

**PRAGMATIC MULTILATERALISM:
STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT IN AN AGE OF INTERDEPENDENCE**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: PRAGMATIC MULTILATERALISM

The fall, 2002 debate on intervention in Iraq brought into sharp focus arguments over the role of multilateral institutions and coalitions in U.S. foreign policy.

Yet the controversy over whether to “go it alone” or “with others” in Iraq and other situations obscures an underlying consensus that the U.S. must rely on an array of approaches from committed international cooperation to single-handed U.S. leadership. This report contends that only by adopting a more consistent approach toward multilateral engagement can the U.S. secure the advantages of cooperation and also position itself for successful unilateral action when necessary. It urges policymakers from across the political spectrum to coalesce behind a pragmatic multilateralism designed to take advantage of international organizations to further American interests. The question is not *whether* the United States should practice multilateralism, but *when* and *how*.

Although the U.S. succeeded in forging a broad coalition after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, this does not mean the world will inevitably rally around us when it matters. The lesson of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks is that in a world of unpredictable threats, the U.S. must hone its ability to use a broad array of multilateral tools, including both formal structures like the UN and informal, ad hoc coalitions.

The U.S.’s influence in international forums has been undercut by rhetoric and actions that have antagonized its partners and offered fodder to its critics. By failing to adopt a consistent approach to multilateral engagement, the U.S. has opened itself up to charges of opportunism and unwillingness to accept the responsibilities of the international order. By arousing mistrust among other countries that then seek to impose checks on American power, this approach ultimately weakens U.S. influence in the global arena. Through a concerted effort to strengthen the U.S.’s approach to multilateral engagement, the U.S. can turn around skeptics and build a reservoir of goodwill that will make it easier for others to accept unpopular American positions.

In existing institutions like the UN, the United States should learn to use its unmatched leverage and its diplomatic apparatus to cultivate, steer, and persuade

rather than criticize and dominate. It must craft merit-based arguments to win over key countries. Image matters: the U.S. must pay attention to how it is perceived, treading carefully, reassuring liberally, and providing material and moral support to other countries, especially poorer ones. Far-sighted strategies will allow it to shape the consensus in matters of importance before other actors harden their positions. By assembling broad support, the United States can almost invariably prevail on important issues in international forums. That success will enable it to progress from keeping international bodies in check to using them to promote American interests.

Along with the international bodies, ad hoc coalitions are being recognized by all sides as a vital tool for statecraft. To safeguard its ability to build and guide such coalitions, Washington should nurture key bilateral relationships, ensuring that no region of the world feels ignored. When practicable, it should back other countries in initiatives to achieve their priorities. When it concludes that multilateral approaches cannot work and it must act alone, it should take pains to explain its motives to others.

Multilateralism does not mean naive idealism. Approached correctly, it can be a hardheaded and realist policy that greatly expands America's influence over others, while making it easier for the U.S. to go alone when it has to.

It is the time for the United States to commit itself to vigorous multilateral cooperation through measures that include:

- Keeping the lead in the multilateral order and shape the agenda
- Cultivating key bilateral relationships above almost all else
- Recognizing the comparative merits of standing multilateral institutions and ad hoc coalitions and combine approaches where possible
- Proffering a convincing rationale for those occasions when we must act alone
- Paying attention to how other countries perceive America, and work to improve negative impressions
- Adopting a constructive approach to reforming multilateral institutions, avoiding formulaic measures and punitive overtones
- Working at taming the knee-jerk anti-Israel contingent at the UN
- Making Congress a prime partner in multilateral diplomacy
- Ensuring structural and institutional support inside the government for pragmatic multilateralism
- Expanding outreach to the public, particularly to opinion-makers and young Americans, educating them on the necessity and the benefits of multilateralism

The new multilateralism outlined in the Report will significantly strengthen the United States' influence throughout the world while boosting its ability to fend off threats and advance its interests.

A VIEW FROM THE NEXT GENERATION

This Report is the product of a Council on Foreign Relations Roundtable first convened by a group of Term Members in late-2001. The Roundtable was moderated by Suzanne Nossel and was convened at the suggestion of Council President Leslie Gelb. Participants included Republicans, Democrats, and independents drawn from fields including diplomacy, journalism, law, finance, business, politics, academia, and non-profit management, all of whom were based in New York.

The views expressed in this Report are those of the members of the Roundtable on Multilateralism and United States Foreign Policy. These perspectives should not be attributed to the Council on Foreign Relations as an organization or to the Term Membership as a whole.

INTRODUCTION: A STERILE DEBATE, A FALSE DICHOTOMY

For some observers, the period since September 11, 2001 has reinforced a sense that the United States must be fully self-reliant in preserving its security and prepared to act unilaterally in dealing with threats from an increasingly dangerous world. For others, the emergence of a large-scale terrorist threat made it clear that multilateral cooperation is the only way to grapple with transnational challenges and to advance U.S. interests in a global age.¹

The Report argues that those two alternatives—vigorous unilateral action and committed multilateral cooperation—represent a false dichotomy. The United States has always relied and will continue to rely on a variety of strategies—unilateral, multilateral, and bilateral—to achieve its objectives. American foreign policy must seek to ensure the maximum effectiveness of each of these approaches, using each one strategically to reinforce the others, and integrating them where necessary.

It is true, as proponents of multilateral cooperation contend, that forces of globalization are fostering interdependency and creating problems that defy resolution by a single state, even the world's lone superpower. Many foreign policy challenges—refugee flows, global warming, epidemics, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, narcotics trafficking, and crime—are inherently global, requiring the United States to coordinate with international institutions and partnerships.² Multilateral cooperation has fought disease, curbed ethnic conflict, and promoted global trade. Few unilateralists would argue that the United States should single-handedly try to stem the flow of funds or arms to global terror networks like Al Qaeda rather than enlisting multilateral organs equipped to help do the job.

¹ For arguments in favor of multilateral cooperation following the attacks of September 11, 2001, see E.J. Dionne, Jr., "Multilateralism and the Wimp Factor," *The Washington Post*, December 18, 2001, p. A27; Joseph Nye, "The New Rome Meets the New Barbarians – America's Power," *The Economist*, March 23, 2002; and Shibley Telhami, "Standing Alone with Our Views on Terrorism," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 2002. For unilateralist views, see Charles Krauthammer, "Unilateral? Yes, Indeed," *The Washington Post*, December 14, 2001, and Claude Smadja, "The Age of Gulliver," *Newsweek*, February 18, 2002, p. 16.

But it is also true, as those skeptical about multilateralism point out, that not all foreign policy challenges are best addressed through collective action or multilateral institutions.³ Even the staunchest multilateralists concede that when it comes to direct threats to U.S. national security, unilateral action cannot be ruled out. In crisis situations where other nations refuse to act, broad domestic support can be rallied in favor of U.S. leadership even when it lacks a multilateral imprimatur. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the U.S. blockade enjoyed domestic support even though it violated the letter of the UN Charter. Likewise, in 1999 most multilateralists agreed that the United States was right to spearhead intervention in Kosovo even without Security Council approval. Implicitly if not explicitly, policymakers agree that today's challenges demand a mix of multilateral and unilateral approaches.

Unfortunately, there is no hard and fast rule about when America should act alone and when it should act in concert with others. Inevitably the decision hinges on a judgment about U.S. interests in a particular context. Scholars and diplomats have recently attempted to delineate broad criteria for determining when it makes sense to lean in one direction or the other.⁴ These general guidelines may aid decision-makers, but every policy challenge is unique. Disagreements will still arise in borderline cases, where strong arguments can be made for either approach.

As important as whether and when the United States opts to use multilateral approaches is how it conducts itself multilaterally on occasions ranging from routine participation in international organizations to heroic efforts to mobilize ad hoc coalitions. The Report is concerned not with

2 For a useful overview, see P. J. Simmons and Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, eds., *Managing Global Issues: Lessons Learned* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001).

3 Robert B. Zoellick, "A Republican Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79, no.1 (January/February 2000), p. 63.

4 A number of foreign policy analysts, both Democrat and Republican, have proposed criteria for choosing between unilateral and multilateral action. Joseph Nye suggests "seven tests," including (1) whether survival is at stake; (2) the likely effect on regional stability and peace; (3) whether it will help to create international public goods; (4) whether it is consistent with United States values; (5) whether the issue is intrinsically global; (6) whether it will assist burden-sharing; and (7) whether it will advance or decrease America's "soft power." Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 163, and Nye, "Seven Tests," *The National Interest*, no. 66 (Winter 2001/2002).

refining checklists for multilateral action but with maximizing the effectiveness of the U.S.' multilateral efforts once it decides to make them. The quality of American leadership and its ability to foster U.S. interests will depend less on formal criteria than on the effectiveness of U.S. diplomacy, sensitivity to how others perceive the United States, and skill in managing diverse domestic constituencies.

A SHORT, SOMETIMES PAINFUL HISTORY OF MULTILATERALISM

Since the end of the Cold War, debate has raged over whether the United States should “go it alone” or “with others.”⁵ Echoing disputes dating back to the early Republic, the controversy is fueled by questions about how broadly the United States should define the national interest; whether it should be prepared to adapt its objectives to accommodate the needs of allies; whether U.S. security ultimately rests on collective arrangements or unilateral power; and whether the advantages of international cooperation outweigh its pitfalls.⁶ Although the United States has enjoyed lone superpower status for more than a decade, its relationship to multilateral endeavors during the period has been frustrating at best. A quick look back through the history suggests some important lessons for the future.

The first post-Cold War president, George H. W. Bush, saw multilateral institutions as the cornerstone of a hoped-for “New World Order” based on international law, collective security, and free economic exchange.⁷ In 1990-91, he sought and received UN authorization for the creation of a broad multinational coalition to defend Saudi Arabia and dislodge Iraqi forces from Kuwait, relying on the UN to “provide a cloak of acceptability to our efforts and mobilize world opinion behind the principles we

5 (Winter, 1996-1997), pp. 5-53. Richard N. Gardner, “The Comeback of Liberal Internationalism,” *Washington Quarterly* vol. 13, no. 3 (Summer 1990), pp. 23-39.

6 Edward Luck probes the twentieth-century debate over United States global engagement in *Mixed Messages: The United States and International Organization 1919-1999* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1999).

7 Stanley R. Sloan, “The United States Role in a New World Order: Prospects for George Bush’s Global Vision” (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, March 28, 1991).

wished to protect.”⁸ Bush’s successor, Bill Clinton, was an even more ardent proponent of multilateralism, arguing that international institutions and partnerships could spread the burden of global leadership, gain legitimacy for U.S. objectives, and permit the United States to attain goals it could not reach otherwise.

But the pro-multilateral rhetoric of the early 1990s hid ambivalence. Multilateral approaches gave the United States greater bang for its buck in restoring peace and aiding reconstruction in war-torn countries including Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mozambique. Multilateral institutions including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and UN specialized agencies leveraged modest U.S. financial contributions to tackle problems ranging from HIV/AIDS to human rights violations to global intellectual property protection.

Critics on Capitol Hill, however, felt the United States was shouldering a disproportionate share of the financial and political costs of international cooperation. Multilateralism, they said, constrained policy options, entangled the country in foreign adventures, and risked infringing on U.S. sovereignty. Moreover, far from fostering decisive action, it led to lowest-common-denominator decision-making and paralysis.

Angry that the United States was assessed for more than 25 percent of the budget of what some saw as a bloated UN, U.S. lawmakers refused to pay American dues to the world body. Expensive and at times humiliating UN-backed peacekeeping forays into Bosnia and Somalia brought many people’s misgivings about the world body to a head.⁹ While some pointed out that these missions failed because they were poorly conceived and inadequately supported by the UN’s membership, others blamed the organization itself. Reflexive anti-Israel policies in the General Assembly, confrontations between developing- and developed-world caucuses, and revelations of corruption in the Secretariat created further distrust. The success stories of some UN programs and

⁸ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 491.

⁹ Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Assertive Multilateralism and Post-Cold War United States Foreign Policy-Making,” in James M. Scott, ed., *After the End: Making Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

of peacekeeping operations in southern Africa and Central America were eclipsed by high-profile failures.

The result was a pattern of selective U.S. support for multilateral engagement.¹⁰ While the United States helped create and expand certain organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—its support was conditioned on substantial U.S. control over decision-making. The United States opted out of certain major international agreements supported by most of its partners, such as the Land Mines Convention, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the Kyoto Protocol on global warming. Especially after the 1994 Republican Contract with America, U.S. support for UN peacekeeping efforts declined significantly, leading to a sharp, worldwide drop in such UN undertakings by the late 1990s. Where the United States found itself outnumbered or isolated, it sometimes resorted to unilateral measures—such as the Helms-Burton Act imposing extraterritorial economic sanctions on foreign countries doing business with Cuba—inconsistent with both the letter and the spirit of voluntarily assumed multilateral obligations. By the late 1990s, proponents of multilateralism felt besieged by UN-bashers. Defenders argued that if multilateral organs failed to live up to their potential, the organizations' members – including not least the U.S. – bore much of the blame. On the other side, conservatives sought to rally the public behind a view that of UN and similar organizations as dangerous to America.¹¹ Speaking in the UN Security Council Chamber in January 2000 Senator Jesse Helms intoned: “A United Nations that seeks to impose its presumed authority on the American people without their consent begs for confrontation and . . . eventual withdrawal.”¹²

Within multilateral settings, the U.S. was increasingly viewed as an aloof superpower with limited patience for the duties of international citizenship. In one bright spot, shortly before Clinton left office, the U.S. closed a deal with the UN membership to settle the majority of U.S. back dues in

¹⁰For an overview, see Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman, *Multilateralism and United States Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).

exchange for an agreement negotiated to lower future American contributions to the organization. While arguably a sign of rapprochement, some interpreted the pact as an instance of America bullying the international community.

During its first seven months in office in 2001, the administration of George W. Bush left many with the impression that it regarded alliances, multilateral treaties, and international organizations as more trouble than they were worth. Critics listed the Administration's decisions to remain on the sidelines as 178 other nations agreed to implement the 1997 Kyoto treaty on global warming; proceed with National Missile Defense over the objections of "strategic partners"; express skepticism about U.S. involvement in UN peacekeeping and "nation-building" exercises; and oppose the creation of an International Criminal Court as signs of a policy shift away from multilateral participation.¹³ In May 2001, the United States was voted off the UN's Human Rights Committee for the first time. A few months later, the American delegation withdrew in protest from the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, after the conference rejected U.S. demands to moderate its language on Israel. On September 11 the post of U.S. ambassador to the UN had been downgraded from Cabinet rank and stood vacant.

The initial U.S. response to the 9/11 crisis seemed to suggest a tectonic shift in foreign policy. Rather than vowing to pursue its terrorist enemies independently, the administration immediately set out to create the broadest possible international coalition. In his first full-length address to the nation after the attacks, President Bush declared, "This is not just America's fight, this is the world's fight." To wage it, the United States

11 Peter Spiro, "The New Sovereignists," *Foreign Affairs* 79, 6 (November/December 2000).

12 Barbara Crossette, "Helms, in Visit to UN, Offers Harsh Message," *New York Times*, January 21, 2000.

13 Stewart Patrick, "Don't Fence Me In: The Perils of Going It Alone," *World Policy Journal* (Fall 2001), pp. 2-14.

would ask the help of police forces, intelligence services, and banking systems around the world.

The United States quickly cut deals to get key countries on board, in some cases setting aside long-held policies to do so. Congress confirmed a UN ambassador posthaste and passed legislation that would pay the country's outstanding dues. The United States worked hard in the UN Security Council to shape resolutions that provided cover for nations supporting the U.S. antiterrorist efforts and called upon Member States to clamp down on terrorism within their borders. Washington also took assertive steps in the area of foreign economic aid, increasing overseas development assistance and pushing to replace loan programs with outright grants to many of the world's poorest countries. These dramatic commitments led one commentator to declare, "We are all multilateralists now."¹⁴

By spring 2002, however, old patterns had resurfaced. The administration had renounced the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) treaty unilaterally, reasserted its opposition to strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention, imposed unilateral tariffs on steel imports in a move Europe charged violated WTO rules, avowed its readiness to take the war on terrorism into its own hands on foreign soil, and made clear its readiness to single-handedly topple Saddam Hussein by force.¹⁵ Christopher Patten, European commissioner for external affairs, worried that the Bush administration was moving into "unilateralist overdrive" — a theme echoed by the foreign ministers of France and Germany. The latter warned the United States to "consult" its allies rather than treating them as "satellites."¹⁶

LESSONS OF 9/11

Historians will judge whether a true policy shift occurred in the wake of 9/11. But with the near single-handed triumph of the United States and its Afghan allies over the Taliban in Afghanistan and the restoration of some sense of normality back home, it is worth asking what the recent events reveal about America's place in the world and its use of its power.

¹⁴ Lael Brainard, "Globalization in the Aftermath: Target, Casualty, and Callous Bystander?," The Brookings Institution, November 28, 2001.

¹⁵ The backing away from multilateralism is described in Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, "Unilateralism is Alive and Well in Washington," *International Herald Tribune*, December 21, 2001.

First, Americans were gratified by the speed with which the international community rallied around the United States after the September attacks. Instant and seemingly unqualified backing was offered by virtually the entire world, including frequent critics and sometime sparring partners like China, Russia, and the countries of the European Union. The United States received strong support in virtually every multilateral forum, including NATO, the Organization of American States, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Organization of Islamic Conferences.

The global solidarity was all the more striking because it came on the heels of what many viewed as a low point in multilateral relations, during which critics had accused the United States of snubbing the international community. One might be tempted to draw the lesson that the U.S. attitude toward multilateralism matters little when it comes to the country's ability to attract the support of others. Some could conclude that the United States, thanks to its unparalleled combination of military and economic power and its network of bilateral relationships, can anticipate overwhelming global support for foreign policy measures that it deems important, irrespective of how it treats the multilateral order.

But those conclusions could be wrong. Even as they mourned the deaths of innocents, certain journalists, pundits, politicians, and diplomats worldwide suggested that the attacks were in part retribution for U.S. foreign policy actions. Among a broader group of foreign commentators, there was a detectable undertone of grim satisfaction that the United States could no longer count itself singularly invulnerable.¹⁷ Other nations flocked to America's side not out of blind fealty but because they shared an interest in combating a threat—global terrorism—to which they too felt directly vulnerable.

For the majority of coalition members, national interest motivated participation as much as sympathy for or loyalty to the United States. For some countries, like Russia, the Philippines, or

¹⁶ Steven Erlanger, "German Joins Europe's Cry that the United States Won't Consult," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2002, A18.

¹⁷ See, for example, Pew Research Center Survey, "America Admired, Yet its New Vulnerability Seen as Good Thing, Say Opinion Leaders," December 19, 2001.

Indonesia, the U.S.-led campaign offered a chance to brand national and regional threats (and sometimes domestic political opponents) as “terrorists,” thus gaining international legitimacy for their own battles. For many countries, “joining” the fight posed minimal if any financial or political consequences and might even lead to a cash infusion to support antiterrorist efforts. For the few countries like Pakistan that would otherwise have faced a genuine dilemma, the decision to participate was shaped by powerful incentives and disincentives, such as the lifting of sanctions and the threat of U.S. military action. Furthermore, the imprimatur of UN resolutions blunted qualms that siding with the United States was siding against anything but an isolated, renegade band of terrorists.

The “coalition” was hardly seamless or unquestioning. Even before the campaign in Afghanistan was launched, coalition members publicly questioned the Bush administration’s intentions and motives. Although President Bush called on nations to take sides either with America or with the terrorists, in practice many nations supported U.S. efforts partially or with reservations. The administration acknowledged the uneven character of its coalition, commenting that the members determined their own levels of involvement and whether this participation would be made public.¹⁸

Because the United States and its Afghan allies did most of the work in the ousting of the Taliban, it would be easy to dismiss the coalition as a purely symbolic mechanism whose only function was to clear the way for America to do what it does best. In early 2002, senior administration officials seemed to embrace that view, referring in passing to the coalition but dwelling on the idea that only the United States had the requisite strength, will, and firepower to prevail in the next phase of the war on terrorism. As Vice President Dick Cheney argued, “The United States, and only the United States, can see this effort through to victory.”¹⁹

Although the events of September 11 led much of the world community temporarily to put aside misgivings about U.S. power, negative perceptions of the United States in the multilateral arena do have adverse consequences. Mistrust, ill will, and resentment of the United States—some an unavoidable consequence of its status as lone superpower, some a product of U.S. choices about how

18 Donald Rumsfeld, Defense Department Briefing, February 26, 2002; and Karen DeYoung, “Bush Urges Coalition to Fulfill Its ‘Duties,’” *Washington Post*, November 11, 2001.

19 “We are in a unique position because of our unique assets, because of the character of our people, the strength of our ideals, the might of our military and the enormous economy that supports it.”, February 15, 2002.

and when to wield its power—affect U.S. diplomacy. As those who represent the United States in international forums know, the country can be left out of the loop when it comes to important information because other countries feel distant from it; others sometimes oppose U.S. positions out of frustration, or for fear of being perceived as a U.S. lackey; foreign policy initiatives that are seen as “made in the United States” are sometimes doomed solely because of their origin, forcing the United States to work through others to get things done. The willingness of key countries and blocs to follow U.S. leadership on major issues hinges on the United States’ ability to demonstrate to them that its policies take due account of their national interests as well as its own.

In the face of U.S. reticence on multilateral cooperation, other countries have moved ahead without American participation. Rather than allowing Washington’s misgivings to hold up the creation of new multilateral institutions or the ratification of treaties, they have sometimes opted to leave the United States out. From the creation of the International Criminal Court to the ratification of the Kyoto Treaty, multilateral structures are progressing without full U.S. participation. That has implications for U.S. interests and the global leadership role to which America aspires. Even though the United States may not consider itself bound by such regimes, other countries will measure U.S. behavior against those standards. Failure to meet expectations could have substantial costs for U.S. leadership, legitimacy, and standing in the world. Before the pattern is firmly set, the United States should consider carefully how to play its hand.

Before September 11, there was a tendency to depict support for multilateralism as fueled by a naïve, Wilsonian idealism. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, an almost intuitive sense emerged among American policymakers that vigorous participation in multilateral institutions and frameworks could be justified on hardheaded, realist grounds. In the words of Richard N. Haass, the State Department’s director of policy planning, “Multilateralism is not an end in itself, but it is often

a necessary means to our ends. A commitment to multilateralism need not constrain our options—done right, it can expand them.”²⁰

Shortly after the attacks, the UN—with full U.S. support—assumed responsibility for an array of vital tasks that no other body could have performed. The UN approved resolutions that gave wavering countries the cover they needed to support the U.S. antiterrorist campaign; mandated that UN member countries clamp down on terrorism within their borders; provided food and medical and humanitarian aid to the Afghan people; and grappled with the refugee exodus from Afghanistan, helping to ensure the stability of regimes in neighboring countries. When the battle against Taliban control of Afghanistan neared an end, the UN took responsibility for helping create a postwar government and restore civilian rule. The nature of the UN’s role in the war on terrorism was practical testament to the necessity of coordinated transnational approaches in dealing with challenging conflicts.

Such developments, coupled with the emphasis that the Bush administration placed on coalition building before both domestic and international audiences, make it fair to hope that the old debate on multilateralism versus unilateralism will finally be put to rest. Both liberals and conservatives should be able to agree that multilateral approaches can be indispensable at critical moments, for both practical and symbolic reasons—always stipulating that such cooperation does not preclude independent action.

The broad consensus that the United States needs to be able to mobilize multilateral institutions and coalitions at key moments does not translate into a common view of how that awareness should shape policymaking. Despite President Bush’s avowed commitment to a coalition-based foreign policy, Administration officials have made statements and taken actions that have undercut the U.S.’s ability to build and sustain multilateral support. Only by adopting a more coherent and consistent approach to multilateral engagement can the Administration ensure that its many arms work together to promote common goals. The Report proposes specific steps and broader shifts in attitude and approach to ensure that the United States can mobilize and guide both standing multilateral institutions and ad hoc coalitions when it needs to.

²⁰ Richard N. Haass, “Multilateralism for a Global Era,” remarks delivered at Carnegie Endowment for International

MAXIMIZING THE VALUE OF STANDING MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

Agree to disagree about overarching value of multilateral institutions. Some Americans will continue to believe the United Nations and other world forums hold the key to realizing a more peaceful world based on fundamental democratic values. Other Americans will go on regarding those bodies as potentially dangerous forums where corrupt elements hostile to the United States join forces to encroach on U.S. sovereignty; unilateral action, they declare, is far more virtuous.

Fortunately, crafting an effective policy toward multilateral institutions does not depend on resolving that debate. In practice, both multilateralism and unilateralism have their place, depending on the circumstances. At either end of the spectrum, the answer to the question of whether a multilateral or a unilateral approach is warranted may be crystal clear. Where U.S. security is in immediate danger, even the UN Charter authorizes unilateral use of force. Where foreign landing rights are vital to the success of a military operation, no one would argue against seeking relevant nations' support. In the harder cases that fall somewhere in between, the key is focusing not on philosophical or ideological grounds for a particular strategy but on why each is practically suited for meeting a specific challenge. Proponents of both sides, however, should agree on the importance of ensuring that the tools for both multilateral and unilateral action remain as effective and accessible as possible.

If you're in it, use it. The United States is not going to withdraw from the UN or other multilateral institutions anytime soon. The UN is the biggest multinational tent the world has ever known, and it remains an irreplaceable resource in foreign policy. The more countries that stand outside collective efforts to face global problems like terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and drug trafficking, the more hiding places there are for rogue elements. Flaws notwithstanding, the UN enjoys near-universality in membership and a baseline legitimacy recognized throughout the world, qualities essential to tackling many of the world's most difficult challenges, and impossible to replicate on an ad hoc basis. While this idea may seem obvious, there have been long periods during recent decades when U.S. multilateral diplomacy has focused more on how to keep multilateral

bodies in check than on how to use them to advance American interests. As the UN exists, the United States should seek to take the greatest possible advantage of its potential.

Public complaints undercut the UN—talk privately. Policymakers should reject the longstanding argument that the only good UN is a weak UN, kept in its place by a U.S. government quick to point out the organization's shortcomings and to withdraw support to register its disapproval. Rather than complaining publicly about multilateral institutions, the United States should work with them on addressing American frustrations. Americans understand that the respect and legitimacy accorded their domestic institutions affect those institutions' ability to succeed. Neglected, marginalized, underfunded institutions, whether at the state, federal, or multilateral level, are less effective. By undermining the UN, the United States risks antagonizing its allies and thwarting its own objectives. If the UN is seen as weak and unimportant, it makes it easier for Iraq to defy the resolutions of the Security Council or for Libya and Syria to distort and politicize the agenda of the UN Human Rights Commission. An underfunded UN may be unable to act in places like Cambodia or East Timor where the United States wants a particular result but is unwilling to take the lead in achieving it. The administration seemed to realize this belatedly in March 2002, when a senior U.S. official called for the winding down of the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, faulting the forums for their wastefulness and inefficiency. These poorly timed criticisms came in the midst of the prosecution of Slobodan Milosevic in the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and were seen to lend credence to his charge that the Tribunal was illegitimate and did not warrant respect. The U.S. pulled back once it realized that its comments were playing into the hands of the former despot, but the damage to the stature of the Tribunal was done. A better approach would have avoided a public attack,

and instead moved forcefully within UN committees with oversight responsibility for the Tribunals to insist on better budget controls and greater productivity.

Take advantage of the United States' unmatched influence in multilateral settings. That publicly denigrating multilateral bodies can backfire does not mean that the United States should restrain itself in registering dissatisfaction or in working to influence the organizations internally. Although the United States sometimes feels isolated in international forums, it wields greater influence in the UN and other international institutions than any other country. Other members typically regard the United States as one of their most important bilateral relationships—if not *the* most important. Likewise, few would deny that the U.S. is indispensable in making international forums effective. America's unmatched influence in the world community as a whole and its leverage over individual countries affords it unparalleled ability to set agendas, determine the outcome of key decisions, and prevent harmful developments from occurring.

Taking the initiative on key policy interests will often win the day in multilateral forums. The United States' ambivalence toward multilateral initiatives has often translated into passivity on key issues, undercutting U.S. power. Rather than working to forestall destructive proposals or wasteful efforts, the United States has sometimes held back as initiatives it opposed ripened into outcomes it disapproved of. Americans later point to those results as grounds for mistrusting the institutions, which only antagonizes other members who watched the United States sit out the debate and provides ammunition for those who say participation in multilateral organizations is never in America's interest. This pattern manifested in relation to the August 2002 UN Conference on Racism in Durban, where the United States saw trouble brewing months ahead yet used limited diplomatic muscle to try to head it off. Although routine demarches were made in capitals, top officials did not engage in the campaign until it was too late. When the United States lobbies aggressively in advance of key decisions, as it did during the controversies over U.S. dues to the UN and the seating of Sudan on the Security Council, it can win in the face of long odds. During the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990-91, under the leadership of Ambassador Thomas Pickering, U.S. diplomats returned to the Security

Council repeatedly to shape consensus in the direction of U.S. interests, head off opposition, and rally international support for U.S. policies. Rather than reacting to proposals by others, the American delegation dominated the drafting of Security Council resolutions, consulting with foreign missions to build support. The United States has the power to shape the consensus on most key issues, if it will battle in earnest.

Practice effective “retail diplomacy.” The UN does not make decisions; its 190 member states do. The same is true of all other multilateral institutions. If the United States wants to overcome being outnumbered and flex its muscle in the UN and in other multilateral bodies, it must use its diplomatic apparatus effectively, not only in New York and Washington but also in capitals around the world. At times, that will mean approaching countries one by one, framing particular issues in terms of their goals and priorities. In other cases it may be necessary to identify points of leverage in U.S. bilateral relationships that can be used to influence countries’ stands.²¹

Focus on lobbying political blocs. The majority of UN member states are aligned with blocs such as the European Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Because blocs hold sway over a large number of voices and votes, building consensus behind U.S. positions demands intensive lobbying of the leaders of these alliances. As the United States finds itself one of a shrinking group of countries not aligned with a strong multilateral grouping, attention to bloc politics has become an increasingly vital part of multilateral diplomacy. Most international blocs are relatively poorly organized and suffer from internal divisions, offering the United States opportunities to work with allies in their ranks to influence outcomes. While the U.S. must avoid being seen trying to divide political blocs or dictate their decisions, private discussions with key influentials can deliver decisive results. To take advantage of its pull, the United States must mobilize its global diplomatic apparatus, working with interested countries and global power brokers (including larger developing countries) to influence the “silent majority” of small, relatively poor countries that make up the vast majority of the world’s nation-states. Timing is of the essence, since once a group position is

21 See Suzanne Nossel, “Retail Diplomacy,” *The National Interest*, vol. 66 (Winter 2001-2002).

negotiated it is difficult for the United States to pry away even moderate bloc members. With respect to smaller countries, highly talented diplomats based in international institutions often have considerable leeway in decision-making, rarely receiving instructions from their capitals. In such cases, personal relationships and one-on-one advocacy can be all it takes to win the U.S. allies. Well-regarded representatives even from powerless countries can sometimes exert personal influence over their diplomatic allies, making relationships with them even more worth cultivating.

Build the U.S. case on the merits, with arguments tailored to the interests of others. To forge and lead coalitions, the United States must persuade others that American positions are in their interest as well. The United States must invest time in crafting and articulating cogent arguments, so that countries that want to support it can do so based on self-interest rather than because they are bowing to U.S. pressure. Rather than relying on blunderbuss talking points, long before key debates the United States should assess each major country's stake in the issue at hand, and work out how best to appeal to its concerns. Historical research, statistical data, and political analysis can be brought to bear to convince countries that their reservations about a U.S. position are unfounded, or that the hopes they attach to an alternative are without basis. That approach will not only help the United States broaden support for its positions but will also improve the character and durability of the backing the United States receives.²²

Pay attention to the problems of smaller countries. Numerically, virtually every multilateral forum is dominated by developing countries. Smaller countries are beginning to take advantage of this clout. For example, in 2000 when the U.S. and other Western countries pushed for reform of the UN's peacekeeping apparatus, poorer countries insisted that increased funding for peacekeeping must be accompanied by expanded appropriations for development assistance. In the aftermath of September 11, the Bush administration recognized that in a world of unpredictable threats the United States could not afford to be vulnerable to criticism of foreign aid programs perceived as ungenerous. Despite an economic recession, the administration doubled Overseas Development Assistance,

²² Ibid.

recognizing that the dollars committed would bring in more than their value in goodwill. President Bush also expanded the Peace Corps, acknowledging that non-financial contributions can help shore up support in key regions. Other developed countries enjoy tangible fruits of their generosity. When Nordic countries put up candidates for UN system positions against opponents from the developing world, they can win, with the support of developing countries that appreciate Nordic backing for development and humanitarian causes. While the Nordic countries do not bear the weight of superpower status and thus enjoy less complicated relationships with the developing world, similar benefits will follow a steady increase in U.S. attention to poor developing countries, addressing both aid and trade. While some inevitably say that whatever the United States does is not enough, many developing countries support the United States and will be receptive to signals that the sentiment is reciprocated. Renewed U.S. investment in multilateral institutions does not mean that the United States should look to these organizations as a panacea, or invite their involvement whenever the organ itself or individual members see fit. When the United States lacks the political will to intervene in a conflict (for example in Bosnia, Haiti or Rwanda during the early 1990s) or to support intervention led by another major power, it is unrealistic to expect multilateral institutions to act successfully. At the same time, for the United States to use multilateral effectively to build support for its interests, it must be prepared to reciprocate when others try to do the same.

Work to address the UN's anti-Israel tendencies. To prevent its diplomatic efforts on other fronts from being disrupted by controversy, the United States should address one of the most persistent causes of America's distrust of the UN: the organization's role in providing of a forum for insistent anti-Israel resolutions and rhetoric, most notoriously the Zionism is Racism resolution approved in 1975 (later overturned). Tables compiled by Israel's Mission to the UN show that in votes on 22 separate UN resolutions pertaining to Israel, the United States and Israel stood virtually alone, supported only by three tiny states.²³ The UN's track record on Israel has long been a source of friction between the United States and certain allies, complicating efforts to build consensus on other

²³ Those member states are Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Tuvalu.

issues. The UN's bias has also made Israelis skeptical that the UN can play a constructive role in the peace process.

Although some countries feel very strongly about particular Israeli actions, the bulk of the world's nations are not deeply antagonistic to the Jewish state. On the contrary, dozens of developing countries receive agricultural and development training and aid directly from Israel. Israeli isolation at the UN stems in large part from highly effective Palestinian diplomacy in the developing world caucuses. When anti-Israel resolutions sail through the General Assembly, it is often because the developing world has a solid position that the U.S. feels it cannot crack. The pattern could be challenged by a methodical, well-timed, behind-the-scenes campaign with leaders in the Non-Aligned Movement and small countries. The United States could also bring the issue up at ministerial level in the United States' bilateral relationships with key countries. If and when the Middle East reaches its next point of temporary equilibrium, the United States should seize the moment to mount a global lobbying campaign. If developments in the region permit, the U.S. should also consider working with its allies to mount affirmative efforts in the Security Council on behalf of its own goals for the peace process. While reversing the trend would be difficult and would demand considerable political capital, it is worth trying in that it could ultimately free the United States from having to continually wage some of the most bruising battles it faces at the UN.

Strike a tone intended to appeal to the multilateral audience. At the UN, the United States can be perceived as aloof, dismissive, even bullying. While many individual U.S. diplomats have helped to reverse these perceptions, as a matter of policy the United States has not set out to improve its image in international forums. The United States' superpower status, its wealth and its values already provoke controversy; the country does not need to add to the contentiousness by statements and actions that seem deliberately intended to provoke its foreign partners. During the 2000 Presidential campaign, George W. Bush spoke persuasively about the need for America to demonstrate humility. He acknowledged that, too often, we have approached the world with inflexible positions and an attitude that our military and economic might place us above the need to negotiate. While the U.S.

will still approach multilateralism in a selective, even *à la carte* manner, there is no need to flaunt our ability to do so. No nation expects the U.S. to be shrinking or silent in multilateral forums. On the contrary, when the U.S. hangs back it is often faulted for its failure to lead. Allies and neutrals alike are responsive to an American approach that is assertive without being bullying; that presses points on their merits, not simply because Washington prefers them; that listens to others; that recognizes the symbolic need for give-and-take; and that strives for flexibility where possible.

Do not cede the role of chief champion of the international order. After the Second World War, the United States became the primary force behind the creation of rule-based international regimes that it saw as vital checks on totalitarianism. The United States' efforts helped enhance its position as a superpower and as an example to the developed and the developing world. The value of that role should not be underestimated: it furthered U.S. ability to secure international cooperation for policy initiatives; led other countries to seek to build domestic institutions fashioned in America's image; and made them more open to U.S. cultural and economic influence. Of late, the United States has sometimes retreated from its role as standard-bearer of the multilateral order, leaving the European Union and others to fill the void, framing agendas in their own interests.²⁴ Where the United States declines to lead, it risks losing its influence over the shape and direction of multilateral institutions. While seeking to set an example for other countries imposes demands and obligations, historically it has paid significant dividends in enhanced American political and economic power.

Craft a credible reform agenda. The United States has devoted considerable energy to the subject of UN reform. Rooted in congressional frustration over insufficient financial accountability in international organizations, such efforts have often amounted to time-consuming, rote auditing exercises designed to keep UN bureaucrats and their State Department minders on their toes. In 2000 and 2001, a new, more constructive model began to emerge, in the form of strong U.S. backing for strengthening the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations. American diplomats worked hand in hand with foreign counterparts and UN officials on an agenda of importance both to U.S. policy

and to UN credibility. In the future, the U.S. agenda for UN reform should focus less on bean-counting than on tangible steps to strengthen the organization's capabilities in important areas. The reform agenda should drop its punitive cast, focusing instead on strengthening key functions and restructuring committees and bodies that have not kept up with the UN's growth and change. The United States should also tie up loose ends left by its earlier policies. A legislated cap on U.S. payments for UN peacekeeping operations remains in place, even though the United States offered strong support for an assessment scale that imposes a slightly higher rate. As a result, despite the 2000 arrears settlement, new U.S. arrears accumulate every time a UN peacekeeping operation is launched. By lifting the peacekeeping cap as well as abandoning a practice whereby the country routinely remits its annual dues nearly a year after they are assessed, the United States can signal its intention to inaugurate a new era in the UN's institutional reform.

Restructure the U.S. administration and diplomatic corps to buttress a new multilateral approach. Implementing a pragmatic multilateral approach will require augmenting America's capacity to wage effective diplomacy. The State Department should elevate the importance of multilateral diplomacy internally. U.S. ambassadors to the UN and other top multilateral posts should have ready access at all levels in the U.S. government. They should be included in policymaking debates, and consulted on issues that affect their responsibilities. Currently, multilateral postings including the U.S. mission to the UN and the Bureau of International Organizations are comparatively undesirable in that they are not seen as advancing officers' careers. That perception should be reversed by making multilateral training and assignments a requirement for senior Foreign Service personnel. By that means, the United States can better integrate its bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, achieving better results in both arenas. Likewise, the State Department should require that before being dispatched to a foreign post, senior political affairs officers assigned to countries active in the UN attend briefing sessions concerning their host country's track record on multilateral issues. Such sessions would open the lines of communication between our country's embassies overseas and our missions to international organizations, enabling closer coordination.

24 See Stephan Richter, "Is This Europe's Hour to Lead on Free Trade?" *The New York Times*, April 1, 2002, p. 19, col.

Likewise, permanent representatives and top staff from multilateral missions should be urged to travel to key capitals, using the occasions to build relationships and discuss key policy issues directly with decision-makers.

ENHANCING THE ABILITY TO MOBILIZE AND LEAD AD HOC COALITIONS

Grant that ad hoc coalitions and alliances are essential counterparts to institutional arrangements. Standing multilateral institutions have an integral role to play in the pursuit of U.S. national interests. But they are not always available, appropriate, or effective. As the aftermath of the terrorist attacks showed, informal coalitions can be as or more important. In the United States' fight against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, an informal coalition of allies provided essential resources, including overflight rights, military bases, intelligence sharing, and troop contributions from some twenty nations, as well as pledges of more than \$4.5 billion to reconstruct Afghanistan after the conflict. Intensive strategic cooperation with Pakistan, a country that before September 11 had chilly relations with the United States, became a prerequisite for effective prosecution of the first stage of the war. When there is a need for decisive action and flexible participation, the United States must be able to convene ad hoc groupings of countries under firm American leadership. In the past, formal multilateral organizations and "coalitions of the willing" have often been described as competing approaches—with only the former considered a true form of multilateralism. That is outdated thinking.

The relative merits of formal and informal multilateral approaches depend on the nature of the challenge. Ad hoc groupings are critical in instances where standing organizations are hamstrung by internal political divisions; where their decision-making apparatus is too cumbersome; where institutional bureaucracy stands in the way of rapid action; or where participatory norms prevent the United States from exercising leadership to advance U.S. policy imperatives. Likewise, there are many situations in which standing institutions offer clear advantages: where the transaction costs

and time it takes to forge a new alliance cannot be spared; where the legitimacy of institutional backing is needed to win over fence-sitters; where a task has multiple phases and the uncertain half-life of an ad hoc coalition poses a risk that the job will not get finished; where there is a need for broad burden-sharing of hefty long-term costs and obligations; and where an expert institutional infrastructure is required to handle concrete tasks.

Merge the two sets of tactics where possible. By keeping in mind those relative strengths and weaknesses, the United States can mix and match ad hoc coalitions and standing institutions to play complementary roles. There are many recent examples of such interplay, including the Gulf War, where the United States acted pursuant to UN resolutions but largely through the means of an ad hoc coalition. In Afghanistan the eighteen-member International Security Assistance Force operates with UN Security Council approval but is not a UN-sponsored mission. The post-September 11 demand for a combination of formal and informal multilateral mechanisms is likely to become the norm. Disparate challenges will require speedy and decisive action that defies UN consensus-building procedures, as well as sustained post-conflict reconstruction efforts of a kind that the UN and few other multilateral institutions are capable of sustaining. If the United States takes offensive action in Iraq, for example, it will reference the imprimatur of UN Security Council resolutions but is likely to act with tangible assistance from a much smaller group of key countries. After a military victory, UN assistance may well help create new governing structures in Iraq.

The United States should work to win international support for its conception of the complementary role of formal and less formal multilateral mechanisms. By demonstrating greater respect for the role of the UN, for example, the United States can absolve itself of the charge that its ad hoc coalition building efforts are attempts to circumvent or weaken established multilateral mechanisms.

Put key bilateral relationships above virtually all else. To maximize the efficiency of ad hoc coalitions, the United States place as much priority on its relationships with a range of key allies as they do on their ties to the United States. America must be aggressive in improving and shaping these

relationships, devoting sustained professional attention that goes far beyond what has been the norm. Simply put, some countries are more important than others—either because they are critical to America’s ability to forge coalitions in particular regions (as with Russia’s necessary acquiescence in the stationing of U.S. troops in the Russian “near abroad”); because they are politically fragile, threatening daunting consequences should they implode (Pakistan, Indonesia); or because they serve as anchors of U.S. policy in important regions (South Korea, Turkey).

Be vigilant about where alliances may be needed. The United States must be ready to cobble together alliances as needed to deter and defeat all potential threats. It must be sensitive to changes in regional power balances and how those affect existing or potential allies. Keeping current will require solid intelligence and reliable partners on the ground comfortable with short notice. The skyrocketing importance of relationships with countries like Pakistan and Uzbekistan after September 11 demonstrates the difficulty of predicting whose aid will be needed next in a world of globalized threats. In an era when threats may originate in Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East, or the Korean Peninsula, NATO can no longer serve as the sole cornerstone of America’s security strategy. Thus U.S. embassies overseas and State Department regional bureaus must maintain a constant level of vigilance, laying the groundwork before almost anyone realizes it is necessary and maintaining the relationships and the leverage that will allow the United States to mobilize tangible support from capitals around the world on very short notice.

Fill ambassadorial posts with those best equipped to man the front lines of American foreign policy. Ambassadors, especially to key countries like the above, should not be mere liaisons or caretakers. Their mandate should be to identify ways of deepening the bilateral relationship through intelligence exchanges, military cooperation, and economic and cultural ties. U.S. diplomats must seek to forge consensus among countries about the nature of global challenges and appropriate responses to them. Embassies should ensure that pivotal states are rarely, if ever, caught by surprise by major American initiatives and that their hosts always feel that they are consulted, even when final

decisions do not break their way. Finding the right people, therefore, from within or outside the Foreign Service, should take precedence over political patronage or bureaucratic hierarchies. Chief American emissaries should be chosen for their knowledge of local conditions and their effectiveness in representing the United States to foreign governments and opinion-leaders, rather than the size of their campaign contributions.

Create structures to ensure adequate attention to all key allies and regions. Since the terrorist attacks, certain regions, Latin America in particular, have felt neglected.²⁵ Unmet hopes for expanded trade and liberalization of immigration laws have left the United States' Latin partners complaining that the Bush administration's pledge of renewed focus on the region has gone unfulfilled. While U.S. policymakers must focus on areas of active conflict, the U.S. diplomatic apparatus must be capable of multitasking, even in the face of unprecedented challenges. This problem can be avoided in domestic policy areas because each area—health care, education, the environment—has its own dedicated Cabinet department. In contrast, in the State Department, the Pentagon, and the National Security Council, all roads lead to a common group of senior officials. Unless they get some attention from this small cadre of top diplomats and policymakers, countries and regions can feel overlooked. In an increasingly complex policymaking environment, steps must be taken to ensure that bottlenecks do not result in the United States' neglect of key allies and even of regions.

Do not rule out unilateralism. While acknowledging the importance of both formal and informal multilateralism, the United States should convey by word and deed that unilateral action can never be ruled out entirely. Demonstrating convincingly that the United States is ready and able to go it alone when necessary is vital to maintaining its ability to build coalitions and shape their actions. Unilateralism is appropriate when, for example, U.S. national security or survival is seriously threatened and only independent action by the United States can preserve it.

²⁵ Christopher Marquis, "United States Hasn't Kept Promise to Latin America, Critics Say," *The New York Times*, May 19, 2002.

When the United States “goes it alone,” explain. In the debates over the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, and U.S. repudiation of the ABM treaty, few foreign diplomats came away with a nuanced understanding of the reasoning behind America’s position. Thus U.S. decisions fell victim to distortions, both inadvertent and deliberate, by policymakers, media commentators, and foreign observers. For each controversial decision, the State Department and other organs of the executive branch should seek to build a rigorous, substantiated case, akin to what the Justice Department would compile in preparation for a hearing before the Supreme Court. The United States should anticipate challenges from all quarters and use its diplomatic infrastructure to put forward counter-arguments before the fact. Particularly when America breaks with a broad consensus in the world, it should make sure its reasoning is well understood and work to counter misrepresentations of the U.S. position. When countries ask for evidence to back U.S. assertions, the United States should not regard the request as challenge to its power but rather welcome it as an opportunity to elevate fact over prejudices.

SELLING ENGAGEMENT

Address the homefront. It might not be obvious why a report on U.S. policy on multilateralism should include a discussion of domestic politics. Inadequate attention to the nexus between congressional support, the U.S. foreign affairs budget, and public attitudes and interests regarding foreign policy has complicated and undercut U.S. policy toward multilateral structures. A policy of pragmatic multilateralism can only be achieved by convincing key constituencies and opinion-leaders in and outside Washington to support a constructive approach to multilateralism guided by American interests. While both the public and politicians have been focusing more on international relations since September 11, sustained political support for multilateralism will require public interest in foreign affairs that endures beyond the latest international crisis. Such public backing is essential if decision-makers are to be able to support the allocation of the financial resources and political capital to pursue a constructive multilateral agenda.

Raise public interest in foreign affairs to prevent debates from being captured by extreme positions. Although public interest surged after September 11, some recent polls show that Americans' concern with foreign policy has already receded.²⁶ Because so few ordinary Americans base their vote on the conduct of foreign affairs, members of Congress have little incentive to become actively involved in foreign policy debates. Those that are vocal often have an ax to grind, be it a local constituency with roots abroad or a domestic political cause like trade protectionism or opposition to reproductive choice. While such voices should be heard in foreign policy debates, the lack of participation by politicians without a particular agenda can result in policy dictated by special interests, yielding results that go against the preferences of the majority. This is why, for example, U.S. dues were withheld from the UN throughout the 1990s although the overwhelming majority of Americans supported payment in full. During campaign periods in particular, politicians and commentators have a tendency to attack multilateralism as a way of scoring political points.

Multilateral organizations are easy targets since, lacking a voice in domestic debates, they can neither defend themselves nor retaliate. Such grandstanding at home becomes known overseas, harming U.S. relationships and fueling perceptions of American parochialism and unilateralism.

Build a constituency to ensure adequate funding for U.S. diplomacy. Historically, when faced with choices of how to allocate resources and political capital, domestic concerns with voting constituencies outweigh more remote, abstract foreign policy considerations. While interest in foreign affairs has increased on Capital Hill since September 11, it is not clear whether the attention will be sustained. Slack congressional interest since the end of the Cold War meant that even in an era of surpluses during the late 1990s, Congress kept the State Department in a fiscal straitjacket, constraining the United States's ability to wage diplomatic offensives overseas.²⁷ Before George W. Bush's announcement of a significant increase in U.S. foreign assistance in March 2002, American contributions to development aid had been slashed to their lowest per capita levels since World War II. The administration has taken preliminary steps toward reversing this trend; these efforts should be intensified.

Capitalize on baseline public support for multilateral approaches and on the heightened concern for international cooperation evoked by September 11. Despite their relative indifference toward foreign policy, extensive survey research has shown that significant majorities of U.S. citizens would prefer the United States to address foreign policy challenges through multilateral institutions and partnerships.²⁸ Public support for the United Nations is robust, with majorities in favor of strengthening the UN's capacities and relying on it to authorize and organize military force. Most Americans do not perceive the world body as a threat to national sovereignty. The preference for multilateral cooperation extends to other global challenges, with the public supporting stronger international legal institutions like the International Criminal Court, binding regimes to protect the

²⁶ See, for example, Gallup Polls, **January** 21, 2002, "Military and Foreign Policy Issues Fade Among Public's Priorities" and January 14, 2002, "Terrorism Fades as Nation's Most Important Problem."

²⁷ Richard N. Gardner, "The One Percent Solution: Shirking the Cost of World Leadership," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 4 (July/August 2000).

world environment, and continued trade liberalization through the WTO (provided the latter incorporates labor and environmental standards).²⁹ Public opinion polls in the wake of the September 11 attacks have reconfirmed this finding. The attacks opened the eyes of policymakers and the public to the need for the United States to find constructive ways to work with the other countries to address shared problems ranging from terrorism to the environment. The momentum should not be allowed to wane.

Mobilize solid congressional support. As was true for the public at large, interest in foreign affairs in the U.S. Congress waned dramatically after the Cold War. The recent upsurge in legislative attention to international relations has created an opening to rebuild a knowledgeable and committed constituency that favors pragmatic multilateralism. Secretary of State Colin Powell has taken important steps in this direction, elevating the importance of congressional relations within the department, opening up State Department liaison offices on the Hill, and developing close relationships with a broad cross-section of influential players in Congress. These efforts should be institutionalized to ensure that the executive and legislative branches can work hand in hand in crafting and executing multilateral policies designed to advance U.S. interests.

View congressional relations as a core element of the making of foreign policy. Senior White House foreign policy decision-makers and State Department diplomats should start regarding congressional relations as an integral part of policymaking. The U.S. ambassadors to the United Nations and other key multilateral posts should develop solid relationships with key figures on the Hill, keeping them informed and canvassing their views. Rather than look down on members of Congress who are not well informed on foreign policy or lack a strong interest in it, executive branch officials should assume the obligation of informing and educating indispensable partners in the execution of U.S. policy. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke's term at the United Nations and Secretary Powell's tenure in the State Department both exemplify the policy dividends that can derive

²⁸ Roper/ASW April 2002 poll showing 54% back U.S. government support for the International Criminal Court. Pew Research Center Report, March 2, 2000, showing public support for the WTO.

²⁹ For data on this question and explanations of why politicians and political elites often underestimate public support for multilateralism, see Steven Kull, 2002.

from building solid ties to the Hill. Ambassador Holbrooke was able to elicit a compromise from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that freed up nearly \$600 million in American back dues to the UN. Secretary Powell has been rewarded with a substantial increase in the State Department's budget and in foreign aid. Their tactics and attitudes should be reflected in the training given upcoming generations of foreign policy professionals.

Liberate the task of congressional relations from the confines of the Bureau of Legislative Affairs.

In recent decades the task of liaison between the State Department and Congress was the sole responsibility of the Department's Bureau of Legislative Affairs, known as "H." Dominated by experts in congressional relations rather than foreign policy, the bureau has not enjoyed consistent close working relationships with key functional and regional offices in the Department. The bureau came to be regarded as highly territorial, tightly controlling contacts between diplomats and legislators. As a result, members of Congress and their staffs found it difficult to access immediate, unvarnished information on key policy issues. State Department policymakers and diplomats were constrained in communicating their objectives and needs to Congress. Secretary Powell has widened the corridors of contact between the State Department and the Hill, urging senior officials to maintain regular contact with relevant legislators.³⁰ This practice should be institutionalized in the form of a revamped Bureau of Legislative Affairs made up of officers who combine foreign policy expertise with the ability to work well with Congress. The skills of communication and persuasion that top diplomats bring to dealings with foreign counterparts could serve equally well on the Hill. Staffing the bureau in this way would also ensure that capable foreign and civil service officers gained experience dealing with the Hill—know-how they could put to use in later postings. The bureau's role should be as a facilitator—rather than gatekeeper—of relations between the department and Congress. Members of Congress need to hear directly from—and be heard by—those who make U.S. foreign policy. "H"'s job should be to forge these direct contacts where needed, and to support the efforts of line policymakers in communicating their priorities and views to the Hill.

³⁰ See "Powell's Congressional Army Guards His Flank," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, April 13, 2002, pp. 946-950.

Foster direct dealings between members of Congress and international organizations, personalities, and problems. Few members of Congress understand how the UN works or what it does. Lack of knowledge feeds reservations and suspicions about the world body. During the tenure of Ambassador Holbrooke at the UN this barrier began to break down as a result of a series of historic exchanges between the UN Security Council and the U.S. Senate. In January 2000 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, led by Jesse Helms, held its first ever field-hearing outside Washington in New York on the subject of the UN. Several months later the UN Security Council returned the favor, traveling to Washington for meetings on Capitol Hill and at the White House and State Department. Participating senators and ambassadors cited these two occasions as essential to the restoration of the U.S.-UN relationship. Thereafter Senator Helms became a leading proponent of paying U.S. dues to the UN and increasing funding for global HIV/AIDS. Such exchanges should become a routine part of U.S. diplomacy, run by the State Department. Key officials from the UN and other multilateral organizations should be invited to Washington on a regular basis to brief Congress and get to know counterparts in the U.S. policymaking establishment. Likewise, instead of being criticized as frivolous junkets, trips overseas by congressional delegations should be encouraged as a way to keep members of Congress informed of and involved in key policy areas. There is no substitute for firsthand experience as the spark for a legislator's commitment to foreign policy issues. Proponents of multilateralism in Congress should urge more skeptical counterparts to take part in these efforts.

Restore the resources and structures necessary to enable Congress to effectively engage with foreign policy issues. To participate effectively in the policymaking process, legislators need adequate access to information and forums for analysis. Because of funding cutbacks and lack of emphasis on international relations, many congressional offices have no staff person dedicated to foreign policy matters, much less personnel with adequate knowledge or sufficient time to closely cover specific regional or functional foreign policy problems. One way to address this gap is to expand the availability of trained Foreign Service and civil service officers for rotations on Capitol Hill. Such postings should be encouraged as useful parts of the training experience of top-notch

officers. A related obstacle to greater congressional involvement in foreign policy stems from the termination of funding in the mid-1990s for the Congressional Caucuses. The caucuses provided bipartisan forums in which members could debate areas of interest outside formal committee settings, relying on the research and analytical support of expert staff members. Caucuses related to international relations covered areas such as foreign affairs, human rights, and arms control and non-proliferation. The restoration of the caucus system or something like it would foster a more knowledgeable, more actively engaged legislative branch.

Enlist non-elected opinion-makers to support pragmatic multilateralism. In addition to key policymakers, journalists, academics, and business and civic leaders must be mobilized in support of pragmatic multilateralism. Here, the role of organizations such as the Council on Foreign Relations, think tanks, universities, and research institutions as well as the media will be critical in promoting a new vision of multilateral engagement and working out how it ought to be applied under specific circumstances. Winning support for a re-defined vision of multilateralism among key opinion-makers can reinforce both politicians' and the public's positive perception of multilateral institutions. The State Department should work with nongovernmental entities to engage opinion leaders in U.S. diplomacy. Currently the State Department's "public" outreach efforts center mostly on an insular community of specialized foreign affairs organizations. The department must reach beyond that circle, enlisting business leaders, local politicians, and civic officials for programs, visits to Washington, and overseas trips that expose them firsthand to American diplomacy and multilateral institutions. These individuals can become powerful advocates in political circles and among the public for support of constructive multilateralism.

Elevate public interest in foreign affairs, focusing on young Americans. Educating the public on the benefits of multilateral action will both provide political backing for elected officials to support such initiatives and help counter vocal opposition to multilateralism by segments of the population that are ideologically opposed to it. Such education can be accomplished by transforming the State Department's public affairs division from a press office and speaker's bureau to a targeted outreach

arm charged with building a constituency for pragmatic U.S. engagement. A key to building longer-lasting public support for multilateral initiatives is to be limited and strategic in what the public is pushed to embrace. Multilateralism should not be presented as an end in itself, but as a tool for promoting concrete American interests. U.S. policymakers need to do a better job communicating to American citizens their growing stake in a functioning global system, providing concrete examples of how U.S. prosperity, security, and welfare increasingly depend on a variety of frameworks for international cooperation. By focusing now on outreach aimed at young Americans, a new generation of more engaged citizens can be shaped. This must be seen as a priority U.S. investment in the future, akin to the outlays America makes in developing new weaponry to prepare our military for future challenges. President Bush's announcement of a renewed focus on promoting volunteerism and the doubling of the size of the Peace Corps are vital steps in this direction. In addition to promoting goodwill toward America overseas, these measures should also be recognized as essential to helping foster awareness of and interest in foreign affairs among the American people.

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