Notes for a Presentation to an ACUNS Lunch

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UN Summit: limited progress

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Check Against Delivery

Introduction

154 HOG/S came to New York, and made the <u>least</u> of their opportunity to reform the UN (Canada and a few others excepted).

Why?

- 1. Too satisfied with Status Quo
 - Russia, China,
- 2. Too afraid to risk change/inert
 - Much of the G77
- 3. Too concerned with placating domestic audiences
 - USA
- 4. Too distracted by scandal
 - Secretariat
- 5. Too inept
 - The negotiating process
 - The US initiative
 - Giving the "Spoilers" (e.g., Cuba, Pakistan, Libya, etc.,) too much credibility
- 6. Too Disengaged
 - Most world leaders
- 7. Too ambitious

- High Level Panel (plus/minus 144 recommendations)
- Sachs (plus/minus 45 recommendations)
- The Secretary General, at least initially (60 plus recommendations)

But was it there to win from the outset?

Probably not, short of WWIII

But was it a failure?

It certainly did not meet expectations, positive or negative.

The UN did not die, disappointing many neo-cons and some US Congressmen.

But it did not get a new lease on life, either.

It failed on ACD, terrorism

It neither advanced nor set back some major issues, especially the MDG's

It achieved limited progress but what it did achieve was significant:

- R2P
- Peace-building
- Human Rights Secretariat
- Democracy

Institutionally, the outcome was otherwise near zero.

- UNSC
- ECOSOC
- UNGA

Lessons Learned

More dust needs to settle (cf. Brahimi Report), but the following seem plausible at this stage:

- 1. Short of WWIII, transformation of the UN in one fell swoop is not possible.
- 2. Absent truly compelling necessity, reforming statutory institutions in particular is difficult
 - UNGA—The preserve of the G-77
 - UNSC—the P5 forever; the G 4 arguments for permanent seats were not persuasive,
 - ECOSOC—the appendix of the UN
- 3. Limited, incremental change is possible
 - if it is well-prepared, focused, has steady political backing, and complies with the Zeitgeist
 - E.G., R2P.
 - Important to re-visit not just the outcomes document but the inputs as well and focus on particulars, such as terrorism
- 4. Change requires consistent pressure from/participation of "the Peoples"
 - More NGO engagement is crucial
 - Members of Parliament
- 5. A better negotiating framework is essential
 - E.G., an L 20 to cook the basic deal