Don’t Defund the U.N., Just Say ‘Go!’

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

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

So let’s see if that healthy instinct can help us grasp a principle that ought to be easier to apply: When it’s not your swamp and yet you’re being sullied by it, you don’t drain it. You leave it. That’s what we ought to be doing about the United Nations.

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

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

At best, denying our annual $3 billion payment would accomplish nothing. Defunding measures are called for periodically, whenever the U.N. induces a congressional tantrum over one or another of its obscenities. Even as one lawmaker fumes about shutting off the spigot, another is already saying, “Well, we don’t need to defund everything — after all, the U.N. does a lot of good.”

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

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

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

Yet the money is not the real problem, and cutting it off for a time won’t pack much political punch. The Left digs the U.N. It will never seriously address the institution’s thoroughgoing anti-Americanism, anti-Westernism, anti-Semitism, anti-nationalism, anti-capitalism, and anti-rectitude. Instead the media-Democrat complex – with a big assist, starting in two weeks, from the most publicly active former president in American history – would portray an aspirational U.N. valiantly fighting to save the planet from war, poverty and CO2. Duly abominated for slashing funds, the GOP would take a political hit but achieve nothing: The U.N. would find other ways to raise the dough, and Republicans – after watering the defund effort down to feckless foot-stomping – would be goaded into paying any withheld dues, with interest, probably during the next lame-duck session.

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

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

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

Think no ratification means no problem? You’re not getting how the U.N.’s international-law game works. Once American presidents sign agreements, globalists insist that we’re bound by them. How can that be, since a presidential signature is insufficient under the Constitution? Because in 1970, President Nixon signed another beauty, the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Its Article 18 states that once a nation signs a treaty — or merely does something that could be interpreted as “express[ing] its consent to be bound by the treaty” — that nation is “obliged to refrain from acts which would defeat the object and purpose of the treaty.” You’ll be shocked, I’m sure, to hear that the Senate has never approved this treaty on treaties, either. No matter: The State Department (who else?) advises us that, notwithstanding the lack of ratification under our Constitution, “many” of the treaty’s provisions are binding as — you guessed it — “customary international law.”

American government participation in the U.N.’s shenanigans is stripping away our rights and our capacity to govern ourselves. Just as bad, it is sullying us. Logically, it has to be that way. When not bowing before foreign despots, Obama practically genuflects at mentions of the “international community.” But the international community is awful. It consists of a few good countries swimming in a shark-infested sea. When good seeks consensus with evil, the result cannot be good — just as when you insist, as our government does, on being an impartial “honest broker” between Israel, our democratic ally, and the Palestinian terror state-in-waiting, that is a boon for the jihadists, not the democrats. When you pretend that all states are equal, that there is no difference between the good guys and the bad guys, that is always a coup for the bad guys. And that’s what the U.N. is: a coup for the bad guys.

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

We are voluntarily underwriting an institution that — with Obama having formally boarded the anti-Israel train — is joining the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. The General Assembly, which is steered by the sharia-supremacist Organization of Islamic Cooperation, has just created a BDS database to target companies that do business with Israeli settlements in what the U.N. has declared is “Palestinian territory.” What else is new? As UN Watch has reported, in 2015–16, the General Assembly adopted 20 resolutions condemning Israel, compared to just three against the rest of the planet — including none against such favorite U.N. human-rights havens as China, Russia, Cuba, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia.

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

Of course the United States must have robust, vibrant international relations. We need friends with common interests, and we have to deal with the hostiles. We do not need the U.N. for any of that. We do not need the U.N. at all — it needs us. And if we were out of it, we could still deal with it and support what little good it does. It is not enough to cut off funding from a bad organization. We should disassociate from that bad organization. We should stop helping it be a consequential bad organization by denying it legitimacy. Don’t defund the U.N. Just say, “Go!”