



4-1-1960

## The United Nations as a Policy Instrument

Robert E. Riggs

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>

---

### Recommended Citation

Riggs, Robert E. (1960) "The United Nations as a Policy Instrument," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 2 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol2/iss2/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

# *The United Nations as a Policy Instrument*

ROBERT E. RIGGS

In the eyes of its members the United Nations is judged by its capacity to increase, or restrict, the ultimate reach of national policy. It can remain viable as long as members believe that the usefulness of the instrument outweighs the limitations upon their freedom of action. In a general sense, the organization was established precisely for the purpose of limiting national freedom of action—the freedom to engage in aggressive war. Framers of the Charter recognized that they were creating an external source of influence upon their national policies. But in the minds of most statesmen, certainly American statesmen, the organization was conceived as a means of restricting other countries—the “aggressive” ones. If the United Nations were not to be an instrument for achieving important national goals, what good was it? Viewed in this light, the United Nations must be evaluated primarily as an instrument of national policy. This essay will concentrate upon its characteristics as an instrument of United States policy.

Idealists may protest that the function of the United Nations in world politics is construed too narrowly if it is regarded as an instrument of national policy. From a practical standpoint, however, there is no better way to evaluate its success or failure. National governments are the agencies which speak for people in international politics. Each must be concerned with the interests of its own people, as it interprets them. To regard the goals of United States foreign policy as wholly compatible with the goals of all other right-minded peace-loving states would be comforting. But this view is true only, if indeed it is ever true, with respect to vague and generalized long-run objectives. Nearly all may agree on the desirability of “peace,” “justice,” economic “well-being,” and respect for “individual worth and dignity.” Here all stand on common ground—East

---

Dr. Riggs is assistant professor of political science at Brigham Young University.

meets West and even the great Goliaths of the Cold War have no quarrel. But in the short-run encounters in which policy is actually made and executed, a general coincidence of national policy goals is much harder to find. Consequently, United Nations contributions to peace, justice, and well-being cannot readily be evaluated in terms having general application. The United Nations contributes to these things only as they are made concrete by interpretation—particularly by governments which are the actors in international politics. If governments can agree on interpretations, so much the better. If they cannot, evaluations will differ. In any event, the United Nations is valuable to the United States only as it furthers identifiable policy objectives, whether other countries share those objectives or not. In this sense and with this justification, the United Nations will be discussed as an instrument of national policy.

#### THE USES OF THE U. N. INSTRUMENT

In the lexicon of policy instruments the UN is usually regarded as an extension of diplomacy. Dag Hammarskjold has called it "an instrument for negotiation among, and to some extent for, Governments . . . an instrument added to the time-honored means of diplomacy for concerting action by Governments in support of the goals of the Charter."<sup>1</sup> As an extension of diplomacy, the United Nations offers manifest advantages in matters in which nations from all parts of the world have a legitimate interest. With the exception of Switzerland, mainland China, the three partitioned states of Germany, Viet-nam, and Korea, all countries of importance in world affairs are included in UN membership. The new states emerging from the metamorphosis of old colonial empires are now taking their seats within the organization almost concurrently with the attainment of independence. Thus consultations and negotiations on a wide variety of topics can be multilateralized—almost universalized—on the shortest notice.<sup>2</sup> The advantages to a country of having

<sup>1</sup>"The Indispensable Role of the United Nations," *United Nations Review*, Vol. 4 (Oct., 1957), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>The UN political process has been described in greater detail elsewhere, but a brief recapitulation seems appropriate here. For fuller discussion see Robert E. Riggs, *Politics in the United Nations* (Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1958), pp. 11-44 and *passim*; James N. Hyde, "United States Participation in the United Nations," *International Organization*, Vol. 10 (Feb., 1956), pp. 22-34; Benjamin H. Brown and Joseph E. Johnson, "The U.S. and the UN,"

a listening post tuned simultaneously to reports and views from all parts of the world are not to be minimized. The physical proximity of many of the permanent UN missions facilitates frequent contact. The UN building itself is a magnet which daily draws to neutral ground representatives from most countries, whether or not a major organ is in session. Its commodious offices, lounges, meeting halls, and corridors provide ideal congregating spots for groups of delegates. The procedures and habits of multilateral interchange developed at the UN are no small contribution to the clarification of issues and outlining of settlements—if settlements are indeed feasible. The mediatory and expert services of the Secretariat are another peculiar UN contribution to successful negotiation.

On the other hand, if a problem involves only two or a few powers, the UN may be less conducive to an amicable settlement than another locale. Certainly, there is little reason to hope that a disagreement which the Soviet Union and the United States cannot solve at Washington or Moscow can be more easily settled by moving the site of negotiations to New York. If the issue has engendered ill-will, questioning of good faith, or clash of vital interests, carrying it to an open forum may invite all of the disadvantages of goldfish bowl diplomacy. Matters of regional concern may be much more expeditiously handled in a regional organization than in the General Assembly where the majority of delegations present have only a peripheral—and a few perhaps a sinister—interest in the problem. NATO family squabbles like the three-cornered Cyprus imbroglio may find their way to the UN but not because of any manifest advantages for reasoned negotiation. Cyprus was thrown into the UN arena because negotiation had failed and Greece hoped to try pressure. Indirectly the prospect of perennial debates in the Assembly, so injurious to the morale and prestige of NATO, spurred the parties to achieve the ultimate diplomatic settlement—outside the UN. But only in a very left-handed fashion can the UN be given credit for facilitating negotiations.

As the Cyprus affair aptly illustrates the United Nations

---

Foreign Policy Association Headline Series, No. 107 (Sept.-Oct., 1954), esp. pp. 41-43.

can be used for other purposes than diplomatic negotiation. States come there as often to broadcast propaganda to foreign and domestic audiences as to engage in serious negotiation. This is especially true of formal meetings where orators, some with speeches polished to the last affected pause and carefully phrased innuendo, are apparently convinced of the proposition that all the world's a stage. The UN has other uses as well. By automatically multilaterizing every issue raised there, it provides opportunities for the influential to exert their influence upon matters which otherwise would not directly concern them. Multilateralization may also serve some states by legitimizing policies which other states would find unacceptable if carried on outside the UN framework. If the elements of world opinion reached through the UN have any real force, the organization skillfully used can become a means of subtle coercion. In the case of Korea coercion assumed the less subtle form of military force. The successful if limited use of the organization as an operating agency for economic and social programs is another illustration of UN extra-diplomatic activities.

In wielding this many-faceted tool of foreign policy, the United States works primarily through its permanent mission to the United Nations, an expertly staffed body of well over a hundred officials and administrative personnel. Headed by a Permanent Representative to the United Nations as Chief of Mission, it is for all practical purposes, except administrative control, an embassy to the United Nations.<sup>3</sup> Well supplied with subject matter and geographic area specialists for year-round operations, the mission is bolstered by additional teams of experts sent down from Washington for special UN meetings, including the annual General Assembly sessions and the semi-annual meetings of the Economic and Social Council. In the autumn five to ten amateur diplomats are also attached to the

---

<sup>3</sup>Since 1953, when Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., became Permanent Representative, the precise administrative status of the mission has been somewhat anomalous. According to the organization chart, the mission head should be responsible to the Assistant Secretary of State in charge of the International Organization Bureau in the Department of State. However, because of Mr. Lodge's special personal and political relationship with President Eisenhower, he was given quasi-cabinet status along with the UN job. Thus, while being nominally and for administrative purposes responsible to the bureau head, he has had a direct pipeline to the President as well.

mission as official delegates and alternates to the General Assembly.

From their Park Avenue citadel the delegates and advisers sally forth to represent the interests of their country. If the object is to score propaganda points off a communist competitor, argument alone may be enough. Usually, however, votes must be marshalled in sufficient numbers to secure formal adoption of a resolution expressing the approved point of view or authorizing the desired action. In this task United States representatives begin with important advantages: they speak for a country with great military power, economic resources, and a recognized position of leadership among non-communist countries. But these are only the foundations of influence. Technique is also crucial, and the strategy of winning UN majorities begins well before the mission personnel go out to garner votes. In the planning of U.S. positions, every reasonable effort is made to consider the views and interests of other countries, including, in many instances, advance consultation with representatives of the countries most vitally concerned. If this is done well, the vote-catching will be easy; our position will be their position. Advance preparation can never be ideally thorough, however, and the process of consultation and adjustment may continue up to the final vote. Always the preferred approach is to find an area of common interest wide enough to take in a majority without pressure. Crucial votes are secured in the heat of battle by adding a co-sponsor here, a new paragraph there, or a minor deletion or change of phraseology. Occasionally a more devious approach may be used: that of persuading a friendly delegation to present the American resolution so that the origin of the program is obfuscated and some delegations relieved of the embarrassment of supporting a United States proposal on a sensitive topic. If other means fail, friendly persuasion may sometimes yield to pressure in order to win reluctant or indifferent delegates. Telegrams to the home governments, persistent badgering in lounges and corridors, allusions to the possible repercussions in Congress, and perhaps a smattering of old-fashioned horse-trading may be involved. Great care must be taken to assure that only the right arms are twisted, and that these are not broken, for malice might well be the fruit of pres-

sure misguidedly, unskillfully, or too persistently applied.

#### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Each deliberative organ of the United Nations has its particular competence, procedures, traditions, and political configurations. Each must be used by the United States according to its peculiar limitations and potentialities. The General Assembly is the most inclusive in scope and membership and undoubtedly the most important. There is essentially no subject impinging on international relations which it cannot discuss if the members want to. The Charter limitation upon the right to intervene in matters "essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state"<sup>4</sup> has in practice been vitiated by the tendency of the Assembly to construe its own authority broadly. Although the Assembly is constitutionally prohibited from making a recommendation with regard to any dispute or situation being considered by the Security Council,<sup>5</sup> discussions of the same situation may take place concurrently in both bodies. The Assembly's role is enhanced by its electoral functions. The non-permanent members of the Security Council and the Trusteeship Council, and all members of the Economic and Social Council, are elected by vote of the General Assembly. The Assembly shares with the Security Council the responsibility of admitting new members, selecting the Secretary-General, and appointing members of the International Court of Justice. Through its power of recommendation, control of the UN budget, and its right to receive and review annual reports from the other major organs, the Assembly exercises supervisory authority over the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, and the Secretariat. Leaving aside the question of legal obligation, the Secretariat invariably attempts to carry out Assembly recommendations while ECOSOC and the Trusteeship Council usually do. Individual members of the Assembly, although not legally bound by its recommendations, are less diligent in carrying them out; but most prefer to give at least the appearance of compliance whenever possible.

In the autumn the permanent missions to the United Nations can anticipate a substantial increase in the level of activity as

---

<sup>4</sup>*UN Charter*, Art. 2, sec. 7.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, Art. 12, sec. 1.

delegations from more than eighty member states converge on New York for the annual sessions of the Assembly. Ordinarily the sessions convene in mid-September and end in December, although the practice of postponing sessions until November during American presidential election years is becoming well established.<sup>6</sup> Once the session is formally terminated, the Assembly will not meet until the following autumn unless called into special session by a request of the Security Council or a majority of the members. The unwieldy method of request by a UN majority has never been used, but on five different occasions, 1947-1958, the Assembly has met at the request of the Security Council—four times to deal with problems in the explosive Middle East and once in response to Soviet suppression of the 1956 Hungarian revolt.<sup>7</sup> The Assembly has been resourceful in devising alternatives to the special session when faced with problems which require supervision or Assembly action during nine months of the year when it does not ordinarily meet. One method has been the establishment of subsidiary bodies with special supervisory or watch-dog functions.<sup>8</sup> Another expedient frequently used is to recess the regular session temporarily and authorize the Assembly President or the Secretary-General to reconvene the session whenever necessary. Under such an arrangement the seventh Assembly resumed its activities in the spring of 1953 and met again in August to act on the Korean Armistice Agreement. More recently, because of the Hungarian crisis, the eleventh session did not formally end until September, 1957, ten months from its opening date and just in time for the twelfth session to begin.

---

<sup>6</sup>This was done in 1952 and again in 1956.

<sup>7</sup>The first two special sessions, in 1947 and 1948, were "regular" special sessions called to discuss the fate of the British Palestine mandate. The last three have been "Special Emergency Sessions" convened by the Security Council under the terms of the Assembly's 1950 Uniting for Peace Resolution which makes the Assembly subject to call on 24 hours' notice on a "procedural" vote of the Security Council. The first and second Special Emergency Sessions were held concurrently in November, 1956, to deal with the Suez and Hungarian crises. The most recent met in August, 1958, to discuss U.S. military intervention in Lebanon and other problems of the Middle East.

<sup>8</sup>An example is the now-defunct United Nations Commission on Korea, which was performing an observational assignment in Korea at the time of the North Korean invasion. A more ambitious, but largely abortive, attempt, the Interim Committee of the Assembly, first established in 1947 as a general purpose committee of the full membership, remains officially in existence but



There is, of course, no guarantee that the Assembly when convened will act quickly. It can, as evidenced by the Suez crisis. In that instance the Special Emergency Session met on November 1 at the request of the Security Council. Deliberating almost continuously throughout the day and night, the Assembly adopted a cease-fire resolution in the small hours of the morning, November 2, less than 24 hours after the session had begun. Ordinarily, however, due deliberation rather than speed characterizes the Assembly. Regular agenda items are supposed to be submitted at least sixty days in advance of the session, although special items may be later proposed. These must be approved by the General Committee, a steering body composed of the principal officers of the Assembly and its committees, and subsequently submitted to the whole Assembly for acceptance. General Committee recommendations are usually approved without debate, except for the most controversial items. Although this stage is relatively expeditious, the committee stage which follows is usually not. Each of the seven principal committees to which items are allotted according to subject matter classification gives representation to all member countries.<sup>9</sup> All members do not speak on every issue, but each is entitled to speak if it wishes. On a particularly important or controversial question, committee discussion of an item may last several weeks. Nearly two months were consumed in the committee discussion of the partition of Palestine. The committee's report is ultimately submitted to the plenary meeting of the Assembly for final acceptance, amendment, or rejection. A simple majority governs all committee decisions but formal Assembly resolutions on "important" matters require a two-thirds majority of those voting yea or nay.<sup>10</sup>

---

still abortive, owing to a Soviet boycott. The Soviet Union regarded it, quite correctly, as an attempt to circumvent the veto-bound Security Council.

<sup>9</sup>The committees are commonly designated numerically, e.g., First Committee, Second Committee, etc. By subject matter classification they are (1) the Political and Security Committee; (2) the Economic and Financial Committee; (3) the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee; (4) the Trusteeship Committee; (5) the Administrative and Budgetary Committee; and (6) the Legal Committee. The seventh committee is known as the Special Political Committee (prior to 1956 the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee).

<sup>10</sup>Abstentions and absences are not counted in the computation of a two-thirds majority. Some types of "important" matters are specified in the Charter. The Assembly may designate others by a simple majority.

The process just described is an extension of diplomacy, but it is also a legislative process in which the criterion of success is a voting majority. Every issue is a separate battle and every draft resolution will have peculiarities which attract or repel individual votes. In general, however, the Assembly maintains rather stable political alignments which permit fairly accurate prediction of the fate of some types of issues. This predictability is a boon to State Department planners when preparing their legislative program and positions for a forthcoming General Assembly. Experts in the permanent mission and in the bureau can usually calculate in advance—give or take a few votes—what the final decision on most proposals will be. They cannot, of course, always predict what types of vote-catching compromises the Russians or others will raise on controversial issues. This adds an element of uncertainty and surprise, which, if skillfully exploited, can sometimes lead to unexpected tactical defeats of the United States.

The most common and convenient method of analyzing the political complexion of the Assembly begins with the delineation of voting blocs, some of which have formal arrangements for periodic caucusing by bloc members. For voting purposes, the most significant bloc alignments are as follows:

<i>Latin American</i>	<i>Soviet bloc</i>
Argentina	U.S.S.R.
Bolivia	Ukraine
Brazil	Byelorussia
Chile	Czechoslovakia
Colombia	Poland
Costa Rica	Romania
Cuba	Bulgaria
Dominican Republic	Hungary
Ecuador	Albania
El Salvador	
Guatemala	<i>Non-bloc</i>
Haiti	Yugoslavia
Honduras	Israel
Mexico	China
Nicaragua	Finland
Panama	
Paraguay	
Peru	
Uruguay	
Venezuela	

*Western bloc*

Australia  
 Austria  
 Belgium  
 Canada  
 Denmark  
 France  
 Greece  
 Iceland  
 Ireland  
 Italy  
 Luxembourg  
 Netherlands  
 New Zealand  
 Norway  
 Portugal  
 Spain  
 Sweden  
 Turkey  
 Union of South Africa  
 United Kingdom  
 United States

*Afro-Asian*

Afghanistan  
 Burma  
 Cambodia  
 Ceylon  
 Ethiopia  
 Guinea  
 Ghana  
 India  
 Indonesia  
 Iran  
 Iraq\*  
 Japan  
 Jordan\*  
 Laos  
 Lebanon\*  
 Liberia  
 Libya\*  
 Malayan Federation  
 Morocco\*  
 Nepal  
 Pakistan  
 Philippines  
 Saudi Arabia\*  
 Sudan\*  
 Thailand  
 Tunisia\*  
 Turkey  
 United Arab Republic\*  
 Yemen\*

\*Also a member of the Arab League

Some catalogs of bloc alignments might list NATO, Western Europe, or the Commonwealth separately. Members of the Commonwealth, both old and new, meet regularly while the assembly is in session to discuss issues of mutual interest, but as a group they do not show much voting cohesiveness. Less regularly, representatives of Western European countries have collective consultations as do NATO members if pertinent issues arise. For voting purposes, however, the more recent additions to the Commonwealth belong with the Afro-Asian bloc; and the countries of Western Europe, NATO and the old Commonwealth have enough interests in common to be regarded as a single "Western" bloc. Turkey is somewhat of an anomaly being represented in both NATO and the formal caucus deli-

berations of the Afro-Asian bloc. For the present classification, Turkey is with both groups. China, Finland, Israel, and Yugoslavia, lacking sufficient affinity of interest and outlook with any of the established groupings, are treated here as members of no bloc.

Of the numerous agenda items which come to a final vote in any session of the Assembly, probably a majority will be adopted by unanimous consent, or something closely approximating unanimity. Most of these relate to administrative detail, confirmation of appointments, or other matters not affecting the vital interests of states. Others affect vital interests but do not give rise to marked conflicts of interest. Although a strong clash of interests may develop on issues in any subject matter classification, the most persistent and fundamental cleavages center around the Cold War, colonialism, and the problems of the world's underdeveloped majority.

On questions basically involving East-West conflict, the United States can almost always muster large majorities. This may require careful position preparation, earnest consultation, and hard work in the UN lobbies. But it can be done. Of the 21 votes in the "Western" bloc at least 18 will ordinarily be cast for the United States position. Typically, South Africa may be absent in protest against Assembly discussion of its racial policies, and one or two of the others may be absent when the ballot is taken or perhaps abstain for special reasons. The Latin-American group of 20 votes should be good for a conservative minimum of fifteen on an East-West security issue, an allowance being made for unpredictable absences or abstentions. Among the Afro-Asians the precise voting configuration will vary with the nature of the issue and, in the case of a few, with a change in domestic regimes. Another conservative estimate might count at least ten and possibly as many as twenty from this group. Of the four non-bloc countries, Israel will probably sustain the West, as will Nationalist China. Yugoslavia and Finland, characteristically, will abstain. On the basis of these conservative estimates, the vote in favor of the United States position would be 46—18 from the Western bloc, 15 from Latin-America, 10 from the Afro-Asian group, and two from non-bloc countries. The total of 46 is not an absolute two-thirds

majority (55 votes), but it is easily enough, in view of the potential opposition. Opposing votes will include all nine of the Soviet bloc, but not necessarily anyone else. On rare occasions a few Afro-Asian countries or Yugoslavia may vote with the Soviet bloc, but Latin-America, Western Europe, and the English-speaking Commonwealth are not likely to yield a single one. Usually the result will be even more lop-sided on a straight East-West security issue.<sup>11</sup> This alignment might be modified substantially, however, if the security issue is clouded by association with colonialism or if it also involves other elements not directly related to the Cold War.

Debate and voting on colonial issues reveal another fundamental cleavage in the Assembly, but United States interests are usually less vitally affected than with East-West security questions. The one American-administered trusteeship is a "strategic area" subject to review by the Security Council rather than the General Assembly. United States administration of its non-self-governing territories is above serious reproach, and there are no outstanding problems of suppressed self-determination in any American territories. Britain, France, South Africa, Belgium, and the Netherlands are the countries whose vital interests have been most deeply affected by colonial issues aired in the UN. For the sake of solidarity with its NATO allies, or in protest at meddlesome interference by the Assembly majority in matters of territorial administration best handled by the administering powers, the United States may sometimes speak and vote on the side of the colonial minority. Other battles will find the United States casting a silent and uneasy abstention. Occasionally its delegates will join the anti-colonial majority, spurred by conviction or the exigencies of UN politics. Not infrequently a moderate resolution may win the support of the United States and most of the colonial powers.

The structure of majorities on colonial questions in the Assembly is particularly fluid and complex. A few examples from the record of the twelfth Assembly may illustrate some of the variations. On a moderate approach to the problem of

---

<sup>11</sup>General Assembly Resolution 1143 (XII). See *Official Records of the General Assembly, 12th sess.*, Plenary Meetings, pp. 369-70. South Africa was boycotting the Assembly in its annual protest against alleged interference in her internal affairs.

South West Africa, the final vote was 50-10-20. Burma and nine communist states voted in opposition, twenty countries abstained (15 of the 20 were Afro-Asian votes), and all the other—including the United States and all of the colonial powers except South Africa—voted in the affirmative. On the Cyprus question in the same Assembly, the non-communist members of the Assembly were almost evenly split into three segments—22 in favor, 24 opposed, and 24 abstaining. The Soviet bloc favored the resolution, making the affirmative vote total 31. Latin-American states were almost evenly distributed among the three groups; Afro-Asians were about equally divided between affirmative and abstention, except for three in the negative group; and the Western bloc voted chiefly in the negative.<sup>12</sup> The West Irian issue, to exhibit a third arrangement, found the Afro-Asians and Communists almost solidly in favor of the resolution, abetted by five Latin-Americans and Greece; Western Europe and the Old Commonwealth—supported by nine Latin-American votes, China, and Israel—lined up almost solidly in opposition; and abstaining were 6 Latin-Americans, the United States and Turkey, Finland, Cambodia and Liberia. The vote was 41-29-11.<sup>13</sup>

The cleavage between developed and underdeveloped countries in the Assembly is not so often expressed in voting upon resolutions as it is in the accompanying debate. Marked differences of viewpoint often separate the United States as chief donor of financial resources from the recipient underdeveloped majority, but the tendency in recent years has been to draft compromise resolutions capable of winning unanimous or near-unanimous votes. The United States has made some concessions to pressures for bigger aid programs, while the majority have usually—if reluctantly—recognized that a large-scale UN economic development program without the support of the United States and other major capital exporting countries is tantamount to no program. If the underdeveloped nations chose to press their majority, they might be able to adopt very grandiose paper programs. Fortunately, they have not done so on most occasions.

---

<sup>12</sup>*UN Yearbook, 1957*, p. 76.

<sup>13</sup>*Official Records of the General Assembly, 12th sess., Plenary Meetings*, p. 547.

A number of UN observers have suggested that the new membership of the United Nations, enlarged by the admission of twenty-three states since 1955, has eroded United States influence in the Assembly. The point may be more clearly illustrated by listing the twenty-three new additions according to bloc membership:

<i>Afro-Asian bloc</i>	<i>Western bloc</i>	<i>Soviet bloc</i>	<i>Non-bloc</i>
Cambodia	Austria	Albania	Finland
Ceylon	Ireland	Bulgaria	
Ghana	Italy	Hungary	
Guinea	Portugal	Romania	
Japan	Spain		
Jordan			
Laos			
Libya			
Morocco			
Malayan Federation			
Nepal			
Sudan			
Tunisia			

Only five votes were added to the West, while four sure votes accrued to the Soviet bloc, and a net gain of twelve was registered by the Afro-Asian group.<sup>14</sup> Expressed in percentages of the total membership, the new Assembly shows a definite shift in favor of Afro-Asia and the Soviet bloc. The total voting strength of Western Europe, NATO, and the Old Commonwealth remains virtually constant—25.6 as compared with the former 26.7—and the small group of non-bloc states maintains the same relative strength. Latin-America and Afro-Asia, however, exchange positions. The twenty Latin-American votes, which were one-third of the total in the old Assembly, now account for less than 25%. The new members from Africa and Asia raise their bloc voting strength from the former 26.7% to more than a third in the new Assembly. Proportionately, the Soviet bloc has had the greatest accretion of power although the actual increase is less than three percentage points.

Despite this shift of the Assembly center of gravity toward

---

<sup>14</sup>One vote was lost to this bloc in 1958 when Syria and Egypt merged in the United Arab Republic.

the areas least susceptible to United States influence, the practical consequences for United States policy have not been severe. Members of the mission must contact more delegations and calculate the odds more carefully to obtain the required majorities. The necessity for compromise has increased somewhat. A few more abstentions are apparent, and occasionally the Soviet opposition acquires an additional vote or two. But the new configuration of the Assembly has thus far not prevented the United States from securing two-thirds majorities on vital issues. On colonial questions, the position of the anti-colonial factions has been strengthened; but most colonial questions on which the United States votes with the minority would have found the United States in the minority in the 60-vote Assembly. The addition of new members has added to the pressures but has not significantly affected the voting alignments on issues of economic assistance and development.

The following table of Assembly voting on certain perennial issues may graphically illustrate the impact of the new membership upon voting trends.<sup>15</sup>

	<i>Apartheid</i>	<i>West Irian</i>	<i>Disarmament</i>	<i>Korea</i>
1952	35-1-23		52-5-3	54-5-1
1953	38-11-11		54-0-5	55-0-5
1954	40-10-10	33-23-4	Unanimous	50-5-4
1955	41-6-8	Unanimous	53-5-0	44-0-11
1956	56-5-12	40-25-13	Unanimous	57-8-9
1957	59-6-14	41-29-11	56-9-15	54-9-16
1958	70-5-4	Not voted on	49-9-22	54-9-17

Examination of the Apartheid and West Irian questions, neither of which directly involve the prestige or vital interests of the United States, shows that the capacity of majority coalitions to adopt resolutions was not affected one way or the other. The affirmative vote tended to be larger in the years after 1955, and in the case of West Irian the number of abstentions increased markedly. However, both before and after the magic number "60" was discarded in December, 1955, the majorities were adequate to assure passage of resolutions concerning the

---

<sup>15</sup>The points at issue and the proposed resolutions were not precisely the same each year with each of the four questions, as the occasional unanimous agreement indicates. These four were selected, however, because they were perennials in which the issues did to a large extent remain homogeneous from year to year.



South African racial policies and inadequate to endorse by a two-thirds vote the position of Indonesia on West Irian. A check on disarmament and the Korean problem, two questions directly affecting the interests and prestige of the United States, finds American capacity to secure two-thirds majorities practically unimpaired. Although the number of affirmative votes did not show any significant increase, the opposition was augmented only by the addition of the four Soviet satellites.<sup>16</sup> These facts suggest that for practical purposes the erosion of American influence due to increased membership in the Assembly has been slight. The one notable difference is a greater number of abstentions, which may have the effect of limiting the moral force or the propaganda value of the resolutions.

#### THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The Security Council, originally intended to be the keystone of the UN arch, has a much more restricted use as an instrument of United States policy. Although the Charter grants the Security Council priority of action in the area of international peace and security, it has often yielded to action by the Assembly. So organized, by Charter prescription, "as to be able to function continuously,"<sup>17</sup> the Council in recent years has often passed weeks at a time without having a substantial matter to deal with. Each month a new President takes office as rotation by alphabetical order gives each of its five permanent members and six non-permanent members an opportunity to share the glory and sometimes the tactical advantage of presiding, if there is any discussion over which to preside.

The reasons for this malaise of the Security Council are not hard to find. In a phrase—a hackneyed one—the root of the problem is great power deadlock. Established so that substantive decisions require the assent of all five permanent members—plus any two others, agreement among the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China is a necessary prerequisite to action. The Security Council acquired veto-paralysis in its infancy, resulting in the atrophy of many of its intended functions. Its Military Staff Committee, supposed to advise the

---

<sup>16</sup>In 1956 the Hungarian representative was absent—hence the 8 opposing votes instead of 9.

<sup>17</sup>*UN Charter*, Art. 28.

Council on military matters, has for years been an institutional appendix. The armed forces, the vaunted "teeth" of the new organization, were never placed at the disposal of the Council by special agreements under Article 43 because of disagreements among the major powers. In June and July, 1950, the Security Council authorized military action in Korea. But this proved to be a set of false teeth, never really under the Council's control and impossible to use when the Soviet delegate returned in August. With divided counsels and lack of power to enforce its decisions, the Security Council has not always commanded the respect of governments. Despite the Charter commitment of all members "to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter,"<sup>18</sup> enforcement orders of the Council have been sometimes disregarded or implemented only in part.

These circumstances have narrowed the Security Council's usefulness to essentially two types of issues—those upon which the United States and the Soviet Union can agree (or at least not disagree) and those from which some propaganda value may be derived. The former category has included disputes and outbreaks of violence not directly relating to East-West conflict, such as the Kashmir dispute, violence in the Middle East, and the Indonesian struggle for independence from the Netherlands. With respect to the latter, the value of the Security Council to the United States is reduced by the capacity of the Soviet delegate to forestall any substantive resolution by his negative vote, so that the United States cannot then claim the official sanction of the Security Council for its position. This contrasts with the General Assembly where anti-Soviet propositions have often been passed over the Soviet negative vote. With the Council's membership restricted to eleven, its voice also carries much less conviction as the "verdict of world opinion." However, the prior claim of the Council to disputes and threats to the peace means that some actions can most appropriately be initiated there. It has the merit of availability at times when the General Assembly is not in session and the magnitude of the issue is not great enough to warrant calling a special Assembly session. The Security Council may also be use-

---

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, Art. 25.

ful when the object is to draw a lone Russian veto against nine or ten affirmative votes, thereby creating the appearance of Soviet intransigence.

The composition of the Security Council assures that the constitutional majority of seven can readily be obtained on virtually all issues affecting the vital security interests of the United States.<sup>19</sup> The mathematics are simple. Of the five permanent members, Britain, China, France, and the United States are sure pro-Western votes. Under the principle of geographical distribution adopted by the Assembly for election of non-permanent members, two Latin-American countries always hold seats, one is allotted to Western Europe and one is filled by a prominent Commonwealth country. These are usually safe pro-Western votes, unless India holds the Commonwealth chair. Of the remaining two Council seats, one is filled from the Middle East and the other from Eastern Europe or Afro-Asia. At worst, in recent years, the Eastern European or Asian member might be expected to abstain. At best, the member might be Turkey, Greece, or the Philippines, which could be expected to "vote right" on the crucial questions. From 1946 through 1949 Poland and the Ukraine voted with the Soviet Union on all issues, but since then no Soviet satellite has been elected to the Council. The strength of the U.S. political position on the Council may be indicated by listing the non-permanent membership for selected years.

1947	1950	1952	1955	1958	1959
Australia	Cuba	Brazil	Belgium	Canada	Argentina
Belgium	Ecuador	Chile	Brazil	Colombia	Canada
Brazil	Egypt	Greece	Iran	Iraq	Italy
Colombia	India	Netherlands	New Zealand	Japan	Japan
Poland	Norway	Pakistan	Peru	Panama	Pakistan
Syria	Yugoslavia	Turkey	Turkey	Sweden	Tunisia
<i>Latin-America</i>	<i>Western bloc</i>	<i>Afro-Asian bloc</i>	<i>Soviet bloc</i>	<i>Other</i>	
Costa Rica	Netherlands	Afghanistan	Soviet Union	China	
Chile	France	Sudan	Poland	Finland	
Venezuela	New Zealand	Pakistan	Bulgaria		
Mexico	Spain				
	United States				
	United Kingdom				

### THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

In comparison with the Assembly and the Security Council, the eighteen-member Economic and Social Council hardly

<sup>19</sup>Issues not so vital to the United States might find different alignments. On admission of some new members and other issues, the United States has abstained, while friends and allies have voted with the Soviet Union.

seems to merit the appellation of a major organ. It lacks the broad scope of action and the universal membership of the Assembly. Although the Big Five are unfailingly reelected by the Assembly when their three-year council terms expire, ECOSOC decisions also lack the authoritativeness that sometimes emanates from the Security Council when the veto is not operative. Its agenda does not ordinarily extend to those dramatic disputes and threats to the peace which give such intrinsic importance to the Security Council. Although peace may ultimately depend upon the solution to world economic and social problems, the discussions of the Economic and Social Council do not have the same urgency or popular appeal and consequently receive scantier coverage in the press and other mass media. Until 1958 the United States government did not have a full time officer for ECOSOC affairs attached to the permanent mission.

The Economic and Social Council is legally and politically subordinate to the Assembly and relies heavily upon the expertise of the Secretariat. Much of its work load springs directly from recommendations of the Assembly, and most of its important recommendations are referred to the Assembly for discussion and final action. The second and third committees of the Assembly serve as centers for detailed review of ECOSOC decisions. In making studies, reports, and recommendations, as well as providing opportunity for debate and discussion, ECOSOC contributes to the understanding of world economic and social problems. Yet, even here, much of the spadework is performed by the Secretariat and outside experts. Without unduly deprecating the role of the Council in instigating many valuable studies, clarifying issues through discussion and debate, and formulating useful recommendations, one can say fairly that the Secretariat lays much of the factual groundwork for discussion, and the General Assembly makes the final decisions.

ECOSOC is not without value to the United States as a window for observing how the other half lives and occasionally as a means of coming to grips with practical problems. With the shift of U.S.-Soviet rivalry in the direction of economic competition, it has achieved wider political significance. Neverthe-

less, in the catalog of instruments for implementation of United States foreign policy, the Economic and Social Council ranks far down the list. Despite Senator Sparkman's bland assertion to the fifth Assembly that the United States had always regarded ECOSOC as "the basic instrument through which the conditions of well-being essential to the maintenance of peace would be achieved throughout the world,"<sup>20</sup> the United States has consistently channeled outside the United Nations the lion's share of its efforts to promote the general welfare of other countries.

Many of the important issues discussed in ECOSOC pose real dilemmas for the United States. The multilateral approach to promotion of human rights, once so vigorously espoused by American representatives, has become almost a source of embarrassment. Discussions of economic development find the United States often on the defensive, forced constantly to reiterate reasons why substantially more American aid should not be distributed under UN auspices. Consideration of basic commodity marketing problems likewise has found the United States in an unenviable position because of unwillingness to accept the principle of inter-governmental controls and guarantees which many other governments think desirable. Related schemes like the establishment of a world food reserve—popular with so many members—have been unpalatable to the United States.

Voting majorities have been somewhat more difficult to obtain than in the Assembly or the Security Council because the issues are less directly concerned with international security—the field in which American influence is most pronounced.<sup>21</sup> The interests of the majority—especially the underdeveloped majority—may not converge so readily with American interests. This was notably true during the summer session of ECOSOC, 1957, when the United States found itself on the short end of a 15-3 vote in favor of a greatly expanded UN program of economic aid to underdeveloped countries.<sup>22</sup> Such a resounding defeat on a major issue in ECOSOC was extraordinary; it led to

---

<sup>20</sup>*Official Records of the General Assembly*, 5th sess., 2d Committee, p. 61.

<sup>21</sup>Only a simple majority is required for an ECOSOC decision.

<sup>22</sup>*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*, 24th sess., p. 203.

subsequent revision of American policy toward UN economic development programs. But it represented the potential cleavage of interests between the United States, Britain, and France as principal donor countries, and the vast majority of underdeveloped countries and their sympathizers. Over-emphasizing the difficult issues and spectacular defeats can easily create an erroneous impression. The United States has proved capable of effective leadership in ECOSOC. On the issue of economic development American delegates have shown sympathy for the plight of underdeveloped countries and have often been able to win their votes by force of reason, mild pressures, or the argument that aid programs without American support are unrealistic. The fact remains, however, that the United States must often work hard to win support for its positions. Majorities can be won but they are fashioned through compromise and interspersed with occasional defeat.

Some issues before the Council are amenable to a voting division along East-West lines, and here the United States—as in the Assembly and Security Council—is usually able to marshal a substantial majority. Forced labor, infringement of trade union rights, Soviet radio jamming, and the Czech imprisonment of William N. Oatis are among the questions which have lent themselves to such a division. The membership of the 1959 Council, given below, shows the strength of the anti-communist bloc.

<i>Bloc</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Membership</i>	
	1954	1959
Afro-Asia	26.7	34.1
Latin-America	33.3	24.4
Western	26.7	25.6
Soviet bloc	8.3	11.0
Non-bloc	5.0	4.9

If an issue between the United States and the Soviet Union is clearly drawn, with the political implications outweighing the economic or social, formal balloting would probably find 12 in support of the United States position, 3 opposed, and possibly 3 (Sudan, Afghanistan, Finland) abstaining. The Pro-Western vote would include all of the first two groups listed, plus Pakistan and China, both firmly tied to the Western orbit by economic aid and military alliances as well as more basic as-

pects of the national interest. Should economic and social factors overshadow the Cold War conflict, however, the voting pattern might be greatly altered.

The admission of new members to the United Nations has affected the political complexion of the Economic and Social Council very little. The membership has remained fixed at eighteen, despite growing clamor for increasing the number by Charter amendment. The bloc arrangement of the membership differs little from the pre-1955 pattern, as the table on the following page will show. Latin-American strength has remained constant, with four seats. The Western bloc strength has fluctuated slightly, but any change attributable to the admission of new members after 1955 is not significant. The Afro-Asian group, notwithstanding its enlarged membership in the Assembly, has not increased its representation on ECOSOC. The award of a third seat to the Soviet bloc for 1959 marks a return to a pattern followed in the first years of the organization.

As earlier noted, the role of ECOSOC in United States foreign policy has been altered somewhat by new trends in Russo-American rivalry. Debates have always been tinged with Cold War atmosphere—on some issues impregnated with it. In the past the result was not to make the body more important but to make its work more difficult and less productive. With so much of the Cold War now being shifted to the economic and social front, however, the activities of the Council have lately assumed a new importance for both the United States and the Soviet Union. The issues are much the same; only their significance has been changed. Final decisions are still made largely in the Assembly—and even these are not legally binding. But the United States is more concerned about the propaganda impact of ECOSOC activities. There is also concern lest ECOSOC programs and recommendations provide avoidable advantage to the Soviet Union in its efforts to penetrate the underdeveloped countries. Soviet awakening to the possibilities of UN economic programs stands out sharply in its policy reversal with respect to technical assistance. For years the Soviet Union boycotted UN technical assistance, refusing to contribute or support it in any way. In 1954 the attitude changed. Soviet techni-

## THE UNITED NATIONS

171

BLOC	1948	1951	1954	1957	1958	1959
Latin-American	Chile Peru Brazil Venezuela	Chile Peru Mexico Uruguay	Argentina Cuba Ecuador Venezuela	Argentina Dominican Republic Brazil Mexico	Costa Rica Chile Brazil Mexico	Costa Rica Chile Venezuela Mexico
Western bloc	Canada France Netherlands Denmark Australia New Zealand Turkey U.S. UK	Canada France Belgium Sweden U.S. UK	Australia France Belgium Norway Turkey U.S. UK	Canada France Netherlands Greece U.S. UK	Canada France Netherlands Greece U.S. UK	New Zealand France Netherlands Spain U.S. UK
Afro-Asia	Lebanon	India Iran Pakistan Philippines	Egypt India Pakistan	Egypt Indonesia Pakistan	Sudan Indonesia Pakistan	Sudan Afghanistan Pakistan
Soviet bloc	Soviet Union Byelorussia Poland	Soviet Union Czech Poland	Soviet Union Czech	Soviet Union Poland	Soviet Union Poland	Soviet Union Poland Bulgaria
Other	China	China	China Yugoslavia	China Finland Yugoslavia	China Finland Yugoslavia	China Finland



cians were made available and annual pledges of four million rubles were redeemed. The rubles could be used only to purchase goods and services in Russia; Russian technicians followed Russian equipment; and a new wedge had been found to increase Soviet influence in underdeveloped countries, in addition to reducing slightly the overall flexibility of the UN technical assistance program. While final action on the broad outline of technical assistance is an Assembly prerogative, no stage of the battle, including the formative ECOSOC stage, is to be neglected. As the stakes of both propaganda and programs grow, so does the importance of the Council to the United States. The appointment in 1958 of a full-time officer for ECOSOC affairs, attached to the permanent mission, is an indication of the growing significance of this forum for United States foreign policy.

#### THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

The Trusteeship Council is the fourth major deliberative organ of the United Nations. At first appraisal it appears more as a limitation upon American policy than an instrument of it. The trusteeship system was designed primarily as a restraint upon states administering trust territories. It is a means by which other states can exert influence upon the government of the territories and their transition toward self-government. As conditions of trusteeship, the administering authorities must render annual reports and reply to questionnaires, submit to searching and often hostile questioning in the Trusteeship Council, accept periodic visiting missions to inspect their trust territories, and permit dissatisfied elements within the territories to petition the Trusteeship Council for redress of grievances. From the United States viewpoint, the trusteeship system provides an opening for other countries to pry into American administration of the Pacific Islands. Although this opening may serve as a stimulus to maintain high standards of administration, it is doubtful that American officials regard the trusteeship system as particularly helpful in their relations with the trust territory.

However, if the Trusteeship Council system gives others license to pry into American-administered territory, it also opens a legitimate avenue for American influence upon the colonial

policies of other countries. Friendly allies with dependent territories may resist suggestions tendered bilaterally as unwarranted interference in domestic affairs. Membership on the Trusteeship Council markedly alters the relationship. American advice on the government of dependent areas not only becomes legitimate because of the trustee relationship, but it also becomes more acceptable as fellow administering authorities seek grounds for mutual support in anticipation of the scrutiny to which their non-administering colleagues on the Trusteeship Council and in the Assembly will subject them. Through the UN trusteeship system the United States thus has a means of making its opinions felt in dependent areas for the good of the peoples and the peace of the world, both oft-avowed concerns of American foreign policy.

Given the existence of trusteeship system, the Trusteeship Council itself has been quite helpful to the colonial powers. Because its membership is equally divided between administering and non-administering states, no resolution can be adopted without the concurring vote or abstention of at least one of the administering authorities. Although the American delegate may sometimes cross the aisle to break a tie vote, the administering powers have ordinarily shown marked cohesiveness as a voting bloc. As a result, the split personality of the Council usually brings compromise and moderate action. The influence of the East-West struggle has on the whole reinforced the tendency toward moderation. Though the Soviet Union, with its permanent seat on the Trusteeship Council, has been critical and often abusive, the very excesses of Soviet vilification have sometimes led non-administering members to vote with the administering powers or abstain in order to avoid identification with the Soviet position.<sup>23</sup> This contrasts with the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly, which has been a continual thorn in the flesh of administering powers with its overwhelming anti-colonial majority. Assuming the practical necessity of the trusteeship system with international supervision and accountability, the Trusteeship Council can be regarded as a

---

<sup>23</sup>See James N. Murray, Jr., *The United Nations Trusteeship System* (Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1957,), pp. 241-43.

moderating influence or buffer between the colonial powers and the extremist tendencies of the Assembly.

#### THE SECRETARIAT

As one considers the United Nations as an instrument of policy, he cannot overlook the Secretariat. As an administrative organization, the Secretariat is allotted the tasks of servicing the vast number of formal meetings of UN organs and subsidiary bodies and implementing many of their recommendations. Formally, the Secretariat is responsible to the deliberative organs and to the Charter itself, not to individual member governments. As members of the organization, states of course benefit from general services which the Secretariat may provide. And members of the Secretariat often find themselves in a position to render more individualized assistance to delegates. In addition to numerous valuable studies and reports made generally available, the Secretariat may provide special briefings to delegations on request. The links of trust and confidence which they forge with UN representatives give them access to information which is not readily available elsewhere. Experience and recognized ability of some Secretariat officials make them valuable counselors. Resolution drafting services are available, out of which may come judicious suggestions for substantive provisions. Members of the Secretariat, including the Secretary-General, are available as mediators or impartial third parties in confidential efforts to resolve conflicts or aid delegations in compromising their differences. The Secretariat may even take the initiative in recommending approaches to the solution of difficult problems.

The Secretary-General is an especially useful negotiating agent between governments which do not communicate easily and frankly with one another. His impartial status and reputation for neutrality and integrity may win for him the trust of parties to a dispute who do not trust each other. In attempting to secure the release of imprisoned airmen, the Secretary-General was sent to probe the intentions of Communist China and thereby set in motion a chain of events leading to the release of the flyers. Frequently the Secretary-General has served as a bridge between the United States and Arab neutralists. Some Arab governments that are suspicious of alleged Western im-

perialism may be frank and more tractable in dealing with the Secretary-General as an intermediary. Dag Hammarskjold's role in negotiating with Egypt for the deployment of UNEF and clearance of the Suez Canal was highly useful, if not indispensable, in furthering American policy objectives in the Middle East. In this instance the Secretariat served as an instrument for negotiation "among" and "for" governments with a high degree of success. The Secretariat may thus become a valuable adjunct of foreign policy when individual governments themselves cannot act effectively. The Secretary-General would certainly resent the implication that he was the "tool" of any one's foreign policy. He acts when he believes the objectives of the Charter will be promoted. Yet, in a broader sense, when his concept of Charter objectives coincides with the policy objectives of particular states he becomes an instrument of their policy. In this sense he has on many occasions served the United States well.

There are many important problems of international politics for which the United Nations offers no approach to a solution. For the United States the major demands of national security and prosperity are better met outside the organization. Yet each political organ of the United Nations offers its own special capabilities as an extension of diplomacy, a propaganda forum, a source of information, a center for international cooperation, a channel for influence or a means of coercion. Considered as one tool among many available to the United States for dealing with limited aspects of international conflict and cooperation, it modestly fulfills the intent of its founders in extending the ultimate reach of policy.