



## 5 dumbest UN “conspiracies”

*Claiming a treaty that ensures rights for the disabled "undermines American sovereignty" is only the right's latest*

BY ALEX KANE – 12/5/12

---

The Republican Party successfully scuttled the prospect of the United States joining a United Nations treaty that would establish international standards for the rights of disabled people. The vote took place on December 4. The treaty “urges nations to strive to ensure that the disabled enjoy the same rights as their fellow citizens,” the [Associated Pressreports](#). But the GOP “objected to taking up a treaty during the lame-duck session and warned that the treaty could pose a threat to U.S. sovereignty.”

The GOP’s opposition to the treaty was reinforced by right-wing media freaking out over yet another United Nations effort. The pattern is well-established: take a UN treaty the US is thinking of signing, twist the language to make it seem nefarious, and then gin up hysterical opposition to it based on non-existent provisions in the treaty.

So here are five ways the right has jumped the shark over the UN.

### 1. Disability Treaty ‘Undermines American Sovereignty’

The latest example of the conservative freakout over the UN is the disability treaty being pushed around the world. Right-wing media have followed the playbook on this issue. On the [conservative National Review’s Web site](#), writer Betsy Woodruff claimed that the disability treaty, named the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), would “potentially undermine American sovereignty.” A writer at the libertarian Cato institute said that if the US signed the treaty, it would take “away our national sovereignty on questions of how best to accommodate the disabled.”

None of this is true. As [Media Matters notes](#), “U.S. law already meets the standards the treaty requests.” And the New York Times notes that “the treaty would have no power to alter or overrule United States law, and any recommendations that emerge from it would not be binding on state or federal governments or in any state or federal court.”

## **2. Agenda 21**

“Agenda 21” is one of many United Nations documents that lay out a vision for the future. In this case, Agenda 21 is the name given to the UN’s non-binding plan for sustainable development. But given its clumsy name, it’s no surprise that right-wing fear-mongers would gin up hysteria over the plan.

Former Fox News star Glenn Beck has taken the lead on this, routinely sounding false alarms on Agenda 21. In [June 2011](#), Beck said on Fox News that after “reading through the pages [of Agenda 21], it becomes clear ‘sustainable development’ is just a really nice way of saying ‘centralized control over all of human life on planet Earth.’” Beck also said, referring to the UN vision, that “once they put their fangs into our communities, they’ll suck all the blood out of it, and we will not be able to survive. Watch out.”

Now, Beck has published an entire book on the subject. His fictional book envisions a horrific future in which Agenda 21 has overtaken America.

## **3. UN Arms Trade Treaty**

The global arms trade is deadly, violent and assists human rights abusers. So it makes sense that the UN would want to develop a treaty framework on this problem. But right-wing media, predictably, have tried to scuttle the prospect of the US signing on. They have taken to Fox News to air baseless theories about what the treaty may do.

On Fox News, Dick Morris said that President Obama was going to use the UN treaty to impose gun control in the U.S. This line of reasoning was boosted by Gun Owners of America executive director Larry Pratt, who said on Fox that the treaty “would completely work against what the Second Amendment is intended to do.”

What Fox has aired, however, has zero to do with the reality of the treaty—and even the conservative Heritage Foundation agrees. “I don’t regard that as within the bounds of possibility in the United States and secondly, because that is not what the text says,” [said one Heritage fellow](#), referring to the right-wing meme that the UN treaty would lead to limitations on the Second Amendment.

#### 4. John Bolton's Crusade

John Bolton, a right-wing foreign policy voice in the GOP, deserves his own category for freaking out about the UN. In 1994, [he told an audience](#) that “there is no United Nations. There is an international community that occasionally can be led by the only real power left in the world, and that’s the United States.”

These comments sparked controversy when George W. Bush nominated Bolton to serve as US ambassador to the United Nations. But Bolton did not stop just questioning why the UN existed. He also suggested that it wouldn’t matter if the UN building lost physical stories. “The Secretariat building in New York has 38 stories. If it lost 10 stories, it wouldn’t make a bit of difference,” [Bolton](#) said. Since leaving his post as ambassador, Bolton has continued to raise doubts about the UN.

#### 5. Reparations for Climate Change

In December 2011, the UN convened in Durban, South Africa to try and hammer out a deal over climate change. The deal stipulated that countries were “to begin a new round of talks on a new agreement in the years ahead,” noted the Washington Post. There were some other provisions as well hammered out in Durban, including the creation of a global fund set up to help poor countries tackle climate change.

But [Fox News wasn't having any of that](#), despite the fact that climate change threatens the long-term viability of the planet. On Fox and Friends, legal analyst Peter Johnson claimed that the agreement in Durban would set up an “international climate court of justice.” There is no mention of such a court in the final draft of the UN agreement. Johnson also claimed that the agreement mandates that the West pay “reparations” for climate change — a claim that is [entirely misleading](#).

*Alex Kane is a staff reporter at Mondoweiss and the World editor at AlterNet. His work has also appeared in The Daily Beast, the Electronic Intifada, Extra! and Common Dreams. Follow him on Twitter @alexbkane.*