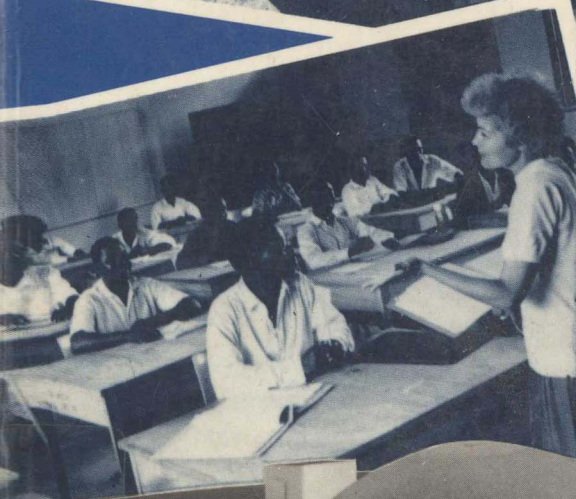


THE UNITED NATIONS

HOW IT WORKS AND WHAT IT DOES

EVAN LUARD



THE UNITED NATIONS

How it Works and What it Does

Evan Luard

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS

New York

Evan Luard 1979

All rights reserved. For information, write:

St. Martin's Press, Inc., 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010

Printed in Hong Kong

Published in the United Kingdom by The Macmillan Press Ltd.

First published in the United States of America in 1985

ISBN 0-312-83310-5

ISBN 0-312-83311-3 (pbk)

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Luard, David Evan Trant, 1926-

The United Nations, how it works and what it
does.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. United Nations. I. Title.

JX1977.L8 1979 341.23 78-21471

ISBN 0-312-83310-5

ISBN 0-312-83311-3 Pbk

Foreword

This book is an attempt to take a fresh look at the United Nations and the role which it plays in the modern international political system: to describe the way it operates today, and to examine the reforms needed to make it a more effective force in modern world politics.

Many people feel that the UN has failed. It has fallen down, they say, in its central role of keeping the world's peace. It has become little more than a debating chamber, dominated by very small nations, where hotheads angrily abuse each other, and where nothing effective ever gets done. Others feel that, though we have to have a UN, the existing organisation is largely irrelevant to current needs, and is of little importance in relation to more potent factors in world politics — superpower diplomacy, the multinational corporation, regional communities, such as the EEC, international political movements or terrorist organisations. Others again merely take the UN for granted as a fact of life, necessary but of little importance to themselves, about which they think as little as they decently can.

Though their views differ widely, these groups have two things in common. First, they mainly possess only the haziest notion of what the UN actually is and what it does in practice. This book is therefore designed partly to help to correct this widespread ignorance. It aims to provide an up-to-date description of what the UN is, how it works, and how it has evolved over the years — including what takes place behind the scenes, as well as what is visible to the naked eye. It seeks to show how its role is changing with changes in the world about it.

The critics are also agreed in feeling, with some reason, that the UN, in its present form, is inadequate to the world's current needs. The book

therefore seeks to examine some of the changes which have affected it — the influx of new members, many of them very small, the role of great power diplomacy in diminishing its role, the prevalence of internal rather than external conflict in the modern world, the inadequate peace-keeping capacity, the disordered state of the finances, the poor morale of international civil servants, the chronic political conflicts, once mainly between East and West and now mainly between rich and poor, among others. Finally, it seeks, on the basis of this survey, to consider the changes that could be made in the system to make it a more effective force in world politics.

In some ways the UN is now coming into its own again. There is increasing recognition of the need for serious negotiation among the world community about world problems — North-South issues, nuclear proliferation, the sea-bed and the international environment, as well as more immediate threats to the peace. Demands for UN peace-keeping forces are again widely made: three are operating at present in Cyprus, Sinai and Syria, and others have recently been called for (in Namibia, Rhodesia and Lebanon). There is a new willingness to look to the UN for solutions to major problems, or at least as a forum for discussion. It thus becomes all the more important for a fresh look at the organisation to see how it can be made better adapted to meet the growing demands that are made on it.

It is thus hoped that the book may be of interest to the general reader interested in international affairs, as well as to students having a more specialised concern with international organisations. To those who care about world politics nothing can be more important than the state of its main institution for the discussion of conflict. This book is intended to provoke thought and discussion about the body's future. It is hoped that, together with its companion volume, *International Agencies: the Emerging Framework of Interdependence*, it may serve to provide a general survey of the institutions of contemporary international society.

The author wishes to thank the Fabian Society for permission to make use of a passage from his pamphlet, published under their auspices, entitled *The United Nations in a New Age*.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Introduction: Has the UN failed?</i>	1
1 The Security Council: keeping the peace	9
2 The General Assembly: discussion of world issues	33
3 The Economic and Social Institutions: securing a fairer world	55
4 The Legal Institutions: laying down the international law	72
5 The Secretariat: running the organisation	92
6 The Budgetary System: finding the money	113
7 The Fundamental Political Problems	137
8 Conclusions: Can the system be reformed?	154
<i>Notes</i>	172
<i>Index</i>	182

Introduction: Has the UN failed?

The UN's Changing Role

Governments, in all countries and of all political persuasions, continually affirm, in as many as possible of their public statements, their undying devotion to the United Nations and all its purposes and principles. They continually express, as often as they decently can, as they have done for the past thirty years, their determination to uphold its objectives, to strengthen its effectiveness, and to love, cherish and preserve it in every possible way.

But there has been sometimes a tone of desperation in such statements. The words become an act of faith, an incantation which all feel obliged to pronounce, but in which they no longer feel any great confidence. The paying of such obeisances is regarded as a necessary formality, but there is little inclination to take them too seriously; still less to act upon them. The underlying presumption has been that the UN is 'ineffective'. It has contributed little to the solution of major problems in recent years. In a word, it has 'failed'. It must continue to exist, of course, like the House of Lords, the Daughters of the American Revolution and other decaying institutions; but little account need any longer be taken of it in the everyday policies of governments.

In some ways this general attitude of indifference, even contempt, has been more disturbing than those which prevailed in earlier years. Previously there was, among some, downright hostility to the UN and a wish to see it destroyed altogether. But there were at least many others who retained a burning faith in its potential, and were therefore prepared to

give it a significant part in policy-making. Recently there have been fewer in either category: few who retained any faith in its capacity to forge a substantial change in the traditional conduct of international relations among states; just as there were few who wish to abolish it — for why abolish the totally impotent? It has been regarded not so much as the sinister instrument of hostile and seditious forces, but as the feeble mouthpiece of ineffective busybodies; not as a threat, but as an irrelevance.

These feelings derived from a number of sources. Partly they were the result of wholly unrealistic expectations. The child who expects her new doll not merely to talk but to answer all her questions correctly, the driver who expects his new car not merely to go at 100 miles an hour but to turn all corners automatically will (unless they have bought unusually advanced models) inevitably feel cheated and disillusioned. Similarly, those who have traditionally regarded the UN as the modern manifestation of divine providence, a holy and impeccable supreme being, which can be called down from the skies to wave its magic wand and produce peace at a moment's notice, are inevitably disillusioned when they discover it is composed of frail and mortal human beings, representing conventional and conflicting states, with the same weaknesses and inconsistencies as their predecessors over generations. Those who thought it only required the Security Council to meet and pronounce on every act of violence in any part of the world to produce instant concord have felt deceived and tricked when they find that even the most skilfully worded resolution is not invariably instantaneous in effect. The syllogism is simple if crude: the UN was created to assure peace; peace has not been assured; therefore the UN has failed.

Even among those whose standards are somewhat less exacting, the sense of let-down remains. Consciousness that the UN has failed to bring solutions to any of the main conflict situations of recent years (the Middle East and Vietnam, Bangladesh and Biafra, the Dominican Republic and Czechoslovakia, Angola and Rhodesia) creates a feeling that it is an increasingly marginal force in modern world politics. The real solutions, the serious negotiations, it is felt (on these, as on East-West relations, strategic weapons, or monetary and trade policy) are undertaken elsewhere, between the great powers. The UN, on all these matters, seems ineffective and irrelevant. It provides, it is said, only words but not deeds; it is a focus for propaganda rather than for serious discussion and debate; it is dominated by a majority of very small, irresponsible nations who use their votes to steamroller through unrealistic resolutions; it flounders in endless and insuperable financial difficulties; it is a costly, inefficient and time-consuming bureaucracy.

Some of these criticisms are plain untruths. It is not the case that the UN provides only words but not deeds. Even in the peace-keeping field, the most difficult of all, the UN has established five major peace forces,

which have done much to maintain or restore peace in three important conflict areas (the Middle East, the Congo and Cyprus), has established observer forces in a number of other cases, and has, elsewhere, successfully mediated in disputes which might otherwise have led to war. In the economic and social field, the deeds are even more manifest. Leaving aside the World Bank, lending six or seven billion dollars a year, leaving aside the other specialised agencies (a vitally important and rapidly growing part of the UN system, which spend a billion dollars a year in essential services), extensive programmes of economic and technical assistance are provided by the UN proper. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which is run and organised under the UN, spends about 500 million dollars a year on worthwhile programmes. Even more important, the UN is now increasingly called upon to perform a whole range of new and important programmes, in areas where world-wide action is essential; on the environment, population, disaster relief, refugees, narcotics control and many others. These practical programmes have in many cases been outstandingly successful. Though sometimes ignored altogether in assessments of its activities, these are the areas of UN activity which today are developing fastest and are perhaps most valuable.

Some of the other criticisms contain a core of truth. The UN has a cumbersome, and sometimes irresponsible Assembly; is bureaucratic; has financial problems. The fact that the criticisms are made at all, however, and that so much is made of them, again shows the unrealistic standards which are created for the UN, and for the UN alone. It is recognised that national parliaments waste much time in idle debate, childish antics and sterile altercation; but this causes little more reaction than a shrug of the shoulders, and the assumption that this is a normal fact of life. It is accepted that in almost every national administration in the world there is inefficient and wasteful bureaucracy (and in many, dishonesty and corruption as well, happily virtually unknown in the UN system); and this too is taken for granted. It is known that national and municipal governments have their financial problems; and this is regarded as inevitable. It is only because many people have, if only subconsciously, a conception of the UN as something above and beyond reality, as a mythical Utopian entity that should be free of all mortal failings, that they condemn, with such violence, inadequacies which elsewhere they would accept as inescapable.

The UN indeed, as has often been pointed out, can never be anything but a mirror of the world as it is. It merely assembles together the multiplicity of individual national states with all their imperfections. If the states are bellicose, the UN will be full of bellicosity. If the world is a world of cold war, the UN will be a system of cold war (as in its first fifteen years). If the world is one of rich/poor confrontation (as today), so will the UN be also. If the world is beset with nationalism, so too must the UN be. If there are conflicts and disagreements among continents, races, or

ideologies, these will be manifest in the UN as well. It is no use blaming the UN, therefore, for deficiencies which are those of the world it reflects. The UN is as good or as bad as the nations which compose it.

When all this is said and done, however, it remains true that, for a number of reasons, the UN does not today, especially in the peace and security area, perform the role it was expected to play when it was founded. This is only partly for the institutional reasons, sometimes quoted, which have been operative for many years; the failure to create, as originally intended, a powerful Security Council force, the use of the veto, the 'by-passing' of the UN through agreements outside it. These are themselves reflections of tensions and hostilities, which would have made it difficult for the UN to perform effectively to maintain world peace in any case. Even if, for example, a Security Council force, as envisaged in Articles 42 to 49 of the Charter, had been created, even if the veto had been used more sparingly in the early years, even if every major issue had been brought first to the Security Council before discussions began elsewhere, it is unlikely that, in most of the situations it has confronted, agreement would have been easily reached on effective UN action to keep the peace. Here, too, the difficulties were symptoms, rather than causes of the UN's failure to play a more dominant role in world affairs. The difficulties have been those of world politics as a whole, which no international machinery, however perfect, can automatically dissolve or spirit away. And recent changes in world politics have in many cases accentuated the difficulties.

Let us look at the developments of recent years which have affected the UN's capacity.

Trends in Modern World Politics

The underlying factors which have prevented the UN from performing the role which many originally envisaged for it are of a number of kinds.

First, the world has become smaller. The Charter was based on the assumption that though, on matters *directly* affecting themselves, the permanent members would be able to prevent UN action through the use of the veto, there would be a wide range of other matters, for example affecting other parts of the world, in which they would normally be able to agree on the action required because their own interests were minimal. The common belief that the founders of the UN assumed 'great-power unanimity' is an absurdity: the cold war had already begun at the time the Charter was signed and few were so naïve as to think that there would not be serious disagreements on many of the matters which arose. They merely assumed that where there *was* such a direct conflict of interest the UN would be helpless. At least the disagreements should not be allowed to destroy the organisation. What is true is that they underestimated the

scope of these great-power conflicts. The shrinkage of distance made the disagreements far more universal in impact than expected. There has been no part of the world, however remote, which was not regarded as essential to the interests of some or all of the great powers: over Iran as over Korea, over the Middle East as over the Congo, over Guatemala as over Hungary, over Lebanon as over Angola, each felt its interests involved, so that the organisation was spilt fatally. Over Vietnam, the world's most important trouble-spot for nearly ten years, for that reason the UN was almost totally inactive. The entry of China has only increased the difficulty. Today there are few threats to peace, wherever they arise, on which there is not a major conflict of interest between two or more of the permanent members; and this will often prevent effective action being taken.

Second, a very large proportion of conflict situations in the modern world, are, at least nominally, internal problems. Most wars in the contemporary world are civil wars rather than international wars (or at least begin as such).¹ But the Charter reflects the assumptions of sovereignty. Article 2(7) of the Charter was inserted to prevent interference in matters 'essentially within the domestic jurisdiction' of a member state. This provision can be, and is, used to prevent UN action over civil war situations, unless the government concerned actively demands it (as they did, unusually, over the Congo and Cyprus). On these grounds such major conflicts as those in Biafra, Bangladesh (until it became the cause of international war) and Angola, not to speak of lesser wars in Laos, Cambodia, Sudan, Burma, Chad, Burundi, Ethiopia, Lebanon (1975-6) and others (in other words most of the main conflict situations of recent years) were not discussed in the UN at all. It seems reasonable to forecast that conflicts in the next decade or two will continue to be predominantly of this type. Unless there is a drastic change in policy, therefore, they may take place largely unregarded by the world body, even though in almost all there is widespread outside intervention, and often, as in Vietnam, they are more international than domestic in character.

Third, the increasing move in recent years toward the explicit acceptance of a sphere-of-influence policy has also weakened the UN. The West has not attempted to interfere in eastern Europe, even over the events in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union was prepared to accept US dominance in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, and, ultimately, in the Cuban missile crisis. The Nixon and the Brezhnev doctrines, in different ways, were designed to underwrite this world partition. The trend may extend. The growth of Western European and Chinese power, the increasing resentment in Africa and Latin America at great-power interference, and the increasing reluctance of US public opinion to accept a continuing role for the US as international policeman, bring about a world of increasingly self-sufficient regions, each determined to regulate its own affairs, and each reluctant often to allow outside intervention, even by a body such as the UN. Regional organisations, such as the Organisation

of American States (OAS), the Organisation of African Union (OAU) and the emerging European institutions, become more significant than the UN; and they too resist encroachment by the world body but are often ineffective themselves.

Fourth, a considerable number of the major issues of the modern world are questions of human rights, whether the rights are those of individuals (say, in South Africa, or the Soviet Union), or of large minorities (such as the Ibos in Nigeria or the Kurds in Iraq, the Jews of the Soviet Union or the Palestinians in Israel). The UN is a body of nation-states, however, each concerned to preserve national sovereignty; and each probably having at least one such skeleton in its own cupboard. The assembled governments within that organisation, therefore, however much some are genuinely concerned over particular human rights issues, are usually reluctant to interfere too blatantly in the internal affairs of another state. Thus the provisions of Article 2(7), excluding questions of domestic jurisdiction, are not only widely invoked by the government accused in such cases; but are often interpreted with sympathy and understanding by fellow-members too. Where the violation is a particularly gross one, and where there is a large number of nations which feels racial solidarity with the oppressed group (as over Southern Africa), such objections may be overcome. In other cases, however, even where basic political rights are denied (as in certain other states of Africa, for example, or in totalitarian systems elsewhere) they are held to make any action by the world body inadmissible. Here again therefore the UN is made impotent.

Fifth, some of the great powers explicitly oppose a strong UN role. The Communist countries in general, as a permanent minority within the organisation, and one pathologically suspicious of all external interference, have always been apprehensive that the UN may be used against their interests by a hostile majority (its present Afro-Asian majority as much as its former Western majority). For this reason they have been consistently hostile to any steps which might have the effect of strengthening the organisation. They oppose increases in its budget or in those of the agencies. They oppose 'strong' candidates for Secretary-General. They are particularly unfavourable to any extension of the UN's peace-keeping role, and to anything else which looks even remotely 'supranational'. China too, though seeking to win support and goodwill among the developing countries, may resist giving the UN strong powers. Even the US has often been cautious in its approach to the UN. She has succeeded in reducing her financial commitment to it and suspects the Afro-Asian majority there for their anti-American sentiment or for 'politicisation'. Britain and France have sometimes seemed little more positive. None of the major powers, in other words, now (as some at least did in the fifties) appears to have an interest in a strengthening of the organisation's power.

Sixth, the increase in the number of very small members, exercising equal voting power with the very largest, perhaps as much as anything

threatens to weaken UN authority. The fact that majority votes in the Assembly can now be passed by 75 governments representing under 5 per cent of the world's population against the will of ten or twelve nations representing 90 per cent, makes its resolutions increasingly unrepresentative. This anomaly lessens respect for UN resolutions. It arouses resentment among larger powers. And it makes the greatest powers of all particularly chary of giving any effective authority to the world body, or at least to the Assembly. The effect of this is seen also in the Security Council, even though it has only fifteen members and always contains the largest powers of all. When, as recently, over half the members of the Council were very small states whose total contributions amounted to only 0.25 per cent of the UN budget, it is scarcely surprising that the largest countries come to regard its resolutions with less than total veneration.

Seventh, the development of superpower politics — bilateral dealings between the US and the Soviet Union, and now increasingly involving other great powers too — as a means of resolving important issues, has served to downgrade the UN. Not only do the big powers look less to the UN to solve their problems; they devise new channels of their own which can replace it. Summit meetings take place among the powerful to discuss the world economy. The feeling grows that the major issues will only be decided through these other channels; and so again the UN begins to appear irrelevant.

Eighth, the glaring economic disparities between rich countries and poor create wholly new pressures and tensions, which increasingly become the most important of all. But the UN has not yet found the means of resolving them effectively. Thus to the rich countries the UN begins to look more and more like a begging-bowl, in which ever more onerous demands are directed towards them from which they are therefore inclined to shy away. To the poor, it seems to provide the only available means of bringing pressure to bear on the rich, yet fails to do so effectively. Either way, images of the UN's proper role increasingly diverge, and become the source of more and more misunderstandings.

Ninth, the major problems to be confronted are no longer only those of peace and war. A whole range of new international issues has emerged, which were scarcely thought of when the UN was founded, but which now occupy a central place in international politics. The role of the multinational corporation, the pollution of the international environment, the depletion of world resources, the problem of terrorism, the relief of debt for poor countries, the world population problem, the ownership of deep-sea resources, these and others like them become the key political issues of the international community. But the structure and procedures of the UN have not always been adapted sufficiently to deal adequately with this type of question. And so, here too, the organisation increasingly seems to some irrelevant to man's major concerns.

Finally, and perhaps most fundamental of all, the old Adam of national

sovereignty will not go away as obligingly as the UN founders fondly hoped. Indeed nationalist feeling, in some parts of the world at least, is more powerful than ever. Governments strongly influenced by these sentiments do not easily respond to the urgings of an organisation which in any case has no ultimate means of enforcing its wishes. Most governments support the UN where the UN view is identical with their own. So the West could make a virtue of supporting the UN in the fifties, when what the UN wanted was what the West wanted (except on colonial issues); while today the Afro-Asians can present themselves as powerful supporters of the organisation, since what the UN wants usually means what they want. But in both cases their opponents have for that very reason feared an increase in the organisation's power. Where UN demands conflict with those of individual nations, they are still often resisted. Yet there is little the UN can do to enforce conformity. Most nations, third-world as much as western or communist, are not yet ready to surrender any significant part of their independence of action to an international organisation; and especially not on the basic questions of peace and war where this surrender is most necessary if the organisation is to perform the task the world has called on it to undertake.

Having glanced at this broad picture of the environment in which the UN must operate, we can go on to look in greater detail at the individual elements of the UN system, the way in which they function today, and the way in which they need to be adapted to this changing world if the UN's effectiveness is to be increased.

1 The Security Council: keeping the peace

The chief UN body responsible for keeping the peace is the Security Council. If we wish to consider how the UN's role in maintaining peace can be improved, therefore, we must first examine the Council, how it has developed and the way it operates today.

When the UN was formed there was a general desire to learn the lessons of the League of Nations' failure. The League had failed, it was felt, for four main reasons. First, it had had no teeth: no armed force of its own it could call on to withstand aggression. Secondly, it had lacked authority, above all the authority to impose collective decisions to defend a member that was attacked. Thirdly, it had been paralysed in crisis situations by the rule of unanimity, inherited from nineteenth-century conferences, by which all members had to agree (except the parties to a dispute) for any decision to be reached. Fourth, the absence of several major powers – the US throughout its life, the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy and Japan for much of it, had made it unrepresentative and impotent.

All these failings would be rectified in the UN. It would have armed forces permanently at its disposal for use against aggressors. Its Council would be given authority over every member in calling for collective action. The veto would be abolished for all except the five most powerful states of all. And it would be made more universal by making it as freely open as possible to all states. First, to provide the teeth required, all members were to negotiate with the Security Council for the allocation of armed forces, which the Council might use to keep the peace. Though held by the home state, they would be available for use by the UN immediately when needed. Armed with this weapon, the new Council might show itself

more effective than its predecessor in dealing with threats to the peace.

Secondly, the Council was equipped with powers to make 'decisions' which the League Council lacked: that is, powers to command the obedience of all UN members. Under Article 25 of the new Charter every member of the organisation was under an obligation to 'accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter'. When a threat to the peace took place, the Council could first call on all members in certain circumstances either to apply economic sanctions, the severing of communications or of diplomatic relations (Article 41); or, if necessary, take such action 'by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international security' (Article 42). In this way the Organisation should this time possess the power to act decisively which the League had conspicuously lacked.

Thirdly, the unanimity rule was largely abandoned. In the Assembly it was given up altogether. In the Council it was confined to the big five, who were enabled to protect themselves through the exercise of a veto: a contrary vote by any of them would cause a resolution to fail. Otherwise a decision could be reached by majority vote (7 votes out of 11). The granting of the veto power to the largest states of all could be said to represent merely a recognition of reality. Whether or not such a veto had been explicitly accorded, in practice the organisation could not have been used wholly against the will of any one of the major powers without disaster: for example provoking it to leave the organisation altogether. The veto could thus be regarded as an essential safety-valve, which served to prevent dissension among its leading members from exploding the whole machine. Without it, the organisation, if urged to take action against one of those powers, could have been destroyed.

The ideal of universal membership was also upheld, at least in theory. The organisation was to be made open to all 'peace-loving' states: which at this time was expected to include all countries except ex-enemies — and even these, it was assumed, would be admitted as soon as they had purged their guilt and been reborn under democratic governments. But at the same time it was laid down that admission to the organisation was to be recommended by the Security Council: which meant that in practice the veto applied to this too.

All four of these hopes were to be disappointed. The UN never had the armed forces at its disposal that had been hoped for. Discussion on the establishment of the force took place in 1946–7 in the Military Staffs Committee, consisting of the military staffs of the five permanent members accredited to the United Nations. Differences soon arose on the scope and character of the force. The Soviet Union wished the forces to be stationed only on the territory of those countries which provided them and objected to the use of foreign bases for this purpose (perhaps fearing some new type of capitalist encirclement); most of the others thought bases should be made available for the permanent stationing of the force.

The Soviet Union wanted a limited force of not more than twelve divisions altogether and six hundred bombers; the US wanted a large force with twenty ground divisions, three battleships, and fifteen cruisers. The Soviet Union wanted an assurance that such forces would be withdrawn after use within ninety days of the termination of any operation (apparently fearing that they might be used to influence the political situation after such an emergency); the others wanted greater flexibility on this question. The Soviet Union thought that exactly equal forces should be provided from all the permanent members; while the US wanted it to be possible for variable contributions to be made. On most of these questions Western powers would now take a view close to that of the Soviet Union then. But even if those difficulties had been overcome, there would have remained huge obstacles to providing such a force. For, even if agreement could have been reached on its size and character, it seems unlikely there would have been agreement on the circumstances in which it was to be used, and on how it should be controlled: each far more important and difficult issues, which arose in acute form later over peace-keeping forces.

This in turn meant that the second hope was disappointed: the authority of the Council was greatly weakened. Without a special force, it was held, it could no longer call on the use of force to resist aggression. Moreover, it was fatally divided by cold war disputes. These were reflected in the constant use of the veto by the minority power, the Soviet Union. All this made clear that the Council was not going to be the dominant peace-preserving agency in the post-war world which had been originally conceived. It could recommend but not enforce. The hope that the UN would establish a wholly new 'enforcement system' for preserving peace was frustrated.

Thirdly, the voting system, though there was no universal veto, worked little better than before. The veto, even in its limited form, brought constant paralysis. All over the world East and West were in conflict. Almost at the Council's first meeting the Soviet Union registered its first veto on an issue (foreign forces in Syria and Lebanon) in which no vital interest was involved for her. This foreshadowed a whole series of similar occasions in the next few years when the Soviet Union exercised her veto on similar questions. Because the Western powers were at that time in a majority in the Council, these resolutions inevitably often reflected the Western viewpoint, but it could not be said that the Soviet Union's essential interests would have been threatened by any of them. She used the veto, in other words, not to protect vital concerns but to prevent the passage of any resolution with which she happened to disagree: a purpose for which it was certainly not intended (later, by the 1970s, Western powers, then themselves in a minority, vetoed more than the Soviet Union¹). In consequence, over innumerable issues decision was frustrated. By good fortune this did not affect the Council's response to the Korean War in 1950. Because she had not won her demand for the transfer of the China