



PERSPECTIVES

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Trump Stands Firm Against Bias and Abuses at International Organizations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: President Donald Trump believes his controversial standing at home and assertive policies abroad lie behind the pattern of countries daring to challenge American interests in international organizations. He has responded with an aggressive new strategy against widespread abuses and anti-Americanism at the UN and a host of other international fora. Trump's strategy serves Jerusalem's interests because Israel has been a consistent victim of obsession, hostility, hypocrisy, and double standards on the floors of many of these organizations.

Critics of President Donald Trump often accuse him of being erratic and inconsistent on foreign policy. In one particular area, however, he has been clear and consistent: the UN, international organizations, and international law.

As in other areas of foreign policy and national security, Trump has completely reversed the policies of his predecessor Barack Obama. From the beginning of his tenure in the White House, Trump has shown little respect for the Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and several other UN and international agencies. He views them as highly politicized, corrupt, ineffective, and anti-American.

Trump appointed Nikki Haley, a highly popular and very sharp politician, to the position of US Ambassador to the UN. Haley, of Indian-Sikh origin, was the first female governor of South Carolina and was considered for vice president. She regularly and defiantly holds up a mirror to the delegates at the UN to expose the body's hypocrisy, falseness, and double standards. (On October 9, Haley resigned her position, to be effective at the end of calendar 2018.) John Bolton, the former US ambassador to the UN who became Trump's

National Security Advisor in April 2018, is another key player in the new American approach to the UN and other international organizations.

In his speech to the 2018 UN General Assembly (his second to the body), Trump clarified a doctrine he often repeated during the 2016 presidential campaign and has continued to emphasize since becoming president: The US is a sovereign state and will determine its functions in world affairs solely on the basis of its national interests. "America is governed by Americans," he said. "We reject the ideology of globalism and accept the doctrine of patriotism."

Trump has consistently applied this doctrine to multiple international organizations and processes. When the US decided to leave the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo explained, "Too many commitments have gone unfulfilled. President Trump wants to move the ball forward. From day one he has called out institutions or countries who say one thing and do another, and that's precisely the problem at the Human Rights Council."

UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

In June 2018, the US left the UNHRC. Ambassador Haley said that for almost a year, she had demanded reforms to the Council's operations to no avail. "Regrettably," she said, "it is now clear that our call for reform was not heeded. Human rights abusers continue to serve on, and be elected to, the Council." She mentioned the election of the Democratic Republic of Congo as a new member, and the Council's failure to conduct a single session on massive abuses committed by Venezuela and Iran, two Council members.

Haley added, "The world's most inhumane regimes continue to escape scrutiny and the Council continues the politicizing and scapegoating of countries with positive human rights records in an attempt to distract from the abusers in their ranks. For too long the Human Rights Council has been a protector of human rights abusers and a cesspool of political bias." The US decision to leave the UNHRC was also prompted by talks at the Council on condemning the Trump administration for immigration policies, particularly regarding the separation of illegal parents from their children.

The UNHRC was established in 2006 to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights, which ran from 1947 to 2006. The Commission was dismantled because of overt politicizing and the membership of many countries that have been among the greatest abusers of human rights on earth, such as Cuba, China, Russia, Libya, Sudan, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Zimbabwe. The Council has done no better. The same abusers were elected to the new body

and the Council's performance has been as ludicrous as that of the Commission. Its handling of Israel has been especially biased and outrageous.

The UNHRC has one item, Agenda Item 7, dedicated solely to Israel and another for the entire rest of the world. More than 50% of all resolutions this body adopts every year are against Israel. Most are one-sided and based on false information. The Council has appointed two committees to investigate alleged “war crimes” by Israel in Gaza warfare – but only Israel's alleged crimes, not those of Hamas, the extreme Islamic terror organization that controls Gaza. The Goldstone Report (April 2009) and the Davis Report (June 2015) were skewed, flawed, and baseless (and, indeed, Goldstone himself later [disavowed](#) his namesake report). The UNHRC commissioned them in order to question and limit Israel's right to self-defense. No other country in any other international conflict has ever been subjected to this type of biased and false inquiry.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

In October 2017, the US withdrew from UNESCO. The US is now an “observer state,” with no dues payable and making no contribution to the running of the organization. The State Department cited endemic anti-Israel bias and mounting dues – over \$500 million owed to UNESCO – as the main reasons for the action.

The US was annoyed by the Palestinians’ status in the organization. Palestine has not been granted full membership at the UN, but did receive full member status at UNESCO. This violates a congressional law that bans US funding of any international organization that recognizes Palestinian statehood in the absence of a peace agreement with Israel. In November 2011, this law forced the Obama administration to slash funding for UNESCO.

UNESCO is a highly politicized organization that has passed a series of preposterous resolutions against Israel. UNESCO does not criticize any other UN member state in any country-specific resolutions, but adopts around 10 resolutions per year criticizing Israel alone.

In support of the Palestinian diplomatic effort to erase any historical ties between Jews and the land of Israel, in October 2016, UNESCO adopted a ridiculous resolution that defined all the holy places in Jerusalem as Palestinian only, including the Western Wall of the Jewish biblical temple. (The voting of several Christian European countries in favor of this resolution is astonishing. If Jews don't have any right to the holy places in Jerusalem, Christians don't either, because the histories of Judaism and Christianity are interwoven.)

Similarly, In July 2017, UNESCO absurdly declared the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron as Palestinian only. Following the US withdrawal, Israel decided to take the same action.

The International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ICC, the Hague-based world court, was Trump's next target. The ICC was established in 2002 to prosecute individuals for international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The US and Israel did not ratify the Rome Treaty that established the Court out of concern about its potential for politicized and biased judgments.

In November 2017, an ICC prosecutor requested that an investigation be opened into war crimes allegedly committed against detainees by the US military in Afghanistan. In July 2018, in an unusual move for the Court, three ICC judges ordered the Court's registry "to establish, as soon as practicable, a system of public information and outreach activities for the benefit of the victims and affected communities in the situation in Palestine." The Palestinian Authority has also repeatedly demanded that the Court investigate Israel's alleged "war crimes" in the West Bank and Gaza.

These appeals to the ICC angered John Bolton. In September 2018, he called the Court "unaccountable" and "outright dangerous" to the US, Israel, and other allies. "For all intents and purposes, the ICC is already dead to us," he told the conservative Federalist Society in Washington. "If the Court comes after us, Israel, or other US allies, we will not sit quietly." Bolton threatened the ICC with sanctions as follows: "We will ban its judges and prosecutors from entering the United States. We will sanction their funds in the US financial system, and we will prosecute them in the US criminal system." The ICC's officials rebuffed Bolton's threats, but it remains to be seen if and how they will be affected by his warnings.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ)

Most recently, prospective judicial processes at the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) have triggered tough American responses. Created in 1945, the ICJ resolves disputes among UN member states and gives advisory opinions to UN organs and agencies. The processes in question resulted from crises in American relations with Iran and the Palestinians.

In 2016, Tehran brought a suit at the ICJ against the freezing of nearly \$2 billion worth of Iranian assets abroad, which US courts have ruled should go to American victims of terrorist attacks. This case has not yet been discussed. In July 2018, Iran asked the ICJ to issue a ruling against sanctions re-imposed by Trump following the canceling by the US of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Iran argued that the sanctions violated the Treaty of Amity the two countries signed in 1955 on economic relations and consular rights as well as the 1961 Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations, which protects diplomats and embassies.

The US argued in response that Iran became an enemy of the US after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. In 1979-80, Iran not only violated the Treaty of Amity but flouted all established norms of diplomatic relations. It captured the US embassy in Tehran and held 52 American diplomats hostage for 444 days. The US further added that in any event, the ICJ has no jurisdiction in the case since the dispute involves American national security.

The ICJ issued an interim ruling against the US and ordered the Trump administration to lift some of the sanctions. The 15-justice panel ruled that the sanctions may not hurt “exportation to the territory of Iran of goods required for humanitarian needs such as medicines, medical devices and foodstuffs and agricultural commodities as well as goods and services required for the safety of civil aviation.” (Rulings by the Court are legally binding, though it has no way of enforcing them.)

Shortly thereafter, in September 2018, the Palestinians filed a complaint at the ICJ against the transfer by the US of its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Palestinians argued that the transfer violates the 1961 Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations, which requires a country to locate its embassy in the host nation’s own territory. Israel, they insisted, controls Jerusalem militarily, and its ownership of the city is disputed.

This complaint is false on its face. The US’s intent was to transfer the embassy to West Jerusalem, a part of the city that has never been in dispute and is not controlled by military means. Moreover, Palestine is not a state and has not been recognized as a member state by the UN, so it has no standing at the IJC.

The US response to both complaints was swift and decisive. Bolton said, “This really has less to do with Iran and the Palestinians than with the continued consistent policy of the US to reject the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, which we think is politicized and ineffective.” The US canceled the Treaty of Amity with Iran and withdrew from the 1963 Optional Protocol of the Vienna Convention concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes. These actions will annul the Iranian and Palestinian complaints to the ICJ.

Conclusion

As a superpower, the US has never tolerated any interference by international organizations in its foreign policy. In a paraphrase of the saying “might is right,” former Secretary of State James Baker was quoted as saying that “even when the US is wrong, it is right.” Trump believes that due to his controversial standing at home and assertive policies abroad, countries – even weak ones – are daring to challenge American interests in international organizations. His response is to withdraw from these organizations and either reduce or entirely stop funding them.

The US has often cited anti-Israel bias and one-sided resolutions as among the main reasons for its criticism and punitive actions towards the UN and international organizations. Israel has been a victim of obsession, hostility, hypocrisy, and double standards in many of these bodies. It is not yet clear if the US actions will produce the necessary reforms. As long as the EU and other democratic states put up with the abuses, support them, and oppose Trump's corrective measures, the chances for long-term change are not promising.

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