The Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Security Threats—

Maximizing Prospects for Success

35th United Nations Issues Conference

January 13-15, 2004

Arden Conference Center
Harriman, New York

Executive Summary

On November 4, 2003, the United Nations' Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the creation of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change to examine the main threats to international peace and security in the 21st century, as well as to recommend changes necessary to ensure the United Nations remains a key tool for collective action more than 50 years after its founding. The panel consists of 16 eminent international figures.

From January 13 to 15, 2004, the Stanley Foundation convened a group of policy experts at the Arden Conference Center in Harriman, New York, to examine the challenges facing the panel's work and its prospects for success. Drawing on rich experience with past UN reform commissions, the group considered the critical political and practical challenges facing the panel and offered recommendations for the way ahead.

The political backdrop for the panel's work is a diversity of views among member states as to what are the most urgent threats and challenges. As much as today's world is interlinked, with threats paying no heed to borders, countries still experience and perceive those threats to different degrees and with differing priorities. Terrorism may be uppermost in the minds of the US leadership, but the crushing effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS is a more urgent concern for many of the less developed countries. Noting the difficulty in mobilizing member states around threats they may not feel acutely, participants in the Arden House conference said the high-level panel should use the assessment portion of its mandate to validate the full range of threats different countries face.

The secretary-general's panel represents an opportunity to take a bold and ambitious step. In this light, the group was able to reach consensus on a set of five "principles" to guide the panel's work.

- **The assessment step is absolutely critical.** The panel's mandate to assess threats to international security is very important. This step will determine how seriously many governments will take the document as they read it to see what is of interest. Such analysis should look beyond the UN system and take a global view of threats, with the understanding that not all issues will be answered. Taking the assessment step seriously will lay the basis for the recommendations and help identify the opportunities for common ground.

- **Individuals matter.** The chair and members of the panel will be instrumental in drafting and "selling" the report. They will need to think strategically about reaching out to key heads of states systematically over a period of time. It was noted that the secretary-general's role will be "absolutely essential and crucial." Furthermore, certain permanent representatives and ambassadors should be cultivated to act as effective interlocutors on the panel's behalf.

- **The work is not finished with the release of the report.** The release of the report should be seen as the mid-point in the panel's work. This will take significant pressure off the panel to write the "definitive report" and leave an opening for issues that require further discussion. Moreover, mechanisms should be set up within the UN system to track implementation following the release of the report. As the experience with the Brahimi Report showed, the chances for success are higher when there is pressure from

within the UN system for reform. The panel should also consider not disbanding but rather view its work as a multiyear project with a long-term plan for implementation. Depending on the report's recommendations, the secretary-general could also work toward a heads of state summit meeting, either with the Security Council, the G8, or the full General Assembly to provoke action down the line.

- **Obtain buy-in from key constituencies outside New York.** The panel will be meeting in a series of regional forums and consultations around the world. Moving beyond New York City early will allow the panel to sell its recommendations down the line. Engaging directly with capitals throughout the process will be essential to prevent the panel's work from being pecked to death in the General Assembly. Direct high-level intervention by panel members will be necessary to get pivotal heads of states to buy in. Foundations, academia, and think tanks can also have a key role in promoting dialogue and discussion.

- **The panel is not starting from scratch, nor is it alone.** There may be areas where the panel will find it useful to simply adopt large portions of existing work or delegate follow-up work to other institutions. For example, a division of labor with the Blix Commission on weapons of mass destruction might be helpful. Similarly, the panel could endorse studies that expand upon poverty as a threat to international security or examine the links between state failure and terrorism.

The appointment of the panel in November 2003, of course, came on the heels of last year's impasse between the Security Council, as it debated Iraq, and the determination of the United States to take military action. Indeed, the fact of predominant American power will thread through the panel's agenda, as a core issue for some questions and political context for others. The fundamental question underlying the entire exercise is whether the world's rules-based multilateral forum and its dominant superpower can work harmoniously to guarantee international peace and security.

To help shape a realistic approach toward the United States, participants laid out five specific guidelines to help the panel's work:

- **There should be a validation of US concerns.** Fundamentally, in order for the United States to take an interest in the panel's work, the assessment phase must hit the "big issues" for the United States—in particular, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. If the panel is able to capture and mirror the rhetoric being used in Washington, it could credibly engage the administration and say, "We hear your concerns." The secretary-general himself did so in his General Assembly address when he said, "It is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some states feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action."

- **There may not be any basis for bargaining.** To influential policymakers in Washington, new capacities and greater independence for the United Nations in the areas where the United States needs assistance may not be seen as something they want to bargain for, or perhaps even accept. Some will see an advantage in simply taking an ad hoc approach and assembling coalitions whenever convenient. The stark reality is that the United States has the resources to continue reinventing the wheel each time.

- **There are people in Washington who do care.** In addition to the diplomats at the US mission, there are many in the State Department, Pentagon, and White House that may be interested. It will be important to establish the line of communication early on both to show a transparent process and to determine if the panel is "asking the right questions." The fact that the United Nations is looking at its own accountability could send an important message that things are different this time around.

- **Many can't see past the United Nations' flaws and failings.** The hypocrisy of Libya chairing the UN Human Rights Commission still burns in the psyche of US policymakers. Unless there's a sufficient outcry that satisfies the skeptics, many will not "engage the UN with a straight face." The long-term trick is to change the level of competency in the UN system so US policymakers have less of an allergic reaction. To some extent, the United Nations must be seen as taking responsibility for an abused system rather than always passing the blame onto member states.

- **Washington likes success stories.** Whenever possible, the panel's work should highlight situations on the ground that have specific strategic value to the United States. For example, in Afghanistan or Iraq, the panel has an opportunity to recommend creating capacities in the areas that would directly help the United States with reconstruction, such as elections or human rights monitoring. If that produces a success, it will make the United Nations more relevant to Washington across the entire political spectrum.

The panel's work was seen as an unusual opportunity to advance the thinking and practice of cooperative multilateralism. Given the panoply of challenges facing the international community today—terrorism, poverty, disease, environmental degradation, population control—the United Nations is an institution that needs to adjust to new realities.

Opening Remarks
Richard H. Stanley
President, The Stanley Foundation

On November 4, 2003, Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the appointment of a high-level panel of eminent persons to examine 21st century threats to international security and recommend how the United Nations could be made most effective in dealing with them. This appointment came on the heels of last year's impasse between the Security Council, as it debated Iraq, and the determination of the United States to take military action—a vivid demonstration of the potential for clash between the United Nations' global governance system of collective action and the predominant power of the United States.

The panel's appointment presents an unusual opportunity to advance thinking and practice on cooperative multilateralism, and to help rationalize the tensions between national power and global institutions. This opportunity should not be lost, and that is the reason for this conference. We have invited you here as friends of both the United Nations and the United States to explore how best to support the panel's work and the implementation of its recommendations.

The role of national power has been a continuing focus, beginning as the United Nations was being designed in 1945. As Franklin Roosevelt molded his concepts for the United Nations, he envisioned that the five major powers would serve as the primary collective security guarantors, and the organization's political machinery was constructed to reflect this. Therefore, we have the veto power of the permanent Security Council members.

But, of course, the power realities and threats to international peace and security have both changed substantially in the 58 years since the United Nations was founded, particularly in the last several. When 49 countries gathered in San Francisco to negotiate and adopt the UN Charter, the 20th century's two world wars were fresh in their minds. Now in the 21st century, the number of member states has swelled to 191. Power has become so concentrated that one superpower's military strength outweighs all others combined. Now, the threats to peace and security most often emanate not from states but from nonstate actors. Their character has also changed to become more global and less geopolitical in nature, and to include issues such as terrorism, poverty, disease, the environment, human rights, population, and migration.

The secretary-general has asked the panel to recommend how the United Nations can update itself to adjust to these new realities, particularly focusing on contemporary and future threats.

As indicated by our conference title, "*The Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Security Threats—Maximizing Prospects for Success*," we hope that this gathering at Arden House will contribute ideas that will help foster success in this vital undertaking.

We are fortunate to have with us representatives from the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change: Dr. Nafis Sadik, a member of the panel, as well as Dr. Stephen Stedman, the panel's research director. I should also mention that we are working closely with the United Nations Foundation, represented here by Jeffrey Laurenti, Tom Leney, and Johanna Mendelson-Forman. The United Nations Foundation has been commissioning important research on key issues, and our two foundations are collaborating on other conferences and programming to delve more deeply into some critical issues and support the panel's efforts. Many others of

you have been involved in earlier efforts to strengthen the United Nations, and we are eager to hear what you think are the key lessons learned.

Our agenda here includes three strands that will be vital to the panel's work: the substantive issues with which it must deal, several process matters, and the political context for its work. Let me offer a few comments about each of these.

Regarding the substantive issues, we want to take stock of the most important threats to international security—the challenges to which the United Nations must rise. We will be asking about the key issues and challenges that should be addressed by the panel. As we all know, the United Nations is first and foremost an organization of sovereign states. Its ability to act depends entirely on the political will and resources of its members. To take this point a step further, I think we can say that well-governed states—those that reflect the will of their citizens, protect their rights, and provide them with meaningful opportunity to thrive and prosper—are the essential guarantors of the ideals of the UN Charter.

The converse is also true. The lack of fundamentally good national governance is the source of many of the threats encountered in today's world. It is becoming increasingly evident that some of the most destructive forces operate in the dark shadows and corners where the rule of law does not extend. Terrorists, warlords, profiteers—and it is often hard to tell the difference among them—make their money, move their money, and parlay that money into destruction somehow beyond the reach of individual governments and intergovernmental organizations. It is interesting to note, for instance, that the West African diamond trade was an income source not only for Charles Taylor and his allies in Liberia and Sierra Leone but also for Al Qaeda. And in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda's primary base of operations, the dominance of a fanatic militant movement rather than a legitimate democratic government gave bin Laden a perverse sort of protection.

The subterranean nature of such networks, coupled with the extensive resources at their disposal, makes them difficult for international and domestic authorities to root out; yet I suggest that this is a primary challenge for the United Nations and thus the high-level panel. A few recent efforts could perhaps point the way. The antiterrorism committee created after September 11, the Kimberly Process on conflict diamonds, and the Angola sanctions committee have all confronted these challenges with some degree of success. Are there lessons here that can be culled for the panel's consideration?

War-torn regions like West Africa and Afghanistan also provide a glimpse of the nexus between security and poverty. Warlords often provide the most attractive economic opportunity available to young men. Economics drives far too many Afghani farmers to grow opium. When local economies built on the rule of law are vibrant, they leave less room for criminal networks (whether with terrorist, political, or merely business aims) to move in and dominate. Wider access to education and vocational training—for young men and also for women and girls—should thus be an essential element of a holistic strategy toward international peace and security. Among other things, this argues for giving disarmament, demobilization, and especially reintegration prominent places on the panel's agenda. Likewise the problem of the widespread—one might say ubiquitous—availability of small arms and light weapons must be tackled in a more serious way.

This is not to say that all security threats of today and tomorrow come from nonstate actors. Sovereign states are sometimes guilty of abusing their sovereignty by violating the rights of their citizens, supporting terrorism, or destabilizing their neighbors. All of these questions have been at issue in the Iraq case. Without getting into the merits of the Iraq war, it certainly demonstrates the need for a renewed discussion of the use of force and when military intervention is warranted —a debate that I hope the panel will frame and ignite.

Let me shift now to the process. As we know, change is very difficult to bring about, particularly in large institutions. Hence we must understand the opportunities for and the obstacles to change. Our discussions about process should, in particular, be informed by the United Nations' long history of reform commissions with at best modest success. I hope this conference will help spur the panel to set a new standard for impact. The times demand it. Indeed, throughout the process, all of us must remain mindful of the critical challenge of bringing the UN system into line with the times. As the secretary-general himself said in his speech to the General Assembly, "This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself." In that vein, we must consider whatever changes are needed in today's and tomorrow's world, even if that requires amendment of the Charter itself. We must recognize that the work of the panel is not complete when it submits its report. Rather, we need plans and actions for disseminating, promoting, and implementing panel findings and proposals. Moreover, the panel process itself should be only one part of an ongoing and forward-moving dialogue about how to refit the United Nations for the 21st century.

As we discuss the craft of high-level commissions, we will benefit from the experience of several of you who have been involved in earlier efforts such as the Brahimi panel, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, and the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. Prior to the conference you received a paper from Bill Durch, who was of course instrumental in drafting the Brahimi Report. Tori Holt, who has worked very closely with Bill Durch at the Stimson Center on peacekeeping issues, can speak to the experience with the Brahimi Report.

You also received another excellent paper by Ed Luck, who unfortunately cannot be with us. A couple of quick points from Ed's paper merit mention. Ed emphasized the importance of obtaining buy-in from key constituencies. This can help give the panel's report much needed support and momentum when it is released. He also stressed that the release of a commission report should be seen as the mid-point and not the end of the process, something that the Brahimi peacekeeping initiative recognized with its follow-on implementation reports and the designation of the deputy secretary-general as the point person for the United Nations.

In the area of political context, the third dimension of our conference, we have highlighted the role of the United States in the prospects for the panel's success. The high-level panel will not succeed unless it, the United Nations, and the United States can enter into constructive collaboration.

The concurrence and support of many others is also necessary, but the United States has been the most vocal in questioning UN relevancy. When President Bush was in London last November, he said, "America and Great Britain have done and will do all in their power to prevent the United Nations from solemnly choosing its own irrelevance and inviting the fate of the League of Nations." Strong words indeed from the president.

The secretary-general also addressed this in his General Assembly address last September. He said, "But it is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some States feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action. We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action."

It is not clear how supportive the US administration is of the panel's work. Certainly their perception of what is at stake is dire. I suggest that our discussions here should proceed on the assumption that the United States is still undecided on whether the United Nations can be meaningfully updated, whether the United States should help it do so, and the extent to which cooperative and principled multilateralism serves US interests. How can the panel and others convince Washington that the United Nations is not only relevant but indispensable? We should talk about ways that Washington can be engaged in the process and encouraged to take a constructive posture toward the mission of the panel. We should discuss optimal timing for the panel's report in light of this year's US elections. We should explore how the factors that drive toward unilateralism can be mitigated and how the advantages of collaboration can be explained and embraced.

The secretary-general's appointment of the high-level panel offers an unusual opportunity to strengthen the United Nations to equip it for the peace and security threats of today and the future. We must do everything possible to grasp and fulfill this opportunity. Let us encourage the panel to be ambitious rather than timid in addressing its mandate. Let us use our energy and creativity to support the panel in its work and find ways to contribute toward a most successful outcome of the process that will move the world toward a secure peace with freedom and justice.

Gathered in this room are many of the United Nations' best friends. This is certainly a moment when friends should speak up and make sure that the hard issues are confronted.

I welcome your input and thank you in advance for your contributions.

Conference Report

On November 4, 2003, the United Nations' Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the creation of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change to examine the main threats to international peace and security in the 21st century, as well as to recommend changes necessary to ensure the United Nations remains a key tool for collective action more than 50 years after its founding. The panel consists of 16 eminent international figures. According to the panel's terms of reference, the group will "examine today's global threats and provide an analysis of future challenges to international peace and security…identify clearly the contribution that collective action can make in addressing these challenges, [and]…recommend the changes necessary to ensure effective collective action." At the heart of the mandate is the task of responding to both hard threats, such as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, as well as soft threats, such as global underdevelopment. The panel is scheduled to release its report late this summer, though an extension may be necessary to complete its work.

The Stanley Foundation convened a group of policy experts January 13-15, 2004, at the Arden Conference Center in Harriman, New York, to examine the challenges facing the panel's work and its prospects for success. Drawing on rich experience with past UN reform commissions, the group considered the critical political and practical challenges facing the panel and offered recommendations for the way ahead.

The Unusual Opportunity
The panel's work was seen as an unusual opportunity to advance the thinking and practice of cooperative multilateralism. Given the panoply of challenges facing the international community today—terrorism, poverty, disease, environmental degradation, population control—the United Nations is an institution that needs to adjust to new realities.

Since the panel's mandate extends to the most sweeping and fundamental questions of the international political order, it must decide what sort of change is most appropriate and feasible. The United Nations itself encompasses many functions and fora: the General Assembly and committees; the Security Council and ECOSOC; the Secretariat; and the specialized agencies, funds, and programs. Where does the panel see the opportunities? Should certain issues be added to the UN agenda—or subtracted? Are there subjects that need to be re-framed or re-energized? Does the panel want to articulate new political rules of the road? If so, do those need to be codified?

The political backdrop for the panel's work is a diversity of views among member states as to what are the most urgent threats and challenges. As much as today's world is interlinked, with threats paying no heed to borders, countries still experience and perceive those threats to different degrees and with differing priorities. Terrorism may be uppermost in the minds of the US leadership, but the crushing effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS is a more urgent concern for many of the less developed countries. Many governments are more concerned about the flow of small arms and light weapons in their regions than they are about weapons of mass destruction. The high-level panel thus faces the question of whether it will try to craft a single agenda or program that it believes would unify the world community.

Focusing on Assessment
Because participants in the UN Issues Conference doubted that a unifying consensus or compromise would be possible, they suggested that the panel use its mandate for assessment of

threats to validate the full range of member states' concerns and threat perceptions. In a world where there is no consensus on what are the threats to security, some sort of validation of different perspectives is crucial.

In essence, the secretary-general himself took this approach in his General Assembly speech when he raised pointed questions regarding not only the impulse to unilateral action, such as taken by the United States, but also the threat at which the preemptive approach is directed:

> According to this argument, states are not obliged to wait until there is agreement in the Security Council. Instead they reserve the right to act unilaterally, or in ad hoc coalitions. This logic represents a fundamental challenge to the principles on which, however imperfectly, world peace and stability have rested for the last 58 years…. But it is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some states feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action. We must show that those concerns can, and will be, addressed effectively through collective action.

Only through recognizing different perspectives on threats will the panel be able to move things forward and base their recommendations on a rigorous analysis of the situation. The participants elaborated on the components of such a "full spectrum" assessment of threats.

On one hand, the global South needs to hear that their issues are threats in their own right, without links needing to be drawn between poverty and the threat of terrorism as viewed from the North. Unless the panel pushes this forward, significant support will be lost. The United States and European governments need to recognize that AIDS and poverty as they affect ordinary people in the developing world are to them significant security threats. On the other hand, the United States needs to hear that its security concerns are recognized by the world—that specifically, in the areas of proliferation and terrorism, the United States is uniquely threatened, as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan highlighted in his September 23 speech to the General Assembly. Failure by the panel to validate those concerns would make success difficult.

While participants saw the value of an assessment that would examine the range of different concerns of member states, there was skepticism regarding any sort of deal or bargain at the macro-level that would trade across "different policy baskets." It's simply unrealistic for the United States to, say, significantly reduce agricultural subsidies in return for something on nonproliferation. For that matter, it cannot be assumed that the US administration even desires help with the threats usually seen as their concerns—i.e., Washington may see itself as its only sure source of help. On the other hand though, casting issues in the right light could leave room for less ambitious win-win agreements for which there is a more widely shared interest (e.g., counterterrorism and development could be seen as two sides of the same coin.).

Perhaps most importantly, whenever possible the panel should strive to show the linkages between those threats and emphasize that countries and regions perceive threats in differing degrees rather than confronting fundamentally different threats. Describing distinct threats in terms understood by other parties will allow more people to buy into the process. Showing the connections between threats will help move the conversation toward validating that they are indeed all threats. Threats can also be perceived at different degrees within and across different policy areas or geographic regions of the world. For example, weapons of mass destruction may affect the West more than Africa in a way that HIV/AIDS affects Africa more than the West.

Similarly, the United States may view the Middle East though the prism of proliferation, while the rest of the world sees the security threat as a reflection of the unresolved conflict between Israel and Palestine. The panel's challenge will be to note that threats are different and yet arrive at a common notion or understanding of threats.

In the Shadows of Iraq
Participants recognized that the panel's creation was largely driven by the secretary-general's concern about the relevance of the Security Council in the wake of last fall's breakdown in collective action over Iraq. Out of these concerns, the panel is widely expected to grapple with the prospect of creating new rules to help guide authorization of "use of force for preventive purposes." The panel is also to look at the obstacles to the Security Council's effectiveness and the possibility of reforming the body. Thus it is no wonder that the panel is, as one participant put it, "shrouded in controversy."

However, one participant warned that the panel should not overemphasize the recent controversy over Iraq. "Iraq was an aberration. You don't hear the administration talking about attacking other places anymore. I hope the panel doesn't get taken over by Iraq." Instead, he noted that the real crisis for the United Nations is its insufficient capacity to deal with the panoply of contemporary challenges, such as peacekeeping, reconstruction, and development.

Several participants argued that in order for the panel to be taken seriously it needs to pose the question of whether "the UN Charter, as currently understood, is addressing today's dangers." To what extent is preemptive response legal? When do the grounds for self-defense kick in? Can the Charter be reinterpreted to permit preventive action in the age of terrorism?

Considerations From Past Experience
At the heart of the panel's success is the question of whether its work is a "UN-focused exercise or something much broader." When compared to similar past efforts, this initiative embraces much more than UN activities in its scope. In the secretary-general's own words, the panel is described as dealing with a "fork in the road" and the "architecture of international security." At first glance, with the project embracing such broad pieces of international security, "the exercise looks cosmic."

Another key difference from past experiences is the apparent lack of immediate practical demand. As one participant noted, "with the 'Brahimi' reform report, there was a demand for operational detail; with the 'Responsibility to Protect' commission, there was a normative need for squaring the circle." Without a natural audience or consumer, framing the panel's work will be a challenge from the outset. Indeed the proposals and ideas the panel develops will have to be ambitious if they are to avoid becoming captive of the stultifying debate endemic to the UN councils in New York, which is so resistant to change of virtually any kind.

Dealing With the United States
Participants agreed that it would be incredibly useful to have full US support, but some believed that the panel could still significantly contribute and shape the debate without it. As one individual put it, US ambivalence should not be "a reason for holding up the train." Similarly, another participant noted, "Washington can't be the pole on which to base the report…. Yes, Washington should be engaged and we should recognize where its redlines are, but the train has to move from the station without Washington." Some participants highlighted that the United States had put up signals of disinterest prior to the 2002 Monterey Financing for Development

Conference only to have a shift in political dynamics resulting in Washington being pulled in. This dramatic turnaround on overseas development assistance was cited as an example where shaping the debate was enough to "bring a reluctant US along."

Others stuck to the position that the United States was a primary audience for the panel. "The US has to be engaged early on and often." In particular, the focus should be squarely on the administration itself. In this light, the American panel member, Brent Scowcroft, was described as "an inspired choice" and someone who could open doors. However, the panel was warned not to fall into the trap of expecting that Scowcroft's presence on the panel will be enough to cinch the Bush administration's support. Specifically, several participants highlighted the importance of engaging the Pentagon, and particularly the uniformed military leadership, as a potential ally in recognizing the "multifaceted nature of security and the link between fighting war and making peace."

Several in the group argued that the panel should be prepared to tackle contentious issues head on. For instance, it should pose alternatives to the administration's preemption doctrine and put forward answers to the questions posed by the secretary-general in September. By seriously addressing why certain governments would feel the need to act preemptively and unilaterally, the panel might be able to find important middle ground about how the international community should deal with the threats that only certain members feel strongly about.

Two absolute US "redlines" were discussed at length. First, the group felt that any new rules restricting the use of force would automatically be rejected. As one participant warned, "If the US sees the recommendations of the panel constraining the use of power, it's dead on arrival." Another participant felt the need to clarify a key misperception about the difference between Democrats and Republicans on this issue. In that individual's own words, "Yes, there's a huge gulf between the two parties on soft issues. Many assume this gap includes differences over US freedom of action, but it doesn't. No administration will accept constraints on US use of force. This is not a partisan issue when you get down to it." It was recognized that many in the world community, including US allies, would like to see some framework established around the American use of power. The problem as posed by one participant: "How does the world manage American power? At some level, that has to be addressed directly; but once you do it directly, you'll have a problem with the addressee." This central issue will need to be finessed in the panel's report.

However, it was also argued that the panel should keep the issue of constraining US power in perspective. Looking at the *status quo ante*, the UN Charter provides for national and collective self-defense, and whatever reforms emerge, they are not likely to curtail this essential sovereign prerogative. Thus, on issues of the use of force, the question should be recast as what the United States has to gain by engaging the United Nations in order to secure legitimacy. In the event that a unilateral intervention starts to go wrong, that legitimacy would become a "powerful political rationale" for policymakers. Similarly, it's important to understand that the US public has a strong tendency to want that legitimacy. For purposes of collaboration and burden-sharing, the United States will prefer to have partners in dealing with real security issues. As one participant put it, "Even the hard-nosed types don't want to carry the load alone."

The second US redline discussed was the US veto power in the Security Council. The group agreed that if the panel made any suggestions regarding dropping the veto, the United States would quickly become openly hostile. "The veto is an absolute US redline." However,

participants agreed that the panel would have some space to discuss conditions for the exercise of it, in the context of how "veto abuse" had often paralyzed the council into inaction (e.g., Kosovo, Macedonia). That step might indeed spur veto-wielding powers to exercise more restraint.

To help shape a realistic approach toward the United States, the group laid out five specific guidelines to help the panel's work:

- **There should be a validation of US concerns.** Fundamentally, in order for the United States to be interested in the panel's work, the assessment phase must hit the "big issues" for the United States, in particular terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. If the panel is able to capture and mirror the rhetoric being used in Washington, it could credibly engage the administration and say, "We hear your concerns."

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- **There are people in Washington who do care.** In addition to the diplomats at the US mission, there are many in the State Department, Pentagon, and White House that may be interested. It will be important to establish the line of communication early on both to show a transparent process and to determine if the panel is asking the right questions. The fact that the United Nations is looking at its own accountability could send an important message that things are different this time around.

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Dealing With Other Member States
The panel will also need to deal with several challenges outside of Washington and New York. As put by one participant, "The main problem with the panel is that it may come up with recommendations and get general consensus about what the problem is, but what I fear is that the member states are not ready to do what the panel wants them to do." The day-to-day wrangling in the Security Council reveals a gaping lack of consensus in the international community about

what constitutes a threat. Furthermore, the fear of "external interference in internal affairs" is still alive and kicking in the halls of the building. As a result, "It's impossible to get a shared definition of and agree on a response prior to dealing with a specific case." Participants were quick to point out the UN Secretariat was not the problem, "With Kofi Annan, the organization has the best secretary-general it will ever have." But rather, the problem lies with the member states. The panel will need to guard against pressures from countless member states to validate each of their own specific concerns.

Participants urged the panel to take a proactive strategy to win advocates and neutralize "obstructers" early on in the process. It will be critical to identify key governments in regions such as Latin America and Africa that have influence over other countries that often play an obstructionist role. Only by getting support from such regional leaders will "pack mentalities" be broken. Engaging directly with capitals throughout the process will be essential to prevent the panel's work from being pecked to death in the General Assembly. Direct high-level intervention by panel members will be necessary to get pivotal heads of states to buy in. Indeed, it would be extremely helpful to have one or more governments support the panel as an element of their foreign policy, as Canada and the United Kingdom did for the Responsibility to Protect initiative.

Just as the South has credibility problems with the North, many participants highlighted the North's credibility problem with the South. Specifically, with initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals, the North suffers credibility problems when it comes to following through on its commitments and promises. Similarly, pledges at high-profile donors' conferences for reconstruction and development rarely fully materialize. As a result, resentment continues to brew beneath the surface.

Security Council Reform
The value of tackling institutional reform, specifically with the Security Council, was discussed at length with participants favoring touching upon it only within a larger context. While reform at some level may be necessary in order to bolster UN effectiveness and credibility, participants felt that focusing unduly on council reform could bog down the panel's work. At the same time, it was noted that Security Council reform is the "big elephant in the room" and needs to be addressed in some coherent way.

As a result, some participants felt the panel should avoid pushing specific recommendations, but rather the "most important thing is to create movement." One participant suggested that the panel should note that "once there's a consensus on threats, the way toward finding an answer on Security Council reform will be easier." Another suggested that if the panel does touch Security Council reform, it has to be tied back to those threats and answer the question, "What would a reformed Security Council help you achieve on threats that an unreformed council wouldn't?" Failure to address that link would doom the report. On any discussion of reform, the panel's credibility would be called into question unless it examined other obvious areas calling out for reform, such as the Trusteeship Council and the Human Rights Commission.

Considerable time was spent addressing what the criteria for new Security Council members might look like. Some argued that membership should be linked to a commitment of resources, specifically troops and money. Others felt that a country's political system should be a consideration (e.g., democracy, rule of law, open society). While this would be politically difficult to tackle in the report, in many quarters in Washington it would be seen as essential. Some felt that expansion should achieve greater regional representation, while others proposed a

formula reflecting "power and population." Participants concluded that the panel could start a worthwhile dialogue on these issues, but would have to do so with extreme caution and care.

The group was also divided about whether the panel should wade into defining criteria for the Security Council's role regarding the use of force. Rather than rules or laws, the panel could provide guidance that would serve as a set of reference points. Many thought the guidelines would provide a useful means for "laying out what constitutes a threat and the basis of collective action." Others felt that such an exercise would come too close to touching sensitive "no-go" areas, could be easily misconstrued, and ultimately, still fail to curb a state taking unilateral action in the face of what it sees as the failure of collective action. One participant felt that at the heart of the council's problems was its failure to enforce its own resolutions. "The question of enforceability is blissfully neglected by those who have the ability to enforce them."

Guiding Principles
The secretary-general's panel represents an opportunity to take a bold and ambitious step. In this light, the group was able to reach consensus on a set of five "principles" to guide the panel's work.

- **The assessment step is absolutely critical.** The panel's mandate to assess threats to international security is very important. This step will determine how seriously many governments will take the document as they read it to see what is of interest. Such analysis should look beyond the UN system and take a global view of threats, with the understanding that not all issues will be answered. Taking the assessment step seriously will lay the basis for the recommendations and help identify the opportunities for common ground.

- **Individuals matter.** The chair and members of the panel will be instrumental in drafting and "selling" the report. They will need to think strategically about reaching out to key heads of states systematically over a period of time. It was also noted that the secretary-general's role will be "absolutely essential and crucial." Furthermore, certain permanent representatives and ambassadors should be cultivated to act as effective interlocutors on the panel's behalf. As an example, one participant cited the impact of the Washington visits of the British ambassador to UNESCO in persuading Washington to rejoin that institution.

- **The work is not finished with the release of the report.** The release of the report should be seen as the mid-point in the panel's work. This will take significant pressure off the panel to write the "definitive report" and leave an opening for issues that require further discussion. Moreover, mechanisms should be set up within the UN system to track implementation following the release of the report. As the experience with the Brahimi Report showed, the chances for success are higher when there is pressure from within the UN system for reform. The panel should also consider not disbanding but rather view its work as a multiyear project with a long-term plan for implementation. Depending on the report's recommendations, the secretary-general could also work toward a heads of state summit meeting, either with the Security Council, the G8, or the full General Assembly to provoke action down the line.

- **Obtain buy-in from key constituencies outside New York.** The panel will be meeting in a series of regional forums and consultations around the world. Moving beyond New

York City early will allow the panel to sell its recommendations down the line. If the report lays out linkages between threats, follow-up meetings and conversations will be needed after its release. Foundations, academia, and think tanks can also have a key role in promoting dialogue and discussion.

- **The panel is not starting from scratch, nor is it alone.** There may be areas where the panel will find it useful to simply adopt large portions of existing work or delegate follow-up work to other institutions. For example, a division of labor with the Blix Commission on weapons of mass destruction might be helpful. Similarly, the panel could endorse studies that expand upon poverty as a threat to international security or examine the links between state failure and terrorism.

Conclusion

The road to retooling the United Nations to handle the 21st century's threats to international peace and security is fraught with political landmines. Change will be slow, rather than sweeping. In this context, the panel's work must be seen as only one step in a long process. One participant declared, "This is a campaign of a thousand skirmishes rather than one decisive battle." Thus the goal may not be to get something the United Nations can act on immediately, but rather to get something the United Nations can build on. An essential part of this is to replace the outdated Cold War notions of security still held by many individuals. After many past efforts, UN reform commissions aren't taken very seriously anymore. The panel's charge has the potential to change this. But it can do so only with serious engagement and commitment from the United Nations and its member states.

Chairman's Observations

This conference was convened to support and assist the important work of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change. It focused primarily on two aspects of the panel's assignment—to explore strategies for maximizing the panel's impact, including drawing on lessons from past UN "reform" experiences, and to probe how the US role in the United Nations should be factored into the panel's work.

Conference participants were invited and the conference agenda was designed to address these two aspects of the panel's work. We gathered participants having substantial knowledge of the United Nations and a broad understanding of UN reform issues and experience. Other aspects of the panel's work will be examined in other venues.

The panel's terms of reference are daunting. Yet this is indeed an unusual opportunity to advance the thinking and practice of cooperative multilateralism. Events of the last 12 to 18 months have offered lessons and been a learning experience in many quarters. This opens the possibility of forward movement toward an improved international system—one that is better able to provide a secure peace with freedom and justice.

Conference participants properly urged the panel to thoroughly assess the threats of the 21st century and validate the differing threat perspectives of the various nations and regions. Moreover, the interests and concerns of legitimate transnational and nonstate actors are an important component of the global order and will have to be taken into account. Only an understanding of all these perspectives will allow the panel to develop balanced recommendations that deal with enough threats to gain broad support for implementation. Nations and citizens must be brought to understand the validity of the others' threat perceptions. Each party needs to support actions to assuage others' threats in order to gain the support to deal with its own. Threat identification and assessment should drive change.

Conceivably, the panel may develop some proposals that, standing alone, are beneficial to the full spectrum of nations. These "win-win" initiatives should certainly be a part of its recommendations. But for the most part, the panel will have to work with the understanding that the international system is political, and some of the panel's proposals will inevitably require intergovernmental negotiation. In such cases action will be possible only when member states strike small or large "bargains" that serve their respective interests. Mutual concessions will be required in order to gain mutual benefits. The panel would be well advised to search for combinations of proposals that can be grouped to gain necessary support.

It would be a mistake for the panel to simply prepare a "laundry list" of possible initiatives in the hope that some of them might gain traction. Similarly, the panel would err if it defines its task as limited to, or even primarily targeted toward, UN institutional change. Either of these approaches would relegate the panel's work to the "black hole" that has devoured too many prior reform efforts.

A fundamental objective of the panel's assignment is to strengthen the rule of law in international affairs. While the conference discussion went quickly to means and methods, participants recognized that this overarching goal should be kept uppermost as the panel goes forward with its work. The conference report offers many insights, guiding principles, and recommendations that merit serious consideration.

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