



Countering CCP Global Influence
Beyond the Great Wall: China's Ambitions in the Multilateral System

Bottom-Line Up Front:

Beijing has successfully leveraged its presence in the multilateral system and exerts considerable influence over United Nations (UN) entities such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Health Organization (WHO). This allows China to:

- **Prioritize the election of UN-member states who act favorable to Beijing's interests.** From 2009 to 2021, China saw an [85 percent increase](#) in Chinese nationals employed at the UN.
- **Use the UN to underwrite China's long-term global development and strategic aims.** In 2016, China established the [United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund](#) (UNPDF), agreeing to fund it with \$200 million in supplemental voluntary contributions over ten years. The UNPDF includes [funding for BRI projects](#).
- **Undermine U.S. interests.** The United States remains the largest contributor to the UN system—funding about [22 percent of its budget](#)—however, the UN often undermines American interests. The United States must pursue strategic reform at the UN by reprioritizing funding away from ineffective agencies, increasing the numbers of U.S. personnel, and ensuring UN efforts do not contradict U.S. objectives.

Background:

Following the passage of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758, the PRC assumed China's seat at the UN—including China's place on the UN Security Council (UNSC)—which had previously been held by Taiwan (Republic of China). While the United States is the largest donor to the UN system, China has emerged as its most influential member state. Under Xi Jinping, China moved beyond their historic distrust of the U.S. dominated system to viewing the UN as a tool for its foreign policy objectives. As one of five permanent members of the UNSC, China has considerable influence on key international efforts and the ability to exercise veto power over substantive resolutions. Especially notable during the COVID-19 pandemic, China leverages its role at the WHO to provide aid and vaccines to increase its global influence. At the WTO, China has been accused by countries of manipulating its currency to gain a trade advantage. A weaker yuan makes Chinese exports cheaper and more competitive in global markets. China now plays a leading role in the UN's Artificial Intelligence advisory body, where the CCP will play a leading role in drafting global standards and guidelines for this next generation digital technology.

Key Issues:

- **China's Influence Campaign at the United Nations:** China has expanded its influence over the UN, sparking credible accusations of [using financial incentives to manipulate decision-making](#) by Secretary General António Guterres and member-states. Under Xi's leadership, China has assumed leadership over [four specialized UN agencies](#), allowing Chinese representatives to [advocate for CCP interests in agriculture, development, telecommunications, and aviation](#). While under Chinese leadership, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) fell victim to a month's long cyber security attack concealed by and since linked back to China. Beijing also created new air routes in violation of ICAO policies to advance its territorial claims in the South China Sea.
- **Absence of Accountability:** China's influence in international institutions allows Beijing to deflect attention from its own malfeasance, including its role in the origins [of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and its genocide against Uyghurs in Xinjiang. China utilizes its UNSC veto to prevent holding other authoritarian states accountable, such as [blocking down key resolutions](#) calling for cross-border humanitarian aid to Syrian civilians.



- **Peace Keeping Contributions:** China is a major contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, both financially and in terms of troop deployment. It has increased its role in peacekeeping to demonstrate the facade of its commitment to global stability.
- **Subversion of Human Rights:** China uses its seat on the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to [diminish accountability measures](#) for governments committing human rights abuses in countries like Syria and Myanmar. China promotes its ambiguous notion of [state-defined](#) human rights which help defend against criticism for its abysmal human rights record, including its ongoing Uyghur genocide. Due to pressure from the Chinese delegation, a 2022 report from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights refrained from using the term “genocide” to describe China’s actions in Xinjiang.
- **Need for Strategic Reform:** The United States must reassess the utility of its funding to various UN agencies such as the controversial UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and UN Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and promote American personnel to UN leadership positions. To do so, the United States must improve its processes for U.S. citizens applying for jobs to keep pace with the growing and disproportionate number of Chinese personnel in IOs. Since 2013, China has [strategically placed Chinese staff](#) in both high-level and general positions within the UN, shifting the agenda-setting power in the CCP’s favor.