Get the U.S. Out of Unesco for Good

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President Trump’s Feb. 4 executive order mandated a review of U.S. membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or Unesco. A decision is due by May 5. The proceedings of Unesco’s executive board meeting in Paris this month demonstrate that the organization is beyond reform.

This year, three of the 11 ‘program issues’ on the agenda related to criticism of Israel. Two of the three ‘general matters’ items revolved around ‘occupied Palestine’ and ‘the occupied Arab territories.’ Ukraine and Syria merited only one item each at the entire two-week conference.

A meeting document on ‘the current situation in the Gaza Strip/Palestine’ decried damage to educational institutions in Gaza and the killing of journalists. It failed to mention either that Hamas uses schools as terrorist bases or that many journalists in Gaza are affiliated with Hamas. The 17-page report, which asks for tens of millions of dollars from member states in ‘extrabudgetary support’ for Gaza, doesn’t mention Hamas at all.

If this is how the organization conducts itself as U.S. membership hangs in the balance, hopes of genuine reform are chimerical.

This has played out before. In 1984 Ronald Reagan withdrew the U.S. from Unesco over the organization’s politicization. George W. Bush rejoined in 2003, beguiled by claims of reform. But in the years that followed, Unesco admitted the ‘State of Palestine’ as a full member, passed resolutions denying the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount, and designated Jewish holy places as ‘Palestinian World Heritage sites.’ This led Mr. Trump to pull the U.S. out of Unesco in 2018, only for President Biden to reverse the move five years later. Unesco’s erasure of Jewish history still stands.

Mr. Trump was right the first time—and the organization hasn’t improved since. In addition to opposing Israel, Unesco has supported a variety of left-wing causes, including inserting transgender ideology into public-school curricula and strengthening ‘research and measures to address disinformation seeking to delay and derail climate action.’ One item at this year’s executive board meeting focused on Unesco’s ‘Transforming MENtalities’ program, which is dedicated to ‘combatting harmful norms of masculinity’ by publishing global reports such as ‘The Gender Equality Quest in Video Games.’

Another meeting item highlighted Unesco’s ‘Global Alliance Against Racism and Discriminations,’ which advocates ‘intersectionality and the adoption of a transversal approach to address inequalities across sectors of government.’ The initiative is guided by Unesco’s ‘Anti-Racism Toolkit,’ which demands that governments and organizations undergo an ‘audit of racial equality,’ a six-step process that starts with ‘an explicit recognition of structural racism’ and ends with a commitment to ‘systemic and cultural changes.’ Many such policies are now illegal in the U.S.

The U.S. should quit Unesco as quickly as possible—and encourage its allies to do the same.