

A United Nations Assessment Project Study

February 14, 1983

AMERICANS AT THE U.N. : AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

INTRODUCTION

A painful but valid maxim of governance is that those who enforce policy end up shaping policy. And the United Nations is no different than anywhere else. There, policy is enforced by the personnel of the Secretariat and other bureaucracies. And as with other aspects of the U.N. world, the United States is not fairly represented. Americans at the U.N., in fact, may be becoming an endangered species.

Though the U.S. contributes one-quarter of the assessed U.N. budget (and, often more than that of the voluntary budgets), Americans comprise a mere one-sixth of U.N. Secretariat personnel. Moreover, the share is shrinking; among assessed agency professional posts, the American contingent has melted from 14.6 percent in 1972 to 12.6 percent today in the U.N. system. Even U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar admits that the number of U.S. citizens in senior and policymaking U.N. posts is well below the "desirable" range--and falling.¹

This means that the U.S. faces a double handicap at the U.N. Almost constantly outvoted in the General Assembly and in nearly every U.N. agency, the U.S. is also deprived of sufficient control of the administrative and policy posts to ameliorate the U.N.'s anti-U.S. and anti-Western pronouncements and resolutions. Examples abound of the deteriorating and unfair situation vis-a-vis Americans at the U.N.

* At the U.N. Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), a quasi-independent agency under the aegis of the Security

¹ A/37/378/Add. 1, page 7.

Council, for example, the number of high-level posts filled by U.S. nationals declined between 1973 and 1982.

	<u>Percentage of Total Professional Posts</u>		
	<u>1972</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1982</u>
Total U. S. UNIDO posts subject to geographic distribution	17.93	13.41	11.21
Total U.S. high-level posts (D-1 and above) ²	12.5	7.69	3.12

Several high officials at UNIDO have told a U.S. House of Representatives Investigating Committee that "a successful vendetta has been carried out against the U.S. to reduce its impact on this organization."³ Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations Gregory Newell is making a strong effort to resist this tide, but according to his Deputy, Mark Edelman, there is yet little reason for hope.

* In January 1982, the U.S. and British candidates failed to be reelected to the International Civil Service Commission, even though American Civil Service salaries are the standard by which U.N. system salaries are determined, and even though both nations have permanent Security Council membership and make huge contributions to the U.N. This is not only a loss in prestige, it may also be costly. The Commission can recommend higher salaries and increased benefits (as it did in its September 15, 1982 report)⁴ without the U.S. or Britain being able to object, and with little chance that a vote in the General Assembly would give the U.S. a chance to reverse a commission decision. The recommended higher salaries, of course, would be paid for, to a great extent, by U.S. taxpayers. The trend was halted--if only temporarily--by the appointment to that Commission on December 21, 1982, of an American, though not the same person who had done so fine a job for many years.

² Secretariat positions, in decreasing order of importance, are: Under-Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General, D-2, D-1, P-5, P-4, P-3, P-2, and P-1. The D posts are managerial, while the P posts are technical experts.

³ Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, Second Session, Part 8, "Interim Report on Selected Organizations and Programs of the United Nations," p. 1142.

⁴ "...the majority of the members of the Commission favored an increase in salaries for staff in the professional or higher categories." A/37/30, S 118, p. 31. See statement by Senator J. Bennett Johnson, USUN Press Release 128-(82), November 16, 1982.

Confidential information, however, indicates that the circumstances of the appointment are sufficiently extraordinary that the U.S. should be prepared for a possible future disappointment once again.

* Not only is the U.S. share of U.N. bureaucrats declining, so is its share of influential, policymaking posts. In the Personnel Department itself, for example, an American formerly was the only one who held a managerial D-2 position. Today he is one of four, and the highly influential post of Director of the Division for Policy Coordination is held by Victor Elissejev of the USSR.

* The Director of the Department of Public Information once was an American; the post currently is held by a Japanese, Yasushi Akashi. The Director of the Administrative Management Service, an American, J. Robert Webb, has retired this past year; a colleague in the Secretariat, who at the time expressed some doubt whether his replacement would be an American, was proved right; an in-house announcement by the Secretary-General has just stated that the new Acting Director is from Ghana.

Not only the U.S. loses when Americans disappear at the U.N. Though a number of other nations have sent hardworking, well-qualified nationals to the U.N., Americans are widely acknowledged to be among the most efficient employees. In addition, according to a high-ranking American who has worked in the Secretariat almost straight through from its inception, most other nationals, especially from the developing states of the Third World, "do not understand the profit motive," and thus are less inclined to save the U.N. money and run it in a businesslike fashion. Some Secretariat employees appear to take for granted that a U.N. job is to be used for private gain; this practice seems more prevalent, or at least more obvious, among non-Americans.

The same official relates the story of a Secretariat employee who wanted to transfer to another U.N. department and tried to sell himself because he had lobbied successfully with government representatives on behalf of his former program, though according to U.N. regulations, this is illegal; it is, however, a commonplace among many nations at the U.N. One of the best-known cases of personal corruption is that of the former Director of Personnel, Muhammed Ghareb of Tunisia, who placed Arab nationals in key positions throughout the U.N. system. Another very high-ranking Secretariat official, also an American, apparently attempting to mute criticism of Ghareb, said that the actions was mere corruption, "nothing political." Corruption would seem bad enough. But James Jonah, Assistant Secretary-General for Field Operational and External Support Activities and former head of U.N. Personnel, saw political motives involved and said that Ghareb was "doing what Executive Heads had been doing for years." Though Jonah does not exempt Americans from criticism, he agrees with the almost universal perception that Americans are among the most hardworking of U.N. employees.

Dr. Arkady Shevchenko of the USSR, who was Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs until his defection to the U.S. in 1978, told The Heritage Foundation that the American presence at the Secretariat is a vital matter. He explains that the Secretariat is extremely important in "setting the tone" at the U.N. by drafting committee resolutions, setting up expert teams, preparing reports, and carrying on a wide range of other tasks--including interpreting broadly worded U.N. resolutions--that affect the degree of politicization in the organization. Shevchenko feels that Washington does not appreciate the significance of adequately staffing the U.N. He is echoed by many observers, including senior officers of the Secretariat, as well as members of the U.S. Mission to the U.N., the House Investigative Committee, and the General Accounting Office. They accuse the State Department of having paid little attention to the political sensitivity of U.N. staffing. Indeed, despite recent efforts in this area by its own Bureau of International Organizations, the State Department still regards the U.N. as a low priority item.

Finally, the U.N.'s institutional obstacles have resulted in blocking the hiring of Americans on the U.N. staff, while Palestinians and other "stateless persons" (mainly Arabs) are working for the Secretariat. Unless the U.S. takes serious steps, even to the point of cutting off funds to U.N. agencies that do not raise the level of U.S. staffing to "desirable ranges" by the U.N.'s own standards, Americans will remain woefully underrepresented at the U.N.

U.S. VS. OTHER NATIONALS IN THE U.N. SYSTEM TODAY

Articles 100 and 101 of the U.N. Charter state that "the paramount consideration in the employment of [U.N.] staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standard of efficiency, competence, and integrity." At the same time, the U.N. Charter declares that "due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible." At first, personnel quotas mirrored the size of a nation's financial contribution to the U.N. Eventually, however, the developing countries of the Third World forced a reinterpretation of the Charter provision that stressed "equitable geographical distribution." The weight of financial contributions was reduced, and now affects only 55 percent of the quota. According to O. Richard Nottidge, Deputy Director for Policy Coordination at the U.N. Personnel Office, this proportion is likely to continue to diminish.

The latest State Department figures indicate that, for its nearly \$1 billion assessed and voluntary contributions, which comprise about 25 percent of U.N. spending, the U.S. furnishes only about 12 percent of the entire professional staff and only about 10 percent at the specialized agencies. In the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the U.S. fills only 11.83

percent and 8.59 percent of the total professional posts respectively. In the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Labor Organization (ILO)--areas in which the U.S. has envied expertise--the U.S. is shockingly underrepresented, with only 8.02 percent of the FAO's total 3,192 professional posts and only 6.41 percent of the ILO's 1,372 professional posts. In the U.N. Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which a high-ranking State Department official has called "a disaster situation," the U.S. has only 3.12 percent of the professional posts.

For years, the State Department has emphasized "quality" of U.S. personnel--their rank and influence in the U.N. Even so, compared with other countries, the U.S. has placed far lower numbers of professional staff. As Table I demonstrates, in almost no agency does the proportion of professional posts held by Americans amount to even half the proportion of U.S. funding. The Soviet Union, if appears, fares even worse. One reason for Soviet underrepresentation is the USSR's lack of interest, until recently, in U.N. staffing. In addition, according to Theodore Meron, former Israeli representative to the Fifth Committee and former Visiting Professor of Law at the New York University Law School, Soviet underrepresentation in the Secretariat is largely because Soviet policy has a built-in bias against permanent, rather than temporary contracts for employment of Soviet nationals.⁵

While the U.S. is shortchanged when it comes to U.N. staffing, France and Britain do well. At many agencies, the share of their nationals equals or even exceeds their share of the funding. But this is nothing compared to the success of Third World states at landing key posts. Unfortunately, staffing figures by country for the U.N. agencies are not available either through the U.N. Headquarters or the State Department--a glaring example of the lack of coordination in this area.

The most severely underrepresented states in the U.N. Secretariat, however, are Japan, Israel, and the Federal Republic of Germany. The overrepresented are chiefly the underdeveloped states of the Third World, as Table II indicates.

Staffing at the highest levels is, of course, especially important. Arkady Shevchenko, for example, explains that in his capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security

⁵ Theodore Meron, The United Nations Secretariat (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1977), p. 30. Another reason for Soviet underrepresentation in the U.N. Secretariat was revealed by former head of U.N. Personnel, James Jonah: "When I used to interview prospective U.N. employees in the USSR, many candidates--whose names had been given to the U.N. by the Soviet government--begged me not to select them." The reason, said Jonah, was that U.N. employment would often mean being separated from immediate family (to discourage defection to the West) and losing important employment opportunities with the Soviet government.

Table I

Number and Percentage of Selected Professional Staff in the Secretariat of the U.N. System (as of December 1981) and Percentage of Contributions to the Regular Budget (for C.Y. 1082) - State Dept. 10/IR 2, 3/82.

Agency*	% U.S. Contribution	% U.S. Staff	% USSR Contribution	% USSR Staff	% UK Contribution	% UK Staff	% France Contribution	% France Staff
UN	25.00	17.32	11.10	6.04	4.46	4.16	6.26	5.05
FAO	25.00	9.31	none	none	5.45	9.78	7.66	8.37
ICAO	25.00	10.00	10.64	1.76	4.92	8.82	5.77	5.29
IMCO	4.53	5.35	5.61	3.57	6.07	21.43	2.73	1.78
ILO	25.00	9.16	11.02	3.87	4.43	8.55	6.21	11.00
ITU	7.00	9.23	7.00	3.73	7.00	9.94	7.00	11.80
UNESCO	25.00	11.05	10.98	3.05	4.41	3.18	6.19	6.86
UPU	4.75	-	2.37	-	4.75	3.77	4.75	5.66
WHO	25.00	11.22	10.91	3.15	4.38	6.59	6.15	5.47
WIPO	11.62	7.86	7.65	4.49	6.66	4.49	7.45	15.73
WMO	24.57	2.08	10.36	10.42	5.74	8.33	4.66	8.33
IAEA	25.81	19.14	11.59	9.16	4.66	5.09	6.54	4.68

* UN: United Nations Secretariat; FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization; ICAO: International Civil Aviation Organization; IMCO: Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization; ILO: International Labor Organization; ITU: International Telecommunication Union; UNESCO: U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; UPU: Universal Postal Union; WHO: World Health Organization; WIPO: World Intellectual Property Organization; WMO: World Meteorological Organization; IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency.

Table II
 Distribution of Posts Subject to Geographical Distribution
 in U.N. Secretariat -- as of June 30, 1982

Overrepresented Countries (selected)	% of Contribution to UN (Assessment)	Number of UN-determined "Desirable Range"	Number of Actual Staff	% of Total Staff
Algeria	.12	4-16	20	.67
Egypt	.07	3-15	21	.67
Ethiopia	.01	2-14	25	.84
Ghana	.03	3-14	19	.64
Nigeria	.16	5-17	20	.67
Tunisia	.03	3-14	20	.67
Tanzania	.01	2-14	21	.67
Uganda	.01	2-14	16	.54
P.R. China	1.62	33-44	57	1.92
India	.60	13-25	54	1.82
Pakistan	.07	3-15	18	.60
Philippines	.10	4-15	57	1.92
Thailand	.10	4-15	36	1.21
Argentina	.78	17-28	36	1.21
Chile	.07	3-15	36	1.21
Iraq	.12	4-16	22	.68
Lebanon	.03	3-14	26	.87
Syria	.03	3-14	15	.50
Guyana	.01	2-14	16	.50
Jamaica	.02	2-14	21	.67
Underrepresented Countries (selected)				
Japan	9.58	161-217	101	3.41
F. R. Germany	8.31	140-190	100	3.41
Israel	.25	7-18	4	.13
Communist bloc (E. Europe & USSR)	17.5	374-504	312	10.54

Council Affairs, his advice was asked on key issues in the Security Council and the First Committee of the General Assembly. He had occasion to influence policy as well in the twenty-seven committees in his charge, whose agendas were drafted mainly by his staff. Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs William Buffum, the highest ranking American in the Secretariat, has much less power and more limited jurisdiction than did Shevchenko. To be sure, notes Dr. Homer A. Jack, Chairman of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Committee on Disarmament at U.N. Headquarters, "the Under-Secretary for General Assembly Affairs has always been an American"; yet this post has changed considerably since the days of Ralph Bunche, who was Under-Secretary-General in 1955 and then became Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs in 1957. In his detailed study, The U.N. Secretariat, Theodore Meron notes that:

to distinguish from the Soviet and the Chinese Under-Secretary-General, the American Under-Secretary-General (since January 1976, Mr. William Buffum) does not head a large department. Indeed, the important political, diplomatic, and troubleshooting functions previously fulfilled by American Under-Secretary-General [Ralph] Bunche (and shared to a certain extent with Jose Rotz-Bennett of Guatemala) have been divided between two non-American Under-Secretary-Generals: Guyer of Argentina and Urquhart of the United Kingdom....The post of the American Under-Secretary-General does not, despite its title, have as much political content as previously. Nor does it entail management of a large constituent body of the secretariat.⁶

Yet even in the high level posts, the U.S. is being short-changed, as Table III indicates.

The State Department's traditional emphasis⁷ on attempting to secure primarily professional staff in the U.N. has been criticized as possibly shortsighted. A European diplomat underlined the significance of seemingly minor positions in the Secretariat. Mr. Shevchenko agrees; the USSR, he says, is well aware that someone strategically placed, say, in the U.N. Department of Public Information, can be of considerable use to his government.⁸

⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

⁷ General Accounting Office Report to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, May 16, 1977: "In reply to our previous reports on the low number of Americans in the international organizations, the Department of State said that its primary emphasis is on placing Americans in key positions, with total numbers a secondary objective." p. 30.

⁸ The very significant European Unit of that Department is headed by Arkady Chapayev of the USSR; two other officers in that Unit are also Soviet. A high official in the Department, currently in New York, has charged that the nongovernmental organizations in Europe work in close cooperation with the Soviet officers for propaganda purposes.

Table III
 Percentage Distribution of Staff in Senior and Policymaking Level Posts
 (D-1 and above) Subject to Geographical Distribution by Region
 from A/37/378/Add.1, October 28, 1982

	Percentage of High-Level Posts	% Contribution to U.N.
Africa		
1978	11.4	
1982	13.6	1.6
Asia		
1978	15.6	
1982	19.5	14.71
Eastern Europe (incl. USSR)		
1978	11.1	
1982	11.6	17.54
Western Europe		
1978	26.1	
1982	23.7	31.56
Latin America		
1978	9.1	
1982	9.0	3.88
Middle East		
1978	6.0	
1982	6.9	2.36
North America		
1978	19.6	
1982	15.4	28.42
Others (nonmember states, permanent observers, and stateless)		
1978	1.1	
1982	0.3 (one Swiss national)	0

The State Department's emphasis is now changing, according to Assistant Secretary of State Gregory Newell, but without any dramatic results as yet.

Some countries are greatly overrepresented, particularly in the nonprofessional staff. Lebanon has no fewer than 368 employees

in the U.N. Secretariat--or 200 more than Canada, which pays 310 times more to the U.N. Jordan has 189 U.N. employees in the Secretariat, Syria 129, Palestine 22, and 52 are "stateless" (mainly Arabs).⁹ A high level official in the U.N.'s Department of Personnel states that the appointment of stateless people is limited to "exceptional situations." There is a real problem, however, in verifying whether a person is truly stateless. According to Assistant Secretary-General James Jonah, the U.N. does not take great pains to check the claims.

The Palestinians in the U.N. present a rather special difficulty. The PLO's Permanent Observer at the U.N., Zehdi Labib Terzi, told The Heritage Foundation that "all the Palestinians working at the U.N. are members of the PLO. Even if they are not a part of the PLO's administration, they are still considered members." Terzi claims to know the Palestinians in the Secretariat and to be in regular contact with them--though he emphasizes that most of them are listed as nationals of other Arab states.

Most of the Palestinians and stateless Arabs are employed in general services jobs. The same high official in the U.N. Personnel Department considers these jobs rather insignificant; "we don't really care exactly what nationality these people are; quotas come into consideration only at the professional level anyway." Yet employing Palestinians in the U.N. system deserves closer scrutiny. It should be checked whether their appointment does, indeed, involve "exceptional situations." It is noteworthy that Taiwan is unrepresented on the U.N. staff, that Latvians and Lithuanians in exile are not among the stateless personnel in the U.N. system. Palestinian interpreters can be found at the U.N. but no non-Soviet Russian interpreters. The reason, according to Professor Meron, is that

It appears that one of the understandings reached between the U.N. and the Soviet Union was...that the U.N. would not recruit Russian interpreters (and translators) except from the Soviet Union. Thus an exception was established to the salutary policy of the U.N. whereby language staff (which is not subject to the principle of geographical distribution) is recruited on the basis of competitive examinations open to all.¹⁰

Such instances of politicization of U.N. staff and their implications for the U.S. are ominous.

⁹ A/C.5/37/L.2 This document is of "limited" circulation--belying the theory that everything at the U.N. is an "open book."

¹⁰ Meron, p. 35.

INSTITUTIONAL OBSTACLES FOR AMERICANS AT THE U.N.

In Resolution 1852 (XVII), of December 19, 1962, the General Assembly recommended a new formula for "desirable ranges," or quotas for national representation in the U.N. Secretariat as the first step toward diminishing the role of financial contributions in calculating those quotas. In Resolution 31/26 of November 29, 1976, another step was taken, when even those member states whose U.N. contribution was nominal were guaranteed two to seven posts in the Secretariat. The Secretary-General was told to give priority to recruitment of candidates from underrepresented countries.

The key change came with Resolution 33/143 of December 20, 1978, which accepted the report of the Rapporteur to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, Hamzah M. Hamzah of Syria, who presented a plan requesting the Secretary-General "to establish a target of 40 percent of all vacancies arising in professional posts [in the Secretariat] subject to geographical distribution" for the purpose of appointing nationals of underrepresented countries. And in a further departure from the U.N.'s primary commitment, by Charter, to a staff independent of governmental pressure, Mr. Hamzah's report requested that "competitive methods of recruitment be used in consultation with the governments concerned, organized on a national, subregional or regional basis, for selection of staff"¹¹ at the professional level, to achieve a "more equitable" distribution. This amounted to one more step in the direction of politicization of the U.N. Secretariat.

According to the Secretary-General, the 40 percent target has now been reached.¹² O. Richard Nottidge of the U.N. Personnel Department explains that, in his opinion, "there is some justice in this state of affairs." As he puts it, "the Western countries needed to take into account the realities of the world as it is now." He adds, however, that he expects Third World nations to press further for even greater representation in U.N. staffing. In fact, a report prepared for discussion in the current session of the General Assembly by Alexander S. Bryntsev, Joseph A. Sawyer, and Zakaria Sibahi, for the U.N. Joint Inspection Unit, now asks that "60 percent of vacant posts in each entity [in the Secretariat] should be filled by nationals of unrepresented and underrepresented countries."

Aside from restrictions on employment of U.S. nationals imposed by the U.N.'s revised quota system, the U.S. has its own recruitment problems. According to a high-level official at the U.S. Mission, the Secretariat has become a place where foreign service officers, sometimes friends of State Department officials,

¹¹ December 19, 1978, A/33/525, p. 4.

¹² A/37/378 Add, 1 October 28, 1982, S. 9, p. 4.

retire on fat incomes. Indeed, contrary to a report by a congressional investigation staff, Americans are not at a financial disadvantage at the U.N. Though their gross salaries are taxed, unlike the U.N. salaries of most foreigners, the U.N. reimburses the Americans for the taxes they pay. Those salaries, especially when appended to generous U.S. government pensions, are lucrative. U.N. salaries are higher--by about 35 percent--than those of U.S. civil servants, as Senator J. Bennett Johnson, U.S. Representative to the Fifth Committee, has pointed out.

Grade	Gross Salary ¹³ (as of Jan. 1, 1982)
Under-Sec.-Gen.	\$96,765
Assistant Sec.-Gen.	\$85,864
D-2	\$67,009 - 72,927
D-1	\$55,919 - 66,755
P-5	\$48,661 - 61,231
P-4	\$38,167 - 52,173
P-3	\$30,518 - 43,375

Source: 10/IR/13/82, State Department.

How much work is demanded for such fat U.N. salaries is unclear. Though some U.N. employees are very industrious, U.N. diplomats point out that others "do nothing." A member of a Western European mission states that everyone realizes that the Secretariat is mostly "dead wood." Arkady Shevchenko speculates that the entire Secretariat could function better with one-fourth of its present staff. When asked what the new trend toward geographical "equity" has meant to the quality of the Secretariat, a high official in the U.N. Personnel Department admits that it has meant a deterioration. As Robert Rhodes James, Director of the Institute for the Study of International Organization at the University of Sussex, wrote as early as 1970 in his monograph Staffing the U.N. Secretariat:

While it would be simplistic and unfair to blame geographical distribution requirements for the undeniable decline in Secretariat standards in recent years, it has been without a doubt a significant element.¹⁴

This observation is echoed by many today. Richard Nottidge, for example, states that "Third World countries may have good, qualified people--but not necessarily available for employment by the U.N." United Press International Senior Editor Peter Costa reported on October 10, 1982, that in a recent poll a majority of

¹³ The actual salary at any one level depends on longevity of service to the U.N.

¹⁴ Robert Rhodes James Staffing the U.N. Secretariat (Institute for the Study of International Organization, University of Sussex, First Series, no. 2, 1970), p. 17.

the 1,011 U.N. delegates polled criticized the quality of U.N. personnel, 70 percent saying that the general performance has declined. A major factor in the decline was "political interference" by governments. Susanna H. Johnson, head of the U.N. Staff Union, told a press conference, as reported in Diplomatic World Bulletin of November 1-8, 1982, that "the emphasis on politics over competence which had existed [she claimed] for some time where top jobs were concerned, now was seeping down to lower levels."

POLITICIZATION OF THE U.N. STAFF

An important obstacle in placing more Americans in the U.N. system is politicization. In their article "The U.N. Secretariat Revisited," S. M. Finger, Professor of Political Science at the Graduate Center and the College of Staten Island, City University of New York, and Director of the Ralph Bunche Institute on the U.N., and his assistant Nina Hanan call attention to "the political pressure and interference exerted by member governments at all levels of the Secretariat in the area of recruitment and promotion."¹⁵ Former head of U.N. personnel James Jonah charges that most foreign governments "seem to regard the Secretariat as a dumping ground for officials unwanted at home," complaining that "many staff members use the U.N. for private gain." Jonah also charges that "few governments truly take seriously the independence of the international civil service."¹⁶ He even accuses "some staff members of giving advance information or warning to their governments of action contemplated by the [U.N.] Administration to which the staff members are opposed."¹⁷

Private ambitions and political goals at times merge. The activities of Muhammed Ghareb of Tunisia, the former director of the personnel department, who allegedly extorted "loans" from individuals seeking jobs or promotion in the organization, are well known at the U.N. Ghareb, who was also accused of operating a ring of prostitutes for Arab diplomats, was finally ordered by former Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim to leave his post for that of Secretary-General of the Conference on New and Renewable Energy Sources. He resigned only recently, but is still a diplomat; he was reassigned by his government as Ambassador to Moscow.

Politicization is significant at every level. Even lesser positions in the Secretariat can be used to acquire information and to influence the policymaking process of the U.N. Arabs

¹⁵ S. M. Finger and Nina Hanan, "The U.N. Secretariat Revisited," Orbis Spring 1981, p. 197.

¹⁶ "Independence and Integrity of the International Civil Service: The Role of Executive Heads and the Role of States," p. 4, unpublished version. The published version in International Law and Politics, Vol. 14: 841, 1982, pp. 841-859, omits this and several other crucial statements.

¹⁷ Jonah, op. cit., only in unpublished version, p. 11.

occupy many low-level jobs as secretaries and security officers, which enables them to gain access to sensitive information. Many of them are believed to take advantage of these opportunities for political or personal purposes.

Though it is impossible to determine how a particular candidate among several is selected for a U.N. post, high level U.N. personnel officials admit that non-Americans generally have a better chance of being hired at the Secretariat and elsewhere in the U.N. system, particularly outside New York. This is true even where the U.S. is underrepresented, such as at the World Health Organization. Although the WHO professes to seek qualified Americans,¹⁸ its performance belies the promise. One young U.S. biologist, Andrew Kramer, for example, who wanted to try to redress what he perceived to be a heavily anti-American, anti-Western, anti-free enterprise bias at the WHO, recently was given the runaround while applying, despite his excellent qualifications.

At times, Americans are appointed to the U.N. in a manner that seems, at the least, questionable. For example, Richard Hennes, Executive Director of the Bureau of International Affairs at the State Department, for years the highly respected U.S. representative to the U.N. Civil Service Commission, explains that the Commission decided in January 1982 to violate its own statute when it replaced him with a non-American. His job was especially significant to the U.S. since the Commission sets the salaries of U.N. employees. Indeed, the entire U.N. Civil Service is modeled after the American system. Hennes's input throughout his years on the Commission accomplished a great deal in minimizing costs.

On January 1, 1982, the U.S. also lost its seat on the Statistical Commission, one of the subsidiary bodies of the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), despite the fact that the U.S. provides perhaps the greatest input into that Commission. In light of the history of statistical inaccuracies (often politically motivated) elsewhere in the U.N.,¹⁹ losing this position provided one less opportunity for the U.S. to prevent other nations from censoring information.

INTERNATIONALIZATION: A PROBLEM UNIQUE TO U.S. NATIONALS AT THE U.N.

Americans at the Secretariat who were interviewed invariably see themselves as international civil servants carrying out the

¹⁸ See report to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, "Greater U.S. Government Efforts to Recruit Qualified Candidates for Employment by U.N. Organizations," May 16, 1977, p. 12.

¹⁹ Juliana Pilon, "Through the Looking Glass: The Political Culture at the U.N.," Heritage Foundation Background No. 206, August 30, 1982.

interests of the international community as defined by the U.N. This is certainly in line with U.N. staff regulations, which state that the responsibilities of the members of the secretariat "are not national but exclusively international."²⁰ Most Americans in the Secretariat who were interviewed failed to see any political significance for the U.S. in their own positions, claiming that nearly everything in the U.N. "is an open book." A top official of the U.S. Mission to the U.N. disagrees, doubting that anyone could possibly deny that many, if not most, positions in the Secretariat are politically significant. He charges that anyone who states otherwise "is simply lying." One European member speculates that in some cases American attitudes appear "naive"--adding his wish that this "idealistic" approach to the U.N. be tempered with greater "realism."

Shevchenko also notes the "internationalization" of American staff at the U.N. He defines this as their reluctance to cooperate in any significant way with American officials, not even those at the U.S. mission. This is rare behavior at the U.N. He confesses that, as Under-Secretary-General, he was in daily contact with the Soviet mission to the U.N.--a matter that was common knowledge. Professor Meron notes in his book on The United Nations Secretariat:

The Soviet Union's attitude that Soviet nationals in the Secretariat fulfill a function on behalf of the Soviet Union and serve her national interests does not appear to have changed, but it is no longer articulated publicly. There is every reason to believe that the Soviet government continues to exercise strict control over its nationals in the Secretariat, including control over the duration of their stay abroad.²¹

The Charter explicitly forbids Secretariat staff from taking orders from governments. This is a restriction that seems to be most rigorously honored by Americans. An official at the U.S. Mission notes ironically that he receives unsolicited useful information from Secretariat staff of other Western nations more frequently than from Americans. A senior American in the Secretariat defended such noncooperation by stating that it earns a great deal of respect for Americans in the U.N. system, to which a European diplomat smiled and quipped: "It may be rather that Americans are not very good diplomats." Perhaps, he added, this American "internationalization" may be a way of rationalizing an unwillingness or inability to "play the game" by the rules known to everyone else. A similar point was made by an official at the U.S. Mission with U.N. experience. He speculated that "one of the reasons why many Americans in the U.N. system defend it, and sometimes tend to be quite critical of U.S. policies, is that it

²⁰ ST/SGB/Staff Regulations/Rev. 12, p. 1, Regulation 1.1.

²¹ Meron, p. 34. See also Finger and Hanan, p. 201.

must be difficult to admit that you are working for a corrupt organization which can have pernicious effects. The psychological complexities involved are worth exploring."

It seems that every American working in the Secretariat is very loyal to the U.N. Sally Swing Shelley, an American who is Chief of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the Department of Public Information, for example, says: "I've worked for the U.N. for twenty-six years; I am totally dedicated to the organization." Such an attitude is admirable, but puts the U.S. at a great disadvantage since it is shared by so few U.N. staffers from other countries. Admits a high-level official in the U.S. Mission: "Sometimes I think the free world would be better off if we had some good Western Europeans in place of Americans working on the U.N. and the agencies."²²

CONCLUSION

Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Gregory J. Newell includes as one of his "Five Priorities for U.S. Policy" to "insist on increasing U.S. Personnel in international organizations."²³ This is welcome news. Newell seems to be breaking with the traditional indifference of the State Department to personnel matters at the U.N. Over the years, states the General Accounting Office (GAO) in its May 15, 1977, study, despite reports "on the low number of Americans working in the U.N. organizations, and [its having] made recommendations for improving the U.S. recruiting system...the Department of State has done little to improve the situation."²⁴

Some GAO analysts currently speculate that the reason the GAO has not been asked to do a follow-up study may be State Department dissatisfaction with its earlier report card. A House of Representatives Investigation report released in early 1982 blames the State Department for not having up-to-date information

²² One way to alleviate the phenomenon of "internationalization" was suggested to The Heritage Foundation by a high official in the U.S. Office of Personnel Management which used to handle the so-called "loyalty check" for Americans applying to work for the U.N. The Executive Order 10422, signed on January 9, 1953, by President Harry Truman, required a "full field" investigation. That system was changed by a new Executive Order, 11890, signed on December 10, 1975, by President Gerald Ford, requiring only a "National Agency Check." This new system is so lax as to be--according to the same high-level OPM official--"virtually worthless." State Department officials are opposed to reverting to the old system, arguing that it was too time consuming. The merits of the arguments on both sides are worth investigating.

²³ Speech to the United Nations Association, August 18, 1982.

²⁴ Report to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, p. i.

regarding available positions in the U.N. Members of the House staff complain as well, in private, that some of those whom the State Department recommends for U.N. positions are by no means the best possible candidates. Though Karl Grip, the head of the Office of U.N. System Recruitment at the State Department, insists that State recommends good candidates, a former official from the Bureau of International Organizations, Virginia C. Housholder, a member of the U.N. Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, says: "It is impossible to do so complex a job properly with only one or two people working on it."

To be sure, institutional barriers at the U.N., the mounting politicization of U.N. posts, and the internationalization of Americans at the U.N. are serious obstacles to appropriate U.N. representation for the U.S. A number of steps could be taken, however, to ensure that Americans at the U.N. do not become an endangered species:

- * The State Department should give higher priority to the quality of Americans it recommends for U.N. staffs.
- * The U.S. should consider cutting its funding to U.N. agencies that do not raise the level of U.S. staffing to "desirable ranges."
- * Congress should require the Secretary of State to report annually on his implementation of a more aggressive plan for improving participation.
- * Congress should commission a study of U.N. personnel practices to determine whether the massive U.S. funding of U.N. personnel is being used effectively, efficiently, and in American interests.

Such steps would lead to a clearer understanding of the role of the United States at the United Nations, of the problems inherent in U.S. staffing, and of the U.S. staffers' position relative to friends and enemies. Thus armed, the U.S. could improve its quantitative and qualitative status within the United Nations by positive measures--or by withdrawal from significant participation and financial support.

Juliana Geran Pilon
Policy Analyst

