

---

---

TESTIMONY OF AMBASSADOR JEANE J. KIRKPATRICK, U.S. PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

The following is a reprint from U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Report, International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1983, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983, pp. 107-113.

Mr. Chairman: Last year, appearing before this Subcommittee, I presented a kind of report card on my first 16 months at the United Nations, in the course of which I tried to make four major points. These were:

The United Nations is an important body, worthy of our attention.

The United Nations is not at all the institution its American founders hoped for.

The United Nations does not reflect or represent the world in the way representative bodies usually do.

The question for the United States and for all countries committed to democracy and self-determination is whether the United Nations can be made a more effective instrument for problem-solving and peace-making among nations, an institution which helps resolve differences rather than exacerbate them.

Today, I would like to talk about a phenomenon that underlies these considerations, an activity which determines whether the United Nations becomes involved in conflict resolution or conflict exacerbation. I want to talk about voting behavior in the United Nations, and I will try to explain why we seem so often to be on the wrong side of lopsided votes, and what this tells us about ourselves and about the United Nations.

From the very earliest days of the United Nations, we here in the United States have had a fundamentally flawed mental picture of how issues are decided at the United Nations. We have imagined that the General Assembly, or whatever U.N. body is under consideration, is made up of individual voting members who listen carefully to the arguments pro and con, decide what is right and just and in their country's interest, and vote accordingly. This is what political scientists call the "rational activist" view of voting behavior.

Why we should have believed that anything in this imperfect world would operate on a totally rational basis, is an interesting question. After all, legislatures do not behave in this way. With all respect, I may suggest it is open to question whether the Congress of the United States operates on so pure a basis of absolute rationality.

Yet somehow, we expect that the United Nations would behave in this manner. Indeed, we profess surprise and disappointment that it does not.

How does the United Nations behave? You may not be too surprised to learn that voting behavior at Turtle Bay is rather like voting behavior in any legislature. That is, voting alliances, temporary or of longer duration are formed on the basis of shared interests. Favors are extended, obligations accumulated and discharged, arms are twisted, horses traded and occasionally, or so one hears, a vote may be bought -- or at least rented.

There is one phenomenon which is unique to United Nations voting behavior, however, and that is the role and influence of the various regional voting blocs.

Regional organizations have played a key role in the United Nations since the organization was established. The Charter, in Article 52, encourages the involvement of regional organizations in the settlement of international disputes, and in Article 53 even recommends to the Security Council that regional organizations be used to enforce Council decisions. The Charter thus institutionalizes a role for regional groupings within the U.N. system.

Over time, a network of informal arrangements has grown up, linking the Secretariat of the United Nations with the secretariats of the various regional groups such as the Organization for African Unity or the Islamic Conference. In fact, some international civil servants move from a job with one or another regional body to a job at the U.N. Secretariat, and back again, during the course of a career. Most of all, however, the position of the regional organizations has been cemented within the UN by their effectiveness in protecting their members' interests, for it is through these regional voting blocs that the smaller nations have been able to make sure that the issues important to them will dominate the agenda of the United Nations.

The numbers tell the story. The Organization for African Unity has about 50 members -- one-third of the U.N. membership. The Asian group has about 40 members. A voting coalition of the two will have enough votes to carry any issue, even allowing for defectors or absentees, regardless of who else may be opposed. Similarly, the Non-Aligned Movement has about 96 members at present. If the NAM caucus takes a position on an issue, that position will determine whether the issue is voted up or down in the United Nations.

The influence of these voting blocs is so all pervasive, that today in the United Nations, aside from the United States, only Canada, New Zealand, Australia and a very few others, exist outside of voting blocs, and the Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders have the British Commonwealth Club to which they can repair. But we are members of no Club, given the rational activist approach we adopted at the beginning of our U.N. career and,

perhaps even more importantly, given the fact that our interests are global rather than regional in scope. When we examine an issue, we must determine how it will affect NATO, whether it will have an impact on security on the Korean peninsula, or the prospects for peace in the Middle East, stability in the South Atlantic or economic development in the Caribbean. For many U.N. members, the claims of regional solidarity or some form of religious or cultural affinity can be commanding. This is not true for the United States.

So we find ourselves in an arena which is dominated by the concerns of the regional voting blocs. What are they? Because the regional organizations themselves are heterogeneous -- the Organization for African Unity, for example, includes Arab states and black states, Islamic states and Christian states, kingdoms and socialist republics -- broad unity tends to coalesce only around certain "lowest common denominator" national corporations, the bogeymen of the new international mythology; support for any organization which describes itself as a "national liberation movement;" support for high levels of resource transfers from the industrialized to the nonindustrialized world as a matter of right and obligation.

Thus the agenda of the General Assembly tends to be the same from year to year. Indeed, aside from the addition or subtraction of verbal curlicues, not only the agenda items but the resolutions themselves are the same from year to year. There are the inevitable twenty or thirty resolutions attacking South African behavior and the equally inevitable ten or twenty resolutions attacking Israel. There are never any resolutions calling upon the Arab countries of the Middle East to make peace with Israel, nor are there resolutions which might lead the South Africans to believe that if they did modify their behavior -- which indeed is an affront to human sensibilities -- their international isolation might be lessened. Meanwhile, in the realm of resource transfers and economic development, codes of conduct for multinational corporations are elaborated which, if followed, probably would drive these firms out of business and surely would drive them out of the non-developed world, scuttling the economies of many of these third world states in the process. At the same time, new "human rights" are identified, for example the right to pain-free, adjustment-free economic development. I have no doubt at all that one day the General Assembly, in its collective wisdom, will declare that all children have an inalienable right to a completely happy childhood and a truly compassionate second grade teacher.

Given this issue orientation and the determination of most of the "third world" to steer clear of anything that looks like an East-West confrontation, no one should be surprised that we find it difficult to get a hearing on issues like human rights violations in the Soviet Union, or that we often find ourselves on the wrong side of a lopsided vote.

Let's take a closer look at voting behavior. If we take the twenty issues which we identified as the most important at last year's General Assembly, and compared our voting pattern with that of each of the major blocs, we see the following measure of agreement:

	<u>Percent</u>
With the West Europeans	80
With the Latin Americans	38
With the Asian group	26
With the African group	23
With the East Europeans	8
With the nonaligned movement	22

Of course these overall vote totals don't tell the whole story, because we are amalgamating votes where we were, happily, on the winning side at 105 to 23, as in the case of the resolution on Kampuchea, to resolutions where we were on the wrong end of 113 to 4. This last vote is worth looking into more closely, for it is a good example of how common sense can be confounded, and confounded overwhelmingly. At issue was a resolution which called on the Security Council to take steps to establish an independent Palestinian state in the Israeli occupied territories, to create it by fiat and impose it on Israel. Now of course such an action would cut directly across the major Security Council resolutions on the Middle East, 242 to 338, and everyone knew that the Security Council was never going to do this. Equally, everyone knew that such a resolution was quite worthless in terms of advancing the settlement on any of the outstanding Middle East issues. In fact, the resolution was as good an example as one could find of UN action which exacerbates differences rather than settling them. Nevertheless, 113 states voted for the resolution and only two, Canada and Costa Rica, joined the United States and Israel in voting against it. Our NATO allies other than Canada abstained.

Now how does this happen?

I think it happens because a few see a chance to roil the waters, while the many are so desensitized to this kind of cynical manipulation that they no longer take it seriously. Not only do they vote in favor, believing that it will lead to no result one way or the other, they vote in favor precisely because they know it will lead to no result. If they thought it would, most would vote differently.

As I have said in past testimony before this and other committees, at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, we take these matters seriously and we believe that resolutions like this one do have an effect. Not only is there a kind of Gresham's Law of resolutions where balderdash such as this preempts the time that could be given to more useful purposes, but the very elan and purpose of the United Nations as a body dealing realistically with real problems tends to be eroded.

In the 2 years I have been there, and increasingly in the past 12 months, I think that we at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations have shown that by taking the United Nations seriously, and by demonstrating to all that we do take it seriously, we have made a difference. On issues of particular concern to us, for example on the question of Puerto Rico at last year's General Assembly, by communicating the depth of our concern we were effective in winning support, and ultimately the vote. We have been successful as well on other issues of principle, for example in connection with the attempt to delegitimize Israel and to deny Israeli credentials. Along the way, we have learned that on matters of principle, one must take an absolutely clear and unambiguous stand. Although I often have been told of the uses of ambiguity in bilateral matters, I am persuaded that extreme clarity is necessary in multilateral diplomacy.

Which brings me to a final point, and one I consider particularly important. In my view, we cannot and should not maintain the compartmentalization that traditionally has separated our bilateral and our multilateral diplomacy. We need to communicate to nations that their votes, their attitudes, and their actions inside the U.N. system inevitably must have consequences for their relations with the United States outside the U.N. system. We must communicate that it is not possible to denounce us on Monday, vote against us on important issues of principle on Tuesday and Wednesday, and pick up assurances of our support on Thursday and Friday.

To say that I believe there has to be some linkage between bilateral and multilateral diplomacy should not be taken as meaning I advocate simply turning the economic assistance spigot, or the military assistance spigot, or any spigot at all, on or off solely on the basis of how a country votes in the United Nations. Obviously, when the Administration proposes assistance to another country, and when the Congress votes it, both have in mind specific and important reasons for doing so. These can range from key geo-strategic location, to economic or political turnaround, to formal military pact or base agreement. But I do believe that behavior, including voting behavior, in multilateral organizations like the United Nations should also be one of the criteria we employ in deciding whether we will provide assistance, and what type of assistance and in what amount. Most particularly, I am convinced that to make attacks on the United States a risk-free operation can have only the effect of insuring that they will take place.

Thank you.

UN Voting Record -- 37th General Assembly, 1982 (overall percentage agreement with United States, all UNGA votes)

<u>Regional group/country</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Israel	86.2
Western Europe and others:	
United Kingdom	80.1

<u>Regional group/country</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Federal Republic of Germany	76.6
Belgium	74.4
Luxembourg	73.7
Canada	70.7
France	68.8
Italy	67.9
Netherlands	66.8
Australia	64.6
New Zealand	64.2
Denmark	60.3
Norway	59.8
Iceland	58.4
Portugal	57.3
Spain	51.1
Ireland	48.7
Finland	43.2
Austria	40.6
Greece	33.2
Latin America/Caribbean:	
Guatemala	49.2
Paraguay	48.9
Uruguay	36.4
Honduras	36.2
St. Lucia	35.2
Chile	35.1
St. Vincent	33.3
El Salvador	32.9
Haiti	31.9
Bahamas	31.3
Dominican Republic	30.1
Costa Rica	29.4
Columbia	27.7
Brazil	27.2
Venezuela	25.0
Antigua and Barbada	25.0
Trinidad and Tabago	24.8
Ecuador	24.8
Jamaica	24.0
Dominica	23.5
Peru	23.5
Suriname	22.5
Barbados	22.1
Argentina	22.1
Panama	20.0
Mexico	19.9
Bolivia	18.5
Belize	17.9
Guyana	17.5
Nicaragua	14.3
Cuba	10.5
Grenada	9.3
Asian group:	
Japan	67.2

<u>Regional group/country</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Turkey	44.6
Soloman Islands	34.2
Fiji	31.6
Lebanon	31.5
Singapore	30.8
Philippines	30.2
Papau, New Guinea	30.2
Samoa	30.2
Kampuchea	28.0
Burma	27.1
Pakistan	26.8
Nepal	26.5
Egypt	26.2
Malaysia	25.5
Malta	24.7
Indonesia	24.5
Oman	24.2
Saudi Arabia	24.0
Bangladesh	22.8
Sri Lanka	22.0
Jordan	20.8
Qatar	20.7
Bahrain	20.6
United Arab Emirates	20.2
China	20.2
Kuwait	20.2
Cyprus	19.9
Bhutan	19.5
Yemen, North	18.4
Mauritius	17.3
India	17.2
Iraq	16.3
Iran	14.8
Syria	14.4
Libya	13.6
Vanuatu	12.9
Seychelles	12.8
Yemen, South	12.2
Laos	11.4
Afghanistan	11.5
Africa:	
Morocco	31.8
Malawi	31.4
Somalia	30.6
Ivory Coast	30.4
Liberia	29.0
Zaire	28.3
Gabon	28.1
Sudan	26.0
Senegal	25.8
Chad	25.7
Equatorial Guinea	25.4

<u>Regional group/country</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Cameroon	25.1
Central African Republic	25.0
Togo	24.1
Tunisia	24.0
Djibouti	23.7
Lesotho	23.4
Mauritania	23.1
Kenya	22.4
Upper Volta	22.3
Niger	22.0
Maldives	21.8
Rwanda	21.6
Burundi	21.1
Zambia	20.6
Nigeria	20.5
Gambia	20.3
Sierra Leone	20.3
Tanzania	20.3
Ghana	20.1
Botswana	20.0
Comoros	20.0
Guinea	19.0
Uganda	17.9
Swaziland	16.9
Congo	16.0
Sao Tome	15.1
Madagascar	14.9
Benin	14.2
Angola	14.2
Guinea-Bissau	13.9
Algeria	12.8
Zimbabwe	12.8
Ethiopia	12.2
Mozambique	11.2
Cape Verde	10.4
Eastern Europe:	
Hungary	21.0
Bulgaria	20.8
U.S.S.R	20.6
Byelorussia	20.6
Czechoslovakia	20.5
German Democratic Republic	20.1
Romania	19.4
Yugoslavia	19.0
Poland	18.9
Mongolia	18.3
Albania	8.8