“The UN’s corruption can be traced to the 1940s, when it first took up the issue of human rights.”

The United Nations Is Ineffective and Corrupt and Does Not Stop Human Rights Abuses

Joseph Loconte

In this viewpoint, Joseph Loconte claims the United Nations (UN) has been sabotaged by repressive governments and is not effective in stopping human rights abuses. Loconte says the United Nations was corrupted from its very beginning when social and economic goals were given equal status with human rights. Loconte proposes a U.S.-based alternative to the UN that functions along with other national groups and has strong input from the American evangelical community. Joseph Loconte is a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, an organization that strives to link domestic and foreign policy issues to the Judeo-Christian moral tradition.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. According to Loconte, what was the “original sin” of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
2. According to Loconte, “utopianism” has nurtured what? What is utopianism according to Loconte?

Not long ago, I joined a Washington luncheon with Shashi Tharoor, an undersecretary general at the United Nations [UN]. Tharoor, a candidate to replace Kofi Annan [in 2006] as head of the UN, speaks with the polish and assurance of the quintessential UN diplomat. But when asked why repressive states such as China and Saudi Arabia should be allowed to serve on the UN’s premier human-rights body, he hesitated. “You don’t advance human rights,” Tharoor insisted, “by preaching only to the converted.”

Here on display is the flawed idealism of the UN’s human-rights agenda, as if having human-rights abusers judging human-rights cases is the way to convert them. It is the same utopian impulse that lies behind multilateralism (the idea that nations should always act in concert) and its cousin multiculturalism (openness to the traditions and values of other cultures) and causes such confusion about human rights. Though helpful in some contexts, these ideas are slavishly applied in international politics in ways that assault the concepts of natural rights and moral norms enshrined not only in our Declaration of Independence, but also in the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The unconverted states, of course, have hijacked human-rights ideals for their own despotic purposes. A 2004 UN task force report lamented a “legitimacy deficit” in the organization’s commitment to human rights. A year later, Kofi Annan admitted that the United Nations was “passing through the gravest crisis of its existence” because of its tarnished