



RCAS Commentary

Trump in UN: From Dialogue to Disruption

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About RCAS

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RCAS aims to become a leading research institute and think tank on Asian affairs in the Indo-Pacific region. To date, RCAS has conducted research programs on maritime disputes in the South China Sea (SCS), China's relations with the Indo-Pacific states, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), terrorism/counterterrorism in the Afg-Pak region, and so on. It is committed to promoting maritime cooperation, regional integration, and regional peace in the Indo-Pacific region at large.

RCAS has published nearly ten books in Chinese and English and more than 20 papers in SSCI/SCOPUS/CSSCI-indexed journals. Recent English publications include *Populism, Nationalism and South China Sea Dispute: Chinese and Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2022); *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Contemporary Developments and Dynamics* (London: Routledge, 2022); *Crossing the Himalayas: Buddhist Ties, Regional Integration and Great-Power Rivalry* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *The Reshaping of China-Southeast Asia Relations in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *Territorial Disputes, The Role of Leaders and The Impact of Quad: A Triangular Explanation of China-India Border Escalations* (2023); *Managing the South China Sea Dispute: Multilateral and Bilateral Approaches* (2022); *China-Pakistan Cooperation on Afghanistan: Assessing Key Interests and Implementing Strategies* (2022); *Hedging Against the Dragon: Myanmar's Tangled Relations with China since 1988* (2021); and *China-Pakistan Conventional Arms Trade: An Appraisal of Supplier's and Recipient's Motives* (2020).

RCAS has also published hundreds of articles, and its researchers have been interviewed in various local and international media outlets, such as *The Diplomat* in the United States, *East Asian Forum (EAF)* in Australia, *Bangkok Post* in Thailand, *Jakarta Post* in Indonesia, *Lian He Zao Bao*, *Think China* in Singapore, *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, *China-US Focus* in Hong Kong, *CGTN*, *Global Times*, *World Affairs* in China. RCAS researchers have actively participated in international conferences or study visits in the United States, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia, and other places.

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For many years, American presidents have pledged their support for human rights, multilateralism, and the liberal international order that emerged after World War II before the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). However, rather than being a conversation and reassertion exercise, Donald Trump's day on stage was a radical disruption exercise. He was a well-known orator whose remarks established the confrontation-first concept of sovereignty. He put an end to long-term engagement diplomacy, thereby changing the direction of traditional American foreign policy. Trump used the UN as a forum to vent his frustrations because he had a fundamental pessimism about international collaboration.



▲(Times of Bangladesh).

The reaction that followed was sufficient to raise questions about the fundamental tenets of the UN itself, creating further diplomatic rifts and confirming the anxieties of nations that had been comforted by the idea of a steady U.S. foreign policy. Trump's assault was primarily directed at the United Nations organization. He criticized the group for not realizing its vast potential and contested its reputation as a bureaucratic institution that valued rhetoric over results. In contrast, the UN was a meaningless show that was content to make forceful statements but vehemently opposed any action that was taken.

This criticism went even deeper when he questioned the UN's humanitarian and security mandates. Trump directly challenged the UN aid to asylum seekers in the U.S. by not necessarily presenting it as a humanitarian role of the UN, but as a waste of resources that implicitly promoted migration. His accusation that the UN is tasked with preventing aggression, not creating and funding it, distorted the humanitarian aspect of the institution into an implication that the UN assists in making the world an unsafe place. This rhetoric was used to weaken the global agreement on supporting refugees and communal security, turning the U.S into a supporter of UN goals instead of its greatest domestic critic. Many observers recognized Trump's attempt to convert the UN into an instrument of the United States' national interest, which has enormous potential but is primarily implemented covertly and with little fanfare. Within a larger plan to reframe American foreign policy as independently assertive and not dependent on a lack of international consensus, it was a strategic blow to the UN's tactical effectiveness.

However, in a stunning break from the accepted rules of diplomacy, Trump saved his harshest words for the European nations to which America had most trusted, rather than those whose animosity was the source of her affront. This emphasis meant that he was fighting for the principles of post-war Western liberalism itself, rather than a foreign nation. His objections centered on two fundamental policy areas: unsustainable immigration and self-immolating renewable energy plans. His remarks about immigration were apocalyptic. He drew a drawing of a continent on the outside and said that illegal immigrants had entered Europe, causing a major catastrophe that had never been seen before. The author intentionally sought to incite and alienate readers by employing exaggeration and military terminology to characterize a demographic and migratory crisis. The most well-known prediction he made was that Western Europe would inevitably perish as a result of unrestricted borders and what he called catastrophic energy choices. It was a massive shift in philosophy. Similar democratic principles and a common defense have long been characteristics of transatlantic alliances; Trump's position suggested that any European dedication to liberal immigration policies and environmental consciousness would have been much more dangerous to the West than the adversary overseas.

He applied the same feeling to the subject of climate change, calling it the biggest deception in history. He loudly criticized European nations for slamming fossil fuels and squandering money on renewable and multifunctional energy. The Paris Agreement and the worldwide decarbonization effort in general were overtly challenged both intellectually and policy-wise. In addition to forcing the United States to withdraw from a central international accord, he was also pressuring other nations to do the same by driving up the price of fossil fuels and demeaning climate research on the periphery of the global stage. As a result, a significant moral and policy divide has emerged between the U.S. and its European allies, making their security and economic cooperation somewhat precarious. His breakdown of these alliances was

calculated such that, under his administration, the United States placed a higher priority on national energy and economic self-defense than on the long-standing ties in environmental and ideological care.

Besides the especially critical assessment of the UN and Europe, in his speech, Trump also added an unclear assessment of geopolitical confrontations and an inflammatory list of his own diplomatic successes. Regarding Russia, he surprisingly described the country as a paper tiger, as it lacked actual military strength. This remark was a good omen to the diplomats accustomed to the diplomacy of the UNGA, which is neither usual nor very straightforward. Some interpreted it to suggest that Trump might move his policy on the Russia matter to a more skeptical position in the future, a change from his traditionally deferential stance. It was also employed to contribute further disorientation to the Western perception of Russian might and intentions, rendering the U.S. policy to Moscow all the more erratic and capricious in the minds of its allies.

The most factually challenged section of his speech was when he claimed to have halted seven wars in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. An analysis of the international situation, however, revealed a much more complex and, in many cases, unresolved reality. Although he provided an account of a successful and decisive American intervention, several of the listed conflicts remained volatile with no real resolution, and the role of his administration in others was highly controversial. Such a penchant for exaggerating or distorting diplomatic successes was another common thread throughout his tenure as president, indicating that he favored image over practical, long-range peace. Of particular instructive interest was the example of the dispute between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), a \$ 4 billion project on the Nile River, which involved transactional and polarizing diplomacy. According to the author of the source, the two countries were not at war during his presidency. However, the dispute over Nile water rights caused intense diplomatic tension between them, as Egypt and Sudan feared that the flow of water would be limited.

All things considered, Donald Trump's addresses to the UN General Assembly were a clear and intentional change in tone from discussion to disruption. The post-war consensus, which valued transatlantic unity, international institutions, and cooperative efforts on global issues like climate change, was rejected entirely as the uber-topic. He reframed the UN as a pointless, resource-clogging bureaucracy, shattering the previous notion of it as a forum for moral discussion. Simultaneously, he denounced the American policy choices of her closest friends, particularly those related to immigration and energy, which he believed to be ideologically reprehensible and ultimately fatal to Western culture.

Constant instability and his own government's politicized, contentious intervention, such as the GERD, frequently undermined his claims for international conflict resolution. One of Trump's contributions to the UN is not a diplomatic victory, but rather a purposeful, global systemic event that has made nations reconsider the reliability of American leadership and the prospects for future international collaboration. His blunder may have put out a local political fire. However, on a global scale, it left a legacy of diplomatic misunderstanding, strained friendships, and a rediscovery of the purpose and value of multilateralism in the twenty-first century.

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About Author



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