
The United Nations Joins the New War

Nancy E. Soderberg

The events of September 11 have brought the United Nations to the forefront of the fight against terrorism. Among the thousands dead are citizens of eighty-one countries, bringing home to us all the global nature of this threat. As UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated in his speech opening the UN's week-long debate following the attacks, "Terrorism will be defeated if the international community summons the will to unite in a broad coalition, or it will not be defeated at all." But is the UN up to the task?

The United Nations has no army of its own, and depends on member states for financial support. It takes its instructions from a disparate group of 189 states in the General Assembly and fifteen in the Security Council (UNSC). But it can be a persuasive moral voice, a tough monitor of compliance with the demands of the international community, a catalyst for humanitarian aid, and a builder of consensus. With the right kind of support, the United Nations can make the difference in winning or losing this "New War." So far, that support has been lacking.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington sparked a 180-degree turn from the previous arms-length approach to the United Nations taken by the Bush administration and Congress. Within a week of the attacks, John Negroponte was

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confirmed as ambassador to the UN and was hard at work. Congress paid \$582 million in back dues, and the administration sought and received United Nations Security Council authorization for the broadest and strongest anti-terrorism measure in the UN's history, UN Security Council Resolution 1373.

Done right, a new partnership can make great strides in the fight against terrorism, and can help rebuild a post-Tal-

iban regime. But success will require an understanding of what the UN can do—and what it cannot. UN member states will have to make a serious, concerted effort to crack down on terrorist networks and their financing. Through leadership, the UN will need to help states have the political courage to join the war. The UN must adopt a realistic approach to its role in Afghanistan. There must be a new firmness to deal with Iraq's ongoing efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD). And the Bush administration will have to rethink its approach to major UN efforts, such as those on global cooperation on global warming, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and arms control. Each of these issues deserves a closer look if the UN and the United States are to successfully wage a new war on terrorism.

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Resolved against Terror. Even with the best secretary general ever, the United Nations is only as good as the resolve of its member states. With the passage of the historic UN Security Council Resolution 1373 in September,

it will be put to the test. Resolution 1373 is unprecedented in its scope. It cuts off all sources of support for all terrorist groups everywhere. It eliminates financial support by freezing funds, financial assets, and economic resources of those who commit or attempt to commit terrorist acts. It denies safe haven to those who finance, plan, support, or commit terrorist acts. It demands that those who participate in the financing, planning,

preparation, or perpetration of terrorist acts be brought to justice. And it calls for full exchange of information regarding terrorist action or movement.

To be serious, the UN Security Council will have to press for implementation of the resolution and overcome its poor record of enforcing sanctions.

The UN now has the chance to do it right. Resolution 1373 sets up a committee in the Security Council to monitor the implementation of the resolution. The very able permanent representative from the United Kingdom, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, chairs the committee and has circulated guidelines for compliance. Tough issues lie ahead, including building a consensus on what constitutes terrorism—a difficult task when one nation's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. Tackling the financing of terrorism and ending the provision of safe haven will also prove to be difficult challenges.

Moving states beyond lip service to the New War will require skill, persistence, and guts—from the UN itself and from its leading members. To be effective, the committee must have a full-time profes-

sional staff, travel to troublesome regions to investigate compliance, and, above all, transgress a long-standing diplomatic tradition at the UN: It must publicly name the violators.

The committee must also guard against efforts by member states to misuse the committee to score political points at home. For instance, bringing the Palestinian-Israeli debate into the committee through a series of charges and countercharges will only serve to undermine the fight against terror. Instead, the committee ought to be a serious forum in which member states can pool resources to cut off all resources from terrorists.

The UN also offers an unparalleled bully pulpit with a truly global reach. The secretary general should use it to send an unequivocal message that the actions of Osama bin Laden are blatantly un-Islamic. He can rally support behind Muslim and Arab states with the courage to oppose terrorism and lend their full support to the UN efforts. He can help states turn over key information and suspects in this New War.

As he did in calling for one-half billion dollars in aid for 7.5 million Afghans at risk, the secretary general can help ensure that innocent men, women, and children do not suffer from the consequences of the coming New War. His top humanitarian aide, Undersecretary General Kenzo Oshima, has traveled to Pakistan and Iran. Member states professing concern about civilians will have to meet his appeals for help.

The UN's rich collection of conventions and protocols on terrorism, twelve in all, offer key tools in the fight. Member states must move to sign, ratify, and implement them. These instruments date from 1963 and address a variety of threats, including aspects of airline safe-

ty, protection of diplomatic personnel, the taking of hostages, protection of nuclear materials, maritime navigation, plastic explosives, and suppression of terrorism and its financing.

The UN has a pivotal role to play in redoubled efforts to counter the very real threat from weapons of mass destruction. One shudders at how much more terror and death would have followed had the planes of September 11 carried chemical or biological weapons. Now is the time to secure universal adherence to and compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to work to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention with a new inspection system to help detect and deter cheating. Reports that the Bush administration is rethinking its earlier rejection of the protocol of the Biological Weapons Convention in the wake of the anthrax attacks here at home are welcome news.

Lastly, the establishment of an ad hoc international criminal tribunal by the UN Security Council along the lines of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) should be considered, as proposed by Harvard Law School professor Anne-Marie Slaughter.¹ Such a court could put on trial alleged terrorists until the planned International Criminal Court becomes operative. Given the political tensions surrounding the issue of terrorism, some nations may find it more palatable to hand suspects over to an international court than to a U.S. national court.

Afghanistan. Before September 11, it was inconceivable that the Bush administration would push for "nation building" and encourage the United Nations to do it. Now, however, the world is a very different place. The United Nations is

rightly skeptical that the conditions for success will exist anytime soon—it learned the hard way in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Somalia that the UN cannot succeed where there is no peace to keep.

Thus, the first step will be to secure a stable peace in Afghanistan. But that is no easy task. The Taliban shows no sign of negotiating its departure, and the Northern Alliance will not likely be able to take over the country. U.S. policy appears to have evolved from one designed to break the Taliban's ability to support the al Qaeda network into one designed to overthrow the Taliban regime. There is a real possibility of increasing the role of U.S. ground troops. The war may take months or more to succeed. But until its completion, the UN cannot take up a significant role in Afghanistan.

In the post-Taliban era, the plan with the most currency is that once the Tal-

most discussed in the corridors in New York and Washington is that of Cambodia, which in October 2001 marked the tenth anniversary of the Paris Conference that ended the war there. Like Cambodia, where King Sihanouk helped bring legitimacy to the power sharing deal between his son and the Khmer Rouge, Afghanistan has a monarch who may be able to unify the warring factions. But Cambodia's population is half that of Afghanistan, and is geographically one-third its size. Even so, the two UN operations in Cambodia—the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)—cost \$1.6 billion over two years, involved 23,500 military and civilian personnel, and resulted in seventy-eight fatalities.

Afghanistan will prove to be an even tougher challenge. The international community should prepare for a longer

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iban are convinced or coerced to leave Kabul, the former Afghan king, Mohammed Zahir Shah, will convene a *loya jirga*—a traditional council of tribal leaders—to form a Supreme Council. The international community, under the newly-restored UN Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, would help to bring the various parties together. The UN would then be asked by the Supreme Council to help administer the country.

The UN has vast experience in administering governments in transition. It has won wide praise for its efforts in East Timor, and brought Kosovo to the election in November 2001. The model

and more expensive engagement. But if any lesson is to be learned from international policy over the last decade regarding Afghanistan, it is that abandoning Afghanistan is a mistake. With sustained U.S. leadership, there ought to be the will to stay engaged this time around.

The other key challenge for the international community will be deciding whose armed forces will keep the peace in Afghanistan. Even with a peace agreement, conflict likely will continue in parts of Afghanistan. Any peacekeeping force would have to be prepared to take enforcement action if necessary. History has shown that the UN is not

capable of such a mandate. Another solution must be found.

A force of tens of thousands, maybe a hundred thousand, may be needed, perhaps for many years. States contiguous to Afghanistan that have backed various factions in the past—China, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—would not be considered neutral. Non-Muslim states would probably spark a backlash. It will certainly be years before a unified Afghan force could do the job. One option that is gaining support is to build a coalition of Muslim states, invited by the new Supreme Council; this plan could well fit the bill. Led by Turkey, such a coalition could include Morocco, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Jordan, and others. The troops would also have the support of the Organization of Islamic States and the blessing of the United Nations Security Council.

But as Mr. Brahimi has pointed out, Afghans have a long history of opposing foreign troops on their soil. It is unlikely that they would invite troops in, particularly before they have had the chance to fight it out among themselves in a post-Taliban era. And Turkey, Morocco, and others fear repeating the experience of the 100,000 Russian troops who spent a decade fighting Afghans and suffered 15,000 casualties before withdrawing.

It may be, in fact, that there is no viable option for an international peace-keeping operation in Afghanistan. In this case, the international community would have to rely on training and advising Afghan security forces who would take over the task. Such an all-Afghan force could take years to establish. If this is the course ultimately chosen, the UN's job will be made all the more precarious.

These are tough issues to address in the midst of a military campaign to cap-

ture Osama bin Laden and break the back of his patrons. But the current military campaign can only succeed if a plan is in place to enforce the peace. Unless there is a decision soon on how to keep the peace, the UN risks being set up to repeat the mistakes of the last decade.

Iraq. We do not yet know who is behind the series of anthrax attacks following the events of September 11. But they do bring to the forefront the need for strict control of biological and chemical weapons, and call for a renewed effort to rein in Iraq, the world's most notorious producer of biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons.

In the decade since former U.S. president George Bush successfully built an international coalition and secured UNSC authorization for the use of force against Iraq, the Security Council consensus for demanding Iraqi compliance with its demands has evaporated. Saddam Hussein has flouted the sanctions, and failed to take full advantage of the tens of billions of dollars made available for him to care for the Iraqi people. He has cynically worsened the suffering of the Iraqi people in an effort to get sanctions lifted rather than comply with the demands of the Security Council resolutions. And with French and Russian complicity, he is succeeding—despite the real threat that he presents.

While international support for sanctions against Iraq have crumbled, Iraq's WMD program remains a serious threat to U.S. interests. Since 1991, UN inspectors have uncovered the existence of an offensive biological warfare program and the chemical nerve agent VX. According to a 1999 Security Council disarmament panel report, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) has confiscat-

ed missiles, chemical warheads, 88,000 chemical munitions, over 600 tons of weaponized and bulk chemical weapons agents, and some 4,000 metric tons of precursor chemicals.² It has also uncovered Iraq's biological weapons program and destroyed several biological weapons production and development facilities, as well as twenty-two tons of growth media for biological weapons production.

The report's stark conclusion has failed to receive the attention it warrants: "Iraq possesses the capability and knowledge base through which biological warfare agents could be produced quickly and in volume." In the nearly three years since the UN inspectors left Iraq, Saddam Hussein certainly has attempted to continue these programs. The only question is how successful he has been.

Despite this clear threat, some members of the international community openly breach the UN sanctions. Member states regularly violate sanctions on Iraq, including states that sit on the Security Council. Thus, U.S. policy toward Iraq has become one of containment through military means, rather than sanctions and inspections. U.S. and British warplanes routinely bombard Iraq as it threatens pilots enforcing the no-fly zones. It is a stunning testament to the talents of these pilots that none have been lost or taken hostage.

When it took office, the Bush administration worked with the United Kingdom to develop a new approach to sanctions that attempted to put the propaganda burden back on Hussein's shoulders, and, more importantly, to get inspectors back on the ground in Iraq. It involved new "smart" sanctions that would lift sanctions on goods entering Iraq but maintain a list of sanctioned items on all military and dual-use items,

such as high-powered computers and advanced telecommunications equipment. The proposal would maintain the existing escrow account into which Iraqi oil revenue is deposited, and would try to regularize Syrian, Turkish, and Jordanian smuggling. Saddam Hussein would have to allow inspectors back into Iraq—the most effective way to prevent WMD programs there.

After a valiant effort that brought even the reluctant Chinese on board with the plan, it faltered last summer because of Russian objections. To date, the issue does not appear to have been high on the agenda of the discussions between U.S. president George W. Bush and Russian president Vladimir Putin. But the threat of weapons of mass destruction has taken new proportions in the wake of September 11 and the anthrax attacks in the United States. The Bush administration must put the issue of Iraq high on its agenda with the Russians, and work to resume arms inspections in Iraq.

The Way Forward is Engagement. September 11 ended the Bush administration's unilateralist approach to pursuing its interests. The president and his advisers—most of whom viewed the world through a Cold War lens now seem to have a better understanding of the fact that the threats of the twenty-first century can only be overcome by united efforts by the United States and its allies.

As it moves forward in the fight against terrorism, the administration will have to review its approach to a host of international issues. Over the course of 2001, the administration withdrew U.S. support from a range of international treaties addressing such pressing issues as global warming; nuclear, biological, and conventional arms control; and the creation

of an international criminal court. But such actions risk undermining support from key allies in the war on terrorism.

The Bush administration reviewed whether it was possible to “unsign” the International Criminal Court treaty. In March, it rejected the accord reached by 178 other nations on the Kyoto Protocol limiting emissions of greenhouse gases. But attitudes seem to be changing. The administration’s threats to abrogate the ABM Treaty appear to have been tempered by the need to work with Russia on the New War. And, having rejected last spring a protocol that would create a policing mechanism for the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, the administration now appears to be taking up serious review of how to move the Convention forward.

Facing the Soviet threat in the aftermath of World War II, the United States embarked on a multidimensional strategy to contain its enemy in the east. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his successors understood that such a threat could only be challenged in cooperation with our allies. Institutions such as NATO, the UN, GATT, the IMF, and the World Bank gave a multilateral framework to the daunting challenge at hand. Today’s challenge will require similar efforts to work with and galvanize the international community. The United States must face the challenge of international terrorism using a combination of its military, economic, diplomatic, and financial tools. Unilateralism and a misconstrued definition of national interest will only hamper it in this important endeavor.

NOTES

¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Terrorism and Justice,” *Financial Times*, 12 October 2001.

² Final report of the panel on disarmament and current and future ongoing monitoring and verification issues, 27 March 1999.