



THE HENRY L.  
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# **THE UNITED NATIONS IN 2015: SOME ALTERNATIVE FUTURES**

*A WORKSHOP SUMMARY*

**ELLEN LAIPSON**

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The Henry L. Stimson Center  
1111 19<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 202-223-5956  
Fax: 202-238-9604

[www.stimson.org](http://www.stimson.org)  
email: [info@stimson.org](mailto:info@stimson.org)

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

As the twenty-first century begins, the major instrument of global governance, the United Nations (UN), is again in crisis. Multiple panels and commissions urge reforms so that the institution can meet the challenges of globalization and its impact on security and development around the world. After much talk in the aftermath of Rwanda, a new genocide is occurring in Africa and the members of the Security Council have not directed the UN to intervene. Poverty and disease continue to grind down the aspirations of growing populations in the developing world. In New York, management and administrative reform proceeds, but its quiet successes are appreciated most by those already in the system, not by the customers receiving the services the UN provides. In the public debate in capitals and in universities, the demand for change is expressed by calls for either more inclusiveness (the south) or more effectiveness (the north). A new budget crisis brews in 2006, further polarizing the situation for an outgoing Secretary-General.

In the midst of all this uncertainty, no one knows if the UN will look fundamentally different in a decade. Most believe it will still exist, and will continue to under perform in some areas, and maintain its competence in others. The geopolitical shifts in Asia and in Asia's relations with the rest of the world could lead to a redistribution of power and patterns of participation, with or without formal, structural reform. Reform is not the only or even the most useful framework in which to consider the future of the UN; it is the current preoccupation, but it is important to look impartially at international trends that will challenge the UN and will test its ability to adapt to global dynamics, as well as forces for change within the UN system.

In May 2006, a group of 40 foreign policy experts spent two days thinking about the future of the UN. They included government practitioners and analysts, professionals with current and past assignments at the UN, academics with writings on multilateralism, and stakeholders from civil society who are familiar with parts of the UN system that attend to critical transnational issues including weapons of mass destruction, economic development, humanitarian needs, and human rights. This report captures the essence of the discussion, and offers some alternative futures that were considered, but do not necessarily reflect a consensus of the group. This exercise was initiated by the National Intelligence Council and supported by the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research's Office of External Research. The Stimson Center was responsible

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for developing the content of the workshop and for reporting its results; the views here should not be construed as representing the position of the Stimson Center or its staff.

## **ENDURING TRUTHS**

There are several nearly immutable forces that need to be recognized in embarking on a discussion of the United Nations. These are core political realities that have underpinned the UN system since its inception sixty years ago, and have appeared to be resistant to change.

*The UN can only be the sum of its parts.*<sup>2</sup> The UN reflects the world as it is, not as some might wish it to be. It is also not an independent, autonomous entity setting an agenda somehow independent of its membership's wishes. The UN can only do (or not do) what its members tell it to do. And UN member states bring their political biases, regional alliances, and neighborhood disputes with them when they gather in New York. Therefore, when the UN is charged with inaction in the face of genocide, it is due to a lack of political will among its membership to intervene. While its institutional processes tend to be scrupulously non-judgmental about many of the worlds' enduring disputes, its member states bring their own passions and opinions to the deliberations.

*The developing world and the developed world have different expectations and demands of the UN.* At present, the discourse on reform at the UN is two distinct conversations. The G-77 (which numbers 132 states) opposes proposed shifts in management authority to the Secretary General and the major donors and away from the General Assembly (UNGA) where they predominate. For the largest donors to the UN, reform is about greater effectiveness and efficiency. The G-77, in mid-2006, has been blocking financial restructuring that would update and revise states' contributions to the UN budget, and its opposition could well lead to a severe financial crisis this year. The enduring truth is that the impasse between the interests and goals of the north and those of the south over reform is deep and could well prevent consensus about transforming the UN into a different or stronger institution for the twenty-first century.

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<sup>2</sup> The UN "family" includes the formal bodies of the UN (Security Council, General Assembly, Secretariat plus three others), the subsidiary organs created by the General Assembly (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Children's Fund, UN Development Program, et. al.) and a larger group of autonomous intergovernmental agencies that are related to the UN by special agreements, several of which actually predate the creation of the UN. Examples of these are: The World Bank, created in 1944, the International Civil Aviation Organization, 1944, and the International Labor Organization, 1919.

***Disagreements over reform might compel the largest contributors to the UN budget to threaten to withhold funds if the process does not accommodate their interests.*** At present, the United States and Japan are the largest single donors; together they contribute over 40% of the UN's budget. The members of the European Union also contribute over 36% of the budget if taken together, and may increasingly vote as a bloc. Reform needs to take the big donors' interests into account. As China and India grow, they will become more significant contributors to the UN budget, and will accrue more influence over the allocation of funding for core UN activities. As the UN is now structured, key management authority (including on budget and personnel issues) resides in the elected members<sup>3</sup> of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters (ACABQ) and the dominant (G-77) group in the UNGA. The G-77 group represents states that contribute about 15% of the budget, but are blocking reforms that the states contributing over 80% of the budget support.

***Humanitarian work is consistently viewed as the most effective and most respected work of the UN.*** The UN is likely to retain its core competence and its central role in responding to humanitarian needs, from natural disasters to wars, regardless of what transpires in structural reform or on peace and security issues. The enduring truth is that this is the role that has the most impact on the world's citizens, and where the UN enjoys undisputed legitimacy.

***Large bureaucracies are resistant to change and can be wily and persistent in protecting the status quo.*** The UN headquarters is no different than other large institutions. Incumbent staff can and do work to undermine new initiatives imposed by senior management. Such staff resistance to change is almost always supported by strong majorities in the ACABQ and UNGA. The staff, for example, seek to prevent moves that would provide more open competition for positions, or that would reduce the salience of national origin in appointing people to jobs. The enduring truth is that even the most charismatic Secretary-General will need to have realistic goals in "transforming" the UN secretariat into a lean and agile machine.

***Conflict prevention is enormously hard to achieve; the political will and resources will never be allocated for a timely intervention.*** Among the many post-Cold War goals for the UN, one that is not likely to succeed is conflict prevention; the development community works to prevent conflict-prone conditions at the strategic level, but acute prevention remains an elusive goal. In an

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<sup>3</sup> Members in 2006 are the United States, France, Russia, China, Japan, Netherlands, Canada, Poland, Argentina, Barbados, Botswana, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Honduras, India and Nepal.

organization that derives authority from its member states, acquiring sufficient and timely support for early conflict preventions will prove too hard. The enduring truth is that for the UN to play its role, things have to get bad before the UN, particularly the Security Council, will act.

## **NEW FACTS**

***The rise of China and India will change the UN in ways that are not yet apparent. China will become a more active player in the Security Council, and whether India becomes a permanent member of the Security Council or not, both China and India will play key roles in bridging the north-south divide.*** It is not yet possible to calculate or understand the shifting power in the politics of the UN community, but many believe it is happening in subtle, incremental ways. Rising Asian powers are paying more attention to budget issues, in anticipation of their own share of UN dues increasing. The old analytic formulas about China's likely positions on issues before the Security Council are giving way to more differentiated views. It is a more dynamic and fluid situation, and Asians themselves speak openly about their expectation to have more attention paid to their positions. In fact, were China to demonstrate a deep interest in UN reform and if its views aligned with the United States' views, it would be the most effective way to achieve reform. China could play, after the US, the most important role at the UN, due to its size and its ability to bridge the worlds of the great powers and the south.

***Reform is already happening, but its achievements are not always recognized or valued by those whose reservations about the UN go deeper than institutional effectiveness.*** Peacekeeping management and planning has been on a positive trajectory for nearly a decade. Administrative reform is occurring in parts of the secretariat. The UN is a stronger institution in terms of its capacity to respond quickly to humanitarian emergencies, and has stronger internal mechanisms for ethics, oversight, and protection of whistleblowers. It has modernized and improved its mechanisms for human rights (the new Human Rights Council) and post-conflict responses (the new Peacebuilding Commission). The black and white depictions of UN reform that focus almost exclusively on Security Council Reform or on human rights do not do justice to the reality of an institution in considerable flux and adaptation.

***If globalization is a core defining concept for the twenty-first century, the UN in fact is part of that process. Many global economic, transportation and communications standards and regulations have been established and implemented under UN auspices.*** Greater recognition of the way in which the UN has adapted and evolved could, in theory, shift perceptions on the future

of the UN in a more positive direction. But the champions of the UN and its detractors are ensconced in two different narratives, and those who find serious fault with the UN often share a state-centric view, are mistrustful of globalization and do not see the UN's role in facilitating globalization as a global good.

## **UNCERTAINTIES**

In 2006, new uncertainties about the future direction of the UN are evident. The showdown between the G-77 and the developed world over financial and management reforms has only been temporarily resolved, and could still lead to recurrent acute funding crises for the institution. The election of a new Secretary-General will take place amidst this uncertainty, and could affect the willingness of key international figures to take on the task of running the UN. The rising Asian powers have not yet made explicit and coordinated demands for shifts in the power structure, but it is likely that such expectations will emerge during the term of the next Secretary-General.

The workshop tried to leapfrog over this turbulent period, and consider alternative outcomes a decade or more down the road. The group did not develop highly detailed scenarios of how change could occur, but two broad narratives, not entirely mutually exclusive, were identified.

## **TWO ALTERNATIVE FUTURES**

### **1. THE UN AS HUMANITARIAN PROVIDER – PLAYING TO ITS STRENGTHS**

In this concept, the UN continues to do what it does well. The member states acknowledge that the UN system, the specialized agencies in particular, provide unique functions and services in addressing the vast array of transnational problems and challenges. The UN has core competence in humanitarian and development work, and remains the “go-to” actor for problems of disease surveillance and response to pandemics, environmental and climate related crises, and for specific missions related to refugees, hunger, children, and post-conflict reconstruction. In these areas, states and societies would continue to invest in the UN's capacity, through assessed dues and through voluntary payments from states, individuals, and foundations. Voluntary funding would reward success; states would invest more resources in those parts of the system that were seen as able to deliver needed services.

Support for these agencies derives from their successful execution of the tasks assigned, from the UN campaign against HIV-AIDS (e.g., achieving a reduction in infection rates, improvement in

survival rates) and avian flu (e.g., playing a key role in convening global and regional parties, setting priorities for prevention and preparing for pandemic response). In addition to sufficient funding, their continued ability to function as agile, problem-solving service providers may, paradoxically, require that they be insulated from the reform impulse. The current strengths of the specialized agencies would be undermined by efforts to centralize decision-making or consolidate the agencies into a larger bureaucratic structure.

The specialized agencies enjoy the benefits of small governance, that is, governance by a few dozen member states, rather than the full membership of the UN. An agency (such as UNICEF or the World Food Program) that is directed by thirty-six member states, carefully selected to include donors and developing states, can act more quickly and change course more easily than a UN program or institution whose mandate and governance involve all member states. This concept of “small governance” contrasts with the more inclusive organs of the UN system requiring consensus or majority rule. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) would continue to be stymied by stalemates and would be seen, and derided, as little more than debating clubs rather than problem-solving, and action-oriented bodies.

Over the next decade, these specialized agencies could evolve into stronger institutions, if membership were determined by some key requirements, such as financial support, proven expertise, willingness to deploy personnel, etc. The motivation by states to expand the capacity of these specialized agencies could be driven by a genuine crisis, such as an environmental disaster that affected large parts of the world’s population, or the worst case scenario for one of the infectious disease threats currently emerging. The pressure to respond to a catastrophic situation could stimulate the international community to shed some of its formal protocols and truly empower the specialized agencies to function as supranational institutions.

This future posits that, alongside a rising capacity on the humanitarian agenda, the UN’s performance in peace and security issues would continue to lag behind. The failure to respond effectively to the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, and the continued stalemate over Security Council expansion lead to a decline in the political relevance and credibility of the UN as a player in responding to hard political crises. The Security Council in 2015 would continue to perform, in a formal sense, its original role, and would provide the mandates for peacekeeping and even for some humanitarian interventions, but it would be increasingly viewed as a stodgy and anachronistic body, reflecting the power structure of the past. Emerging powers in Asia and elsewhere would

continue to criticize sharply the failure of the Council to enlarge its membership and update its procedures. Over time, this enduring critique by rising middle powers would erode the credibility and stature of the Security Council, and there would be less competition for the rotating seats on the Council by these middle powers. They would instead seek positions of leadership and influence in the specialized agencies.

The international community would continue to develop the concept of peacebuilding as an important bridge between the humanitarian and development work the UN does well and the work of peacekeeping forces. Peacebuilding, drawing more on civilian cadres and focusing on rebuilding civilian institutions, the rule of law, and political stability in post-conflict situations, would continue to evolve and become an important pillar of the international community's response to crises in the developing world. The relations between peacebuilders and more traditional peacekeepers would also develop clearer protocols, with the two functions working together until peacekeepers could be withdrawn, the task of getting a former conflict state back on its feet then reverting to civilian cadres.

In this scenario, peacekeeping forces mandated by the Council would continue to demonstrate the strong professionalism and modernization of doctrine and training that occurred in the 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some innovative new programs, such as allowing people from the developed world to serve in UN peacekeeping as an alternative to service in a national military, might be up and running by 2015, increasing the capacity of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to deploy quickly and effectively when the need arises. This scenario presumes that the Security Council would still authorize some new peacekeeping missions, but would avoid the hard cases and would prove incapable of responding to the most acute security challenges.

For those who worry about the UN becoming too strong in its ability to bound or challenge the sovereignty of states, it is important to recognize that the peacebuilding function in effect helps countries *restore* their sovereignty after conflict. In that sense, it does not foreshadow necessarily a world of global governance that weakens the traditional sovereign state system, but helps preserve the capacity of states to provide for their citizens and maintain peace and stability.

Another potential bridge between the strong UN role in humanitarian and development issues and its weaker performance on peace and security would be further progress in developing a UN role in fighting terrorism. If large stakeholders, such as Egypt or India, were to encourage a greater UN

role in setting norms and developing responses to terrorism, it could help revitalize the peace and security function, and demonstrate the organic links between the security agenda and the development agenda.

## **2. THE UN IN STRATEGIC DECLINE AS REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS REFLECT NEW GEOPOLITICS**

An alternative future, a somewhat darker version of the first, focuses on the erosion of performance in the peace and security function of the UN, and the adaptation of the international community to greater reliance on regional organizations, which may have very divergent philosophies and practices. The scenario is premised on the failure to achieve meaningful reforms of the Security Council that would satisfy the demands for more recognition of emerging middle powers and the rising Asian great powers, China and India. One could argue that a new system based on a division of labor, or coalitions of the willing, is an acceptable alternative to the UN. This scenario, however, presents a darker picture, a world of competing concepts of what regional organizations do, and for what purpose. It is a Hobbesian world, with few transcendent shared values. In this narrative, the UN's effort to create supranational norms has faltered over intervention doctrines, the policies of the United States, and the preferences of Russia and strong Asian nation states to keep democracy and human rights outside the agenda for international cooperation. The scenario would emerge in part because some reforms -- in intervention doctrine and in human rights -- were seen as protecting the interests of liberal democracies, whereas other reforms, such as enlargement of the Security Council, were stymied. For some, this scenario echoes an early vision of Winston Churchill, in which strong regional organizations would be the ultimate guarantors of peace and security, and the heads of those organizations would form a World Council, presumably more globally representative than today's Security Council.

The end state of this process would be the emergence of two strategic competitors for "peace and security" services, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), representing the will of the democratic west, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) emerging as the alternative magnet on the Eurasian landmass. SCO would focus on preserving the rights of nation states, managing geopolitical and energy disputes, and eschewing a moralistic approach to international affairs. This development would occur because the UN Security Council's western members resisted reform of that body while continuing to press for the "responsibility to protect" doctrine, the empowerment of the Human Rights Council, and other management and administrative reforms perceived as weakening the rights and sovereignty of developing countries.

Additional regional or cross-regional groupings could include: a junior Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), comprised of the two dozen emerging market countries that are no longer developing nor yet eligible for the rich states' club; a strong Muslim world organization; and a club for democracies with high standards for admission. These organizations would absorb some of the need for standard setting, would have some internal capacity to respond to various types of security contingencies, and would interact with and collaborate with both NATO and the SCO. In addition, this future would entail greater prominence for the institutions of global civil society, whether the Davos World Economic Forum and its counterpart, the World Social Forum at Puerto Allegro, or newer manifestations of non-government alliances and forums.

On the humanitarian and development side of the UN system, a parallel evolution would occur. Many member states would increasingly rely on local and regional NGOs for some key services while the developed west would fund, on a voluntary basis, those UN agencies they deemed to be performing well. The net effect would be the transfer of some responsibility and resources for humanitarian and development purposes from the UN to regional organizations, and more competition for resources among the UN specialized agencies with core competencies. The UN would still be in the game, but there would be less coherence and clarity about international responses to natural and man-made disasters. Many would regret the diffusion of effort, and argue for new steps to consolidate humanitarian work under the UN banner.

One feature of this future would be continued tension between the Muslim world and parts of the developed world. Terrorism against the west and societal stress in countries where either Islamic politics emerged in once-secular states or where democratic processes were halted due to the rise of political Islam, would cause an enduring friction in the international system. Should a radicalization of key Muslim countries occur, in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, or elsewhere, some countries might turn to the Security Council as a forum to consider measures to respond to, or deter, the further spread of radical Islam. Such developments would be viewed as a new threat to international security, and could bring the P-5 closer together. Most believe that the Security Council response would likely focus on specific issues, such as the safety of nuclear material or human rights cases. The controversy that would be generated in the developing world over the Security Council's perceived Islamophobia could further erode the credibility of the institution.

## APPENDIX ONE

### UN STAKEHOLDERS

During the workshop, we invited participants who represented key communities of interest or geopolitical stakeholders to share their thoughts on the future of the UN. Here are brief excerpts from their remarks.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Russia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ The UN must reform in a world undergoing globalization</li> <li>♦ Russia’s leadership lacks a clear vision on the direction of UN reform and thus most rhetoric focuses on what Russia does <i>not</i> want.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Human Rights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ A strong UN is necessary, with bodies that have the power to prosecute human rights violators and to compel governments to respect the rights of their citizen.</li> <li>♦ UN reform should strengthen the United Nations and empower it to intervene in instances where human rights are violated.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>China</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ China is not opposed to UN reform, however, China and US interests in UN reform are sharply divergent.</li> <li>♦ China does not want to see the UN divided into democracies and non-democracies.</li> <li>♦ China is a country with divided UN loyalties: one foot in the developing world, the other in the developed world.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Specialized Agencies (Humanitarian Actors)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Humanitarian assistance is the best functioning area of the UN, and the easiest area to reform due to the decentralized management of the specialized agencies by a relatively few member states.</li> <li>♦ Reformers should resist pressure to combine all the humanitarian organizations together, as over the long term this will backfire and decrease efficiency.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>India</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Development is one of India’s primary concerns, it views the United Nations largely as an international agency engaged in promoting development.</li> <li>♦ Inclusiveness and effectiveness are not disparate from the Indian perspective, but rather complementary concepts. India advocates for inclusiveness based on democratic ideals.</li> <li>♦ India seeks a participatory role in the Non-aligned movement, the G-77 and the P-5. It is a potential power, with a participatory role in both the developed and developing world.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Non-proliferation Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ While the UN is the “custodian” of non-proliferation treaties, the UN was not instrumental in their negotiation.</li> <li>♦ The only successful example of UN involvement in non-proliferation is UNSCOM (UN Special Commission on Iraq).</li> <li>♦ The UN could be the appropriate forum to merge various disarmament and oversight bodies in non-proliferation to form a more compact and efficient group.</li> <li>♦ We should consider a nuclear energy protectorate, with inspectors from difference countries, drawing from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UNSCOM’s experiences, housed at the UN.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX TWO

### SCENARIOS

The participants broke into small groups to consider some plausible contingencies that would test the UN's decision-making capacity in distinct ways. These stories were intended to sharpen the thinking of the group about the UN system's prospective strengths and weaknesses, and to speculate about the institution's capacity to respond to future challenges.

#### East Africa: A War over Water?

**The Problem:** The rising toll of desertification has affected water supplies in parts of Kenya and Tanzania. Despite a history of good neighborly relations, politicians are starting to accuse the other state of taking steps in managing water that adversely affect the neighbor. Both states are beefing up security around water treatment facilities and dams. An outbreak of a water-borne disease in Tanzania is affecting thousands of children in the north, and the government has decided to ask the World Health Organization for help. The press is speculating that the disease could have been caused by man, as a biological attack. Tanzanian experts raise the issue of Kenya's inability to control the influx of Arab and South Asian radical Islamic groups, who are rumored to be testing biological agents in remote parts of the country. A group of African countries ask the Security Council to monitor the situation, out of concern for cross-border conflict and a humanitarian crisis.

**The Group's Response:** The UN would have considerable capacity to respond competently to this crisis, although the responses relating to development (environment, water) would be very long-term, and therefore, unlikely to produce early concrete results. The World Health Organization would act quickly to get to the bottom of the health issues. The Security Council would convene and might appoint a special representative to keep channels open between the aggrieved parties and report back to the Council. It might urge the parties to bring the dispute to the International Court of Justice. One uncertainty was whether the African Union would expect to take the lead, and postpone referral to the UN.

## **Pakistan: A Failing State with Global Consequences**

**The Problem:** After the ouster of General Musharraf by Islamist military officers, the state of Pakistan has been in constant crisis. The new government has made it difficult for western embassies to operate, and the US withdraws all but a core Embassy staff. The new government makes decrees about religious adherence in public life, and secular elite Pakistanis are starting to panic. Sunni-Shia tensions are on the rise, and attacks against secular figures, including prominent intellectuals and journalists, increase. The government denies approving such attacks, but rarely makes arrests. The government sees the urban elites as undermining its authority, and several hundred intellectuals are arrested for their political views. This prompts a group of prominent Pakistani academics and human rights activists to petition the UN for protection, citing the Responsibility to Protect doctrine. In the meantime, the P-4 (absent China) are meeting urgently on the matter of security of nuclear facilities and materials in Pakistan, and the Terrorism Committee has asked Pakistan to explain its decision to withdraw from a number of international treaties that address counterterrorism cooperation. India sits on the Security Council, and introduces the option of an intervention force.

**The Group's Response:** It was assumed that some important UN reforms would be in place at the time of this crisis, such as new disincentives to withdraw from international treaties. The new norm would require states that desire to withdraw to actively petition the UN General Assembly. In other ways, the UN would likely respond in a bureaucratic manner to such a crisis. It would argue legally against invoking the responsibility to protect doctrine, and neither China nor India would play a leadership role in resolving the crisis. The group imagined the creation of a coalition to intervene to secure Pakistan's nuclear facilities, after securing an authorizing Security Council resolution. It might need to consider sanctions if Pakistan refused a nuclear monitoring mission.

## US-China Relations Erode: Tensions in the P5

**The Problem:** Continued disagreements over Taiwan and rising Chinese economic power have led to deep anxieties in the United States about the China threat. Experts generally agree that military confrontation is unlikely, although a close monitoring of Chinese military modernization is a high priority for US intelligence and think tanks. There are countless signs of China enjoying its influence on the world stage, and Chinese officials are increasingly active in third world trouble spots, and at the UN. The United States is openly considering ways to counter or contain Chinese geopolitical power, through special trade relationships with China's neighbors and increased attention to China's internal political and human rights problems, as well as unilateral military measures. The Chinese are hinting that they are ready to activate their unification policy with Taiwan, and Taiwan is calling urgently for meetings in Washington and New York on what it sees as an imminent threat of Chinese military action. Other permanent members of the Security Council are discreetly holding meetings to consider what they can do to defuse tensions; European states are feeling torn about the US demand for solidarity due to their economic relations with Beijing and a sense that the US has created the military competition with China. In the meantime, the Security Council is unable to convene on any other topic, due to the sensitivity of the superpower situation.

**The Group's Response:** Most of the group believed the UN would not be able to handle a conflict between great powers. The most the Security Council could do would be to establish the "moral high ground." Russia would likely play both sides, and would see some strategic advantage in a protracted US-China contretemps. An alternative view was that the US might need the UN as a face-saving way to scale back its historic commitment to Taiwan, and might use the good offices of the Secretary General to achieve a Hong Kong-like solution to the China-Taiwan crisis. The US would thus see the UN as a means to resolve the China-Taiwan problem without resorting to war. This could be seen as acquiescing to China's regional hegemony. Some also thought that the scenario would result in the nuclearization of Japan, and that the UN would not be able to prevent it.

## **Leadership at the UN and the Issue of Headquarters**

**The Problem:** After the truncated term of an Asian Secretary General due to health problems, and through new procedures allowing the General Assembly to override a Security Council veto on the selection of a Secretary General, the G-77 successfully maneuvers to have a fiery Latin American populist elected. The European group splits with the United States over the candidate. US failure to pay its dues creates a dynamic where the US is so isolated at the UN that it cannot turn around the political momentum. At the same time, the issue of the need to renovate the headquarters building is reaching a crunch point, with the City of New York insisting on total demolition due to environmental and security concerns. The new Secretary General decides to poll the member states on the desirability of moving UN Headquarters to another country. Dubai and Singapore quickly volunteer to become the new host for UN headquarters.

**The Group's Response:** There would be considerable resistance and forces of inertia working against a new consensus in favor of relocating the UN Headquarters. The group conceded that it was not outside the realm of possibility; such a move would require a shift in US attitudes, such as deep indifference or hostility to the UN in the American Congress and public, and a failure by the Executive Branch to argue effectively for keeping the UN on US soil. Should the move occur, it would represent a major geopolitical shift of power towards Asia, and towards the south. The group believed that the move would ultimately be very bad for the UN, unless at the same time, the US had devolved to a second-rate power.