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Editor
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Dear Editor,

The US Ambassador to the United Nations' latest intemperate outburst ("Bolton hits back over jibes by UN official", 8 June) is a timely reminder of how wise the US Senate was in the first place to decline to confirm John Bolton's nomination. Moreover it proves the main thesis of the UN Deputy-Secretary-General's – in my view unexceptionable and perceptive – speech, namely that only US political leaders can effectively shoulder the responsibility for advocating to their own citizens the case for UN reform and for explaining why the US needs the UN every bit as much as the UN needs the US.

The saddest aspect of this is that in the main matter at stake in New York just now – the struggle over Kofi Annan's package of reforms to the UN Secretariat – the US and the UN leadership are natural allies, together with the UK and the rest of the European Union. What is needed if that package is to be adopted is not spectacular displays of disunity, such as the present episode, but a persuasive presentation of the arguments for endorsing Annan's proposals; not muttered threats of dire consequences, but advocacy of the need for a stronger, more effective UN. Perhaps John Bolton could try his hand at those themes next time he makes a speech. That would certainly be more likely to rally support for the cause of reform.

David Hannay
UK Ambassador to the UN, 1990-1995
Chair of the UN Association of the UK