

# Investing in a New Multilateralism

A Smart Power Approach to the United Nations

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## About the CSIS Smart Power Initiative

The CSIS Smart Power Initiative focuses on the five policy areas identified by the CSIS Smart Power Commission as priorities for the incoming administration and Congress: alliances, partnerships, and institutions; global development; public diplomacy; economic integration; and energy technology and innovation. *A Smarter, More Secure America*, the report of the bipartisan commission cochaired by Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, calls on the United States to invest anew in the global good by complementing U.S. military and economic might with greater attention to soft power. The report can be found at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071106\\_csissmartpower-report.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071106_csissmartpower-report.pdf). The Smart Power Initiative is directed by CSIS senior fellow Carola McGiffert.

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The Better World Campaign works to build a stronger relationship between the United States and the United Nations through outreach, communications, and advocacy. BWC encourages U.S. leadership to strengthen the UN's ability to carry out its invaluable operations around the world. And it engages policymakers, the media, and the American public to increase awareness of and support for the United Nations.



# INVESTING IN A NEW MULTILATERALISM

## A SMART POWER APPROACH TO THE UNITED NATIONS

### Introduction: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Appeal for Multilateralism

Among the organizations formed in the wake of World War II, the United Nations has been more welcoming to nations than most institutions, imposing little responsibility or criteria on its members. Both tyrants and democrats have a place at the table; human rights violators often sit alongside nations that offer asylum and refuge to those being persecuted. And it is precisely because the UN was conceived as a community of nations rather than as a community of democracies that it has endured.

The elaborate security architecture of the UN has persisted into the twenty-first century because it has demanded little from most of its members, but a great deal from a few. The United States, as the largest financial contributor to the UN, remains an essential player. But challenges to the status quo have grown with the shifts in global power that began at the end of the Cold War and have morphed further since September 11, 2001. In less than two decades we have seen that the durability of the current international order as demonstrated by the ongoing importance of the UN is being challenged by the multipolar world.<sup>1</sup>

Today power is as much a function of economic capacity as it is of military strength. Access to natural resources has provided many undemocratic regimes with a new sense of entitlement and power. Thus, we are at a transitional moment in the history of multilateralism. The new president of the United States, Barack Obama, has an opportunity to reinvest in multilateralism with a focus on the UN as a tool to promote and protect U.S. interests in the years to come.

The United States still needs the UN and the UN needs the United States. The UN as an institution remains a part of the U.S. diplomatic tool kit because it can still provide a legitimate means of convening nations to address conflict, transnational threats, and humanitarian crises. The United Nations is also an instrument of U.S. smart power. What does this mean? “Smart power” is neither hard nor soft, but rather a skillful combination of both qualities. According to the Commission on Smart Power of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, smart power is “an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships, and institutions of all levels to expand American influence and establish legitimacy of American action.”<sup>2</sup> The CSIS Smart Power Commission reported that “the true strength of the United Nations still lies in the norms embedded in its charter—values that greatly benefit the

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1. “What a Way to Run the World,” editorial, *Economist*, July 3, 2008.

2. Center for Strategic and International Studies, *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A smarter, more secure America* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2007), p. 7.

United States if pursued objectively—as well as its operational departments and agencies that can help the United States to implement a smart power strategy.”<sup>3</sup> The report also argued that while the United States needs the United Nations, it needs “a better one than we have at present” and called for accountability at all levels of the organization. This statement echoes the spirit behind the 2005 Gingrich- Mitchell Task Force on UN Reform, which offered many excellent ideas for change.

This report will identify and assess a handful of key areas where, with U.S. leadership, commitment, and cooperation, the United States can work with the United Nations and other members of the international community to break through the obstacles to progress and reinvigorate the multilateral systems. It will review some of the issues that have challenged the U.S. – UN relationship in recent years and address some of the recommendations for reform. The CSIS Commission on Smart Power identified several key areas where participation in the UN can further America’s desire to promote the global good: “peacekeeping and peacebuilding; counterterrorism; global health; and energy and climate change.” Looking forward, this paper examines opportunities for immediate collaboration with the UN by the new administration in the areas of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, global health, and climate change, plus managing humanitarian operations. We have chosen those based on the UN’s record of timely response in those areas and its ability to convene global actors for crafting solutions to complex issues. Finally, the paper will address how using both old and new constituencies to support the UN in the United States can help sustain the UN as an instrument of smart power in the future.

## American Exceptionalism?

The value of the UN directly after the attacks of September 11, 2001, was evident when the Security Council supported U.S. actions to retaliate against the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> Eager to tie the actions of Osama bin Laden to the situation in Iraq, the administration of George W. Bush continued to push the UN to inspect for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to demonstrate that Al Qaeda terrorists had transferred weapons there. In February 2003 the administration sought UN approval to attack Iraq, but despite its tremendous pressure on Security Council members, it could not move the Council and in March 2003 the United States attacked Iraq without UN authorization.<sup>5</sup>

Once the fighting stopped, the United States had to call upon the UN to create the legal authority for the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq.<sup>6</sup> The creation of the Coalition Provision Authority, with the approval of the UN Security Council, was one of the more tortured moments in the history of the international organization. The United States used the UN as needed to advance its mission in Iraq, but its relationship with the organization continued to deteriorate. In December 2003, former Secretary General Kofi Annan called for a High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change to review the UN’s role in collective security, noting that the institution had reached a “fork in the road.”<sup>7</sup>

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3. Ibid., p. 30.

4. Security Council Resolution 1368, September 12, 2001, S/RES/1368(2001).

5. Herald Muñoz, *A Solitary War: A Diplomat’s Chronicle of the Iraq War and Its Lessons* (Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum, 2008), p. 62.

6. Security Council Resolution 1483, May 22, 2003, S/RES/1483(2003); Open Society Institute and United Nations Foundation, *Iraq in Transition: Post Conflict Challenges and Opportunities*, 2004.

7. This panel would ultimately help address the issues of security and development for this century. United Nations, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility: Report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* (New York: United Nations, 2004).

If the outward posture of the United States toward the UN was hostile during this period, especially after the Bush administration's recess appointment of John Bolton as its UN ambassador in 2006, an examination of the record shows that President Bush did anything but avoid the UN during his tenure in office. Despite Bolton's rhetoric, which verged on disdain of the UN, a good deal of diplomatic activity was going on in New York. From sanctions on Iran to persuade it to shut down its nuclear program to dealing with genocide in Darfur, the United States played an active role in advancing its national interests at the UN. One-fourth of all Security Council resolutions in the UN's 63-year history were authorized from 2001 to the present, many introduced by the United States. Historian Stephen Schlesinger points out that while "some of these [resolutions] reflected the Bush administration's conservative concerns," more often they responded "to diplomatic imperatives and pragmatic needs in world crises."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the use of the UN, though done quietly, reflected a realistic recognition that the UN, although imperfect and not always efficient in its operations, was a forum to use for urgent matters of foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

## UN Reform

Reforming the UN has been a central theme of debates in Washington about the future of the UN, especially about its ability to address future issues of peace and security. For the United States, several points of contention still require resolution: an ongoing divisiveness about the payment of U.S. dues to the UN in a timely fashion; management reform at the Secretariat; the UN's role in peace and security; its ability to address human rights abuses; and the realignment of power in the Security Council.

The point of departure for discussing reforms is the 2005 report by Secretary General Kofi Annan, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All*.<sup>10</sup> This document, prepared for the UN's 60th anniversary, reported on the now-borderless threats to collective security in the twenty-first century. It underscored the importance of administrative and management reforms to give the UN a chance to be responsive to such new challenges as global health crises, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and climate change.<sup>11</sup>

A second report, *American Interests in UN Reform*, prepared in the United States by the Task Force on the United Nations,<sup>12</sup> led by the U.S. Institute of Peace and headed by two senior statesmen,

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8. Stephen Schlesinger, "Activism at the Security Council," *World Policy Journal*, at <http://www.maxim-news.com/news20080903schlesingerbushunpolicy10809031604.htm>.

9. For example, the importance of the UN to U.S. values of justice and accountability became evident when the United States Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Zalmay Khalizad, noted that the International Criminal Court, a UN body, could be used as a tool "to enhance security, and to send a warning to individuals who might resort to brutality as a way of achieving their aims." This was a complete reversal of position on the International Criminal Court, which had been disowned by the Bush administration after it took office in 2001. The court is now being used as a means to address the crimes against humanity being committed in the Sudan.

10. Kofi Annan, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All* (New York: United Nations, September 2005).

11. *In Larger Freedom* was the product of a larger endeavor, the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, whose work revealed the nature of new problems the UN faced (December 2004).

12. Task Force on the United Nations, *American Interests in UN Reform* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2005).

George Mitchell and Newt Gingrich, laid out the case for the United States' ongoing need to work with the UN, especially in "the prevention and halting of genocide, mass killing and major human rights abuses." This report also called on the president of the United States to work with Congress to make the UN a more effective tool for fighting terrorism, addressing nuclear proliferation, and alleviating poverty through development. It insisted that the United States would have to work to create a more accountable, transparent, and effective United Nations.

A common theme in all the reports on reform is that today's threats to collective security arise not only from nation states, but also from non-state actors and from natural phenomenon that are transnational in nature. Reform is about finding an approach to these new threats as well as about implementing reforms in the way the institution operates. Since 2005 there has been some progress on both institutional reforms and substantive issues, but like any measure of progress, actual success depends on the execution of those changes.

A recent report on UN reform prepared by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars concluded that if we compare the current situation at the UN with the year of crisis, 2003, when Secretary General Kofi Annan told the General Assembly that "we have come to a fork in the road," a "moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the UN was founded," the reforms to date still do not measure up to the needs of the institution.<sup>13</sup> Another review by the Stimson Center noted that reform for the largest donors is about greater effectiveness and efficiency, but that the G-77 oppose any shifts in management authority to the Secretary General. The report further concluded that "reform may not be as useful a framework to consider the future of the UN" as are the international challenges that will test the institution's ability "to adapt to global dynamics."<sup>14</sup>

A smart power approach to UN reform requires looking at those areas at the UN where the United States and other member states can make realistic progress rather than allowing the reform debate over management to become a wedge issue that deepens the divide between the United States and the G-77. The CSIS Smart Power Commission highlighted several areas of multilateralism where U.S. national interests are best served through the UN, including the following:

- Preventing and managing state failure through UN peacekeeping operations;
- Addressing the borderless threats posed by the spread of infectious diseases;
- Helping to bring together the global north and south to adapt to the threats posed by climate change;
- Supporting treaty-based efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and
- Providing humanitarian relief for natural disaster and man-made emergencies.

What sets the UN apart from other multilateral groups such as the G-8 is that actions on behalf of the Security Council convey the legal authority of the UN Charter. Today more than ever, the United States' national interests and those of the global community are best served by the existence of a rule-based international community. It is precisely this legitimacy of UN action

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13. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, *UN Reform: Progress, Prospects and Priorities*, Washington, D.C., October 2007.

14. Ellen Laipson, *The United Nations in 2014: Some Alternative Futures—A Workshop Summary* (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, August 2006), [www.stimson.org/print.cfm?pub=1&ID+321](http://www.stimson.org/print.cfm?pub=1&ID+321).

that provides the United States with a vital foreign policy tool at a time when our recent efforts at working multilaterally have faltered.

## Four Priority Issues for U.S.-UN Collaboration

The UN and its agencies can serve as a force multiplier in support of U.S. goals and interests as well as those of other nations. Our smart power approach to the UN concluded that the UN was most effective when the views of its key stakeholders aligned. If we are to rebuild the image of the United States at the UN, focusing on four areas will help strengthen the institution, but also help build confidence about U.S. intentions and interests in multilateral engagement. Those areas are peacekeeping and peacebuilding, climate change, global health, and managing humanitarian operations. Each is discussed in greater detail below. We have chosen these four because of the potential for concrete progress and because they are areas where U.S. leadership is needed at this transitional time in our government.

### Peacebuilding and Peacekeeping

A solid U.S.-UN relationship is essential for effective peacebuilding and peacekeeping. The United States cannot carry out peacekeeping or peacebuilding alone. As the demand for UN peacekeepers has grown (the UN forces are second only to the U.S. military in the number of troops on the ground; currently more than 109,800 UN personnel are serving in peacekeeping operations), the United States has been unable to contribute forces or provide much beyond financial assistance because of our military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Security and development are linked, and the ability of any country to prosper is a function of its capacity to manage the use of force. With 19 peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions at the cost of \$7 billion in 2008, this component of the UN is growing as the number of weak or fragile states challenges our own security according to the U.S. national security strategy. As the need to support post-conflict states in need of reconstruction and security grows, the UN continues to be a partner in many countries where U.S. interests are significant.<sup>15</sup>

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15. In 2005 the UN created the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to fill the institutional gap in the UN system by assisting countries in the transition from war to peace. The United States is one of 31 members that are part of this new intergovernmental organization that brings together all relevant actors to marshal resources and advise on the proposed integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery. Now entering its third year, the Commission has limited capacity. To date it has addressed the needs of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Burundi. Expanding its case load is essential, though current financial constraints prevent this.

President Obama should make support of this important office a priority in our broader strategy of addressing our interests in post-conflict reconstruction. This means ensuring predictable financing for early recovery activities and sustained financial investment over the medium term to long term. It also means greater collaboration with other member states at the UN to promote best practices that help harmonize the political, security, and humanitarian policies of development actors.

The PBC could also be used to establish a more strategic vision in assisting countries in their transitions from war to peace. An emphasis should be placed on how transnational threats can compromise a fragile country as it works to achieve peace. For example, UN resources could be utilized to draw links between how climate and environment affect rebuilding and how health issues affect development. This integration of knowledge will be instrumental in reconstructing war-torn societies.

In this century, the United States, along with other members of the Security Council, must find a way to go beyond the rhetoric of the UN's right to intervene to prevent genocide by creating mechanisms that will allow the permanent members of the council to act effectively when diplomacy fails. In practice this means expanding the UN's role in peacekeeping and peace operations and also developing a more reactive mechanism for deployment of peacekeepers to crisis regions to prevent further deterioration of conditions. In a recent article, two U.S. senior statesmen, Morton Abramowitz and Thomas Pickering, both recommend that all permanent members of the Security Council each contribute 5,000 troops to UN Peacekeeping Operations to serve as a standby force that would be robust enough to respond rapidly in any given crisis.<sup>16</sup> While similar ideas have been proposed since the UN's inception, implementing such an idea today may be appropriate, especially if it were tried out in one country or one world area, such as Darfur or sub-Saharan Africa.

The time is ripe to reconsider U.S. commitments to multinational peace operations to reflect on how the core principles of peacekeeping – consent, impartiality, and the minimum use of force —can be integrated into U.S. conversations about post-conflict reconstruction and stability operations.<sup>17</sup> The United States together with the UN has a unique opportunity to develop shared responsibilities in countries in transition. Burden sharing in peacekeeping and reconstruction has never been more important.

One of the best ways to demonstrate a renewed commitment to peacekeeping is for the Obama administration to make full funding of our contributions to UN peacekeeping nonnegotiable. The U.S. government supports the training of peacekeepers in Africa and also offers support to peacekeeping training centers. So why, if we are the major contributor of funds (the United States pays 22 percent of the UN's administration budget and 27 percent of its peacekeeping costs<sup>18</sup>), does the United States have so much difficulty in getting Congress to appropriate funds in a timely fashion?<sup>19</sup> The continued arrears in payment of the United States' UN dues have created more ill-will among other member states than any other policy of the U.S. government. The new administration must work together with Congress to make the case for on-time payment. By allowing dues to become a political bargaining chip in the war of words that rejects the UN in congressional debate, we compromise our capacity to use smart power to address some of the worst conflicts in the world.

As a nation we also have a right to demand that UN peacekeepers do not contribute to the problems they are meant to resolve. The United States must get other troop-contributing nations to take a zero-tolerance approach to peacekeepers who violate the rights of the citizens they are sent to protect. This means that we work with the UN to prevent acts of violence against women and children. It also means that our training activities for future peacekeepers need to include a solid foundation in human rights and the basic legal standards of working with civilians.

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16. See Morton Abramowitz and Thomas Pickering, "Making Intervention Work: Improving the UN's Ability to Act," *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2008): 100–108. These diplomats make the case for a standby force of troops from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P-5)

17. See Center on International Cooperation, *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2006* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2006), p.11.

18. Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) *Foreign Assistance Act (P.L. 87-195), Sec. 551.*

19. A decade ago it took the intervention of philanthropist Ted Turner, who offered a billion dollars to pay the U.S. arrears in peacekeeping, to craft a congressional compromise on the payment of those UN dues. We should not need to find a private donor to do what is in the best security interests of our nation.

In the last eight years the United States' reliance on the UN to multiply our field capacity in Afghanistan, Darfur, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Haiti has resulted in a continued expansion of peace operations. We will continue to need the UN troops in those countries, but also in Afghanistan and perhaps even in Iraq as the nature of our engagement changes and we seek UN support in these conflicts. Starting out with a fresh approach to peacekeeping that is collaborative, where the United States removes itself from the role of global policeman, could not only bolster our own security, but also lay a strong foundation for restoring the legitimacy of U.S. interests in multilateralism.

## Climate Change

Of all the transnational threats with long-term consequences for the United States and the rest of our planet, climate change may be the next existential one. The predictions about the impact of global warming are so dire that if nothing is done to keep the earth's temperature from rising 3 to 5 degrees in the next fifty years, other issues will be rendered irrelevant. It is precisely a threat of such global proportions that is best addressed multilaterally at the UN in terms of international actions and frameworks.

The United States has lost close to eight years by failing to work with the UN on this issue. It is only in the last year that the term "climate change" came into use in official U.S. circles when our government could not ignore the findings of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, which unequivocally concluded that global warming was caused by human activities. With the United States the largest emitter of carbon dioxide, the chemical that causes temperature rises, and soon to be surpassed by China, the question is not whether climate change is a global threat, but whether our nation can work with others to mitigate the life-changing threats to the environment caused by carbon emissions.

As we make the transition from ignoring the problem to taking action, the United States is best served by working multilaterally. Moving beyond the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, we must look to the UN and its agencies, the UN Environment Program, the United Nations Development Program, and other related UN agencies, to invest in a new framework that will bring the United States into compliance with goals to reduce carbon emissions.<sup>20</sup> Not only will we need to work on the larger framework to create mechanisms for prevention; we will have to work with the UN on how to help ourselves and other nations develop mechanisms for adaptation as sea levels rise and small island states and coastlines are threatened by flooding and population displacement. It may well be that the Office of the High Commissioner of Refugees finds itself more overwhelmed by environmental migrants in the years to come than by persons fleeing the effects of war and violence. Unless the United States takes a leadership role in addressing the consequences of climate change, and does so with the UN, we may face crises that demand a global body to resolve, something that will not happen without U.S. support.<sup>21</sup>

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20. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in May 1992, was the preceding document to the Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1997.

21. One way for greater action on climate change would be to bring together some of the largest carbon dioxide emitters in some form of a special commission on climate change at the UN that would report to the Security Council. A commission that included Japan, India, Germany, Brazil, and South Africa would help create a strong strategic alliance at the UN, with the Security Council, to address specific frameworks for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Some precedent for such a commission exists for support of peacebuilding. This model might advance the goals of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Of course, the United States will have much to do in the way of developing national strategies to address the consequences of climate change. The UN will not be the forum to deal with our own needs for carbon dioxide emission reductions or flood prevention. But the UN will be essential for less developed nations that lack the means or the capacity to manage the predicted natural disasters caused by the warming planet. We will have to work with our allies as well as with those we may not agree with if our planet is to survive the next century. And the UN is our best hope for creating an overarching framework for international consensus on the urgent steps needed.

## Global Health

During the last decade pandemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS and multiple-drug-resistant tuberculosis have become the ultimate borderless threat in an age of global travel. Their potential to kill more people than a nuclear attack is what makes such biological threats so significant to U.S. security and that of other nations. Like any issue where knowledge and consensus are important components of policy, multilateral approaches remain a tool in our defense against such threats to our own country.

The Bush administration made global health threats a priority. The Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, was the largest commitment ever by a country for a health initiative dedicated to a single disease.<sup>22</sup> U.S. funding to combat malaria-related deaths in Africa demonstrates a similar willingness to address the consequences of mosquito-borne disease.

What has to come next in global health is a U.S. dedication to working with the UN to provide early warning on disease outbreaks. The World Health Organization (WHO) is seriously underfunded in this area. In the CSIS report on smart power, we recommended that the UN, working with the United States and other donors, help increase WHO's budget, governance, and staffing. U.S. policymakers must also request that adequate UN financial and technical resources be dedicated to disease surveillance if we are serious about preventing pandemics. The importance of multilateralism was underscored by the cooperation between the World Health Organization and China in 2003 in response to the SARS epidemic. Had it not been for the UN's ability to work with Chinese officials, fatalities from that disease would have grown, causing great hardship around the world. The new administration should begin a review of the capacity and reach of the UN health organizations, including where efforts coincide, are duplicative, or need support in the years to come. The UN must also serve as a forum where our own concerns about global health can be addressed with all states when it comes to prevention of pandemics and helping the developing world combat child and maternal mortality, malnutrition, unclean water, and lack of adequate health care. If health is a bridge to peace, then the United States should reinforce this concept through the UN by viewing our work with UN agencies as primary tools to alleviate suffering worldwide while also protecting our citizens. The United States will be in an excellent position given our leadership to date on global health issues.

## Managing Humanitarian Operations

The way in which the United States works with the UN on the issues of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, climate change, and global health has consequences for the way we support UN hu-

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22. PEPFAR legislation H.R. 5501, the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008, was signed into law by President Bush on July 30, 2008, <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/107735.htm>.

humanitarian operations and how we work with our allies to address the increasing incidence of both natural disasters and man-made ones arising from conflict. For example, the collateral effects of climate change—namely the increased incidence of natural disasters that have been associated with global warming such as hurricanes, cyclones, and droughts—bring to bear the UN’s vast humanitarian capacity with U.S. military support for delivery of emergency supplies and workers to disaster zones. Recent hurricanes in the Caribbean and in Asia underscore the value and importance of UN emergency services as the basis for assistance in crisis management. Experiences from the 2003 tsunami in South Asia, where U.S. citizens were favorably disposed to working through the UN, similarly underscore the value of multilateralism in responding to large-scale natural disasters. Preparation at the global level can help less-developed countries before disaster strikes. The Central Emergency Response Fund established by the UN, which is designed to support a swift and effective response to humanitarian crises, has been funded, though it is still short of its \$500 billion goal. Funding for this global facility by the United States should be a high priority for the new administration.

The UN remains the world’s first responder. But only when the UN works with the United States, whose logistical support and resources multiply the effectiveness of a UN network, can a humanitarian response model be created that brings the best of the UN, the United States, and the international nongovernmental community together to save lives and protect victims of disasters.

Similarly, in the case of conflicts, where famine and refugees are the twin manifestations of internal warfare, the United States can work effectively with the UN using our military assets and our vast international network of supplies to help save civilians caught up in war. Health crises that accompany such man-made disasters will require more than the United States alone to relieve suffering. UN emergency services are a central component of our own capacity to organize and respond to these specific events.

## Building New Constituencies

Historically, the constituencies that have supported the UN in the United States have included humanitarian groups, human rights organizations, religious organizations, and charitable foundations that advocate multilateral approaches to U.S. foreign policy. A missing link in this mix has been the private sector. In a globalized economy the importance of the private sector as an engine of economic growth and development could transform the way the UN operates. Especially today, bringing the private sector along could greatly improve the image of the UN in the United States.

The United States is also in a strong position to mobilize corporate support for the UN as part of our smart power approach to multilateral engagement in the four areas discussed above. Whether it is bringing the strength of the private sector to work with the UN on addressing climate change, or working in collaboration with pharmaceutical companies on the threat of infectious diseases and drug distribution to the poor, or working with companies who seek new investment markets in countries emerging from conflict, there is a compelling case for private-public involvement in sustaining development and stabilizing fragile states.<sup>23</sup>

The private sector reinforces U.S. interests through its investments in an array of development, health, and security programs. Such types of programs, often called corporate social responsibility

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23. Jane Nelson, *Building Partnerships: Cooperation Between the United Nations System and the Private Sector* (New York: United Nations, Department of Public Information, 2002).

programs, provide examples for engagement with the UN. Although private sector partnerships are a recent phenomenon at the UN, they have already proved to increase public awareness about the work of the UN. For example, working with the UN the “Nothing but Nets” program has helped distribute bed nets to thousands of families in Africa where malaria remains a killer.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the UN and private groups, the UN Association, and the private sector have been working together successfully to promote awareness of land mines — hidden killers that take lives or maim innocent people who happen to walk on mined agricultural lands—and expand programs to remove land mines around the world.

U.S. businesses together with the UN should build on the Global Compact, first launched in 1999 by former Secretary General Kofi Annan at the World Economic Forum. This program now must be advanced to the next level by creating a strong private sector partnership as a means of gaining greater U.S. government support for certain parts of the UN. Congress is largely influenced by local constituencies, where stakeholders are not necessarily engaged with international matters, and by larger organizations that lobby to gain support for their own interests. Sustainable development is a function of foreign direct investment and not bilateral donor aid. Working with the private sector, the United States and the UN can help challenge and improve the way foreign assistance is used to create the basis for greater economic growth and poverty reduction.

The UN brand is a symbol around the globe. One of the central challenges in coming years is how we translate the positive attributes of the UN to our geopolitical needs. The involvement of the private sector with UN programs can be an important communications bridge for building new recognition of the important, though often under-recognized, work that the UN and its agencies do to alleviate poverty and address transnational threats. There is great value added when the United States combines its resources with those of other states and the private sector to support security and development worldwide.

What is needed in the years ahead is a way to promote a UN brand when it comes to claiming success when the United States speaks to Congress. While members of Congress love the work of the UN Children’s Fund, UNICEF, or praise the World Food Program because of its heroic efforts to prevent famines in Korea or Bangladesh, there is often little recognition that these agencies are also part of the UN. Congress needs a better understanding of how private-public partnerships between UN agencies and the UN multiply U.S. resources in the field. Today more than ever it will be important to extend our funding for these types of programs at the UN. Creating a UN brand in Congress that is seen as promoting U.S. policies in development, health, and security will be a step to increasing the UN’s legitimacy at home and gaining more allies on Capitol Hill.

Private foundations also play a major role in moving the concept of public –private partnerships to a new level. The UN Foundation, established a decade ago, started the trend by creating new types of relationships to promote business interests in UN programming. Today others like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Clinton Global Initiative have gone even further to support models of sustainable programming around the issues of health, peace and security, and

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24. Initiated by the United Nations Foundation, this program enjoys corporate and foundational support from the National Basketball Association’s NBA Cares, VH-1, *Sports Illustrated*, People of the United Methodist Church, the Mark J. Gordon Foundation, AOL Black Voices, Rotarians’ Action Group on Malaria, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Factsheet available at [http://www.globalproblems-globalsolutions-files.org/unf\\_website/PDF/factsheet/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Nothing\\_But\\_Nets.pdf](http://www.globalproblems-globalsolutions-files.org/unf_website/PDF/factsheet/Fact_Sheet_Nothing_But_Nets.pdf).

awareness of climate change.<sup>25</sup> These types of institutions have established models for public-private partnerships that have used the positive agendas of UN agencies to promote greater corporate social responsibility in less-developed countries.

There is a real opportunity to develop even greater incentives for private support to complement U.S. engagement at the UN. Educating communities about the value added of working on certain problems with others is a first step. This is best performed by nongovernmental organizations that have already established this type of outreach. One way in which all Americans could help support our work at the UN would be to allow for a voluntary income-tax check off of \$1 dollar to support an emergency UN fund to complement our regular assessed dues and demonstrate the tradition of charity to others that is part of our heritage.

Among the new constituencies that have grown up to support the UN in promoting its peacebuilding and peacekeeping agenda are organizations that represent the U.S. military and veterans. The last eight years of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan have launched a rethinking about how the United States operates in unstable environments. These groups have witnessed the heroism of UN staff on the ground. They have worked side by side with peacekeepers and civilian UN aid workers. And they have gained a new respect for the synergy between their efforts and those of our U.S. armed forces who work in conflictive environments.

As we consider where U.S. interests align with the UN, the U.S. military can play a leading and supportive role. They can become part of a new coalition of advocates who will fight for U.S. payment of UN dues for peacekeeping. And they will support the idea of peace operations, humanitarian response, and prevention of pandemics, to mention just a few areas of convergence. They are also advocates for improved training by the United States and its allies to develop peacekeepers from different regions. New doctrinal development about Stability Operations in the last two years has created a renewed interest in the interoperability of UN peace operations and U.S. military support.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusions

We have moved from the bipolar world that existed when the UN was founded in 1945, to a unipolar moment after the fall of the Berlin Wall, to the period of multipolarity that characterizes the first decade of the twenty-first century. What does this power shift imply for the United States' relationship with the UN? It suggests that the United States must not discard the UN as an outmoded tool of a bygone era, but must find ways to focus on areas of strength. It implies that

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25. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization was created in 2000 with financial support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. UN agencies such as the World Health Organization and UNICEF collaborate with the World Bank and others to promote vaccination as a central issue on the public health agenda, <http://www.who.int/vaccines/gavi/FactSheet-en.doc>; In 2006, the Clinton Global Initiative launched the Maternal and Neonatal Child Survival Program in conjunction with UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank to improve child survival rates in sub-Saharan Africa, <http://www.clintonglobalinitiative.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=2612&srcid=2384>.

26. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) states, "The Department of Defense stands ready to increase its assistance to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in areas of the Department's expertise such as doctrine, training, strategic planning and management." From Nancy Soderberg, "UN Peace Operations" (author's draft), National Defense University Working Group on Peace Operations, Washington, D.C., 2007.

our relationship must be grounded on issues where the United States cannot be successful unless it works with others.

The UN's first responsibility is still collective security, and its universal membership conveys instant legitimacy to any decisions it makes.<sup>27</sup> What the United States must do first is rebuild trust among member states after a period where the U.S. intervention in Iraq created wide misgivings about U.S. intentions and allegiance to international law. The new administration has the opportunity to rebuild that trust. Our actions must demonstrate a willingness to abide by decisions of the UN and to contribute both materially and intellectually to urgent collective action in terms of transnational threats as well as specific cases where the threat to peace is imminent.

Almost a decade into the twenty-first century, the United States has yet to think strategically about a new multilateralism that will address the threats our nation faces—threats not only from other states but from forces that do not respect borders. These so-called transnational threats—including the spread of infectious disease such as HIV/AIDs; the perils of organized crime, which can destabilize fragile states; the increased impact of global warming on development and sustainability of agriculture; the unchecked proliferation of nuclear weapons; and the ongoing internal conflicts that negatively affect regional development—are all areas where the global mechanisms provided through UN agencies can be used to expand our national capacities to address them. These threats alone make the UN essential to the diplomatic and operational tool kit the United States needs in the years to come.

Foreign affairs expert and diplomat Strobe Talbot wrote in his recent history of multilateralism, *The Great Experiment*, that the United States has always had an internationalist perspective, even in its formative days. Talbot also noted that in his 1945 fourth inaugural address a war-weary President Franklin Roosevelt made the case for multilateralism: “We have learned that we cannot live alone at peace. We have learned that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away.”<sup>28</sup> In spite of periods of isolationism, or more recently exceptionalism, the United States has returned to work with other nations to get things done when our peace, security, and well-being have been at stake. Our need to work with the UN is even more urgent today as the United States tries to withdraw from Iraq and hopes to remove terrorists' threats in Afghanistan.

When President Obama steps to the podium of the General Assembly on September 15, 2009, he will have the chance not only to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to multilateralism, but also to ensure that the ideals of 1945 are still alive: a commitment to a strong international legal order that is in America's best interest, and to the universality of UN membership that gives legitimacy to the decisionmaking power of the organization. In the next four years, as U.S. and UN interests align on threats to peace and security, climate change, global health, and managing humanitarian operations, we will need to take a leadership role in promoting reform of the UN where we need it most – in bringing the Secretariat and its agencies up to capacity to multiply U.S. power when

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27. Recent discussions on global security are exploring the concept of “responsible sovereignty” as a principle requiring nations to cooperate across borders to safeguard common resources and tackle common threats. The UN is one vehicle for exercising this type of “smart power” moving forward. See the Managing Global Insecurity Project of the Brookings Institution, May 2008 Project Update, and Bruce Jones, Carlos Pascual, and Stephen John Stedman, *Power and Responsibility: International Order in an Era of Transnational Threat* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, December 2008).

28. Strobe Talbot, *The Great Experiment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), p.181.

needed. As one British diplomat has noted, nothing happens at the UN without the United States. We now have a chance to make things happen.

The new administration must make clear that it is willing to abide by Security Council resolutions and reaffirm that participation in the UN decisionmaking process does not relinquish the United States' ability to defend itself if attacked. Rather, living by the rules of the international system only helps us with specific global issues that are best addressed in collaboration with other nations. As the Obama administration works to establish its approach to multilateralism, it can embrace the strengths of the UN system as one part of a broader set of policy tools that can provide the tactical approaches to immediate problems such as genocide in Darfur and managing terrorism in Afghanistan. The challenge will be finding the appropriate balance between our efforts through our UN membership and maintaining the freedom of action that promotes U.S. interests and strengths.

We have an obligation to promote the UN as a brand that works when supported by private sector initiatives. We must also live up to our financial and human resource commitments to ensure that peacekeeping and peacebuilding, two sides of the same coin, are fully funded and complement our own capacity to provide safety and protection of human rights and development to those who are caught in conflict. Selling the UN to our Congress and to U.S. citizens as an investment in our own security is a function of presidential leadership.

If multilateralism is used effectively, the United States can rebuild its reputation in the community of nations, thus ensuring greater legitimacy for U.S. interests and actions around the globe. This is the smart power approach we need for creating a stronger U.S.–UN relationship, one where our voice is clearly heard and one where we are also willing to listen.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Johanna Mendelson Forman** is a senior associate with the Americas Program and the William E. Simon Chair in Political Economy at CSIS, where she works on renewable energy, the Americas, civil-military relations, and post-conflict reconstruction. A former codirector of the CSIS Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, she has written extensively on security-sector reform in conflict states, economic development in postwar societies, the role of the United Nations in peace operations, and energy security. In 2003, she participated in a review of the post-conflict reconstruction effort of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq as part of a CSIS team.

Mendelson Forman also brings experience in the world of philanthropy, having served as the director of peace, security, and human rights at the UN Foundation. She has held senior positions in the U.S. government at the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Bureau for Humanitarian Response, and the Office of Transition Initiatives, as well as at the World Bank's Post Conflict Unit. She has been a senior fellow with the Association of the United States Army and a guest scholar at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Most recently, she served as an adviser to the UN Mission in Haiti. She holds adjunct faculty appointments at American University, Georgetown University, and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Mendelson Forman is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and serves on the advisory boards of Women in International Security and the Latin American Security Network, RESDAL. She holds a J.D. from Washington College of Law at American University, a Ph.D. in Latin American history from Washington University, St. Louis, and a master's of international affairs, with a certificate of Latin America studies, from Columbia University in New York.