Good-bye UN hello United Democratic Nations
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HEADLINE: Good-bye UN hello United Democratic Nations
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HIGHLIGHT: An antidote to the wavering and moral relativism of Turtle Bay. The writer is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute professor at Touro Law Center and editor of www.EYEontheUN.org

BODY:
Today three individuals will address the opening of the 61st annual session of the UN General Assembly: Secretary-General Kofi Annan US President George W. Bush and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. For the city that marked last week's fifth anniversary of 9/11 with continuing trauma as well as resolve the UN spectacle is profoundly disturbing.

Outside the insulated halls of Turtle Bay there is a war going on. It is a war which threatens the welfare of decent people the world over and a war we cannot afford to lose.

We are therefore obliged to ask and answer the question: Is the UN a help or a hindrance to our success on the battlefield of ideas and the very real trenches that lie beyond?

To win this war we must be certain that those who call themselves our generals have the skills the fortitude and the integrity to deserve our trust and our support our toil and our blood. And if not we owe it to ourselves and to our children's children to ensure that there are alternatives to this institution's infirmity and that we will not react with indifference despair and defeat.

LET US consider therefore the UN's contribution to the war effort.

Earlier this month the UN gave the world its answer to 9/11. The General Assembly adopted its first-ever Global Counterterrorism Strategy. The title is grand. The substance is as follows:

* The UN resolved to implement General Assembly resolutions on the elimination of international terrorism - including one from 1991 which draws a distinction between terrorism on the one hand and the "legitimacy of the struggle of national liberation movements" on the other.

* The UN gave up on a definition of terrorism labeling the issue just "outstanding."

* The "strategy" deliberately excluded a call to sanction all states that harbor and assist terrorists.

* It omitted any reference to the state sponsorship of terrorism.

* And it began not with the defeat of terrorists but with "measures to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism" - which it describes as "preventing the defamation of religions religious values beliefs and cultures eradicating poverty" and reducing youth unemployment.

What does such a strategy do for winning the war? It throws sand in the eyes of the troops on the front lines and renders the goalposts a mirage.

SHORTLY AFTER 9/11 the UN created a new body to take the lead on responding to terrorist threats - the Security Council's Counterterrorism Committee. To this day the CTC has never named a single terrorist terrorist organization or state sponsor of terrorism. What does such a record do for the war effort? It leaves the stewardship of the war against terrorism in the hands of an agent that cannot define it.

The UN's top human rights body for six decades the Commission on Human Rights was charged with identifying
and responding to human rights abuse. During that time 30 percent of all its resolutions condemning a specific state for human rights violations were directed at Israel while not one resolution was adopted condemning states like China, Syria, or Zimbabwe. In recent years Libya served as its chair.

In the name of enhanced credibility the commission was replaced this past spring by a Human Rights Council. Its members include Cuba, China, and Saudi Arabia. Since June the council has adopted three resolutions and held two special sessions critical of human rights violations in specific states. Now 100% of them are on Israel.

In the meantime thousands die in killing fields and deserts and torture chambers around the world. What does this UN game plan do for winning the war? It defines the enemy as the Jew.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Kofi Annan recently decided to go to Iran and shake hands with President Ahmadinejad. The message Annan delivered in his own words was that "the international community should not isolate Iran." Ahmadinejad has embraced genocide called for the eradication of a UN member state denied the truth of the Holocaust even though its ashes form the cornerstone of the UN itself and broken his treaty obligations to end the pursuit of nuclear weapons. Yet the secretary-general still believes the president of Iran does not deserve isolation.

What does such a message do for winning the war? It tells us to appease apologize and run away.

THE UN SYSTEM produces hundreds of reports resolutions letters journals and circulars critical of human rights abuse by particular states. It multiplies their impact through the world's largest multilingual human rights Internet database a constant stream of press releases and the sponsorship of meetings year round across the globe.

Of the top 10 countries of human rights concern to the UN in 2005 Israel was first and the US was 10th. Iran was 18.

The human rights actions statistics for 2006 are even starkers. So far Israel is first and the US is third - of all 192 states on Earth. Human rights are the watchword of our time; they have become the rallying cry both for the forces of good and of evil.

What does the UN campaign to demonize the US and Israel do for winning the war? It provides sustenance for our foes and sows confusion among our friends.

TIME AND AGAIN the UN has stood opposed to US attempts to ensure a decent world order for itself and for others. America has tried to galvanize legal and political forces by calling the millions dead displaced and dying in Sudan genocide. But the UN reported last year that events in Darfur didn't meet its criteria for genocide.

America has called for immediate sanctions to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. But the UN Security Council called only for another report. The International Atomic Energy Agency said that it "remains unable to verify the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations with a view to confirming the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program." And we're meant to wait.

America has named Hizbullah a terrorist organization. But the UN refuses to do so - notwithstanding the 3,900 missiles directed at Israeli civilians this summer.

On the contrary said Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch-Brown: "It is not helpful to couch this Lebanon war in the language of international terrorism" - this because Hizbullah is "completely separate and different from al-Qaida."

America has worked arduously to support the nascent democracy in Iraq. But the UN has dragged its feet responding to appeals to train Iraqi judges and prosecutors.

America has sought repeatedly to put Chinese violations of the civil rights of a billion people on the UN agenda. But all such attempts have been defeated by maneuvers that take draft resolutions off the table before they can even be put to a vote.

America has called for the Security Council to take action on the dire situation in Burma or Myanmar. But the subject has not even made it to the council's agenda.

America attempted to introduce minimal qualifications for membership on the Human Rights Council relating to actual human rights performance. The General Assembly rejected the idea out of hand.
WHY HAVE America's best efforts to enlist the UN in the battle against intolerance and extremism failed? Who are these opponents wrapped in the UN flag who inculcate the view that American unilateralism non-cooperation and support for democratic ally Israel is the root cause of the world’s ills?

They are UN staffers like the secretary-general and his deputy who claim they are hapless functionaries operating at the mercy of member states - notwithstanding self-motivated trips to Iran handshakes with Hizbullah doing business with Saddam Hussein and blaming Middle American ignorance for the credibility gap. They are the 45 not free nations - to use Freedom House labels - who pass judgment on others in the General Assembly.

These are the states sponsors of terrorism. The ones who don't let women vote or drive or kill them in the name of "honor." The ones who raise their children to die while murdering as many others of a different faith as possible. The ones who shoot from behind mothers and babies. The ones who claim that authoring a cartoon a movie or a book can justify a death sentence.

They are also the 58 "partly-free" countries. Some of these are cronies others are just cowards. Some are like-minded with their more notorious neighbors others are very dependent.

Together these nations represent the majority of the 132 developing states and the majority of 192 UN members. They are unified not by a desire to democratize or even to develop since many are quite content with kingdoms and with servitude in their own backyards. They are a team because they are adroit at UN politics and they have learned that the cartel is good for business. This holds true particularly for the largest single bloc among them - the 56-member Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The one loose-knit collective that has miserably failed at coordination within the UN is the Community of Democracies - the pretense of a democratic caucus that counts Nepal Qatar and Russia among its members.

The remaining 89 "free" countries are not only outnumbered at the UN they are pitted against each other. The plethora of non-democratic regimes in the UN framework creates an incentive for a second-string player like France to take on the role of powerbroker and middleman. The possibility of using their influence with dictatorships to offset American power is too tempting for many EU nations. The halfway point between the US and the state sponsors of terrorism however is not where any democracy ought to be.

The UN system though does not merely divide and conquer democracies - it makes the loser pay for the experience. Just eight developed democracies contribute three-quarters of the entire UN regular budget.

IT IS therefore no mystery why the volleys of the UN propaganda machine are firing not at our enemies but at us. The mystery is why democracies and the US in particular permit the degradation of their resources and their resolve to continue.

Americans helped set reform goals at a UN summit a year ago. By the end of 2005 when progress was negligible the US administration tried using financial leverage with a cut-off date for change by June 2006. June came and went. They surrendered and paid.

So here we are today: no definition of "terrorist no comprehensive terrorism treaty in sight no sanctions on Iran continuing genocide not one of the 9 0 UN mandates terminated and the vast majority subject to no prospect of review; an investigative oversight authority whose budget remains in the control of the people and bodies it is supposed to investigate a human rights council hijacked by Islamic states and subject to less Western influence over the UN's human rights agenda than ever before an Ethics Board that organizes seminars while keeping whistleblower protection at a minimum and management reform plans to permit hiring firing and outsourcing stalled completely.

So democracies and especially President George W. Bush have a choice - a choice that is made all the more pressing by the alternatives to victory.

We can make speeches spinning wins out of losses and claiming success for Western policies at the UN. We can announce that we are working hard for reform that lies just over the horizon. We can proclaim that yet another subject will serve as the final real test of the UN's credibility. And Americans can claim that the attempt to thread US foreign policy through the eye of a UN needle is an end in itself.

Or we can say: No more. We gave this organization 60 years of our best efforts - Americans gave $ 5 billion last year alone. But our reform efforts have failed.

And in return for our willingness to look first to the UN for solutions we emboldened Iran its proxy Hizbullah
and fellow terrorists around the world. We handed our enemies the mantle of human rights and left more Sudanese to die.

There is an antidote to the self-doubt and moral relativism planted in our midst by Turtle Bay. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist calls it a council of democracies outside of the UN system that would truly monitor examine and expose human rights abuses around the globe.” Such a gathering is an idea whose time has come: the United Democratic Nations - an international organization of democracies by democracies and for democracies.

A world war is being waged and the UN is not on our side. It is a tragedy in view of its beginnings and its promise but the tragedy will be far greater if we refuse to say: Enough.
Deaglán de Bréadún assesses the prospects for the 61st session of the UN General Assembly which plays host to world leaders this week.

The annual session of the United Nations General Assembly begins quietly, almost imperceptibly. The outgoing president makes a farewell speech, highlighting the achievements of the previous 12 months and listing the issues that still need to be addressed.

The new president takes office with an address full of hope and ambition, a rallying-call to the nations of the earth to work together to bring lasting peace and prosperity to a troubled and endangered planet.

So it has been this year, with the energetic Jan Eliasson, who combined the Assembly presidency with the job of Sweden's foreign minister, pointing out that, on the plus side, two new UN institutions had been established. The Peacebuilding Commission aims to help countries emerging from the shadow of war to establish stability and lasting peace.

The other body set up is the Human Rights Council, replacing the controversial Commission on Human Rights, which had acquired an unfortunate reputation as a playground for dictatorships and other oppressive regimes.

Other changes and improvements were brought about, but the nettle of Security Council reform still has to be grasped. At present there are 15 members, five of whom have permanent seats and veto powers and therefore call the shots on major issues. They are the victorious powers in the second World War: USA, Russia, UK, China and France.

It's anachronistic and unrepresentative - no permanent member from Africa or Latin America for example - but there is no sign of any emerging consensus on the size and shape of a reformed Security Council.

The World Summit at UN headquarters last September was a disappointment in some respects, but its acknowledgment of the "responsibility to protect" was described by President Eliasson last week as "an historic advance". Traditionally the UN does not intervene in a country without the permission of the sovereign government, but the growth of internal conflict, so-called "ethnic cleansing" and genocide have led to a change of heart, although many former colonies remain deeply suspicious over what was originally called "humanitarian intervention".

However, Eliasson put the issue in stark terms: "We have seen the horrors of Cambodia, Rwanda and Srebrenica without taking action. The same tragedy must not befall the people in Darfur or elsewhere."

Seeking to put his finger on the fundamental problem in today's world, Eliasson - a highly-experienced statesman - wisely said there was an "underlying lack of dialogue among civilisations, cultures and nations".

It was appropriate in this context that the diplomat from the industrially and technologically advanced Scandinavian country should hand over to a representative of Bahrain, a nation that has been making a serious effort to modernise itself socially and politically and carve an image that contrasts with the troubled and strife-ridden Middle Eastern states we read about in the headlines.

The first woman to preside over the Assembly since 1969, Bahraini lawyer Haya Rashid Al Khalifa described the UN in her opening address as "an organisation of hope based upon commitment, consensus and co-
existence”. One of her first acts as General Assembly president was to welcome "the newest member of the UN family", Montenegro, which became an independent republic last June.

This will be Kofi Anna's last General Assembly as secretary general. His second five-year term of office comes to an end in December and the succession stakes for the toughest and most thankless job in the world have already begun.

The decision is made by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council and it's seen as Asia's turn this time.

The current front-runner is South Korean foreign minister Ban-Ki Moon (62) who came first in two anonymous straw polls when Security Council members were asked, both in July and last week, if they would "encourage", "discourage" or had "no opinion" about the names on a list of five contenders. But it's early days yet and a great deal of lobbying and politicking will ensue before the final choice is made.

As a student some 32 years ago, the present writer went along out of curiosity to observe the huge demonstration against Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's first speech to General Assembly. Some 100,000 people, mainly Jewish New Yorkers, gathered outside the UN building to shout slogans like, "Hell no, PLO!"

A similar demonstration is planned this week against the current bogeyman, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, characterised by the pro-Israel New York Sun newspaper as, "the Holocaust-denying, nuclear bomb-building, terrorism-sponsoring president of Iran".

Last year's hate-figure, for different reasons, was Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez but it already looks as if Ahmadinejad is going to occupy the spotlight.

Rather cleverly, he challenged his US counterpart, George W Bush to a debate. The idea was rejected out of hand by White House spokesman Tony Snow who said there would be no "steel-cage grudge match" between the two men.

As of tomorrow, the General Assembly will hit the headlines as heads of state and government, along with foreign ministers such as Ireland's Dermot Ahern, take centre-stage. Most of the interest will of course focus on the contribution from Mr Bush. His address to the General Assembly will be the culmination of a 20-day series of speeches centred around the anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks. All politics is local and the Republicans could be facing serious losses in the mid-term congressional elections in November. Observers say Mr Bush will seek to shore up support for the US invasion of Iraq which he still insists was an essential part of the "war on terror". We are likely to hear a robust defence of his Middle East policies combined with Churchill-style warnings about the dangers of appeasing fundamentalist fanatics (for "appeasers" in the Bush lexicon, read "Democrats").

Many of the speeches will doubtless highlight the need to maintain and accelerate progress towards achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals, a series of targets on eliminating poverty and disease adopted at the Millennium Summit six years ago. The deadline for achieving these targets is 2015 and there is some scepticism about the likelihood of success.

The UN has always sought to achieve progress on the social and economic front in parallel with its efforts to tackle the more glamorous and exciting political and security issues.

Total and unqualified successes in any sphere are very rare but still the work continues because, for all the UN's flaws and failings, the prospect of a world without an organisation aimed at achieving peace and consensus is too awful for most people to contemplate.

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Once again the "international community" is clamoring for the United Nations to fix things in the Middle East. It's reminiscent of an episode of The Simpsons in which Homer is in dire straits. In a panic, he yells heavenward, "I'm not normally a praying man, but if you're up there, please save me, Superman!" For some fetishists of multilateralism, the United Nations seems to fill this odd space in their brains once reserved for God, providence, the czar or even the Man of Steel -- whatever force of good that can save civilization from evil. If religion is the opiate of the masses, then the United Nations is the opiate of the elites.

Global U.N. worship is based on an odd mix of delusion and realpolitik. To self-described internationalists, the United Nations is supposed to be a counterweight to America's "unipolar" dominance. In the wake of the U.S.-led victory in the Cold War, America greeted an ungrateful world eager to see the remaining superpower counterbalanced by, well, something. And the United Nations was the only viable candidate. As U.N. Undersecretary-General Shashi Tharoor wrote a few years ago, "American power may well be the central issue in world politics today."

Of course, there are others who pay lip service to idealistic U.N. globaloney, but really they just like to use the place as a grand global rug under which any problem can be swept. If you hear a world leader start out by saying "something must be done," odds are he's going to finish that sentence by saying, "and the United Nations should do it."

Now, it would be one thing if the United Nations actually, you know, worked. But the problem is that its history is one of unrelenting failure. Oh, not in immunizing kids and feeding starving people. The United Nations gets a passing grade there, though certainly not an A. No, the failure comes in precisely the arena that supposedly justifies its existence: global peace and security. And that's where the delusion comes in. The folks at United Nations Plaza have proved themselves to be either well-intentioned incompetents or cagey, crapulent kleptocrats. The list of their biggest failures is spelled out in blood: Somalia, Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Congo (where peacekeepers reportedly raped the local girls), Iraq (where U.N. forces bugged out after a bombing in 2003), Darfur and, in what was supposed to be the model for U.N. peacekeeping, East Timor, which, after seven years of exemplary U.N. stewardship, recently became the ideal location to film a reality-show version of Mad Max.

Second only to keeping the peace, the United Nations was founded to protect human rights. So what does it say that groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch long considered the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to be a protective shield for torturers and tyrants? In The Future of the United Nations, an elegant sledgehammer of a book, Joshua Muravchik offers some useful tables showing that the world's worst offenders on human rights were more likely to be members of the commission than to be condemned by it. Last March, after years of such embarrassment, the United Nations finally moved to abolish the commission, creating instead the U.N. Human Rights Council, which is supposed to do a better job at keeping the worst abusers at bay. Fingers crossed, everybody.
In fact, finger crossing seems to be the plan. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and others want the United Nations to impose a cease-fire on Hezbollah and Israel and have peacekeepers guard the Israel-Lebanon border. Of course, a U.N. "interim force" has been "monitoring" the border since 1978. The Hezbollah and U.N. flags fly side by side there. In 2000, blue helmets videotaped Hezbollah kidnapping three Israeli soldiers, one of them an Israeli Arab. The video could have been useful in rescuing the soldiers. But, for eight months, the U.N. troops angrily denied even having the tape. When forced to admit they did, they refused to release it because that might compromise their "neutrality."

That neutrality was compromised long ago. As Muravchik notes, the United Nations is chockablock with agencies and bureaucrats dedicated to undermining Israel. Even known terrorists, including members of Hamas, are on the payroll. And in 2002, the old human-rights panel endorsed the "legitimacy" of Palestinian terrorism against Israel. Indeed, it says something that democratic Israel is -- by leaps and bounds -- the most condemned nation in the history of the United Nations. Not China, the Soviet Union or North Korea. Israel.

Still, despite this rich tapestry of failure and hypocrisy, the international community is once again behaving like Charlie Brown trying to kick that football, pushing for the United Nations to impose order, peace and tranquility. In the long term, such efforts have to fail. In a contest of wills between blue-helmeted Belgians and turbaned jihadists, don't bet on the boys in blue.

A premature U.N.-imposed cease-fire would be a disaster if it allows Hezbollah to escape annihilation. But the more interesting question is why people always think the United Nations is the answer before they hear the question.

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