



Passing the BATON

*Foreign Policy Challenges and
Opportunities Facing the New Administration*

Afternoon Panel Three: New Strategies for International Cooperation

Speakers: **Anne-Marie Slaughter**, Dean, Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs, Princeton University;
Bob Orr, Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Planning and Policy Coordination, United Nations;
Richard Armitage, Former Deputy Secretary of State;
Abiodun Williams, Vice President, Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention, United States Institute of Peace

Main Issues

The election of Senator Barack Obama has increased expectations for a change in the U.S. role in the international system. During this panel, Ambassador Armitage observed that the 2008 election put “the wind in the sails of international cooperation.” To that end, as the new administration takes office, the question is no longer if the United States will engage in international cooperation, but how it will do so. International cooperation is essential not only to promote U.S. interests and enhance U.S. legitimacy, but also to meet the new geopolitical challenges of a globalized world.

The panelists agreed that the task facing the new administration was how to combine power and principle in these very challenging times. To that end, the strategies for international cooperation focused primarily in two areas: cooperation through formal institutions and through informal networks. All of the panelists agreed that both formal institutions and informal networks, as well as non-state actors, had a critical role to play in fostering multilateralism and international cooperation.

The panelists first examined the existing international institutions and assessed their ability to promote cooperation. Dr. Orr noted that the uniqueness of the United Nations derives from its legitimacy, its global forum and operational capacity. He stressed that many of the “new” strategies in international cooperation could actually be achieved by using established multilateral instruments such as the UN. In a globalized world, he stressed, the legitimacy of operations has become more important than it was in the past. He argued that only by using formal institutions such as the UN, with its truly global mandate, could universal responses to global public goods problems—such as energy crises, non-proliferation and disarmament, and global terrorism—be crafted. He highlighted that the operational capacity of the UN has substantially increased over the last decade and that it is well poised to meet these global challenges.



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While Dr. Slaughter agreed with Orr that formal institutions would continue to play a key role in international cooperation, she noted that only through dramatic reform could the UN continue to be perceived as legitimate in the international system. According to Slaughter, as long as the Security Council does not reflect Twenty-First Century power realities, it will become less and less relevant for major decision-making. She argued that it is incumbent upon the United States to recognize that many international institutions cannot do what we want and need them to do unless they are more representative.

Armitage agreed with Slaughter that significant UN reform was needed and also suggested that the role of the Secretary General should focus more on being the chief administrative officer of the UN as stated in the UN Charter.

The panelists then addressed the advantages of fostering international cooperation through informal networks. Slaughter argued that informal networks lack the institutional inertia and impediments of formal institutions. In addition, she pointed out that these informal networks already exist and that it is the job of policy makers to harness the power of digital media and emerging technologies to promote increased linkages. As an example, she discussed the importance of the recent meeting of finance ministers from the G20 countries. The success of that informal grouping and, as she argues, the *de facto* end of the G8, demonstrates that the potential exists for other G20 groups to emerge around various functional domains. She proposed a G20 for food ministers, a G20 for CT officials, and a G20 for energy officials. In this way, the table for global decision making will be expanded.

Armitage echoed Slaughter's belief in the importance of informal networks for cooperation and her belief that the United States should establish functional coalitions. He argued that the United States should decide the global issues on which we want to take the lead and those on which others can take the lead. This sort of "strategic leadership" requires looking for partners and knowing when to ask them to take on a leadership role. Armitage concluded by stating that U.S. credibility could be enhanced by empowering other states and even other non-state actors to take the lead in tackling global issues.

Policy Conclusions*

1. The panelists agreed that, with the election of Senator Obama, the United States faces an opportunity to reclaim its credibility in the international system.

* Policy Conclusions from Group Panel Discussions at Passing the Baton 2009 were not necessarily achieved by group consensus. In some instances, individual panel members may have been in disagreement with the larger group. For specific information on each panel's contents, please see the comprehensive online archive at www.usip.org/baton2009.



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2. All of the panelists agreed that the future international cooperation required not just formal institutions but also the participation of informal networks and non-state actors.
3. The panelists affirmed that President-elect Obama needs to take immediate actions to demonstrate his dedication to international cooperation and restore U.S. credibility in the international system.
 - a. Dr. Orr recommended that the ratification of the CTBT would substantially increase U.S. prestige.
 - b. Ambassador Armitage recommended that the new administration should immediately ratify the Law of the Sea Treaty and close the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay.
4. In addition, the new administration needs to reaffirm the importance of public diplomacy in all aspects of foreign policy promotion.
5. The level of U.S. power is less important than the manner in which it exercises that power in the international system.