**Replace the UN**

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By: David M. Weinberg

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The United Nations, for all its flowery promises, was designed with appalling flaws from the start. It operates with no real accountability, no functional moral compass, and no mechanism for acquiring any such vital features. It has tyrant-friendly, diplomatically immune, and collectively irresponsible DNA.

This leads almost inevitably to the U.N.'s bigotry, waste and abuse of its lavish funding, and ever-expanding mandates.

Although everybody knows that the U.N. is broken, it is pretty much taboo to openly seek to shut it down. The usual defense is that "it may be imperfect but it's all we've got" -- a refrain that tends to be accompanied by prescriptions for reforms that either won't stick, or won't work at all.

The counter argument is this: Is the U.N. really the best we can do? Do we have to settle for a system that elects Syria, Saudi Arabia and Iran to lead human rights councils, women's rights agencies, and cultural bodies? If the U.N. is "all we've got," and it can cavalierly disregard the ongoing slaughter in Syria and outrageously brand Israel a war criminal enterprise, then it is way past time to come up with something else.

The Trump administration is breaking new ground by talking about a 50% cut in the $10 billion in American funding for the U.N. But neither Trump administration officials nor any serious think tank has offered concrete suggestions for how to fix the organization or replace it. It is time to do so.

Edwin Black, the investigative author of "IBM and the Holocaust," is leading an effort to replace the U.N. with a new world body called the Covenant of Democratic Nations.

The proposed entity would be limited to nations governed by democratic principles, and one of its prime missions would be to nullify crazy acts and nasty resolutions of the U.N. and its agencies, such as UNESCO's denial of Jewish ties to Jerusalem. It also would seek to create a long-overdue new body of reformed and updated international law.

In January, U.S. Rep. Trent Franks (R-Arizona) assembled a panel of like-minded thinkers in Congress to discuss this.

"The U.N. has become an anti-American, anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, anti-freedom mob," he said. "We need some type of alternative -- a Covenant of Democratic Nations."

Famed constitutional attorney Nathan Lewin proclaimed to the room that the U.N. had written its own death warrant by adopting U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334, which criminalized Israeli settlements. International law does not function any longer as "law" as we know it, since it is applied so unevenly and inequitably, he said.  
  
The trenchant U.N. critic Claudia Rosett of the Independent Women's Forum went in another direction. She felt that the ideal of "world peace" led by democracies was an overreach, too driven by ideals that would not translate easily into action. (Just how would democracy be defined for membership purposes?)

Rosett believes the first order of business is not to assemble a general body devoted to "peace" or "democracy," but to define the functions truly needed by the Western international community, and to create a set of agencies that will tackle these functions separately.

In her book "What To Do About the U.N." (Encounter Broadside), Rosett defines her guiding principle for replacing the U.N. as competition.   
  
Competition is what takes down monopolies, she writes, and the U.N. is the biggest monopoly of them all, a mammoth helped along by immunities, privileges and lavish government contributions, and backed by legions of special interest NGOs around the globe that lobby for more.

As a result, Rosett writes, the U.N. has become like the failed collectivist experiments of the 20th century, those huge Soviet or Chinese communist state enterprises. It was and remains very hard to shutter these behemoths since they are tied into every aspect of a dysfunctional economy, as well as their employees' lives. They are a terrible drain.

But this can be fixed by creating competition. So Rosett proposes the establishment of several coalitions that are less pegged to ideals and more mission-driven by countries with specific shared interests, as NATO was during the Cold War.   
  
She says the world needs to weigh up exactly which functions currently funneled through the U.N. are really needed in the 21st century, then make a judgment about erasing the U.N. from the equation and instead vesting these functions in professional agencies with no grandiose moral pretensions. Then decide who should be a member of each such agency and who shouldn't.  
  
There is the question of some residual usefulness in a global "talk shop" in which even North Korea can bluster and Russia can dissimulate. If at all, this should be a forum for the exchange of views only and for blowing off steam.

In a conversation with me, Rosett said, "It should be a General Assembly minus the votes and minus agencies with multi-billion dollar budgets. It is not a joke to suggest that it would better be housed in a gymnasium somewhere in Iowa (or Siberia) than in a multi-billion dollar gilded chamber in Manhattan."  
  
Rosett admits that replacing the U.N. with effective alternatives would be difficult. Big issues would need to be considered, such as what becomes of U.N.-housed treaties and a host of international arrangements that have been folded into the U.N. over the decades -- everything from the International Telecommunication Union to the World Intellectual Property Organization.   
  
But that is exactly why thinkers and experts need to apply themselves diligently to the task. It is time for those with the knowhow, resources, and genuine good will toward future generations to take an in-depth and non-polemical look at the opportunity cost to the West of cleaving to the U.N.