

Connecticut Debate Association

Novice Scrimmage, September 29, 2018

Academy of Aerospace and Engineering and Greenwich High School

Resolved: The US should strongly support and work through the UN.

The United States of America and the United Nations of the World

International Policy Digest, WORLD NEWS/29 MAR 2017, Olivia Smith

After the Second World War, America and her allies were weary. World leaders knew that such a devastating war never should happen again, so they created the United Nations. They thought nations could unite together to keep the world free of warmongers and genocide. The ideals of freedom, justice and harmony that inspired the United States guided the architects of the United Nations.

We created the United Nations to work for us throughout the world, so we would not have to exhaust ourselves doing so. Yet America's relationship with the UN in recent decades has been poor. Supporting the UN has not been a policy priority. The U.S. has opted out of major international agreements and owes the UN over \$2 billion in outstanding dues. We must now empower the United Nations to fulfill its intended role.

If we support the UN, the world will be safer. Today, United Nations programs conduct a plethora of projects like development assistance, food aid, disaster relief and refugee services. These projects improve standards of living for millions of people. These projects help prevent turmoil in vulnerable places. Without U.S. or UN assistance, vulnerable states risk becoming conflict zones that endanger our security. In areas experiencing conflict, UN peacekeepers work to return stability. The UN's refugee program works to resettle people in danger. The more support America gives to the UN to perform these operations, the more secure we will be.

If we support the UN, America's reputation will improve. We have attracted negative attention from longtime friends and would-be allies for not signing treaties and not paying our dues. Countries have accused us of ignoring important international issues, like women's rights, children's rights, and the environment. By providing support both financially and otherwise for UN programs, we can show American leadership.

If we support the UN, we will leverage our limited resources. America cannot fight the world's wars and solve all of its problems alone. The UN can perform many roles that America cannot or chooses not to play. It brings together the resources of many states to address the world's challenges.

Some argue that engaging with the UN is not in America's interest. They claim that the UN shackles America's power. They are wrong. America is stronger with the United Nations. President Franklin Roosevelt took the lead in creating the UN, and America has always been its most important member. America has the most power of any UN member, with a Security Council veto and UN headquarters located in New York.

It is time we supported the UN to the best of our ability. America should pay its dues and participate in UN activities so that America and the world will be more secure. Our international image will improve. Our limited resources will have greater impact. The union of the UN and the U.S. will build a better future.

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UN Prepares for Donald Trump—and a Second Helping of “America First”

Brookings Institute, Blog Post by Stewart M. Patrick, September 24, 2018

Trump has revealed himself to be a man resistant to compromise, with few qualms about going it alone when he doesn't get his way. For the leaders gathering for the UN General Assembly this week, the question hanging in the air is simple: Is that all there is to American diplomacy?

When President Donald J. Trump takes the podium Tuesday morning to speak to the UN General Assembly, he will encounter a global audience both familiar with and weary of his “America First” mantra. Last year, the president benefited from novelty and low expectations. The assembled foreign leaders were disturbed by Trump's saber rattling over North Korea, but they were otherwise reassured by his stated desire to help the world body fulfill its potential and by his explicit endorsement of the UN reform agenda advanced by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Here was a president, many concluded, with whom we can do business.

Those hopes have dimmed over the past year. The president has revealed himself to be a man resistant to compromise, with few qualms about going it alone when he doesn't get his way. Since September, The Trump administration has abandoned the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Scientific, Educational, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), withdrawn from multilateral negotiations over a benign UN Global Compact on Migration, moved its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem despite overwhelming international opposition, slashed funding for UN bodies from the UN Population Fund to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine, repudiated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program, threatened to withdraw from the World Trade Organization, and declared virtual war on the International Criminal Court.

The United States has not (yet) left the United Nations, although Trump is the first president one could envision pondering such a step. The United States remains the United Nations' largest funder—despite engineering a reduction in its peacekeeping dues—and continues to make use of the Security Council to keep the heat on North Korea. But the Trump administration's UN diplomacy has been heavy-handed and often counterproductive, including vain efforts to browbeat UN member states into supporting U.S. positions on symbolic votes (particularly those related to Israel and Palestine). Consistent with her early pledge, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has been “taking names” of those who seek to thwart Washington's aims. But it is the United States, rather than U.S. adversaries, that has been isolated.

For the leaders gathering in New York this week, the question hanging in the air is simple: Is that all there is to American diplomacy? Unlike his predecessors, Republican and Democratic alike, Trump offers no positive vision for the United Nations, no invocation of the “international community” or the higher purposes it should serve. Rather than rallying the world, the president clings to a crimped, transactional foreign policy. In place of American exceptionalism, he defends American “exemptionalism”—an insistence on special treatment, with an implicit threat that the United States will walk away if it fails to get its way. In place of global “leadership”—a phrase Trump rarely utters—he asks only, what's in it for me? It is a worldview based on power, without purpose.

Changing this narrative will require the president on Tuesday to pay at least lip service to the fundamental objectives of the United Nations. These include “sav[ing] future generations from the scourge of war,” by investing in collective security; reducing poverty and suffering, through support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and life-saving humanitarian relief; expanding human freedom and dignity, rather than coddling dictators or leaving dissidents to the tender mercies of tyrants; and preserving a habitable planet in the face of history's greatest and most complex threat, climate change. Expectations for his speech are so low that even a modest rhetorical shift in this direction could win the president global plaudits.

Alas, Haley's pre-UN General Assembly briefing last Thursday suggested that the president would hew to his shopworn script, which depicts global bodies and international agreements as threats to American “sovereignty”—a word he used twenty-one times in his General Assembly address last year. The United States has no problem with multilateralism, Haley insisted. It just opposes agreements like the Global Compact for Migration and Paris Climate Accord that “mandate[s] things on the United States.” As she explained, “Anytime you hear the United States talk about sovereignty it's always going to be the will of the American people, not the will of the international community.”

Haley's formulation, of course, sets up a straw man. The U.S. decision to join an international body or treaty is not a sacrifice of sovereignty, but its expression and embodiment. Provided it is done voluntarily, in accordance with constitutional requirements, it places no limits on the nation's independent political authority. What multilateral cooperation does entail is a willingness on the part of the United States to give up some notional (but often illusory) freedom of action, for the benefits of working with others to advance American national interests. Alas, senior Trump administration officials, including the president himself, appear impervious to the logic of enlightened self-interest.

Besides his speech from the podium, the president will chair two other UN sessions this week. On Wednesday he will gavel into order a special session of the UN Security Council, whose rotating presidency the United States occupies this month. Earlier this month Haley had billed this as a session focused on Iran's destabilizing regional activities. Facing resistance from permanent member Russia, the U.S. mission broadened the topic to a general discussion of preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. However, the President did not seem to get the message, tweeting on September 21 that he would be chairing the Security Council “meeting on Iran.” The stage is thus set for a volatile meeting, in which the famously unscripted president is likely to berate Iran, whose own President Hassan Rouhani may well be in attendance. That gambit could backfire, since many close U.S. allies—not least permanent Security Council members Britain and France—are incensed by Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA. In attempting to isolate Teheran, the United States may wind up isolating itself.

The president will also host another meeting of UN member states on Monday, focused on the global drug problem. On the surface, this is a diplomatic and political winner, providing the administration a chance to win broad support for global counternarcotics efforts and also call attention to its own domestic focus on countering the deadly opioid epidemic. But it is not without risks, given the fracturing international consensus over the unending U.S.-led “drug war”

and its casualties. The administration's prohibitionist outlook, which has expanded under Attorney General Jeff Sessions, also collides with the growing experimentation by both UN member states (including Canada starting next month) and some twenty U.S. states in legalizing or decriminalizing the cannabis trade.

In his own writings, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton has long championed "a distinctly American internationalism," based on a forthright defense of U.S. sovereignty and national interests (as he narrowly conceives these). President Trump appears to share Bolton's nationalist instincts. But it is increasingly clear that such a defensive and confrontational approach to world order offers little basis for American global leadership.

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I Love the U.N., but It Is Failing

The New York Times, By Anthony Banbury, March 18, 2016

I HAVE worked for the United Nations for most of the last three decades. I was a human rights officer in Haiti in the 1990s and served in the former Yugoslavia during the Srebrenica genocide. I helped lead the response to the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Haitian earthquake, planned the mission to eliminate Syrian chemical weapons, and most recently led the Ebola mission in West Africa. I care deeply for the principles the United Nations is designed to uphold. And that's why I have decided to leave.

The world faces a range of terrifying crises, from the threat of climate change to terrorist breeding grounds in places like Syria, Iraq and Somalia. The United Nations is uniquely placed to meet these challenges, and it is doing invaluable work, like protecting civilians and delivering humanitarian aid in South Sudan and elsewhere. But in terms of its overall mission, thanks to colossal mismanagement, the United Nations is failing.

Six years ago, I became an assistant secretary general, posted to the headquarters in New York. I was no stranger to red tape, but I was unprepared for the blur of Orwellian admonitions and Carrollian logic that govern the place. If you locked a team of evil geniuses in a laboratory, they could not design a bureaucracy so maddeningly complex, requiring so much effort but in the end incapable of delivering the intended result. The system is a black hole into which disappear countless tax dollars and human aspirations, never to be seen again.

The first major problem is a sclerotic personnel system. The United Nations needs to be able to attract and quickly deploy the world's best talent. And yet, it takes on average 213 days to recruit someone. In January, to the horror of many, the Department of Management imposed a new recruitment system that is likely to increase the delay to over a year.

During the Ebola epidemic, I was desperate to get qualified people on the ground, and yet I was told that a staff member working in South Sudan could not travel to our headquarters in Accra, Ghana, until she received a new medical clearance. We were fighting a disease that killed many thousands and risked spinning out of control and yet we spent weeks waiting for a healthy colleague to get her forms processed.

Too often, the only way to speed things up is to break the rules. That's what I did in Accra when I hired an anthropologist as an independent contractor. She turned out to be worth her weight in gold. Unsafe burial practices were responsible for about half of new Ebola cases in some areas. We had to understand these traditions before we could persuade people to change them. As far as I know, no United Nations mission had ever had an anthropologist on staff before; shortly after I left the mission, she was let go.

The heads of billion-dollar peace operations, with enormous responsibilities for ending wars, are not able to hire their immediate staff, or to reassign non-performers away from critical roles. It is a sign of how perversely twisted the bureaucracy is that personnel decisions are considered more dangerous than the responsibility to lead a mission on which the fate of a country depends.

One result of this dysfunction is minimal accountability. There is today a chief of staff in a large peacekeeping mission who is manifestly incompetent. Many have tried to get rid of him, but short of a serious crime, it is virtually impossible to fire someone in the United Nations. In the past six years, I am not aware of a single international field staff member's being fired, or even sanctioned, for poor performance.

The second serious problem is that too many decisions are driven by political expediency instead of by the values of the United Nations or the facts on the ground.

Peacekeeping forces often lumber along for years without clear goals or exit plans, crowding out governments, diverting attention from deeper socioeconomic problems and costing billions of dollars. My first peacekeeping mission was in Cambodia in 1992. We left after less than two years. Now it's a rare exception when a mission lasts fewer than 10.

Look at Haiti: There has been no armed conflict for more than a decade, and yet a United Nations force of more than 4,500 remains. Meanwhile, we are failing at what should be our most important task: assisting in the creation of stable,

democratic institutions. Elections have been postponed amid allegations of fraud, and the interim prime minister has said that “the country is facing serious social and economic difficulties.” The military deployment makes no contribution at all to solving these problems.

Our most grievous blunder is in Mali. In early 2013, the United Nations decided to send 10,000 soldiers and police officers to Mali in response to a terrorist takeover of parts of the north. Inexplicably, we sent a force that was unprepared for counterterrorism and explicitly told not to engage in it. More than 80 percent of the force’s resources are spent on logistics and self-protection. Already 56 people in the United Nations contingent have been killed, and more are certain to die. The United Nations in Mali is day by day marching deeper into its first quagmire.

BUT the thing that has upset me most is what the United Nations has done in the Central African Republic. When we took over peacekeeping responsibilities from the African Union there in 2014, we had the choice of which troops to accept. Without appropriate debate, and for cynical political reasons, a decision was made to include soldiers from the Democratic Republic of Congo and from the Republic of Congo, despite reports of serious human rights violations by these soldiers. Since then, troops from these countries have engaged in a persistent pattern of rape and abuse of the people — often young girls — the United Nations was sent there to protect.

Last year, peacekeepers from the Republic of Congo arrested a group of civilians, with no legal basis whatsoever, and beat them so badly that one died in custody and the other shortly after in a hospital. In response there was hardly a murmur, and certainly no outrage, from the responsible officials in New York.

As the abuse cases piled up, impassioned pleas were made to send the troops home. These were ignored, and more cases of child rape came to light. Last month, we finally kicked out the Democratic Republic of Congo soldiers, but the ones from the Republic of Congo remain.

In 1988, my first job with the United Nations was as a human rights officer in Cambodian refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border, investigating rapes and murders of the poor and helpless. Never could I have imagined that I would one day have to deal with members of my own organization committing the same crimes or, worse, senior officials tolerating them for reasons of cynical expediency.

I am hardly the first to warn that the United Nations bureaucracy is getting in the way of its peacekeeping efforts. But too often, these criticisms come from people who think the United Nations is doomed to fail. I come at it from a different angle: I believe that for the world’s sake we must make the United Nations succeed.

In the run-up to the election of a new secretary general this year, it is essential that governments, and especially the permanent members of the Security Council, think carefully about what they want out of the United Nations. The organization is a Remington typewriter in a smartphone world. If it is going to advance the causes of peace, human rights, development and the climate, it needs a leader genuinely committed to reform.

The bureaucracy needs to work for the missions; not the other way around. The starting point should be the overhaul of our personnel system. We need an outside panel to examine the system and recommend changes. Second, all administrative expenses should be capped at a fixed percentage of operations costs. Third, decisions on budget allocations should be removed from the Department of Management and placed in the hands of an independent controller reporting to the secretary general. Finally, we need rigorous performance audits of all parts of headquarters operations.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is a man of great integrity, and the United Nations is filled with smart, brave and selfless people. Unfortunately, far too many others lack the moral aptitude and professional abilities to serve. We need a United Nations led by people for whom “doing the right thing” is normal and expected.

Anthony Banbury was a United Nations assistant secretary general for field support until this month.

United Nations General Assembly Faces Global, U.S. Challenges

Bloomberg News, September 24, 2018

U.S. President Donald Trump will command the world’s attention at the United Nations General Assembly this week. After last year’s affirmations of U.S. sovereignty and denunciations of Kim Jong Un as a “Rocket Man on a suicide mission,” who knows what bolts Trump will hurl this time? His chairing of a Security Council meeting on nonproliferation and a U.S. event on the “world drug problem” promise other opportunities for drama.

These theatrics shouldn’t be allowed to shift the focus from a broader problem. In 2018, governments face a pressing and fundamental issue: What can be done to adapt the UN to a new era of rising nationalism and geopolitical competition? The U.S., under this president’s leadership, has no answer. In most ways, it seems unaware of the question.

The president’s instincts seem to call for disengagement if not outright withdrawal. Trump has backed away from the UN Population Fund, the Paris accord on climate change, the UN-led Global Compact on Migration, UNESCO, and the

UN Human Rights Council, and has proposed drastic cuts in voluntary contributions to UN agencies.

Granted, some of his complaints about the UN are valid. (Many echo those of previous administrations.)

Mismanagement, episodes of corruption and a pronounced anti-Israel bias have marred the UN's reputation and made it less effective. But in a world plagued by complex collective problems, a well-functioning UN is more necessary than ever.

The administration should engage more seriously across the full range of issues — with the same sense of purpose it has brought to one or two particular cases. U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley has led useful scrutiny of peacekeeping operations, for instance.

Secretary-General António Guterres's proposals for strengthening peacekeeping management were approved with U.S. support. The U.S. and the other permanent members of the Security Council have made common cause on peacekeeping and crises such as North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, but their inability to resolve horrific conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Myanmar is a grave disappointment. Conflict resolution lies, or ought to lie, at the core of the UN's ambitions. This is why it was founded in the first place.

The council's non-permanent members should be more forceful in pressing this agenda. The induction next year of Germany, Indonesia and South Africa ought to help. The institution itself needs to be managed more efficiently and with a refreshed sense of purpose. The ability to respond more quickly, with joint forces ready to be deployed at short notice, would be valuable. To reduce costs and save lives, the UN should be more willing to shut down missions that aren't working and hold national detachments accountable for their conduct.

Critics and admirers of the UN alike regard Guterres, appointed to the job last year, as an accomplished leader with the experience and temperament needed to make meaningful strides in the years ahead. In the end, though, the effectiveness of the UN will depend on the desire of its member governments, and especially that of the U.S., to make it succeed. The U.S. needs to show it again understands what it used to regard as obvious.

If Trump wanted to do that, it wouldn't be hard. If he wanted to ease divisions, strengthen U.S. influence and bolster the UN at a single stroke, he'd reverse his stance on the Paris accord on climate change — an existential challenge that geopolitical rivals such as China have embraced as a basis for global cooperation. Of late, the U.S. government's posture on this fateful question has been a failure on every level.

And it's symptomatic — one more abdication of America's responsibility to lead. This is Trump's biggest mistake, which is saying something. American leadership, bound up with the role that the world needs the UN to play, remains as indispensable as ever.

Don't Defund the U.N., Just Say 'Go!'

National Review, By ANDREW C. MCCARTHY, January 7, 2017 9:00 AM

The organization of crooks and dictators needs us much more than we need it.

There are some swamps that we have to drain because they're our swamps. Washington is our swamp. The lesson of the 2016 election is that people across the ideological spectrum are furious at Washington. Our incoming president won because he convinced enough people that, while Hillary was a swamp creature, he — the self-styled outsider non-politician — would make like a big, shiny Trump colander. But Washington is not going away; once the ooze seeps out, the idea is to build something better — like how New Jersey keeps building new stadiums on the marshy Meadowlands.

Well, good luck with that.

But look, even if we're not very good at cleaning up our own messes, the fact that we know we should, that we know our messes sully us, is a sign of mental health.

So let's see if that healthy instinct can help us grasp a principle that ought to be easier to apply: When it's not your swamp and yet you're being sullied by it, you don't drain it. You leave it.

That's what we ought to be doing about the United Nations.

Republicans are irate over the latest U.N. outrage, the Security Council resolution orchestrated by the Obama administration to reward Palestinian jihadists with territory while rendering Israel a pariah. In truth, the resolution is just business as usual at the U.N. It is also not nearly the worst use our post-American president has made of this ersatz global government.

As usual, though, the GOP response is a hollow gesture, couched in hot rhetoric. Congressional Republicans want to defund the U.N., a 193-nation boondoggle for which the United States alone pays well over a quarter of the freight — about 22 percent of the regular operating budget, and close to 30 percent of the much larger peacekeeping budget (for which we get more scandal than peace).

At best, denying our annual \$3 billion payment would accomplish nothing. Defunding measures are called for

periodically, whenever the U.N. induces a congressional tantrum over one or another of its obscenities. Even as one lawmaker fumes about shutting off the spigot, another is already saying, “Well, we don’t need to defund everything — after all, the U.N. does a lot of good.”

“A lot of good,” by the way, is an exaggeration. Sure, some U.N. officials are just as well-meaning as any other preening progressive. But the institution stinks, even in its humanitarian aid work. As Heritage’s Brett D. Schaefer notes, citing a 2012 academic study on best and worst practices among aid agencies, U.N. agencies consistently rank “among the worst and least effective performers.”

More important, if \$3 billion seems like chump change to you in an age of unfathomable \$20 trillion national debt, that’s the way Turtle Bay’s grubby globalists see it, too. They continue to plot international tax schemes (on carbon emissions, financial transactions, etc.), as well as the lucrative skim from redistributionist rackets like the “Green Climate Fund” and the new “Sustainable Development Goals.” The real goal, naturally, is a sustainable fund for the U.N., relieving it of reliance on finicky donors.

The GOP Congress’s focus on the U.S. contribution is understandable. The American taxpayer’s U.N. tab far exceeds the combined \$2.5 billion ponied up by the other four permanent Security Council members (China, Russia, Britain, and France). In fact, it exceeds the contributions of 185 countries combined (about three dozen of which pay under \$30K in dues — far less than what their diplomats rack up in unpaid Manhattan parking tickets).

Yet the money is not the real problem, and cutting it off for a time won’t pack much political punch.

The Left digs the U.N. It will never seriously address the institution’s thoroughgoing anti-Americanism, anti-Westernism, anti-Semitism, anti-nationalism, anti-capitalism, and anti-rectitude. Instead the media-Democrat complex — with a big assist, starting in two weeks, from the most publicly active former president in American history — would portray an aspirational U.N. valiantly fighting to save the planet from war, poverty and CO2. Duly abominated for slashing funds, the GOP would take a political hit but achieve nothing: The U.N. would find other ways to raise the dough, and Republicans — after watering the defund effort down to feckless foot-stomping — would be goaded into paying any withheld dues, with interest, probably during the next lame-duck session.

The better move is: Just leave. Withdrawal from the U.N. would make transnational progressives go ballistic, but it would hearten millions — the kind of patriotic, self-determining citizens whose fury at statism’s transition into globalism catalyzed Trump’s candidacy (and, in Britain, spurred Brexit).

Put the politics aside, though. Leaving would be the right thing to do.

The U.N. is Ground Zero of the totalitarian Islamist-Leftist quest to eviscerate Western principles and individual liberty — and, while they’re at it, the Jewish state.

You think I’m exaggerating? The U.N. is the Islamist-Leftist vehicle for nullifying American constitutionalism — its guaranteed freedoms and the very premise that the People are sovereign. In just the last few years of Obama’s eager collaborations, the U.N. has produced resolutions that erode First Amendment liberties, calling on member states to outlaw negative criticism of Islam. It has overridden the Constitution’s protections against treaties that harm American interests, endorsing the Iran nuclear deal to give it the imprimatur of international law even though it is unsigned, unratified, and would not have had a prayer of attaining the required two-thirds supermajority Senate approval.

The U.N. is the Islamist-Leftist vehicle for nullifying American constitutionalism — its guaranteed freedoms and the very premise that the People are sovereign.

And more is on the way. The Obama administration signed a U.N. arms-trade treaty that would undermine Second Amendment rights — again, under the vaporous guise of “international law.” On Obama’s watch, the U.S. has also signed the U.N.’s onerous Paris climate agreement, which international bureaucrats tell us has “entered into force” despite — again — the lack of Senate approval required for ratification under our law.

Think no ratification means no problem? You’re not getting how the U.N.’s international-law game works.

Once American presidents sign agreements, globalists insist that we’re bound by them. How can that be, since a presidential signature is insufficient under the Constitution? Because in 1970, President Nixon signed another beauty, the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Its Article 18 states that once a nation signs a treaty — or merely does something that could be interpreted as “express[ing] its consent to be bound by the treaty” — that nation is “obliged to refrain from acts which would defeat the object and purpose of the treaty.” You’ll be shocked, I’m sure, to hear that the Senate has never approved this treaty on treaties, either. No matter: The State Department (who else?) advises us that, notwithstanding the lack of ratification under our Constitution, “many” of the treaty’s provisions are binding as — you guessed it — “customary international law.”

American government participation in the U.N.’s shenanigans is stripping away our rights and our capacity to govern ourselves. Just as bad, it is sullyng us.

Logically, it has to be that way. When not bowing before foreign despots, Obama practically genuflects at mentions of

the “international community.” But the international community is awful. It consists of a few good countries swimming in a shark-infested sea. When good seeks consensus with evil, the result cannot be good — just as when you insist, as our government does, on being an impartial “honest broker” between Israel, our democratic ally, and the Palestinian terror state-in-waiting, that is a boon for the jihadists, not the democrats. When you pretend that all states are equal, that there is no difference between the good guys and the bad guys, that is always a coup for the bad guys.

And that’s what the U.N. is: a coup for the bad guys.

Think about it: We are voluntarily entered into an arrangement in which actions affecting American national security and prosperity are subject to the Security Council veto power of Vladimir Putin and the Communist Party of China — the principal patrons of the “Death to America” regime in Iran, the world’s leading sponsor of anti-American terrorism.

We are voluntarily underwriting an institution that — with Obama having formally boarded the anti-Israel train — is joining the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. The General Assembly, which is steered by the sharia-supremacist Organization of Islamic Cooperation, has just created a BDS database to target companies that do business with Israeli settlements in what the U.N. has declared is “Palestinian territory.”

What else is new? As UN Watch has reported, in 2015–16, the General Assembly adopted 20 resolutions condemning Israel, compared to just three against the rest of the planet — including none against such favorite U.N. human-rights havens as China, Russia, Cuba, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia.

Now consider this: There is one reason and one reason alone why the U.N. is relevant: because the United States is in it. It is not our financial support that the U.N. needs; it is our participation. The U.N. is a corrupt institution that is hostile to our interests and system of government while living off our prosperity, banking on our rule of law, and luxuriating in the very society it so routinely condemns. And we continue to legitimize it.

It is not enough to cut off funding from a bad organization. We should disassociate from that bad organization. We should stop helping it be a consequential bad organization by denying it legitimacy. Don’t defund the U.N. Just say, “Go!”

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How much does the United States contribute to the UN?

PolitiFact, By Jon Greenberg on Wednesday, February 1st, 2017 at 4:12 p.m.

The Donald Trump administration has drafted an executive order that would cut U.S. payments to the United Nations by as much as 40 percent. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, highlighted the substantial role the United States plays in funding the U.N. during the confirmation hearing for U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley.

"When all of our taxpayers are paying roughly 22 percent of the budget, I think they do expect to see a more efficient and an organization that's more objective and more in keeping with our values," Portman said on Jan. 18, 2017. "How do you intend to support U.S. national security interests, but also ensure that the U.N. is a more effective body toward promoting a more peaceful and less volatile world?"

The U.N. and U.S. budget documents show Portman’s number is correct, and if peacekeeping is included, the percentage gets even higher.

The current U.N. regular budget calls for \$5.4 billion over two years. By a formula based on the size of a country’s economy and other factors, America’s assessment is set at 22 percent, or about \$1.2 billion.

Based on the last Obama administration budget, the United States provided \$1.2 billion to the U.N. over two years, and Portman is correct.

But that’s just for the U.N.’s regular budget. There are over a dozen other U.N. agencies and operations that American dollars also support. The single largest is peacekeeping with a price tag of about \$7.8 billion this year alone. The U.S. share of that cost is over 28 percent, or \$2.2 billion.

The next three U.N. agencies -- all roughly in the \$100 million per year range -- are the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

All told, the United States provides about \$3.3 billion a year to finance U.N. activities. A 40 percent cut would save taxpayers about \$1.3 billion out of the current \$4.1 trillion U.S. federal budget. The impact on the U.N. would be substantial, although the precise effect would depend on how the cuts are spread around.

Our ruling: Portman said American taxpayers cover 22 percent of the U.N. budget. Budget documents from the U.N. and the United States confirm that. The percentage for peacekeeping operations is even higher. We rate this claim True.

Why Trump needs the United Nations

The Brookings Institute, Eric Rosand, Wednesday, January 11, 2017

The United Nations is not only imperfect, it is also misunderstood. Somewhat predictably, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump and his fellow Republicans unleashed a torrent of criticism against the U.N. Security Council's adoption of a resolution on December 23 condemning Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. To express his disapproval, Trump described the institution as "just a club for people to get together, talk, and have a good time" and went on to suggest that "if it is causing problems rather than solving them...it will be a waste of time and money if it doesn't start living up to its potential." Several U.S. lawmakers have since demanded that the United States restrict its funding for the global body over the Security Council vote and former Governor of Alaska Sarah Palin even went as far as to call on the United States to leave the U.N.

The United Nations' failures, of course, are well known. Less known is what it gets right, and on this score even Trump should find much to love in the institution. Indeed, if his administration hopes to, as he says, work with all "freedom loving partners" to eradicate terrorism, he will need the U.N., warts and all.

[E]ven Trump should find much to love in the institution.

In the post-9/11 era—and often at the behest of U.S. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama—the U.N. has played a central role in globalizing the fight against terrorism and strengthening international cooperation and capacities to defeat al-Qaida, the Islamic State (ISIS), and other terrorist groups. Less than three weeks after 9/11, Bush relied on the U.N. Security Council to require all countries to reboot or upgrade their counterterrorism laws. As a result, dozens of nations put in place new legal measures to crack down on terrorists and their financiers. Obama likewise went to the U.N. when he sought to tighten sanctions against and cut off financial flows to ISIS and to push the White House agenda to counter violent extremism around the world. Critical U.S. partners, including China, India, and Russia, and Muslim-majority countries ranging from Egypt to Indonesia, now generally insist that all nonmilitary counterterrorism measures (such as the tightening of border controls, investigating and prosecuting terrorists, or countering radicalization at home) be grounded in some way on the U.N. counterterrorism framework that evolved rapidly after 9/11. This framework is seen as being in compliance with international law and therefore carries broad global legitimacy, in large part because it is derived from the U.N. Charter itself.

The comprehensive legal and political framework that the United Nations has developed not only facilitates and underpins international counterterrorism cooperation, including against ISIS, but also makes U.S. efforts more broadly legitimate. This framework includes 19 U.N. treaties requiring states to criminalize different terrorist acts. Recent legislation adopted by Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia—developed with the help of U.N. experts—has incorporated into domestic law key requirements emanating from the framework. It also includes Security Council resolutions that impose obligations on all 193 member states to tighten terrorism laws, strengthen border controls to prevent terrorism, and do more to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters to conflict zones. In the wake of these legally binding resolutions, more than 60 countries now have laws in place to prosecute and penalize the activities of foreign terrorist fighters and have in fact prosecuted or arrested such fighters, either prior to departure or upon their return home, or their facilitators. The broadest piece of the framework is the U.N. General Assembly's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which provides a hard-won basis for collective action against terrorism. This strategy signaled a shift, at least rhetorically, in international counterterrorism efforts, as it included both preventive and responsive measures, focusing not just on tighter security measures, but also on addressing the underlying political, economic, and social conditions that give rise to terrorism in the first place.

The United Nations, particularly the Security Council, has demonstrated its ability to respond to emerging terrorism challenges—often with strong U.S. leadership. Examples include calling on or requiring states to stop the practice of making ransom payments to terrorists, preventing terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria from benefiting from trade in oil and antiquities, improving international cooperation on counterterrorism investigations and prosecutions, and treating human traffickers affiliated with terrorist organizations as terrorists.

Of course, there is little doubt that the implementation of these measures continues to lag and that if more countries actually did what their U.N. representatives in New York committed to do, terrorist threats would be reduced. But the lion share of the fault, as with last month's resolution condemning Israeli behavior, lies with the member states themselves and not the U.N. as an institution.

Furthermore, through the Security Council, the U.N. has globalized sanctions. What would otherwise be just a U.S. requirement on U.S. persons or institutions to freeze terrorists' bank accounts, prevent travel, and stop the flow of arms to terrorist groups is now a coordinated, worldwide effort. At the end of 2016 there were 256 individuals and 75 groups linked to al-Qaida or ISIS subject to these sanctions. Some \$136 million in assets were frozen during the first few years following 9/11, largely shutting down terrorists' use of the formal banking system to raise or transfer funds. Bush's counterterrorism czar once lauded the U.N. committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of this U.N. regime as "one of the most potent bodies in the world in combatting terrorist financing," adding that "[f]aced with a

deadly enemy that recognizes no borders, any nation's unilateral efforts to combat terrorism are bound to fail.”

And, at the end of the day, governments are much more likely to take the steps necessary to starve terrorists of funding if there is a U.N. requirement to do so as opposed to just prodding from Washington. For one, it removes the perceived “made in America” stamp from the fight against terrorism, which, despite the progress over the past eight years, continues to be a disincentive to cooperation for some states where there is still lingering criticisms of U.S. counterterrorism policies.

Trump would also need the U.N. for building the capacity of other countries to fight terrorism. Since 2001, the U.N. has performed an invaluable and expanding role as a facilitator and provider of counterterrorism-related technical assistance, on top of bilateral assistance from the United States and other countries. For example, the U.N. has helped Afghanistan, Niger, Nigeria, and more than 100 other countries implement or improve existing counterterrorism laws. It has delivered counterterrorism training to police, prosecutors, and judges in every region of the world—more than 14,000 in all—which has played a role in the dismantling of terrorist plots or in the efficient investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of terrorist cases in a number of countries, including Colombia, Morocco, Nigeria, and Tunisia. It has also established numerous global networks of counterterrorism professionals (most recently one for prosecutors under the auspices of the International Association of Prosecutors); strengthened border security in West Africa (such as addressing the challenges of patrolling the long, unmanned borders in the Sahel); provided specialized training for countries such as Mali and Somalia on the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders; and helped European countries enhance their cooperation against foreign terrorist fighters.

Perhaps most significantly, the U.N. has amassed what amounts to the most comprehensive inventory of national counterterrorism laws, measures, and policies, bar none, and, based on this information and regular exchanges with member states, it has identified the needs and priorities of each country. Rather than being members of a “club” where members sit around having “a good time,” U.N. counterterrorism experts visit some of the most difficult and dangerous places in the world, often at risk to their lives (some have in fact been killed). They bring back valuable information on what countries on the frontlines of the terrorist threat need to do to safeguard their citizens.

As both post-9/11 presidents, Bush and Obama, have recognized, the United States cannot simply identify and fund its own counterterrorism priorities. The security of the United States is interwoven with that of other countries. Washington must work with its partners to identify and address counterterrorism needs in every corner of the world—and working closely with the United Nations makes this task much easier. An effective U.N. can leverage limited resources and help raise the capacity of all states. It can shoulder the burden of providing counterterrorism training and other capacity-building assistance, especially in regions and countries where the United States may lack access or leverage, or which are not priorities for Washington, but nevertheless require attention before violent extremism takes root.

Despite the ways in which an effective U.N. counterterrorism program benefits the United States (perhaps it does so more so than any other country), the Trump administration's initial instinct might be to focus on the body's shortcomings and thus, look for alternatives. And the shortcomings are many: they include the inability of its member states to agree on a definition of terrorism; the competition, duplication, and a lack of coordination among various U.N. entities; and the gap between the rhetoric in New York and the action (or lack thereof) by states at home. However, working constructively with and through the U.N. is important given the global nature of the terrorist threat. And so when it comes to counterterrorism, despite the expected flurry of angry Tweets about the institution, Trump will most likely be turning to the U.N. for help and support before too long.

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What Americans Want from the United Nations

Council on Foreign Relations, Expert Brief by Stewart M. Patrick, September 22, 2009

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Surveys during the past decade show consistent support among Americans for the UN's role in the world order but also worry about its dysfunctions. CFR's Stewart Patrick says President Barack Obama should echo these sentiments in his UN address.

Americans would never cede power to global institutions. They savor their independence, guard their sovereignty, and sidestep efforts to curb their freedom of action. They are wary that the United Nations might impose its will within their sacred borders. And in the face of U.S. ambivalence, they believe the UN can never be more than a global talk shop. Most U.S. pundits can agree on that much.

But this conventional wisdom may be wrong. As President Barack Obama prepares to address the UN General Assembly, it makes sense to ask: What do Americans think about the United Nations? With the help of

WorldPublicOpinion.org (WPO), the Council on Foreign Relations will soon release a comprehensive digest of existing polling of the U.S. public (and world public) from the past ten years on issues of global governance. The results are surprising. Contrary to common assumptions, Americans have been consistently internationalist in outlook--and see the UN as a cornerstone of world order.

Surveys taken over the past decade show that a majority of Americans have considered traditional ideas about national sovereignty outdated, no longer appropriate to a world of global challenges. Most respondents have said they want the United Nations--rather than the United States--to take the lead on international issues like refugees, peacekeeping, human rights, and nuclear proliferation. For instance, in a soon-to-be-released poll from WPO, 60 percent of respondents said U.S. officials should work more within the United Nations, even if doing so means the United States has to compromise its own policies. In the forthcoming 2009 WPO poll, 69 percent of Americans agreed that: "Our nation should consistently follow international laws. It is wrong to violate international laws, just as it is wrong to violate laws within a country."

Polls have shown that most Americans believe the United Nations should be able to authorize force in a wide range of cases, including defending nations under attack, stopping countries from supporting terrorism, and restoring deposed democratic governments. In a WPO poll from 2007, almost three-quarters of Americans said the UN Security Council has the responsibility to protect people from severe human rights violations, such as genocide, as in Darfur.

But despite Americans' support for the UN's mission, they are dissatisfied with the UN's actual performance. Since 2003, majorities in the United States have said the United Nations is doing a "poor job"--a view held by 65 percent in a February 2009 Gallup poll. Americans' frustration seems to stem from a variety of sources, including the Security Council's inability to deal with major issues, including Iran, North Korea, and Sudan, and the failure of the UN Human Rights Council to hold major abusers to account. Although large majorities of Americans have consistently expressed support for the UN's mandate, they criticize the institution for falling short of its own ideals.

Most Americans therefore encourage reforms that would make the UN more effective. A majority of Americans in recent years, for instance, have favored expanding the UN's powers to investigate human rights violations, to regulate the international arms trade, and even to select, train, and command its own peacekeeping force.

Not only have Americans wanted the United Nations to be more effective, but they have wanted it to be more legitimate, which would require introducing new voices into the anachronistic body. Seventy percent (PDF) of Americans answering a March 2005 survey by the international polling firm GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes said they supported additional countries becoming permanent members of the Security Council, expressing the most support for new German, Japanese, Indian, and Brazilian seats.

Many of these statistics are counterintuitive, and they raise important questions about the tenacity of the respondents' views. Are Americans actually convinced they need a more powerful United Nations, or would they renege if they saw real U.S. power diminish? And does it even matter what the majority of Americans want if a vocal minority is willing to mobilize in opposition to pro-UN policies? These questions are legitimate and deserve further discussion. But so do the polls, which defy almost every stereotype of American isolationism and unilateralism.

Contrary to popular thought, Americans see the United Nations as a critical pillar of world order. They believe in multilateralism--and they criticize their own government not for cooperating too much, but too little. Their dissatisfaction with the UN reflects not disdain but disappointment that the world body has fallen short of its ideals, and they seek reforms to improve its performance.

These findings should cheer Barack Obama as he travels to New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly. The president has described the United Nations as "flawed but indispensable." His fellow citizens clearly agree. The president can harness this public support in his address to the assembled UN delegates. His speech should echo the public's sentiment that:

Americans are committed to multilateralism, willing to pull their own weight, and ready to make compromises for effective international cooperation;

The United Nations must embrace a global leadership role on critical international issues from emergency relief to peacekeeping, nonproliferation to human rights;

Continued American support for the United Nations depends on the world body, and its member states, living up to the ideals on which the UN was founded, such as real human rights monitoring;

To better fulfill its mandate, the UN Security Council needs to better represent the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century, by adjusting its membership to include emerging powers.
