[Europe seeks to pin down President Trump – and America](http://carolineglick.com/europe-seeks-to-pin-down-president-trump-and-america/)

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## National Security Advisor John Bolton said last Wednesday that while discussion of President Donald Trump’s decision to leave the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has centered on the administration’s revulsion with its institutional anti-Israel bias, the move was really about restoring American control over U.S. foreign policy.

[In his words:](http://video.foxnews.com/v/5799696140001/#sp=show-clips)“We did talk about Israel [in setting out our reasons for leaving the UNHRC] because it’s singled out unfairly. But in many respects, Israel is, as the saying goes, ‘the canary in the mine shaft’ for the United States. Countries that attack Israel do so because they think it’s easier, but much of their criticism is really aimed at us.”

Bolton added, “Getting off of the council is an assertion of America’s determination to stick to its Constitution and not to recognize that there’s some ‘higher authority’ at the UN … to judge our performance or to give us advice on how to implement the constitution … That’s what this is about: self-government.”

The Trump administration’s determination to restore American power and independence in the international arena places it on a collision course with the European Union, whose perspective on the proper goal of international affairs is diametrically opposed to the administration’s.

American power abroad rests on military and economic power. Since the end of the Second World War, Europe has been militarily dependent on the U.S.

Rather than build their own military power to secure their interests and enable them to play a leading role in world affairs, European leaders have based their international position on their power as a voting bloc in international and transnational institutions, and on their collective financial power.

Since the mid-1970s, Europe has used its power in international institutions and its financial power to advance one consistent policy position: hostility towards Israel.

The UNHRC is a perfect vehicle for advancing Europe’s foreign policy. Its name gives it a do-gooder [halo effect](https://www.ngo-monitor.org/key-issues/ngos-101-the-basics-on-ngos-funding-and-delegitimization/the-halo-effect/). The notion that a “human rights council” could be anything but a force for good in the world is hard to accept.

But a year after it was established, the council focused its efforts not on protecting human rights, but on attacking the human rights of Jews in Israel. In 2007, the UNHRC [passed Permanent Agenda Item 7](https://www.haaretz.com/1.4944826). Item 7 created a separate standard for judging the Jewish state. Under Item 7, Israel is automatically subjected to condemnation for every action it takes to defend itself. Under Item 7, the council automatically embraces every Palestinian libel against Israel.

To get a sense of how this agenda item has perverted the council, from 2006-2016, the council [passed](https://www.unwatch.org/un-israel-key-statistics/) 135 resolutions in total.

68 were condemnations of Israel. Syria was condemned 20 times, North Korea nine, and Iran six.

In her remarks Tuesday explaining America’s decision to leave the UNHRC, UN Ambassador Nikki Haley expressed frustration at the fact that Europe had refused to assist in the U.S.’s efforts to reform the UNHRC by, among other things, cancelling Agenda Item 7.

[In her words](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2018/06/19/mike_pompeo_and_nikki_haley_announce_us_withdrawal_from_un_human_rights_council_citing_anti-israel_bias.html):

There are several countries on the Human Rights Council who do share our values. Many of them strongly urged us to remain engaged in the council. They are embarrassed by the obsessive mistreatment of Israel. … Ultimately, many of these likeminded countries were unwilling to seriously challenge the status quo. We gave them opportunity after opportunity and many months of consultations, and yet they would not take a stand unless it was behind closed doors. Some even admittedly were fine with the blatant flaws of the council as long as they could pursue their own narrow agenda within the current structure.

Haley attributed their refusal to help to cowardice – or what she called “moral compromise.”

Haley’s explanation for Europe’s refusal to work with the U.S. on what she thought was a common goal of ending the UNHRC’s anti-Semitism was reasonable, but wrong. And her mistake was understandable.

The EU and its member nations go to great lengths to hide the fact that they are on the opposite side of the fence from the U.S. in regards to Israel specifically and the issue of nationalism and U.S. independence more broadly.

The day before Haley and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the U.S. withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council, British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson addressed the body. His speech was a case study in how this double game works.

Johnson began his address by offering fulsome praise for the UNHRC. [Johnson said](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-by-the-foreign-secretary-to-the-un-human-rights-council), “Britain considers this Council to be part of the rules-based international system in which we believe and that we strive to protect.:

He then proceeded to pay lip service to America’s opposition to the council’s institutional bias against Israel.

“I will say that we share the [U.S.] view that a dedicated agenda item focused solely on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is disproportionate and damaging to the cause of peace and unless things change, we shall move next year to vote against all resolutions introduced under Item 7.”

Then he went back to roundly praising the council.

“But I stress that that does not mean that we in the UK are blind to the value of this Council – including the work it could do on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under the right agenda item – and we support its emphasis on freedom of religion and expression and the empowerment of women.”

Johnson devoted the rest of his remarks to an impassioned call for universal K-12 education for girls worldwide as a means to “solve the majority of the world’s most serious problems.”

Three things stand out in Johnson’s speech.

First, while he said that Britain supports a “rules-based international system,” he effectively endorsed the destruction of all rules in the international system.

Permanent Agenda Item 7 created a set of rules that it applies only to Israel. Under the rules it set up, Israel is always guilty of abusing human rights.

By setting up a system of rules it applies only to the Jewish state, Item 7 abolished the entire notion of international law. After all, if there is one law for Jews, and another law for everyone else, then there is no rule of law at all.

If his statement about Britain’s commitment to the “rules-based international system,” were serious, then Britain would have withdrawn from the council with the U.S. By remaining in, and praising, the UNHRC, Johnson made clear that Britain couldn’t care less about a “rules-based international system.”

The second thing that stands out in his speech is the disingenuousness of his opposition to Item 7. Johnson said that the UK opposes Item 7 because it is “disproportionate and damaging to the cause of peace.”

Let us leave aside the fact that Item 7 scuppers the entire system of international law and judge Johnson’s credibility within the limited scope of his statement. Johnson said that due to the “disproportionate” character of anti-Israel resolutions, Britain will stop voting in favor of those drafted in the framework of Item 7 in six months.

Why the long wait?

If Britain really views Item 7 as damaging to the cause of peace, then in the interest of peace Britain must oppose all Item 7 resolutions effective yesterday. The six-month waiting period tells us that Britain is not serious about peace, and that it is not at all upset with the fact that Item 7 is “disproportionate” (whatever that means).

The final notable aspect of Johnson’s speech was his ode to universal female education. Johnson’s impassioned cri de coeur speech was remarkable for its irrelevance. True, educating girls would have a positive impact on many of the world’s major problems. But the UNHRC has about as much power to bring about K-12 education for the girls of Nigeria and Yemen as Micronesia has of dictating world oil prices.

Apparently, in presenting his pie-in-the-sky plan, Johnson was advocating on behalf of what Haley referred to as a “narrow agenda,” which he apparently believes is so important it justifies remaining in an institutionally anti-Semitic body.

In short, Johnson pretended to side with the U.S in its opposition to the UNHRC’s antisemitism while he substantively endorsed that antisemitism.

Finally, Johnson pretended that Britain cares about human rights with his plea for universal K-12 education for girls. But actually, he was just bloviating.

Three days before he made his manipulative speech, Israel’s Channel 10 [reported](https://www.timesofisrael.com/british-fm-said-to-seek-meeting-with-kushner-to-voice-red-lines-on-peace-plan/) that Johnson is trying to organize a meeting of European and Arab foreign ministers with Trump’s senior advisor Jared Kushner, who is leading the U.S. team forming a new U.S. plan for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for July. It is supposed to serve as an opportunity for the Europeans and the Arabs to present their “red lines” for peace.

In light of Europe’s institutional hostility towards Israel, and given the collective Arab rejection of Israel’s right to exist, it is obvious that Johnson doesn’t want this meeting because he is keen to advance the cause of peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

He is working to set up a meeting where the foreign ministers of Britain, France, Germany, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan gang up on the U.S. and tell the President’s son-in-law that they will not accept any plan that doesn’t reflect their animus towards Israel.

Kushner, for his part, reportedly responded to Johnson’s attempt to railroad the White House into giving the EU veto power over U.S. Middle East policy by saying that while he is open to outside input in the U.S. peace plan, the President will decide its contents.

Kushner’s response hit the proper note. But it bears pointing out that Johnson’s speech at the UNHRC, like his attempt to build a coalition to ensnare the White House in a Middle East policy predicated on hostility towards Israel, show that Europe’s refusal to back the U.S.’s positions at the UNHRC was not a simple disagreement about the best way to achieve common ends.

Rather, Johnson’s efforts reveal a much more basic and unbridgeable conflict between the U.S. and Europe about the proper ends of foreign policy, and the sovereign right of the U.S. to advance its goals in the international arena.