

Background

No. 2171
August 18, 2008



Published by The Heritage Foundation

How Do U.S. Foreign Aid Recipients Vote at the U.N.? Against the U.S.

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America's engagement with the United Nations has been multifaceted and is an important venue for discussing many of today's global challenges. The United States, the largest contributor to the U.N. budget, has steadfastly supported the founding ideals of the U.N. with a strong conviction that the international body "should be a place where diverse countries and cultures of the world work together for freedom, democracy, peace, human rights, and prosperity for all people."¹

It is clearly in America's interest to work with the U.N. to advance U.S. diplomatic initiatives related to these values and to facilitate cooperation with other nations to address these common concerns. At times, the U.N. has been an effective instrument for advancing the above-stated values, for example, coordinating regulatory standards through organizations such as the International Telecommunication Union and the Universal Postal Union, condemning human rights violations, helping to alleviate suffering during humanitarian or natural disasters, or authorizing peacekeeping operations when such missions could facilitate a lasting peace.

The U.N. remains a member-driven organization. As such, countries' voting practices in the U.N. General Assembly are a useful metric for gauging their ability—and willingness—to support U.S. priorities. The Assembly conducts discussions and adopts resolutions on issues relating to peace and security, terrorism, disarmament, economic and social development, humanitarian relief, and human rights. A

Talking Points

- Most major recipients of U.S. assistance vote against the U.S. on non-consensus votes more often than they vote with the U.S.
- Politically and economically free countries are more likely to agree with the U.S. on policy priorities in the U.N. General Assembly and vote with the U.S. in favor of resolutions supporting those priorities.
- Forging freedom coalitions in the U.N. is a practical strategy for working with other nations to promote mutual goals, positions, and policy objectives.
- The U.S. should adopt a policy of letting aid recipients know that undermining U.S. priorities at the U.N. will be taken into account in future decisions on allocation of U.S. aid.
- The U.S. should continue its efforts to fundamentally reform the U.N. in order to improve transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/bg2171.fgm

Produced by The Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom

Published by The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4999
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country's record in General Assembly non-consensus votes is one means of measuring its support for U.S. diplomatic priorities. This record also provides some important guiding principles for a strategy to elicit greater support for American foreign policy objectives from the U.N. Analyses of U.N. member countries' voting patterns in the General Assembly reveal that:

- U.S. assistance to other member countries of the U.N. has not resulted in support for U.S. diplomatic initiatives in the U.N. On the contrary, most recipients of U.S. assistance vote against the U.S. more often than they vote with the U.S.
- Economically free countries are more likely than less free countries to vote for U.S. positions in the General Assembly.
- Politically free governments are also more likely than less free countries to vote for U.S. positions in the General Assembly.

This result is to be expected. As nations become freer—both politically and economically—the policies that they consider to be in their interests become more closely aligned with U.S. policies. This is not because they are U.S. policies, but because those policies are more likely to be consistent with those countries' own interests.

To bolster international support for U.S. diplomatic initiatives, particularly in the General Assembly, America should seek to build and strengthen coalitions among economically and politically free nations that share many values and principles with America. America should also use its foreign assistance to encourage political and economic free-

dom in recipient countries. Additionally, the State Department should adopt a policy of letting aid recipients know that undermining U.S. priorities at the U.N. will make Americans, and especially Congress, far less supportive of continuing aid to them in the future.

U.S. Aid Does Not Advance U.S. Policies

One measure of the level of influence that U.S. foreign assistance programs have in promoting U.S. priorities is the degree to which aid recipients vote with the U.S. in the General Assembly. Historically, the U.S. has been largely unsuccessful in eliciting support for its positions in the General Assembly.² Following the Cold War, the U.S. enjoyed a honeymoon with the U.N. during which it steadily gained support for its positions on non-consensus votes—those resolutions on which actual votes were taken—culminating in a voting coincidence of over 50 percent in 1995. Since then, however, voting coincidence with the U.S. on non-consensus General Assembly resolutions has fallen to 18 percent in 2007, well below the average of 31 percent over the past two decades.³ (See Chart 1.)

This divergence between the U.S. and the broader U.N. membership over contentious issues is not surprising given that a majority of the U.N. member states are neither politically nor economically free, according to *Freedom in the World 2008*⁴ published by Freedom House and the *2008 Index of Economic Freedom*⁵ published by The Heritage Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*. The U.N. practice of “one nation, one vote” allows the many members with repressive economic and political

1. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, *United States Participation in the United Nations: 2006*, January 2008, Prologue, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/104303.pdf> (July 28, 2008).
2. This paper considers both non-consensus “all” and “important” votes. In the 2007 session, the General Assembly adopted 246 resolutions, 76 (30.9 percent) of them without consensus. This analysis of General Assembly voting patterns ignores consensus decisions because they generally do not adopt substantive language and contribute little to support U.S. positions. See U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, *Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2007*, May 5, 2008, Introduction, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/104484.pdf> (July 29, 2008).
3. The all-time low since 1983, when the State Department began tracking this information, was 15.4 percent in 1988. U.S. Department of State, *Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2007*, Introduction.
4. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2008: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*, at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=395> (July 29, 2008).
5. Kim R. Holmes, Edwin J. Feulner, and Mary Anastasia O'Grady, *2008 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2008), at <http://www.heritage.org/index>.

systems and the worst human rights offenses to “vote together to block not only sensible ideas of economic development, but also proposals for U.N. reform that would loosen their hold on U.N. decision making in areas of budget and economic development.”⁶ Worse, these repressive governments exert pressure through regional voting blocs and other political groupings such as the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement to dissuade countries that would otherwise be more receptive to U.S. policy positions from voting similarly to the U.S.⁷

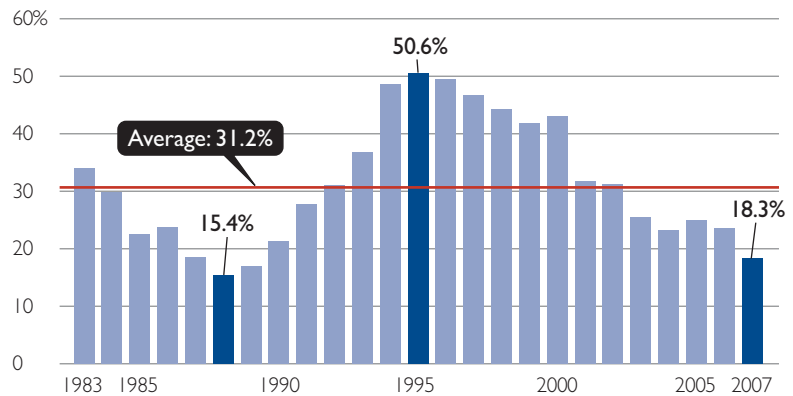
Unlike U.N. Security Council resolutions, which all U.N. member states are theoretically obligated to obey, General Assembly votes are non-binding. They do, however, influence public perceptions in many countries and are often characterized as the “will of the international community.” Regrettably, a wide array of proposals in recent General Assembly sessions could damage the global economy and U.S. interests if they were adopted and enforced. This situation requires that the U.S. pay close attention to General Assembly votes and that U.S. diplomats and negotiators spend much time and effort trying to prevent such initiatives from gaining international legitimacy through U.N. resolutions or decisions.⁸

A potential lever for increasing support for U.S. policies is U.S. foreign assistance. Analysis of U.S. economic and military assistance over the past eight years, though, shows that there is no significant relationship between U.S. foreign aid and the recipient countries’ support for U.S. policy posi-

U.S. Voted Down on Most U.N. Resolutions

Historically, members of the United Nations vote against the U.S. far more frequently than they vote with the U.S. on General Assembly resolutions. In fact, average voting coincidence—the percentage of votes in which nations’ votes match U.S. votes—is only 31.2 percent since 1983.

Voting Coincidence with the U.S.



Notes: Data include only resolutions adopted by the U.N. General Assembly. Resolutions adopted by consensus are excluded.

Source: Authors’ correspondence with the U.S. Department of State; *Voting Practices in the United Nations*, 2007, May 5, 2008, p. 3, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/1104484.pdf>.

Chart 1 • B 2171 heritage.org

tions in the General Assembly. This is unsurprising as, historically, America has made little effort to use foreign aid to gain support for U.S. priorities in the U.N. As a result, most major recipients of U.S. foreign assistance vote against the U.S. more often than they vote with it.⁹

- Over the past eight sessions of the U.N. General Assembly (2000 through 2007), about 95 percent of U.S. foreign aid recipients voted against the U.S. a majority of the time on non-consensus votes, and over 71 percent voted against the U.S. a majority of the time on non-consensus votes deemed “important” by the U.S. Department of State.¹⁰

6. Then-Assistant Secretary of State Kim R. Holmes, “Promoting Economic Freedom at the United Nations,” Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 823, February 24, 2004, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/TradeandForeignAid/hl823.cfm>.

7. Brett D. Schaefer, “Who Leads the United Nations?” Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 1054, December 4, 2007, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/hl1054.cfm>.

8. Holmes, “Promoting Economic Freedom at the United Nations.”

9. Iraq, as a non-participating U.N. member, did not vote until 2003.

- Of the 30 largest recipients of U.S. foreign aid that have voted during the past eight sessions, 28 countries voted against the U.S. a majority of the time on all non-consensus votes, and 24 voted against the U.S. a majority of the time on non-consensus important votes. (See Chart 2.)

The U.S. provides assistance for a variety of purposes. Some assistance can reasonably be linked to support for U.S. policy priorities in the U.N. while other assistance cannot.

Humanitarian Assistance. The lack of a relationship between humanitarian assistance and support for U.S. positions is understandable. Humanitarian assistance is often provided to address sudden major natural disasters, tragedies, or ongoing suffering. Such assistance is given for moral reasons, not to pursue foreign policy objectives.

Military Assistance. Military assistance can similarly be excused for not being closely associated with support for American priorities in the U.N. Support of U.S. interests is clearly at the forefront of providing military assistance, which is used overwhelmingly to provide equipment and training to U.S. allies or to nations deemed vital to America's security interests. America's military concerns are often in unstable areas of the world and require cooperation with governments that are less than ideal partners. Here, the choice is between different facets of support for U.S. interests—one in the U.N. and one around the world. In an ideal world, recipients of military assistance would bolster U.S. interests in both arenas, but securing support in just one of the two is acceptable. If U.S. interests are not advanced in either realm, assistance should be reallocated.

Development Assistance. There is no reason, however, for development assistance not to be more closely tied to support for America's priorities in the U.N. If development assistance contributed to higher standards of living in poor nations, it would support other U.S. priorities because wealthier nations are generally more stable, democratic, and likely to become economic partners with America. Regrettably, development assistance has a dismal record in catalyzing economic growth. The U.S. disbursed nearly \$309 billion (in 2006 constant dollars) in development assistance between 1980 and 2006, and the populations in many of these countries are hardly better off today than they were decades ago in terms of per capita gross domestic product (GDP). In fact, many are poorer. Of the 98 countries for which per capita GDP data are available and that received economic assistance between 1980 and 2006 that made up at least 1 percent of their 2006 GDP:¹¹

- Twenty-seven countries experienced a decline in real per capita GDP;
- Twenty-eight economies experienced negligible real growth of less than 1 percent compound annual growth in real per capita GDP; and
- Forty-three experienced real growth exceeding 1 percent, but only four countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Cambodia, and Serbia) exceeded 5 percent.¹²

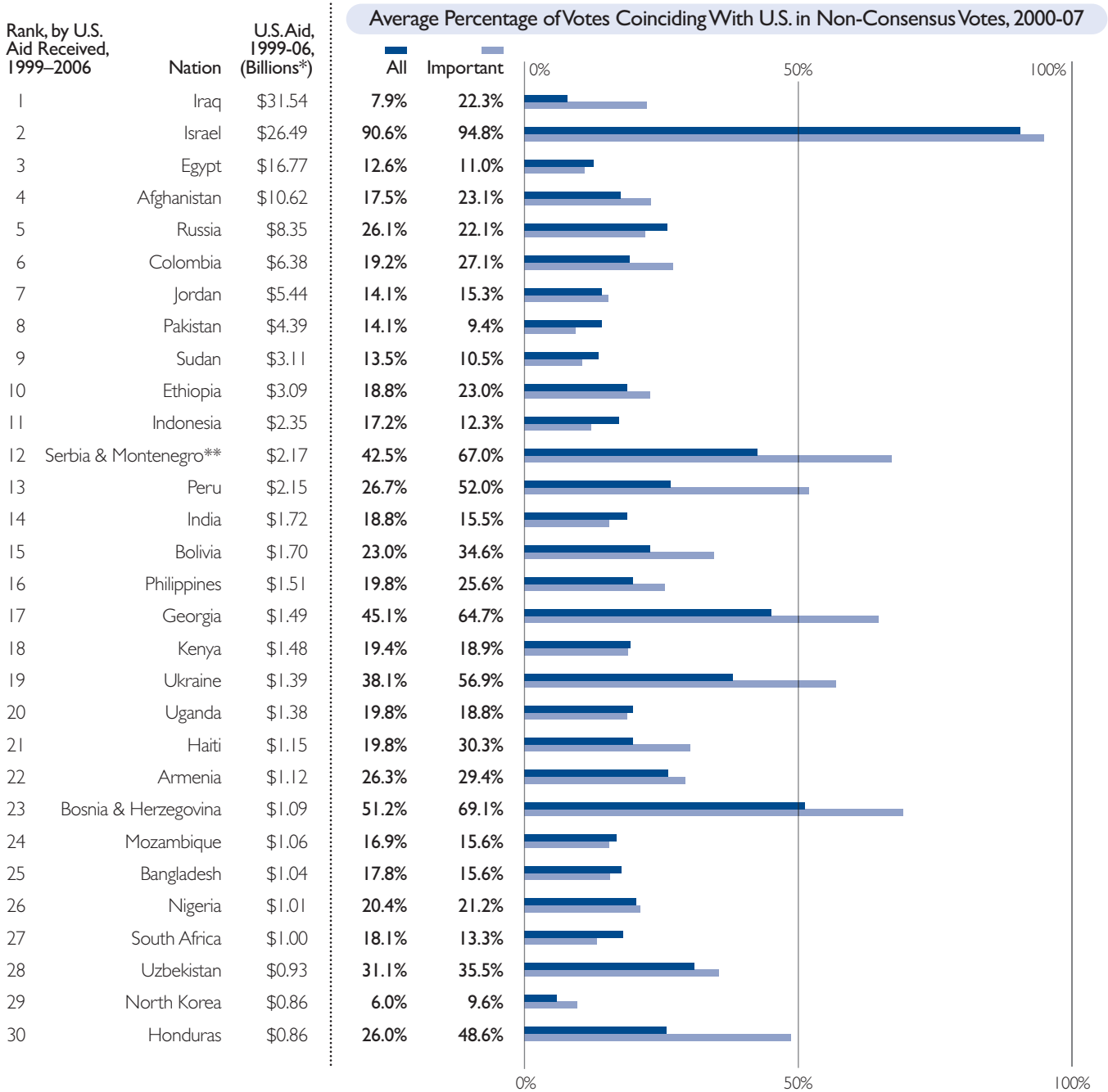
This failure to elicit economic growth is tragic because strong, reliable, long-term economic growth is critical to development. To reach lower-middle-income status (per capita income of \$936), low-

10. By law, the State Department is required to analyze and discuss "important votes," which are defined as votes on "issues which directly affected United States interests and on which the United States lobbied extensively." See U.S. Department of State, *Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2007*.

11. While experts may disagree on the impact of an additional dollar of development assistance on economic growth, advocates of development aid generally call for greatly increased assistance and commonly blame insufficient levels of assistance for the lack of growth among recipients. For instance, see U.N. Millennium Project, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2005), at <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/MainReportComplete-lowres.pdf> (March 13, 2007), and Jeffrey D. Sachs, "The Development Challenge," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (March/April 2005), at <http://www.earth.columbia.edu/about/director/documents/foreignaff0305.pdf> (March 13, 2007). Thus, the analysis in this paper excludes countries that received an insignificant amount of assistance between 1980 and 2006 (cumulative aid over that period totaling less than 1 percent of their 2006 GDP). World Bank, World Development Indicators Online, 2008, at <http://www.worldbank.org/data> (subscription required), and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, International Development Statistics, at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/50/17/5037721.htm> (August 4, 2008).

U.S. Sees Little Support in the U.N. From Countries Receiving U.S. Aid

Of the top 30 countries in the United Nations receiving aid from the United States, 28 have matched votes with the U.S. less than half the time in non-consensus U.N. votes from 2000 to 2007.



* In 2006 constant dollars. ** The two nations became independent in 2006.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, *Voting Practices in the United Nations*, 2007, May 5, 2008, at <http://www.state.gov/plo/iris/rpt/c25867.htm>; U.S. Overseas Loans & Grants Greenbook, at <http://qesdb.usaid.gov/gbk>.

Chart 2 • B 2171 heritage.org

income countries such as Nepal or the Central African Republic with their respective per capita gross domestic product of \$242 and \$223 must see a real compound growth in per capita GDP of 5 percent for over 25 years.¹³ To reach upper-middle-income status (per capita income of \$3,705), they must experience real compound growth of 5 percent for over 55 years. Instead, Nepal and the Central African Republic have experienced a real per capita GDP annual compound growth rate of 2.1 percent and -1.3 percent, respectively, since 1980.

With so many aid recipients experiencing declines in economic growth, or insignificant growth, despite large amounts of development assistance, one must conclude that development assistance from one government to another is not sufficient to facilitate development. Combined with the demonstrated failure of U.S. assistance to engender support for U.S. policies in the U.N., this should lead policymakers to reassess America's disbursement of development assistance both to make it more effective in contributing to development and to use it to more directly support U.S. interests.

The Bush Administration has started to do the first through the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) that approaches development assistance in an innovative manner by providing U.S. development assistance to developing countries that have demonstrated a commitment to good governance, economic freedom, and investing in their people.¹⁴

The U.S. has also attempted to make America's foreign assistance programs more coherent and ensure that those resources support U.S. policy priorities more directly.¹⁵ The State Department's budget request for fiscal year 2009 noted:

It has become clear that the security and well-being of Americans is inextricably linked to the capacity of foreign states to govern justly and effectively... Since the beginning of this Administration, unprecedented investments have been made in meaningful, long-term advancement for partner nations around the world ... At the same time, we have continued support for key partners in the war on terror, efforts to promote and strengthen democracy and

12. Due to the lack of earlier data, per capita GDP figures for the earliest available years were used for the following 25 countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Croatia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Lebanon, Macedonia, Micronesia, Mongolia, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Serbia, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.
13. World Bank, *Country Classifications, Definition of Country Groups, Income Group*, at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20420458~menuPK:64133156~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html> (July 29, 2008).
14. There are indications that the MCA may be more effective than other aid programs through its focus on encouraging policy change. Over the past four years, the Millennium Challenge Corporation has created remarkable policy reform competition, known as "the MCC effect" among countries that wish to qualify for an MCC "compact agreement" or a "threshold program." By increasing transparency in compiling and disseminating economic statistics and competing with each other for MCC grants, these countries have been motivated to pursue real policy improvements. The reforms brought about by "the MCC effect" have encouraged entrepreneurial activities and created more favorable conditions for economic growth and development. For more information see Brett D. Schaefer, "Promoting Economic Prosperity Through the Millennium Challenge Account," Heritage Foundation *Lecture No. 920*, January 13, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/TradeandForeignAid/hl920.cfm>; and Brett D. Schaefer and Anthony B. Kim, "President Bush's Trip to Africa: Solidifying U.S. Partnerships with the Region," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo No. 1817*, February 15, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Africa/wm1817.cfm>.
15. See U.S. Department of State, "Framework for U.S. Foreign Assistance," at <http://www.state.gov/f/c23053.htm> (July 29, 2008); Randall L. Tobias, "Democracy and the New Approach to U.S. Foreign Assistance," speech before Democracy Advisory Committee, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., January 17, 2007, at <http://www.usaid.gov/press/speeches/2007/sp070117.html> (July 29, 2008); Randall L. Tobias, "A Strategic Approach to Addressing Poverty and Global Challenges: We Are in This Together," address at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., February 5, 2007, at <http://www.usaid.gov/press/speeches/2007/sp070205.html> (July 29, 2008); and U.S. Department of State, *Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Request: International Affairs Function 150, Summary and Highlights*, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/100014.pdf> (July 29, 2008).

human rights, trade capacity, and climate observation and mitigation. To sustain real progress, the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) must nurture and grow these investments—investments in a future in which there is an ever expanding circle of well-governed states upon which the United States can partner and rely.¹⁶

Under the Strategic Framework for U.S. Foreign Assistance, U.S. foreign assistance is focused on five objectives: “Peace and Security,” “Governing Justly and Democratically,” “Investing in People,” “Economic Growth,” and “Humanitarian Assistance.” Missing from this agenda, however, is an explicit statement that U.S. foreign assistance is intended to bolster support for U.S. political priorities. Indeed, reading the Framework for U.S. Foreign Assistance one could be forgiven for assuming that the primary purpose of U.S. foreign assistance is entirely to help other countries achieve *their* objectives. This is not the case—the U.S. often provides assistance in direct support of its foreign policy objectives, particularly in the Peace and Security arena. But too often recipient countries view U.S. aid as an entitlement unrelated to U.S. foreign policy priorities. This is particularly true in the U.N., where aid recipients seldom face repercussions for their failure to support U.S. priorities.

There is no doubt that the five objectives identified above are indeed important and, if achieved, would likely contribute to U.S. interests and result in support for U.S. policy priorities in the U.N. Emphasis by the U.S. on using its development assistance to support economic and political freedom in recipient nations, as discussed below, should help to bolster support for U.S. policies in the U.N. General Assembly. The U.S. is missing a key opportunity, however, by failing to link economic assistance to support for U.S. policies in the U.N.

Freedom: A Key Indicator of Support

While U.S. development aid has little impact on recipients’ voting patterns, a country’s level of political and economic freedom is a key indicator of the likelihood that the country will vote with the U.S. on U.N. General Assembly resolutions. The tendency that countries will side with the U.S. in the U.N. General Assembly on non-consensus votes increases if a country is politically or economically free as measured by *Freedom in the World 2008* and the *2008 Index of Economic Freedom*.

Economic Freedom. Economic freedom is about individuals’ basic rights to work, produce, save, and consume without infringement by the state. Greater economic freedom generates more opportunities for people and can help create sustainable wealth and respect for human rights. In other words, by reducing barriers to economic activities, economic freedom helps to create a framework in which people are free to fulfill their dreams of success. This is well-documented in the *Index of Economic Freedom*, which examines the 10 key ingredients of economic freedom, among which are economic openness to the world, transparency, and the rule of law. Economic freedom scores are graded on a scale of 0 to 100. The overall economic freedom score is the simple average of the scores for each of the 10 freedoms. Based on its average score, each country’s economy is classified as “free,” “mostly free,” “moderately free,” “mostly unfree,” or “repressed.”¹⁷

A close look at voting patterns based on countries’ economic freedom level reveals that economically freer countries are more likely to vote with the U.S. than countries with less economic freedom.

Chart 3 illustrates voting patterns as identified by the U.S. State Department during the 62nd session of the General Assembly. (The chart covers the 154 countries for which economic freedom and voting data are available.) Patterns on all non-consensus votes were as follows:

16. U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2009*, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/101415.pdf> (July 30, 2008).

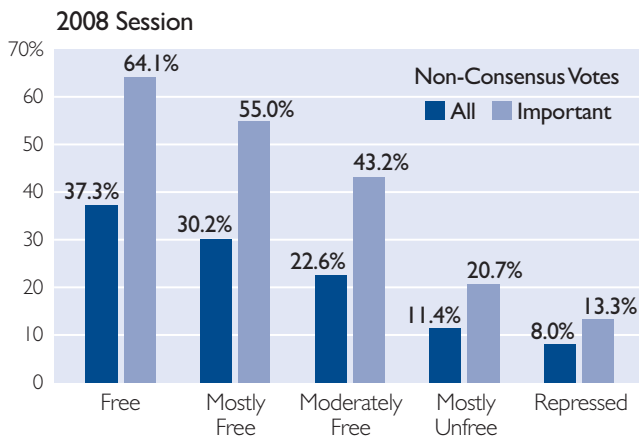
17. William W. Beach and Tim Kane, Ph.D., “Methodology: Measuring the 10 Economic Freedoms,” Chapter 4 in Holmes *et al.*, *2008 Index of Economic Freedom*.

- Free and mostly free countries voted with the U.S. 37.3 percent and 30.2 percent of the time, respectively;
 - Moderately free countries voted with the U.S. 22.6 percent of the time;
 - Mostly unfree countries voted with the U.S. 11.4 percent of the time; and
 - Countries with repressed economies voted with the U.S. only 8 percent of the time.
- Similar patterns were evident in non-consensus votes deemed “important” by the U.S. Department of State:
- Free and mostly free countries voted with the U.S. 64.1 percent and 55 percent of the time, respectively;

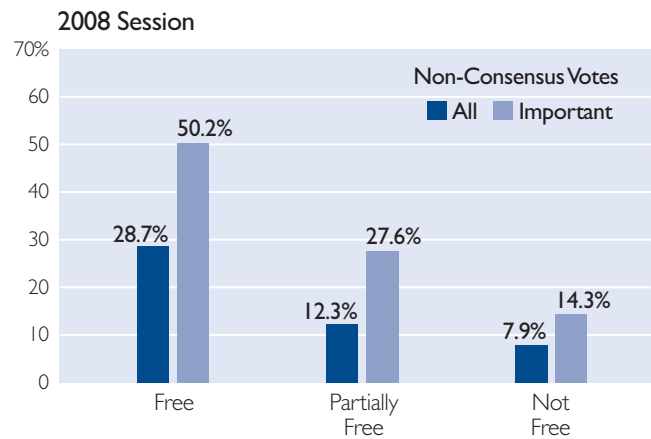
Free Nations More Likely to Cast Votes Coinciding with the U.S.

A distinct voting trend appears when grouping members of the United Nations in terms of economic and political freedom—the freer a nation is, the more likely it will cast a vote on a U.N. resolution that coincides with the U.S. vote. In the charts below, economic freedom categories were determined by The Heritage Foundation; political freedom categories were determined by Freedom House.

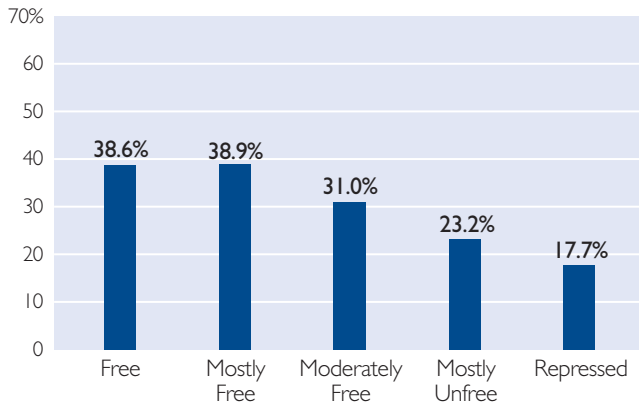
Economic Freedom



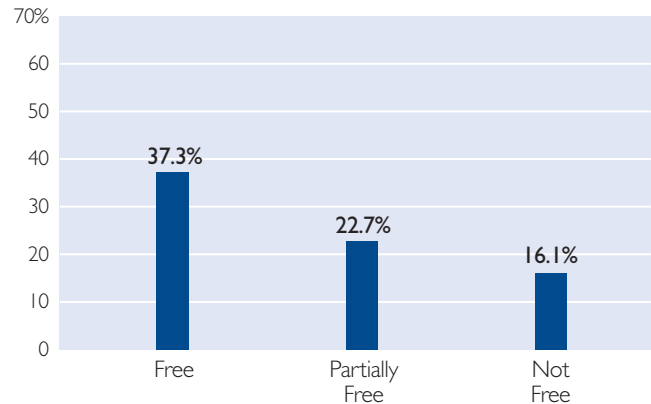
Political Freedom



Sessions from 2000 to 2007



Sessions from 2000 to 2007



Note: Data include only resolutions adopted by the U.N. General Assembly.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, *Voting Practices in the United Nations*, 2007, May 5, 2008, at <http://www.state.gov/p/oi/irs/rpt/c25867.htm>; Kim R. Holmes, Edwin J. Feulner, and Mary Anastasia O’Grady, *2008 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.:The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2008), at <http://www.heritage.org/index>.

Note: Data include only resolutions adopted by the U.N. General Assembly.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, *Voting Practices in the United Nations*, 2007, May 5, 2008, at <http://www.state.gov/p/oi/irs/rpt/c25867.htm>; Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2008: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*, at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=395>.

Chart 3 • B 2171  heritage.org

- Moderately free countries voted with the U.S. 43.2 percent of the time;
- Mostly unfree countries voted with the U.S. 20.7 percent of the time; and
- Countries with repressed economies voted with the U.S. only 13.3 percent of the time.

The chart also shows average voting coincidence on non-consensus votes for the 154 countries over the General Assembly's past eight sessions by category of economic freedom. This chart clearly demonstrates a positive relationship between a country's level of economic freedom and its votes with the U.S. in the General Assembly. Economically "free" and "mostly free" countries vote with the U.S. at more than twice the rate of "repressed" countries.

Political Freedom. A similar relationship exists between voting coincidence with the U.S. and a country's level of political freedom as measured by Freedom House in its annual study *Freedom in the World*. Freedom House awards points to each country based on 10 questions about political rights and 15 questions about civil liberties. The total points in each category determine the country's numerical ratings (from one to seven) for both categories. The average of the two ratings is used to classify each country as "free," "partly free," or "not free."¹⁸

Politically free countries voted with the U.S. more often than partly free countries, and partly free countries were more likely to vote with the U.S. than not free countries. This pattern held true during the 62nd session of the General Assembly as shown in Chart 3. On all non-consensus votes:

- Politically free countries voted with the U.S. on non-consensus votes 28.7 percent of the time;
- Partly free countries voted with the U.S. 12.3 percent of the time; and
- Not free countries voted with the U.S. only 7.9 percent of the time.

As with economically free countries, politically free countries were far more in line with U.S. positions on non-consensus "important" votes:

- Politically free countries voted with the U.S. 50.2 percent of the time;
- Partly free countries voted with the U.S. 27.6 percent of the time; and
- Not free countries voted with the U.S. only 14.3 percent of the time.

The chart also shows that the relationship between political freedom and voting with the U.S. on non-consensus votes in the General Assembly over the past eight sessions is consistent with the results from the 62nd session. Politically "free" countries vote with the U.S. more than twice as often as do "not free" countries.

Why do these patterns exist? Countries vote according to their national interests. The U.N. is a microcosm of international relations. As nations become politically and economically freer, the policies that they consider to be in their interests become more closely aligned with U.S. policies, not because they are U.S. policies, but because they are more likely to be consistent with those countries' own interests.¹⁹

What the U.S. Should Do

Expecting every member of the U.N. to follow America's lead is unrealistic, of course—even America's strongest allies do not agree with the U.S. on every vote. But the U.S. could be more effective in championing its positions in the General Assembly. Other countries do this effectively and the U.S. must increase its effort if it wishes to promote its policy priorities more successfully in the U.N.

General Assembly voting patterns indicate that U.S. development assistance neither effectively rewards countries that support U.S. priorities in the U.N., nor is assistance withheld from countries that consistently oppose U.S. priorities. Table 1 shows a summary comparison of voting coincidence with the U.S. between the 30 largest recipients of U.S. foreign aid and economically and politically free countries in 2008. Clearly, freer countries are more likely than less free countries to support U.S. posi-

18. Freedom House, "Methodology," in *Freedom in the World 2008*.

19. These patterns hold even though all voting coincidence with the U.S. on non-consensus decisions has been declining. Freer nations continue to vote with the U.S. more consistently than less free nations do.

tions and far more likely than major recipients of U.S. foreign assistance to vote with the U.S. America should recognize these realities and take several specific steps to increase its chances of garnering support for U.S. positions in the General Assembly. Specifically, the U.S. should:

Explicitly link disbursement of U.S. assistance to support for U.S. policy priorities in the U.N. The U.S. provides foreign assistance for a number of reasons ranging from increasing economic growth, addressing humanitarian disasters, and giving military equipment and training to its allies. Unfortunately, in decisions to allocate U.S. assistance, these priorities often override whether the recipient nation can be relied on to support U.S. positions in the U.N. and other international organizations. As a result, many countries consider the U.N. and other international organizations to be penalty-free arenas where they can undermine U.S. initiatives and oppose its policy priorities without fear of retaliation or consequence, confident that no matter how they conduct themselves they will receive financial support from the U.S. Similarly, congressional earmarks on foreign assistance often remove executive branch discretion over aid disbursements, thereby removing a key means for rewarding nations that support U.S. priorities or penalizing those who oppose them.

If the U.S. is to be more effective in promoting its policy priorities in the U.N. this situation must change. The U.S. Department of State should inform recipients of U.S. assistance that their support, or lack thereof, for key U.S. priorities in the U.N. and other international organizations will directly affect the level of foreign assistance that they receive. Congress should assist this process by rescinding its earmarks, limitations, and other legislative directives on disbursement of foreign assistance unless they are directly related to U.S. national security.

U.N. Voting Coincidence with U.S. in 2008

	All Votes		Important Votes	
	Votes Only	Including Consensus	Votes Only	Including Consensus
30 largest aid recipients	16.0%	72.2%	28.2%	65.7%
30 largest aid recipients without Israel	13.5%	71.4%	25.7%	64.5%
By Economic Freedom				
Free	37.3%	80.5%	64.1%	83.0%
Mostly Free	30.2%	77.6%	55.0%	78.4%
Moderately Free	22.6%	74.6%	43.2%	73.9%
Mostly Unfree	11.4%	70.7%	20.7%	65.0%
Repressed	8.0%	69.4%	13.3%	59.4%
By Political Freedom				
Free	28.7%	77.1%	50.2%	78.8%
Partly Free	12.3%	71.4%	27.6%	68.7%
Unfree	7.9%	69.7%	14.3%	58.6%

Note: Data include only resolutions adopted by the U.N. General Assembly.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, *Voting Practices in the United Nations*, 2007, May 5, 2008, at <http://www.state.gov/plo/rls/rpt/c25867.htm>; Kim R. Holmes, Edwin J. Feulner, and Mary Anastasia O'Grady, *2008 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2008), at <http://www.heritage.org/index>; Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2008: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*, at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=395>; U.S. Overseas Loans & Grants Greenbook, at <http://quesdb.usaid.gov/lgbk>.

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Center U.S. foreign aid on countries whose policies make real progress in improving economic and political freedom. The U.S. has provided more development aid to the world than any other country, yet decades of foreign assistance have failed to improve economic growth and development consistently. Examples of areas where economic development has been successful indicate that the keys to development are good economic policy and a strong rule of law, not the amount of foreign assistance they receive. By encouraging countries to adopt policies that promote economic and political freedom, the U.S. supports the best means for recipients to escape poverty and become self-reliant. It also would result in policies that should translate into greater support for the U.S. both around the world and in the U.N. according to the voting patterns discussed in this paper.

The U.S. should focus development assistance on countries committed to promoting economic and political freedom for their citizens. The Bush Administration has begun to follow this strategy through the MCA and has incorporated the concept into its Framework for U.S. Foreign Assistance.²⁰ In May 2008, the U.S. Senate proposed a funding cut of \$525 million for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which oversees the MCA. This cut was subsequently reduced to \$58 million by a joint House and Senate conference.²¹ The Senate approved the revised supplemental appropriations bill for fiscal year 2008 on June 26, and President Bush signed the bill on June 30, 2008, which resulted in the MCC receiving \$1.544 billion for FY 2008.²² The House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs also approved \$1.544 billion for the MCC for FY 2009 or \$681 million less than the President's \$2.225 billion request. However, the Senate Appropriations Committee proposed only \$254 million in funding for the MCC for FY 2009—a staggering \$1.971 billion cut from the Administration's request.²³ The final appropriation has yet to be decided, but it makes little sense to dramatically cut a U.S. development assistance program focused on promoting the policies most likely to lead to economic growth and development (versus other development assistance programs that have a lengthy record of ineffective-

ness) and also lead to greater support for U.S. foreign policy priorities.

Strengthen the American cause at the U.N. and coordinate voting by politically free governments in the U.N. Numerous countries in the U.N. are considered politically free according to Freedom House, yet they routinely fail to hold less representative governments accountable. Even worse, they frequently permit repressive governments to run roughshod over U.N. bodies and resolutions designed to highlight or curb human rights abuse and political repression. Emphasizing the necessity of forming a common partnership for liberty in his recent book, *Liberty's Best Hope: American Leadership for the 21st Century*, Heritage Foundation Vice President Kim Holmes observes that “the original principles of freedom and democracy that inspired the founders of the U.N. have been lost in a cynical power game that essentially defines legitimacy and ‘democracy’ as whatever a majority of U.N. members say it is.”²⁴

A case in point is the disappointing new Human Rights Council (HRC).²⁵ Even though members of the U.N. Democracy Caucus comprise over 75 percent of the HRC, it has ignored ongoing state-sanctioned human rights abuses in Belarus, Cuba, China, Iran, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere, instead obsessing over Israel.²⁶ The only resolutions adopted by the HRC condemning

20. U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2009* at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/101415.pdf> (July 30, 2008); U.S. Department of State, “Foreign Assistance Framework,” at <http://www.state.gov/f/c23053.htm> (August 5, 2008); and Millennium Challenge Corporation, “About the Millennium Challenge Corporation,” at <http://www.mcc.gov/about/index.php> (July 30, 2008).

21. For more information, see House Amendment to Senate Amendment 2 at http://www.rules.house.gov/110/text/110_supp_pp_amnd.pdf (July 30, 2008).

22. Press release, “President Bush Signs H.R. 2642, the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008,” The White House, June 30, 2008, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/06/20080630.html> (July 30, 2008).

23. Department of State, *Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2009*, S. Rep. 110–425, 110th Cong., 2nd Sess., July 18, 2008, pp. 59–61, at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_reports&docid=f:sr425.110.pdf (August 4, 2008).

24. Kim R. Holmes, *Liberty's Best Hope: American Leadership for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2008).

25. For a description of the failure of politically free and partly free members of the U.N. Democracy Caucus to work together to hold human rights violators accountable, see Freedom House, “The UN Human Rights Council at the Halfway Mark: A Report Card,” November 20, 2006, at http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/47.pdf (July 31, 2008).

26. Press release, “UN Human Rights Council Fails to Hold Sudan Accountable,” UN Watch, November 28, 2006, at <http://www.unwatch.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=bdKKISNqEmG&b=1316871&ct=3269841> (July 31, 2008).

human rights practices in a specific country situation not involving Israel were weak resolutions noting “with concern” the situation in Darfur and chastising the Burmese government following a crackdown on peaceful demonstrators.²⁷

The U.S. and its democratic allies should be much clearer about denouncing actions by regional groups that undermine representative government, the rule of law, or basic human rights. The U.S. has sought to organize these nations by supporting the Community of Democracies, which is designed to promote democracy, in part by coordinating policy positions among democracies on relevant issues at the United Nations, as well as the U.N. Democracy Fund, through which U.N. member states contribute to a U.N. Trust Fund dedicated to financing “projects that build and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, and ensure the participation of all groups in democratic processes.”²⁸ The U.S. needs to bolster these efforts through its targeted allocation of foreign assistance.

Seek support for an economic freedom coalition within the U.N. Another plausible strategy for strengthening the American cause at the U.N. is to create an Economic Freedom Caucus among nations of all regions that have a demonstrable record of economic freedom. Such a coalition would

serve U.S. interests by offering alternative voting relationships beyond regional groupings and would facilitate common principles that both developed and developing countries could champion.

While the U.S. has spoken about the need for economic freedom, its efforts to organize other nations around that concept have not been as successful as those focused on democracy.²⁹ The U.S. should seek to emulate its modest successes in coordinating actions and positions of democratic countries by establishing a Global Economic Freedom Forum in addition to an Economic Freedom Caucus, emphasizing the need for economic freedom within U.N. discussions on development.

Build support for U.N. reform. The U.N. is charged with many serious responsibilities and tasks. Millions of individuals around the world rely on the U.N. for protection and other assistance, but at times the U.N. has proven unreliable or even detrimental in discharging these duties. Worse, “the combination of democracy deficit with the free-rider budget problem” is at the center of U.S. concerns about the U.N. and its decisions and programs.³⁰

In addressing these problems, the U.S. should continue its efforts to fundamentally reform the U.N. and to work with nations that are committed

27. Brett D. Schaefer, “The U.S. Is Right to Shun the U.N. Human Rights Council,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1910, May 2, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/wm1910.cfm>.
28. United Nations Democracy Fund, “What is The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)?” at <http://www.un.org/democracyfund/XWhatIsUNDEFhtm> (August 8, 2008); Mark P. Lagon, “A UN Strengthened by and Strengthening Democracy,” remarks to the New America Foundation, Washington, D.C., September 25, 2006, at <http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rm/73128.htm> (July 31, 2008); U.S. Department of State, “The Community of Democracies,” at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/c10790.htm> (July 31, 2008); U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, “To Promote Democracy in the United Nations,” August 27, 2004, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/36467.pdf> (July 31, 2008); U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, “The UN Democracy Fund: Promoting Human Rights and Freedom Worldwide,” September 14, 2006, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/72348.pdf> (July 31, 2008); and U.N. Democracy Fund at <http://www.un.org/democracyfund> (July 31, 2008).
29. According to the U.S. Department of State, “Like-minded nations have succeeded in gaining some support for the principles of economic freedom, though the Economic Freedom Caucus has been hindered by a prolonged and contentious debate in the General Assembly on the respective roles and responsibilities of developed and developing countries.” U.S. Department of State, *Performance and Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2006*, November 2006, p. 153, at <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/perfrpt/2006/pdf/> (August 8, 2008). See also U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, *Performance Summary: Fiscal Year 2006*, February 2006, pp. 188–195, at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/53112.pdf> (July 31, 2008). For more information on promoting economic freedom at the U.N., see Holmes, “Promoting Economic Freedom at the United Nations,” and “The Challenges Facing the United Nations Today: An American View,” remarks before the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., October 21, 2003, at <http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rm/2003/25491.htm> (July 31, 2008). At the time of the second speech, Dr. Holmes was serving as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs.

to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the U.N. through reformed management, human resources, budgetary, and oversight practices. Such nations tend to be the most politically and economically free.³¹

Conclusion

In protecting American interests, the U.S. should do all that it can to strengthen broad support for America's policies in the U.N. The U.S. should focus on changing the dynamics of the U.N. by explicitly linking U.S. assistance to support for U.S. priorities in the U.N., forging coalitions with nations that share the American principles of political and economic freedom, and seeking to expand the membership of those coalitions by focusing development

assistance on countries with demonstrable records of improving political and economic freedom because economically and politically free nations are more likely to support U.S. priorities in the U.N. While the U.N. will never be an echo chamber for U.S. policies, forging coalitions with nations that share values with the U.S. can go a long way toward advancing American priorities.

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30. Ambassador Terry Miller, "Understanding the Democracy Deficit at the U.N.: The G-77, Non-Aligned Movement, and Organization of the Islamic Conference," Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 1061, February 25, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/hl1061.cfm>.

31. Brett D. Schaefer and Nile Gardiner, "Malloch Brown Is Wrong: The U.S. Should Press Even Harder for U.N. Reform," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1122, June 13, 2006, at <http://www.heritage.org/wm1122.cfm>.