

## “The EU and the UN: Effective Style and Productive Substance”

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I am part of a competent group of peace and security consultants with limited formal authority but wide ranging access to persons whose authority is more clearly defined. Our office deals with a wide range of security concerns, from women’s policy leadership to nuclear arsenals. We not only provide problem solving assistance to missions and UN agencies, but also help establish a framework of indivisibility within a human security framework. Despite the tendency of many NGOs to ‘siloh’ their concerns, for many smaller missions to focus on only a few issues germane to global security, and for UN experts and mission staff to become completely immersed in the sometimes arcane details of specific security policies, we continue to affirm and promote broad linkages between security, development and human rights concerns.

Given our broad mandate, this has been a busy time for us. There have been major debates in the Security Council, the General Assembly and specialized UN committees over the past few months dealing with some of the core concerns of our office: strengthening prospects for an effective nuclear disarmament regime, ending the practice of child soldiers, strengthening civilian protection mandates in peacekeeping operations, eliminating impunity for sexual violence employed as a war strategy, implementing the three pillars of the Responsibility to Protect, and developing a viable Arms Trade Treaty. All of this is taking place alongside other work to promote women’s participation in peace processes, explore linkages between climate change and conflict, petition the ICJ for guidance on what constitutes ‘good faith’ negotiations on disarmament, and promote authorization of standing UN capacities that can identify, resolve and, if all else fails, respond rapidly and effectively to outbreaks of genocide, crimes against humanity and other mass atrocities.

Recent policy discussions at the UN have brought new countries into positions of leadership, notably Mexico and Indonesia, and have also provided the European Union and its constitutive national bodies with new opportunities to test and promote the next phases of a ‘common foreign policy’ that lies at the heart of the EU’s mandate.

This common policy was placed under premature strain during the Bush years as the EU and its member states struggled to maintain links of active engagement with the non-aligned movement and other ‘global south’ counties, keep focus on the larger issues of peace and development as consistent with the UN charter, and maintain its commitment to reforming the

UN in a manner that did not undermine the legitimacy of the UN itself. While the EU did not always have the experience and expertise to stand up effectively to what was generally perceived as a highly disciplined, somewhat ideologically disingenuous and deeply mistrustful approach to multi-lateral security of the Bush administration, the EU did realize that its relationship to the broader international community could flourish with a better balance between its passion and skill for consensus building and the need to help develop clear directions for sustainable global security. The EU's foreign policy was forced to get up to speed during what was a combined crisis of US unilateralism and UN legitimacy. It seems to us to have made breathtaking progress under difficult conditions. Even with the changes in style and focus initiated under the Obama Administration, the EU seems more conscious now of a deep, almost genetic US mistrust of global institutions, and is now better positioned to offer direct challenge in ways that preserves the best of the US-EU relationship.

In many ways, it is fair to affirm the words of Benita Ferrero-Waldner that the EU is the UN 's most ardent supporter and firmest friend. In our work with many EU missions, we have noted that there is a distinctive form to that friendship that I would like to highlight here:

- A commitment to building the capacity of the UN so that it can respond effectively to the security emergencies for which it is generally held responsible by the global public. The EU tends to understand better than their US counterparts that it is impossible for the UN to function effectively and sustainably while huge disparities exist between the responsibility which the UN has been given and the response tools it has at its disposal. This responsibility/capacity gap can be as debilitating in international policy as it is in our personal lives, and many EU policy statements both recognize the gap and seek to narrow it.
- An insistence that all relevant skills and capacities of UN agencies are brought to bear to solve the most complex problems that the UN has to face. There is a long history of suspicion among UN agencies, as evidenced (among others) by recent discussions that attempt to sort out viable relationships between ICC prosecutors and relief workers operating in countries where indictments have been issued or are imminent. Bridging and invigorating institutional cultures takes more than forcing joint meetings, and the EU has both recognized the problem and actively sought ways to promote inter-agency cooperation that is sincere and robust.
- A recognition that civil society organizations not only have disciplinary expertise to share but can also build valuable political will for key UN initiatives and structural reforms. Discussions on Responsibility to Protect and on strengthening the NPT regime are only two examples where the expertise and organizational skill of NGOs have been

helpful in getting more delegations to understand ways to overcome technical and political obstacles to progress and to remind delegations of the urgent need to do so. Having EU support for NGO efforts helps gives us the incentive we need to develop helpful approaches and skills to support important global initiatives.

- A commitment to ensuring that diverse policy voices from Africa, Asia, and other global regions are involved in plans to develop new, UN-based peacekeeping and global security capacities. As the EU formulated its own policy earlier this year for what a final Arms Trade Treaty might look like, it invested considerable energy in partnering with UN and regional agencies, especially UNITAR, to organize regional workshops that could both vet regional perspectives on an ATT and encourage broader regional participation on this and other security issues that directly impact their societies. For the EU, the invitation to broad participation on core policy issues is extended sincerely and is often backed by capacity assistance to make participation possible.
- A willingness to lay out the long-term needs of the international community on issues from security to poverty reduction, regardless of their current political feasibility. In document after document, EU officials have been able to skillfully blend commitment to the task at hand with an honest and healthy assessment of the road remaining to be traveled and the constituent needs that are still crying out to be addressed.
- A commitment to policy formulation that permits EU members, prospective members and other nations to both raise their voices in consensus and individually describe how EU policies can be more clearly defined, made broader in scope, or appeal more to other nations and regions.

As the EU becomes a more powerful force in international policy, it will need to keep a tight reign on tendencies that were often characteristic of the US during the Bush years and that may not change as much as we might like under the current administration. These include tendencies to 'lecture' other diplomats or to establish rigid policy commitments before those policies have had a broad and proper global vetting. For the EU, increased policy prominence must be vigorously interrogated to ensure that the EU's distinctive foreign affairs style is enhanced rather than undermined by paternalism or self-importance.

The demand for the EU brand of security engagement in the international community, as Javier Solana is fond of noting, still very much outstrips the supply. Perhaps this is a good thing. As power can corrupt clarity of purpose, so can too much reliance by others. The EU's leadership is growing and sought after, but it is clearly based on having a lower, but more engaged profile, making space for discussion rather than seizing the debate for partisan purposes. In our own

limited way, this is our style preference as well and we look forward to more fruitful interactions on broad security interests with the EU and its member states.