

zenship and ethics, having an understanding of other cultures and religions, listening to and learning from others and being a leader that others can count on.

At the same time, we need to show we don't intend to impose our will anywhere we choose. And we can't afford to feel or act as if we can impose our will virtually alone. For if we do either, we can count on little or no support or cooperation from those around the world who have grown to either hate or fear us.

## 10. The use of power

What we need to do is pass these three public tests – those of policy, diplomacy and involvement. We must invest our time, treasure and talent in strengthening the bonds of international cooperation. It starts with what Richard L. Armitage, the former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., the former Dean of the Kennedy School at Harvard, call “Smart Power”, in their bipartisan commission report published in late 2007.

Their thesis is that “the United States must become a smarter power by once again investing in the global good – providing things people and governments in all quarters of the world want but cannot attain in the absence of American leadership”.

This plays off of what Nye in his book *Soft Power* describes as the ability to get what you want through an attraction of who you are rather than by coercion or payment. Nye advocates getting others to admire your ideals and do what you want or profess because they believe in it as opposed to you imposing those ideals on them because you simply say those ideals are right.<sup>9</sup>

As a nation, we need to strive for that soft power attractiveness to our culture, our political ideals and our policies. These are times to be clear eyed and sure footed as a nation with respect to our foreign policy as it is applied to global issues at play on the world stage.<sup>10</sup>

For the world, the challenges and consequences of the moment are enormous. For the United States, this moment offers the opportunity to bind the wounds to reputation with decisions that can heal image and influence. Doing so can responsibly contribute to making the world a better place and at the same time can earn respect as a solid citizen-nation of the world. It is a watershed moment that cannot be squandered.

9 Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye Jr. “CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America.” Washington D.C.: 2007, p.1.

10 Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: 2004.

# The UN-US pas de deux

Ramesh Thakur<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This chapter examines the relationship between the United States as the universal power and the United Nations as the universal organisation in terms of four critical areas: the use of force, peace operations, nuclear weapons and climate change. Neither the US nor the UN can dispense with the other, yet their mutual dependence is asymmetrical. The material capacity to deploy and use force globally is concentrated in the United States, while the authority to do so is legally vested in the UN Security Council. The latter is the proper locus of authorising and legitimising the creation, deployment and use of military force under international auspices. Multilateralism remains important to US foreign policy, and the US is the pivot of multilateral action for the maintenance of international peace and security. Because the US will remain the main financial underwriter of UN peacekeeping costs, it will continue to exercise unmatched influence on UN peace operations. The hard core of negotiations on issues of nuclear stockpiles will be conducted among the nine nuclear powers directly. But they can draw on world moral authority via the UN. On climate change, Washington and the UN will have to work cooperatively to convert the formula of common but differentiated responsibility into action. During the primary campaign, the candidates Clinton, McCain and Obama showed interesting differences on these issues as an anticipatory guide to how their administrations might frame policies.

**Keywords:** UN, nuclear weapons, use of force, peace operations, climate change; VN, Nuklearwaffen, Gewaltanwendung, Friedensmissionen, Klimawandel

America matters, what America does and does not do matters and so the choice of who leads America matters to all other nations. It is impossible for the world to move forward if America decides to stand still and refuses to budge, as on climate change. It is impossible for the world to avoid a tsunami of misfortunes when America takes a misstep, as in Iraq. This is why outsiders followed the progress of the American presidential campaigns within and then between the

parties with a mixture of eagerness, apprehension and fretfulness.

The incoming administration will confront a congested menu of domestic and foreign policy items demanding immediate attention. He or she, required to separate the urgent from the merely important, will be fortunate if the Bush administration has left behind just unfinished business instead of a full-blown crisis or two. “Moreover, in dealing with that morass, the US will need help from a world where its reputation is scraping bottom, from an enfeebled United Nations and from allies whose

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confidence in America's stewardship of its own power and their interests has been profoundly shaken."<sup>2</sup> The list of critical areas and issues is long: Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,<sup>3</sup> Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and North Korea; terrorism, nuclear proliferation, human rights abuses and atrocities, global trade, climate change, pandemics, and poverty. There are also the perennial issues like managing the China-US relationship as a partnership or rivalry, reassuring traditional allies like Japan and Australia, dealing with a prickly and newly assertive Russia, responding to requests for NATO membership from Georgia and Ukraine, and massaging the trans-Atlantic alliance.

Though the *hyperpuissance* may be humbled, the US is neither a humble nor a dispensable power. Nor is the United Nations a disposable organisation, even for the most powerful nation in history. The Iraq quagmire proves that the US is an incomplete power in the contemporary world. The fragility of post-invasion Iraq confirmed that it is easier to wage war without UN blessing than it is to win the peace – but victory in war is pointless without a resulting secure peace.

Within the urgent and important issues, the new administration will therefore have to pay early attention to repairing and revitalizing the relationship with the United Nations that has been strained and frayed. In Afghanistan, the two are already working together closely and have done so from the start. This is one reason why the US role in Afghanistan remains relatively uncontroversial. In Iraq, the UN presence is minor and secondary. Yet clearly the situation is such that the large US military presence has become part of the problem and no solution is likely until a substantial drawdown.<sup>4</sup> Yet for them simply to withdraw would create a dangerous vacuum. Only the United Nations has the legitimacy to authorise a replacement multinational presence for stabilising the security situation and the capacity to mobilise the requisite resources for post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq. Regarding Iran, any military attack without UN authorisation would reopen America's Iraq wounds around the world with a vengeance.<sup>5</sup>

The UN Charter articulates the normative architecture of world order based on quintessentially American values and worldview. No other country had as much influence on designing the international organisation nor on its operations once established; no other will have as critical a role in determining its agenda and actions in the foreseeable future. At the same time, no other country will have as devastating an impact on the fortunes of the United Nations by withholding support or opposing it.

The primary UN purpose is the maintenance of international peace and security. Created from the ashes of the Second World War with the allies determined to prevent a repeat of Adolf Hitler's horrors, the United Nations for most of its existence

has focussed far more on external aggression than internal mass killings. Yet Nazi Germany was guilty of both. Unlike aggression against other countries, the systematic and large-scale extermination of Jews was a new horror. The organisation is at long last elevating the doctrine of preventing mass atrocities against people to the same level of collective responsibility as preventing and repelling armed aggression against states. Absent US support and engagement, the UN will remain an incomplete international organisation with respect to both the collective security and responsibility to protect agendas.<sup>6</sup>

The connecting link between US national interests and the international interest symbolised by the United Nations might be the analytical prism or organising principle – the strategic-cum-moral compass – through which the new president interprets the world and frames the foreign policy choices: balance-of-power, isolationism, concert of democracies, or embedded liberalism which seeks American security and prosperity in a rules-based international architecture? The underlying and unifying theme is the challenge posed to world order by the shifts in power in the international system.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I will analyse the relationship between the United States as the universal power and the United Nations as the universal organisation with respect to four critical themes: the use of force; peace operations; nuclear weapons; and climate change. Although not exhaustive, the list is highly representative.

## The Use of Force

The material capacity to deploy and use force at various trouble spots around the world is concentrated in the United States while the authority to do so is legally vested in the UN Security Council. A unilateral use of force by Washington risks the loss of legitimacy while any US refusal to back a UN decision to use force will undermine its effectiveness.

Americans fret over a nettlesome UN and the Hamlet-like allies who agonise over moral qualms when Washington has determined that military action is vital to US security interests. American commitment to the post-1945 order had emphasised the protection of the democratic community through rules constraining the use of force by "the other side"; the impact of 9/11 saw an expansion in the use of force to promote and export the democratic franchise. The most serious US-UN split occurred in relation to Iraq over the procedural norm which emphasises multilateral forums and approaches for making the decision to use force, over the substantive reasons justifying the recourse to force, and over the manner in which both these embedded norms have come under pressure in recent times.<sup>8</sup> At the heart of the dispute was not Iraq, nor even Saddam Hussein, but the nature and exercise of US power.

2 Strobe Talbott, "Trouble ahead," *Financial Times Magazine*, 5 January 2008.

3 The preoccupation with Iraq since 2003 has obscured the fact that the most enduring and the biggest UN-US divide is over the causes and solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

4 See Ramesh Thakur, *War in Our Time: Reflections on Iraq, Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007).

5 See Ramesh Thakur, *Fast Forward to the Past? The Line in the Sand from Iraq to Iran*, CIGI Working Paper No. 7 (Waterloo, Ontario: Centre for International Governance Innovation, August 2006); and Ramesh Thakur, "US, Iran play with fire," *Boston Globe*, 4 October 2007.

6 For the evolution of the UN agenda from one to the other, see Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

7 This is why the changing power balance is one of the six clusters of themes in the work of the Centre of International Governance Innovation (CIGI). See [www.cigionline.org](http://www.cigionline.org).

8 See Ramesh Thakur and W.P.S. Sidhu, eds., *The Iraq Crisis and World Order: Structural, Institutional and Normative Challenges* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2006).

The UN, headquartered in the US, is universal in membership. The US is global in reach and power but lacks international authority (the right to make policy and rules, in contrast to power as the capacity to implement the policy and enforce the rules). Often it acts as a de facto world government but disclaims responsibility for the distributional outcomes of its actions. The UN has authority without power. It symbolises global governance but lacks the attributes of international government. As an organisation that practices only parts of its Charter, Luck asks, “Is it tenable for the UN to say that it only wants to walk on the soft side of the street but nevertheless wants to have some degree of control over what happens on the other side as well?”<sup>9</sup>

By their bitter separation over Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, the US and the UN provoked a mutually reinforcing legitimacy crisis of American power and UN authority. The lack of a sense of moral clarity – values that it espouses and principles in defence of which it is prepared to stand up and be counted – diminished the UN’s moral authority and hence its legitimacy. The certainty of moral clarity put the Bush administration on a course that seriously eroded its moral authority in the exercise of world power.

Yet it would be a mistake to fault the Bush administration rather than a broader tendency to unilateralism. Multilateral rhetoric notwithstanding, the Clinton administration scapegoated the UN for the Somalia debacle, never put its full weight behind the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), launched a tardy campaign for the ratification of the CWC and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and presented the statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to the Senate for signature in the dying days of the administration. While Clinton launched missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998 without even the pretence of going through the UN, Bush at least tried to rally the UN to the cause of ousting Saddam Hussein and went his own way only when rebuffed. It would be short-sighted, therefore, to discount the degree of continuity into the post-Bush administration.

This does not diminish the elements of discontinuity which will need to be reversed in order to restore US moral authority. The free world recognised that the long peace during the Cold War had been preserved by the perseverance and stability of US power married to a moral vision. The world was duly grateful and in return held fast to the belief that American power was both necessary and right, that is, legitimate. The Bush administration produced a “startling loss of legitimacy” whose combined effect has been to strike the world with terror: the world “now sees the United States increasingly as an outlier – invoking international law when convenient, and ignoring it when not; using international institutions when they work to its advantage, and disdaining them when they pose obstacles to U.S. designs.”<sup>10</sup>

The strategic disconnect between the distribution of military, political and economic power in the real world, and the dis-

tribution of decision-making authority in the artificially constructed world of intergovernmental organisations, weakens the system of global governance that rests simultaneously on UN authority and US power. The practical way to resolve the dilemma will be for Washington to accept restraint on the international use of force other than in defence against armed attack and for the United Nations to refrain from courses of action inimical to vital US interests. This is less difficult than it might seem at first glance, and has been achieved for most of the UN history. “It is part of the pathology of U.S. power today that the evident need for a constitutional check on the world’s most powerful state – a constraint the United States would welcome if it were true to its political heritage – is now seen to stem from spiteful anti-Americanism.”<sup>11</sup> The Iraq crisis highlighted the urgent need for a new institutional framework and vision that can marry prudent anticipatory self-defence against imminent threats to the centuries-old dream of a world where force is put to the service of law that protects the innocent without shielding the criminals.

## Peace Operations

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is the proper locus of authorising and legitimising the creation, deployment and use of military force under international auspices. The major powers were given permanent membership of the UNSC and the veto in recognition of their special role and responsibility in underwriting world order and collective security. When collective security proved unattainable and peacekeeping emerged as a substitute technique for keeping the major powers out of competitive involvement in armed conflicts, direct military involvement by the five permanent members (P5) of the UNSC was not welcome. But they still had to consent to the creation, deployment and financing of the UN peacekeeping missions. When the nature of the types of crises into which UN peace operations were deployed changed after the Cold War, the blue berets were often confronted with the challenge of military enforcement. Yet the UNSC is singularly ill-suited to being the proper locus of the command and control of fighting forces.

Operation Desert Storm (1990–91) generated unwarranted and unsustainable optimism about the centrality of the UN in the new world order and of the US in the UN scheme of things. This was ephemeral because it was based on a unique confluence of circumstances that had produced a fortuitous conjunction of US national and international interests. President George H. W. Bush left office on a cautiously optimistic note with regard to US-UN relations in international peace operations. The Clinton administration came in with an initial blush of enthusiasm that faded as the reality of peace missions in the complex environment of civil wars put paid to naiveté and enthusiasm for ever-enlarging US involvement in ever-expanding UN missions. The UN remains a lightning rod for many American concerns about distracting entanglement of American forces overseas.<sup>12</sup>

9 Edward C. Luck, “Another Reluctant Belligerent: The United Nations and the War on Terrorism,” in Richard M. Price and Mark W. Zacher, eds., *The United Nations and Global Security* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 105.

10 Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, “The Sources of American Legitimacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, 83:6 (November/December 2004), pp. 23, 24 and 32.

11 Ibid., p. 26.

12 Sarah B. Sewell, “Multilateral Peace Operations,” in Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman, eds., *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p. 209.



Nevertheless, multilateralism remains important to US foreign policy and the US remains the pivot of multilateral action in the maintenance of international peace and security. What did change over the course of the 1990s was the centrality of the UN in the US scheme of multilateralism. Learning from experience in a world no longer riven by the Cold War blocs yet facing messy internal conflicts, Washington progressively divided its multilateral impulse between the UN as the global mobilising and legitimising organisation, and NATO as the strategic enforcement arm for peace operations in Europe. Outside Europe, Washington progressively retrenched from direct participation but not necessarily all forms of involvement in UN peacekeeping. By the end of the century, the peacekeeping effort was channelled through the UN, the security response through NATO or coalitions of the willing, and diplomatic efforts through the European Union or other regional organisations.

Peace operations enlarge the spectrum of capabilities available to the international community to respond to threats of chaos in the periphery. But the UN does not have its own military and police forces and would be hard pressed to achieve anything of note without active US engagement, let alone against its vital interests and determined opposition. Conversely, UN operations permit Washington to choose its preferred mode of articulation between international/UN responses and US engagement on a spectrum of the level and geographical theatre of international involvement. Participation in them symbolises solidarity and encapsulates shared responsibility.<sup>13</sup> The Brahimi Report reinforced the importance of the formula of a UN-authorised force under the active leadership of a significant military power.<sup>14</sup> While the UN can validate the legitimacy of a peace support operation, it does not have its own troops and police forces. Successful operations that need robust mandates might still have to depend on coalitions of the able, willing and duly authorised.

For decades, UN peace operations have served US security interests in the Middle East, Southern Africa, Central America, Southeast Asia and Haiti. US disengagement from UN peacekeeping has had a spillover effect in eroding partially the legitimacy of UN operations, and therefore the effectiveness of the UN as the primary manager of international security. In turn this has reduced US leverage in spreading the burden of providing international security and lessening the demands and expectations on the US to take up the slack. The level of informed interest about the UN is so low in the American body politic that any administration will always be able to distance itself from spectacular failures of UN peacekeeping. At the same time, scapegoating the UN has produced a backlash among other nations and so reduced the US ability to use the UN in pursuit of US goals.

US power, wealth and politics are too deeply intertwined with the cross-currents of international affairs for disengagement to be a credible or sustainable policy posture for the world's only superpower. Unilateralism cannot be the strategy of choice either. Because peacekeeping is likely to remain the instrument of choice by the UN for engaging with the characteristic types of conflicts in the contemporary world, the US approach to peace operations will continue to define the nature of the US engagement with the UN. Because the US will remain the main financial underwriter of the costs of UN peacekeeping, it will continue to exercise unmatched influence on the establishment, mandate, nature, size, and termination of UN peace operations.

UN peace operations are only one of many foreign policy tools available to the US, others being multilateral action through standing alliances like NATO, or an ad hoc multinational coalition as in the Gulf War, or even unilateral US action if truly vital interests are involved. In the case of non-UN operations, the US would prefer to obtain the legitimating approbation of the United Nations if possible, in the form of enabling UNSC resolutions authorising the operations. But Washington will not accept a prior UNSC resolution as a mandatory requirement. The problematic element in this comes from the equally compelling US interest in promoting the norm of the UN being the only collective legitimator of international military action for everyone else. Washington thus faces an unresolved and irreconcilable dilemma between instilling the principle of multilateralism as the world order norm and exempting itself from the same principle because of the sustaining and enduring belief in exceptionalism, in its identity as the virtuous power. The bar is not very high for the new administration to improve upon the record of George W. Bush in efforts to resolve this dilemma.

## Nuclear Weapons

Kofi Annan noted in 2005 that the NPT “faces a crisis of confidence and compliance born of a growing strain on verification and enforcement.”<sup>15</sup> The nuclear arms control regime centered on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) is under challenge on many fronts. In some quarters of the international community of states and civil society actors, there is exasperation at the failure of an accelerated timetable of nuclear disarmament by the five NPT-licit nuclear powers (Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States: the N5). In Western circles, there are worries about some non-nuclear signatories cheating on their NPT obligations. The proposed India-US civil nuclear cooperation deal split analysts on whether it would mark an advance on or a setback to the nonproliferation agenda. Almost everyone is concerned about the potential of terrorists acquiring and using nuclear weapons and also about the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal amidst its political turmoil. The consequences of a nuclear war between the Cold War enemies would have been the more apocalyptic; the danger of a nuclear war between the newer nuclear states, or the use of nuclear weapons by terrorists, is the more plausible. Against

13 See Ramesh Thakur, “UN Peace Operations and U.S. Unilateralism and Multilateralism,” in David Malone and Yuen Foong Khong, eds., *Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Perspectives* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003), pp. 153–79.

14 *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (A/55/305-S/2000/809), 21 August 2000. For an early assessment, see David M. Malone and Ramesh Thakur, “UN Peacekeeping: Lessons Learned?” *Global Governance* 7:1 (January–March 2001), pp. 11–17.

15 Kofi A. Annan, *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*. Report of the Secretary-General (New York: United Nations, document A/59/2005, 21 March 2005), para. 97.

this backdrop, there was fresh interest in the longstanding goal of nuclear abolition by a surprising coalition of influential heavyweights from the American strategic community.<sup>16</sup>

The hard core of the negotiations first to freeze and then to dismantle nuclear stockpiles and abolish nuclear weapons capability, for example through a nuclear weapons convention, and to place the nuclear fuel cycle under international control, for example that of the IAEA in a 21st-century version of President Dwight Eisenhower's 1953 Atoms for Peace plan, will be conducted among the nine nuclear powers (NS plus India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan) directly. But they can draw on the moral authority of the international community as expressed in numerous UN resolutions during the negotiations; they will want to have any final deal endorsed by the United Nations; and the depositary, monitoring and enforcement clauses will entail substantial roles for the international organisation as well. US leadership is critical for the entire cycle of initiating, concluding and formally linking the final agreement to the UN system. The first steps must include further degrees of separation between the possession and launch of nuclear weapons by modifying the doctrines and practices of deployment; a moratorium and then a treaty-based ban on the production of fissile material; the ratification and entry into force of the CTBT; and drastic reductions in the US-Russian stockpiles.

## Climate Change

The issue on which the United States and the United Nations will have to work the most cooperatively is the threat of global warming which is already alarmingly close to the tipping point. The science of climate change has accumulated over many decades to become compelling.<sup>17</sup> The politics has changed with a startling suddenness so that previously sceptical leaders are scrambling to catch up with the firming convictions of their electorates that serious action is urgently needed. Global climate change poses significant risks to the planet and all nations have an important stake in addressing this new threat that is already sufficient to make collective action both necessary and urgent.

The responsibility for having created the problem through carbon-intensive growth and profligate consumption patterns, and therefore for the solutions, rests largely with the rich countries who have far deeper carbon footprints and also the financial and technological capabilities to undertake the necessary action. The three worst GHG emitters per capita are the US, Canada and Australia. If the whole world adopted US and Canadian levels of production, consumption and waste generation per person, we would need nine planets Earth to sustain them. Yet while the responsibility for causing climate change rests largely with the rich countries, it is the poor people who will be the hardest hit by worsening drought, weather volatility and extremes, food and water shortages, and a rising sea level.

16 George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, "Toward a Nuclear-Free World," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 January 2008.

17 See *Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report of the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC* (Geneva: IPCC, 2007), p. 1.

Adaptive capacity "is intimately connected to social and economic development" and "unevenly distributed across and within societies."<sup>18</sup> Even with stringent mitigation, warming will continue at least until 2050. Adaptation is necessary to cope with the implications of this and as insurance against the threat of insufficiently stringent mitigation. Here again, differential capacity between the rich and poor countries carries the risk of "drifting into a world of adaptation apartheid."<sup>19</sup>

Because current levels of affluence in industrial countries have been directly associated with cumulative carbon emissions, they must provide financial and technical support to developing countries for them to achieve sustainable economic growth and social equity. For the past two decades, "sustainable development" has been subverted into sustainable consumption under the neoliberal consensus. It is neither fair nor realistic to expect developing countries, including powerful and populous countries like Brazil, China and India, to forego tolerable consumption levels for their people in order to subsidise continued conspicuous consumption by the advanced countries.

As with nuclear weapons, of which the US has the most lethal stockpile, the United States is the largest producer of greenhouse gases and the only country with the capacity to lead the concerted global effort to take effective action. The new president will need to devote sustained attention, expend political capital and invest diplomatic energy on this mega-threat. Like the United Nations itself, the Kyoto Protocol, flawed as it is, is the only game in town on curbing greenhouse gas emissions. It expires in 2012, giving Washington a very short window of opportunity in which to conclude a new deal by example and through UN-centred negotiation. Whoever the new president, a refusal to make use of Al Gore's commitment, expertise and global credibility will amount to criminal folly.

## Conclusion

American policy-makers cannot construct a world in which all others have to obey universal norms and rules, but Washington can opt out whenever, as often, and for as long as it likes on global norms with respect to nuclear tests, landmines, international criminal prosecution, and climate change regimes – all of which were negotiated in and reflect the post-Cold War world. The United Nations remains an unsubstitutable forum and an indispensable font of authority for reducing the transaction costs of US diplomatic engagement with the rest of the world.

While Nye notes the paradox that even the most supremely powerful country cannot achieve its goals acting alone,<sup>20</sup> Sorensen poses a pertinent question:

... what is more unrealistic than to believe that this country can unilaterally decide the fate of others, without a decent respect for the opinions of mankind, or for the judgment of world institutions and our traditional allies? Only the arro-

18 Ibid., p. 14.

19 Desmond Tutu, quoted in UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008 – *Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), p. 13.

20 Joseph E. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

gance of power and the ignorance of history could lead any American to believe that our vast military superiority confers upon us moral superiority as well.<sup>21</sup>

For example, in relation to the “war on terror,” of the three presidential candidates, only Obama clearly drew the link between the invasion of Iraq and the rise in international terrorism targeting the West. By contrast, efforts channelled through the UN have been revolutionary and surprisingly successful.<sup>22</sup> Security Council Resolution 1368 (12 September 2001) was the first to incorporate acts against terrorism into the right of self-defence. Resolution 1373 (28 September 2001) imposed significant requirements on member states within their domestic jurisdictions and expanded the Council’s oversight role in relation to them. Its legislative and reporting requirements imposed uniform obligations on all countries to end any form of support for terrorism and established the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) to monitor implementation and increase state capacity to combat terrorism. The scope of Resolution 1373 is quite broad, encompassing domestic legislation, national executive machinery and international cooperation. On 13 April 2005, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the “International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.”

An unheralded success, the CTC, assisted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) established by Security Council Resolution 1535 (2004), calls on the advice of experts in the fields of legislative drafting; financial, customs, immigration and extradition law and practice; police and law enforcement; and illegal arms trafficking. Some states will lack the capacity to implement the domestic requirements imposed by UN resolutions, others will want in inclination. Both will be the very states that attract the interest of terrorist cells. The CTC also helps with the capacity building of member states through dissemination of best practices, provision of technical, financial, regulatory and legislative expertise, and facilitating cooperation between national, regional and international organisations. But it does not have the resources and capacity to monitor state compliance with Council imposed obligations: Washington can help in this.

UN efforts are less controversial also because the organisation has not retreated from its commitment from human rights norms. Resolution 1456 (20 January 2003) obligates states to ensure that counter-terrorism measures comply with international human rights, refugees and international humanitarian law obligations.

How will the different candidates respond to this agenda? There are two difficulties in answering the question with any degree of confidence. First, what they say and write before and during the campaign is aimed at winning the party nomination and then the general election. For all the precision and details demanded by voters as the basis of making their choice, no one can be surprised that actual policies vary from campaign promises. Second, no one can predict the exact challenges and

crises that will confront the new president. Who would have been brave enough to forecast the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent Iraq war as the defining foreign policy legacy of the Bush administration?

At the time of writing, there were three viable presidential candidates. Of them, Barack Obama is the most likely to win instant international attention, admiration and respect for the United States. His persona was formed in part in Indonesia, where he learnt the triple lesson of the powerlessness and helplessness of citizens in developing countries, the status of Americans abroad, and the extent to which others look to America to help them overcome their own political and economic problems. According to him, the US mission “is to provide global leadership grounded in the understanding that the world shares a common security and a common humanity.”<sup>23</sup> He is the most likely to engage with the rest of the world on climate change, calling on Al Gore’s assistance, and by instinct should be the most responsive to providing US logistical and political support for UN peace operations in Africa. He is also the only one to have shown interest in pursuing the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world while downgrading its role in the interim and ratifying the CTBT. As for the use of force, in general, he has been the most circumspect of the three candidates, for example with respect to Iraq and Iran. He has shown the clearest understanding of the broader damage done to US interests and leadership by the distraction in Iraq and promised to bring it to “a responsible end.”<sup>24</sup> Yet he also famously said that he would not hesitate to take military action inside Pakistan even without the host government’s permission if there was actionable intelligence to indicate the presence of high value terrorist leaders there. Overall, nonetheless, he is likely to strive to “harness American power to reinvigorate American diplomacy.”<sup>25</sup> His understanding of the reforms needed in the UN system are not substantially different from the Bush administration’s.<sup>26</sup>

Hillary Clinton is the most difficult to read because of her known propensity to tailor her promises to the political exigencies of the moment, the unknown variable of her husband’s influence as a former president First Mate, etc. Certainly during the campaign she seemed obsessed with the Commander-in-Chief role of the president, went out of her way to present a persona of unrelenting toughness,<sup>27</sup> and threatened to “obliterate” Iran if it dared to attack Israel with nuclear weapons.<sup>28</sup> In other respects as well, she gave firm signals of an America-first policy stance. She declares that although the US cannot solve the climate crisis alone, “the rest of the world cannot solve it without us.”<sup>29</sup> Given the distant relations with Gore, his role on climate change is likely to be ornamental rather than substantial. Despite her declaration that “international institutions are tools rather than traps,”<sup>30</sup> US participation in UN peace ope-

23 Barack Obama, “Renewing American Leadership,” *Foreign Affairs* 86:4 (July/August 2007), p. 4.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p. 6.

26 See *ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

27 See, for example, Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Security and Opportunity for the Twenty-first Century,” *Foreign Affairs* 86:6 (November/December 2007), pp. 2–18.

28 Ewen MacAskill, “‘Obliteration’ threat to Iran in case of nuclear attack,” *Guardian*, 23 April 2008.

29 Clinton, “Security and Opportunity for the Twenty-first Century,” p. 16.

30 Ibid., p. 6.

21 Theodore C. Sorensen, “JFK’s Strategy of Peace,” *World Policy Journal* 20:3 (Fall 2003), p. 4.

22 See Jane Boulden and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., *Terrorism and the UN: Before and After September 11* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).



rations is unlikely to be any less problematical than under Bill Clinton which witnessed the failures, disasters and horrors of Somalia, Srebrenica and Rwanda. And she is likely to emphasise nuclear nonproliferation and downplay disarmament.

John McCain, finally, is the only one of the three to know firsthand what war means. The deliberate misrepresentation of his 100-years in Iraq comment notwithstanding, therefore, he could be more cautious than Clinton but because of his party less restrained than Obama in defending US interests with force. He has based his campaign on winning the war in Iraq and not losing focus from the war on terrorism. He seems more interested in cooperating with a coalition or league of democracies than giving priority to the United Nations.<sup>31</sup> Based on that, like Bush he would most likely differentiate between US-friendly and US-hostile regimes possessing or pursuing nuclear weapons, enlisting the former as strategic partners and allies

31 See John McCain, "An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom," *Foreign Affairs* 86:6 (November/December 2007), pp. 19-34.

while sanctioning the latter as threats to world peace. But he could also offer Reaganesque surprises if the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free world propounded by four former republican heavyweights grabs his attention. But neither by personal instinct nor by party leanings is McCain likely to pursue an activist agenda with respect to UN peace operations and climate change. Moreover, as he is the least likely of the three to serve for a second term (based simply on age), he may have the least longer term impact.

Regardless of who becomes president, to regain its former status as a good international citizen, the US should reinvest diplomatic assets in the United Nations, reassert its former role as the champion-in-chief of the global human rights norm, "re-sign" and ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC that was "unsigned" by Bush in 2002, reaffirm firm adherence to the Geneva and UN torture conventions, ratify the CTBT, and assume the leadership role in negotiating a post-Kyoto climate deal.

# Die Strategien der Administrationen Bill Clinton und George W. Bush gegenüber dem Iran im Vergleich

Bernd W. Kubbig und Sven-Eric Fikenscher\*

**Abstract:** This article examines the policies of the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. It analyses continuity and change and terms of both the "Grand Strategy" and operational US policy with its objectives and preferred instruments. Since 2005, a significant feature of the second term of the Bush administration has been the competing policies of the neoconservatives and the conservative realists. This contribution concludes that the latter group has prevailed so far mainly due to the catastrophic situation in Iran's neighbour Iraq. From today's perspective it seems that during the remaining months of the current US government, neither a "regime change" nor a military option in the form of a bombardment of Iranian nuclear facilities is realistic (both objectives have been favoured by "Neocons"). Nevertheless, the conservative realists led by Condoleezza Rice, who have increasingly supported a policy of containment, reject the option of selective and unconditional engagement with Tehran via direct diplomacy – an approach which had been favoured by the outgoing Clinton administration.

**Keywords:** Amerikanische Außenpolitik, Islamische Republik Iran, Sanktionen, Nichtverbreitung, Eindämmungsstrategie, „regime change“, Neokonservative, Clinton-Administration, George W. Bush-Administration

## 1 Kontinuität und Neuerungen in der amerikanischen Iran-Politik

Politische Stabilität, gesicherter Zugang zum Öl sowie der verbrieft Schutz Israels und der arabischen Verbündeten – diese Trias umfasst die grundlegenden Interessen und Ziele, die die Vereinigten Staaten bereits während des Ost-

West-Konflikts kontinuierlich in der Konfliktregion Naher und Mittlerer Osten/Golf<sup>1</sup> verfolgt haben. Diese Interessen und Ziele stehen für Washington unter der übergeordneten Leitlinie, mit allen Mitteln zu verhindern, dass der Golf unter die Kontrolle rivalisierender Mächte fällt.<sup>2</sup> Die USA setzten dabei jahrzehntelang auf realpolitische Elemente, also primär auf eine Eindämmungspolitik gegenüber ihren Gegnern. Im Rahmen dieser

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1 Wir meinen in der Regel die gesamte Region, wenn wir im Folgenden aus sprachlichen Gründen oft vom Nahen bzw. vom Mittleren Osten sprechen.

2 Siehe beispielhaft: A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, Washington, D.C. 1995, 30. – Grundlegend für Viele: Steven L. Spiegel, The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict. Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan, Chicago, IL/London 1985; William B. Quandt, Peace Process. American Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967, Washington D.C. u.a. 1993; David W. Lesch (Hrsg.), The Middle East and the United States. A Historical and Political Reassessment, Boulder, CO/Oxford 1996.