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Trends. Human Rights and Military Conflict: Numerology versus Quantitative Analysis

Editor

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A journalist comments on the United Nations Human Rights Commission vote to take no action on a human rights censure motion against the People's Republic of China. The vote was 22-17 for taking no action and therefore—states the analyst—five nations "tipped the outcome." In actuality, of course, any of three nations through a 3-vote swing (to 20-19 against taking no action) would have tipped the "no action" outcome.

A chief operating officer of a public-policy group concludes that the B-2 aircraft is a huge bargain. How is this conclusion reached? An operational alternative to the B-2, the B-52, costs $8.3K an hour to fly, carries air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) at $2M each, and thus engenders a cost of $24,083,000 for a 10-hour mission to destroy a dozen targets. The B-2, on the other hand, costs about $5.719K an hour to fly, carries satellite-guided bombs (SGBs) at $23.2K each, and thus engenders a cost of $335.59K for the same mission for the same targets. What the chief operating officer "forgets" to leave out is that the B-52 can carry other than ALCMs, the B-2s can carry other than SGBs, the B-2 development and production costs have been orders of magnitude higher than the B-52, the B-52 has been a training and operational workhorse for generations minimizing the development and production costs per aircraft, and that the B-2 was created for an operational environment—a nuclear war—that it is never likely to face and is being used for missions it doesn't need to face.