

January 17, 2005 Two weeks ago I discussed the growing sentiment among conservatives in America that we should consider getting out of the United Nations. Much of this sentiment has been generated by the oil-for-food scandal, but this strikes me as misguided. Sovereignty is the issue, not scandals, and many newly-minted critics of the UN were happy to support the organization when it did our foreign policy bidding. Why in the world are we surprised by this oil-for-food scandal? Power without accountability naturally leads to corruption, and the UN is nothing if not unaccountable. Just as Washington politicians are too far removed from the Americans they purport to represent, UN bureaucrats are utterly distanced from the “world citizens” they wish to govern. The UN is nascent global government, no matter what its supporters claim-- it attempts to issue legally binding decrees. Centralized, faraway government is always less accountable than localized government. The average American has no say whatsoever over what happens at the UN, even though he’s forced to pay taxes to support it. Given the reality that UN bureaucrats operate totally outside the bounds of any national laws or oversight, we hardly should be surprised when the organization becomes arrogant, corrupt, and mismanaged. The real problem, however, is not that the UN is corrupt, or ineffective, or run by scoundrels. The real problem is that the UN is inherently illegitimate, because supra-national government is an inherently illegitimate concept. The ultimate test for the ostensible validity of any government is whether its authority comes from the people it governs, rather than from the use of force or arbitrary edicts. In other words, legitimate governments operate only by the consent of those they govern. This is the fundamental democratic principle. It is ludicrous to suggest that billions of people across the globe have in any way consented to UN governance, or have even the slightest influence over their own governments. Yet so many of those on the political left in America, who claim to believe in democracy above all, vigorously champion the inherently undemocratic UN. We cannot reconcile American sovereignty with our membership in the UN. Neither the UN nor any other international body has authority to make laws that bind the American people. Americans have not consented to laws passed by foreign individuals or bodies. American citizens abroad, of course, are subject to the laws of their host nation. At home, however, American citizens are subject only to our domestic laws. Congress, and Congress alone, has the constitutional power to craft our federal laws. While constitutionally-ratified treaties can be legitimate, no treaty can legally usurp the basic function of Congress by transferring legislative authority to an international body. Not even the wildest interpretation of the Constitution would allow Congress simply to abandon its lawmaking power to another body. Yet this is what UN advocates would have us believe when the UN attempts to dictate or influence our domestic labor, environmental, trade, tax, and gun laws-- as it already has.