The UN Assault on Democracies

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Executive Summary

- The United Nations was founded to advance peace, security, international cooperation, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. Those aims remain worthy. But the UN system increasingly does the opposite: it gives authoritarian regimes decisive influence over norms, mandates, and institutional priorities while undermining the goals, positions, and national security interests of democracies.
- The UN's core problem is structural. Under its one-country-one-vote system, a liberal democracy has the same vote as a regime that suppresses freedoms, criminalizes free speech, and engages in gross violations of human rights.
- Authoritarian blocs shape agendas, create politicized mechanisms, and dilute attempts at reform, while democracies provide the majority of the funding for the system that undermines their interests, positions, and goals.
- China has become particularly effective at exploiting this structure. Through the "G77 and China" grouping, Beijing is able to leverage an organized voting bloc encompassing 69 percent of the General Assembly. It has repeatedly used its influence over member states to shield itself from scrutiny and advance its agenda. For example, in 2022, after the UN human rights office found possible crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, China was able to use its influence to prevent the Human Rights Council (HRC) from even holding a debate on the report.
- Through its recurring resolutions on "mutually beneficial cooperation," Beijing has used the HRC to advance an alternative conception of human rights, one that emphasizes dialogue among governments, state consent, sovereignty, and non-interference rather than independent scrutiny and accountability for abuses.
- China's influence affects a broad range of democratic interests. For example, due to Chinese pressure, Taiwan has been excluded from the World Health Assembly, despite its importance to global health. The UN system has embraced China's Belt and Road Initiative, helping legitimize

Beijing's geopolitical infrastructure strategy.

- Russia has similarly used UN forums to weaponize historical memory, including its annual resolution on the glorification of Nazism, distorted to support its claim that its invasion of Ukraine was a campaign of "denazification."
- The composition of the HRC further illustrates this absurdity. In addition to China and Russia, it has counted countries such as Cuba, Burundi, Sudan, Venezuela, and Egypt among its members in recent years. Iran chaired the Council's 2023 Social Forum. Elsewhere in the UN system, North Korea presided over the 2022 Conference on Disarmament, Syria joined the World Health Organization Executive Board, and China, Cuba, Eritrea, and Nicaragua were elected to the UN Committee on NGOs. These bodies allow human rights abusers to shape the standards by which others are judged.
- Democracies also face sustained UN campaigns against vital tools of national security. In 2024, the General Assembly adopted a resolution seeking to recast lawful unilateral sanctions as a human rights abuse, despite opposition from the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Canada, Japan, Australia, and most European democracies. Six months later, it went a step further and created an annual International Day against Unilateral Coercive Measures.
- A similar dynamic is evident with regards to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In 2016, the General Assembly launched the process that produced the treaty despite opposition from the U.S., UK, France, Canada, Germany, Japan, Australia, NATO allies, and other democracies that rely on nuclear deterrence for their security. These governments argued that the initiative ignored the security conditions that make deterrence necessary, lacked a credible verification and enforcement mechanism, and risked weakening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the IAEA safeguards regime.
- Israel is the clearest case of the UN's institutional double standard and bias. More than thirty UN bodies and mechanisms form a permanent infrastructure of anti-Israel condemnation. Israel alone is subject to a dedicated HRC agenda item, a standing commission of inquiry, and specialized General Assembly bodies, databases, and recurring resolutions.
- From 2015 through May 2026, the General Assembly adopted 187

condemnatory resolutions against Israel, compared with 33 against Russia, 12 against Syria, 11 against Iran, and none against China. This is not normal scrutiny. It is structural discrimination.

- This discrimination is a challenge not only for Israel but for all democracies facing threats from terror. The machinery created to attack Israel can be repurposed against other democracies conducting counterterrorism operations, defending territorial claims, applying sanctions, or resisting transnational political pressure.
- After eighty years, it is clear that the UN has failed at its primary purpose: maintaining international peace and security. While regular and peacekeeping budgets grew, the number of global conflicts rose. For example, in 2024, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program recorded 61 active state-based conflicts, the highest number since records began in 1946, despite UN peacekeeping budgets reaching record heights in the preceding years. From Rwanda and Srebrenica to Syria, the DRC, Lebanon, and beyond, the UN repeatedly failed to prevent mass atrocities, wide-scale displacement, sexual violence, and the build-up of terrorist armies.
- UNIFIL and UNRWA further illustrate the failure of UN bodies to ensure security or counter terrorism. UNIFIL failed to prevent Hezbollah's military build-up in southern Lebanon despite millions in Western funding. UNRWA was penetrated by Hamas, provided salaries to terror operatives, and allowed Islamic terror organizations to exploit its infrastructure for military purposes. Too often, the UN substitutes reports, meetings, and mandate renewals for enforcement, deterrence, and real results.
- While failing to achieve its founding objectives, the UN has become a caricature of institutional sprawl, bloat, and waste. Its own review found more than 40,000 mandates issued since the organization's founding, with 85 percent of active mandates lacking a sunset clause or termination review. In 2024, the Secretariat supported more than 27,000 meetings and processed an average of 2,300 pages of documentation every day. Democracies provide the majority of the financing for this wasteful and unaccountable system, yet are routinely outvoted by states that contribute little to its budget or to the pursuit of its founding values.
- The answer is not isolationism but rather renewed international leadership, accountability, and initiative. Democracies should end broad, automatic support for failed UN institutions. Funding should be

conditional, transparent, limited, and revocable. States should withhold support from bodies that enable terrorism, institutionalize discrimination, or advance legal and economic warfare against democracies. If calls for true reform go unanswered, contributions should be cut.

- Democratic countries should work together to create alternative structures that replace failed UN bodies through bilateral agreements, capable regional coalitions, targeted diplomatic initiatives, rigorously vetted local partners, faith-based networks, private-public partnerships, and mission-specific frameworks. In this manner, they can advance international cooperation based on measurable results, funding accountability, equal treatment, and coalitions willing to defend freedom and peace.

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