

Background

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The U.S. Should Oppose the Proposed U.N. Alliance of Civilizations

Brett D. Schaefer

In recent years, a host of events have affected and strained public perceptions between Islamic countries and the United States and Europe. The more notable incidents include the terrorist attacks on U.S. embassies in East Africa and the World Trade Center, the 2004 Madrid train bombing, a major terrorist attack in London, continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, riots over cartoon portrayals of Muhammad, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israeli forces in Lebanon, and the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The general public perception in the West is that Muslims are fanatical, violent, and intolerant, while Muslims in the Middle East see Westerners as selfish, immoral, greedy, violent, and fanatical.¹

To combat these tensions, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in July 2005 proposed an Alliance of Civilizations to “respond to the need for a committed effort by the international community—both at the institutional and civil society levels—to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions, and polarization which potentially threaten world peace.”² The alliance was to be guided by a “high-level group of eminent persons,” selected by Annan in consultation with the prime ministers of Spain and Turkey, that would submit a report in late 2006 laying out recommendations and a practical plan of action to overcome this divide.³

The *Report of the High-Level Group* is testament to the limited value of such exercises by the U.N. Focused obsessively on the failings of Western countries while largely ignoring the faults of Muslim countries, it implic-

Talking Points

- The Alliance of Civilizations is a disappointment. Far from offering a “bridge” to cross the divide between Muslim and Western societies, the report from its High-Level Group offers little more than platitudes, wishful thinking, one-sided analysis, faulty justification for constraining freedom of expression, and repackaged calls for increased assistance from Western countries.
- The primary responsibility for the Middle East’s problems lies with those governments in the Middle East and North Africa that refuse to change policies that preserve unequal legal and economic treatment of the female population, retard economic growth and job creation, and repress fundamental religious and political freedoms.
- The United States should oppose the proposals for the U.N. General Assembly to give the alliance a permanent mandate, establish a permanent funding stream, and create new supporting mechanisms.

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itly justifies constraining freedom of media, speech, and expression in the name of halting “the spread of hatred resulting in Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism” and proposes a dubious agenda to “improve” non-Muslim media treatment of Muslims. The report glosses over the underlying reasons behind the economic problems of many Islamic countries in favor of a laundry list of objectives.

Despite the report’s dubious contributions, on December 18, Secretary-General Annan recommended that the U.N. adopt and implement its recommendations.⁴ Such action would do little to improve relations between Western and Muslim countries but would enshrine the Alliance of Civilizations and a host of supplementary bodies in the U.N. system.

The United States should oppose these proposals to give the alliance a permanent mandate, establish a permanent funding stream, and create new supporting mechanisms.

Origins of the Alliance of Civilizations

Polling data support the general perception that mutual poor regard between people in Western nations and those in Islamic countries is a significant problem. For instance, the June 2006 Pew Global Attitudes Survey found that:

After a year marked by riots over cartoon portrayals of Muhammad, a major terrorist attack in London, and continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, most Muslims and Westerners are convinced that relations between them are generally bad these days. Many in the West

see Muslims as fanatical, violent, and as lacking tolerance. Meanwhile, Muslims in the Middle East and Asia generally see Westerners as selfish, immoral and greedy—as well as violent and fanatical.⁵

The notion that the U.N. could somehow alleviate these poor public opinions through international conferences dates back to the Dialogue Among Civilizations, a U.N. program that was first proposed by Iran in 1998 and launched by Annan in 1999. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.N. decided to replace the dialogue with the Alliance of Civilizations in 2005. Although former Iranian President Mohammed Khatemi, who initiated the Dialogue Among Civilizations, remains prominent,⁶ Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made the proposal to create the alliance at the 59th U.N. General Assembly and were subsequently backed by former Secretary-General Annan.

The purposes of the Alliance of Civilizations are described succinctly in the *Report of the High-Level Group*:

The Alliance seeks to forge collective political will and to mobilize concerted action at the institutional and civil society levels to overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that militate against such a consensus. And it hopes to contribute to a coalescing global movement which, reflecting the will of the vast majority of people, rejects extremism in any society.⁷

1. Pew Research Center, *The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other*, Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 22, 2006, at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=253> (February 15, 2007).
2. U.N. News Centre, “Annan Announces New Initiative to Bridge Gap Between Islamic, Western Worlds,” July 14, 2005, at www.un.org/apps/news/storyAr.asp?NewsID=15027 (February 15, 2007).
3. U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Alliance of Civilizations: Report of the High-Level Group*, November 13, 2006, at www.unaoc.org/repository/HLG_Report.pdf (February 15, 2007). Cited hereafter as *Report of the High-Level Group*.
4. Media advisory, “Recommendations on the Follow-Up to the Alliance of Civilizations to Be Presented to the General Assembly,” U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, at www.unaoc.org/repository/media_advisory_december_events.pdf (February 15, 2007).
5. Pew Research Center, *The Great Divide*.
6. Claudia Rosett and George Russell, “New U.N. Scheme: Alliance of Civilizations,” Fox News, November 22, 2005, at www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,176362,00.html (February 15, 2007); Benny Avni, “New Forum Kicks into High Gear at the U.N.,” *The New York Sun*, December 19, 2006, at www.nysun.com/article/45391 (February 14, 2007); and U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Report of the High-Level Group*, p. 11.
7. U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Report of the High-Level Group*, p. 47.

Annan assembled the High-Level Group of “eminent persons” to guide this effort by meeting and drafting a report with actionable recommendations by the end of 2006 for U.N. member states to adopt. Upon receiving the report in late 2006, the Secretary-General recommended that the U.N. adopt and implement its recommendations:⁸

The Report’s proposals—in the areas of politics, media, education, youth and migration—comprise an action plan to improve cross-cultural relations. Many of its suggestions—such as media campaigns to fight discrimination, or the critical review of educational materials—seek to foster tolerance and dispel stereotypes at the local and individual levels. . . .

So let us work together to transform this Report into action, and let us work to strengthen and improve not any single society or any one nation, but all of human civilization.

Annan’s endorsement raises serious questions about his motives. The report calls for establishing a High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations with a support office; a U.N.-financed Forum for the Alliance of Civilizations; an Alliance of Civilizations fund; and regional, national, and local Alliance Councils. All of these recommendations would make the alliance—currently just a temporary initiative sponsored by Annan and some member states—a permanent fixture in the U.N. with accompanying bureaucracies, funding, and standing.

Annan’s endorsement raises other concerns beyond simply embedding a pet project into the U.N. system. For instance, Annan appointed his former deputy Iqbal Riza—who was deeply embroiled in the Oil-for-Food scandal for allegedly shredding documents related to the investigation—as Spe-

cial Advisor of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations.⁹ Moreover, Annan is rumored to be one of the individuals being considered for the post of High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.¹⁰

Thus, Annan’s endorsement could directly benefit him and at least one of his close associates. Annan has only reinforced this impression since leaving office through his published writings in support of the alliance.¹¹ Regardless of what happens with the alliance, in the interest of minimizing the impression of corruption or unprofessional conduct in the U.N., Annan and his associates should not be appointed to positions that they had a key role in creating.

The Disappointing Report

The report falls well short of its own goal of offering a “practicable program of action for states, international organizations and civil society aimed at promoting harmony among societies.”¹² Indeed, the report often simply endorses ongoing initiatives. When it does offer analysis and recommendations, they are burdened by biased perspective, unacceptable calls for restrictions on free speech, and a list of objectives in place of a strategy to revive the economic performance of Middle Eastern and North African nations.

Biased Perspective. The report’s most egregious failing is its one-sided treatment of the relationship between Western and Muslim countries. With the exception of noting that terrorism is a problem undermining relations with the West, the report consistently treats the people in Islamic countries as victims of depredations by Western countries and Israel. The governments of Muslim countries for the most part are given a pass. The report largely ignores that the Middle East and North Africa are blessed with oil, enjoy a rich cultural and religious identity,

8. Media advisory, “Recommendations on the Follow-Up to the Alliance of Civilizations to Be Presented to the General Assembly.”

9. Joseph Klein, “Alliance of Civilizations?” *FrontPage Magazine*, March 29, 2006, at www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=21814 (February 15, 2007), and Rosett and Russell, “New U.N. Scheme.”

10. Kuwait News Agency, “Annan Calls for Active Effort to ‘Discover What Is Best’ in Other Beliefs,” December 19, 2006, at www.kuna.net.kw/home/story.aspx?Language=en&DSNO=935529 (February 15, 2007).

11. Kofi Annan, “Do As You Would Be Done by,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, English ed., February 2007, at <http://mondediplo.com/2007/02/13civilisations> (February 16, 2007; subscription required).

12. U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Report of the High-Level Group*, p. 47.

and have enjoyed independence from colonial powers for decades. With these advantages, the governments in the region have only themselves to blame for their unequal legal and economic treatment of their female populations, their failure to implement policies conducive to economic growth and job creation, and the prevalence of autocratic rulers.

In typical U.N. fashion, the report focuses obsessively on “the growing urgency of the Palestinian issue,” which is judged “a major factor in the widening rift between Muslim and Western societies.” The report goes on to declare that “without a just, dignified, and democratic solution based on the will of all peoples involved in this conflict, all efforts—including recommendations contained in this report—to bridge this gap and counter the hostilities among societies are likely to meet with only limited success.” Yet the report merely offers the recycled objective of a reinvigorated multilateral peace process seeking “recognition of both the Palestinian and Jewish national aspirations and...the establishment of two fully sovereign and independent states living side by side in peace and security.” The report also pins its hope on a white paper to acknowledge the “competing narratives of Palestinians and Israelis” with the aim of providing a “level-headed and rational analysis [that] would make it clear to the Palestinian people that the price of decades of occupation, misunderstanding and stigmatization is being fully acknowledged, while at the same time contributing to exorcize the fears of Israelis.”¹³

These recommendations should sound familiar because most of them have been part of the peace strategy for the past decade—a process that has been less than successful. They also ignore the interest of many Muslim governments in perpetuating the conflict. As acknowledged in the 2004 *Arab Human Development Report*, the Israeli “occupation [of Palestine] has also given Arab regimes a pretext for postponing internal reform.”¹⁴ Moreover, despite the

importance placed upon the conflict in the report, the High-Level Group failed to include a single representative from Israel. However, it did include nine individuals from predominantly Muslim nations among its 20 members, including the former president of Iran. Notably, the current Iranian president has publicly called for the destruction of Israel.

Meanwhile, the report downplays the fact that terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda explicitly link their terrorist acts to Islam as interpreted through the lens of an extremist ideology. Instead, the report focuses on observations like:

[N]one of the world religions condones or approves the killing of innocents. All promote the ideals of compassion, justice and respect for the dignity of life. However, in a wide range of recent conflicts in many parts of the world religion has been exploited to justify intolerance, violence and even the taking of life.¹⁵

This may be true, but it is beside the point. The use of Islam by terrorist groups is central to the ongoing deterioration of relations between Western and Muslim nations and cannot be glossed over.

In this regard, the report’s failure to call upon Muslim political and religious leaders to denounce religiously based violence and intolerance, specifically terrorism by Islamic extremists, is a gross oversight. Similarly, the report’s emphasis on “respect for religious monuments and holy sites” and “teaching about religions” rather than emphasizing the need for governments to remove existing obstacles to religious freedom is odd considering the severe restrictions on religious freedom in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁶

Media Censorship. Another worrisome aspect of the report is its implicit approval of constraints on freedom of expression and the press. The report asserts that “[i]ncreased attention to the responsibil-

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

14. U.N. Development Programme, *Arab Human Development Report 2004: Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, p. 3, at http://hdr.undp.org/reports/detail_reports.cfm?view=912 (February 15, 2007).

15. U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Report of the High-Level Group*, p. 10.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 26, 34, and 41, and U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “Near East and North Africa,” *2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, March 8, 2006, at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/c17095.htm (February 15, 2007).

ity of the press need not, and should not, detract from advocacy for the freedom of the press.”¹⁷ However, this assurance is weak in the face of the lengthy recommendations for restraining media content and coverage. For instance, the report concludes:

Assertions that Islam is inherently violent and related statements by some political and religious leaders in the West—including the use of terms such as “Islamic terrorism” and “Islamic fascism”—have contributed to an alarming increase in Islamophobia which further exacerbates Muslim fears of the West.¹⁸

The report counsels that:

[Western activists and governments should] avoid certain actions that have negative repercussions on debates taking place in Muslim societies. Propagation by Western media and official authorities of over-simplified explanations that either blame Islam as a religion or falsely pit secularists against religious activists has a detrimental effect.¹⁹

The report goes beyond merely cautioning against untoward statements by proposing a broad-based international campaign to censor and influence media representations of Muslims that includes:

- Creating training programs in schools of journalism to widen “journalists’ understanding of critical international issues...and enhance their capacity to inform the public accurately and in a balanced way.”
- Encouraging leaders in the fields of “academia, religion, politics, civil society, and culture” to generate op-ed pieces, commentaries, and video and audio statements to help deepen intercultural understanding.
- Directing greater resources toward media aimed at “improving popular attitudes between different cultures,” including broadcasting during major events that attract world attention; productions aimed at youth populations like video games, car-

toons, and Web sites; and producing TV series in multiple languages to address historical, social, and psychological aspects of relations among societies to foster mutual understanding.

- Encouraging producers and script writers, particularly in Hollywood, to increase the “portrayal of normalized Muslim and other under-represented or negatively stereotyped communities in popular media.”
- Encouraging governments, media organizations, and civil society to work together to prevent the Internet from being used and abused to “disseminate racist stereotypes and intolerance that can inspire hatred and violence” and instead develop initiatives to promote the Internet as “an instrument of cross-cultural dialogue.”
- Monitoring and reviewing media coverage of Islamic–Western relations and rewarding efforts that “aim to improve coverage of relations between Muslim and Western societies.”
- Establishing a “risk fund” to “temper the market forces that encourage sensationalistic and stereotyped media and cultural materials” and to compensate theaters, museums, publishers, and other cultural venues for losses incurred when they feature media that “humanize and normalize the views of populations in the West and in predominantly Muslim societies about one another.”²⁰

It is doubtful that a politically correct media campaign will overcome bitterness based on real, substantive differences. Moreover, the report’s emphasis on altering Western media products and content seems off target since the Pew Global Attitudes survey finds that:

[D]espite the deep attitudinal divide between Western and Muslim publics...the views of each toward the other are far from uniformly negative. For example, even in the wake of the tumultuous events of the past year, solid majorities in France, Great Britain and the U.S. retain overall favorable opin-

17. U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Report of the High-Level Group*, p. 40.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 40–42.

ions of Muslims.... On average, Muslims in predominantly Muslim countries are more likely to associate Westerners with multiple negative traits than vice versa.²¹

Considering the spate of protests and riots in Islamic countries following publication of cartoons depicting Mohammed and an academic commentary by Pope Benedict XVI, tolerance seems far more lacking in the Muslim world than in the West. In spite of this, the report virtually ignores the pervasive constraints, official or otherwise, on freedom of speech, expression, and the press in many Islamic countries.²²

Most troubling, however, is that all of these suggestions would greatly increase government intervention in the media to promote the above-cited agenda, presumably directed by the Alliance of Civilizations and its related officers and bodies as proposed in the report. This course of action to encourage some media coverage and discourage other media coverage to prevent “negative repercussions” is an invitation to censorship that is far more likely to undermine freedom of speech, expression, and the press than it is to protect it.

Misdiagnosis of Problems in the Middle East.

The report notes a number of economic problems in Islamic countries, including youth unemployment, lack of access to the Internet, persistent poverty and global inequities, and migration to developed countries. The recommendations for resolving these concerns are predictable and unlikely to work. The recommendations include calls for convening and supporting “a coalition of multilateral agencies and civil society organizations...to pilot broad-based

youth employment initiatives,” “expanding access to education,” and “expanding Internet access in developing countries.” They also call for “wealthier countries [to meet] their commitments of increased investment in the developing world, as this, together with good governance and capacity building efforts in developing countries, would help improve economic conditions in those countries.”²³

The problem with these recommendations is that they are a wish list rather than a strategy. They largely ignore the main reason why countries in the Middle East have failed to develop or generate jobs: namely, their governments’ repressive economic policies. Sound economic policies, the rule of law, and good governance are essential to promoting economic growth, creating new jobs, and reducing poverty. According to the 2007 *Index of Economic Freedom*, published by The Heritage Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*, the Middle East–North Africa region has the second lowest ranking on economic freedom. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that ranks lower.²⁴ As the World Bank has noted, “Middle Eastern nations with high youth unemployment rates continue to thwart small and medium businesses with heavy legal burdens and piecemeal reforms.”²⁵

Economic freedom and increased integration into the global economy are urgently needed if the countries of the Middle East and North Africa are to experience the increased economic growth and development that lead to job creation. However, the report makes deceptive and inaccurate statements like “income inequality has continued to rise in recent decades and current studies indicate that

21. Pew Research Center, *The Great Divide*.

22. “Generally, media in the [Middle East and North Africa] region remain constrained by extremely restrictive legal environments, in which laws concerning libel and defamation, the insult of monarchs and public figures, and emergency legislation continue to hamper the ability of journalists to write freely.” Indeed, the only nation possessing a free rating in the region is Israel. Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2006*, at www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=16 (February 15, 2007). For more information, see U.S. Department of State, “Near East and North Africa.”

23. U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Report of the High-Level Group*, pp. 27, 29, and 37.

24. Tim Kane, Kim R. Holmes, and Mary Anastasia O’Grady, *2007 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2007), pp. 1–13, at www.heritage.org/research/features/index/chapters/pdfs/Index2007_execsum.pdf.

25. News release, “Doing Business in 2006: Middle Eastern and North African Nations Lag in Encouraging Businesses with Regulatory Reforms,” World Bank Group, International Finance Corporation, September 13, 2005, at www.doingbusiness.org/documents/DB2006_PR_MENA_English.pdf (February 15, 2007).

increased integration into the world economy has actually exacerbated the divergence in the economic growth of countries.”²⁶ Such statements are based on selective data that ignore evidence that globalization has led to a convergence of global incomes,²⁷ and they provide irresponsible justification for developing countries to distance themselves from international markets, which provide the surest path to increasing economic growth, development, jobs, and economic opportunity.

What the United States Should Do

The Alliance of Civilizations report offers little more than platitudes, wishful thinking, one-sided analysis, faulty justification for constraining freedom of expression, and repackaged calls for increased assistance from Western countries. Nonetheless, the report shamelessly urges the General Assembly to incorporate the Alliance of Civilizations into the agenda of its 62nd session and to establish a litany of supporting councils, representatives, forums, and funding to expand the work of the alliance. According to the Alliance of Civilizations:

[Former] UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General Designate Ban Ki-moon, Spanish President Zapatero and Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan met at UN Headquarters in New York to discuss the follow-up to the Report of the AoC High-level Group. They agreed that an implementation plan for the Report’s recommendations is to be drafted in the coming three months and finalized upon the Secretary-General’s nomination of a High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. Subsequently,

Annan, Zapatero and Erdoğan held an informal meeting of the General Assembly to present the plan for implementing the Alliance of Civilizations recommendations.²⁸

This three-month timeline would end in March 2007. Clearly, the alliance’s performance does not justify such expense, expansion of U.N. bureaucracy, or radical expansion of U.N. authority to restrict freedom of expression. Not even the report’s sole highlight—a repudiation of the targeting of non-combatants by terrorists—can offset its overall weaknesses or justify American support.²⁹ In advance of the announced plan for implementing the Alliance of Civilizations, the United States should:

- **Call upon Muslim political and religious leaders to denounce religiously based violence and intolerance and to condemn terrorism by Islamic extremists.**
- **Reject the report’s implicit approval of constraints on freedom of expression and the press** and clearly state that the U.S. will not support any international campaign to manipulate media coverage of Muslims. Encouraging some media coverage and discouraging other media coverage to prevent “negative repercussions” is an invitation to censorship that would likely undermine freedom of speech, expression, and the press.
- **Insist that primary responsibility for the Middle East’s economic and social problems lies with those governments in the Middle East and North Africa** that maintain policies that preserve unequal legal and economic treatment

26. U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Report of the High-Level Group*, p. 7.

27. Based on his research on global income distribution and poverty, economist Xavier Sala-i-Martin concludes that “Looking at the planet as a whole, never in history has poverty been eradicated so rapidly as it has been during our lifetimes. Moreover, individual income inequalities have been falling, and this is the first time they have fallen since the eve of the Industrial Revolution. The aggregate numbers have never looked better. Looking at the world distribution of income (WDI), the world is a better place.” See Xavier Sala-i-Martin, “Global Inequality Fades as the Global Economy Grows,” chap. 1, in Kane *et al.*, 2007 *Index of Economic Freedom*, p. 16.

28. U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, “Secretary-General Presents AoC Report at Informal Session of the General Assembly,” December 18, 2006, at www.unaoc.org/aoc.php?page=10&id=76 (February 16, 2007).

29. “We must make it clear that, in our view, no political end, whether arising from historical injustice or contemporary provocation, and whether committed by resistance organizations, global militant groups, or by states, can justify the targeting of civilians and non-combatants. Such actions must be condemned unequivocally.” U.N. Alliance of Civilizations, *Report of the High-Level Group*, p. 16.

of the female population, retard economic growth and job creation, and repress fundamental religious and political freedoms. Efforts by the international community or donor nations to assist developing nations in the Middle East and North Africa with these problems will be futile unless those countries adopt policies that permit progress to occur.

- **Point out that sound economic policies, the rule of law, and good governance are essential to promoting economic growth, creating new jobs, and reducing poverty.** The U.S. should urge the countries of the Middle East and North Africa to adopt economic freedom and pursue increased integration into the global economy if they wish to experience the increased economic growth and development that lead to job creation and reduce poverty.
- **Oppose efforts to make the Alliance of Civilizations a permanent part of the U.N.** and refuse to support the establishment of supporting councils, representatives, forums, and funding to expand the work of the alliance. If individual nations wish to continue their support for the alliance through voluntary contributions, that is their right, but financial support should not be provided through assessed contributions to the U.N. or its affiliated funds and programs, nor should the alliance be awarded official status within the U.N. system.
- **Oppose the nomination of Kofi Annan as High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations on the basis of conflict of interest.** Annan and his close associates were instrumental in supporting creation of the Alliance of Civilizations, initiating the alliance report, and selecting those participating in the High-Level Group, which recommended official status for the alliance in the U.N. system and the creation of a number of new positions and supporting bodies for the alliance. Regardless of what happens with the alliance, in the interest of minimizing the impression of corruption or unprofessional conduct in the U.N., Annan and

his associates should not be appointed to positions that they had a key role in creating.

Conclusion

The Alliance of Civilizations is a disappointment. Far from offering a “bridge” to cross the divide, the Alliance of Civilizations report offers little more than platitudes and wishful thinking. The report’s lack of substance and originality—it acknowledges several times that many of its recommendations and initiatives are already in place or being pursued—explains the lack of interest in the report since its release in November.

Despite failing to meet its objective, the *Report of the High-Level Group* shamelessly calls for the General Assembly to incorporate the Alliance of Civilizations as part of the U.N. by establishing a litany of supporting councils, representatives, forums, and funding mechanisms to expand its work. Kofi Annan’s petition for the U.N. to adopt these recommendations raises serious questions about his motives because he is rumored to be one of the individuals being considered for the post of High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.³⁰

In spite of Annan’s continued attempts to promote the Alliance of Civilizations, there is scant justification for the proposed expense, expansion of the U.N. bureaucracy, and expansion of U.N. authority in a manner that is likely to restrict freedom of expression. Not even the report’s sole highlight—a repudiation of the targeting of noncombatants by terrorists—can offset its overall weaknesses or justify American support. To the extent that the alliance’s ideas prove useful, they are neither unique nor dependent on the perpetuation of the alliance or granting it official U.N. status. The U.S. should clearly refute the report’s false assumptions and biased perspective and oppose any effort to make the alliance a permanent part of the U.N.

—Brett D. Schaefer is Jay Kingham Fellow in International Regulatory Affairs in the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, a division of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, at The Heritage Foundation.

30. Kuwait News Agency, “Annan Calls for Active Effort to ‘Discover What Is Best’ in Other Beliefs.”