

A United Nations Assessment Project Study

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AT THE 42ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE UNITED STATES LOSES AGAIN

INTRODUCTION

Last month, the Department of State submitted to Congress its analysis of voting patterns in the 42nd United Nations General Assembly, which adjourned last December. This report, called the Kasten Report after its legislative sponsor, Senator Robert Kasten, the Wisconsin Republican, has been issued annually since 1984. It is the definitive numerical analysis of support for United States positions in the U.N. General Assembly and Security Council.

The news for the U.S. this year is not good: overall voting coincidence with the U.S. in the General Assembly fell to 18.6 percent, a decline of 21 percent since 1986 and the lowest level since records have been kept. Moreover, countries that receive a substantial amount of U.S. bilateral and multilateral assistance voted against the U.S. position in record percentages.

Weakening U.S. Influence. The record on individual issues of importance to the U.S. is no less troubling: U.S. initiatives on budget process reform and "secondment," the system by which the Soviets retain control of key positions in the U.N. Secretariat, were soundly defeated. Although the U.N. budget for the 1988-1989 biennium increased only modestly, the weakening of U.S. influence over the procedures by which budget levels are set does not bode well for long-term U.N. budget restraint.

On key political issues, there were some positive U.S. achievements. In addition to the by now traditional oblique condemnation of Soviet abuses in Afghanistan (the U.N. has refused to condemn the USSR by name for invading Afghanistan) and the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, the General Assembly passed only narrowly a watered down Soviet initiative on a system of "international security," while the U.N. Human Rights Commission agreed to dispatch a team of diplomats to assess the human rights situation in Cuba. Some progress also was made in eliminating specific criticisms of the U.S. and in

removing tendentious items from the agenda, such as the ritual condemnation of the 1986 U.S. raid on Libya in retaliation for Libyan involvement in international terrorism.

"Restricted" Funding. Nonetheless, as the 18.6 percent overall coincidence indicates, on the vast majority of substantive issues, the U.N. continues to isolate and outvote the U.S., usually by overwhelming majorities. From disarmament issues to economic development and regional conflicts in southern Africa and the Middle East, the U.N. forces the U.S. perpetually to be on the defensive. In fact, of all recorded votes on resolutions, the U.S. was in a minority of five nations or fewer more than one-third of the time, and 22 times found itself a minority of one. Stated Alan L. Keyes, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs during the 42nd General Assembly: "At this year's General Assembly not a single U.S.-initiated resolution met with any success."

Due for the most part to the U.N.'s failure to undertake serious budgetary and administrative reform, the State Department wisely has placed the U.N. Headquarters operations in New York City — in contrast to most of the U.N.'s specialized agencies — in a "restricted" category for U.S. funding. Stronger steps are needed, however, if the U.S. is going to continue to keep up the pressure for reform. The Reagan Administration therefore should refuse to release an additional \$44 million authorized for U.N. operations in New York in fiscal 1988 funding. The Administration should inform the Congress that the U.N. has failed to meet the requirements needed to qualify for full U.S. funding of the U.N. in 1989. Only then will the United Nations understand that cosmetic "reform" is not enough, and that a strong bipartisan coalition in Congress continues to be concerned about events in New York.

THE KASTEN REPORT

The "Report to Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations," or Kasten Report, submitted on March 14, 1988, is a detailed compilation of all votes in the U.N. General Assembly, along with the individual voting records of every nation on ten key issues in the General Assembly and the Security Council. Although the report cannot give a complete picture of support for U.S. positions, since support is often expressed in ways that cannot be measured in statistical records, it nonetheless gives a clear indication of a nation's general posture in the United Nations.

As in past years, Israel was the U.S.'s best ally in the U.N. General Assembly, voting with the United States 80 percent of the time. Similarly, NATO countries, in particular the United Kingdom, West Germany, and France supported U.S. positions frequently, usually in the 70 percent range. As in past years, though, Turkey and Greece, both NATO countries, supported U.S. positions only 30.8 percent and 35.6 percent of time, respectively.

Ungrateful for U.S. Aid. The 1987 General Assembly also saw a repetition of another trend: inconsistent to non-existent support for U.S. positions from nations that receive substantial amounts of U.S. bilateral and multilateral aid. Egypt, for example, the second largest U.S. aid recipient (\$2.2 billion in fiscal 1987) supported the United States less than

15 percent of the time, while El Salvador, also a large U.S. aid recipient, supported the U.S. only 20.9 percent of the time.

The Kasten Report also notes that only nine countries — Gambia, Qatar, Iraq, Vietnam, Yemen, Laos, Dominica, Albania, and Malta — supported the United States more frequently in 1987 than in 1986, while the remaining 149 nations decreased their level of support for U.S. positions. Just as disturbing, the group average of support for the U.S. in Latin America — usually one of the more supportive regional groupings — fell by a sharp 34 percent.

U.N. BUDGETARY AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

In response to a decade of ever-rising U.N. budgets, the Congress in 1985 passed the Kassebaum-Solomon Amendment, a statutory limitation on the percentage of the U.S. assessments for U.N. dues that the U.S. could pay. The Amendment was designed to increase the power of the U.S. and other major donors, who, despite contributing the greatest part of the U.N.'s budget, have almost no voice in the disposition of the organization's funds. Along with across-the-board reductions on federal spending mandated by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law, the Kassebaum-Solomon Amendment has resulted in substantial withholdings of U.S. funds for the United Nations.

Largely as a consequence of these withholdings, now totaling some \$250 million, the United Nations appointed a panel of experts to research and recommend steps to streamline the United Nations' operations and rationalize its activities. This panel, the so-called Group of 18, issued its recommendations in September 1986. Though the Group could not agree on how to redress the disjunction between voting power and financial contributions, their report — while couched in diplomatic language — was highly critical of many aspects of U.N. operations, citing widespread overstaffing and function duplication within the U.N. Secretariat.

International Pork Barrel. At the 41st (1986) General Assembly, many of the Group's recommendations were adopted, albeit in diluted form. Most important from the U.S. point of view, the General Assembly's "reform" Resolution 41/213, adopted unanimously, strengthened the power over the U.N. budget of an obscure U.N. panel, the Committee on Program Coordination — or CPC. Formerly, the budget was adopted by the Fifth Committee of the U.N. General Assembly, and then passed by the U.N. General Assembly plenary. In both of these bodies, the U.S. and other major donors are vastly outnumbered by smaller nations, who consistently supported international "pork barrel" expenditures, which in large part accounted for the inflated U.N. budget.

Under the new format, the budget first was to be approved by the CPC, which originally consisted of 18 member states, and only then would be passed on to the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly. The CPC was to operate by "consensus," giving the U.S. a *de facto* veto over expenditures. As important, the CPC's agreed budget levels were to be respected by other member states.

In practice, the CPC has not yet functioned. After meeting several times throughout 1987, the Committee turned down flat a U.S. proposal to place a 2 percent cap on the U.N.'s "contingency fund," postponed the task of setting firm budget outlines and, most important, voted to expand its membership from 21 states to 34 — permanently diluting U.S. influence in the body.

To be sure, the United Nations has made some efforts at reform. The U.N. budget for the 1988-1989 biennium has declined in real terms from the previous biennial budget. There is a 10 percent "vacancy" rate for U.N. jobs and there has been some organizational reshuffling. Yet the systematic reconstruction of U.N. organs envisioned by the Group of 18, as well as the reduction of wasteful expenditures and perquisites, simply has not taken place.

Example: The U.N. has failed to abolish the posts that are currently vacant, thus leaving open the possibility that they will ultimately be filled.

Example: The U.N.'s "hiring freeze" has been waived, while many grossly overstaffed U.N. units, such as the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development and the various regional Economic Commissions, remain largely untouched by the reform process.

SECONDMENT AND SOVIET U.N. POLICY

"Secondment" is the system by which virtually all Soviet-bloc nationals in the U.N. are employed on "fixed-term" contracts. This allows the Soviets to maintain control over their nationals in the Secretariat, as well as key positions within U.N. organizations. The practice openly violates the U.N. Charter's vision of a genuinely independent international civil service, and has been condemned repeatedly by the U.S. Congress, which made reducing "secondment" a key condition for full U.S. funding of the U.N.

On this crucial issue of secondment, however, there has been no progress: more than 98 percent of Soviet nationals in the U.N. Secretariat are still on secondment; Soviet U.N. employees continue to report illegally to their government, continue to be forced to turn over part of their salary to their government, and, in many cases, to engage in espionage against the U.S. When the U.S. considered introducing a resolution at the General Assembly to criticize this practice, it had to be withdrawn due to lack of support. Clearly, there are two sets of rules at the U.N.: those the Soviets live by, and those for every other nation.

Sympathetic to Moscow's Interests. Just as disturbing, at the 42nd General Assembly, Soviets pushed hard for passage of a resolution on a "Comprehensive System of International Security," a proposal first enunciated by Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. This resolution originally proposed a vastly expanded role for the United Nations in "collective security" tasks, and was based on the accurate perception that no other diverse intergovernmental organization has been as sympathetic to Soviet interests as the U.N. Only intense diplomatic efforts by the United Kingdom and the United States

ensured that the resolution was diluted before passage. It surely will reappear regularly on the U.N. agenda for years to come.

Moreover, in a related tactic in the disarmament field, the Soviets pushed hard for the establishment of "nuclear weapons free" zones in South Asia and the Middle East, for a "Zone of Peace" in the Indian Ocean, and various resolutions and treaties on the "non-use of force" and "non-use of nuclear weapons" in international relations. These initiatives, like Soviet initiatives in other fora, deftly give the appearance of a peace-minded Soviet leadership, while embarrassing the U.S. and its allies. The aim of these resolutions, of course, is to prevent the U.S. from fulfilling its security commitments, such as U.S. naval operations from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

These anti-U.S. initiatives, furthermore, are coordinated and followed up by key Soviets in the U.N. Secretariat. For example, a "Chief of Unit" in the U.N.'s Office for Research and the Collection of Information is a T. Dmitrichev, a Soviet national; he has been working earnestly on proposals for a heightened U.N. role in the verification of international arms accords, trying to lay the groundwork for U.N. involvement in a range of sensitive disarmament questions.

MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

The U.N.'s record on issues of importance to the U.S. in the Middle East is monotonously familiar: large majorities in virtually every U.N. body condemn Israel for apparently every imaginable crime, while ignoring the violence and state terrorism of Arab states. The record at the U.N. in 1987 (and early 1988) is little different: Israel was condemned for its alleged nuclear program, for repression of the Palestinians, for its "illegal" occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and for allegedly despoiling the holy places in Jerusalem; the Palestine Liberation Organization was avidly praised, and Libyan, Syrian, and Iranian terrorism ignored.

Reconsidering U.S. Participation. There were, however, two new developments. First, at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Israel was explicitly charged with "genocide against the Palestinian people." Only the United States, the United Kingdom, West Germany, and Norway opposed this resolution; a number of Latin American and Asian countries otherwise favorably disposed to the U.S. abstained. With the passage of this resolution, Washington should seriously reconsider whether U.S. participation in the Human Rights Commission is appropriate. The U.S. Congress should also consider passing a formal resolution of disapproval of this U.N. action.

Second, possibly due in part to the uprisings in the West Bank and Gaza, the U.S. maintained more diplomatic distance from Israel than at any time since Israel's 1982 military operations in Lebanon. The U.S. even voted last January for a PLO-drafted resolution in the Security Council condemning the Israeli policy of deporting Palestinian agitators from the West Bank and Gaza; by custom, a U.S. abstention in the Security Council is the worst that the U.S. has done to the Israelis. The U.S. also abstained on a Security Council Resolution condemning Israeli "repression" in the territories. Lastly, the

U.S., embarrassingly, failed to oppose a General Assembly resolution condemning the congressionally mandated closure of the PLO's Observer Mission to the U.N., claiming instead that such U.N. action was "premature." Only the Israeli delegation voted to defend the actions of the United States Congress.

On the Iran-Iraq war, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution urging a ceasefire and immediate withdrawal to internationally recognized boundaries. Despite intense American diplomatic efforts, though, no consensus on an arms embargo — the enforcement mechanism called for in the U.N. Charter — could be constructed, due apparently to Chinese and Soviet objections.

FOUR KEY POLITICAL ISSUES

In four other key areas — economics and development, Central America, information policy and international law — the U.N. once again demonstrated that it is reflexively hostile to the views and values of the West.

In economics and development, the U.N. continues to ignore the increasing global trend towards less regulated markets and the recognition of the abject failure of the socialist model of development. Instead, it is the radical "New International Economic Order," first adopted in 1974, that still shapes U.N. debate and programs on economic matters. As such, the U.N. remains reflexively hostile toward free markets and private industry, thus making the organization nearly wholly irrelevant in international economics. A U.S. draft resolution on capital formation, for example, had to be withdrawn. The reason: U.N. delegates apparently oppose capital formation. A U.N. resolution on "the impact of property on the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms" meanwhile noted "with concern" that "the concentration of economic power in the hands of transnational corporations may impede the comprehensive and meaningful realization of the right to self-determination of the peoples," and went on to state that "legal property ownership" may take "private, communal or State forms." The General Assembly likewise discovered a "right" to both housing and development, with the U.S. concurring in the discovery of the latter "right." And the U.N. passed its ritual resolution condemning the West for the Third World debt crisis.

The U.N. showed much the same bias when it took up the issue of Central America. The General Assembly, with only the U.S. and Israel opposing, condemned the U.S. trade embargo against Nicaragua, and approved by a similarly overwhelming margin a resolution condemning the U.S. for purported non-compliance with the World Court decision in the case *Nicaragua v. United States*. No mention was made of Nicaragua's repeated incursions into Honduras, its violations of human rights, or its use as a transshipment point for Marxist insurgencies the world over. Nor was any mention made of America's legal right to deny the World Court jurisdiction over any issue.

In information policy, the U.N. continued to support the "New World Information and Communications Order," a scheme originally promulgated by UNESCO, to impose state control over media and journalists. This scheme was one of the principal reasons for the

U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO in 1985. Now the "Question of Information" has become an important part of the U.N.'s agenda in New York. The General Assembly actively promotes "international communications redistribution," instructing the U.N. Department of Public Information to promote the New World Information and Communications Order, thus ensuring the perpetual politicization of that troubled department.

Finally, in the area of international law, the U.N. retreated. The focus of the Sixth (legal) Committee of the General Assembly's work in 1987 was on defining "terrorism" and agreeing to convene a Conference to discuss the subject. The Committee, chaired by a Libyan, ultimately produced a resolution which excluded "wars of national liberation" from consideration as terrorism. This resolution was supported by the USSR, Syria and Iran, and opposed by the U.S. The Committee also worked on Codes and Conventions with chillingly Orwellian titles, including the "Draft Code of Crimes Against the Peace and Security of Mankind," all strongly supported by the Soviet Union.

CONCLUSION

The record of the 42nd U.N. General Assembly is clear; despite progress on such isolated issues as Afghanistan and U.S. bashing, the United Nations largely abandoned its internal reform process and continued to be extremely hostile to a broad spectrum of American interests and values. As a senior State Department official told the Heritage Foundation, "This General Assembly was a disaster."

As a result, the Congress should not release already authorized funds to the United Nations, and should seriously consider severe reductions in funding for Fiscal Year 1989. Though some will argue that this will result in a loss of "influence" for the United States, the record of this General Assembly amply confirms that U.S. influence at the United Nations is already so limited that its impact on America's diplomatic position would be negligible. Such a move also would send a strong signal that the United States no longer will tolerate unjustifiable expenditures for international organizations that waste taxpayers' funds while disdaining the views of their most generous donors.

Thomas E.L. Dewey
Policy Analyst

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