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THE INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY & ZIONIST STRATEGY

From UN Bureaucracy to American Global Leadership

A Strategy for Advancing American Interests
by Disengaging from a Failed UN



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	5
Section 1: The UN's Core Structural Flaws	9
Section 2: How the UN Advances Anti-American and Pro-Chinese Interests	14
Promoting the Positions of the Chinese Communist Party	14
Undermining U.S. National Security and Sovereignty	16
The UN's Structural Bias Against Israel and its Implications for U.S. National Security	18
Section 3: Why the UN Fails to Resolve Conflicts	22
More UN Funding Does Not Translate to More Peace or Less Conflict.....	23
The Failure of UN Peacekeeping	25
U.S.-Led Diplomacy Can Succeed Where the UN Cannot	30
Section 4: Why the UN Will Not Carry Out Fundamental Reforms	35
Section 5: Reorienting U.S. Policy Toward the UN: Disengage, Withdraw, and Replace	41
Withdrawal Without Retreat	42
A Roadmap for a Disengage, Withdraw, and Replace Strategy	44
Conclusion	48



Executive Summary

- The U.S. State Department's Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 declares: "The Department will no longer fund or support international organizations that act contrary to America's interests or that erode our sovereignty." This statement reflects an important paradigm shift. International institutions are not ends in themselves. The United States should participate in them only when the benefits to American interests outweigh the costs.
- The traditional American approach treated the United Nations as flawed but necessary, assumed its defects could be addressed through reform, accepted America's disproportionate financial burden as the price of leadership, and viewed continued participation as necessary to preserve influence. These assumptions no longer stand up to scrutiny.
- In reality, the UN repeatedly undermines American interests, advances the positions of China and other adversarial powers, fails to deliver international peace and security, and has become a caricature of bureaucratic waste and bloat.
- The central problems with the UN are structural. The UN's core Charter, procedures, membership, political blocs, and incentives create a system which undermines American sovereignty and interests while generating institutional sprawl.
- The flaws begin with the UN's one-country-one-vote structure. Every member of the General Assembly has one vote, regardless of population, power or contribution. From 2015-2024, U.S. taxpayers provided roughly 28 percent of all government contributions to the UN, equal to the contributions of 183 other member states combined. In 2024 alone, the United States provided \$14.3 billion to the UN system. By contrast, the lowest-assessed countries are charged less than \$40,000.
- It is a mistake to think that the one-country-one-vote principle shapes only unimportant General Assembly resolutions. It in fact affects a wide range of UN bodies, elections, decisions, budgets, initiatives, and norm-setting processes. States that pay little can expand budgets, preserve politicized bodies, create mandates, block reform, and advance anti-American positions, while American taxpayers fund the machinery.
- China has learned how to exploit this system. Through the G77 and China bloc, Beijing can influence the votes of nearly 70 percent of UN members. The result is a system in which China and other hostile powers use the language of multilateralism to advance strategic goals.



- The UN has therefore become a platform for attacks on U.S. sovereignty and national security, including efforts to delegitimize U.S. sanctions, undermine nuclear deterrence, and advance migration norms over U.S. objections.
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- Nowhere are the UN's politicization and double standards clearer than in its treatment of Israel, a country described by the 2026 U.S. National Defense Strategy as a "model ally" of the United States. Israel alone faces a permanent, multi-layered machinery of condemnation across dozens of UN bodies, councils, special procedures, commissions, secretariat units, databases, and recurring annual resolutions. This directly harms American interests and creates tools that can be turned against America itself, including politicized reports, committees, special rapporteurs, blacklists, lawfare campaigns, and international criminal accusations detached from reality.
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- The UN has failed at its most basic purpose: maintaining international peace and security. While UN regular and peacekeeping budgets grew, the number of global conflicts increased. From Rwanda to Srebrenica, Syria, the DRC, Lebanon and beyond, the UN repeatedly failed to prevent massacres, wide-scale displacement, sexual violence, and the build-up of terror armies. With UNRWA, the UN created a massive bureaucracy that promotes radicalization, perpetuates conflict, and was thoroughly infiltrated by terrorists.
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- By contrast, U.S.-led diplomacy, leverage, and frameworks have repeatedly produced outcomes and breakthroughs that the UN could not deliver.
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- The UN cannot and will not carry out the fundamental reforms necessary to fix the organization. U.S. pressure can produce cost-cutting and administrative efficiencies, but it cannot change the UN's basic structure or member-state incentives. This is because the very countries that benefit from bureaucratic sprawl, waste, and bloat are the ones with the authority to determine the extent and nature of reform. UN80, the UN's latest reform initiative, proves this point.
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- UN80 exposed absurd institutional sprawl. Since the UN's founding, more than 40,000 mandates have been adopted by the UN's main bodies. 86 percent of active mandates lack sunset clauses or termination reviews. The UN Secretariat processes an average of 2,300 pages of documentation every day. In 2024 alone, it supported more than 27,000 meetings and produced more than 1,100 reports. Processing these meetings and reports costs roughly \$360 million annually, about 10 percent of the UN regular budget.
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- The internal management picture is no better. Only about 40 percent of UN entities have strategic plans, and only 30 percent operate with frameworks that connect resources to results.
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- U.S. pressure has helped secure some administrative and cost-cutting measures, including a 15 percent budget cut, which removed \$570 million from the UN regular budget. But achieving deeper and more substantive reforms, such as retiring mandates, closing bodies, and ending the operation of duplicative, politicized, or wasteful mechanisms, would require the consent of the very states that benefit from their existence.
- For American policymakers, the central question is therefore not whether the UN can be made marginally more efficient, cost-effective, or unbiased. The question is whether the UN system can become sufficiently accountable and aligned with American interests to justify continued U.S. engagement on a broad scale. The answer is no.
- The United States should therefore adopt a new strategy with relation to the UN: “Disengage, Withdraw, and Replace”. The U.S. should maximally disengage and withdraw from the UN, and replace it wherever possible with better alternatives.
- This does not mean America should leave the world. It means America should lead more effectively by distinguishing necessary international functions from the failed institutions that currently perform them.
- Congress should establish a presumption of zero automatic funding for the UN system. No assessed or voluntary contributions should be made unless Congress specifically authorizes the payment’s amount, purpose, duration, and safeguards.
- The White House should create an interagency task force to manage lawful and orderly disengagement, while preserving case-by-case cooperation with the UN as necessary.
- The United States should be willing to allow its General Assembly vote to lapse if withholding assessed contributions triggers Article 19 of the UN Charter. America’s influence does not come from possessing one vote in a chamber where it is routinely outvoted by blocs of states with competing interests.
- Responsible withdrawal requires replacement where possible. The United States should build non-UN mechanisms for humanitarian delivery, global health cooperation, technology development and governance, security, counterterrorism, standard setting, legal coordination, and strategic development. It should rely on bilateral agreements, alternative diplomatic frameworks, vetted NGOs, faith-based organizations, private logistics firms, and mission-specific coalitions, while preserving genuinely useful technical cooperation with the UN.



- Congress and the administration should end the presumption that UN credentials, privileges, and immunities shield misconduct. Where appropriate, the United States should deny or revoke visas and impose personal sanctions on UN officials or affiliated personnel who support terrorism, abuse diplomatic privileges, or target U.S. personnel and allies through politicized legal campaigns. Congress should clarify that U.S. courts should not recognize UN privileges or immunities for personnel accused of terror-related offenses, corruption, gross violations of human rights, or other serious criminal conduct. In cases such as UNRWA, Congress and the administration should determine whether specific UN-linked offices, committees, unions, contractors, or personnel meet the criteria for terror-related related sanctions or designation.
- Withdrawal must be durable. Congress should repeal or sunset outdated statutory authorizations for U.S. participation in UN bodies from which the United States has withdrawn, and require congressional approval before future reentry. Washington should also align foreign aid and trade benefits with countries' behavior in international organizations.
- Disengagement from the UN does not mean America is leaving the world. It means America is leaving failed structures. The U.S. should not treat outdated commitments as permanent obligations. It should build a new architecture of international cooperation grounded in sovereignty, accountability, burden sharing, measurable results, coalitions of capable allies, and peace through strength.

Introduction

The U.S. State Department's Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2030 declares that "The Department will no longer fund or support international organizations that act contrary to America's interests or that erode our sovereignty."¹ Similarly, the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mike Waltz, told Congress in March 2026: "We've made it clear that we will cease participation in some UN agencies that undermine our sovereignty and cannot be reformed."²

These statements reflect an important shift in the U.S. approach to the UN. The traditional American approach to the UN was that the organization had many faults, but that the focus should be on reform. This view held that the disproportionate share of the UN's growing budget shouldered by U.S. taxpayers was the price to be paid for American global leadership, and for the UN's performance of certain functions beneficial to American interests. Others believed that global cooperation through a supposedly neutral body was an ideal in itself, and would advance international peace and security. Therefore, the argument went, the U.S. should focus on making the UN more efficient and effective.



UN Secretary-General António Guterres Addresses the 72nd UN General Assembly, Sept. 19, 2017

1 U.S. Department of State, Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2030 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, January 2026), 6, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Agency-Strategic-Plan-for-Fiscal-Years-2026-2030.pdf>

2 Michael Waltz, "Testimony on UN Reform," testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs, March 20, 2026, U.S. Mission to the United Nations, <https://usun.usmission.gov/testimony-of-ambassador-mike-waltz-u-s-representative-to-the-united-nations-at-a-congressional-field-hearing-on-un-reform/>.



Over the last half century, American presidents have chosen at times to exit specific UN bodies deemed irredeemably contrary to American interests, though such decisions were often subsequently reversed. The Ford administration gave notice in 1975 that the U.S. would leave the International Labour Organization (ILO). President Carter allowed the withdrawal to take effect in 1977, but then reversed course and brought the U.S. back into the ILO in 1980. President Reagan withdrew the U.S. from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) effective December 1984. President George W. Bush later reversed that decision in 2003. President Clinton withdrew the U.S. from the UN Industrial Development Organization in 1995.

This approach accelerated during the first Trump administration. Under President Trump, the U.S. announced or initiated withdrawal from several UN-affiliated bodies and frameworks, including the Paris Agreement and UNESCO in 2017, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2018, and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020. Trump also ended funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in 2018. President Biden reversed course on each of these decisions, although he too suspended UNRWA funding in 2024 due to the involvement of UNRWA staff in Hamas's October 7, 2023 terror attacks.

In his second term, President Trump has gone further. In January 2025, he ordered a renewed withdrawal from the WHO. In February 2025, he issued Executive Order 14199, ending U.S. participation in the HRC, barring funding for UNRWA, and directing a review of U.S. participation in UNESCO and all international organizations, conventions, and treaties. Following that review, in January 2026 he directed U.S. withdrawal from 66 international organizations, conventions, and treaties, including 31 UN entities.

While this approach of exiting or defunding specific bodies is positive, it is time to recognize the deeper reality. The central problems with the UN are structural. They go to the core of the UN's Charter, membership, procedures, incentives, and operations. The UN's failure to achieve its founding goals or reverse its institutional sprawl is not merely the result of poor management. Nor can the UN's repeated promotion of positions hostile to the U.S. and its allies, and supportive of China and other adversarial states, be addressed simply through dialogue or better lobbying. These are basic features of the UN system and structure itself.

This is a structure in which American taxpayers are expected to provide billions of dollars to finance institutions, mandates, reports, investigations, processes, and operations that Washington opposes. It is a structure in which states that pay little can vote to expand budgets, preserve politicized bodies, and resist accountability. It is a structure in which the world's leading democracy can be outvoted by authoritarian regimes, failed states, and anti-American coalitions on matters that affect U.S. sovereignty, allies, and interests.

Nor has the UN delivered on its most fundamental purpose: maintaining international peace and security. More UN funding has not produced more peace. The UN system has grown larger, more expensive, and more bureaucratically expansive, while the world has become more violent, fragmented, and unstable. In many of the gravest conflicts and atrocities of the modern era, the UN did not prevent war, did not stop mass killings once they began, and did not overcome great-power obstruction. It often documented failure,



issued statements, convened meetings, coordinated aid around crises, and preserved mandates long after their strategic logic had collapsed.

The UN has also repeatedly demonstrated its inability to carry out true reform. This should be expected, because the very countries that benefit from bureaucratic sprawl, waste, and bloat are the ones with the authority to determine the extent and nature of reform. U.S. pressure can have an impact in forcing through some cost-cutting and enhancing administrative efficiencies. But it cannot change the basic procedures and perverse incentives that define UN decision-making. The member-state coalitions that created mandate sprawl and diverted resources for their own particular interests will not approve reforms that fundamentally weaken their influence, access to resources, or ability to pursue their agendas. This is as true of the UN's latest reform attempt, UN80, as it was of previous attempts stretching back decades.

At the same time, the United States has repeatedly demonstrated that it can often produce better outcomes when it acts through its own power, alliances, partnerships, bilateral agreements, leverage, and mission-specific frameworks. On numerous occasions, American leadership has helped advance peace, build regional frameworks, deter adversaries, counter terror, expand economic growth, promote development, deliver humanitarian assistance, and shape strategic outcomes outside the UN system.

The time has come for a U.S. approach to the UN defined by three words: Disengage, Withdraw, Replace. Adopting this strategy will better serve U.S. interests, leadership, and sovereignty than continued broad commitment to the UN system.

This does not mean that the United States should abandon the world. The opposite is true. America should lead more effectively. It should distinguish between necessary international functions and the flawed institutions that currently perform many of them. Humanitarian assistance, global health cooperation, technical standards, sanctions, maritime security, counterterrorism, and diplomacy all matter. But none of these functions requires dependence on the United Nations.

Nor does this mean that the U.S. should never cooperate or coordinate with the UN. Where a UN body genuinely serves a defined American interest, the United States can cooperate on a case-by-case basis.

The current moment provides an opportunity for a fundamental reassessment. The principle that the U.S. will no longer fund or support international organizations that act contrary to America's interests or erode American sovereignty should now be applied seriously and comprehensively to the entire UN system.

For American policymakers, the central question is not whether the UN can be made marginally more efficient, cost-effective, or unbiased. The question is whether the UN system can become sufficiently accountable and aligned with American interests to justify continued U.S. engagement on a broad scale. The answer is no.

This paper sets out the case for a new strategy and approach. It first explains the core structural flaws that lead the UN to undermine U.S. sovereignty and leadership. It then



examines how the UN system advances anti-American, anti-Western, and pro-China agendas, while working against American interests and allies. It evaluates the UN's failure to deliver peace and security despite growing resources and expanding mandates. It also analyzes the limits of UN80 and other reform efforts.

Finally, the paper proposes a strategy for the United States to disengage, withdraw, and replace: ending funding, requiring affirmative authorization for contributions, withdrawing from most UN bodies, preserving only genuinely useful cooperation, and building alternative frameworks and mechanisms.

The choice is not between the current UN system and international chaos. The real choice is between two models of international engagement: a universalist model that empowers hostile blocs and decreases accountability, or a selective, interest-based model that builds coalitions of capable and aligned states to solve concrete problems.

The United States should lead using the second model. It should not treat outdated commitments as permanent obligations. Rather, it should continue building the new architecture of international cooperation, one grounded in sovereignty, accountability, burden sharing, measurable results, and peace through strength.

Section 1: The UN's Core Structural Flaws

The United Nations system, because of its fundamental structure, procedures, and institutional incentives, runs counter to American sovereignty, leadership, and interests. This is not primarily an issue of improving bureaucratic or administrative operations. The UN's core structure and rules make it far more likely to undermine U.S. positions than to advance them.

This is not hypothetical. A multitude of examples demonstrate how the UN erodes U.S. interests and favors America's adversaries.

The UN's Charter separates power from responsibility across numerous arenas and functions. It gives equal voting power in the General Assembly and many other bodies to states that are radically unequal in contribution, population, power, governance, and commitment to the UN's stated purposes. The fundamental principle upon which most UN bodies, decisions and actions are based is enshrined in Article 18(1) of the UN Charter which states: "Each member of the General Assembly shall have one vote." Despite the fact that over the past decade, the U.S. provided 28 percent of all government contributions to the UN, approximately equivalent to the contributions of 183 other member states combined,³ it has the same vote as Somalia, Afghanistan or Tuvalu.



UN Headquarters in New York, Oct. 8, 2024

3 Brett D. Schaefer, "Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Intelligence, Hearing on 'U.S. Accountability at the United Nations: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform,'" April 29, 2026, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA17/20260429/119214/HHRG-119-FA17-Wstate-SchaeferB-20260429.pdf>.



Article 18(2) of the UN Charter states that “decisions of the General Assembly on important questions shall be made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.” China, through the “Group of 77 and China” voting bloc, has far-reaching influence over the votes of 134 of the 193 UN member states, or 69.4 percent of UN members. This gives Beijing extensive influence over such “important questions” and far beyond.

Contrary to a common misconception, the one-country-one-vote principle does not apply only to unimportant General Assembly resolutions. It applies to a broad range of bodies, issues, budget allocations, and decisions that directly affect U.S. interests.

Through the General Assembly, UN member states determine the scale of assessments for both the UN regular budget and peacekeeping operations. They then decide how UN funds are allocated across the Byzantine network of UN departments, subsidiary bodies, commissions, political missions, mandate reporting and investigative mechanisms, and more.

These matters are negotiated first in the Fifth Committee, the General Assembly’s committee for administrative and budgetary affairs. Like the General Assembly itself, the Fifth Committee operates on the basis of one country, one vote. The full General Assembly then approves the budget.

The result is a structure that weakens U.S. control over U.S. taxpayer funds. The United States has one vote out of 193 in determining how much it must pay. It then has one vote out of 193 in determining how that money will be spent. The United States is currently assessed 22 percent of the UN regular budget and just over 26 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget. For 2026, this amounts to roughly \$759 million for the regular budget and \$1.408 billion for peacekeeping. By contrast, the lowest-assessed countries are charged only \$34,504 for the regular budget and \$5,386 for the peacekeeping budget, while possessing the same General Assembly vote. If the U.S. refuses or delays payment, it is accused of being in violation of its commitments.

In practice, the U.S. funds an even higher percentage of the UN budget. In 2024, the U.S., across assessed and voluntary contributions, provided \$14.3 billion to the UN system, amounting to 30.5 percent of all government contributions to the UN. As noted, this was equal to the combined contributions of 183 other nations, and was three times the contribution of Germany, the second-largest contributor.⁴

Member states, often acting through blocs such as the G77 and China, the Non-Aligned Movement, or the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, have repeatedly used this voting structure to protect politically preferred bodies and posts, preserve outdated mandates, resist transparency, and weaken reform efforts.

This pattern has continued for decades. For example, in 2006, the U.S., Europe, and

4 Ibid.

other reform-minded states opposed a Fifth Committee draft resolution sponsored by the G77 and China that limited the UN Secretary-General's ability to advance management reforms. The United States and its allies lost: 108 states supported the G77 and China position, 50 opposed, and three abstained. South Africa, speaking on behalf of the G77, stated the principle explicitly: "The Group of 77 and China strongly believes that the right of every Member State to have an equal say in the decision-making of the Organization must be upheld. This right is not dependent on the financial contributions of member states to the budget of the Organization."⁵

Peacekeeping financing reflects the same structural problem. The Security Council creates or renews peacekeeping mandates, but the General Assembly approves their financing. In 2025, the General Assembly approved a \$5.38 billion peacekeeping budget for 2025–2026. Most mission budgets were adopted without a vote, but the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) budget was adopted by 147 votes in favor, three against, and two abstentions, with the United States, Israel, and Argentina voting against.

This means that the United States can oppose the financing of a specific mission, lose overwhelmingly, and still be assessed more than a quarter of the peacekeeping budget. Meanwhile, many of the states voting to approve these expenditures pay almost nothing toward the costs.

The same problem applies to the General Assembly's power to create subsidiary organs. The GA can establish committees, bodies, mechanisms, and processes that become permanent or semi-permanent parts of the UN ecosystem. These bodies do not merely express opinions. They produce reports, convene conferences, establish staffs, recommend diplomatic and legal action, generate recurring resolutions, promote treaties, shape international norms, and create bureaucratic constituencies that seek to preserve and expand themselves. Examples include the Special Committee on Decolonization, which provides a recurring platform for challenges to U.S. sovereignty and territorial arrangements; the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action process, which has been used to advance anti-Western narratives under the banner of anti-racism; the nuclear-ban-treaty process; and the UN's permanent Palestinian-focused bodies, including the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights, and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices. Once created, these platforms receive resources, staffing, meeting time, documentation, translation, reporting capacity, and international legitimacy.

The issue, therefore, is not whether the original resolution creating a given body was legally binding. The issue is that a nonbinding vote can create a permanent institutional platform. That platform can then mobilize UN resources year after year against U.S. interests, positions, and allies.

5 Group of 77 and China, "Statement on Behalf of the Group of 77 and China by H.E. Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the UN and Chairman of the Group of 77," New York, April 24, 2006, <https://www.g77.org/Speeches/042406.htm>.

Some General Assembly actions can affect U.S. strategic defense capabilities. For example, the General Assembly launched the process that produced the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons through Resolution 71/258. The United States opposed the process. Even though the United States is not party to the treaty, the process creates a soft-law campaign to stigmatize nuclear weapons, pressure banks and companies involved in nuclear-defense supply chains, and delegitimize U.S. deterrence doctrine.

Other resolutions and processes adopted and advanced by the General Assembly that run counter to U.S. interests include those related to “reparatory justice,” the “right to development,” and sustainable-development demands. These resolutions shape expectations that the United States and other wealthy countries owe higher aid, climate finance, debt relief, or technology transfer to many of the countries voting for the resolution’s passage.

The same one-country-one-vote structure determines elections to key UN bodies. The General Assembly elects members of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ECOSOC-linked bodies help shape global narratives on development, digital governance, gender policy, climate, migration, and economic justice. ECOSOC decisions also affect which NGOs receive consultative status, giving them access to UN meetings, side events, and advocacy channels.

This structure also determines the members of the UN Human Rights Council. As a result, authoritarian regimes and serial human-rights violators can win seats on bodies responsible for shaping international norms, overseeing human-rights issues, and influencing the global diplomatic agenda. The Human Rights Council has included, and in some cases repeatedly elected, some of the world’s most repressive governments. China and Cuba were reelected for 2024–2026. Russia was elected for 2021–2023, only to be suspended in 2022 over reports of gross and systematic violations in Ukraine. Other recent members with very questionable human rights records include Burundi, Sudan, Venezuela and Egypt. Iran was appointed to chair the Human Rights Council 2023 Social Forum.

This absurdity is not limited to the Human Rights Council. North Korea presided over the 2022 UN Conference on Disarmament, Syria was elected to the World Health Organization Executive Board in 2021, and China, Cuba, Eritrea and Nicaragua were elected to the UN Committee on NGOs.

The one-country-one-vote system critically also shapes the election of judges to the International Court of Justice. ICJ judges must receive a majority in both the General Assembly and the Security Council, but the permanent members of the Security Council do not wield a veto. This leads to absurdities like the UN electing Nawaf Salam, who as Lebanon’s UN Ambassador from 2007 to 2017, repeatedly demonized Israel, to serve as an ICJ judge who would then take part in cases involving accusations against Israel. The election of an official known for his anti-Israel bias to the ICJ was a feature, not a bug of the UN system, and it reflects a pattern which plays out across a broad range of UN entities. It is important to recall that the ICJ, due to its veneer of international legitimacy, helps shape the norms and laws that impact how all democracies, and not just Israel, are expected to combat threats posed by radical regimes and terror groups.



The General Assembly can also request ICJ advisory opinions based on the one-country-one-vote system, and thereby advance legal and political agendas opposed by the U.S. For example, in March 2023, the General Assembly adopted a request for an ICJ advisory opinion on states' obligations with respect to climate change. After the Court issued its opinion in July 2025, the GA voted in May 2026 by 141 to 8, with 28 abstentions, to support the opinion, despite United States opposition. Even when formally nonbinding, advisory opinions can influence diplomatic pressure, litigation strategies, UN reporting mechanisms, treaty interpretation, and claims regarding state responsibility.

The General Assembly also elects members of the International Law Commission, which develops and codifies international law. The ILC's work can shape future treaties, customary-law arguments, state-responsibility doctrines, immunity rules, environmental obligations, and legal claims against states.

The conclusion is clear. The UN's one-country-one-vote structure does not merely produce speeches and symbolic resolutions. It determines budgets, assessments, mandates, institutional platforms, elections, legal processes, norms, decisions, and the bureaucratic machinery through which international pressure is generated and sustained. For the United States, the problem is not simply that it can lose votes. The problem is that it can be forced to finance the very institutions, processes, and mandates that are used to constrain its freedom of action, legitimize hostile legal theories, advance priorities contrary to its national interests, and undermine its allies. This problem finds expression in numerous facets of the UN's activity, as described in the following section.

Section 2: How the UN Advances Anti-American and Pro-Chinese Interests

As a result of the UN's core structure, its bodies, bureaucracies, and activities often amplify the interests of states hostile to the United States and its allies, while constraining or condemning the policies of democratic nations. The result is a system in which American adversaries use the language of multilateralism to advance strategic goals they could not achieve through direct confrontation with the United States.

This pattern is most visible in three areas. First, the UN has repeatedly accommodated or advanced Chinese positions and priorities, including Beijing's efforts to shield itself from human-rights scrutiny, isolate Taiwan, and promote the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Second, the UN has provided recurring platforms for challenges to U.S. sovereignty, national security, sanctions, and migration policy. Third, the UN has built a permanent institutional campaign against Israel, America's closest ally in the Middle East, while granting relative impunity to many of the world's most abusive regimes. The UN's obsessive campaign of demonization against Israel threatens and undermines key U.S. interests as well.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi Speaks at UN Security Council, Sept. 27, 2024



Promoting the Positions of the Chinese Communist Party

China has been able to transform the UN into a forum for advancing its positions and deflecting criticism on multiple occasions. For example, in October 2022, the UN Human Rights Council voted on a proposal to hold a debate regarding China's treatment of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. This vote came just weeks after the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report finding that China's actions in Xinjiang could constitute crimes against humanity.⁶ The proposed action before the Council was not a resolution condemning China, imposing sanctions, or creating an investigation. It was merely a proposal to hold a discussion.

China was able to marshal the support to defeat even that proposal, with 17 countries voting in favor, 19 against, and 11 abstaining. The United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands and others voted in favor. China, Cuba, Eritrea, Pakistan, Qatar, Venezuela and others voted no. The result demonstrated how China and its partners could use the UN's own human-rights machinery to block scrutiny of one of the most serious human rights crises in the world.

Another example came in March 2018, when the Human Rights Council adopted a China-sponsored resolution on "promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights." On its face, the language sounded harmless. In practice, it advanced Beijing's preferred model of human rights: less emphasis on individual liberty, accountability, and scrutiny of abusive governments, and more emphasis on "dialogue," state sovereignty, and non-interference. The United States was the only country to vote against the resolution, warning that its "feel-good" language was "intended to benefit autocratic states at the expense of people whose human rights and fundamental freedoms" states are obligated to respect. The episode was important because it showed that China was not merely trying to avoid criticism at the UN; it was actively trying to reshape the vocabulary and operating principles of the UN human-rights system itself.⁷

The UN system has also repeatedly accommodated Beijing's campaign to exclude Taiwan from international organizations, even when Taiwan's participation would clearly serve practical global interests. This has been especially visible in the World Health Organization and the World Health Assembly, where Taiwan participated as an observer from 2009 to 2016 but has since been excluded under Chinese pressure. The exclusion became especially glaring during the COVID-19 crisis, when Taiwan's public-health experience and early warnings could have contributed to global disease monitoring. The United States has repeatedly argued that Taiwan's exclusion undermines global health and

6 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China, August 31, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assesment.pdf>

7 U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, "EOV on Mutually Beneficial Cooperation — HRC37 Resolution L.36," March 23, 2018, <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2018/03/23/eov-on-mutually-beneficial-cooperation-l-36/>.



reflects political pressure from the People's Republic of China rather than the functional needs of the international community.

The same pattern appeared in the International Civil Aviation Organization, a UN specialized agency. In January 2020, during the early spread of COVID-19, ICAO blocked social-media users who criticized the agency's exclusion of Taiwan from aviation-related information sharing. The blocked users reportedly included analysts, policy experts, and even U.S. congressional staffers. The U.S. State Department condemned ICAO's conduct as "outrageous" and "unacceptable." The episode became a vivid example of a UN specialized agency appearing to police criticism of Beijing's Taiwan position rather than facilitating open discussion about aviation safety and public-health risks.⁸

Another major example is the UN system's embrace of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. At the Second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in April 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres declared that the Belt and Road Initiative had assumed "remarkable and urgent importance" and that it "offers a meaningful opportunity to contribute to the creation of a more equitable, prosperous world for all, and to reversing the negative impact of climate change."⁹ UN-linked materials and Chinese UN mission statements have repeatedly presented the Belt and Road Initiative as "intrinsically linked" to the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁰ The BRI is China's flagship geopolitical infrastructure strategy, designed to expand Beijing's economic, technological, political, and strategic influence. By framing BRI as a partner of the UN development agenda, the UN system helped legitimize a Chinese strategic project under the language of multilateral development.

Undermining U.S. National Security and Sovereignty

The UN's one-country-one-vote structure regularly leads to UN resolutions and actions which undermine U.S. national security and sovereignty. For example, the UNGA has provided a recurring platform for direct attacks on U.S. sanctions policy, including through the annual resolution condemning the U.S. embargo on Cuba. In October 2025, the General Assembly adopted the resolution for the 33rd consecutive year, with 165 countries voting in favor, 7 against, and 12 abstaining. This recurring UN vote is aimed at transforming a unilateral U.S. policy decision into an annual global indictment of American policy, giving diplomatic support to Havana's narrative and isolating Washington in the General Assembly.

8 U.S. Department of State, "The International Civil Aviation Organization's Twitter Account Blocking of Users," January 28, 2020, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-international-civil-aviation-organizations-twitter-account-blocking-of-users/>

9 United Nations UNifeed, "CHINA / GUTERRES BELT AND ROAD FORUM," April 26, 2019, <https://media.un.org/unifeed/en/asset/d238/d2384824>.

10 Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, "Jointly Advancing the Belt and Road Initiative and the 2030 Agenda for Global Sustainable Development," September 14, 2022, https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/chinaandun/economicdevelopment/202209/t20220915_10766230.htm



A broader and more systemic challenge to U.S. policy has come through recurring UN resolutions against “unilateral coercive measures.” In UN terminology, this phrase is generally used to criticize sanctions imposed by individual states or groups of states outside the Security Council framework. In practice, the target is often U.S. sanctions against regimes such as Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, North Korea, and Russia. This track culminated in June 2025, when the General Assembly voted to establish December 4 as the International Day against Unilateral Coercive Measures, beginning in 2025. The resolution passed by 116 votes to 51, with 6 abstentions. The United States declared in response that it “opposes the absurdity of International Days for pet causes and completely rejects the entire unilateral coercive measures – or UCM – narrative devoted to discrediting sanctions as a tool of statecraft.”¹¹

The UN’s Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration offers another example of the UN advancing a framework opposed by the United States on sovereignty grounds. In December 2017, the Trump administration withdrew from the negotiations over the compact, arguing that migration policy must remain under the control of sovereign states and that the compact risked promoting international norms inconsistent with U.S. immigration policy. Nevertheless, on December 19, 2018, the General Assembly endorsed the compact by 152 votes in favor, 5 against, and 12 abstentions. The United States voted no, joined by only a small number of countries. Although formally nonbinding, the compact was designed as the first comprehensive intergovernmental framework on migration under UN auspices, marking an attempt to shape international expectations and norms.

The UN-backed Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons provides a defense-policy example. Adopted on July 7, 2017, by 122 votes in favor, 1 against, and 1 abstention, the treaty sought to ban nuclear weapons outright. The United States and other nuclear-armed states opposed the process and did not join the treaty. Washington and its allies argued that the treaty ignored the realities of deterrence, weakened rather than strengthened the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty framework, and was incompatible with extended deterrence commitments to U.S. allies in Europe and Asia. This was a case in which a large General Assembly-driven coalition produced a treaty that directly conflicted with the security doctrine of the United States.

The UN’s Structural Bias Against Israel and its Implications for U.S. National Security

The United Nations’ obsessive bias against Israel is structural and unparalleled. No other country is subject to anything comparable: not China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba, or any other state. Israel alone faces a permanent, multi-layered machinery of condemnation embedded across the General Assembly, Human Rights

11 U.S. Mission to the United Nations, “Statement at the General Assembly Informal Meeting on the International Day against Unilateral Coercive Measures,” December 4, 2025, <https://usun.usmission.gov/statement-at-the-general-assembly-informal-meeting-on-the-international-day-against-unilateral-coercive-measures-ucms/>.



Council, specialized agencies, special procedures, committees, databases, commissions of inquiry, secretariat units, and recurring annual resolutions.

From 2015 to May 2026, the General Assembly adopted 187 condemnatory resolutions against Israel, compared with 33 against Russia, 12 against Syria, 11 against Iran, 11 against North Korea, and 10 against Myanmar. It adopted zero such resolutions against China, Cuba, Qatar, Turkey, Pakistan, Venezuela, and numerous other states with dismal human rights records. At the Human Rights Council, from its creation in 2006 to the present, the Council adopted 116 condemnatory resolutions against Israel, compared with 45 against Syria, 19 against North Korea, 18 against Iran, 15 against Eritrea, 14 against Russia, 6 against Sudan, and 4 against Venezuela. It adopted zero condemnatory resolutions against China, Cuba, Qatar, Turkey, Pakistan, and many other countries during this period.¹²

This UN-wide trend has continued since Hamas's October 7 terrorist attack. From October 7, 2023 to May 2026, UN bodies adopted at least 74 resolutions condemning or criticizing Israel: 46 in the General Assembly, 2 in ECOSOC, 12 in the Human Rights Council, 8 in the World Health Organization, and 6 in UNESCO.¹³ Over the same period, Israel also faced at least five major ICJ-related proceedings, orders, or advisory opinions.

The bias is built directly into the Human Rights Council's agenda. Israel is the only country in the world subject to its own permanent agenda item: Agenda Item 7, titled "Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories." Every other country is considered under the general human-rights agenda item. The United States and United Kingdom have both objected to this unique treatment, with the UK stating in March 2026 that Item 7 "unfairly and uniquely singles out" Israel and that "no other country is treated in this way by the Human Rights Council."¹⁴

The UN has created an entire sprawling bureaucracy dedicated to condemning Israel and promoting the Palestinian narrative. This includes the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights, the UN Information System on the Question of Palestine, the UN Global Communications Palestine section, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, and more.

The mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian territories is entirely one-sided. The current mandate holder, Francesca Albanese, has used the prestige of a UN title to accuse Israel of "genocide," call for sanctions and an arms embargo, and target private companies, including American firms. Her record has also drawn repeated

12 UN Watch, "Resolution Database," <https://unwatch.org/database/resolution-database/>; UN Watch, "2025 UNGA Resolutions on Israel vs. Rest of the World," November 19, 2025, <https://unwatch.org/2025-unga-resolutions-on-israel-vs-rest-of-the-world/>.

13 Ibid.

14 United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, "UN Human Rights Council 61: EoV for Item 7," GOV.UK, March 31, 2026, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-61-eov-for-item-7>.



accusations of antisemitism and bias. The UN Office of Internal Oversight Services opened an investigation into allegations that Albanese improperly accepted outside funding from pro-Hamas groups for a lobbying trip. She was condemned by France, Germany, the U.S. Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, and bipartisan U.S. lawmakers over statements including her claim that “America is subjugated by the Jewish lobby” and her remarks denying the antisemitic nature of Hamas’s October 7 massacre.¹⁵ In July 2025, the United States sanctioned Albanese, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio accusing her of “lawfare” and of targeting U.S. and Israeli persons.¹⁶

The problem is broader than one mandate holder. It is institutional and system-wide. Richard Falk, who held the same mandate from 2008 to 2014, became notorious for antisemitic and conspiratorial rhetoric, including his posting of an antisemitic cartoon and his comments suggesting possible U.S. complicity in the September 11 attacks. Other mandate-holders have likewise used thematic human-rights titles to advance one-sided campaigns against Israel. For example, Reem Alsalem, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, has minimized or questioned Hamas’s sexual crimes against Israeli women while advancing accusations against Israel.¹⁷

The Human Rights Council went further in May 2021, when it created an “ongoing” independent international Commission of Inquiry to investigate Israel. This was not a time-limited fact-finding mission into a specific incident. It was an open-ended investigative mechanism empowered to examine alleged violations and their “underlying root causes,” and report to the UNGA and HRC. The Commission’s personnel controversies reinforced concerns from the beginning. In July 2022, then Commission of Inquiry member Miloon Kothari questioned why Israel should be a UN member and referred to the “Jewish lobby” as controlling social media. The remarks were condemned by the United States and by numerous other democratic governments.¹⁸

The same bias has reached the UN’s highest judicial organ. As noted, Nawaf Salam, Lebanon’s former ambassador to the United Nations from 2007 to 2017, was elected to the International Court of Justice in November 2017. He was then involved in proceedings against Israel, including South Africa’s claims related to the genocide convention. During his tenure as Lebanon’s UN ambassador, Salam accused Israel of “crimes against humanity” and “war crimes,” referred to Israeli “war criminals,” and opposed Israel’s candidacy for the vice-presidency of the General Assembly’s Fourth Committee, saying

15 UN Watch, “UN Opens Investigation into Allegations Its Palestine Monitor Took Funds from Pro-Hamas Lobby Groups,” July 2, 2024, <https://unwatch.org/un-opens-investigation-into-official-accused-of-antisemitism-by-france-germany-us/>.

16 Marco Rubio, “Sanctioning Lawfare that Targets U.S. and Israeli Persons,” U.S. Department of State, July 9, 2025, www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/07/sanctioning-lawfare-that-targets-u-s-and-israeli-persons.

17 UN Watch, From Watchdogs to Ideologues: How Politicized UN Rapporteurs Are Subverting Human Rights, May 2026, <https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/From-Watchdogs-to-Ideologues.pdf>.

18 U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, “Statement on Antisemitic Remarks by a Commissioner of the Israel COI,” July 28, 2022, <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2022/07/28/statement-on-antisemitic-remarks-by-a-commissioner-of-the-israel-coi/>.



Israel was not eligible for election “to any office.” Despite these statements, or perhaps because of them, he was elected to sit on the UN’s highest court.

The UN has also built tools designed to stigmatize economic activity connected to Israel. In 2020, the OHCHR published a database of 112 business enterprises, including American companies, alleged to be involved in certain activities related to Israeli communities over the Green Line. The database has no equivalent for businesses operating in occupied Northern Cyprus, Crimea, Tibet, or other disputed or occupied territories.

The pattern extends into UN bodies whose mandates have little obvious connection to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Commission on the Status of Women, the UN’s principal intergovernmental body dedicated to gender equality, has repeatedly singled out Israel as the only country-specific violator of women’s rights, including adopting resolutions in 2022 and 2023 accusing Israel of being a “major obstacle” to Palestinian women’s advancement. The World Health Organization has likewise adopted recurring resolutions singling out Israel for censure. Specialized technical forums have thus been turned into stages for political condemnations.

The Secretary-General’s annual blacklists have become another instrument of reputational warfare. In June 2024, Secretary-General António Guterres placed Israeli security forces in the annex of his report on children and armed conflict, alongside Hamas and other armed groups, for alleged grave violations against children. In May 2026, the UN formally added Israeli security forces to the annex of parties suspected of committing or being responsible for conflict-related sexual violence, alongside Russian forces. Israel rejected the claims as baseless and condemned what it called a “false moral equation” between Israel and Hamas, announcing that it would sever all contact with the Office of the Secretary-General and its representatives. These listings reveal the UN’s moral confusion: a democratic state fighting an enemy that began the war with mass murder, hostage-taking, and sexual violence is placed in the same symbolic category as the terrorist organizations it is fighting.

The core problem is not that Israel is criticized at the UN. Democratic states can and should be scrutinized. The problem is that Israel is treated as a special category of evil. The UN has given one conflict a permanent agenda item, one people a dedicated committee, one cause a secretariat division, one state an open-ended commission of inquiry, one territorial dispute a corporate blacklist, and one democratic military a recurring place in symbolic lists normally associated with the world’s worst violators. This is institutional discrimination.

The UN’s vast anti-Israel machinery has direct impacts on American interests and security. First of all, this institutionalized campaign targets a country that the 2026 U.S. National Defense Strategy states is a “model ally” which the U.S. is committed to help “defend itself and promote our shared interests.”¹⁹ The campaign delegitimizes U.S.-backed security policy and gives authoritarian states a ready-made shield: they can

19 U.S. Department of Defense, 2026 National Defense Strategy, January 23, 2026, <https://media.defense.gov/2026/Jan/23/2003864773/-1/-1/0/2026-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY.PDF>.



condemn Israel to posture as defenders of human rights while avoiding scrutiny of their own crimes.

The expansive UN campaign of delegitimization and double standards also creates precedents and tools that can be turned against the United States itself: open-ended commissions, politicized special rapporteurs, blacklists, lawfare campaigns, and international criminal accusations detached from reality. The Trump administration made this point directly in its 2025 executive order on the ICC, warning that actions against Israel and the United States set a “dangerous precedent” that endangers U.S. personnel and undermines U.S. sovereignty and foreign policy.²⁰ A UN so blatantly biased corrupts the international system, degrades moral clarity, weakens the fight against terror, and is strategically harmful to the United States and its allies.

20 White House, “Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court,” February 6, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-sanctions-on-the-international-criminal-court/>.

Section 3:

Why the UN Fails to Resolve Conflicts

The United Nations was not created primarily to convene conferences, publish reports, manage bureaucracies, or generate diplomatic language. Article 1 of the UN Charter states that the first purpose of the United Nations is “to maintain international peace and security,” including through “effective collective measures” to prevent and remove threats to peace, suppress aggression, and bring about the peaceful settlement of disputes. This is a critical standard by which the UN should be judged.

Measured against that standard, the UN’s record is very poor. In many of the gravest conflicts and atrocities of the modern era, the UN did not prevent war, did not stop mass killings once they began, did not protect civilians under its own declared protection frameworks, and did not overcome great-power obstruction. It often documented, lamented, coordinated aid around, or managed the aftermath of crises it failed to prevent. In other cases, UN forces and organizations contributed to terror, radicalization, sexual crimes, and other human-rights abuses.

On the other hand, the United States has shown that by acting alone or through U.S.-led frameworks and partnerships, it can often facilitate better outcomes. There is little justification for remaining part of an organization that fails to promote peace and security, contributes to terror and rejectionism, and repeatedly proves inadequate where U.S.-led frameworks succeed.

This does not mean that UN agencies have never contributed to peace or reduced conflict. But the overall balance on this count is clearly negative. This also does not mean that the United States should never cooperate with the UN. It can when cooperation is useful. But that does not require membership in, and certainly not funding of, structurally weak and failing bodies.

More UN Funding Does Not Translate to More Peace or Less Conflict

According to UN System Chief Executives Board data, total UN-system revenue rose from \$39.6 billion in 2010 to \$68.3 billion in 2024, after peaking at \$74.3 billion in 2022. In nominal terms, the UN system’s annual revenue grew by approximately 73 percent from 2010 to 2024, and by nearly 88 percent at its 2022 peak.²¹ This was not a starving institution struggling to operate. It was a large and growing international system with tens of billions of dollars flowing through it each year.

21 United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, “Total Revenue,” <https://unsceb.org/fs-revenue>.



Peacekeeping is even more revealing. The UN's 2005–2006 peacekeeping budget was about \$3.2 billion. By 2006–2007, it had risen to about \$4.72 billion. By 2015–2016, it reached about \$8.27 billion. Even after mission closures and reductions, the approved peacekeeping budget remained at \$5.6 billion for 2024–2025 and \$5.38 billion for 2025–2026. In other words, UN peacekeeping grew into a massive global enterprise.²²

This increase in spending did not produce an increase in peace or a decrease in conflict. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) reported that in 2024 there were 61 active state-based conflicts, the highest number recorded since the dataset began in 1946.²³ According to the UN itself, the number of state-based armed conflicts grew from under 20 in 1950 to over 60 in 2025.²⁴ This is the opposite of what should have happened if a larger, better-funded UN system were translating resources into international peace and security.

The deterioration is not only in the number of conflicts. It is also in their intensity. UCDP stated that since 2010, the number of conflicts involving states has almost doubled, while the total number of deaths has increased fivefold. Peace Research Institute Oslo reported that battle-related deaths in 2024 stood at approximately 129,000, making 2024 the fourth most violent year since the end of the Cold War.²⁵ The world did not merely fail to become peaceful. It became more violent.

UN peacekeeping has consumed tens of billions of dollars since the early 2000s. Yet some of the largest and longest-running missions have operated in precisely the countries that remain synonymous with insecurity: Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan, Sudan, and Lebanon.

The deeper problem is that the UN has turned process into a substitute for results. It convenes meetings, produces reports, calls for restraint, and renews mandates. These actions do not stop wars, defeat terrorist armies, deter aggressors, protect civilians, or impose costs on perpetrators. In many crises, the UN does not end the war; it builds a bureaucracy around the war.

Beyond the overall numbers are numerous cases where the UN failed to ensure peace and security, and even contributed to the opposite. The following is a sampling of such cases.

22 United Nations Peacekeeping, "How We Are Funded," <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded>;

23 Uppsala University, "UCDP: Sharp Increase in Conflicts and Wars," June 11, 2025, <https://www.uu.se/en/press/press-releases/2025/2025-06-11-ucdp-sharp-increase-in-conflicts-and-wars>

24 United Nations, UN80 Initiative: Progress Report, May 26, 2026, https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2026-05/UN80-PR2_260526_0833_WEB.pdf

25 Peace Research Institute Oslo, Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2024, 2025, <https://static.poder360.com.br/2025/06/relatorio-prio-conflict-trends-divulgado-em-junho-de-2025.pdf>

The Failure of UN Peacekeeping

Rwanda

Rwanda remains one of the clearest examples of catastrophic UN failure. The UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, UNAMIR, was already on the ground when the genocide began in April 1994. The mission had warning. In January 1994, Force Commander Roméo Dallaire sent what became known as the “genocide fax,” reporting information from an informant about an anti-Tutsi extermination plot, and proposing operations against weapons caches. The warning reached UN headquarters months before the killing began. UN officials rejected Dallaire’s request for authority to raid suspected arms caches and instructed him instead to consult with government leaders.²⁶

When the genocide began, the UN did not prevent or stop it. Instead, after the murder of ten Belgian peacekeepers and the withdrawal of several national contingents, the Security Council adopted Resolution 912 on April 21, 1994, reducing UNAMIR’s authorized strength from roughly 2,500 troops to 270 personnel while mass killing was underway.

The institutional lesson is stark. The UN had a mission in place, a commander warning of extermination, a Security Council mandate, and the moral authority of the international community. But when decisive protection was needed, the system contracted rather than acted.



UN Peacekeeping Mission in Southern Sudan, June 3, 2012

²⁶ United Nations, Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, S/1999/1257, December 16, 1999, <https://docs.un.org/en/S/1999/1257>

A body charged with preventing mass atrocities reduced its peacekeeping presence while genocide was underway.

Srebrenica

Srebrenica demonstrates the danger of unenforced international guarantees. The enclave had been declared a UN “safe area” in 1993. Civilians reasonably understood that designation to mean something. Yet in July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces overran Srebrenica while Dutch UN peacekeepers were present but unable to stop the attack. The UN’s own later report gave a comprehensive account of the fall of the “safe area,” which became one of the defining failures of the organization.²⁷

After the enclave fell, more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed in and around Srebrenica. Tens of thousands of women, children, and elderly persons were forcibly transferred.

Srebrenica is a warning against the moral hazard of symbolic protection. Declaring a UN “safe area” without the will and capacity to defend it can create false expectations of safety, increasing the danger to vulnerable civilians.

Syria

Syria is one of the clearest contemporary examples of UN paralysis. The UN Human Rights Office estimated that 306,887 civilians were killed in Syria between March 1, 2011, and March 31, 2021, as a direct result of the conflict.²⁸

Syria involved almost every category of international-security concern the UN claims to address: mass civilian killing, chemical weapons, refugee flows, jihadist mobilization, attacks on civilian infrastructure, cross-border humanitarian access, and regional destabilization. Yet the Security Council was repeatedly unable to act decisively because a permanent member, Russia, was determined to shield its ally and preserve its regional position. On February 28, 2017, Russia and China vetoed a Security Council resolution that would have imposed sanctions on Syria over chemical-weapons use. Later, Russia thwarted efforts to extend the Syria chemical-weapons investigation mechanism.

The UN did not lack meetings, statements, envoys, reports, or emergency sessions on Syria. It lacked enforceable power when a permanent member chose obstruction over accountability. Syria exposes the central defect in the UN’s collective-security architecture: the Security Council is strongest when the great powers agree and weakest when the stakes are highest. Where the perpetrator or patron is protected by a veto, the system can record the catastrophe but cannot stop it.

27 United Nations General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35: The Fall of Srebrenica, A/54/549, November 15, 1999, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/54/549>.

28 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “UN Human Rights Office Estimates More Than 306,000 Civilians Were Killed over 10 Years in Syria Conflict,” June 28, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/un-human-rights-office-estimates-more-306000-civilians-were-killed-over-10>.

Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a case study in the limits of UN peacekeeping. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), together with its predecessor missions, has been present in Congo for more than two decades. MONUSCO's mandate places the protection of civilians at its core. Yet eastern Congo remains one of the world's worst theaters of armed violence, displacement, sexual violence, and impunity.

The 2025–2026 crisis illustrates the scale of the failure. In early 2025, the Rwanda-backed M23 intensified its offensive, captured Goma and Bukavu, and consolidated control over strategic areas in eastern Congo. The offensive unfolded despite the presence of MONUSCO and regional forces. The civilian toll was catastrophic, with thousands killed during M23's advance and numerous reports of executions, sexual violence, and other abuses by multiple armed actors.

MONUSCO is not merely a mission that failed to solve Congo's violence. It has also been part of the UN's own misconduct crisis. In 2024, sexual misconduct allegations in UN missions topped 100 for the third time in a decade, with the missions in Congo and the Central African Republic accounting for the vast majority of the allegations.²⁹ Congo therefore exposes two failures at once: the UN failed to protect civilians from armed groups and state actors, and UN personnel themselves became implicated in abuse.

The Central African Republic presents the same pattern in another form. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was created to help stabilize the country, protect civilians, and support the restoration of state authority after years of mass sectarian violence and state collapse. Yet more than a decade after its creation, the country remains marked by armed-group attacks, abuses by state and allied forces, sexual violence, displacement, and impunity.

At the same time, as noted, MINUSCA has been plagued by allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Like MONUSCO, it demonstrates the deeper problem with UN peacekeeping: expansive mandates, large budgets, and years of deployment do not necessarily produce security, accountability, or civilian protection.

Mali

Mali demonstrates another form of UN failure: a mission that became too constrained, too distrusted, and too ineffective to continue. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was deployed in 2013 to stabilize Mali amid jihadist violence, state weakness, and political fragmentation. Over the next decade, it became one of the deadliest UN peacekeeping missions, with more than 300 peacekeepers killed.

29 Edith M. Lederer, "Sexual Misconduct Allegations in UN Missions Topped 100 in 2024, UN Says," Associated Press, March 19, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/un-sexual-abuse-peacekeeping-children-victims-exploitation-fd190f443409edc04492bc0f5f36b48d>.



The mission did not stabilize Mali. Violence spread, jihadist groups expanded, the Malian state experienced repeated coups, and Russian mercenaries gained influence. By June 2023, Mali's transitional authorities demanded the mission's immediate withdrawal. The Security Council terminated MINUSMA, and the mission completed its withdrawal by the end of 2023.

Lebanon

UNIFIL is one of the clearest examples of a UN mission whose long-term presence failed to prevent a hostile non-state actor from building a massive military infrastructure in violation of Security Council resolutions. After the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, Security Council Resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities, the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL in southern Lebanon, and an area south of the Litani River free of armed personnel, assets, and weapons other than those of the Lebanese government and UNIFIL. It also called for the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon.

That framework was never implemented. Hezbollah did not disarm or withdraw its terror operatives from southern Lebanon. Instead, over the years following 2006, Hezbollah massively expanded its arsenal, built positions in and around civilian communities, constructed tunnels and weapons caches, and turned southern Lebanon into a forward operating zone against Israel. Hezbollah and local actors repeatedly restricted UNIFIL's freedom of movement, denied access to suspicious areas, and used claims of "private property" or sensitive sites to block inspections. The Iranian proxy terror group used southern Lebanon to prepare for attacks against Israel under the eyes of international peacekeepers.

After October 7, 2023, Hezbollah began near-daily attacks on northern Israel, displacing large numbers of Israeli civilians and eventually triggering a major Israel-Hezbollah war. The fact that Hezbollah could launch such a campaign after seventeen years of UNIFIL's expanded mandate is itself an indictment. The mission was not deployed to observe the birth of a second front against Israel. It was supposed to help prevent it.

UNIFIL may have produced reports and preserved liaison channels. But it did not prevent Hezbollah's military build-up, did not enforce a Hezbollah-free zone south of the Litani, did not stop repeated violations of Resolution 1701, and did not prevent the transformation of southern Lebanon into a launch pad for attacks on a U.S. ally. It can be debated whether this was a failure of will, resources, or authorities. In any case it was undoubtedly a resounding and expensive UN failure.

UNRWA

UNRWA is not a peacekeeping mission, but it is one of the clearest examples of a UN-affiliated institution becoming part of the problem it was supposed to help solve. In Gaza, UNRWA was thoroughly penetrated by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups. According to intelligence reports, among the 12,521 UNRWA employees in the Gaza Strip, at least 1,462 (12%) were members of Hamas or other designated terrorist organizations. Out of 546 principals and deputy-principals in UNRWA's education facilities, at least 80 (15%) are members of terrorist organizations.³⁰



Palestinian terrorists in Khan Yunis, Gaza, Jan. 30, 2025

UNRWA employees actively took part in Hamas's October 7 massacre itself. In August 2024, the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services completed its investigation into 19 UNRWA staff members accused of involvement in the attacks, finding in nine cases sufficient evidence to terminate their employment. Subsequent U.S. investigations revealed a broader problem. In April 2025, USAID's Office of Inspector General reported that it had independently found evidence connecting three current or former UNRWA employees to the October 7 attacks and affiliating 14 others with Hamas. In April 2026, USAID OIG referred four additional former UNRWA staffers for suspension or debarment. By June 2026, USAID OIG reported that its ongoing investigation had resulted in suspension and debarment referrals for 101 current or former UNRWA staff who participated in October 7 or had affiliation with Hamas's military wing.³¹

30 Israel Defense Forces, "The Connection Between UNRWA and Hamas," <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/unrwa-hamas-connection/>.

31 UNRWA, "Investigation Completed: Allegations on UNRWA Staff Participation in the 7 October Attacks," August 5, 2024, <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/investigation-completed-allegations-unrwa-staff-participation-7-october>.



The problem extends beyond individual employees. Hamas used UNRWA facilities and infrastructure for military purposes. For example, in February 2024, the IDF uncovered a Hamas tunnel and intelligence assets running beneath UNRWA's main headquarters in Gaza City, with the tunnel shaft found near an UNRWA school. Additionally, UNRWA-run schools and summer camps in Gaza (as well as in the Palestinian Authority and other locations) frequently contained materials that promoted terror glorification and presented terrorists as role models.³²

The deeper problem, however, is not only UNRWA's penetration by Hamas or the misuse of its facilities. It is UNRWA's basic institutional mission. Unlike the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, whose mandate is generally to resolve refugee situations through repatriation, local integration, or resettlement, UNRWA has helped perpetuate the Palestinian refugee problem across generations. It applies a *sui generis* definition under which refugee status is inherited by descendants, producing the absurd result that the number of registered Palestinian "refugees" has grown from approximately 750,000 in 1948 to roughly 5.9 million today, including millions who were born decades later and many who already live under the Palestinian Authority or as citizens of other states. UNRWA also promotes the demand for a so-called "right of return" to Israel, a demand that, if implemented, would end Israel's existence as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

UNRWA therefore represents a distinct and serious UN failure. It is not simply that the UN failed to stop a war from outside. It is that a UN institution became a central actor in perpetuating the conflict, and was thoroughly infiltrated by violent terrorist organizations, providing the terrorists with UN-funded salaries and resources.

USAID Office of Inspector General, "Investigative Summary: USAID Inspector General's Continuing Investigation Leads to Referral of Over 100 Current and Former UNRWA Staff Linked to Hamas for Suspension/Debarment," June 5, 2026, <https://oig.usaid.gov/node/8155>.

32 Israel Defense Forces, "IDF Uncovers Hamas Tunnel under UNRWA Headquarters in Gaza City," February 10, 2024, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/unrwa-hamas-connection/exploitation-of-unrwa-headquarters/inside-the-hamas-tunnel-under-un-headquarters/>; IMPACT-se, Review of UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories, 2023, <https://www.impact-se.org/reports/>.



U.S.-Led Diplomacy Can Succeed Where the UN Cannot

These cases demonstrate that the UN's peace-and-security architecture repeatedly fails at the point of greatest need. The issue is not whether the UN has activities, offices, reports, missions, envoys, agencies, and peacekeeping deployments. It is whether those instruments deliver outcomes that advance peace, protect civilians, uphold American interests, and strengthen the position of U.S. allies. If they do not, then American participation and legitimization is counter-productive.

The lesson of the past decades is blunt: more UN funding has not produced more peace. The UN system became larger and more expensive while the world became more violent and unstable. Humanitarian budgets expanded around crises the UN failed to prevent and could not end. The United States should not outsource its national-security strategy, the defense of its allies, counterterrorism, atrocity prevention, or humanitarian oversight to a system that repeatedly substitutes process for protection and reporting for results.

The failures of the UN system do not mean that diplomacy is futile. They mean that diplomacy works best when it is backed by national power, strategic leverage, clear interests, and leaders willing to make hard decisions. Where the UN often convenes, condemns, monitors, and manages decline, the United States, acting directly or through U.S.-led frameworks, has repeatedly moved parties toward concrete outcomes. Not every U.S.-led diplomatic effort has succeeded. But in several important cases, U.S.-led diplomacy has produced breakthroughs, de-escalation, or strategic frameworks that the UN did not and could not deliver.

The following are several examples to illustrate the point:

Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords are one of the clearest examples of American-led diplomacy achieving what the UN-centered approach to the Middle East failed to produce for decades. For years, the dominant UN framework treated Arab-Israeli peace as hostage to the Palestinian veto. The UN system reinforced that paradigm through endless resolutions, permanent Palestinian-focused committees, anti-Israel bureaucracies, and diplomatic rituals that rewarded rejectionism while isolating Israel.

The first Trump administration broke that paradigm. In 2020, President Trump directly brokered normalization agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, followed by Morocco and Sudan joining the broader framework. The Accords succeeded precisely because they bypassed the UN approach, which had turned the Palestinian issue into an obstacle to every broader regional breakthrough. The Abraham Accords replaced that model with a different one: peace through strength, tolerance, mutual respect, alignment of interests, and practical cooperation.

The results have been concrete. Trade, technology, and people-to-people ties flourished following the signing of the agreements. Even the multi-front regional war which ensued



Abraham Accords Signing Ceremony at White House, Sept. 15, 2020

following Hamas's October 7, 2023 terror attacks did not unravel the Accords. Diplomatic ties remained stable. Trade ties continued to grow (in fact, both 2024 and 2025 were record-breaking years for Israel's trade with its Arab peace partners). Dubai remained the second most popular destination for travelers departing from Israel's Ben Gurion Airport. These developments demonstrated that the Accords were not merely ceremonies or declarations, but an institutionalized relationship capable of sustaining cooperation even under pressure.³³

The Accords also proved their value in crisis. Following October 7, Abraham Accords countries used the trust and channels built through the Accords to coordinate humanitarian aid shipments to Gaza by land and air. This is exactly what the UN paradigm failed to create: relationships strong enough to manage disagreement, preserve communication, and enable practical cooperation in the midst of war.

Indeed, the evolution of the Abraham Accords since 2020 demonstrates the power and potential of U.S.-led frameworks. Through U.S.-aligned initiatives, including CENTCOM's Middle Eastern Air Defense–Combined Defense Operations Cell, the State Department's Pax Silica initiative on AI supply chains, the envisioned India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC),³⁴ a new Abraham Accords FDA office to promote health and scientific cooperation, and other steps, the Abraham Accords are evolving into a U.S.-led regional

33 The Heritage Foundation, "The Abraham Accords," <https://www.heritage.org/abraham-accords>.

34 IMEC has the potential to serve as a U.S.-aligned corridor for trade, energy, and information, and as an alternative to Chinese and Russian-dominated networks. See Asher Fredman and Joseph Rozen, "The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor: A Catalyst for Regional Integration and Global Prosperity," Misgav Institute for National Security, June 26, 2025, <https://www.misgavins.org/en/fredman-rozen-the-india-middle-east-europe-economic-corridor/>.



architecture built on warm peace and shared prosperity. This regional architecture, while still nascent, demonstrated its potential during Operation Epic Fury against Iran, when cooperation between the U.S., Israel, the UAE, and additional regional countries reached unprecedented levels.

This is precisely the kind of regional alignment the UN system cannot build. The UN can call for de-escalation, publish statements, and issue condemnations. But it cannot create the trust, interoperability, defense cooperation, economic integration, and strategic incentives that come from U.S.-led alliances and partnerships. The Accords have become not only a diplomatic achievement, but a practical mechanism for strengthening American partners, reducing dependence on China, and building a more integrated regional order.

For U.S. policymakers, the contrast is stark. The UN spent decades reinforcing a “peace process” that failed to achieve results. The Trump administration built a framework that produced normalization. The UN bureaucracy preserved an old conflict paradigm. U.S.-led diplomacy created a new architecture of peace, prosperity, and strategic cooperation.

Gaza Ceasefire

President Trump’s Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, the 20-point roadmap introduced by Trump and signed into effect on October 10, 2025, represented a diplomatic breakthrough that shattered expectations and succeeded where the UN had failed abysmally. The United States, working independently of the UN and outside its failed paradigms, was able to negotiate a ceasefire that saw the release of all the Israeli hostages, and brought an end to the high-intensity conflict.

At the center of Trump’s plan sits the Board of Peace, formally established through a founding charter signed by 20 nations on January 22, 2026, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos. The plan envisages the creation of an International Stabilization Force (ISF), commanded by the U.S., with Indonesia, widely considered a potential Abraham Accords country, accepting the role of Deputy Commander. The ISF secured pledges of personnel from multiple international partners, including Indonesia, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, and Albania. The financial structure also reflects the difference between American-led execution and UN-style process. Anchored by a \$10 billion U.S. pledge, the Board of Peace mobilized an additional \$7 billion in international pledges from regional and partner countries, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait.

For U.S. policymakers, the lesson of the 20-point plan is clear. A structured U.S.-led approach can deliver results that the UN system was incapable of achieving. It is important to note that on November 17, 2025 the UN Security Council officially endorsed Trump’s 20-point plan with UNSC Resolution 2803. The vote was 13 in favor, 0 against, with Russia and China abstaining. This demonstrates that even when the U.S. operates outside of the UN system, it can cooperate with the UN if and when doing so helps advance American interests.

Armenia–Azerbaijan

The ability of the United States to broker groundbreaking peace agreements more efficiently and effectively than the UN has been demonstrated beyond the Middle East. The August 8, 2025 White House summit between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev marked a major breakthrough in one of the post-Soviet world's most intractable conflicts. President Trump hosted the two leaders in Washington, where they signed a joint declaration and initialed the text of an agreement on the establishment of peace and interstate relations. The joint declaration stated that Armenia and Azerbaijan would continue efforts toward signing and ratifying the agreement “in the most expeditious manner” and thanked the U.S. President for his contributions to advancing peace between the two countries.

The agreement also included a strategic connectivity component: the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, or TRIPP. The United States and Armenia moved quickly from diplomatic declaration to implementation planning, publishing a U.S.–Armenia implementation framework for TRIPP in January 2026. The framework connected the corridor directly to U.S. strategic interests, stating that TRIPP would strengthen the prosperity and security of Armenia and Azerbaijan, further American commerce, expand regional trade and connectivity, and create new transit opportunities linking Central Asia and the Caspian to Europe.³⁵

For years, the main formal mechanism for Azerbaijan–Armenia talks was the OSCE Minsk Group, which had become ineffective by the time Azerbaijan retook Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023. The decisive breakthrough came through direct U.S. presidential diplomacy, not through a UN-led process. While implementation challenges naturally remain for long-term integration, this framework advanced a major peace breakthrough, reduced the space for Russian and Iranian regional influence, and placed the United States at the center of a strategic corridor.

Cambodia–Thailand

The 2025 Cambodia–Thailand border crisis was the worst fighting between the two countries in more than a decade, leaving dozens dead and hundreds of thousands displaced. President Trump, working with partners in Asia, applied American diplomatic, economic, and trade leverage, which led to the October 2025 Kuala Lumpur Peace Accords, brokered and witnessed by the U.S. President. Cambodia subsequently nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The UN's role was secondary. The Secretary-General welcomed the joint declaration, but the UN did not drive the diplomacy, bring the parties to the decisive table, or supply the leverage that moved the process forward.

35 U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement on the Publication of the U.S.–Armenia Implementation Framework for the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP),” January 13, 2026, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/01/joint-statement-on-the-publication-of-the-u-s-armenia-implementation-framework-for-the-trump-route-for-international-peace-and-prosperity-tripp>.

India–Pakistan

The May 2025 India–Pakistan escalation was one of the most dangerous crises in the world: a military confrontation between two nuclear-armed states after a deadly terrorist attack in Kashmir. After four days of fighting, and intensive diplomacy between Washington, New Delhi, and Islamabad, which reportedly included Trump using the prospect of U.S. economic and trade leverage, the U.S. President announced that India and Pakistan had agreed to a “full and immediate ceasefire.”

This was not a UN-led de-escalation. There is a long-standing UN observer mission related to Kashmir, but the practical ceasefire mechanics came through direct channels between the U.S., India and Pakistan. It was American diplomacy that helped end the fighting and mitigate the risk of a broader war between nuclear-armed rivals.

DRC–Rwanda

The Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda offer a particularly powerful contrast because the UN has been deeply present in Congo for decades. MONUSCO and its predecessor missions have operated in the DRC for more than twenty years. Yet, as noted, eastern Congo remained a theater of armed violence, displacement, sexual violence, and proxy conflict. In 2025, the Rwanda-backed M23 offensive captured major cities including Goma and Bukavu, and the region again risked wider war.

Against that background, the contrast with U.S.-led diplomacy is striking. On June 27, 2025, the Trump administration brokered a peace agreement between the DRC and Rwanda in Washington. On December 4, 2025, the United States announced the signing of the Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity between the DRC and Rwanda, which reaffirmed the parties’ commitment to implement the June peace agreement and placed the security track within a broader framework for regional economic integration and cooperation.³⁶

On April 23, 2026, the DRC and Rwanda convened their Joint Oversight Committee in Washington, D.C., to enforce compliance parameters. This progression was endorsed in May 2026 by the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes during its summit in Stockholm, which commended the diplomatic headway achieved under the Washington Accords.

Even with the persistent presence of skirmishes, the gap between the U.S. and UN-led efforts is clear. The UN spent more than twenty years maintaining a massive peacekeeping footprint in Congo without resolving the underlying crisis. The United States, by contrast, leveraged its financial and strategic weight to tie conflict resolution directly to commercial

36 U.S. Department of State, “Peace Agreement Between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda,” June 27, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/peace-agreement-between-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-the-republic-of-rwanda>.

U.S. Department of State, “Signing of the Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity Between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda,” December 4, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/12/signing-of-the-washington-accords-for-peace-and-prosperity-between-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-rwanda>.



and investment incentives. The Trump administration created a concrete framework that linked stabilization to U.S. national interests, achieving a degree of diplomatic traction the UN had failed to establish for a generation.

These cases point to a broader lesson for U.S.-led diplomacy. The UN too often lacks the power, leverage, strategic clarity, and political will necessary to resolve conflicts or reshape regional realities. The United States has those tools when it chooses to use them. The point is not that the United States can solve every conflict alone. The point is that American power and leadership can often produce outcomes the UN cannot.

A serious American policy should therefore not equate multilateral activity with strategic success. The United States should support mechanisms that work, disengage from those that fail, and rely above all on its own diplomacy, alliances, frameworks, economic leverage, and military strength.

Section 4: Why the UN Will Not Carry Out Fundamental Reforms

The UN's core structure makes it incapable of carrying out fundamental reforms. The organization may be pressured into cutting costs, adopting basic administrative best practices, or eliminating some posts (often vacant ones that exist only on paper). But far-reaching structural reform is another matter. The same member states, voting in the same blocs and through the same one-country-one-vote system that produced the UN's institutional bloat, cannot be expected to implement changes that would reduce their influence, access to resources, or ability to advance political agendas.

Recent U.S. pressure has produced some results. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Mike Waltz recently reported to Congress that the United States had helped secure a historic 15 percent budget cut, removing \$570 million from the UN regular budget and eliminating nearly 3,000 headquarters positions.³⁷ This is a laudable achievement. But forcing the UN to adopt basic cost-saving measures is very different from achieving the structural reforms necessary to change the institution's core behavior, incentives, and politics. Even if the UN Secretariat becomes more efficient, it is still the member states who have the



UN Secretary-General António Guterres addresses Human Rights Council at the United Nations in Geneva, Feb. 24, 2025

37 U.S. Mission to the United Nations, "Testimony of Ambassador Mike Waltz, U.S. Representative to the United Nations, at a Congressional Field Hearing on UN Reform," March 20, 2026, <https://usun.usmission.gov/testimony-of-ambassador-mike-waltz-u-s-representative-to-the-united-nations-at-a-congressional-field-hearing-on-un-reform/>.

power to determine if the mandates they created and benefit from should continue to exist.

As noted, the United States is assessed at 22 percent of the UN regular budget and just over 26 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget. When the regular and peacekeeping budgets are combined, the United States is assessed more than 184 other countries combined. In 2024, across assessed and voluntary contributions, the United States provided \$14.3 billion to the UN system, amounting to 30.5 percent of all government contributions to the UN. By contrast, the least-assessed countries pay less than \$40,000 toward the regular budget, yet retain the same vote in the General Assembly. This structure allows member states to oppose U.S. interests, promote pro-Chinese positions, expand bureaucracies, and subsidize institutional machinery, while sending much of the bill to the American taxpayer.

This is why serious reform efforts have repeatedly failed to produce lasting change. As described earlier, in 2006, when then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan sought to advance management reforms, the G77 and China introduced a Fifth Committee resolution aimed at preserving greater General Assembly control over the reform process. The United States, Europe, and other reform-minded states opposed the draft, seeing it as an effort to constrain the Secretary-General's ability to reform the organization. The resolution passed by 108 votes in favor, 50 against, and three abstentions. States bearing little of the organization's financial burden successfully asserted their right to control how reform would proceed, and how much authority the Secretary-General would have to restrain bureaucratic growth.

The result is a sprawling and wasteful bureaucracy strongly resistant to correction. Member states create mandates. Mandates generate committees, reports, databases, rapporteurs, meetings, consultations, and administrative structures. Those bodies then generate additional outputs, which become the basis for new mandates. The same governments that benefit politically and bureaucratically from this institutional sprawl are then entrusted with streamlining it. The UN can discuss reform, commission reports on reform, and create working groups on reform. But when reform threatens member-state prerogatives, bloc politics, protected mandates, or the institutional interests attached to them, the system protects itself.

The UN's latest flagship reform process, the UN80 Initiative, demonstrates the point. Launched by Secretary-General António Guterres in 2025 as the organization approached its eightieth anniversary, UN80 was meant to take stock of the system and identify ways to improve efficiency, coherence, accountability, and impact. Its findings were damning. Since 1946, more than 40,000 mandates have been adopted across key UN bodies, producing a landscape of decisions and directives that the UN itself admits is difficult to navigate.³⁸ This accumulation and fragmentation leads to duplication, overlap, proliferating meetings and reports, and limited visibility and review mechanisms across the system.

38 United Nations, UN80 Initiative: Progress Report, May 26, 2026, https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2026-05/UN80-PR2_260526_0833_WEB.pdf.



The problem is not only the number of mandates, but their permanence. UN80 found that 86 percent of active mandates lack sunset clauses or termination reviews. 31 percent of General Assembly topics from 1990 were still on the agenda in 2024. Many General Assembly resolutions are adopted year after year with minimal changes, with more than half of recurring resolution texts repeating over 80 percent of the same language.³⁹ A system designed to respond to changing international needs has instead accumulated layers of permanent process.

That mandate overload has turned the UN into a factory for meetings and reports. Guterres told member states on August 1, 2025, that, in the previous year, “the UN system supported 27,000 meetings involving 240 bodies.” He warned: “The sheer number of meetings and reports is pushing the system, and all of us, to the breaking point.” Guy Ryder, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy and chair of the UN80 Task Force, told member states in June 2025 that the Secretariat services around 400 intergovernmental bodies and processes an average of 2,300 pages of documentation every day.⁴⁰

The reporting burden is staggering. More than half of all mandates require reports. Across the broader UN reporting ecosystem, the number of reports prepared in 2024 exceeded 2,000, including 1,100 Secretariat reports, a nearly 20 percent increase since 1990.⁴¹ These reports are largely repetitive: three out of five cover recurring topics. They are also getting longer. Their word counts are more than 40 percent higher than they were 20 years ago. Since 2020, the average word count of General Assembly resolutions has increased by 55 percent, while ECOSOC texts have grown by 95 percent. Most reports must also be designed, distributed, and translated into all six official UN languages. Convening and processing these meetings and reports cost roughly \$360 million annually - about 10 percent of the UN regular budget.⁴²

The same lack of discipline appears in the UN’s planning and accountability systems. UN80 found that only about 40 percent of UN entities have strategic plans, and only 30 percent operate with integrated results and resource frameworks (the Secretary-General described this as a “significant improvement.”)⁴³ In other words, even after reforms, most of the system cannot clearly demonstrate how money, personnel, activity, and outcomes connect. That would be unacceptable in any serious enterprise. It is intolerable in an international system funded so heavily by American taxpayers.

39 United Nations, Report of the Mandate Implementation Review, August 1, 2025, https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2025-09/2512998E_MIR_web.pdf.

40 António Guterres, “Secretary-General’s Remarks to the Informal Meeting of the General Assembly Plenary on the UN80 Initiative,” United Nations Secretary-General, August 1, 2025, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statements/2025-08-01/secretary-generals-remarks-the-informal-meeting-of-the-general-assembly-plenary-the-un80-initiative-bilingual-delivered-scroll-down-for-all-english>; United Nations Office at Geneva, “A Mandate for Change: UN Releases Proposals for Streamlining of Tasks as Part of Major Reform Agenda,” August 1, 2025, <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/news/2025/08/109128/mandate-change-un-releases-proposals-streamlining-tasks-part-major>

41 United Nations, Report of the Mandate Implementation Review, August 1, 2025, https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2025-09/2512998E_MIR_web.pdf.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.



The bloat extends beyond documents and meetings to personnel costs. In April 2026, Ambassador Waltz testified that staff costs, including salaries, pensions, and benefits, account for about 70 percent of the UN regular budget. He noted that UN staff “make about 17 percent more than most U.S. federal workers,” and that employer pension contributions stand at 16 percent, a figure nearly unheard of in the public or private sector.⁴⁴

UN80 has produced some administrative reforms in areas within the Secretary-General’s direct authority. The Secretariat has consolidated payroll operations, merged administrative teams, launched a digital hub, eliminated around 3,000 positions, and moved some posts from high-cost to lower-cost locations. The May 2026 UN80 progress update reported a 21 percent reduction in Secretariat posts for 2026, the merger of 11 Secretariat teams into a common administrative platform, and the consolidation of 10 Secretariat payroll centers into a single team.⁴⁵

But even this progress is limited. The May 2026 progress report states that the 2026 Secretariat budget reflected a 21 percent reduction in posts but only a 9 percent reduction in resources. It appears that at least some of these posts were vacant and merely erased on paper, while many others were relatively junior positions.

More fundamentally, the tangible reforms achieved so far are primarily those within the Secretary-General’s administrative reach. The harder and more substantial reforms, including retiring mandates, closing bodies, consolidating politically protected structures, ending duplicative mechanisms, and reducing member-state-driven reporting and activity requirements, require the consent of the very states that benefit from the sprawl.

Guterres has repeatedly reassured member states that UN80 will not challenge their control. In his August 2025 address on the UN80 process, he admitted as much, declaring: “First, let me be absolutely clear: mandates are the business of member states. They are the expression of your will. And they are the sole property and responsibility of member states. The vital task of creating, reviewing or retiring them lies with you, and you alone.”⁴⁶

The May 2026 UN80 progress report was equally clear about the limits of the process. It stated that “UN80 cannot and does not aim to rewrite UN history” and is “not an attempt to redesign the system from first principles.” The Secretary-General also acknowledged the political obstacles to serious structural change, noting that “political sensitivities and vested interests are present; bureaucratic inertia and defensiveness are significant; fears of disruption are real; and the need to protect agreed mandates is understood.”⁴⁷ This is

44 U.S. Mission to the United Nations, “Testimony of Ambassador Mike Waltz, U.S. Representative to the United Nations, at a Congressional Field Hearing on UN Reform,” March 20, 2026, <https://usun.usmission.gov/testimony-of-ambassador-mike-waltz-u-s-representative-to-the-united-nations-at-a-congressional-field-hearing-on-un-reform/>

45 United Nations, “UN80 Initiative: Progress Report,” May 26, 2026, https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2026-05/UN80-PR2_260526_0833_WEB.pdf.

46 United Nations, “UN / Guterres UN80 Initiative,” UNifeed, August 1, 2025, <https://media.un.org/unifeed/en/asset/d343/d3433155>

47 United Nations, “UN80 Initiative: Progress Report,” May 26, 2026, https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2026-05/UN80-PR2_260526_0833_WEB.pdf.

the fundamental problem. The UN knows the system is broken. But the Secretariat can only recommend. Member states decide.

The General Assembly's actions around mandate review confirm the point. On March 31, 2026, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 80/251, titled "Mandate creation, implementation and review for an efficient and effective United Nations." The Secretary-General called it a "historic resolution" and "a major step." Yet the substance of the resolution is modest. Its supposedly bold reforms mostly amount to better paperwork: concept notes before new mandates; clearer drafting; more concise preambular paragraphs; implementation road maps; possible review clauses; and a promise not to create high-level meetings, reports, or other activities unless they are actually required to achieve the stated objectives of a resolution.

In practice, one of the main achievements of the mandate review was to launch another intergovernmental process - a process to consider how future processes should review past processes.⁴⁸

Most revealing is the carveout which was inserted into the Resolution. Paragraph 25 of the resolution states that "mandates that are in the Charter, norm-setting of universal character, institution-creating, or relate to ongoing political situations which have implications for international peace and security shall not be subject to the reviews" unless member states agree separately. This exemption protects many of the very mandates and institutions most in need of scrutiny. It can shield bureaucracy-sustaining agenda items and recurring mechanisms, including those used to sustain anti-Israel machinery. Even after the system agreed to review mandates, it insulated major categories from review.

In some cases, proposed UN80 reforms will not decrease spending but actually increase it. As Guterres explained: "serious reform requires an initial investment if it is to generate efficiency gains," and "considered investment in real change is sometimes required to bring success."⁴⁹ Several of the UN80 reforms require new platforms, registries, reporting tools, and Secretariat services. These could become yet another layer of permanent process.

The failure of the UN's attempt to reform its human rights mechanisms should serve as a cautionary tale. By 2005, the old UN Commission on Human Rights had become too politicized, selective, and discredited for even the then-UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to defend. He warned that the Commission's work had been "undermined by the politicization of its sessions and the selectivity of its work," and that its "declining credibility" had cast a shadow over the reputation of the UN system as a whole.⁵⁰

48 United Nations General Assembly, "Mandate Creation, Implementation and Review for an Efficient and Effective United Nations," A/RES/80/251, March 31, 2026, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/80/251>.

49 United Nations, UN80 Initiative: Progress Report, May 26, 2026, para. 47, https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2026-05/UN80-PR2_260526_0833_WEB.pdf

50 Kofi Annan, "Secretary-General's Address to the Commission on Human Rights," United Nations Secretary-General, April 7, 2005, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/former-secretary-general/statements/2005-04-07/secretary-generals-address-the-commission-human-rights>.



The promised solution was a “fresh start.” In 2006, the General Assembly created the Human Rights Council to replace the Commission on Human Rights. The founding resolution promised that the Council’s work would be guided by “universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity,” and committed the system to the “elimination of double standards and politicization.”

In reality, the Council reproduced the very defects it was created to correct. This was because it preserved the same core political architecture: one country, one vote; regional blocs; weak membership standards; and elections controlled by the General Assembly. Democracies and dictatorships retained equal power to define the human-rights agenda. Regional and ideological coalitions could shield and elect abusive regimes while targeting democracies and U.S. allies. The politicization and double standards aimed at Israel were reproduced through such mechanisms as the anti-Israel Agenda Item 7, the only standing country-specific agenda item directed at a single UN member state.

The United States recognized the failure. In 2018, the Trump administration withdrew from the HRC, with then-Ambassador Nikki Haley calling it “a protector of human rights abusers and a cesspool of political bias.” In 2025, the United States again ended its participation, and Israel followed, citing the Council’s persistent institutional bias since its creation in 2006.⁵¹

The lesson is broader than Israel. The UN did not solve the credibility crisis of its human-rights machinery; it renamed it. The Commission on Human Rights was shut down because selectivity, politicization, and anti-Israel bias had corroded its legitimacy. The Human Rights Council was created to correct those failures. Instead, it preserved the same political incentives, empowered the same blocs, and entrenched the same double standards under a new institutional label.

Human-rights reform failed because it did not address the source of the disease. UN80 is repeating the same mistake. It identifies genuine problems, but leaves ultimate control in the hands of the same member states whose votes created those problems. Truly solving these problems would require the beneficiaries of the dysfunction to surrender power, platforms, and political leverage.

For the United States, the conclusion should be clear. The UN can make administrative improvements, digitize registries, consolidate payroll offices, trim posts, move personnel, and produce better templates. But it cannot be expected to enact fundamental reform so long as its core governance structure rewards institutional accumulation, diffuses accountability, and gives countries with minimal financial responsibility the same voting power as the United States over mandates, budgets, and priorities.

51 U.S. Mission to the United Nations, “Remarks on the UN Human Rights Council,” June 19, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/remarks-on-the-un-human-rights-council/>; White House, “Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations,” February 4, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-and-ending-funding-to-certain-united-nations-organizations-and-reviewing-united-states-support-to-all-international-organizations/>.

Section 5:

Reorienting U.S. Policy Toward the UN: Disengage, Withdraw, and Replace

The principle that participation in international organizations is not an end in itself is clearly reflected in the State Department's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2030, which states:⁵²

International organizations exist to advance the interests of sovereign nations. They are not global legislatures or independent sources of moral, political, or legal authority.

Generations of American leadership were convinced that global engagement was a good in itself, and that connectivity therein would bring about global peace and make great power rivalry obsolete. This dream has not and will not come to pass.

The Department will no longer fund or support international organizations or conventions that act contrary to America's interests or that erode our sovereignty. We will no longer defer to unelected international bureaucrats who run them. We will not permit international organizations to become weapons in the hands of our adversaries, deployed to target Americans and citizens of partner nations such as Israel.

Instead, we will focus on increasing American influence and driving reform in organizations whose work affects our concrete national interests, particularly the standard-setting bodies, while imposing real accountability on those who threaten Americans, our national interests, or those of our allies.

America's adversaries use international organizations to undermine and reshape the global order or to extract funding that is used against our interests. We, in turn, will use American leadership to return useful bodies to their original purposes, i.e., to build coalitions which clearly and concretely serve to advance our national interests.

As noted, Ambassador Mike Waltz made the same point in his testimony to Congress: "We've made it clear that we will cease participation in some UN agencies that undermine our sovereignty and cannot be reformed." That is the right standard.

The problem is that the United Nations, because of its inherent structure, is not merely a flawed institution in need of reform. It is an institution whose political incentives, decision-making procedures, bureaucratic considerations, and ideological capture repeatedly undermine American sovereignty, interest, and allies.

52 U.S. Department of State, Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2030 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, January 2026), 6, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Agency-Strategic-Plan-for-Fiscal-Years-2026-2030.pdf>

The United States undoubtedly has vital interests in preventing great-power war, deterring aggression, countering terrorism, protecting sea lanes, preventing nuclear proliferation, stabilizing conflict zones, delivering humanitarian assistance, fighting disease, setting technical standards, responding to disasters, and maintaining diplomatic channels. However, those interests do not require the United States to remain dependent on the UN. The central distinction is between functions and institutions.

The United States should replace universalist internationalism with selective cooperation: cooperating where interests align; refusing to subsidize hostile structures; prioritizing alliances and mutually beneficial partnerships; building mission-specific coalitions; preserving sovereignty; insisting on accountability; rewarding responsible behavior; and separating useful functions from failing institutions. Coalitions of capable and aligned states that share strategic interests, goals, standards, and opposition to influence by hostile actors are more likely than universal institutions to produce real results.

The United States should therefore adopt a strategy of maximal disengagement and withdrawal from the UN, and replacement of UN functions with more efficient mechanisms designed to achieve the same goals.

This is not a strategy of retreat. The choice is not between the current UN system and international chaos. The real choice is between two models of international order. One is a universalist system that is increasingly paralyzed, politicized, and disconnected from democratic accountability. The other is a networked system of alliances, coalitions, bilateral frameworks, regional architectures, technical compacts, and mission-specific arrangements built around capabilities, shared interests, accountability, and measurable outcomes.

The United States should lead the development of the second model.

Withdrawal Without Retreat

Critics of disengagement argue that leaving a UN body means abandoning the field and forfeiting key benefits. The recent U.S. withdrawal from the World Health Organization demonstrates that this need not be true. The Trump administration's January 2025 Executive Order did not simply announce withdrawal. It instructed the Secretary of State and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to identify "credible and transparent United States and international partners" to assume necessary activities previously undertaken by the WHO. It also directed the replacement of the prior global health security strategy, and the development of mechanisms to safeguard public health and biosecurity outside WHO structures.⁵³

That is the correct approach: not withdrawal alone, but withdrawal paired with replacement.

53 White House, "Withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization," January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-the-worldhealth-organization/>



The America First Global Health Strategy has begun shifting U.S. global health cooperation toward bilateral, multi-year agreements with partner countries. These agreements are designed to prioritize direct country-to-country cooperation, increase partner-country co-investment, support core health-system functions, and transition U.S. assistance away from long-term aid dependency toward greater country ownership and self-reliance.⁵⁴

This approach does not end global health cooperation. It changes the channels through which cooperation occurs. It moves from unaccountable multilateral bureaucracy toward direct agreements, clearer obligations, stronger burden sharing, and greater U.S. control over priorities and outcomes. The post-WHO model also relies directly on American capabilities: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, the State Department, embassy networks, private-sector expertise, and trusted foreign partners. The Department of Health and Human Services stated after formal withdrawal that the United States would continue to ensure rapid detection of and response to infectious-disease outbreaks, strengthen biosecurity coordination, and lead through targeted global cooperation outside WHO structures.⁵⁵

Humanitarian assistance is one of the most important test cases. Defunding UN agencies does not mean abandoning civilians in need. The United States can and should remain the world's leading humanitarian donor. But humanitarian success should be measured by aid delivered efficiently to civilians, not by the size, permanence, or declarations of international bureaucracies.

There is no reason to assume that a UN bureaucracy can deliver American-funded humanitarian aid better than U.S.-led mechanisms, allied governments, vetted NGOs, faith-based organizations, private logistics firms, regional hubs, and direct contracting under strict monitoring. The United States should build a humanitarian architecture based on effective partnerships, transparent procurement, end-use monitoring, anti-terror vetting, independent audits, digital tracking, suspension triggers for diversion, and congressional reporting. The United States should not reduce its moral ambition. It should increase its operational control.

Another argument for remaining in the UN is that withdrawal would benefit China. The reality is that China already exploits its advantages at the UN: the one-country-one-vote structure, bloc politics, development-state coalitions, and the reluctance of many member states to cross Beijing. In many UN arenas, China has a built-in advantage because it can mobilize or pressure states that are economically dependent on it, while the United States is expected to finance institutions that dilute American influence.

54 U.S. Department of State, America First Global Health Strategy, 2026, <https://www.state.gov/america-first-global-health-strategy/>

55 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Fact Sheet: U.S. Withdrawal from the World Health Organization," HHS.gov, January 22, 2026, <https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/fact-sheet-us-withdrawal-from-the-world-health-organization.html>.



The United States should counter China where American advantages are strongest: technology, capital markets, energy, military power, trusted alliances, intelligence partnerships, democratic legitimacy, private-sector innovation, and international finance. Washington should not define influence as endless participation in forums designed to neutralize American power. American influence should be measured by outcomes, not attendance.

A Roadmap for a Disengage, Withdraw, and Replace Strategy

In order to advance the strategy of Disengage, Withdraw, Replace, the United States should take the following steps:

1. Adopt the principle of zero automatic funding to the UN

The United States should adopt a presumption of zero funding for the UN system. No assessed or voluntary contribution should be automatic. Congress should adopt an affirmative authorization model: no funds may be made available for assessed or voluntary contributions to the United Nations, any UN organ, specialized agency, affiliated body, program, or mission, unless Congress specifically authorizes the payment by name, amount, purpose, and duration.

Each authorization should identify the concrete U.S. national interest being served; the maximum dollar amount; the duration of the authorization; the expected outcome; audit-access requirements; anti-terror vetting; disclosure of contractors, subgrantees, and implementing partners; neutrality requirements; anti-corruption safeguards; whistleblower protections; certification that the entity does not promote discrimination against a U.S. ally; and termination triggers for noncompliance.

Any U.S.-supported stabilization or peacekeeping mission should require a clear U.S. national interest, congressional authorization, defined objectives, sunset provisions, command-and-control clarity, accountability, anti-terror vetting, and regular reporting.

2. Allow the General Assembly Vote to Lapse if Necessary

If the United States withholds assessed contributions and falls into arrears, it could lose its vote in the General Assembly under Article 19 of the UN Charter. The United States should be willing to allow its General Assembly vote to lapse if that is the cost of ending funding for entities opposed to U.S. interests and sovereignty. The U.S. should not measure its global influence by whether it retains one vote in a chamber in which it is routinely outvoted by blocs of states that contribute little, violate the principles they invoke, and face no accountability to the American people.

America's standing does not come from having access to a biased club where the United States has the same formal vote as tiny, failing or authoritarian states. American influence comes from the power, technology, energy, military strength, intelligence capabilities, diplomatic reach, economic clout, and moral authority of the United States. It should be noted that giving up the General Assembly vote would not necessarily affect the U.S. Security Council seat or veto.

3. Devise a responsible withdrawal strategy

Disengagement should be orderly, lawful, and strategic. The President should establish an interagency task force responsible for managing defunding, disengagement, legal



withdrawal, and replacement mechanisms. The task force could include the National Security Council, State Department, Treasury, relevant foreign-assistance authorities, Defense Department, Justice Department, Health and Human Services, Commerce Department, OMB, intelligence community representatives, Inspectors General, and congressional liaison staff.

Its mandate should be to produce a full inventory of all U.S. membership, funding, cooperation, staffing, legal obligations, treaty commitments, privileges and immunities, and operational dependencies connected to the UN system. It should distinguish between functions that should be ended, functions that should be moved to other institutions, functions that should be rebuilt under U.S. or allied leadership, and functions that may justify limited case-by-case cooperation with the UN.

Executive action can begin the process, but durable disengagement requires Congress. Congress should enact comprehensive legislation establishing that U.S. policy is to end automatic support for the UN, and to move toward withdrawal unless Congress affirmatively determines that continued participation in a specific body serves a vital national interest.

4. Build Better Alternatives to Replace UN Functions

Responsible disengagement requires alternatives. The United States should build replacement channels in parallel with defunding.

The following are potential bodies and frameworks that could be established:

Humanitarian Delivery Compact: Such a non-UN compact should rely on vetted NGOs, faith-based humanitarian organizations, local partners subject to strict screening, private logistics firms, allied governments, regional organizations, direct contracting, end-use monitoring, independent audits, anti-terror vetting, transparent procurement, suspension triggers for diversion, and congressional reporting. It should be designed to move food, medicine, shelter, and emergency supplies to civilians around the world faster, more transparently, and with less risk of capture by hostile actors.

Health Security Network: A network that would serve to help further the America First Global Health Strategy. It should include CDC-to-health-ministry partnerships, trusted laboratory networks, transparent early-warning agreements, Taiwan-inclusive disease surveillance, regional health centers, secure data-sharing protocols, allied stockpiles of medical supplies, rapid-response teams, and private-sector partnerships. The WHO withdrawal experience underscores that global health cooperation is not synonymous with WHO governance: the United States can continue to support disease surveillance, outbreak response, biosecurity coordination, and health innovation through targeted partnerships outside the WHO framework.

Technology and Standards Coalition: Authoritarian influence in technical bodies can shape telecommunications, AI development, internet governance, surveillance standards, identity systems, and the infrastructure of the digital age. The United States

should therefore lead coalitions on trusted telecom, secure semiconductors, AI safety and innovation, cyber-defense standards, democratic internet governance, and digital freedom. This effort could potentially operate alongside or become part of the broader Pax Silica initiative, which is designed to build trusted technology supply chains across semiconductors, AI infrastructure, critical minerals, advanced manufacturing, logistics, energy, and data infrastructure. The same coalition that secures the physical and economic foundations of the AI era could also help shape the rules, standards, and governance principles that determine its future development.

Counter-Lawfare Coalition: The United States should not reject international law. It should reject politicized lawfare detached from democratic legitimacy, evidentiary rigor, strategic reality, and the rights of states to defend themselves. A post-UN legal architecture should emphasize self-defense, counterterrorism legitimacy, due process, protection against politicized prosecutions, and rejection of double standards and selective enforcement.

Strategic Development Partnership: A partnership among capable democracies, regional allies, development-finance institutions, and private investors. Development should be tied to lasting impact, transparency, anti-corruption safeguards, strategic infrastructure, energy resilience, food security, technology adoption, and resistance to authoritarian coercion.

The idea of establishing alternative frameworks is not new. For years, American and allied thinkers have proposed different versions of a league of democracies, a concert of democracies, or a coalition of free nations. Some viewed such frameworks as complements to the UN. Others saw them as alternatives to components of the UN system that had failed or no longer served their stated purposes.⁵⁶

Several existing frameworks already point the way. The G7, OECD, Abraham Accords, Quad, I2U2, Board of Peace, and MEAD-style regional defense architectures are all examples of frameworks that already perform, or could perform, some of the functions of the UN.

5. Preserve genuinely useful technical cooperation

Disengagement from the UN system does not require rejecting all technical cooperation. Some coordination is genuinely useful. International aviation, postal systems, maritime rules, telecommunications, and technical standards for example require interoperability. But the existence of useful technical functions does not justify automatic support for the entire UN system.

The United States should apply a functional test: Is the function necessary? Is the

56 See for example, John McCain, "Remarks by John McCain to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council," March 26, 2008, <https://freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1991947/posts?page=158>; Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, "Democracies of the World, Unite," *The American Interest* 2, no. 3 (January/February 2007), <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2007/01/01/democracies-of-the-world-unite/>.



body technical and nonpoliticized? Does participation advance a defined American interest? Are there non-UN alternatives? Can the function be handled through another mechanism? Is the body vulnerable to authoritarian capture or politicization? Does it provide transparency and audit access? Does it respect U.S. sovereignty?

Where the answer justifies cooperation, the United States can cooperate case by case. Where the answer does not, the United States should disengage.

6. Align Foreign Aid, Economic Access, and Diplomatic Benefits with International-Organization Behavior

The United States should encourage other countries to leave, defund, or oppose biased and corrupted international organizations, including the Human Rights Council, UNRWA, the International Criminal Court, and other UN-related mechanisms that target United States interests and allies. Washington should make clear that alignment or non-alignment in international organizations has consequences.

American foreign aid, trade benefits, economic access, diplomatic cooperation, and development support should be linked, where appropriate, to the degree to which countries support American interests in international institutions. This does not require punishing every disagreement. It does require ending the assumption that countries can consistently vote against United States positions in international bodies and expect uninterrupted American aid or support.

7. Reentry must require congressional approval

Withdrawal must be durable. A future administration should not be able to reenter UN-linked treaty bodies, specialized agencies, conventions, or other international commitments without renewed democratic authorization. In his April 29, 2026 testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Intelligence, Prof. Eugene Kontorovich warned that, without congressional action, U.S. withdrawal from UN bodies risks becoming "a dreary version of Hotel California, where one can check out anytime but never really leave." His point was that while the Constitution makes international commitments difficult to enter and easier to leave, recent executive practice has eroded the norm that reentry into treaty-based or congressionally authorized international organizations requires fresh legislative approval.⁵⁷

Congress should therefore cancel outdated statutory authorizations for U.S. membership in UN-linked bodies once the United States has withdrawn. Statutes enacted in the 1940s authorizing the President to accept U.S. membership in specific UN bodies should not be treated as perpetual revolving-door authorizations allowing any future president to rejoin those organizations without returning to Congress.

57 Eugene Kontorovich, Pressure Points for an Organization Built for Non-Accountability, testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Intelligence, April 29, 2026, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA17/20260429/119214/HHRG-119-FA17-Wstate-KontorovichE-20260429.pdf>



Congress should repeal or sunset old authorizations for U.S. participation in UN bodies from which the United States has withdrawn, and require renewed congressional assent before any future reentry. Where U.S. participation was based on a Senate-ratified treaty, reentry should require renewed Senate advice and consent. Where participation was based on a congressional-executive agreement, reentry should require new approval by Congress.

8. Restrict privileges, immunities, and visas for abusive UN-linked actors

Congress and the administration should review the privileges and immunities enjoyed by UN officials and representatives. The United States should deny or restrict visas, consistent with applicable law, for individuals who promote or support terrorism, participate in corruption, intimidate dissidents, abuse diplomatic privileges, engage in serious misconduct, or use international legal processes to target U.S. personnel or allies. The United States should make clear that privileges and immunities exist to support legitimate diplomatic and international functions, not to create impunity for terrorism, corruption, abuse, or lawfare.

No UN body should receive U.S. funding unless the Secretary-General or the relevant executive head of the UN entity has agreed that UN privileges and immunities will not be asserted in cases where a staff member or contractor is credibly accused of terrorism-related offenses, gross human-rights violations, or other serious criminal conduct. Congress should also clarify that U.S. courts should not recognize UN privileges or immunities in such cases. Such acts are not legitimate UN functions and should not be treated as protected official acts.

In appropriate cases, Congress and the administration should also examine whether specific UN-linked structures, offices, committees, unions, or personnel meet the criteria for terror-related sanctions or designation. For example, the United States should determine whether specific UNRWA offices, local bodies, or associated entities meet the criteria for designation under U.S. terrorism sanctions authorities, while permanently prohibiting U.S. funding to the agency.

Conclusion

Disengagement from the UN does not mean that America is leaving the world. It means that America is leaving failed structures and building better ones. The United States can continue to provide humanitarian aid through accountable channels, advance global health cooperation through trusted networks, and exercise diplomatic, economic, technological, and security leadership through effective coalitions. It can continue to defend allies, deter adversaries, uphold sovereignty, counter terrorism, and ensure the proper use of taxpayer funds without financing institutions that undermine those very objectives.

The UN was created for a world that no longer exists. It has become a venue in which authoritarian regimes, hostile blocs, and unaccountable bureaucracies constrain the free world while evading scrutiny themselves. Institutions that no longer serve their founding purposes, and that repeatedly undermine the interests of the states that sustain them, must be judged by their performance rather than their pedigree.

The central question for American policymakers is not whether international cooperation is necessary. It is. The question is whether the United States should continue to finance and legitimize a system whose structure separates power from responsibility, undermines U.S. interests and allies, empowers hostile blocs, diffuses accountability, and too often substitutes process for results. The evidence presented in this paper points to a clear answer: broad engagement and participation in the UN system no longer serve the United States. A strategy of disengagement, withdrawal, and replacement, together with limited targeted cooperation where appropriate, would better serve American interests.

The United States should not spend the coming decades trying to rescue an institution whose deepest flaws are structural. It should lead the construction of a new international architecture built on firmer foundations: sovereignty, accountability, capability, democratic legitimacy, shared interests, burden sharing, non-discrimination, and results.

This new international architecture will increasingly be shaped by coalitions of capable states, bilateral partnerships, regional frameworks, democratic technology alliances, strategic economic partnerships, humanitarian delivery networks, and effective security mechanisms. The United States can and should stand at the forefront of this transition, not by abandoning international order, but by rebuilding it.



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