

## The EU's Security Strategy and the United Nations

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The first great commitment is to defend our security and spread freedom by building effective multinational and multilateral institutions and supporting effective multilateral action.

*George W. Bush, Halifax, December 2004*

The European Security Strategy (ESS) often manages to be simultaneously resonant and opaque, but rarely more so than in its call for “an international order based on effective multilateralism” (p10). The formula was in vogue as *A Secure Europe in a Better World* was in preparation in 2003, and it was not the monopoly of any one party in the debates following the Iraq war. In an August communication on the “choice of multilateralism”, the European Commission cautioned that “an active commitment to an effective multilateralism means more than rhetorical professions of faith” (Commission, 2003). In October, George Bush and Tony Blair made a joint declaration that their policies were driven by just such a commitment: “effective multilateralism, and neither unilateralism nor international paralysis, will guide our approach” (Blair and Bush, 2003).

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\* This article is completed at a time of great uncertainty for both EU and UN in the Middle East, and dramatic events may intervene before its publication. I would like to thank Shepard Forman, Sara Batmanglich and Benjamin Cary Tortolani for their advice on earlier drafts.

Yet this convergence on the phrase only highlighted the extent to which its meaning remained contested, both in terms of values and institutions – and one institution in particular. This was the UN. At the start of 2003, Europe had played out its internal divisions on Iraq in the UN Security Council. Now the European Commission declared that the UN's role as “the pivot of the multilateral system” was necessary not only for peace and security but also for “developing a rule-based international trading system.” By contrast, the British and American leaders' 1,266-word October statement found space for the EU, NATO, the G8, a variety of multilateral initiatives (and even “US-UK school partnerships”, surely an example of *bilateralism*) but yet made no mention of the UN. Nor did they refer to “rules”, appealing instead to a sense of “common purpose” among free nations and “our responsibility to work for the common good in the world.”

The drafters of the ESS thus had to navigate between competing definitions of multilateralism. As we will see in our next section, they nonetheless shifted from an ambivalent attitude to the UN to a clear affirmation that “strengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfill its responsibilities and to act effectively must be a European priority.” This has inspired an admittedly small but noticeably growing body of European policy literature arguing that the EU-UN relationship is of long-term strategic importance (Eide 2004, Ortega 2005a, Biscop 2005, Ojanen 2006). Advocates of stronger EU-UN ties have highlighted the extent to which both the EU and UN are associated with comprehensive long-term approaches to peace and security that involve economic development. And they have also identified a growing political and institutional inter-linkage between the two organizations, as in this interpretation of the ESS and the draft European Constitution\* :

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\* Article III-292 of the draft Constitution noted that the “Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world” including “respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.” It adds that the EU “shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations.”

The European Union and the United Nations need each other. On the one hand, the EU has presented a multilateral vision of the world . . . The United Nations constitutes the centerpiece of this proclaimed multilateral ‘faith’. On the other hand, the United Nations needs the active engagement of EU member states, for the Europeans act as a political catalyst in many issues, and also for more practical reasons, since the Europeans provide the lion’s share of the UN budget. (Ortega, 2004, p11)

Such proclamations of partnership have encountered skepticism. Some promoters of Europe’s international profile hold that its value lies in its *differences* with the UN, not their similarities. For those that believe that the EU’s greatest successes have been to prove the viability of regional integration and to demonstrate the non-viability of traditional sovereignty, it seems likely that the future global order “will be centered around neither the United States nor the United Nations, but will be a community of interdependent regional clubs” (Leonard, 2005, p140). More immediately, Europeans face two dilemmas. Firstly, whatever the significance of the UN to the EU’s identity, the UN’s own identity remains the subject of an international debate – involving the United States and rising powers such as China - to which Europe is not central. Secondly, fundamental questions remain as to how the EU, as a multilateral entity, can behave effectively within another multilateral system. While the ESS calls for a “more coherent” EU, we will see that this is yet to be fully achieved inside the structures of the UN.

The EU is thus confronted by both external and internal disputes over the UN’s role. This article describes these disputes and contends that the EU has responded to them by developing a diffuse set of *ad hoc* forms of cooperation with elements of UN system. This echoes Hanns Maull’s suggestion that “effective multilateralism” cannot be reduced to legal regulation or common values: it is essentially a question of political negotiation and innovation. Arguing that “only recently . . . has the EU given close attention to the difficulties of organizing global multilateralism effectively,” Maull has claimed that:

Effective multilateralism requires not only broad international support and legitimacy, but also the capacity to generate initiatives, and political leadership to set the agenda, define deadlines, mobilize resources and promote effective implementation. A key qualification in this context is the ability to form and sustain broad-based coalitions. (Maull, 2005, p786)

This is the sense in which the EU can act “political catalyst” within the UN system – much of this article concentrates on European efforts to create momentum within the UN on two areas highlighted by the ESS. These are responding to state failure (“an alarming phenomenon, that undermines global governance, and adds to regional instability”) and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (“potentially the greatest threat to our security”). This inevitably excludes other important threats identified in the ESS and the holistic approach to security and development associated with both the EU and UN. But state failure and proliferation are two areas in which there has been significant EU-UN collaboration since 2003, with a focus on Africa in the former case, and Iran in the latter.

However, the European approach to innovation within the UN system is not solely a matter of responding to concrete threats – since 2003, European governments have engaged in discussions of more formal institutional reforms of the UN system. From the time that the ESS was being finalized onwards, both the political and operational aspects of the UN have been under unusually intense scrutiny thanks to the reform process launched by Kofi Annan in September 2003. The initial phase of this process centered on the drafting of the widely-publicized report by the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change – thereafter it moved onto increasingly rancorous inter-governmental negotiations. While the final section of this article will describe the European role in this process, it should be noted in advance that the EU’s members were widely expected to be important drivers of the reform process. As one of the European members of the Panel argued as debates over reform reached their climax in 2005:

The good news is that the fit between the Panel's proposals and EU objectives is astonishingly close, a remarkable fact since only two of the 16 panel members

came from the EU. This fit suggests potentially widespread support for the EU's aim of effective multilateralism. But it also presents the EU with a fundamental challenge: can its foreign policy move beyond warm words and fine-sounding communiqués to action; and can it deploy its influence to convince less enthusiastic members to move forward? (Hannay, 2005)

### **2003: after Iraq**

Before we consider the strategic relevance of the EU-UN relationship, we must turn to the tactical reasons for its prominence in the ESS. This was by no means assured. The first version of the text, presented by Javier Solana to the European Council in June 2003, appeared to play down the UN's role. Its section on "strengthening the international order" referred to the importance of the World Trade Organization, NATO and European and non-European regional organizations before turning to the role of the UN:

The fundamental framework for international relations is the United Nations Charter. Strengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfill its responsibilities and to act effectively must be a European priority. If we want international organizations, regimes and treaties to be effective in confronting threats to international peace and security we should be ready to act when their rules are broken. (Solana, 2003)

The draft contained little indication of what it meant by the UN's responsibilities or the phrase "act effectively". It made only one other reference to the UN, and this was simply to note that "the European Union took over the police mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the United Nations" – an oblique reference to past failures rather than future cooperation. It was thus notable that, when the European Council approved a revised version of the ESS in December 2003, the text placed much greater emphasis on the UN.

It was now the first organization addressed under the "effective multilateralism" heading, with the additional statement (taken nearly verbatim from the North Atlantic Treaty) that

“the United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” And while the ESS still highlighted the EU’s role in Bosnia, the implicit comparison to the UN’s operational difficulties had gone. Instead, there was a new statement that “the EU is committed to reinforcing its cooperation with the UN to assist countries emerging from conflicts, and to enhancing its support for the UN in short-term crisis management situations” (p12). Approving the text, the European Council requested Solana’s office to follow up on “effective multilateralism with the UN at its core”, as well as the Middle East and Bosnia (Council, 2003a).

The UN seemed to have moved from an almost peripheral roll in the ESS to its centre. The importance of this transition should not be overstated. Many alterations to the ESS probably owe more to the need to polish a rapid first draft rather than major philosophical shifts (Bailes, 2005). However, there was also a recognition that, after the Iraq crisis, the problem of the UN could not be resolved through silence. At one of three expert seminars on the draft strategy organized at the behest of the European Council, participants had argued for an even greater expansion of references to the UN, including “giving examples of EU contributions” and “a comprehensive understanding of the UN’s importance” (Gnesotto, 2003, p6). “The UN matters not only for the international order but also for the EU identity,” they argued, for “one essential precondition for promoting effective multilateralism is for the EU itself to act as an effective multilateral institution.”

This declaration reflected immediate realities: the task of restoring the UN’s credibility in 2003 had an additional function of rebuilding a degree of post-Iraq consensus within the EU. Iraq’s own reconstruction was important to this dual process. In August 2003, the Security Council mandated a UN political assistance mission to the country (in the same month, its Baghdad headquarters were bombed and Special Representative Sergio de Mello killed), and in October it also provided a mandate to the US-led force there. Britain and other EU members that had backed Washington now had a belated form of the legitimacy they had tried to win in the Security Council earlier in the year. This did not mean that there was a common European position on the UN’s tactical purpose in Iraq. For many of those who urged that it should take on a high degree of responsibility, “the

primary aim of ousting the US was undisguised” (Youngs, 2004). Nonetheless, it now seemed possible to argue on a more conceptual plane that Europe’s internal clashes in the Security Council had been an “unplanned good cop/bad cop routine” that had somehow managed to serve a fundamental EU goal of keeping the UN relevant (Leonard, 2004).

The EU had also been able to find some consensus through backing the UN elsewhere. In May 2003, the rapid deterioration of the security situation in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo led UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to request that France launch a mission to reinforce the beleaguered UN mission there. At Paris’s suggestion, this request was redirected to the European Council, which launched *Operation Artemis* in June – not only the EU’s first operation in Africa, but also its first autonomous deployment outside Europe. This was a short-term and casualty-free military success although it arguable that its longer-term ramifications are questionable, as Ituri was soon to return to violence (Gowan, 2005). But it has justifiably been argued that “the impact of *Artemis* lay more in its European character than its military merits or even its effect on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo” (Loisel, 2004, p70). In the months running up to the approval of the ESS, the potential benefits of EU-UN relations had been to the fore, lessening if not erasing memories of earlier Iraq debates.

### **International attitudes to the UN: from Kosovo to Asia**

While the circumstances surrounding the finalization of the ESS were thus conducive to positive references to the UN, EU-UN relations must be understood in the longer-term context of other international perceptions of the UN’s contribution to global order. As we have seen, the final draft of the ESS refers to the legal status of the UN charter, the political primacy of the Security Council and the operational significance of the UN in post-conflict and conflict-prevention scenarios (as we will note later, a separate EU strategy on Weapons of Mass Destruction agreed alongside the ESS also emphasized the UN’s role in fighting proliferation). But while the brief text of the ESS thus suggests a continuity between the UN’s legal, political and operational identities, the linkage between them is in reality unclear and deeply contested. There is a growing division

between the United States and rising powers, most obviously China, as to whether the UN is an operational tool or a serious locus for negotiation.

This division is clearly demonstrated in policy documents and statements published around the time of the ESS. The best known is the 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States* (NSS), with which the ESS has been compared all too frequently (Bailes, 2005, p12). This notoriously had nothing to say about the UN's political or legal status, other than "multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom loving nations". Its sole additional reference to the UN was to observe that it could provide help alongside NGOs in "providing the humanitarian, political, economic and security assistance necessary to rebuild Afghanistan." Here is the UN as an operational agency alone.

By contrast, the policy documents of evolving powers highlighted the political role of the UN – and, as Chinese president Hu Jintao remarked in a speech of June 2003, the need "to actively uphold the authority and dominant status of the United Nations in international affairs." (Foot, 2006, p91) As a later Chinese position paper affirmed, efforts to reform the UN should "enhance the UN's authority and efficiency" in such a way as to "safeguard the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, especially those of sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful resolution of conflicts and strengthening international cooperation, etc." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005) Here, the operational role of the UN is very much subordinated to its political function. India's attitudes to reforming the UN are also based on the primacy of politics:

The UN Security Council is not a corporate enterprise: greater efficiency in achieving its objective will not result from limiting its membership to just a few countries but from decisions that are sound, widely acceptable, and that will thereby minimize the need for the use of force over time. (Sen, 2006, p233)

We have seen that the drafters of the ESS were required to balance differing conceptions of "effective multilateralism" *within* Europe – but this only reflected the ways in which EU governments have been faced with different conceptions of the UN among non-

European powers with which the ESS calls for “partnership”. If the UN is claimed as a framework for the EU’s identity, it simultaneously has parts to play in the international profiles of the US (for which it may be a useful *operational* tool for addressing failing or failed states) and for the rising powers of the developing world (for which a voice in UN affairs is *political* evidence of sovereignty and prestige). If the EU is to act as a “catalyst” in the UN system, it must take the resulting debate into account. The difficulties in doing so have been exacerbated by the fact that, while the powers involved in the debate might be outside Europe, it echoes a crisis within it: Kosovo.

While the immediate circumstances of the ESS were dictated by Iraq, the ramifications of debates over Kosovo can clearly be detected in the text. The 1999 decision to take on Slobodan Milosevic without a UN mandate – supported by both current and future members of the EU – had laid out the terms for discussing the linkages between the political and operational dimensions of the UN. For many Europeans, the action was justifiable in terms of the UN’s norms, even if it lacked formal support from the Security Council. When Russia and China threatened to veto any UN mandate for action, the Slovene ambassador complained that “not all permanent members were willing to act in accordance with their special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” (Wheeler, 2001, p119) If the Security Council thus arguably failed to fulfill the political remit of the UN, the distinction between legality, UN decision-making and operational activities was further confused when the Council mandated a large civilian and police mission to administer Kosovo in June 1999. As later in Iraq, the US and its allies appeared to be able to win the UN’s support and legitimacy after it had acted.\* This suggested a disconnection between the political and operational elements of the UN.

While the ESS was response to the Iraq crisis, therefore, it was also a contribution to an older argument over the bases for international action rooted in events four years before. The text retains considerable ambiguity. While “equipping the UN” may be a priority,

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\* The foregoing paragraph should be read as a *political* rather than *legal* interpretation of the events involved, and one from a European perspective.

the declaration that “we should be ready to act” when “rules are broken” implies that the EU should retain its decision-making and operational autonomy in such crises. And – coming closer to the US position that multilateral organizations should multiply the strength of friendly states rather than constrain them – the ESS avers that “the quality of international society depends on the quality of the governments that are its foundation. The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states.”

This underlying emphasis on the need to act for the sake of good governance has been cited as evidence that the purposes of the ESS included fostering “cohesion between the EU and the United States” (Ojanen, 2006, p19). Read in this light, it may appear that the ESS is ultimately closer to the conception of “effective multilateralism” based on the common values rather than that relying on the UN as a “pivot”. Nonetheless, the importance that the ESS places on building “strategic partnerships” with powers wedded to more traditional visions of the UN’s authority – including not only China but Russia – suggests its drafters’ awareness of the difficulties in balancing alternative conceptions of multilateralism. Since its publication, Javier Solana has made this explicit. In a 2005 address, he sounded a gloomy note. If the “intellectual strength and attractiveness of the West” remained strong, “our relative political strength is weakening, while our physical vulnerability is increasing.” (Solana, 2005) He called for new “bargains” on key issues such as development cooperation and energy security, but offered a further warning:

Time is not neutral in this respect. We should realize that in 20 years time, it will be harder to convince giants like China, India and others that a rules-based international system is in their interest too. By 2020, the world’s population will have reached close to 8 billion. Some 56 out of every 100 people will be Asian. Only 5 will come from Western Europe and 4 from the US. The West, if we can still call it that, suddenly will look a very small place.

If European support for the Kosovo campaign once set the terms of debate over the UN’s role, therefore, EU leaders are now conscious that both the focus and locus of debate over the future of multilateralism is shifting away from them. While the ESS appeared to

adopt a position relatively close to Washington's, the intervening period has seen a growing emphasis on winning rising powers' assent for multilateral initiatives. Thus the reasonably standard text of a 2005 EU-China joint statement affirmed that both "were committed to efforts to promote world peace, security and sustainable development, with the United Nations at its core. . . . The two sides reiterated that any model of reform should be decided upon by consensus through consultations." (EU-China Summit, 2005)

In this context, Maull's argument that effective multilateralism requires the development of "broad-based coalitions" has been reflected in the EU's efforts to combine alignment with the United States with outreach to new powers. As we will see, this has had only limited results in terms of UN reform. However, it should also be understood in terms of the complexities of the EU's own profile within the multilateral system, and its evolving attitude to the relationship between the legal, political and operational aspects of the UN.

### **Incoherence and interpenetration**

The EU is not a coherent actor in the UN. As we have noted, the aftermath of the Iraq crisis saw the divided European governments reach some consensus on the UN's role in spite of differing motivations vis-à-vis the US. Yet at the same time, the European Commission was ruefully describing the limitations to the EU's coherence in the UN system. In its previously mentioned communication of August 2003, it complained that significant progress had been made in coordinating EU members in UN bodies, "votes in which the EU is unable to agree on a common line continue to occur, mainly on issues in the area of the [Common Foreign and Security Policy]." If this problem had reached crisis-point over Iraq, it continues to frustrate many advocates of better EU-UN relations.

This frustration is heightened by the fact that a fully coherent EU could carry immense weight within the UN system. Its members represent one eighth of the UN's overall membership, hold a third of the seats on the Security Council (including the permanent seats of France and Britain) and pay roughly two-fifths of its general and peacekeeping budgets (Jørgensen and Laatikainen, 2004, p3). Since 1994, the holder of the rotating EU

presidency has been authorized to make statements on its behalf across a spectrum of UN forums, including in the Security Council – a tactic that is in increasingly frequent use.\* It seems fair to say that “Europe is clearly over-represented in the UN.” (Ojanen, 2006, p38)

But this quantitative over-representation has often failed to translate into an equal level of influence. Within the UN’s General Assembly, there is typically a high degree of cohesion, but at the level of the Security Council EU common positions “are often too general in nature” or conversely “too detailed and too rigid” to be useful in complex diplomatic interplay (Biscop and Drieskins, 2006, p124). The European members of the Council – and especially Britain and France – prefer to maintain the flexibility and prestige that acting in their own right allows. In the most significant debates on peace and security, therefore, the EU often appears to lose coherence in the face of a crisis. And even where it can find consensus, questions remain over its readiness to leverage its relationships with other countries on non-UN issues to gain advantage in UN debates.

Advocates of a stronger EU presence have offered a number of potential solutions, of which the most eye-catching and idealistic is that of a single EU seat on the Security Council. But this continues to encounter opposition from not only Britain and France, but also Germany, which has sunk considerable political capital into gaining a permanent seat of its own. An alternative potential mechanism for creating more coherent EU is that of an “EU Security Council” that might search for consensus on threats and crises outside the formal structures of other international institutions (Everts and Missiroli, 2004).

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\* Biscop and Drieskins (2006, p122) note: “In 2004, 39 Presidency Statements were issued, of which 25 on specific states and regions and 14 on horizontal issues. In comparison, in 2001, 2002 and 2003, the Presidency delivered respectively 45, 38 and 32 statements. The items covered in 2004 included: the Balkans (8), West and Central Africa (5), the Middle East (4), Timor (4), Afghanistan (2), Sudan (1) and Haiti (1), as well as terrorism (5) and non-proliferation (2), and issues in the field of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction (7).”

Such options would arguably permit the EU to behave more like a state within the UN system. Yet to focus on coherence as the only measure of the EU's standing within the UN system is to overlook the alternative forms of influence it has come to exercise. As the European Commission noted in 2003, the EU's interaction with the UN is not confined to the political level of the General Assembly and Security Council, but involves a variety of operational dialogues ranging from direct European financing of UN initiatives to the development of common strategies with UN agencies such as the World Health Organization and everyday "desk-to-desk" contacts between EU and UN officials.

These forms of cooperation are symptoms of an increasing *interpenetration* between the EU and UN. As we have seen, the debate between the United States and countries such as China is (in simple terms) an argument over the political and operational dimensions of the UN. By contrast, the EU's relationship with the UN has resulted in a blurring of political authority and operational responsibility that reflects the ambiguity of the ESS.

### **Peace operations**

We will now consider this phenomenon in the context of handling the threats of state failure and proliferation. It is easier to quantify in the former. As we have seen, the ESS treats state failure a key threat to the EU, and argues that the UN's capacity for crisis-management and post-conflict reconstruction should be bolstered. It also notes that Europe must enhance its military assets and, as "in almost every major intervention, military efficiency has been followed by civilian chaos", the EU needs "greater capacity to bring all necessary civilian resources to bear in crisis and post-crisis situations."

Both the EU and UN have deployed an increasing number of peace operations in recent years: at the end of 2005, the UN was deploying nearly 63,000 military personnel, 7,000 police and 5,000 civilians in seventeen operations (Wiharta, 2005). While the EU's own deployments were much smaller in numerical terms (including 6,000 troops, 500 police and a similar number of civilians), they were spread across eleven missions.

This discrepancy reflects the fact that, while the UN has been mandated to command a number of large-scale military operations (with over 15,000 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and almost as many in Liberia), the EU has tended to more specialized police and civilian operations. Yet, in spite of the fact that the EU accounted for only a twentieth of UN forces in late 2005, the two organization's deployments demonstrated a potential to complement one another where they were co-deployed. To demonstrate what interpenetration between the UN and EU means in the field, we will turn to two concrete cases in which the two organizations' operational and decision-making structures have become connected: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Lebanon.

We have already noted the role of *Operation Artemis* in supporting the UN mission in the DRC in 2003. The EU had deployed two non-military missions alongside the UN force (MONUC) there by late 2005: a police mission (EUPOL Kinshasa) and security sector reform team (EUSEC DR Congo). These were not large, with a combined manpower of little more than thirty, but in December 2005 the UN requested the EU to provide a robust rapid reaction force to back up MONUC during the Congolese elections of July 2006. The EU also provided three hundred observers to cover the polls, while it and UN jointly presented humanitarian and development plans for the Congo in early 2006.

The decision-making structures for these missions have proved particularly complex. If *Artemis* demonstrated that the EU was ready to deploy its resources to reinforce the UN, it also highlighted the status of the European Council as a separate locus of decision-making to the UN Security Council. The mission was mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1484, which called for a multinational force but did not specify its institutional origin. The mission was authorized by a Joint Action of the European Council that located responsibility for launching the mission and "the powers of decision with respect to the objectives and termination of the operation" firmly in Brussels, while operational control of the largely French intervention force was routed through Paris (Council, 2003b). Authorized in 2004, EUPOL Kinshasa did not receive a specific mandate from the UN, although it referred to Security Council Resolution 1493 of the previous year, which encouraged support for the Congolese police – EUSEC RD Congo

was launched on a similar basis (Council, 2004a; Council, 2005a). Both were made answerable to an EU Special Representative (EUSR) in Kinshasa, reporting to Brussels.

In the case of EUFOR RD Congo, the authorization of the mission proved particularly protracted: while the operation was first requested in a letter from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in December 2005, the EU was only ready to confirm the principles of the mission in late March 2006. It finally received a mandate in Security Council Resolution 1671 in April, and a Council Joint Action authorized the operation shortly thereafter. As in the case of *Artemis*, the European Council retained the “powers of decision” over the mission’s goals and conclusion, but it also recognized the level of organizational complexity that had now been reached on the ground, instructing that:

The EU Force Commander in coordination with the EUSR and the Heads of Mission for EUPOL Kinshasa and EUSEC RD Congo respectively shall, on issues relevant to his mission, maintain close contacts with MONUC and local authorities, as well as with other international actors, as appropriate. (Council, 2006a)

In practical terms, the overlapping operational and political responsibilities of the missions in the Congo reflect both the scale and risks of their environment. But politically, the variety of means by which the missions were initiated – including UN mandates, Council Joint Actions and *ad hoc* informal requests – suggested that the decision-making structures of the EU and UN were increasingly intertwined. The EU missions drew their legitimacy from both New York and Brussels, while on the ground EU and UN heads of mission and commanders have had to collaborate across institutional lines. Even more complex forms of interpenetration emerged over Lebanon.

During the confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel in the summer of 2006, the UN and EU structures entered into complex discussions around peacekeeping options there. While it became clear that an EU or NATO mission would not be politically acceptable to the Lebanese government, European governments conferred on possible contributions

to the UN force there UNIFIL. Although their negotiations were sometimes confused, they culminated in a meeting of the European Council on 25 August 2006 at which Italy, France and Germany confirmed significant pledges. Attending the meeting, Kofi Annan declared that “Europe had lived up to its responsibility and provided the backbone of the force”, while a European Council press release stated that further contributions were likely and “this gives a leadership role for the Union in UNIFIL.” (Council, 2006b) This led an innovation within the UN: the creation a “strategic military cell” within its New York Headquarters to liaise with UNIFIL, under the command of a European general.

Neither UNIFIL nor the New York cell has any formal affiliation to the EU. But while the deployment of troops remained on a state-by-state basis, the role of the European Council as a political clearing-house to generate UN forces was an important precedent. UNIFIL’s expansion was the result of overlapping multilateral dialogues in the UN and EU frameworks, with the locus of decision-making shifting between New York and Brussels. Whereas the case of the DRC highlights how the EU and UN can work together in formal terms, therefore, Lebanon points to a more fluid type of cooperation.

It should be emphasized that the structures developed for both DRC and the Lebanon were not the products of intelligent design but evolutionary responses to events. But the degree of interpenetration achieved has not only been a matter of operational circumstances. Developing UN-compatible yet autonomous resources for peace operations was a source of interest within the EU even prior to the drafting of the ESS. As early as 2001, it was reported that the question “could the EU give the UN the Rapid Reaction Capability it needs?” was on the minds of Kofi Annan and “senior figures in Rome, Paris and London” (Grant, 2001). For Javier Solana, elaborating on the ESS in early 2004, distinguishing between direct and indirect aid to the UN seemed fallacious:

Ultimately, I believe that the best way that Europe can contribute to building a stronger UN is by building a strong and capable Europe; a Europe firmly committed to effective multilateralism. These are not alternatives. These are complementary. Last year, the European Union was able to respond quickly and

decisively to the UN's call for peacekeepers in the Great Lakes region. This is EU rapid reaction in practice. Without [the European Security and Defense Policy], the deployment of military capabilities, and the ability to take the necessary decisions, we could not have responded to this call. (Solana, 2004)

In operational terms, this concept has in part been advanced through the development of the battlegroup concept, put forward in February 2004 by Britain, France and Germany. This envisaged the development of rapid reaction forces "to undertake autonomous operations at short notice, principally in response to requests from the UN." (United Kingdom *et al* 2004) While the realization of this concept has encountered obstacles – such as skepticism on the part of countries such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia on the need for EU deployments in Africa – it is nonetheless emblematic of the fact that intensifying EU-UN relations is a matter of political strategy, not circumstance.

### **Proliferation and the case of Iran**

Is a similar process of EU-UN interpenetration observable in policy towards Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)? The distinction between the political and operational dimensions of the UN is more complex, as the processes of verification and diplomacy involved are harder to map than the deployment of peace missions. Nonetheless, just as the ESS underlined the significance of EU-UN cooperation in conflict management, the EU set out a framework for inter-institutional cooperation on proliferation in the wake of Iraq in December 2003. Alongside the ESS, the European Council adopted a stand-alone strategy to counter WMD that was far more specific in its recommendations, not only arguing for "appropriate cooperation with the UN" but also setting out tools that might assist the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Security Council. These included "a pool of readily available competence in order to carry out the verification of proliferating activities that are a potential threat to international peace and security." (Council, 2003c) Meanwhile, the EU committed itself to the UN's political importance. "The role of the UN Security Council," it underlined, "as the final arbiter on the consequence of non-compliance . . . needs to be effectively strengthened."

If the WMD strategy was overshadowed by the public debate over Iraq's supposed capabilities, it was also developed at a time of increasing concern for key elements of the anti-proliferation architecture within the UN system, and most obviously the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In structural terms, the European Council has undertaken a series of Joint Actions to assist the operational agencies of the UN system – in May 2004, for example, it designated some €3,329,000 to the IAEA's programs to assist states identify and safeguard nuclear materials (Council, 2004b). Nonetheless, the EU also looked outside immediate UN structures to find new ways of promoting non-proliferation. One of these, pioneered in negotiations with Syria in 2003, was to introduce a “non-proliferation” clause into a proposed Association Agreement aimed at promoting free trade (Bailes, 2006). While recognizing the primacy of the Security Council in the last resort, therefore, the EU aimed to widen the proliferation debate beyond simple support for the UN's mechanisms. In this sense, it was trying to co-opt the UN into a strategy that relied on its “soft power” economic assets. It was in this context that it approached the problem of Iran's uranium enrichment, a case made all the more problematic by broad disagreements between Russia, China and the United States.

As the ESS and EU WMD strategy were being negotiated in 2003, the governments of Britain, France and Germany (the “E3”) were already engaged in talks with Tehran on nuclear ambitions. During these talks, separate discussions on trade were effectively suspended – but while the EU might hope to gain leverage by this means, its goal was to strengthen the IAEA's hand by prompting Iran to sign the Additional Protocol of the NPT, which allows for intrusive inspections of civilian nuclear facilities. In October 2003, Tehran indicated that it would sign the Protocol – but while it appeared to continue with enrichment activities, Javier Solana and other European leaders continued to emphasize that any progress on a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU would still be predicated on proliferation issues (Bailes, 2006). In November 2004, Solana declared that economic talks would resume in December, and the E3 (on behalf of the EU) linked Iran's suspension of enrichment to the negotiation of an agreement that would “provide objective guarantees that Iran's nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful

purposes. It will equally provide firm guarantees on nuclear, technological and economic cooperation and firm commitments on security issues.” (“Paris Agreement”, 2004)

Here, as with Syria (if with considerably higher stakes), the EU appeared to be providing an incentive structure to validate the role of the IAEA. The level of interpenetration between the two appeared high, and the E3/EU was explicit in linking its policies to the E3/EU was explicit in offering its support to the IAEA’s Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei’s approach to implementing Iran’s obligations. In so far as ElBaradei reported to the IAEA Board, on which all the E3 and a number of other EU members sat, the Europeans were able to deal with Iran from across a range of multilateral platforms. While talks with Iran faltered badly in early 2005, both sides were now accustomed to negotiating across these platforms, and in May Iran set out a framework for dealing with the IAEA that included “greater access to the EU market for Iranian goods” (Kile, 2006, p621). The EU’s response included a variety of economic sweeteners, including cooperation on issues ranging from railway and maritime transport to “ecological agriculture, including herbicides and pesticides” and “developing [Iran’s] reputation as tourist destination and support [for] cooperation in development of new tourist resorts.” (IAEA, 2005)

After this offer was rejected by Iran, a new round of negotiations began that would – after a series of setbacks and moments of hope – led to the European members of the IAEA taking a symbolic lead (backed by the United States, China and Russia) in referring Iran to the Security Council. At the time of writing, the eventual outcome of this process is highly uncertain, but it remains striking that the E3 and Javier Solana have continued to play a leading role in direct negotiations with Tehran. The EU capacity to offer incentives to Iran has established is as a *de facto* political actor in this drawn-out crisis, alongside the formal political role of the Security Council and the operational IAEA.

This is evidently specific to the case in hand – the EU has not played a major role in dealing with North Korea’s far more advanced nuclear threat – but we can compare this case to that of the Congo. There, we noted significant interpenetration between the EU

and UN in the field, reflecting intersecting decision-making processes – in the Iranian case, the EU does not have an operational role, but has tried to give the IAEA additional legitimacy while maintaining the political relevance of the Security Council. Again, the precise locus of decision-making, at least until February 2005, thus becomes obscured.

### **UN reform: a return to incoherence?**

We have sketched out a European approach to the UN that reflects the complexity of two multilateral entities with overlapping membership attempting to relate to one another. It is undeniably an approach more easily explained in terms of process than intentions or outcomes. It has often been argued that one of the EU's strengths in relating to individual countries lies in its ability to entangle them in complex legal, political and economic processes (precisely as it hoped to do with Iran). On reflection, it may appear that its strength in dealing with the UN follows a similar pattern: the EU exerts itself not through a single and coherent political voice in the Security Council, but a capacity to co-opt, reinforce and shape the operational and political processes of the UN system. Again, this harks back to the ambiguity of the ESS in blurring the line between autonomous EU action and support for the UN, but it also relates to a far wider shift in the multilateral environment by which “a reliance on diversity” is increasingly a hallmark of multilateralism (Forman and Segaar, 2006). In Maull's terms, the EU appears to be responding to this diversity by developing alliances not only of states but of elements of the UN system – to which we might all follow the ESS and add other regional and international organizations – to sustain complex security processes. In the context of interpenetration between the EU and UN, incoherence may sometimes be a virtue.

Yet this inherently fails to resolve the problem of the debate between the United States and rising powers as to the political role of the UN – a problem demonstrated by the EU's role in the UN reform process initiated through the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. As we have seen, there were high hopes that the EU might be able to take a lead role in that process. But by 2006, there was a growing chorus of complaints that “the appropriate *synergy* between the EU and the UN regarding UN

reform has not been arrived at during the last two years” or, to put it more bluntly, that the Europeans had “punched below their weight” (Ortega, 2005b). This was underlined when final negotiations on the reform package came close to failure in September 2005.

It can be argued that this was because the reform process attempted to address both the political and operational problems of the UN at once – in political terms through proposing possibly reforms to the Security Council; and in operational ones by setting out a series of significant alterations to the workings of the UN system and secretariat. It also made a number of proposals that had both political and operational implications. One example that enjoyed widespread European support was the Peacebuilding Commission to help coordinate policy towards states emerging from conflict. The practical utility of such a body was easy enough to define in operational terms, but its composition and relationship to existing bodies including the Security Council proved politically divisive.

Meanwhile, the legacy of the Iraq debates lingered in other proposals emerging from the High-level Panel’s report. On the use of force, for example, it suggested a set of “basic criteria for legitimacy” that the Security Council should always refer to when considering military action – this was politically unacceptable to the United States. Yet it also endorsed the “responsibility to protect” civilians from genocide, disliked by many states as a potential mechanism to overturn the principles of sovereignty and non-interference. While the report as a whole firmly favored the enduring political primacy of the Security Council, it thus fed into the broader debate about the UN’s identity without resolving it.

This was bound to create divisions within the EU. Germany joined Brazil, India and Japan in demanding permanent seat on the Security Council, splitting European governments: while Britain and France indicated somewhat half-hearted backing for Berlin’s claim, Italy declared outright opposition. The result was a surprisingly bitter dispute within New York, during which the idea of a single EU seat was largely left to idealists and think-tankers to chew over. Ultimately, Security Council reform faced insurmountable obstacles in the form of Chinese, American and Russian opposition, but

the energy expended by the EU in this debate reduced its ability to build effective alliances to pursue progress on lower-profile but significant operational reform issues.

Yet, more broadly, the lack of EU leadership also reflected the lack of clear European vision of the UN's future. During the deliberations of the High-level Panel, the European Council had submitted a paper linking the ESS to the Panel's report. It began by reasserting that, through the ESS, the "EU has established as its objective the development of a stronger international society, well-functioning international institutions and a rules-based international order, within the fundamental framework of the UN Charter." (Council, 2004c) But whereas the ESS had been able to condense the EU's relations to the UN into a few resonant sentences, the Council now attempted more detail. The resulting explanation of the UN's role was an almost unreadable *mélange*:

[The threats defined in the ESS] demand economic, political and legal instruments, as well as military instruments, and close co-operation between states as well as international organizations across a range of sectors. The UN is uniquely placed to provide the framework for such co-operation. A wide-ranging collective response is the best way to deal with complex, inter-connected threats. But multilateralism alone is no guarantee of an effective response: collective tools and collective will to use them must be built together. For its part, the EU, under the ESS, is determined to make effective use of the instruments available to it and to continue to pursue an active, coherent and capable approach to present-day threats and challenges. The UN Charter remains the basis for any legitimate response to threats to international peace and security. The EU will work closely with its international partners with a view, as a priority, to strengthening the UN and equipping it to fulfill its responsibilities and to act effectively.

If this presentation of the ESS is very far from inspirational, it is nonetheless a strikingly accurate depiction of the EU-UN relationship we have described. The overarching theme is complexity. The EU searches for coordination and partnership across governments and organizations, responding to complex challenges with equally complex international

alliances. As we have suggested this means blurring political and operational elements: “collective tools and collective will to use them must be built together.” This is a functionalist, evolutionary multilateralism – one that, as we have seen, does give the EU international influence.

Nonetheless, the EU’s failure to lead within the reform process still raises questions about how far the EU can translate its influence into a response to larger political questions about the future of the UN. In September 2005, a number of reforms advocated by the EU were approved, including the formation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the responsibility to protect. But as even Javier Solana had admitted, the reform package had a “limited scope” (Solana, 2005). Six years after Kosovo and three years after Iraq, the EU has yet to shift from gaining influence through its interpenetration with the UN to setting out a coherent vision of its future. “Time is not neutral in this respect,” but the question for the EU remains not *when* it will be able to lead effectively at the UN, but *if*.

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