

RETHINKING CANADA AND THE UNITED NATIONS



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Gerald Steinberg

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has announced that he's making Canada's campaign for election to the United Nations Security Council in 2021 a major objective. That's a long time away, but setting the goal is, in itself, highly problematic. The UN is far from the ideal that was envisioned when it was created in 1945, or as it was portrayed by former prime minister Lester Pearson, whose name Trudeau invoked in the announcement. Instead of a platform for "the promotion of democracy... human rights, development, and international peace and security," the UN is a centre for promoting hate and demonization of democracies, and of Israel in particular.

For anyone with a moral compass, UNESCO, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, etc. are not platforms for the "maintenance of international peace and security" or for making "a safer and more prosperous world." Quite the opposite. The recent UNESCO resolutions erasing 3,000 years of Jewish history in Jerusalem resulted from power politics – in particular, bullying by the bloc of more than 50 Arab and Muslim countries that control many UN institutions. This bloc is joined by dozens of others who vote their interests, not their conscience.

The same is true of the frequent condemnations and investigations of Israeli "human rights" violations. Since these UN bodies are unwilling and incapable of dealing with the real moral disasters, such as Syria, North Korea and Iraq, Israel-bashing is a convenient alternative – low-hanging political fruit.

In response, politicians, diplomats and commentators who favour Canadian membership in the Security Council argue that Ottawa can stand in opposition to those who exploit the UN as a battering ram against Israel.

Unfortunately, history shows that diplomats who sit in UN meetings day after day, and spend evenings with NGO officials who are part of the UN's toxic environment, often reinforce the biases that blame Israel for everything. Most people – and soft-spoken diplomats in particular – prefer not to face the abuse and attacks that result from speaking out on the absurdity of the UN's agenda on Israel. And when it comes to votes, as the Europeans repeatedly demonstrate, economic and other benefits of voting with Iran, Saudi Arabia and the rest are far more powerful than any moral qualms.

Prior to 2010, Canada had been a Security Council member for 12 years, frequently holding one of the non-permanent seats (as distinct from the five permanent members with veto power, according to the UN Charter.) During much of this period, and particularly in the later years under the Liberals, Canada's voting record was similar to that of the Europeans – either abstaining or joining the Israel-bashing and demonization.

In 2010, when the Harper government began to vote on the basis of morality, opposing these resolutions, Canada was “punished” by the Arabs and lost the Security Council vote. Two years later, Australia's then prime minister, Kevin Rudd, engineered a successful campaign, at the expense of principle. However, the Australians had very little impact. It was a wasted effort. (Shortly afterward, Rudd lost his position.)

The situation at the International Criminal Court is another case in point. Like the UN, the ICC was a noble idea that was spoiled by politics. In the late 1990s, when the final stages of the negotiations were hijacked by adding terms designed to attack Israel, Canada should have led efforts to reverse this abuse. But the government at the time did not. The result is an institution that, like the UN bodies, is far from embodying universal moral criteria, and recent efforts of Foreign Minister Stéphane Dion to rescue the ICC are mistaken.

By their very nature and structure, these international bodies and their form of power politics are impervious to the influence of self-proclaimed “middle powers,” however well

intentioned. So instead of giving the UN and ICC the facade of legitimacy, Trudeau and his government would do well to stay away.