

# WebMemo



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## The Appointment of Mark Malloch Brown Will Strain U.S.–British Relations

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The appointment of Sir Mark Malloch Brown as the U.K.'s new minister for Africa, Asia, and the United Nations is the clearest sign yet of a break with the pro-U.S. stance of the Blair government. Malloch Brown, who served as chief of staff and deputy to former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, is well known for his stridently anti-American views and fierce opposition to the war in Iraq. Although Malloch Brown will not be a full member of Gordon Brown's Cabinet, he will be entitled to attend some cabinet meetings and is expected to become one of the most powerful voices in British foreign policy after David Miliband, the newly appointed Foreign Secretary (and also a critic of the Iraq war and Tony Blair's support for Israel). His selection sends a clear signal that the Brown government will adopt a more openly critical stance toward U.S. foreign policy.

**A Critic of U.S. Foreign Policy.** Malloch Brown served as Kofi Annan's chief aide during the investigations into the massive U.N. Oil-for-Food scandal and played a lead role in downplaying the U.N.'s failings,<sup>1</sup> bringing him into conflict with the Bush Administration and leading Senators and congressmen who were pressing hard for reform of the world body. Before joining the Secretary-General's office, Malloch Brown was head of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), a dysfunctional U.N. agency that has recently become embroiled in a series of major scandals.

As a U.N. official, Malloch Brown was an outspoken critic of American leadership on the world

stage and a constant thorn in the side of the United States. He launched an unprecedented attack on Washington's approach to the U.N. in a speech in New York in June 2006, despite the fact that Washington gives over \$5 billion a year to the U.N. system—more than France, Germany, China, Canada, and Russia combined. Malloch Brown warned of the "serious consequences of a decades-long tendency by U.S. Administrations of both parties to engage only fitfully with the U.N." and condemned "the prevailing practice of seeking to use the U.N. almost by stealth as a diplomatic tool while failing to stand up for it against its domestic critics."<sup>2</sup> He singled out for particular criticism Washington's decision to opt out of joining the disastrous new U.N. Human Rights Council, despite the fact that it was no better than the discredited former Human Rights Commission.<sup>3</sup>

Malloch Brown could barely disguise his contempt for the American public and media, speaking of "unchecked U.N.-bashing and stereotyping" and a "U.S. heartland [that] has been largely abandoned to its [the U.N.'s] loudest detractors, such as Rush Limbaugh and Fox News." What was needed in response, he argued, was for America's leaders to support the U.N. "not just in a whisper but in a coast

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to coast shout, that pushes back the critics domestically, and wins over the skeptics internationally.”

The speech was also an extraordinary intervention in domestic American politics. In what can only be described as the first stump speech by an international civil servant on U.S. soil, Malloch Brown rallied his largely liberal audience<sup>4</sup> with these stirring words:

Back in Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's day, building a strong, effective U.N. that could play this kind of role was a bipartisan enterprise, with the likes of Arthur Vandenberg and John Foster Dulles joining Democrats to support the new body. Who are their successors in American politics? Who will campaign in 2008 for a new multilateral national security?<sup>5</sup>

Malloch Brown's remarks were rightly described by then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton as “condescending and patronizing” and “a very serious affront” to the American people. Bolton called on U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to repudiate his deputy's comments, which he viewed as “the worst mistake” by a U.N. official in a quarter century.<sup>6</sup>

Malloch Brown's intervention was symptomatic of an increasing tendency among U.N. officials to openly criticize American foreign policy. Kofi

Annan had sparked a major controversy in September 2004, just weeks ahead of the U.S. presidential election, when he described the war with Iraq as an “illegal” violation of the U.N. Charter in an interview with the BBC. Annan followed these remarks with a further intervention on the Iraq issue in November 2004, when he wrote a letter to U.S., British, and Iraqi leaders appealing for Coalition forces to hold back from retaking the insurgent-held city of Fallujah.

Malloch Brown's New York speech echoed a 2005 commencement address he delivered at Pace University School of Law,<sup>7</sup> in which he launched a stinging attack on what he perceived to be America's lack of respect for international law. In his remarks, Malloch Brown painted the United States as an uncooperative superpower that acts outside of the rules, without respect for others:

And it's clear that abroad, President Bush's push for democracy and freedom will run aground on the shoals of American exceptionalism if the United States keeps apart from this emerging international legal system. While the U.S.'s involvement has made the World Trade Organization a powerful facilitator of free trade and global growth, elsewhere, America stands apart. The United States is the country that has opposed the International Criminal

1. See Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., “An Assessment of the Volcker Interim Report and the Independent Inquiry Committee Into the United Nations Oil-for-Food Program,” Testimony before the House Subcommittee on International Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on International Relations, February 9, 2005, at [www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/tst020905a.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/tst020905a.cfm).
2. Mark Malloch Brown, “Power and Superpower: Global Leadership in the 21st Century,” address to the Century Foundation and Center for American Progress, June 6, 2006, at [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/dsgsm287.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/dsgsm287.doc.htm).
3. See Brett Schaefer and Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., “The Right Decision on the UN Human Rights Council,” Heritage Foundation WebMemo No. 1031, April 6, 2006, at [www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1031.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1031.cfm).
4. The audience included former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Democrat financier George Soros, who also happened to be Mark Malloch Brown's landlord. See “Losing the United Nations,” *The New York Sun*, June 8, 2006, at [www.nysun.com/article/34079](http://www.nysun.com/article/34079). Just weeks before his appointment to the British government, Malloch Brown was made vice president of Soros's multi-billion dollar Quantum Fund. See Benny Avni, “Ex-Deputy UN Chief Joins with Soros,” *The New York Sun*, May 7, 2007, at [www.nysun.com/article/53955](http://www.nysun.com/article/53955).
5. Malloch Brown, “Power and Superpower: Global Leadership in the 21st Century.”
6. U.S. Department of State, “UN Official's Remarks a ‘Grave Mistake,’ U.S.'s Bolton Says,” Press Release, June 7, 2006, at <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Jun/08-236703.html>.
7. Mark Malloch Brown, Commencement Address to the Pace University School of Law, May 22, 2005, at <http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/may-2005/mark-malloch-browns-commencement-address-to-the-pace-university-school-of-law.en.jsessionid=acxWzt8vXD9?categoryID=593045&lang=en>.

Court, the Kyoto Protocol on the environment, even UNICEF's convention on the rights of the child.

Because this great ungainly magnificent giant of a nation that has led the world in advancing freedom, democracy, and decency cannot quite accept membership of the global neighborhood association, and the principle of all neighborhoods—that it must abide by others' rules as well as its own. It certainly doesn't want to paint its picket fence the same color as the neighbors and won't turn down the dance music at a sociable hour... Yet respect for law, for other people's laws as a basis for building shared international law is not only a calculus of foreign policy, it is also a reflection of respect for other cultures and points of view and therefore as relevant to the United States as to others.

More recently, Malloch Brown took another swipe at Washington in a London speech, blaming the U.S.–British-led invasion of Iraq for “a loss of credibility” for humanitarian workers serving in trouble spots such as Darfur who are no longer seen as neutral: “Iraq is the immediate cause for this. And 9/11 the preceding trigger, but both come at the end of a process that has knocked

humanitarian work off the straight and narrow of non-impartial help.”<sup>8</sup>

#### **A Barrier to Anglo–American Cooperation.**

Other than outspoken former International Development Secretary Clare Short, few, if any, British politicians are more disdainful of U.S. foreign policy than Mark Malloch Brown. His appointment is a slap in the face of the Anglo–American alliance and does not bode well for relations between the Brown government and the Bush Administration.

Faced with the rising threat of global terrorism, the insurgency in Iraq, counteroffensives by the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the looming threat of a nuclear-armed Iran, the next few years will be a critical time for U.S.–U.K. relations. It is imperative that London and Washington work together in addressing the major international issues of the day, which will involve close cooperation on the U.N. Security Council. It is hard to see how Malloch Brown's appointment to the British government will help to advance the special relationship.

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8. Anne Penketh, “UN No Longer Seen as Neutral, Says Former Chief,” *The Independent*, June 25, 2007, at <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/politics/article2705369.ece>.