How Trump Can Tame the U.N.

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In 1995 Congress tried to force the United Nations to reform by refusing to pay America’s dues. The effort was worthy, but it failed. The U.N. made no real changes and quickly went back to its cynical and corrupt ways. Some in Congress have suggested a repeat in an effort to force the Security Council to revoke the anti-Israel resolution it approved last month.

Instead, the Trump administration could use a far more effective tactic: the veto. The U.N. charter gives the U.S. the ability to paralyze the international body. Why not use it? Since U.N. peacekeeping operations must be renewed periodically by Security Council vote, they would be a good place to start.

In 1979 President Carter negotiated the Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt. The U.N. refused to support a peacekeeping operation in Sinai, so America, Israel and Egypt established the Multinational Force and Observers, which still patrols the region. Its soldiers aren’t allowed to wear the blue berets associated with ordinary U.N. peacekeepers, so they are issued orange ones.

Mr. Trump could easily follow this precedent and instruct U.N. Ambassador-designate Nikki Haley to veto the renewal of all current peacekeeping operations. That would save the U.S. Treasury some of the roughly $2 billion a year it pays in assessed dues for the peacekeeping budget. Countries that support peacekeeping operations in places like Mali, South Sudan, Kashmir and the Central African Republic would either have to pay for them, as the U.S. has done in Sinai, or abandon them.

In Cyprus, for example, a U.N. operation has been active since 1974. Cyprus is now a full member of the European Union, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is a dependency of Turkey, at least in theory still a candidate for EU membership. Why should the U.N.—and the U.S.—foot the bill for something the EU should be doing?

For Europeans, especially the French and British, voting for anti-Israel resolutions in the U.N. has long been a cost-free way not only to appease domestic and foreign foes of the Jewish state but also to kick Uncle Sam in the shins. That could change. Mr. Trump does not seem to care about the goodwill of allies who fail to reciprocate America’s efforts on their behalf.

A policy of disrupting the U.N.’s system of peacekeeping might have drawbacks. In some regions U.N. peacekeepers actually perform a useful role. On the other hand, in places like South Sudan, where there is no peace to keep, all they do is to help humanitarian organizations provide war-catering services.

Aggressive use of the veto would not only save the Treasury money; it would annoy the international bureaucrats to no end. It could eventually lead to dramatic reform of the world body that, in almost every area, has failed to fulfill the great hopes its founders held for it in the 1940s and ’50s.