



# Compass 2020

Germany in international relations  
Aims, instruments, prospects



## Multilateral institutions

Building new alliances,  
solving global problems

Jürgen Stetten



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The Compass 2020 project represents the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's contribution to a debate on Germany's aims, role and strategies in international relations. Compass 2020 will organise events and issue publications in the course of 2007, the year in which German foreign policy will be very much in the limelight due to the country's presidency of the EU Council and the G 8. Some 30 articles written for this project will provide an overview of the topics and regions that are most important for German foreign relations. All the articles will be structured in the same way. Firstly, they will provide information about the most significant developments, the toughest challenges and the key players in the respective political fields and regions. The second section will analyse the role played hitherto by German / European foreign policy, the strategies it pursues and the way in which it is perceived. In the next section, plausible alternative scenarios will be mapped out illustrating the potential development of a political field or region over the next 15 years. The closing section will formulate possible points of departure for German and European policy.

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## Abstract

The mountain of global problems, viz. the list of world tasks that can be solved only collectively by the international community, continues to grow. At the same time, the multilateral institutions find themselves in the midst of a difficult process of change, one marked by a high degree of mistrust and fragmentation in the international community as well as by a low level of willingness and ability to tackle global tasks in the multilateral framework. This trend has been due to certain unilateral reflexes that emerged when the Cold War drew to a close and above all to the experiences the world has made in the time since 9/11. This has left its mark in particular at the United Nations, which has responded to the crisis by embarking on a difficult course of internal reform. The economic and political rise of a number of "rising powers" - led by China and India - is providing for additional adjustment pressure. They have called into question the political arithmetic of "transatlantic multilateralism," tying up in particular the work of the international financial and trade institutions - the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO. Further blockades are brought about by the "North's" growing penchant for protectionism and sealing off its borders, a development rooted in irritation among the populations of the "rich world" over the undesired consequences of the ongoing surge of globalization.

Germany is a respected and welcome actor in the world's multilateral institutions, one that, with its constructive and mediatory approach, has accumulated a substantial measure of political capital and trust. The unmistakable features of German politics in the multilateral arena include an internationally anchored human rights policy, an active development cooperation, and a sound record as a contributor of funds. In participating in international peace missions, Germany has again stepped up its multilateral engagement. In raising a claim to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, the German government is at the same time expressing its aspirations for a larger political voice in world affairs. Europeanization of UN politics and the EU's clear-cut commitment to an effective multilateralism may be seen as further features of the international policies pursued by Germany.

Taking a look at the future of the multilateral institutions, we find that two conceivable paths are open. The present-trend scenario holds promise of a gradual redynamization of global politics, with the "rising powers" finding integration within the multilateral system and the trend toward unilateralism abating. Established alliances are being revitalized and new ones created to supplement them. New responses are found to the most pressing global problems - in particular to the challenges posed by climate change. The crisis scenario, on the other hand, foresees a progressive erosion of the multilateral system, with multilateralism being supplanted by a patchwork of bilateral and regional approaches.

Germany should respond proactively to the tumultuous changes and challenges currently facing the multilateral institutions. Germany has accumulated the trust and the know-how it needs for the purpose. One approach of key importance for improving the international community's problem-solving capacity is to build new alliances, a process in which the German government should become actively engaged. The need to create new forums and to reform international institutions is another construction site at which Germany could lend a helping hand. Other aspirations, though - like Germany's desire for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council - should be formulated in moderate terms and be regarded more as a reward for pursuing imaginative, forward-looking and partnership-oriented policies in the multilateral institutions.

## I. Multilateral institutions under adjustment pressure

### I.1 More to do - less capacity to act?

Global politics and its institutions find themselves in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the list of “global public goods,”<sup>1</sup> i.e. those tasks that can be tackled only collectively, is growing longer by the day: be it the concern for peacemaking and efforts to create human security, efforts to combat international terrorism, stabilization of the international financial markets, or containment of epidemics; be it international environmental protection or efforts to reduce hunger and poverty. On the other hand, though, the international community appears to be less and less willing to work together in the institutions created to deal with these collective tasks. Look where we may, in the corridors of the UN headquarters in New York, in the negotiating rooms of the World Trade Organization (WTO), in the higher echelons of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, what we find is disenchantment.

What are the factors responsible for this state of affairs among the multilateral institutions? In what direction is global policy-making likely to develop over the coming ten to fifteen years? And what chances and risks does this entail for German and European policy in these institutions? The thoughts developed in the present paper are guided by four theses:

- First: the multilateral institutions, led by the UN, are saddled with a good number of inherited organizational burdens and in urgent need of institutional modernization. However, the search for more effectiveness and efficiency should focus on the question of which deficits are accessible to reform and which are inherent to the system, i.e. rooted in its complex structures.
- Second: the economic and political rise of China and India has opened up a new phase in global policy-making. The coalition of interests that shaped the “transatlantic multilateralism” of the 20th century is losing its effectiveness.<sup>2</sup> One of the future tasks of global politics will be to forge new alliances and to establish new mechanisms designed to balance and coordinate interests.
- Third: In the post-9/11 world the global agenda is increasingly set by priorities bound up with peace and security. At the same time, the fact that the euphoria over the current surge in globalization has now vanished has injected an element of uncertainty into international social, trade, and economic policy. Courageous visions of forward-looking efforts to “shape globalization” are giving way to isolationist and protectionist tendencies. This will have long-term consequences for global policy and its institutions.
- Fourth: with the compass of global policy-making in the process of being realigned, German politics in the multilateral institutions has to be adapted as well. As a European actor, Germany can play an important role here by encouraging the EU to work actively for an “effective multilateralism” in the international organizations and at the same time to promote this multilateralism by speaking with a clear and unified voice. Furthermore, Germany’s economic relations with all of the major emerging nations open up avenues for an intensified political dialogue with them. Making use of both points of leverage, Germany can impart momentum to both the building of new alliances and the modernization of global institutions.

1] See International Task Force on Global Public Goods, Meeting Global Challenges. International Cooperation in the National Interest, Stockholm 2006.

2] See Dirk Messner, The European Union: “Protagonist in a Multilateral World Order or Peripheral Power in the ‘Asia-Pacific’ Century?” in: Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft, vol. 1, 2007, pp. 11-27.

## 1.2 Boom and recession of international organizations

The present “crisis of multilateralism” is nothing new. It was the traumatic experience of two world wars and a world economic crisis that shaped the birth of the multilateral system and held the international community welded together for a brief period of time. In the Cold War era, in the decade that followed it, and in the post-9/11 world, the international institutions have gone through a period of constant ups and downs.

Multilateralism experienced its last “boom” in the 1990s. With a rapidly growing number of Blue Helmet missions in Africa and the Balkans, the United Nations redefined - despite dramatic failures in Rwanda and Srebrenica - the role assigned to it by the UN Charter as a “world peace power.” In addition, the UN was able to establish a reputation for itself as a global agenda setter by convening a number of world conferences on topics ranging from social and sustainable development to gender equality and including discussions on economic policy and financing for development. In other fields, the institutional framework was broadened: The World Trade Organization (WTO) was founded in 1994, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997, and in 1998 the cornerstone was laid for the International Criminal Court (ICC). The impulses of the 1990s fuelled hopes that a growingly borderless world could be shaped on the basis of a global policy designed to contain the shadow sides of globalization.

The 9/11 terror attacks brought the next turning point. They set off shock waves in the international organizations whose ramifications are still with us today. The result has been not more cooperation but growing mistrust among the international community. The wrangling in the UN Security over Iraq in the autumn of 2002 may be seen as the starting point of a “phase of recession” from which the multilateral system has yet to recover. And yet the international organizations have been anything but inactive. At present the UN is operating 18 peacekeeping missions made up of close to 100,000 soldiers, police officers, and civil forces, providing humanitarian aid to some 30 million people in 50 countries, and offering a broad range of services extending from election observation to world health policy. The global financial and trade organizations are also engaged in a great variety of day-to-day operations. The WTO, for instance, recently welcomed its 150th member country on board, and its dispute settlement mechanism serves to ensure that existing agreements are complied with.

Still, the picture that the international institutions, always a reliable mirror of world events, present at the political level is that of a set of unwieldy and contradictory structures. At the UN, the international community appears to be sitting on the fence while the Middle East conflict continues to escalate, the humanitarian situation in Darfur goes from bad to worse, the climate regime gets nowhere, and the terrorist threat potential persists. In the Doha Development Round the WTO finds itself in the fifth year of an agonizing negotiating process. The IMF and the World Bank in turn are beset less by internal blockades than by relatively stable and solvent financial markets that seem to call their relevance into question.

## 1.3 UNreformable? The difficult task of modernizing the United Nations

Based on a broadly conceived reform plan, Kofi Annan sought to bring the UN back on the offensive. The UN World Summit 2005 backed the plan in principle - and two important innovations have already been implemented: the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. However, the shift in sentiment that had been hoped for at the world body has not materialized.

A look at a UN organigram is sufficient to show us where to find the real snags to UN reform. Why is it that the UN's second- and third-largest contributors (Japan and Germany) and its second-most populous member country (India) are not represented in the organization's most important decision-making body (the Security Council)? And why is it that despite all calls issued by the heads of state and government to step up efforts to fight poverty, the UN's development work continues to decline in importance?

The deficits have long been known, and there is no lack of proposals on how best to reform the Security Council, to "revitalize" the General Assembly, to "strengthen" ECOSOC, and to make UN development work "more coherent." Quite a few of these discussions and proposals are as old as the organization itself. The reasons for this sobering balance must be seen in the "rigid axes" of the UN system.

The first of these axes is the UN Charter. Amendments to the UN's "constitution" require not only a two-thirds majority of all member countries but also approval by all five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5). The fact that the UN Charter is de facto unamendable is clearly illustrated not least by the Security Council itself, whose structures mirror the political realities of 1945. Both the Council's composition and the unrestricted veto - and thus blockade - power of the P-5 have come in again and again for criticism. Since the veto can also be used to block ratification of amendments to the Charter, the latter is in fact immutable - unless China, France, the UK, Russia, and the US vote in unison to disempower themselves. The "tourists" on the Security Council, i.e. the nonpermanent members elected for a term of two years, must be seen less as a corrective than as a cosmetic embellishment of a body whose representativeness and legitimacy have been repeatedly called into question by the developing countries.

By comparison, the work of the UN General Assembly has won the body the greatest possible measure of legitimacy. Decision-making in this assembly of 192 member states, with its "one country, one vote" principle, often involves a protracted and difficult bargaining process. This is the second axis of the UN system. The fact that the international community has time and again been eager to acquire the UN seal of legitimacy by footing the bill for marathon diplomatic programs is easily illustrated by the long list of resolutions and conventions constantly adopted by the General Assembly, often only after years of negotiations.

The third axis of the multilateral system must be seen in the principle of state sovereignty. With the exception of the Articles of the UN Charter that explicitly permit the international community to impose coercive measures, the principle of national sovereignty sets clear-cut limits to the implementation of international norms and standards. One need think here only of the blockades faced by the UN's human rights work to see how serious this problem in fact is. There is also good reason to assume that individual members of the new Human Rights Council and their allies will continue to seek cover behind the principle of sovereignty, declaring obvious violations of - universal - human rights to be an "internal affair" of the countries concerned. Even in cases involving massive human rights violations of the kind that have been encountered in Rwanda, in Bosnia, and in Darfur, the UN has been and is forced to address the question of whether and where it is legitimate to cross the red line of sovereignty. The fact that this red line itself can be gradually shifted is clearly illustrated by the concept of the "responsibility to protect" that was adopted at the 2005 UN World Summit. The principle introduces - for the first time, and both for individual states and for the international community - an obligation to provide protection in cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

The new UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will have to face up to these contradictions and weaknesses of the UN. Furthermore, the reform zeal of his predecessor confronts him with a dilemma. Some important member states expect him to show commitment in forging on with the current reform process. However, any overly strong emphasis of the need for reform would entail a risk of strengthening the existing "reform aversion" in the UN Secretariat as well as among many developing countries and could lead to new blockades. Some observers have for this reason recommended to Ban Ki-moon that he pursue a calm and collected policy. Instead of initiating a major new round of reforms, they note, Ban would be better advised to concentrate on projects that can be implemented without much delay and hold good promise of success.<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.4 "North versus South": old and new antagonists

The North-South contrast has become part and parcel of the way in which the international institutions view their own work. One of the iron laws of the international system is that at the UN in New York the industrialized countries, focusing on the Security Council, place great emphasis on security interests, while the developing countries, focusing on their work in the General Assembly and ECOSOC, tend to highlight economic and social issues. De facto, though, the global debate on economic issues is dominated by the Bretton Woods Institutions, in which - guided by the governing principle there, "one dollar, one vote" - the economically powerful countries call the shots. While the World Trade Organization in turn is based on the principle of "one country, one vote," the organization's initial phase was guided by the unspoken rule that all important decisions would be taken in the restricted confines of the WTO's "Green Rooms".

In practice, however, it is becoming increasingly difficult to say exactly who "the North" is and who "the South." Traditional behavior patterns are blurring, more and more taking on the shape of clichés. At the IMF, for instance, what the economically expansive emerging nations want most is not loans but voting rights that reflect their current economic power. The Europeans, on the other hand, whose share of aggregate world output is on the decline, fear for their privileges. The year 2003 saw the formation in the WTO framework of a group of developing countries with an "offensive stance" on trade issues - the G-20, which includes India and China alongside Brazil, the group's initiator. What these countries are calling for is not preferential treatment but a "fair liberalization policy" and an end to protectionism and mercantilism. The G-20's self-assuredness struck fear into the hearts not only of those WTO members that were once inclined to dictate the terms of trade agreements as they saw fit, and now, bemoaning a new intransparency, see the WTO "going the way of the UN." The uncertainty among the poor and more "defensively" oriented developing countries is at least as great. It is with great concern that they see a possible end of "South-South cooperation," a development that they fear could further marginalize them.

We can observe a paradoxical situation at the United Nations. Counter to the general trend toward growing differentiation, the G-77, a group made up of 130 developing countries and one of the structures widely reputed to be dead, has exhibited a surprising amount of discipline and influence. An antagonist of the US, the EU, and Japan, the G-77 rejects the current reform agenda as one-sided and counter to the interests of the developing countries. The G-77 sees efforts to strengthen the UN Secretariat as weakening the General Assembly, which it dominates. Improvement of the UN's set of human rights instruments is interpreted as an assault on national sovereignty. Roughly the same goes for efforts to involve civil society in the UN's work: the G-77 has labeled civil society as

3] See Thomas Weiss/Peter Hoffmann, A Priority Agenda for the Next UN Secretary-General, FES Occasional Papers, No. 28, New York, December 2006.



“dominated by the North.” This show of unity and solidarity is, however, illusory. Behind the scenes it is economically prospering countries like India, Brazil, and South Africa that lay claim to the role of leading regional powers, dominating the political process and claiming important positions when it comes to appointing members to important bodies. This in turn is seen as a challenge by other countries - including Egypt, Pakistan, Iran, Venezuela, and (traditionally) Cuba - that likewise pursue active multilateral policies of their own. It is not least the G-4 Security Council reform initiative - in which Brazil and India entered the same boat as Germany - that has shown that these divergences could, in the long run, split the G-77.

China plays a special role in all international organizations. While China has formally declared its solidarity with the South, its behavior has traditionally been reserved, if not enigmatic. It may be no more than a detail, but it is certainly not chance, that China, which - like all other permanent members of the Security Council - “has a right” to a high-ranking position in the UN Secretariat, until recently furnished the under-secretary-general in charge of conference services. China’s traditional reserve may soon be a thing of the past. China’s UN ambassador is more active behind the scenes than any of his predecessors were.<sup>4</sup> When it came to the debates on the nuclear programs underway in Iran and North Korea and the Darfur resolution, China had no choice but to put its cards on the multilateral table, carefully weighing its economic, foreign-policy, and security interests against one another. China has also abandoned its passive stance when it comes to appointments of UN personnel - as witnessed by the recent appointment of the Chinese candidate to the post of director-general of the World Health Organization.

The group of “niche diplomats” is among the winners of the growingly complex decision-making processes in the multilateral institutions. Its members tend to be recruited from smaller countries. These, better able than others to dodge regional or other group constraints, are particularly well suited for mediation roles, and they in this way secure for themselves scopes of action and participation that would otherwise be closed to them. To cite an example, the UN concept of the “responsibility to protect” goes back to a Canadian initiative. And the initial impulse involved in establishing the Human Rights Council came from Switzerland, a neutral country. One country that may just about be termed “hyperactive” in this regard is Norway, a non-member of the EU that in 2006 assumed one of the vice-chairs of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and represents key positions both in the debate on UN reform and on efforts to mediate in the Middle East conflict.

### 1.5 In the wake of a surge in globalization: a paradigm shift?

When the Cold War drew to a close, the world experienced a wave of economic, political, and technological changes for which the mid-1990s found a term as easy to remember as it was imprecise - “globalization.” One of the political responses to this process may be subsumed under what has become known as efforts to “shape globalization.” The model here is an international order (“global governance”) that raises to the global level a number of values formerly implemented only in the national framework, including in particular social justice, but also political values like democracy and participation.

The long-term goal - at least from the European perspective - is and remains to shape the course of globalization. However, political developments in the wake of the events of 9/11 have driven the international dynamic in another direction. The voices that once underlined the chances offered by international integration are today willing to admit

<sup>4</sup> See James Traub, “The World According to China,” in: New York Times Magazine, September 3, 2006.

that free travel and modern means of communication entail certain risks, among them the spread of international terrorism and transboundary crime.<sup>5</sup> Global politics is viewed increasingly in terms of security policy and less and less in terms of the given economic and social context.

When we look at the matter in terms of socioeconomic aspects, we find that the wind of globalization has turned there as well. It is not only the seemingly unbridgeable conflicts of interest between industrialized, industrializing, and developing countries that are impeding the negotiation process in the WTO, it is also resurgent protectionism, particularly in the US.<sup>6</sup> And in rejecting the proposed European constitution, French and Dutch voters on the one hand gave vent to their mistrust toward Brussels and on the other hand voiced their skepticism toward any further internationalization and globalization.

The international financial institutions are likewise under pressure. Numerous emerging nations, including China and India, have accumulated a thick cushion of currency reserves, and when the next financial market crisis comes, they plan to fall back on their own resources. "Classic customers" of the IMF, including Argentina and Brazil, are repaying their loans. While some observers, saying "just you wait," are not alarmed by this development, there is a discussion underway at the IMF on how best to improve the services the fund provides and to increase the participatory rights of emerging economies.

There is still no way to say what long-term implications this development may have for the multilateral institutions. For the short term there is no reason to anticipate either a "renationalization" of politics or exits from or indeed the dissolution of international institutions. However, attempts to hold on to the status quo are not enough to ensure the survival of the international institutions. After all, a World Trade Organization that concludes no more trade agreements and international financial institutions that no longer sign credit agreements would be just about tantamount to a parliament that no longer passes legislation.

## II. Germany's role in global politics

### II.1 Accepted actor in the multilateral arena

Even more than in other European countries, there is a broad-based consensus among German policy makers that the country's objectives and interests must be embedded and secured in the nexus of multilateral relations. That Germany regards the advancement of multilateralism as a guiding principle of its foreign, security, and development policies is not a matter of dispute. Germany's multilateral approach is closely bound up with the experience of European integration, and it increasingly has a global orientation. When it comes to Germany's political line at the United Nations, but also in the international financial and trade institutions, the country has traditionally subscribed to a policy of balance, compromise, and mediation, and this approach has allowed it to accumulate a substantial measure of political capital and trust.

We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that Germany was late to get started on the path of multilateralism. It was only in 1973 that Germany actually returned to the international community - when the two German states joined the United Nations,

5] See Steven Weber/Naazneen Barma et al., "How Globalization Went Bad," in: *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2007, pp. 48–54.

6] See Rawi Abdelal/Adam Segal, "Has Globalization Passed Its Peak?" in: *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2007, pp. 103–114.

with Chancellor Willy Brand holding an address before the UN General Assembly in New York. When in September 2003 - close to exactly thirty years later - Chancellor Gerhard Schröder addressed the United Nations, it was only the second time that a German chancellor had taken part in a regular opening session of the General Assembly.<sup>7</sup> In his address the chancellor recalled Germany's historic responsibility, describing the country as a "sovereign nation, a civil power at the heart of a united Europe." He was referring here to the important role the process of European integration has played for the policies Germany pursues in the multilateral arena, but also to Germany's "No" to the Iraq conflict.

When the Cold War came to an end, the multilateral institutions began to play a growingly important role in the context of Germany's external relations. Not only is "German security policy (now) based on a comprehensive concept of security," i.e. multilateral in nature, as is noted in the German Ministry of Defence's "White Paper 2006."<sup>8</sup> Since the late 1990s German foreign policy has also assumed a more markedly multilateral thrust, as evidenced e.g. by the coalition agreements concluded by Germany's ruling parties since 1998. With an approach to development policy that sees its role as part of a "global structural policy," and with a stepped-up engagement in international environmental policy, Germany has - in other policy fields as well - openly embraced the multilateral momentum that emerged in the 1990s.

## II.2 New role: Bundeswehr missions and collective security policy

The growing relevance of multilateral politics for Germany furthermore results from the obligations the country has assumed since the 1990s in the framework of collective security policy. With German soldiers, police officers, and civil personnel deployed in peace operations in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, in Lebanon, on the Horn of Africa, and in the DR Congo - the processes in which decisions on such missions are taken have assumed a new importance. Germany has repeatedly emphasized that this, too, is one of the reasons why it is interested in "taking on more responsibility" in the UN Security Council.

The bulk of Germany's participation in peacekeeping has taken place in the context of missions led by NATO or the EU and mandated by the UN. The mission in Lebanon, for which the Bundestag has authorized a troop contingent of up to 2400 soldiers, is the Bundeswehr's first large-scale participation in a "UN-led" peacekeeping mission. As a result, Germany has now become the UN's 18th most important troop contributor,<sup>9</sup> and defines itself as a member of the group of "enablers," who focus, among other things, on the provision of modern infrastructure in the field of transportation and communications. France and China (which rank 10th and 12th, respectively) come in only slightly ahead of Germany. With the UK, the US, and Russia ranking only 40th, 43rd, and 45th, respectively, the other permanent members of the Security Council appear to be indicating that while they are prepared to authorize missions, they themselves are not prepared to place their soldiers under UN command. Most of the "boots on the ground" are provided by the "classic troop-contributing countries of the Third World,"<sup>10</sup> with the field being led by Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Jordan.

Developments in world politics and the decisions taken by the Security Council should be enough to ensure that the UN's Department for Peacekeeping Operations in New York

7] See Gerhard Schröder, Rede vor der 58. Generalversammlung der Vereinten Nationen am 24.9.2003, <<http://archiv.bundesregierung.de/bpaexport/rede/38/531138/multi.htm>>.

8] Federal Ministry of Defence (ed.), White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr, Berlin 2006, p. 6.

9] United Nations, Department for Peacekeeping Operations, Ranking of Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations, 31 December 2006.

10] Federal Ministry of Defence (ed.), White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr, Berlin 2006, p. 43.

does not lose sight of Berlin. Be it in Lebanon, in Darfur, in East Timor, or in Somalia: experts estimate that both the size and the costs of global peace missions will continue to rise.<sup>11</sup>

### II.3 Old virtues

With its mandatory contribution of 8.6%, Germany is second only to the US and Japan in the share of the UN's budget that it contributes. This translates concretely into an annual German contribution to the UN's regular budget amounting to some US\$ 155 million. Together with the mandatory German contribution to the costs for UN peacekeeping missions - which have risen sharply in recent years - and the contributions it provides for UN tribunals and other activities, Germany's overall UN contributions amount to roughly US\$ 570 million per year. Unlike some P-5 countries, Germany does not cut its payments on political grounds, and it has therefore come to be seen as a good - because reliable - contributor.

Reliability, though, should not be equated with generosity. When it comes to voluntary contributions to the various programs operated by the UN, Germany - unlike Norway, the Netherlands, and Denmark - is not one of the frontrunners. One exception here is the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); Germany has not only provided the program's director (Achim Steiner, the second German program director after Klaus Töpfer), it has also constantly ranked in first or second place among the program's financial contributors.

Despite the relatively low level of the voluntary contributions that it provides for e.g. the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Germany, the world's third-largest donor nation, need not be shy in turning its contributions to development to account in the multilateral institutions. This is illustrated e.g. by the fact that in 2006 Germany was elected to be one of the founding members of the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

Another German pillar in international politics is the role the country plays in the economic and development dialogue at the UN. The German government has participated actively in the UN "Financing for Development" process. The "Action against Hunger and Poverty," an initiative launched by Brazilian President Lula da Silva and others and later joined by Germany, is likewise concerned with issues of development financing. The so-called Lula Initiative has set itself the goal of tapping innovative sources of development financing, one of the initiative's first steps being the introduction of an airline ticket tax whose proceeds would be used for development purposes. The Grand Coalition in Berlin has, however, made it clear that it is unwilling to follow the example set by France and Chile, which have already adopted the tax, and intends instead to concentrate on the issue complex of international tax evasion.

Alongside Germany's engagement for peace and development, the third pillar of Germany's multilateral engagement is its human rights work. In appointing an official Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid and creating the German Institute for Human Rights, the German government has in recent years broadened the set of instruments available to it in this field. Germany's support for the International Criminal Court likewise has a pronounced human rights dimension. The fact e.g. that Germany received the best result of all the members of its regional group when, in mid-2006, it was elected as a founding member of the UN Human Rights Council, is a clear-cut expression of the recognition that this engagement has met with among the international community.

11] See Security Council Report, Twenty Days in August. The Security Council Sets Massive New Challenges for UN Peacekeeping, Special Research Report No. 5, New York, 8 September 2006.

## II.4 Realistic objective or adventure? The permanent seat on the UN Security Council

The most risky step that German UN policy has taken thus far is the country's candidacy for a permanent seat on an enlarged UN Security Council. The German government has staked a substantial amount of its political capital on its bid - together with Brazil, India, and Japan (the G-4) - to "break into the highest ranks" of the UN. More than merely boosting its political prestige, a permanent seat on the Security Council would open up new avenues for Germany to increase its voice and decision-making rights in the world body.

In view of the ongoing shifts in the balance of world economic, political, and military power, the Security Council would appear ripe for reform. This state of affairs is mirrored in the final document of the World Summit 2005, in which the UN member states literally called for an "early reform of the Security Council." But what they really meant was exactly the opposite. The international community was *not* able to reach agreement on early reform of the Security Council, and thus on the question of what countries would be given a seat on an enlarged Council. Despite intensive diplomatic efforts, nothing came of the G-4 initiative, and it was not even presented to the General Assembly for a vote. Once again, it was regional rivalries and the concern of the present permanent Security Council members that enlargement could curtail their power that proved the downfall of all efforts to reform the body. The next "historic chance" is not yet in sight.

One "simple" solution would be a European seat on the Security Council. But while the idea may sound elegant, it has no chance of being adopted because it is vehemently opposed by France and the UK.

## II.5 "Intersecting multilateralisms": The Europeanization of UN policy

In its European Security Strategy of 2003, the EU came out clearly in favor of an "effective multilateralism" and efforts to strengthen the UN. It is perhaps less often perceived that the EU is already increasingly speaking with one voice in the UN bargaining and coordination process. Unlike the case of the WTO, though, national sovereignty is not affected by such cooperation in the UN framework; that is to say, the EU's status with the UN is the same as that enjoyed by other regional blocs. However, unlike the case e.g. of the African or Latin American group, European cooperation is embedded in the process of EU cohesion and the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The "weak link" of this cooperation is the UN Security Council. Not only do France and the UK exploit to the full the scopes of action that accrue to them from their privileged status. But even when other EU countries are elected to nonpermanent seats on the Security Council, they generally do less to work as catalysts of the EU than to highlight their own sovereign rights as voting members of the Council. The political wrangling in late 2002 over the events leading up to the Iraq war made this more than clear.

But go-it-alone approaches in the Security Council should not blind us to the remarkable progress that has been made on achieving cohesion in other policy fields. The EU's voting record in the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and at the major UN conferences can now be said to be largely homogeneous. Germany is a case in point, and it has voted along with the EU majority position over 90% of the time.<sup>12</sup> It is also remarkable that the process

12] See Katie Verlin Laatikainen/Karen E. Smith (eds.), *The European Union at the United Nations. Intersecting Multilateralisms*, New York 2006, p. 11.

of EU enlargement has taken a smooth course at the UN. Without much complaint, the new EU member countries from eastern Europe have “traded the coerced cohesion of the Soviet era for the negotiated cohesion of [the] ... EU.”<sup>13</sup> If at all, then it is the old EU member states that make use of the new intransparency brought about by the new EU-27 situation to go it on their own.

Apart from progress made on harmonization and the model function that the EU has assumed for the UN as a functioning multilateral system, the question now is whether the system of “intersecting multilateralisms” really leads to the desired result, i.e. contributes to building more effective international organizations. The balance is a mixed one. While it is true that the EU, as long as it speaks with one voice, can have a huge influence on the political process in the UN and other multilateral forums, and generally is, as one undiplomatic diplomat put it, “unbeatable.” At the same time, the EU’s policy of speaking with one voice - viz. with the voice of the (rotating) EU presidency - does tend to promote the culture of diplomatic compromise that is very widespread at the UN in any case. Once a compromise is reached within the EU, it is resolutely defended vis-à-vis the outside world, with the result that EU positions often appear to be inflexible, and often hold a risk of blockade. The latter is perhaps best illustrated with reference to the EU negotiating position on agricultural policy in the WTO framework: A relatively small number of passengers that make determined use of the weight and discipline of their own group can bring the whole train to a halt.

### III. The future of multilateralism: Two scenarios

The following scenarios seek to imagine two conceivable development paths for the multilateral system and at the same time to sketch the framework in which, seeking to influence multilateral events in their own sense, European and German policy is likely to move in the course of the coming 10 to 15 years

#### III.1 On the old cruise liner

Post-9/11 world trends continue: international terrorism, tensions between Islamic and Western world, climate change and scarce energy resources, poverty and social marginalization, Aids and polio, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the difficult process of democratization, and human rights violations - they are the central currents and undulations with which global politics sees itself confronted.

The political actors of the world of sovereign states are sitting in a boat, again and again cruising through phases of high sea. The US has returned to the command bridge of multilateral politics. The immediate reason for the comeback of US diplomacy (and realpolitik) is Washington’s realization that in the long term “idealistic” and for most part unilateral policies prove too costly. With it (hopefully) turning out that terrorist attacks on American soil are a thing of the past, the “war on terror” loses its relevance as a universal legitimacy base for US foreign and security policy. America’s return to the multilateral negotiating table is accompanied by an unmistakable emphasis on US national interests as a well as by a claim to a US right to determine the seating arrangements at the captain’s table. Washington also continues to claim a right to extensive “shore leave.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

China and India, but also other, smaller anchor countries in the South, are unable to shield themselves from the political dynamics in the international institutions. China in particular would like very much to avoid any “beauty contest” in the multilateral organizations, although it is, for reasons of pure national interest, forced to develop “soft power.”

Europe is struggling with its internal unification process. The resurgence of multilateral diplomacy engenders pressure to act. In view of this new power of the actual Germany seeks, together with other EU member states, to revitalize the transatlantic relationship. But it is also recognized in the EU that the only way to prevent the old relationship from losing any of its relevance is to forge new alliances and forums alongside the old “transatlantic multilateralism.” On European initiative, the old captain’s table (G-8) is enlarged to 20 seats (L-20).

The set of multilateral institutions remains on the whole an unstable formation. The group of old and new “big stakeholders” gradually see to it that the aging cruiseliner called “Multilateralism” is put through a general overhaul. A new “stabilizer” is installed in the form of a new global environmental organization in charge of a post-Kyoto regime. New “navigation instruments” are developed to negotiate the dangerous shoals of the Middle East: Under the auspices of the UN, the US, the EU, and increasingly China forge ahead with new Middle East initiatives that lead to an easing of regional tensions. The architecture of global peace operations is reformed in response to a permanent situation of “peacekeeping overstretch.” Instead of dispatching a large number of small “fireboats” to operate “on call,” efforts are undertaken to better coordinate national and international peacekeeping capacities. Generally speaking, the old cruise ship will not be anything like a luxury liner until around the year 2020, but it will have become a vessel than can navigate high and rough seas and circumnavigate any unanticipated obstacles.

### III.2 Alone on the high seas: Between junks, yachts, and aircraft carriers

World politics is characterized by persistently high seas and periodic outbreaks of seasickness - accompanied by different symptoms and open to different subjective prognoses. For people in the “rich world” terrorism, migration, energy crises and climate change, and the process of global change sparked by globalization shape the perception of the greatest threats. The “poor world,” on the other hand, continues to be dominated by fear of poverty, disease, and violent conflict.

The political sphere responds to the sense of insecurity voiced by citizens by sealing off national borders. Instead of transferring more sovereign rights to international bodies, nation-states seek, in a creeping process, to dodge their collective obligations. With everyone using his “own boat,” the old “MS Multilateralism” rarely has occasion to leave its port.

The US takes the lead here, providing a poor example for the rest of the world - regardless of what political party happens to hold power in Washington. One thing that plays an important role here is the unilateralist reflex of a superpower, another the evolution of a new, multipolar global order. Although Washington recognizes that China, and increasingly India as well, are not only bothersome competitors but may even provide the world’s “lonely policeman” a welcome measure of relief. However, the process involved in developing new forms of cooperation and the emergence of a “G-2” or “G-3” remains a patchy and conflictual one.

With a view to securing their expansive economic interests, China and India establish a worldwide network of political and military relationships. This in turn gives rise to a new, spiraling arms race. The new economic powers perceive multilateral forums more as a hindrance than as a stabilizing anchor. Instead of using their newfound political clout in multilateral bodies, they prefer to pursue their interests on a bilateral and regional basis.

At the rhetorical level, Europe and Germany continue to be proponents of “global governance.” Thanks to a lack of unity in its own camp, the ability of the EU to project its influence abroad is on the decline and Europe finds itself in a weakened position in the geopolitical system. Europe is forced to acknowledge that it can be marginalized as a peripheral power, or indeed even be “pulverized,” in its position between the new poles of political power. Despite the interest that Germany, France, and the UK publicly avow in revitalizing the Common Foreign and Security policy, the project founders in the face of national vanities and rivalries. A process of partial “renationalization” sets in.

The leading regional powers in the global South find themselves faced with a similar dynamic. They aspire to a role as regional anchor countries and call for a greater voice in shaping global affairs. But regional conflicts and competition soon set limits to their ambitions.

Russia’s role here remains unclear. It is neither able to initiate a renaissance of Russia as a superpower nor is it prepared to acquiesce in the role of an order-preserving regional power.

What we find at the end of the chain is the group of economically marginalized countries. In order to secure their own interests, they have no choice but to exploit their numerical superiority in the UN and other institutions and to engage in a policy of blockade and protest.

In sum, this leads to an erosion of the multilateral institutions. The antagonistic relations between two, three, or even four big global players engender in the UN - in ways similar to the Cold War era - a mixture of blockade and irrelevance. The United Nation develops into a forum that is taken seriously only by the poorest developing countries and the classic donor countries. The will to reform the international institutions flags. Resigned, many member states realize that the boat, not occupied by the most important players, is becoming unseaworthy. The UN concentrates its efforts on preparing a “nautical chart” setting out targets for peace, development, and human rights, with individual countries largely free to determine how best to reach these targets. Both national “coast guards” and a network of regional fleets take on the task of “securing the world seas” and providing “sea rescue services.”

#### **IV. Germany’s opportunities to shape policy in the multilateral institutions**

Germany’s foreign, security, and development policy, traditionally geared to the mainstream in the multilateral arena, has created trust among Germany’s international partners and is a solid foundation. Still, in view of the tumultuous global changes anticipated for the future, a more active role for Germany is both necessary and possible. Europe and Germany should seek to gain a higher profile as global policy shapers and problem solvers. The transatlantic partnership needs to be redefined and new alliances need to be formed.



#### IV.1 Midwife role in the birth of new alliances

Thus far Germany's cooperation with the rising economic and regional powers has been focused on bilateral economic relations. In the future, Europe and Germany should devote greater efforts to engaging China and India, but also countries like Brazil and South Africa, in a dialogue on global political issues. Climate and energy policy, poverty reduction, and international health policy would offer good entry points. Preference should be given here to forums that encompass country income groups and regional groups, not to bilateral forums. The "Lula Initiative" on development financing (initially a Brazilian-French idea) and established institutions like the G-20 (finance ministers) could serve as models. Innovative forms of bilateral cooperation - of the kind proposed under the "anchor country" concept developed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) should be used to supplement the policy mix. Dialogue with and among civil society actors could serve to generate important impulses and at the same time to underpin intergovernmental initiatives, as illustrated e.g. by the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Thought should also be given to what could be done to better network these dialogues and initiatives and to tie them more strongly into the political process in the multilateral institutions.

#### IV.2 Founding father of international forums

One good approach to improving the coordination of global politics would be to establish a new, permanent initiative and coordination mechanism. Not only the Security Council needs to be enlarged, the G-8 does as well. Together with its European partners, Germany should review the proposals that have been tabled on this issue and then work for one of these options. Former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, for instance, proposed the establishment of a group of 20 leading industrialized and emerging nations that would regularly meet at the level of the heads of state and government (the so-called L-20).

#### IV.3 Social worker for geopolitical relationships in crisis

Even though the time-worn image of the "transatlantic world order" may be a thing of the past, the goal of forming new alliances should not be to isolate the US when it comes to finding collective solutions to global problems. Ideally, efforts to form new alliances should be seen as complementary to efforts to revitalize the transatlantic partnership. Together with its European partners, Germany should seek to identify projects that could serve to bring together its historical transatlantic links with its relations to the Asia-Pacific region. European initiatives should serve as a catalyst in the process of reaching a new geopolitical balance of power.

#### IV.4 Motor of Europe's UN policy

German policy initiatives stand the best chance of realization if they are embedded in European cooperation. The blockade of the European Constitution and the uncertain future of the Common Foreign and Security Policy call for a pragmatic approach at the UN level.

#### IV.5 Think tank for global policy initiatives

Despite its active involvement in efforts to find diplomatic solutions to some of the pressing problems the world faces - e.g. in the Middle East - Germany should further step up its efforts as an initiator and shaper of the international system. Compared with classic

niche diplomacy, but also in relation to the UK and France, it would certainly appear possible for Germany to increase the number of initiatives it launches, in part with a view to setting accents of its own in the various fields of global politics. One point of interest here would be the number of German experts with seats on high-ranking multilateral expert bodies. For example, Germany was represented neither on the “High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change” nor on the “High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence.” It would be essential for Germany to enlarge its reservoir of internationally acknowledged experts on issue of global relevance. A further entry point might be seen in the German research and advisory landscape regarding global policy issues: it could - despite some progress that has already been made - be further enlarged as well. Thought might also be given to ways in which ideas and concepts that have emerged in the German parliament and ministries could be injected more systematically than they have until now into the process of global policy-making.

#### IV.6 Sisyphus or Little Jack Horner?

There is no place more difficult than the UN for Germany to realize its aspirations to a position more in line with the country’s interests and potentials. The objective of a permanent involvement in the Security Council’s work is, however, a correct one, and it should be pursued further. But there are doubts as to the right approach. Now that the G-4 initiative has failed (at least for the time being), a swift follow-up would not hold much promise of success. As soon as a new window of opportunity opens up, Germany should formulate its claim not as “something that is owed to us as the UN’s third-largest financial contributor” but as a reward for Germany for its creditable engagement in global affairs. This Germany could demonstrate by persistently pursuing an imaginative, forward-looking, and partnership-oriented policy in the multilateral institutions.

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