operations. As in the 1990s, the risk of mistakes, setbacks, and overstretch is rising apace.

Repeated scandals involving sexual abuse and corruption in procurement could well reoccur down the road. Levels of agreement between the US and others in the General Assembly, as measured by the State Department, were halved from 1995 to 2005, from 51 to 25 percent.⁴ The decline was particularly marked on matters of high political salience in Washington, such as the Middle East (35 to 11 percent), human rights (81 to 36 percent), and arms control (61 to 32 percent). Once again, US arrearages are mounting, having reached around \$400 million for peacekeeping alone.⁵ When confronted with the swollen bill for the next

³ For an historical account of the roots of American ambivalence toward international institutions, see Edward C. Luck, *Mixed Messages: American Politics and International Organization, 1919-1999* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press for the Century Foundation, 1999).

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round of peacekeeping, Congress, with more than a touch of *déjà vu*, could well feel an acute sense of sticker shock.

Public attitudes, as well, offer a troubling pattern of good and bad news. A Gallup poll of early February 2007 found the worst job performance rating for the UN in history: 66 percent said the UN was doing a “poor” job and 29 percent a “good” job “in trying to solve the problems it has had to face.” Given that Gallup has been asking this same question for more than half a century, the results are sobering. As usual, better educated respondents were more likely to give the UN a “poor” rating (73 percent of college graduates and 69 percent of those with post-graduate training). Like most US policymakers, however, the public would like to see the world body do better. In that same survey, three-quarters

⁴ U.S. Department of State, Report to the Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2005 (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 2006), p. 3. The figures exclude consensus resolutions and hence may underestimate the level of agreement, but the trend lines are headed downward by either count.

⁵ UN Document ST/ADM/SER.B/703, Status of Contributions to the Regular Budget, International Tribunals, Peacekeeping Operations, and Capital Master Plan, 30 November 2006.

(75 percent) responded that they would like to see the UN play a “leading” or “major” role in world affairs. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of conservative respondents agreed.

Though dismayed by UN performance – not to mention that of most domestic institutions as well – Americans clearly have not turned their collective backs on the world body or on other venues for international cooperation.

I c) Support for the new Secretary-General?

In urging the UN to promise less and deliver more, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon seems to be striking some of the right chords for an American audience. His stress on personal accountability and vigorous management is most welcome. His modest style and penchant for listening more than preaching have been well received by Member States weary of divisive campaigns for radical reform and of overly ambitious rhetoric. For one side of the Atlantic, at least, the advent of the first Asian Secretary-General in thirty-five years augurs the prospect of an intriguing realignment of power and cultural relation-

ships in an organization believed by some Americans to be too Eurocentric. Their EU partners, however, will be less enthused.

The Secretary-General's early months, however, have hardly been easy ones. Despite the longest transition period in UN history – 21½ months – neither the Member States nor the press have accorded Ban anything close to a honeymoon period. His initial plans for restructuring the political departments and several of his early appointments were greeted with wide skepticism, particularly among the developing countries. For most UN Member States, reform and restructuring are still largely perceived as questions of turf, control, and power, and only secondarily as matters of efficiency and performance. Fears of American dominance have simply compounded this endemic tendency.

Against this backdrop, Ban has inherited a raft of unfinished reform initiatives in the realms of management, system-wide coherence, human resources, and accountability, among others. The membership remains deeply divided over how to reform the Security Council, the ultimate power issue.

The primary debate about the new Human Rights Council revolves around whether it is worse than its discredited predecessor and whether it has any upside potential. The Peacebuilding Commission seeks to fill a real gap in inter-governmental machinery. However, it has yet to fully define its mission, much less to gain traction on the ground in post-conflict societies. Even for a miracle worker, reforming the UN under these circumstances would be a formidable task.

I d) Three Core Worries about the US-UN Relationship

To narrow the transatlantic, West-West, divide, three troublesome matters at a strategic or institutional level need to be addressed. One, the US, particularly under the Bush Administration, sees a number of substantive issues from a markedly different perspective than do its European partners. On institutional and normative issues, traditional US political and constitutional values make it more cautious about the utility and reach of international law and organization. At this stage in their collective history, on the other hand, members of the European Union are more likely to see the advantages of multilateral norms and institutions and to question their American partners' concerns about

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preserving sovereignty. Divergent views of the International Criminal Court (ICC) are only the tip of the iceberg in this respect. The gap is most stark, of course, when a conservative Republican happens to be President, but the decline in US-European agreement in the General Assembly began in the second term of the Clinton Administration. According to the State Department figures cited earlier, the degree of agreement between European Union countries and the US in the Assembly fell from 73 percent in 1997 to 45 percent in 2005. In terms of the ten countries with the highest voting coincidence with the US in 2005, only France at number nine and the United Kingdom at number ten were from Western Europe. Should a Democrat be elected in 2008, presumably there would be some convergence, but gaps on the Middle East, disarmament, the ICC, and other emotive issues could well persist. Congenial conversation may not augur wider agreement.

Two, beyond these substantive differences lie, as in the North-South plane, unsettled questions of how gaping asymmetries in military and economic power outside of the UN's walls should be reflected within them.

The United Nations was not designed for a unipolar world. It survived the strains of a bipolar Cold War, but the collapse of the Soviet Union and the willingness of the US to employ its unparalleled military assets at times without the authorization of the Security Council have posed serious constitutional dilemmas for the 192-member world body.

So too, in a more subtle way, have the aspirations for a common European foreign and security policy. The temptation for most other members, whether developed or developing, is to employ their soft power assets at the UN to counter-balance, constrain, and frustrate the US. The recent emphasis on rules for the use of force and on enlarging the Security Council is bound to be seen in Washington as a case in point. Such strategies, while attractive to some in the short term, could well have the effect of driving Washington away from, not toward, the UN. The power bargains struck in San Francisco sixty-two years ago need to be addressed and reassessed with a candor and rigor that have been in strikingly short supply during the largely symbolic debate on Security Council reform and enlargement over the past three years.

Three, when, where, and how should the US seek to exercise leadership within the United Nations, given others' exaggerated fears of American dominance of the world body?

At the United Nations, a place where the public discourse is about equity, not power, about fitting in, not standing out, calls for US leadership have long gone out of style.

For the US to openly advocate a substantive or institutional point, it is said, simply invites knee-jerk opposition from the many delegations that are suspicious of Washington's motives, wary of its influence, and concerned about appearing subservient to the last superpower. The irony, of course, is that such a low profile stance feeds the prevalent impression that the US either is secretly controlling the UN's Secretariat, programs, and reforms like some sort of hidden puppetmaster or has lost interest in the Organization. Less clear is how such conspiracy theories can be reconciled with Washington's unimpressive record of advancing its preferred reforms at the UN. Nor is it obvious how such a modest profile could rally public, media, and Congressional

support for active US commitment to the world body. Too often, America's partners seem to be calling on it to lead from behind, that is, to throw its considerable weight behind their initiatives and policy priorities, not its own.

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II: The EU at the UN: From High Aspirations to Effective Action?

As a whole, EU nations pay almost 40% of the UN's regular budget, more than two-fifths of UN peacekeeping operations and about one-half of all UN Member States' contributions to UN funds and programmes.

Politically, however, the EU punches well below its weight.⁶

This is not because of a lack of aspirations. The European Security Strategy from 2003 clearly states that “strengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfil its responsibilities and to act effectively must be a European priority”. The EU presents the UN as the cornerstone of “an international order based on effective multilateralism”. In

⁶ Richard Gowan (2007) 'The EU's Security Strategy and the United Nations' in Sven Biscop/Jan Joel Anderson (eds.) *The EU and the European Security Strategy: Forging a Global Europe* (London, Routledge).

reality, however, the EU has thus far lacked the cohesive political will and strategic vision to turn its aspirations into action.

Currently, the EU falls short in three crucial dimensions⁷: first, **internal effectiveness**, the ability to agree on a common position on crucial matters at the UN; second, **political effectiveness**, the degree to which the EU is seen as a leader on crucial UN matters and is thus able to influence political outcomes; and third, **outcome effectiveness**, the degree to which the EU contribution is able to strengthen the UN's impact.

A closer look at the EU's contribution to the UN in the areas of peace and security, human rights, sustainable development and management reform demonstrates that while the EU has made some progress in all three dimensions over the past decade, a concerted push is necessary for the EU's lofty aspirations to gain political traction at the UN.

⁷ See also Katie Verlin Laatikainen and Karen E. Smith (2006) 'Introduction: The European Union at the United Nations: Leader, Partner or Failure?' in *The European Union at the United Nations. Intersecting Multilateralisms*, Basingtoke: Palgrave, pp. 9-10.

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II a) The EU's Role in the UN's Work on Peace and Security

In the area of peace and security, two major factors have undermined the EU's effectiveness at the UN: the intra-EU fallout over Iraq and the reform of the Security Council.

The internal EU disagreement on Iraq raised profound questions about the use of force that defy easy answers. While making an effort to pick up the pieces after Iraq, the EU security strategy does not present a clear picture. It states: "We want international organisations, regimes and treaties to be effective in confronting threats to international peace and security, and must therefore be ready to act when their rules are broken" – without giving any indication on which violations justify which kind of repercussions. The EU also states that it is "committed to upholding and developing international law" – at the same time shying away from clear statements on where international law should be merely upheld and where it should be developed. The EU position reflects the ambiguity in the global debate on the use of force, and there is no simple solution in sight.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council this picture is very different. Here, the internal EU disagreement is purely the result of petty national ambitions that undermine the effectiveness of the EU as a whole.

Germany's decision to focus its energy during the run-up to the 2005 UN Reform Summit on pushing for a permanent seat on the Security Council and Italy's decision to mobilize all available resources to undermine Germany's bid dealt death blows to any pretensions of collective EU influence on the key questions of UN reform in the area of peace and security. The solution is straightforward: Germany should renounce its ill-fated bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council and instead France and the UK should agree on a phased transition toward a joint EU seat on the Security Council. This would be the single most important measure for enhancing internal EU effectiveness, the EU's clout at the UN and the credibility of the project of a common EU foreign and security policy. At present, it sounds utopian to suggest that France and the UK would agree to renounce their permanent seats in favour of a European seat. However, it is a utopia deeply grounded in realism. In

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the coming decades diminishing European influence in the world will increasingly highlight the need for a concerted European voice in the Security Council. All those claiming that the EU has more influence with two (or even three) seats on the Security Council should revisit the recent intra-EU divisions. Only by agreeing on a single voice (and ultimately on a single vote) can the EU wield its influence and project its positions effectively.

Another crucial test for the EU is its policy on controlling the spread of nuclear weapons. Here Iran is the case where the EU (mostly in the guise of the E3 working alongside Javier Solana) has invested heavily in a multilateral solution within the framework of the UN (IAEA and Security Council).

The EU (by default and through its own efforts) has played a mostly constructive role here but the policy of the EU just offering carrots and the US wielding the sticks seems to have run its course. In order to achieve a solution the EU will need to credibly threaten real sticks (i.e. full-fledged economic sanctions) while the US will need to put some carrots of its own on the table. The EU needs to continue to push for a solution

in order for the multilateral framework for dealing with Iran and nuclear proliferation not to unravel. If the UN deals with the Iran nuclear issue successfully, this would greatly enhance the credibility of both the UN and the EU⁸.

II b) The EU's role in the UN's Work on Human Rights

The EU record at the new UN Human Rights Council demonstrates the possibility of joint EU action based on common values and interests.

EU support for the new Human Rights Council was based on the hope that it would mark a major improvement from the UN Commission on Human Rights, a body which directed thirty percent of its resolutions against Israel. Throughout the work of the Commission, serial human rights violators who represented a majority on the Commission were

⁸ Richard Gowan, A Special Relationship?, E!Sharp September/October 2006, pp. 49-51.

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able to block any real investigations of their own human rights records. Recently, it became clear that the new UN Human Rights Council risks following the path of its predecessor, and the EU did not shy away from alerting to this clear and present danger. In March 2007, Germany (speaking on behalf of the EU) made it clear that it “is not acceptable that very serious human rights violations are not addressed – or are not addressed with the necessary directness – because regional or ideological solidarity takes precedence over the willingness to see critical situations without bias.” This echoes the concern by Human Rights Watch that the “one-sided approach taken by the Human Rights Council is a blow to its credibility and an abdication of its responsibility to protect human rights for all”. This abdication is a direct result of the Council being held hostage by an irresponsible but effective majority: The members of the Group of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference joined by Cuba, South Africa, China, Russia and a number of Latin American states currently overpower a minority of human rights friendly countries including the EU members (voting in concert), Japan and Canada.

The EU should continue to use the powers of moral suasion as well as hard economic and political incentives to ease individual countries out of the block of irresponsible voters.

There is no inevitability for countries such as South Africa or Argentina to side with serial human rights abusers. At the same time, the EU and its allies should make it clear that only a radical change of course can prevent the failure of the new Council. This would include the faithful implementation of the peer review process subjugating the human rights record of all members to mutual evaluations, the end of the one-sided obsession with Israel and an even-handed concern for human rights emergencies across the world. If such change occurs, the EU should encourage the US to come on board the Council for the next term. In doing so, the EU could help re-establish the credibility of the UN’s work on human rights.

At the same time, the EU should work toward providing teeth to the “Responsibility to Protect”. The EU has strongly endorsed the concept

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and stated that “grave and massive violations of human rights and acts of genocide call for strong response and action on the part of the international community”. However, the inaction toward the unfolding mass murder in Darfur demonstrates that this is not much more than a rhetorical commitment. Still, as late as March 2007 the EU only called for unspecified “further measures” against the Khartoum regime to increase the pressure. So far the EU has not achieved agreement on support for full-fledged sanctions, e.g. by placing senior Sudanese officials under immediate travel bans and asset freezes. Moreover, the European public has remained largely indifferent on the issue of Darfur with no meaningful civil society mobilization in place. It is high time for the EU to push for action on Darfur that is commensurate with the pledge of the “responsibility to protect”.

II c) The EU’s role in the UN’s Work on Sustainable Development

With a self-declared emphasis on its soft power appeal, the EU in theory is well placed to push for a greater effectiveness of the UN on sustainable development. By adopting the concept of “global public goods” the EU has demonstrated that investing in sustainable development is

not a luxury or simply an act of charity but in the enlightened self-interest of the developed and the developing world – and that security and development are linked in many ways. In principle, the EU can be a bridge between the US, which puts a premium on issues of security, and the G-77 which emphasizes the importance of development at the UN.

In practice this means that the EU should push for the UN’s notoriously fragmented development work to become more coherent and effective by adopting “Four Ones”: a single program, a single budget, a single evaluation and monitoring framework, and a single, fully empowered resident coordinator for each country.

The EU should lead by example by better aligning national development cooperation priorities thereby moving away from the policy of national flag-planting in development. The EU should also help the new Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, follow through on his assessment that the “strategic focus should be more on achieving the goals already set rather than identifying new frontiers to conquer.” In this spirit, the EU

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should confront all those who want to put the Millennium Development Goals back into the drawer rather than making them the cornerstone of the UN's efforts in the coming decade. This also means increasing internal accountability within the EU to live up to its promises to increase spending on development aid. The EU should also support Ban in continuing Annan's successful policy of enlisting the support of business and civil society to promote sustainable development.

II d) The EU's role in the UN's Work on Management Reform

During the Annan years, the EU placed insufficient emphasis on reforming the UN Secretariat. Instead of the "tough love" demanded by the US, the EU for too long had an attitude of "benevolent indifference" toward the UN Secretariat.

This is unfortunate, since the Annan years clearly exposed the weaknesses of the Secretariat. Today, the Secretariat is a great deal more than just a servicing unit to a platform for intergovernmental debate. It is an increasingly field-based unit performing ever more complex and

important tasks in areas such as humanitarian assistance and peace-building. At the same time, the UN Secretariat's resources and management processes, the ability to cooperate and coordinate with UN sub-organizations as well as with civil society and businesses, the mentality of UN staff and the overall organizational culture do not yet match the tasks at hand. It is crucial that the EU cooperates with the US to ensure that the Secretariat has the skills, the staff, the resources and sufficient integrity to be able to address the tasks that member states present it with. This means giving support to the modernizers that argue that the UN Secretariat needs to be more transparent and accountable to a broad range of internal and external actors. Modernizers advocate results-based management, an across-the board application of merit-based principles, and personal accountability for failures and transgressions. The EU should work together with the US in supporting the new UN Secretary-General in his push for further reform of the UN Secretariat while trying to convince the G-77 countries to stop their obstructionist policies with regard to management reform.

III: Elements of a Joint Transatlantic Strategy at the UN

In recent years, the EU and the US have underinvested intellectually and politically in joint strategies at the UN. As a result, both have been underachievers at the world body. A new joint strategy should be both measured and deep: measured in terms of rhetoric and expectations, and deep in terms of commitment and sustainability. It is about time for the transatlantic partners to tackle the UN's perennial weaknesses head on and in tandem.

- **The first step** ought to be a fuller, more candid, and higher level transatlantic dialogue on the United Nations and on the tactics for overcoming the perverse political dynamics that currently pervade the world body. This should be a sustained and intensive conversation, as on other policy questions that really matter, conducted largely in capitals and at the ministerial level. It should be long on specifics and short on grand gestures and empty rhetoric. Key allies in other parts of the world, such as Japan, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, should be frequently consulted along the way. A three

tiered agenda is envisioned: 1) UN institutional reforms; 2) implementation of agreed measures and principles; and 3) urgent challenges that have too often divided the US and the EU.

When and where these discussions succeed in narrowing the gap in transatlantic perspectives, the second step of moving from a west-west to a north-south dialogue should be pursued with similar vigor and persistence. Hopefully, the EU and US would bring fresh ideas, approaches, and options to this second table, not inflexible, take-it-or-leave-it bloc positions. The southern partners in this second phase should include, but not be limited to, major players in the G-77 plus China group of developing countries at the UN. The choice of which countries from the north and the south should participate in each leg of the dialogue would depend on the issue area and objective being pursued. The goal would be to maintain the kind of flexible and pragmatic architecture that is so rare in New York and Geneva, places where numbers, fears, and traditions insist that process trump results and bloc solidarity is valued over substantive progress.

ELEMENTS OF A JOINT TRANSATLANTIC STRATEGY AT THE UN

- **The first cluster of issues would relate to improving UN performance.** Unless and until there is substantial movement toward strengthening UN capacity, management, and competence, it would make little sense to pile more responsibilities on the overburdened, under-resourced, and under-valued organization. Here it is largely a matter of helping Ban Ki-moon to carry out the management reform agenda he has already articulated: restoring the spirit, standards, and mobility of the international civil service; insuring the integrity, transparency, and accountability of management at all levels; integrating the efforts of field and headquarters, of agencies, departments, and programs, and the inter-related development, security, human rights, and humanitarian agendas; and of rebuilding trust and confidence between Member States and the Secretariat and among the Member States and inter-governmental organs themselves. None of this demands much more than common sense and common purpose. But both have been hard to come by in the highly polarized, insular, and dysfunctional realm of UN reform deliberations.
- **The second cluster includes four sets of measures and principles that have already been endorsed by UN organs and summits, but whose implementation is less than fully secured.** In each case, it is a question of turning promises and potential into practice and impact. The first is the set of targets articulated so cogently and publicly in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Almost halfway to the 2015 deadlines, there has been substantial progress toward a number of the MDGs and the EU and the US have made historic commitments toward achieving them. But forward movement has varied from region to region and from issue to issue. Momentum could well be lost without a fresh injection of transatlantic will and determination.
- **The second area of agreement, UN peace operations, is one in which the US and EU have been quite prepared to entrust the world body with an unprecedented range of mandates and missions, some of them quite daunting, without an equivalent commitment of new resources and fresh ideas.** There is a clear need to strengthen both the strategic and operational capacity of the UN

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peacebuilding apparatus. As of 31 October 2006, only one in seven of the UN's blue helmets came from Europe and one in a thousand from North America⁹. Financially and logistically, the US and its EU partners remain indispensable supporters of UN peacekeeping, but their troops are tied up in NATO missions in Afghanistan and the Balkans or in Iraq. Unlike the first major surge in demand for UN peace operations in the early 1990s, this time around the new blue helmets are largely coming from the developing world. The Secretary-General, moreover, is attempting a major restructuring of the UN's field support operations and political departments at the same time, a move seeking to respond to the growing demand for a UN security and political presence in many places at once. Clearly, the coherent support of the US and EU for the Secretary-General and the blue helmets alike will be needed as never before in the high-risk, high-gain months ahead.

- **Accept the responsibility to prevent and stop genocides.** At the September 2005 summit, the world's leaders pledged their acceptance of the responsibility to protect their citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. As the tragic events in Darfur underline, achieving this third point of convergence has proven more difficult in practice than on paper. The summit document spoke of the international community finding ways to help states meet this responsibility and to establish an early warning capability for the UN, as well as supporting the work of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. How to realize these objectives in terms of policy and practice, however, remains uncertain, making this another area in which further transatlantic cooperation could make a real difference.
- **Assuring that the two most prominent institutional innovations of the recent reform drive – the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council – live up to their potential constitutes a fourth area for US-EU collaboration.** As noted above, the Peacebuilding Commission retains some promise but needs guid-

⁹ Center on International Cooperation, New York University, Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2007 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), p. 155, Figure 5.12.

ance as it begins to mature. Set up to be an advisory body, target states have been quick to see it as a vehicle for generating additional funding in the post-conflict phase of their development. It failed to receive the dual mandate first envisioned by Secretary-General Kofi Annan's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change of addressing societies slipping into conflict, as well as those emerging from it. The Human Rights Council, on the other hand, has been more than a disappointment. With the US sitting on the sidelines, the EU members on the Council bear an extra burden in trying to reorient it to be more balanced in its coverage and to adopt a system of universal periodic review with real teeth. While both bodies are still in their infancy, a searching transatlantic conversation is needed about where they are going and what can be done to put them on more promising tracks.

- **On three other issues of considerable urgency – the Middle East and Persian Gulf, the non-proliferation regime, and climate change – the US and EU have taken quite distinct positions.** The quest for a durable and just peace in the Middle East and Persian

Gulf is as arduous as ever, even as the potential consequences of failure rise with Iran's defiance of the Security Council and determination to play a larger role in the region. There, as well as on the Korean peninsula, the necessity of recasting and reinforcing the nuclear non-proliferation regime is underlined by headline after headline. Two UN bodies, the Security Council and the IAEA, are deeply engaged in both crises. In the case of Iran, transatlantic cooperation, as noted above, has been far-reaching and critical to whatever progress has been made towards persuading Tehran to choose a different path. But the crisis is far from being resolved and it has, in the meantime, exposed the need to revisit some of the central planks of the non-proliferation regime.

- **Finally, a far different sort of threat to international security and welfare is being posed by global warming.** It may prove, in the decades to come, to be among the most ominous and intractable. Here, unfortunately, the US and EU have chosen different paths. But attitudes in the US may be evolving toward acceptance of the need for global action of historic proportions, even as the need to revisit

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and recast the Kyoto Protocol is increasingly accepted on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, the role and capacity of the UN to contribute to this and other environmental priorities are coming into increasing question. This is a rich and consequential topic, one where a deeper transatlantic dialogue can lay the groundwork for global progress. But we must begin now to lay the foundations for a truly global post-Kyoto climate change regime.

The EU and the US should work together to bring rising powers such as India and China as well as key developing countries into a joint framework under a UN umbrella.

With the need for action increasingly accepted in all key countries, a global post-Kyoto agreement on combating climate change could lead the way for successful UN action in a world that looks increasingly multipolar outside of military affairs.

In each of these policy challenges, the gap between the UN's institutional capacity and the world's needs could not be more stark.

None of these tasks are beyond our collective reach. But none will be attained without far more serious and sustained collaboration among those states that less than a generation ago overcame four decades of Cold War, nuclear threat, and ideological division. Once again, they need to set aside their parochial perspectives and preferences in favor of a global approach to global problems. Once again, transatlantic cooperation is the indispensable first step.

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