



Steve Sheffey <stevenrichardsheffey@gmail.com>

The Trump Administration at the UN: A Record of Abdication and Defeat

1 message

National Security Action <press@nationalsecurityaction.org>
 Reply-To: National Security Action <press@nationalsecurityaction.org>
 To: stevenrichardsheffey@gmail.com

Thu, Sep 19, 2019 at 7:03 AM



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 19, 2019

Contact: Ned Price (ned@nationalsecurityaction.org)

The Trump Administration at the UN: A Record of Abdication and Defeat

Trump: "I don't believe there has been any administration in the history of this country that has done more in two years...."

Audience: [Laughter]

UN General Assembly, September 2018

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- President Trump and his administration have turned America's back on the UN, ceding global influence and leadership to our rivals. Trump has instead adopted an ineffective approach of vindictive and bullying diplomacy that has done little except erode American influence, weaken coalitions and alliances vital to our national security, and leave core American values without a champion. This is an administration that has, sometimes literally, abandoned its seat at the table as the world, sometimes literally, laughs at the United States under Trump.

The United States helped create the UN to champion our values and give the world a place to peacefully mediate its disputes. Despite the UN's imperfections, previous administrations have been able to leverage it to advance and defend our interests as well as promote our values. But this administration has hardly tried to stand up for either at the UN, wasting an important opportunity and hurting our standing along the way.

- **Former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley's tenure was characterized by blustery speeches but few results for the United States.** On core U.S. national security issues, including Middle East peace and Iran, we are more isolated than ever, as Haley focused on yelling at our closest allies and burnishing her political credentials at home instead of mobilizing other countries to help us tackle global problems. Too often under Haley, the United States was on the losing end of [lopsided vote counts](#), diplomatic defeats that undermine our standing and make it harder to lead. Few past U.S. ambassadors to the UN have left the job with so few accomplishments.
- **Current UN Ambassador Kelly Knight Craft is a longtime climate denier who has over \$63 million personally invested in coal, gas, and oil assets.** She earned the nod only after Trump unsuccessfully attempted to install a former Fox News personality to the post. The demotion of the UN Ambassadorship under Craft to a sub-cabinet level post makes plain the disdain the Trump administration has for the institution and its doubts regarding its--or Craft's--ability to score victories within the UN system. Craft, who had no major foreign policy experience before joining the administration, was [described](#) as displaying a "lack of depth on key foreign policy issues" during her confirmation.

On issue after issue at the UN, the Trump administration has racked up a record of absence from the table, failure, or, in too many cases, both.

Abandoning human rights: Trump has largely forsaken America's commitment to defending human rights within the UN system. From China to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Trump has backed down from holding countries accountable for human rights abuses and other bad behaviors--in some cases citing little more than their purchases of American arms. The administration loudly invokes human rights only when bashing its adversaries, while often remaining silent when Trump's peculiar set of friends, such as Russia, commit violations.

- **UN condemnations of the United States** have become more common. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has criticized the Trump administration for its [unilateral sanctions against Venezuela](#), [arbitrary separation of families](#), and [use of hate speech](#). In an [interview with the Guardian](#), former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini said: "The Trump administration seems to have separated itself from previous administrations in its upholding of human rights globally."
- **American withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council** abandoned an opportunity to defend human rights, advance American interests, and reform the way the UN responds to egregious human rights violations. Without the United States at the table, our adversaries and rivals, including China, have taken our place on the Council, heralding an open season for looking the other way in the face of abuse.
- **Targeting the International Criminal Court:** Former National Security Adviser John Bolton used his first public speech in office to somehow conclude that [the ICC is a threat](#) to the United States and even threaten sanctions against its judges and prosecutors. Continuing his feud from the Bush administration, Bolton issued an unprecedented visa ban against Fatou Bensouda, the chief ICC prosecutor, a petty and small tactic.
- **The United States did not nominate a candidate for the U.N. Committee on Racial Discrimination** in 2019. A State Department official [reported](#) that the White House intervened to block the renomination of the incumbent apparently because she was an Obama-era nominee.
- **The U.S. refusal to support the Global Compact for Migration** isolated us from not just from our traditional partners, but from nearly the entire planet. After the international community created [an historic agreement](#) recognizing every nation's rights and obligations vis-a-vis the challenge of migration, the administration joined only the increasingly authoritarian government of Hungary in opposing the agreement, letting Trump's xenophobia leave us further alienated from the world.
- **Losing the top position at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2018**, a post that, with only one exception, had always been held by Americans, was a [stunning break](#) from a long tradition of American leadership. The cause was simple; the Trump administration nominated a notorious [Islamophobe](#) who stood in lockstep with its anti-immigrant agenda.
- **Trump's war on women has gone global**, following the reinstatement of the "global gag rule," a partisan policy that denies all U.S. funding to international aid groups and agencies that so much as advise on the issue of abortion. The gag rule falls hardest on some of the most vulnerable women in the world, [including survivors of rape](#) in war zones and victims of [child marriage and female genital mutilation](#).
- The administration **threatened to block a UN Security Council Resolution to combat sexual violence and rape** in armed conflict. [Press reports](#) indicated that the administration worked to cut language from the resolution that would have ensured that the multinational body was working to provide medical care to survivors of sexual violence.
- U.S. diplomats **blew up negotiations on a declaration for a UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage** over minor [references to "sexual and reproductive health,"](#) which extreme voices in the administration interpreted broadly to mean abortion. This was just the latest UN negotiation in which the administration was willing to sacrifice important global health initiatives in order to appease its base voters at home.

A bully's approach to foreign aid: The Trump administration's approach to its UN funding commitments has mirrored its larger transactional, cruel, and ineffective foreign policy. Instead of seeing foreign aid as vital leverage to advance U.S. interests, the administration proposes cuts that would undermine our influence at the UN and around the world.

- **Threatening draconian retaliatory cuts** to America's UN dues payments has become standard procedure. In 2018, the administration attempted to withhold \$27 million in payments, the estimated amount that the UN would allocate for funding of the Office of the High Commissioner and the UN Human Rights Council, both political targets of President Trump. The administration is [on track to run up \\$1 billion in arrears](#) for our contribution to UN peacekeeping troops deployed in dangerous regions that might otherwise require the deployment of U.S. personnel
- **Cruel and counterproductive cuts to foreign aid** have hit the UN hard. The Trump administration authorized a move to cut \$32.5 million in funding for the agency's core operations, in addition to denying the UN Population Fund any U.S. funding for emergency humanitarian operations in places such as Venezuela and Syria.
- **Ending all U.S. funding for the UN agency for Palestinian Refugees**, intended to exert pressure in the peace process, has instead worsened an already bad situation. All aid to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza has stopped. The United States had previously been the largest donor to UNRWA. Now, however, the Trump administration will only punish innocent Palestinians and undermine Israel's security.

Ignoring climate change: The administration's climate denialism has set back the UN's efforts to address an existential collective threat and further strained our global alliances.

- **Trump announced an intent to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement**, [undermining](#) the effectiveness of the agreement by giving cover to other countries to abandon their commitments and by increasing the attractiveness of fossil fuel investments. After Syria joined the Paris climate agreement in 2017, the United States became the sole country to declare itself outside of the agreement. When Trump stands before the UN General Assembly, he will be alone in his refusal to face the facts on climate change, endangering all Americans and the planet as a whole.

Undermining efforts to constrain North Korea: Despite Trump's claim after his first meeting with Kim Jong-un, Pyongyang has continued its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, even testing short range missiles. Trump's tendency to excuse the threat posed by North Korea--going so far as to [say](#) that he is unconcerned by the regime's ballistic missile tests--has alleviated the pressure the United Nations has brought to bear against North Korea. North Korea is no longer the outlier; Trump now holds that role.

- **The Security Council has layered ten rounds of sanctions on North Korea**, and the UN Panel of Experts [assessed](#) this March that North Korea's programs remain intact, and that the country continues to defy UN resolutions. Then-Acting Secretary of Defense Shanahan [confirmed](#) that North Korea launched short-range ballistic missiles in violation of UN resolutions. (Trump contradicted him, his national security advisor, and foreign officials by [claiming](#), incorrectly, that the resolutions did not ban such launches).

Breaking the Security Council consensus on Iran: The administration's reckless decision to exit the Iran nuclear deal split us from the UN Security Council, causing us to lose support from even our closest partners and moving us repeatedly to the brink of war.

- **Four years ago, the UN Security Council unanimously endorsed the Iran deal.** All members of the Council, both our allies and adversaries, recognized the deal as a major diplomatic accomplishment that would prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.
- **The administration has unable to use the UN to respond to Iran.** Beginning in 2006, the UN Security Council acted in response to Iran's covert nuclear weapons program, imposing sanctions that eventually got Iran to the negotiating team. But in the wake of tensions created by the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, Secretary of State Pompeo [has tried but failed](#) to convince members of the Council to increase pressure on Iran, giving Iran a "win" and leaving the United States more isolated than ever.

Missing opportunities to tackle big problems: Because of the administration's disarray and lack of strategy, the United States has failed to use the UN General Assembly to rally world leaders to respond to serious threats.

- **President Obama and his team used the UN General Assembly to tackle the world's most intractable problems.** He personally hosted major UN meetings on countering proliferation of [weapons of mass destruction](#) (2009), stopping the flow of [foreign terrorist fighters](#) (2014), bolstering [UN peacekeeping](#) (2015), and responding to the world's worst [refugee/migration crisis](#) since World War II (2016).
- **The administration is unable to build coalitions at the UN.** With the firing of Trump's fourth national security advisor, continued vacancies in senior foreign policy positions, and a new and inexperienced UN ambassador, the administration lacks the capacity to bring world leaders together to solve big problems. Instead of doing the hard work of diplomacy, this administration's only use for the UN General Assembly is as a stage for the president's made-for-TV bluster.

America's ability to influence global events is weaker than ever. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who came into office eager to work with the United States, [remarked](#) last year: "I think that the soft power of the United States is being reduced at the present moment... the attraction of American society that was a dominant factor in international relations just a few decades ago is today less clear."

###



This email was sent to stevenrichardsheffey@gmail.com

why did I get this? [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

National Security Action · c/o [1090 Vermont Ave., NW, Ste. 750](#) · [Washington, DC 20005](#) · [USA](#)