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For over forty years the United Nations' General Assembly has been meeting annually to examine a broad range of international issues. At the conclusion of its debates, it adopts resolutions and decisions on each of its agenda items. While some resolutions are procedural, many can be considered important, even historic, because of the events they spawned or because they marked a turning point in international relations. These include, among others, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the Partition of Palestine, and the recognition of the People's Republic of China as the only legitimate representative of China in the UN.

The General Assembly can thus be seen as a kind of global parliament or legislature whose resolutions are the formal expression of world opinion on a given question. As in most parliaments, its resolutions are adopted without a vote or by a majority vote. There is widespread agreement that General Assembly resolutions, although viewed by many as mere recommendations, carry a moral weight and can have a significant political impact.¹ Thus, member states take General Assembly resolutions seriously. A single isolated vote does not tell us much about a country's policy, but a study of its cumulative voting record can be most revealing, and a comparison of the votes cast by member states can lead to a better understanding of the UN.

It is difficult, however, to devise a method for objectively evaluating the extent of agreement between any two countries in the UN. Some governments have identified ten or twelve resolutions they consider particularly

1. See, for example, Jorge Castañeda, *Legal Effects of UN Resolutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); H. G. Nicholas, *The United Nations as a Political Institution*, 5th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 135; and Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick's introductory statement to the U.S. State Department's *Report to Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations, February 24, 1985*, pp. 1-12. Compare their views to those of Leland M. Goodrich, *The United Nations in a Changing World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 80-81.

important, and then compared their own vote with other nations' records. But this is a highly subjective exercise, since no two countries at the UN have the same list of priority issues.

A few non-governmental organizations have sought a more objective approach. After selecting a number of the more important resolutions adopted at a given General Assembly session, they analyze each country's vote against a set of predetermined criteria such as "World Order Values," judge each resolution in terms of whether it promotes the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, and grade each country's vote accordingly.² But even here one can run into differing interpretations of certain charter provisions.

Instead of analyzing a country's votes on a group of arbitrarily selected resolutions, I have chosen a more straightforward, less subjective, approach: I have studied all UN General Assembly resolutions adopted at a given session to see how they were approved, who supported them, and who opposed them.³ The following trends emerged from the compiled data:

1. The yearly total has been growing steadily

Although the number of General Assembly resolutions has fluctuated significantly from one year to the next, the five-year averages point to an almost steady increase, from about 117 adopted resolutions in the late 1940s to over 340 in the early 1980s (see Table 1).

Several reasons account for this constant rise. Increased membership in the UN (from 51 original members in 1945 to 159 in 1984) has broadened the range of concerns in the General Assembly. Some questions that have not been resolved in the Security Council have been added to the General Assembly's agenda. Moreover, the number of separate agenda items has trebled as member states have become more aware of the complexity and variety of disarmament, development, humanitarian, and social questions. In contrast, the number of resolutions adopted on legal, administrative, and budgetary matters has remained roughly the same over the years, while those on decolonization issues have declined since 1960 as dozens of nations have gained independence, thus providing tangible proof of the UN's success in this area (Table 2). However, the question of Namibia, which is examined directly in the Plenary, has been the subject of more resolutions than all other past decolonization issues combined. One more reason for the rise in the number of resolutions adopted by the Plenary without reference to a main committee is South Africa's policy of apartheid, which has been the

2. This is the approach Planetary Citizens use to analyze UN General Assembly voting patterns.

3. Over the past fifteen years, the UN's Department of Public Information has published the General Assembly voting records. For previous sessions, one must rely on the verbatim records of the General Assembly meetings.

TABLE 1. *Total resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly^a*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>
1946	119	1967	128
1947	93	1968	142
1948	129	1969	158
1949	108	1970	161
1950	136	1971	180
1951	122	1972	180
1952	123	1973	178
1953	106	1974	187
1954	109	1975	217
1955	111	1976	253
1956	131	1977	264
1957	108	1978	283
1958	125	1979	305
1959	128	1980	321
1960	148	1981	338
1961	133	1982	348
1962	133	1983	332
1963	124	1984	343
1964	14	1985	356
1965	143	1986	320
1966	141		
<i>Five-year averages</i>			
	1946–50	117.0	
	1951–55	114.2	
	1956–60	128.0	
	1961–65	133.3 ^b	
	1966–70	146.0	
	1971–75	188.4	
	1976–80	285.2	
	1981–85	343.4	

a. Yearly totals include the separate decisions taken on the different sections of the budget resolutions. Those resolutions adopted during special or emergency sessions of the General Assembly are not included.

b. Four-year total, since the 1964 General Assembly was an abbreviated session.

topic of prolonged debates and more General Assembly resolutions than any other single item ever to appear on its agenda.

• 2. Half the resolutions are put to a vote

- During the UN's early years, the vast majority of General Assembly resolutions were adopted by a vote. This proportion reached a high of 80 percent in 1950 and then declined to about 55 percent in 1960 and 1965. It rose again in 1970 and fell to about 40 percent in 1980. During the 1980s, it has increased once more, climbing to 48.4 percent in 1986 (Table 3).

TABLE 2. Resolutions adopted upon recommendation of main committees

	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985
<i>Plenary</i>	12	24	31	13	14	21	55	47
<i>Main committees</i>								
Disarmament and security	14	8	6	10	20	30	44	72
Special political	15	4	5	6	15	17	20	25
Economic	16	5	20	21	24	44	71	70
Humanitarian and social	14	4	13	23	23	29	59	73
Decolonization	19	21	27	24	15	23	13	15
Administrative and budgetary	31	38	43	35	41	44	44	39
Legal	15	7	3	11	9	9	14	15

Not all resolutions that are voted upon receive negative votes, that is, a formal objection. Some are passed with only handful of abstentions while a few are actually adopted unanimously. By adding these resolutions to those adopted without a vote, we have the total of General Assembly resolutions approved without formal opposition. The proportion of such resolutions reached a high of 80 percent in 1960. In other words, in that year, only 20 percent of the resolutions were opposed by one or more countries. In 1986, 36 percent had opposition, the highest level since the UN's early years.

3. Number of votes against resolutions has declined since 1980

The average number of votes in favor of General Assembly resolutions has grown steadily since 1946—predictably, as UN membership increased. By 1986, resolutions were adopted by an average of 127 votes in favor and 5.2 against, with 25.7 abstentions or absences. Those figures translate into an average approval rate of 80 percent of all member states, the highest ever in UN annals. General Assembly resolutions are therefore accepted by an increasing majority of its members.

For thirty-five years General Assembly resolutions also received a growing average number of negative votes, reaching a high of seven in 1980. Since then, however, the average has declined to just over five in 1986. Since more resolutions are now receiving negative votes, we can conclude that fewer countries are voting against an increasing number of resolutions.

4. Different opposition to resolutions

At one time or another, every UN member state has cast a negative vote in the General Assembly. In some years, certain countries have pressed the red button more consistently than others (Table 4). To measure the extent of a

TABLE 3. Resolutions adopted without a vote/by a vote

	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1986
1. Total resolutions adopted	136	111	148	143	161	217	321	356	320
2. Without a vote	30	36	67	64	58	116	187	199	165
% of total resolutions	22.1%	32.4%	45.3%	44.8%	36.0%	53.5%	58.3%	55.9%	51.6%
3. By a vote	106	75	81	79	103	101	134	157	155
% of total resolutions	77.9%	67.6%	54.7%	55.2%	64.0%	46.5%	41.7%	44.1%	48.4%
4. Voted upon but with no negative votes	45	42	52	39	50	49	46	37	39
% of total resolutions	33.1%	37.8%	35.1%	27.3%	31.1%	22.6%	14.3%	10.4%	12.2%
5. With negative votes	61	33	29	40	53	52	88	120	116
% of total resolutions	44.9%	29.7%	19.6%	28.0%	32.9%	24.0%	27.4%	33.7%	36.3%
6. Total without negative votes (2 + 4)	75	78	119	103	108	165	233	236	204
% of total resolutions	55.1%	70.3%	80.4%	72.0%	67.1%	76.0%	72.6%	66.3%	63.7%

TABLE 4. *Countries casting negative votes*

(Figures in parentheses indicate the total number of negative votes cast against the resolutions that received ten or less negative votes.)

	5th 1950	15th 1960	25th 1970	30th 1975	35th 1980	40th 1985	41st 1986
Afghanistan		2(0)	2(0)		13(0)	11(1)	4(0)
Albania	*	11(3)	3(0)	10(8)	6(2)	7(2)	5(4)
Algeria	*	*	4(0)	2(0)	1(0)	1(0)	2(0)
Angola	*	*	*	*	6(1)	4(0)	4(0)
Antigua and Barbuda	*	*	*	*	*		3(1)
Argentina		1(0)		1(0)	5(2)		
Australia	7(1)	3(2)	13(8)	5(0)	12(2)	16(0)	21(2)
Austria	*	1(0)	1(0)	2(0)	2(0)	2(0)	2(0)
Bahamas	*	*	*	2(0)			
Bahrain	*	*	*			2(0)	1(0)
Bangladesh	*	*	*		2(0)	3(1)	
Barbados	*	*	1(0)	5(2)			
Belgium	4(1)	7(4)	6(3)	9(0)	22(9)	31(5)	41(6)
Belize	*	*	*	*	*	1(1)	1(1)
Benin	*	3(0)	2(0)	3(2)	3(0)	2(0)	2(0)
Bhutan	*	*	*	1(0)	2(1)	1(1)	1(1)
Bolivia			1(0)	2(0)	4(2)		
Botswana	*	*		2(0)			
Brazil		3(1)	3(3)	1(0)	4(2)		
Brunei Darussalam	*	*	*	*	*	1(0)	1(0)
Bulgaria	*	12(4)	9(4)	11(7)	16(2)	18(4)	10(2)
Burkina Faso	*		1(0)				2(0)
Burma	1(1)	1(0)	1(0)				
Burundi	*	*	2(0)	1(0)			
Byelorussian SSR	44(39)	12(4)	10(5)	11(7)	19(3)	18(4)	10(2)
Cameroon	*	3(1)		1(0)			1(1)
Canada	6(1)	1(0)	7(3)	8(0)	23(11)	29(5)	23(5)
Cape Verde	*	*	*	1(0)			
Central African Republic	*	2(0)		3(0)		1(1)	
Chad	*	3(1)		1(0)			2(0)
Chile			1(0)	3(0)	5(2)	4(3)	2(1)
China	2(0)	2(0)		6(4)			
Colombia			1(0)	1(0)	2(0)	1(0)	
Comoros	*	*	*	2(0)	1(1)	1(0)	3(1)
Congo	*	2(0)	4(0)	2(0)	4(0)	1(0)	1(0)
Costa Rica			4(1)	9(4)	1(0)	3(1)	6(1)
Côte d'Ivoire	*	4(1)		2(0)			1(0)
Cuba	1(1)	6(0)	6(1)	4(1)	8(0)	13(1)	4(0)
Cyprus	*		1(0)	1(0)			
Czechoslovakia	44(39)	12(4)	9(4)	11(7)	19(3)	18(4)	10(2)
Democratic Kampuchea	*	2(0)		1(0)	1(0)		
Democratic Yemen	*	*	3(0)	2(1)	5(0)	5(0)	4(0)
Denmark	3(0)	2(0)	3(1)	9(1)	10(1)	19(0)	14(1)
Djibouti	*	*	*	*			1(0)
Dominica	*	*	*	*			1(0)

TABLE 4. *continued*

	5th 1950	15th 1960	25th 1970	30th 1975	35th 1980	40th 1985	41st 1986
Dominican Republican	1(1)		3(0)	5(1)	2(0)		2(0)
Ecuador			1(0)			1(0)	1(0)
Egypt		4(0)	3(0)	1(0)	1(0)		
El Salvador	1(1)		4(1)	5(1)	2(0)	4(1)	8(3)
Equatorial Guinea	*	*	2(0)	2(0)		1(1)	1(0)
Ethiopia		1(0)	2(0)	2(0)	4(0)	3(0)	4(0)
Fiji	*	*		3(0)			
Finland	*	2(0)	2(0)	3(0)	2(0)	7(0)	5(0)
France	1(0)	4(2)	9(7)	8(3)	23(13)	38(14)	45(21)
Gabon	*	4(1)	1(0)	1(0)		1(1)	1(0)
Gambia	*	*				1(1)	
German Democratic Republic	*	*	*	11(7)	19(3)	18(4)	10(2)
Germany, Federal Republic of	*	*	*	13(4)	21(8)	31(5)	34(8)
Ghana	*	2(0)	1(0)	2(0)			
Greece	1(1)	2(0)			5(0)		
Grenada	*	*	*	2(0)	9(1)	7(2)	3(0)
Guatemala	3(3)	1(0)	3(1)	1(0)	6(2)	4(3)	
Guinea	*	6(0)	2(0)	2(0)			
Guinea Bissau	*	*	*	2(0)			
Guyana	*	*	1(0)	2(0)	1(0)		
Haiti			1(0)	6(1)		1(0)	1(0)
Honduras		1(0)		6(2)	2(0)		4(1)
Hungary	*	12(4)	9(4)	11(7)	19(3)	18(4)	10(2)
Iceland	1(0)	1(0)	2(1)	7(0)	10(1)	22(0)	17(1)
India	5(1)	2(0)	2(0)	2(2)	4(1)	2(1)	2(1)
Indonesia	2(0)	3(0)	1(0)	1(1)	1(0)	3(1)	2(1)
Iran				1(1)		2(0)	1(0)
Iraq	1(0)	4(0)	4(0)	1(0)	4(1)		
Ireland	*	2(0)		7(1)	5(0)	7(0)	7(0)
Israel	6(2)	2(0)	7(3)	22(13)	29(20)	57(34)	50(32)
Italy	*	1(0)	2(0)	7(1)	15(3)	27(5)	29(5)
Jamaica	*			1(0)			
Japan	*	1(0)	2(2)	3(1)	9(0)	18(1)	16(1)
Jordan	*	2(0)			1(0)		
Kenya	*	*	1(0)	1(0)			
Kuwait	*	*	1(0)	1(0)		2(0)	1(0)
Lao	*			2(0)	7(0)	9(0)	3(0)
Lebanon		2(0)				1(0)	2(1)
Lesotho	*	*	1(0)	2(0)			
Liberia	2(0)		2(0)	7(2)	1(1)		
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	*	1(0)	3(0)	3(2)	2(0)	5(0)	4(0)
Luxembourg	2(1)	4(1)	5(2)	10(2)	22(9)	26(2)	29(4)
Madagascar	*	4(1)	1(0)	2(0)	2(0)	1(0)	1(0)
Malawi	*	*	5(1)	5(2)	1(1)		2(1)
Malaysia	*	1(0)	2(0)	1(1)	1(0)	1(0)	1(0)
Maldives	*	*			1(0)		
Mali	*	3(0)	3(0)	1(0)			
Malta	*	*		1(0)			

TABLE 4. *continued*

	5th 1950	15th 1960	25th 1970	30th 1975	35th 1980	40th 1985	41st 1986
Mauritania	*	*	3(0)	1(0)			1(0)
Mauritius	*	*			1(1)	1(1)	1(1)
Mexico	1(1)	1(0)					
Mongolia	*	*	8(3)	11(7)	19(3)	13(0)	6(1)
Morocco	*	5(0)	2(0)	1(1)	2(0)	3(2)	1(0)
Mozambique	*	*	*	2(0)	5(0)		
Nepal	*	2(1)	1(0)				
Netherlands	5(2)	2(1)	6(2)	10(2)	16(5)	26(2)	27(5)
New Zealand	5(1)	1(0)	9(5)	1(0)	10(0)	14(0)	14(0)
Nicaragua			5(2)	14(8)	1(0)	3(0)	3(0)
Niger	*	3(0)		1(0)	1(0)	1(0)	1(0)
Nigeria	*	1(0)	4(0)	1(0)			
Norway	6(1)	2(0)	3(1)	8(0)	9(1)	22(0)	15(0)
Oman	*	*	*	1(0)	1(0)	1(1)	2(1)
Pakistan	3(1)		2(0)	2(1)	3(1)		1(0)
Panama			4(1)	3(1)			
Papua New Guinea	*	*	*		1(0)		
Paraguay		1(0)	3(0)	3(1)	2(2)	2(1)	1(1)
Peru		1(0)	2(1)				
Philippines	1(0)			1(1)	4(1)	2(1)	
Poland	44(39)	12(4)	9(4)	12(8)	17(3)	13(3)	10(2)
Portugal	*	9(7)	22(20)		10(3)	28(5)	27(3)
Qatar	*	*	*	1(1)	1(0)	2(0)	1(0)
Romania	*	12(4)	5(0)	2(0)	2(0)	2(0)	7(2)
Rwanda	*	*	2(0)	1(0)			
Saint Christopher and Nevis	*	*	*	*	*	2(1)	4(1)
Saint Lucia	*	*	*	*			4(0)
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	*	*	*	*			3(0)
Samoa	*	*	*	*			1(0)
Sao Tome and Principe	*	*	*	1(0)	2(0)		
Saudi Arabia		3(0)	1(0)	2(1)	1(0)	2(0)	1(0)
Senegal	*	3(0)		1(0)	1(0)		
Seychelles	*	*	*	*	3(0)		
Sierra Leone	*	*	1(0)	1(0)		2(1)	1(0)
Singapore	*	*	1(0)		1(0)	1(0)	
Solomon Islands	*	*	*	*		1(1)	
Somalia	*		4(0)	1(0)		1(0)	1(0)
South Africa	7(3)	8(7)	22(20)				
Spain	*	5(4)	1(1)	2(0)	3(0)	12(0)	11(0)
Sri Lanka	*	2(0)	1(0)	1(0)			2(1)
Sudan	*	2(0)	4(0)	1(0)	1(0)	1(0)	1(0)
Suriname	*	*	*		1(0)		
Swaziland	*	*		4(0)		1(0)	
Sweden	6(1)	2(0)	2(0)	3(0)	2(0)	7(0)	5(0)
Syria Arab Republic		1(0)	5(0)	4(1)	10(1)	11(2)	7(3)
Thailand				1(1)	1(0)	1(0)	

TABLE 4. *continued*

	5th 1950	15th 1960	25th 1970	30th 1975	35th 1980	40th 1985	41st 1986
Togo	*	1(0)		1(0)			1(0)
Trinidad and Tobago	*	*		1(0)			
Tunisia	*		1(0)		1(0)		
Turkey	2(0)	1(0)		2(1)	5(0)	18(2)	12(1)
Uganda	*	*	3(0)				
Ukrainian SSR	44(39)	12(4)	10(5)	11(7)	19(3)	17(3)	10(2)
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	44(39)	12(4)	10(5)	12(8)	19(3)	18(4)	10(2)
United Arab Emirates	*	*	*			3(0)	1(0)
United Kingdom	7(3)	2(1)	14(13)	13(3)	28(15)	46(19)	49(22)
United Republic of Tanzania	*	*	3(0)	2(0)		1(0)	1(0)
United States	3(0)	2(1)	17(22)	24(14)	45(29)	90(58)	94(67)
Uruguay	1(1)	4(1)	3(0)	4(1)	5(2)		
Vanuatu	*	*	*	*	*		
Venezuela	0	2(0)				1(0)	
Vietnam	*	*	*	*	7(0)	10(0)	3(0)
Yemen	1(0)	4(0)	4(0)	1(0)	1(0)	1(0)	1(0)
Yugoslavia	4(3)	2(0)	4(0)	2(0)	1(0)		
Zaire	*	3(0)				1(1)	2(0)
Zambia	*	*	4(0)	2(0)			
Zimbabwe	*	*	*	*	1(0)		

* Not a member

country's opposition to resolutions, I have taken all resolutions receiving negative votes and shown how often a member state rejected the resolutions (Table 5).

During the early years of the UN, the most persistent opposition came from five Eastern European members: the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Soviet Union. In 1950, for example, they rejected 73.3 percent, or almost three out of every four, of the resolutions put to a vote. No other member state came close to that record: Australia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom occupied a distant second place with 11.7 percent. The United States was far down the list with only 5 percent, and France even farther down with a mere 1.7 percent.

Over the past decades, the roles have reversed. By 1986, Soviet-bloc rejection of General Assembly voted resolutions had declined to 8.6 percent, while opposition by some Western European countries and Israel had climbed to 20–43 percent. The United States, however, had reached 81 percent, a level of rejection that surpassed the Soviet Union's in the early 1950s, and Portugal's and South Africa's in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

TABLE 5. *Rejected resolutions*

	1986	1985	1980	1975	1970	1960	1950
Total number of resolutions with negative votes:	116	120	88	52	53	29	61
<i>Percent times joined in rejection (ranks in parentheses)</i>							
United States	81.0(1)	78.3(1)	52.3(1)	42.1(1)	32.1(3)	6.9(38)	5.0(18)
Israel	43.1(2)	49.6(2)	32.6(3)	38.6(2)	13.2(16)	6.9(38)	10.0(9)
United Kingdom	42.2(3)	40.0(3)	33.7(2)	22.8(4)	26.4(4)	6.9(38)	11.7(6)
France	38.8(4)	33.0(4)	26.7(4)	14.0(21)	17.0(9)	13.8(19)	1.7(28)
Belgium	35.3(5)	27.0(5)	25.6(6)	15.8(18)	11.3(18)	24.1(12)	6.7(16)
Federal Rep. of Germany	29.3(6)	27.0(5)	24.4(8)	22.8(4)	*	*	*
Italy	25.0(7)	23.5(9)	17.4(19)	12.3(24)	3.8(53)	3.4(62)	*
Luxembourg	25.0(7)	22.6(10)	25.6(6)	17.5(15)	9.4(21)	13.8(19)	3.3(22)
Netherlands	23.3(9)	22.6(10)	18.6(17)	17.5(15)	11.3(18)	6.9(38)	8.3(13)
Portugal	23.3(9)	24.3(8)	11.6(22)	0	41.5(1)	31.0(10)	*
Canada	19.8(11)	25.2(7)	26.7(4)	14.0(21)	13.2(16)	3.4(62)	10.0(9)
Australia	18.1(12)	13.9(24)	14.0(21)	8.8(31)	24.5(5)	10.3(27)	11.7(6)
Iceland	14.7(13)	19.1(12)	11.6(22)	12.3(24)	3.8(53)	3.4(62)	1.7(28)
Japan	13.8(14)	15.7(15)	10.5(27)	5.3(39)	3.8(53)	3.4(62)	*
Norway	12.9(15)	19.1(12)	10.5(27)	14.0(21)	5.7(38)	6.9(38)	10.0(9)
Denmark	12.1(16)	16.5(14)	11.6(22)	15.8(18)	5.7(38)	6.9(38)	5.0(18)
New Zealand	12.1(16)	12.2(26)	11.6(22)	1.8(77)	17.0(9)	3.4(62)	8.3(13)
Turkey	10.3(18)	15.7(15)	5.8(36)	3.5(49)	0	3.4(62)	3.3(22)
Spain	9.5(19)	10.4(29)	3.5(51)	3.5(49)	1.9(71)	17.2(15)	*
Bulgaria	8.6(20)	15.7(15)	18.6(17)	19.3(8)	17.0(9)	41.4(1)	*
Byelorussian SSR	8.6(20)	15.7(15)	22.1(9)	19.3(8)	18.7(6)	41.4(1)	73.3(1)
Czechoslovakia	8.6(20)	15.7(15)	22.1(9)	19.3(8)	17.0(9)	41.4(1)	73.3(1)
German Democratic Rep.	8.6(20)	15.7(15)	22.1(9)	19.3(8)	*	*	*
Hungary	8.6(20)	15.7(15)	22.1(9)	19.3(8)	17.0(9)	41.4(1)	*

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TABLE 5. *continued*

	1986	1985	1980	1975	1970	1960	1950
Dominican Republic	1.7(51)	0	2.3(54)	8.8(31)	5.7(38)	0	1.7(28)
Malawi	1.7(51)	0	1.2(66)	8.8(31)	9.4(21)	*	*
Sri Lanka	1.7(51)	0	0	1.8(77)	1.9(71)	6.9(38)	*
Morocco	0.9(62)	2.6(45)	2.3(54)	1.8(77)	3.8(53)	17.2(15)	*
Pakistan	0.9(62)	2.6(45)	2.3(54)	0	3.8(53)	0	5.0(18)
Paraguay	0.9(62)	1.7(51)	2.3(54)	5.3(39)	5.7(38)	3.4(62)	0
Saudi Arabia	0.9(62)	1.7(51)	1.2(66)	3.5(49)	1.9(71)	10.3(27)	0
Congo	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	4.7(44)	3.5(49)	7.5(26)	6.9(38)	*
Equatorial Guinea	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	0	3.5(49)	3.8(53)	*	*
Haiti	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	0	10.5(28)	1.9(71)	0	0
Madagascar	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	2.3(54)	3.5(49)	1.9(71)	13.8(19)	*
Malaysia	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	1.2(66)	1.8(77)	3.8(53)	3.4(62)	*
Niger	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	1.2(66)	1.8(77)	0	10.3(27)	*
Gabon	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	0	1.8(77)	1.9(71)	13.8(19)	*
Somalia	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	0	1.8(77)	7.5(26)	0	*
Sudan	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	1.2(66)	1.8(77)	7.5(26)	6.9(38)	*
Tanzania	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	0	3.5(49)	5.7(38)	*	*
Yemen	0.9(62)	0.9(59)	1.2(66)	1.8(77)	7.5(26)	13.8(19)	1.7(28)
Côte d'Ivoire	0.9(62)	0	0	3.5(49)	0	13.8(19)	*
Mauritania	0.9(62)	0	0	1.8(77)	5.7(38)	*	*
Cameroon	0.9(62)	0	0	1.8(77)	0	10.3(27)	*
Togo	0.9(62)	0	0	1.8(77)	0	3.4(62)	*
Guatemala	0	3.5(41)	7.0(33)	1.8(77)	5.7(38)	3.4(62)	5.0(18)
Philippines	0	1.7(51)	4.7(44)	1.8(77)	0	0	1.7(28)
Central African Republic	0	0.9(59)	0	5.3(39)	0	6.9(38)	*
Swaziland	0	0.9(59)	0	7.0(35)	0	*	*
Venezuela	0	0.9 (59)	0	0	0	6.9(38)	0
Uruguay	0	0	5.8(36)	7.0(35)	5.7(38)	13.8(19)	1.7(28)
Argentina	0	0	5.8(36)	1.8(77)	0	3.4(62)	0
Mozambique	0	0	5.8(36)	3.5(49)	*	*	*
Greece	0	0	5.8(36)	0	0	6.9(38)	3.3(22)
Bolivia	0	0	4.7(44)	3.5(49)	1.9(71)	0	0

Iraq	0	0	0	4.7(44)	1.8(77)	7.5(26)	13.8(19)	1.7(28)
Brazil	0	0	0	4.7(44)	1.8(77)	5.7(38)	10.3(27)	0
Seychelles	0	0	0	3.5(51)	0	*	*	*
Liberia	0	0	0	1.2(66)	12.3(24)	3.8(53)	0	3.3(22)
Yugoslavia	0	0	0	1.2(66)	3.5(49)	7.5(26)	6.9(38)	6.7(16)
Guyana	0	0	0	1.2(66)	3.5(49)	1.9(71)	*	*
Egypt	0	0	0	1.2(66)	1.8(77)	5.7(38)	17.2(15)	0
Senegal	0	0	0	1.2(66)	1.8(77)	0	10.3(27)	*
Democratic Kampuchea	0	0	0	1.2(66)	1.8(77)	0	6.9(38)	*
Jordan	0	0	0	1.2(66)	0	0	6.9(38)	*
China	0	0	0	0	10.5(28)	*	6.9(38)	3.3(22)
Panama	0	0	0	0	5.3(39)	7.5(26)	0	0
Fiji	0	0	0	0	5.3(39)	0	*	*
Zambia	0	0	0	0	3.5(49)	7.5(26)	*	*
Guinea	0	0	0	0	3.5(49)	3.8(53)	20.7(13)	*
Ghana	0	0	0	0	3.5(49)	1.9(71)	6.9(38)	*
Lesotho	0	0	0	0	3.5(49)	1.9(71)	*	*
Bahamas	0	0	0	0	3.5(49)	*	*	*
Botswana	0	0	0	0	3.5(49)	0	*	*
Guinea Bissau	0	0	0	0	3.5(49)	*	*	*
Nigeria	0	0	0	0	1.8(77)	7.5(26)	3.4(62)	*
Mali	0	0	0	0	1.8(77)	5.7(38)	10.3(27)	*
Burundi	0	0	0	0	1.8(77)	3.8(53)	*	*
Rwanda	0	0	0	0	1.8(77)	3.8(53)	*	*
Chad	0	0	0	0	1.8(77)	0	10.3(27)	*
South Africa	*	*	*	*	*	41.5(1)	27.6(11)	11.7(6)
Uganda	0	0	0	0	0	5.7(38)	*	*
Peru	0	0	0	0	0	3.8(53)	3.4(62)	0
Nepal	0	0	0	0	0	1.9(71)	6.9(38)	*
Burma	0	0	0	0	0	1.9(71)	3.4(62)	1.7(28)
Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.4(62)	1.7(28)
Vanuatu	0	0	0	*	*	*	*	*

* Not a member

5. Rejection of resolutions parallels Security Council vetoes

In 1970, the United States cast its first veto in the Security Council. That same year its formal opposition to General Assembly resolutions rose to 32.1 percent, a significant leap over the 6.9 percent of 1960 or the 5.0 percent of 1950. During the 1970s, the United States cast an average of two vetoes each year in the Security Council. In the 1980s, it has cast an average of four vetoes a year, another enormous jump. In contrast, the Soviet Union, which exercised its veto power about ten times a year during the late 1940s, has cast only two since 1981.

6. Some countries are increasingly isolated in their opposition

Over the past decade, a few countries have consistently rejected General Assembly resolutions which were approved by overwhelming majorities. In fact, if one takes all resolutions receiving negative votes, one finds that the proportion with ten or more negative votes has fallen from about 44 percent in 1981 to 28 percent in 1986. Conversely, those receiving five votes or less against have gone from 50 to 65 percent. More significantly in recent years, resolutions with a single negative vote have gone from a low of 12 percent in 1979 and 1980 to 27 percent in 1986 (Table 6).

Between 1975 and 1986, 210 resolutions were adopted with a single negative vote, 199 with two, and 74 with three. The total negative votes cast was 830 ($210 + 199 \times 2 + 74 \times 3$). But although these 830 votes were cast by twenty-seven member states, five of them (Albania, France, Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States) accounted for 683 or 82.3 percent of them. Moreover, two countries—Israel and the United States—cast 552 or 66.5 percent of all those votes (Tables 7, 8, and 9).

The United States and, to a lesser extent, Israel are finding themselves increasingly isolated in their opposition to General Assembly resolutions. Certain North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries and other allies occasionally join them in voting against resolutions—but this is becoming the exception (Table 10).

A clear picture of the United States' self-imposed isolation in the General Assembly emerges from an analysis of resolutions which received a single negative vote. In the 1980s, the United States cast that lone negative vote ninety-eight times—twice as many as all the other UN members combined. That averages out to 16.3 times a year since 1981, as opposed to 2.7 times in the late 1970s.

The United States' pronounced tendency to reject resolutions was most evident during the General Assembly's 1985 and 1986 sessions. A total of 1,734 negative votes were registered against 236 of the 676 resolutions

TABLE 6. Resolutions with negative votes

	Year	1970	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Votes against:	Total	53	52	58	52	67	77	88	95	121	116	114	120	116
	1,129													
	1	6	7	11	14	10	9	10	18	32	25	20	23	31
	2	13	9	16	8	6	7	9	20	22	25	30	25	22
	3	1	6	2	2	5	5	6	6	5	5	6	11	15
	4	3	0	1	5	5	3	3	2	3	4	1	3	3
	5	4	2	1	0	2	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	4
	6-10	183	14	15	14	16	21	23	6	13	17	10	13	8
	11-15	152	5	8	4	8	15	14	12	17	14	18	19	13
	16-20	158	2	3	4	11	9	15	19	16	21	22	19	12
	Over 20	77	5	1	1	4	6	7	11	11	5	6	7	8
	Percent													
	2 or less	37.9%	30.8	46.6	42.3	23.9	20.8	21.6	40.0	44.6	43.1	43.9	40.0	45.7
	5 or less	49.5	50.9	53.4	55.8	41.8	33.8	33.0	49.5	52.9	50.9	50.9	51.7	64.7
	10 or less	65.7	77.4	79.3	82.7	65.7	61.0	59.1	55.8	63.6	65.5	59.6	62.5	71.6
	Over 10	34.3	22.6	20.7	17.3	34.3	39.0	40.1	44.2	36.4	34.5	40.4	37.5	28.4
	20	6.8	9.4	1.7	1.9	6.0	7.8	8.0	11.6	9.1	4.3	5.3	5.8	6.9

TABLE 7. Resolution with one negative vote

	Total	1970	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
United States	114		2	6	2	2	2	2	10	20	16	14	16	22
Israel	58		2	1	7	3	4	6	6	8	7	5	5	4
France	14		1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	2	4
Albania	10		1	1	2	3	2							1
Brazil	2	1									1			
Guatemala	2					1			1					
Turkey	2		1	1										
United Kingdom	2	1		1										
China	1					1								
Ethiopia	1				1									
India	1									1				
Iran	1									1				
Portugal	1	1												
Singapore	1				1									
South Africa ^a	1	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Unrecorded	5	2			1			1		1				
	216	6	7	11	14	10	9	10	18	32	25	20	23	31

a. South Africa did not participate in sessions marked with asterisk.

TABLE 8. *Resolutions with two negative votes*

	Total	1970	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
United States	160		2	3	2	2	6	8	20	21	25	29	22	20
Israel	130	1	3	6	2	2	5	6	17	18	18	21	17	14
United Kingdom	25								3	2	5	7	4	4
Albania	23		3	9	6	1		1					1	2
China	15		3	6	4	2								
Portugal	10	10												
South Africa ^f	10	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Syria	8			3	2									
Turkey	5									1	1	1	1	2
Bhutan	4			1		1	1			1				1
France	4					1	1							
India	4			1		1	1			1			1	1
Costa Rica	3			2										
Liberia	2		1					1					1	
Malawi	2		1					1						
Nicaragua	2		1			1								
Paraguay	2										1			
Others	9	3 ^a	2 ^b	1 ^c		1		1 ^d					2 ^e	
Unrecorded	6	2	2									2		
212 × 2 =	424	13	9	16	8	6	7	9	20	22	25	30	26	22

a. Brazil, El Salvador, and Peru

b. Poland and USSR

c. Canada

d. Pakistan

e. Chile and Guatemala

f. South Africa did not participate in sessions marked with asterisks.

TABLE 9. Resolutions with three negative votes

	Total	1970	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
United States	56		4	1	2	2	4	5	4	4	3	5	10	12
Israel	35		3	2	2	1	2	3	2	1	3	4	6	6
United Kingdom	27		1			1	2	2	1	3	1	2	7	7
Canada	18				1		1	2	3	1	2	3	3	2
France	18					1	2	2				1	4	8
Albania	9		1			3	1		1	1	1			1
Syria	9		1			3	1		1	1	1		1	1
Bhutan	6							1	1		1	1	1	1
India	6							1	1		1	1	1	1
Iraq	6					3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mauritius	6							1	1					
Nicaragua	4		3	1										
Australia	3				1		1	1						
Federal Rep. of Germany	3		1							2				
Costa Rica	2			1									1	1
El Salvador	2												2	2
Guatemala	2						1		1					
Others	10	3 ^a	1 ^b	1 ^c				1 ^d		1 ^e	1 ^f			2 ^g
Unrecorded	3		3											
75 × 3 =	225	1	6	2	2	5	5	6	6	5	5	6	11	15

a. Byelorussian SSR, Ukrainian SSR, and USSR

b. Libya

c. Haiti

d. Brazil

e. New Zealand

f. Democratic Yemen

g. Antigua and Barbuda and Comoros

TABLE 10. *Resolutions adopted with one to three negative votes*

	1975-80	1981-86
<i>Total single negative votes</i>	59	149
Percent votes cast		
United States	25.4%	65.8%
Israel	37.3	23.9
France	6.8	6.7
Albania	15.3	0.7
All others	15.3	3.4
<i>Two negative votes</i>	110 (55 × 2)	288 (144 × 2)
Percent votes cast		
United States	20.9%	47.6%
Israel	21.8	36.5
United Kingdom	0	8.7
Turkey	0	1.7
Albania	18.2	1.0
China	13.6	0
Syria	4.5	1.0
Bhutan	2.7	0.3
India	2.7	0.3
All others	15.5	2.1
<i>Three negative votes</i>	78 (26 × 3)	144 (48 × 3)
Percent votes cast		
United States	23.1%	26.4%
Israel	16.7	15.3
United Kingdom	7.7	14.6
Canada	5.1	9.7
France	6.4	9.0
Bhutan	1.3	3.5
India	1.3	3.5
Mauritius	1.3	3.5
Albania	6.4	2.8
Syria	6.4	2.8
All others	24.3	8.9

adopted at those two sessions. But, although 110 countries cast negative votes, the following sixteen states (10 percent of the members) accounted for 1,048, or 60 percent, of those votes: United States (184 votes), Israel (107), United Kingdom (95), France (83), Belgium (72), Federal Republic of Germany (65), Italy (56), Luxembourg (55), Portugal (55), Netherlands (53), Canada (52), Australia (37), Norway (37), Japan (34), Denmark (33), and Turkey (30).

Why did the United States cast 77 more negative votes than Israel during those two years and 89 more than the United Kingdom? How does one explain why the United States rejected almost three times as many resolu-

tions as the Federal Republic of Germany and over five times as many as Japan? Does the United States consider that its own interests are more threatened by UN General Assembly resolutions than its closest allies do? What does all of this reveal about a country's attitude towards international organization, multilateral cooperation, and the promotion of a more just world based on respect for international law and institutions? These are some of the questions UN member states should address.