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MAI: Failure of United Nations shown through terror response

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At the conclusion of World War II, the United Nations (UN) was created for the explicit purpose of maintaining global peace and stability.

In the aftermath of a conflict in which an estimated 60 million people lost their lives, world leaders wanted to ensure perpetual peace and harmony between nations. It was envisioned that the UN would stifle the interests of competing powers, serve as a mediator to settle disputes and advance human rights.

But the UN has a significant credibility problem.

This was on display last week at the 74th UN General Assembly meeting in New York City. In an interview before his speech, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that “Today, America, unfortunately, is the supporter of terrorism in our region.”

The irony here, of course, is that Iran is the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism funding, among others of violent extremism like Hezbollah, Hamas and the Taliban. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan claimed that “there is no such thing as radical Islam.”

If the prime minister bothered to recall the events of Sept. 11, 2001, he would realize just how ignorant that statement is. Furthermore, according to the U.S. Department of State, Pakistan plays host to numerous terror groups, most notably the Haqqani network.

Throughout the 18-year war in Afghanistan, Pakistan has harbored this terrorist group and granted it the freedom to wage war against American forces.

If the UN was truly dedicated to, as the charter states, taking “effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace,” Iran would be sanctioned to the hilt and Pakistan on notice for its implicit support of terrorist groups that wreak havoc in the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

Instead, the UN validates these countries and their behavior by giving them a platform at the General Assembly on the basis of working towards “international cooperation.” Unless Iran and Pakistan undergo regime change or fundamentally change their behavior, bringing them into the “community of nations” will not make them any less of a threat.

In particular, Iran's ambition to acquire nuclear weapons, expansion through proxies in Syria, Yemen and Iraq and support for terrorism cannot be nullified through diplomatic legitimization.

The General Assembly is not the only body that discredits the UN's mission.

The Human Rights Council, which has the stated mission of "promoting and protecting all human rights around the globe," includes Egypt, Somalia and Saudi Arabia. These countries receive demonstrably low marks on human rights issues, according to the Cato Institute's Human Freedom Index.

The UN Commission on the Status of Women is comprised of countries that do not share the idea of equality between the sexes. As an entity "dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women," countries with abysmal records of protecting women's rights, such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen, are tasked with improving the condition of women around the world.

The civil war in Syria is ground zero for human rights atrocities. The Bashar Hafez al-Assad regime has used chemical weapons against its own people, attacked civilians with impunity and targeted medical facilities treating victims of the conflict. In the aftermath of the 2017 chemical attack in Idlib Province that killed nearly 100 people, a UN Security Council resolution condemning the Assad regime was vetoed by Russia.

Earlier this month, China and Russia both vetoed a UN resolution calling for a ceasefire in the Idlib Province which has seen more than 1000 civilians killed in the past four months. This is the 13th Syria-related resolution vetoed by Russia.

If the Security Council, the most powerful body in the UN, cannot agree to condemn the Assad regime and work towards brokering a ceasefire that would undoubtedly save lives, what purpose does it serve? Even at the highest level of the UN, authoritarian regimes such as Russia and China are given the power to reject the goals of the charter itself.

Based on their support of the Assad regime, it is clear that Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin do not share the same vision of maintaining "international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace."

Finally, there is the issue of UN peacekeepers who for decades have sexually exploited the same people they were tasked with protecting. While the extent of the abuse is not fully known, reported cases are estimated to be, in the words of top UN officials, only "the tip of the iceberg."

While the UN has only recognized more than 600 abuse claims in the last five years, the charity Hear Their Cries estimates that UN staff could be responsible for 60,000 sexual crimes over the last decade. Although 561 UN personnel have been involved in the 600 officially recognized abuse claims, only 30 have been put in prison.

Despite the noble vision post-war leaders had for the world, the UN has not been a force for good.

Their legitimization of state-sponsored terrorism and authoritarian states complements their inability to filter out sexual predators within their ranks.

To say that the UN has failed to live up to the expectations laid out in its charter would be an understatement.