

Speech
by
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
before the
Women's National Democratic Club
Washington, D.C.
February 28, 1957

. When you asked me to appear before you today, you graciously told me to choose my own subject. As it turns out, this has not been an easy thing to do. You, I, and almost everyone else in Washington at the moment are pre-occupied with the crisis in the Middle East and with all the public uncertainties, Congressional-Executive tensions, and the tremendous amount of action and inaction which is now going on. I myself am full of the subject, and almost daily for the past month, I have had to address myself to one or the other aspect of it -- whether it be the ambiguities and insufficiencies of the Eisenhower Doctrine, or the rather hypocritical one-sidedness of the threatened sanctions against Israel.

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One of the further complicating factors for me lately has been my role as a Delegate to the General Assembly of the United Nations. In that role I must, of course, represent the official position of our government as far as my public statements or votes at the United Nations are concerned. Before I joined the Delegation, however, I made it quite clear that I intended to speak out in my role as a Senator and a private citizen whenever I felt that our official policies were misguided or insufficient, just as I would speak out in support of the Administration whenever I felt that my support could be helpful and sincere.

Within the past month, I have watched with considerable apprehension the relationship between our Middle Eastern policy and the functioning of the United Nations. I say apprehension because I am convinced on the one hand that our Middle Eastern "policy" is either non-existent or deficient, and on the other *hand* that the way some of our leaders have used the United Nations

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in this connection has been detrimental to the United Nations itself. I have in mind specifically the inconsistent attitudes of two of the chief Republican spokesmen on foreign affairs -- President Eisenhower himself, who speaks for the Administration, and my colleague at the United Nations, Senator Knowland, who speaks for himself and for an undisclosed number of neo-nationalist Republicans in the Congress and in the country.

We are all thoroughly familiar with the repeated appeals which President Eisenhower has personally made in special TV broadcasts, press conferences, and State papers. He has stated in the strongest possible generalities, that it is our national policy to rely upon the United Nations. Such reliance is, I suppose, particularly useful when the United States government has no policy itself. But it may, by the same token, be unfair to the United Nations.

As Senator Mike Mansfield said last Monday night: "It is a policy which would make the United Nations a scapegoat

for our responsibility. A scapegoat may relieve the Executive Branch of a sense of frustration, but it will hardly serve the interest of the United States."

Senator Knowland, on his part, devoted a whole speech at the Georgetown University on February 11, 1957 to the deficiencies of the United Nations, raising about as fundamental a doubt as can be raised concerning the President's reliance on the U.N.

Senator Knowland's question, as usual, went straight to the point:

"Does the record of the United Nations warrant a continuation of our policy and support?" Every implication in his speech suggested that it does not.

The Senator accused the United Nations of frustrating itself by vetoes, of operating on a double standard of morality, of increasingly resorting to bloc voting, ^{or} increasingly interfering in internal domestic affairs, and of discrimination in allotting its financial burdens. Some of these charges are undeniable, but they spring from the world in which we live. Knowing

Bill Knowland as well as I do, I cannot refrain from commenting
on his consistency. These arguments against the United Nations
have often been made by many of those elements in the Republican
Party for whom Bill Knowland has been a spokesman in the past.
I am sure that his supporters will be reassured to know that
service at the United Nations General Assembly has not warped
the deep and continuing convictions of the senior Senator
from California.

Consequently I have decided to say a few words today about
the role of the United Nations as I see it. It is a role which
does not quite fit either President Eisenhower's reliance ^{on the UN,} or
Senator Knowland's rejection ^{of it,} I should preface this by saying
that I do not want my remarks to be taken in a partisan context,
even when they are delivered from so mildly ^a partisan ₁ rostrum
as this.

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Yet, I am sure no one will take offense if I also point

out that one may discuss the United Nations dispassionately

at a Democratic Party meeting, because ^{an} world responsibilities

^{have} ~~has~~ never been an issue which has torn our party asunder.

Indeed, as far as I know, the United Nations itself has never

been a subject of heat or controversy within the Democratic

Party. From Woodrow Wilson who inspired it, through Franklin

Roosevelt who found^{ed} it, to Harry Truman who invigorated it

in Korea in 1950, the United Nations has been a testimonial

to the hopes and hard work of statesman in the Democratic Party.

As far as I am concerned, it would be a terrible thing if

this instrument of international cooperation which we Democrats

helped so much to build, should suffer a relapse under simultaneous

misuse by a Republican President and abuse from his Senate

Minority leader.

Yet I am afraid that is precisely what has been happening

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during the past few weeks. While the President overloads the United Nations with reliance while refusing to supply the necessary American leadership, the Senate Minority leader attacks the United Nations in an effort to discredit it among the American people.

Of these two Republican approaches to the United Nations, the President's is the most ~~illusive~~ ^{elusive} and the most frustrating. At times he has seemed to regard the United Nations as some kind of vast Univac machine into which all problems may be fed that are too difficult to be resolved by inspiration, high-minded abstractions, or moralizing. This approach in a sense is flattering to the United Nations, but even world organizations can be flattered to death.

A tendency to impose tasks on the United Nations beyond its capacities does a disservice to the U.N. and its future.

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Reliance on the United Nations in the absence of both policy and leadership is self-defeating. Without steady injections of specific American policy^{ies} and hard-working leaders^{hip} at the U.N., ~~the~~ Univac won't register anything except a compromise of other peoples' policies and other peoples' leaders.

So in this case as in any others, while I often welcome the President's words, I do not always know what they mean. Lip-service leadership is not enough to meet the requirements of the hour, and a comfortable reliance on an infant world organization is hardly adequate to the tasks now facing us as the most powerful nation on earth.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I should like to see the United Nations used, but used effectively. I should like to energize it with American leadership. I should like to strengthen it and develop it in a dozen different ways, not only in its political, but in its social, economic and scientific aspects as well. It is this element of constructive, detailed

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support which I find missing both from the President and from the Minority leader.

Let me turn now to some of the criticisms which Senator Knowland and others have made of the United Nations and its usefulness in the context of the long-term goals of American policies.

Let me begin by describing for you a scene which has become familiar to me during my service at the U.N. General Assembly. It is a scene which frequently ^{defies} ~~simile~~ the logic of logic choppers and literal-minded men. [#] Here at the General Assembly are ⁸⁰ nation states, unequal in power, wealth, and culture. All claim an equal sovereignty. Each pursues, or tries to pursue, an independent policy. Each judges its own best national interest. Each entertains its own private and public opinion about the characteristics of a more perfect world.

The delegates themselves represent historical backgrounds and exhibit cultural differences to such a vast extent that most logical men could easily despair over the possibility of commonly

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accepted standards. Some of the members of the United Nations pay much of the cost of its operation; others pay very little. There are blocs. Delegates frequently think more of their own blocs and their own interests than the overall peace of the world—or rather, I should say, almost all delegates identify their own interests, and the interests of their own blocs with the overall peace of the world. Lately, it has seemed to be painfully true that those who defy the law of nations seem to get away with more than those that respect the Charter.

And yet, my friends, we are meeting today in the capital of the United States. One hundred seventy years ago our thirteen colonies attempted the experiment of the United States of America. There is not a single thing said against the United Nations today that was not said against the early Republic. How could you have a government when a part of the states had slaves? There was a double standard. The agricultural states were afraid of the more industrialized states. Some wanted free trade. Some wanted protection. The smaller states were afraid that the larger states

would have more influence in the House of Representatives. Some
of them felt that they would bear a disproportionate share
of the cost of the Federal Government.

Moreover, the nations in the old world that had not been
able to defeat the revolt of the colonists predicted that the
colonists would defeat themselves because they could not govern
themselves. These struggling colonies, with a few million
people - many of them impoverished - with few means of
communication, defied the logic of everyone but themselves.

We are foolhardy, if we judge the United Nations by
the standards of literal-minded men. I shall not claim that it is
able to produce absolute justice or even rough justice for all.
I shall not claim that the weak are as powerful as the strong.
Neither will I claim that the weak are necessarily wise in some
of their voting.

But I will say that the United Nations represents the
early stages of the evolution of mankind to international law
and order. So tenacious is the desire of man for peace, so
strong is this impulse for law and order, that within the last

- 12 -
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twelve years the United Nations has withstood the most terrific shocks and assaults upon it. It has survived the advent of the atomic age and the revolt of a quarter of the world against the colonial system. I earnestly believe that had it not been for this organization, the world might well be in its third and final war.

The United Nations is far from perfect. But all the hopes of man to evolve a just international economic order, to advance human rights, to stop aggression, to disarm, to establish a reign of law, are bound up in the United Nations. It is for us to apply not absolute logic, but rather the test of imagination. It is for us to give the United Nations our leadership.

Let us consider the situation as it really is in view of the attacks against the U.N.

1. Bloc Voting

The United Nations has eighty members. One fourth of them were colonies when the Second World War began. One fourth of the world has thrown off the yoke of colonialism in slightly more than a decade.

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Some hundred million more are making the final liquidation of the colonial system. Paul Hoffman, my fellow delegate at the present United Nations Assembly, has called this the greatest social revolution in history. We Americans might say that the blow which we struck to the colonial system in 1776 is reaching its full fruition in 1957.

Now these new people are very suspicious of the Western World because they identify the Western world with the colonialism which they have struggled to overthrow. Some of them, not appreciating that the Soviet Union has established a new colonial system by absorbing contiguous territories, have tended to be neutral in what we think are some of the great moral issues of our time. Naturally they tend to bloc voting. We hear of the Bandung Bloc, of the Asian-African Bloc, etc.

Many of these nations are without the long experience in government of the nations in the West. But they are entitled to feel their way to make mistakes as did our American forefathers. Many of these nations lack the trained civil service and the industrial

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technicians of the older states. But they tend to give the highest kind of priority to economic development.

Under these circumstances, I think we should rejoice that these new ^{governments} ~~agreements~~, still absorbed with the birth pangs of nationalism and revolution, nevertheless want to join and play an active role in the United Nations. This is the most significant fact of all.

I recognize the difficulty of blocs. At the moment there ^{are leaders in} ~~is~~ this large Asian-African bloc ^{who are} ~~that is~~ sometimes so blinded ^{their} ~~by~~ ^{they} ~~the~~ fear of colonialism that ~~is~~ cannot be objective in such matters as Kashmir. But the Government of the United States must live with these blocs and must do its best to dispel fear and suspicion. It must hold a place of leadership because of its singlemindedness and devotion to the principles of justice and the Charter.

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2. Double Standards of Morality?

It is not necessary to blame the United Nations for decisions that are ^e beyond its control. The United Nations is not responsible for the double standard of morality which is involved in not punishing the Soviet Union while attempting to enforce the Charter elsewhere. The double standard exists and is deplorable. We should do all we can to remove it, and I think we could go farther than we have in attempting to remove it. But is it a false emphasis to criticize the United Nations for failing to act against the Soviet Union when the nations themselves have refused, perhaps rightly, to risk the final terrible gamble of atomic war?

In this sense, the double standard of morality is built into the international situation these days. It exists in or outside the United Nations. The only legitimate question to ask is whether the United Nations diminishes or increases the operation of this double standard. I am convinced that this

international vehicle for the expression of moral force, not
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only diminishes the double standard, but is our very best hope
of diminishing it *in the future.*

It is true that the United Nations has secured results in
the Middle East in the tangible form of securing the withdrawal
of the British and the French. Given the legitimate guarantees
which they seek, we may expect, I think, the withdrawal of the
Israelis. United Nations resolutions have not secured the
withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Hungary. But in the long
process of the development of justice from the frontier to the
modern community, justice has scarcely been even. A "double
standard of morality" is not unheard of historically as among
nations, or even today in all the life that goes on about us.

The strong have often escaped penalty, but they have not
escaped censure. Certainly there was no equivocation about
United Nations resolutions regarding the Soviet Union in Hungary.

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Although the Soviet Union has not yet withdrawn, it is generally agreed that her action in Hungary and the public opinion generated in the United Nations because of that action, has done more to weaken the influence of the Soviet Union than any ^{other} single event since the war.

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3. ~~Veto Power~~

For the same reason, I am not so concerned about the use of the veto by the Soviet Union as are some others. As a real element in the world picture, the Soviet veto exists. Soviet power sets limits to what can and cannot be done. This is regrettable. It is also a fact which would exist whether or not it is formalized in the veto power of the Security Council.

Through the Uniting for Peace Resolution the United Nations has, however, found a technical way around the technical veto. One morning the General Assembly that was debating the Middle Eastern question recessed at three o'clock in order that there might be an emergency meeting of the Security Council to consider Soviet troops in Hungary. And when the Soviet Union vetoed the resolution twice within the lifetime of this present Assembly, without leaving their seats the members invoked the Uniting for Peace Resolution, and the General Assembly met within twenty-four hours in emergency session.

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I realize that a resolution of the General Assembly does not have the legal force of a resolution of the Security Council. But I believe that by precedent, and by the exercise of its prerogatives, and through its influence, resolutions of the General Assembly will come to have greater and greater authority. Two years ago I thought that the Charter would have to be revised before the deadlock in members could be broken. ^{But the} ~~The~~ United Nations has now been able to increase its membership from sixty to eighty.

Of course I know that many argue that the veto in the Security Council should be removed. I have the feeling, however, that many if not most of the politicians who complain most stridently about the current abuse of the veto power in the Security Council are precisely the ones who would insist on its continuation to protect American interests if the time should come when its elimination were seriously considered.

4. U.N. Interference in Domestic Affairs

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The United Nations is based on the principle of sovereign

equality of states. Hence it is not supposed to intervene in the domestic jurisdiction of its members. Presumably this means that the United Nations can criticize a member's domestic law or practice only if it violates its obligations under international law or treaty. In matters of self-determination of colonies or of the protection of human rights, the United Nations is therefore involved in legalisms.

One of the most difficult problems that the United Nations faces, and it will always be so, is defining the area of affairs which are international and which are "essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state." As far as I am concerned, any matter ceases to be a matter of essentially domestic concern if it threatens the peace of the world. Thus I believe that our government was right in supporting United Nations consideration of the treatment by South Africa of its Indian minority because of a treaty existing between South Africa and India.

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I believe that the United Nations is right in interfering in the Union of South Africa attempt to annex Southwest Africa because the Union was bound by an obligation to the League of Nations not to annex its League Mandate for that area. Unhappily, I also believe that a case can be made for saying that South Africa's treatment of its various colored populations, indescribably wicked though that treatment may be, is its domestic concern.

But I also believe that we must decide these questions by trial and error. In the General Assembly, as far as Algeria is concerned, it may well be that the debate in the General Assembly against France's wishes has saved what remains of the French Empire. The French may now move toward reforms in Algeria and, I hope, are about to announce a bold program for all French African possessions. I understand that the French Government was pleased with the mildness of the Assembly resolution on Algeria, but regards this mildness as giving it a one-year respite to produce a better system for Algeria before the Twelfth Assembly meets.

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The passage of this ambiguous resolution may be a practical achievement far surpassing the effectiveness of any clear-cut legal decision on how far the U.N. could go on interfering with France's "internal" jurisdiction over Algeria.

5. Financial Contributions

The United States pays a third of the budget of the United Nations and more of special refugee and emergency items. This is undeniable. But, as far as the ^{one-}third cost is concerned, this is less than the United States would be required to contribute if the United States were actually assessed dues according to its ability to pay. We would then pay forty percent instead of thirty-three. Indeed the national income of the United States is more than the combined national incomes of a third of the U.N. membership.

Beyond that, I do not believe that we want in the United Nations, any more than in the United States, a property qualification

for voting. It may very well be that in time to come the General
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Assembly will move toward a weighted voting based on some population
qualification. I emphasize that the General Assembly is only twelve
years old and has had eighty members for only a few months.

From what I have said about the U.N., you can tell that I
am more interested in the possibilities than I am ⁱⁿ the dangers.
I am less interested in the frustrations than I am ⁱⁿ the opportunities
for leadership.

Consider for a moment the positive achievements of the United
Nations. Here are a few:

(1) In 1951, the United Nations, at the request of the Govern-
ment of the United States, intervened against the aggressor at the
Thirty-eighth Parallel in Korea. I know all the difficulties and
the arguments. The United Nations did not have a police force.
The United States made a disproportionate contribution of forces,
Nevertheless the achievement remains!
because it had the forces close at hand. [^] Fifteen other members of
the United Nations contributed forces. I understand that had we

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been willing to arrange for the logistical support of others, the equivalent of another division from United Nations countries would have been obtained. Some forty nations contributed aid of various kinds, *in the Korean action.*

(2). President Eisenhower, in what I think may be his most important contribution to history, challenged the United Nations General Assembly on December 8, 1953, to establish an agency under the aegis of the United Nations to promote the atom for peace-time purposes. An agency under the aegis of the United Nations has now been established and the blessings of atomic energy will not be the possession of a wealthy few, but will be extended to all mankind. This great new revolutionary force, which President Conant of Harvard said could only be compared with the discovery of fire, shall be the possession of mankind through the United Nations. I am proud that it was our government that made this suggestion.

(3) In 1947, the United Nations proclaimed the Declaration

of Human Rights, which, though a declaration and not a treaty,
is ^{now} becoming a source of law, ~~as~~ Its principles are ^{being} incorporated
in new constitutions, and ~~as~~ it is gradually being referred to
by domestic courts as a standard of human rights.

(4) The United Nations has demonstrated that a multilateral
approach to help the underprivileged peoples of the world help
themselves is a more efficient and satisfactory approach than
many of the bilateral methods of technical assistance that have
been used. We must put this lesson to new and expanded use.

(5) The present General Assembly to which I am a Delegate
has also demonstrated its capacity to do important things. Today
it has a fleet of forty vessels clearing the Suez Canal. It has
the first real international army patrolling an area as the forces
of two powers withdraw in response to Assembly resolutions.
Nothing like that has occurred ^{before} in history.

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I want to say a word about this international force. I wish to see it perpetuated. I do not think it will ever be large; possibly not more than ten or twenty thousand; possibly equipped with a few patrol boats to keep waters open, such as the Gulf of Aqaba, but always a small force. It will be a very small force, indeed, compared to the customary armies of nations.

A sheriff is one man in a community of many, but he wears the badge which is the symbol of the community and men do not attack him easily. So I believe that a small, available United Nations Force, rushed to a scene of trouble before the trouble gets out of hand, will, in most cases, help prevent violence. I do not believe that there is any government in the world today that would fire upon the symbolical force of the community. Had such a force been in existence when the first appeal came from Hungary, it might have been dispatched there quickly. I doubt if even Soviet commanders would have fired upon it.

I have joined ~~Senator Sparkman~~ in his Senate Resolution

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for the establishment of a permanent United Nations police force. It seems to me to be crucially important that this opportunity is not lost for the establishment of a permanent United Nations force growing out of the emergency force in the Middle East.

To conclude, it seems ^{to me} that the only policy to establish a more just and peaceful world is one which combines law enforcement, through the United Nations so far as that is possible, with careful diplomacy inside and outside the United Nations. We must judge all ^{of our} decisions ^{at the U.N.} both as legal obligations from the past and by probable consequences for future precedents. We should urge measures to induce members of the United Nations to observe their obligations under the Charter which are likely to be successful and which do not unduly risk nuclear war. We should urge conciliation and compromise through the United Nations to settle disputes peacefully and justly. We must not ask of

others what we would not accept ourselves. We must strive for

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an equal enforcement of legal obligations, but must realize

that great inequalities of power ^{will} ~~would~~ sometimes make this

impracticable. The discrepancies in the United Nations

structure between voting power and financial contribution is

inherent in the sovereign equality of states and the necessity

to allocate costs by capacity to pay.

The United Nations, though far from perfect, is an asset to the world. While seeking to improve it by practice, interpretation, supplementary agreements and, where feasible, amendments to the Charter, we must not destroy it or weaken it, ignore it or overburden it.

The United States can realize many of its policies more effectively by working through independent diplomacy to create conditions which will permit the United Nations to be more effective -- particularly by seeking agreement with the Soviet Union to reunite Germany, Korea and Vietnam, and to moderate

mutual suspicions and fears. A general policy of defense

without provocation, and conciliation without appeasement,

would contribute to this end.

The most important guide to policy is patience. Some factors are undoubtedly on our side. Nationalism is a stronger force than communist ideology. The demands for peace, self-determination, human rights, economic development and social progress, which are principles of the Charter and also of American foreign policy, are demands of human beings on both sides of the Iron Curtain, in developed and underdeveloped countries. The Charter provides opportunities for these universal demands to exert pressure upon the policies of governments otherwise dominated by fear, ambition or fancied necessities. With patience, skill and moderation we can help the United Nations to utilize ^{these} ~~this~~ opportunities,

Let us see that our own policies are not led astray by

resentment, impatience, misinformation or ambition, into decisions which would fail to reflect the opportunities which the United Nations offers and which would defeat our own objectives.

The United Nations can fail. It can become a futile debating society. It can be afraid to stand for principle or to apply the principles when possible. If so, it will be our failure as much or more than the rest. And failure can well mean an atomic war that will destroy life on this planet.

The processes which have begun in the United Nations in twelve years may also go on to curb the forces of evil and make the blessings of atomic energy, of economic well-being, of human rights, of freedom and civilized living the possession of all mankind. It will be the defeat or the victory of the United Nations and much depends upon the patience, and leadership which this country gives to the task ahead.



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