

NEW USES FOR THE UN

We Can Pursue Concrete Goals and Still Serve the Cause of Idealism

Lincoln P. Bloomfield

The immediate day-to-day foreign policy decisions which are facing us are on issues that are largely of other people's making. Beyond them there is another level where we might move ahead and try to give greater force to our ideas and to our ideals. It is here that we should be looking for action that will connect with our long-range objectives. The path here, as I see it, is to try to develop certain common interests, which may start out on a limited basis but can ultimately develop into world-wide interests.

Diplomatic resources, in the form of agencies and other tools, need not be limited to short-run, crash situations. To the extent that we have a concrete goal, and if that goal is plausible and politically realistic, U.S. foreign policy could well devote some of its resources to planning and limited action to achieve our goal, no less than the Communists devote their resources and use the tools of diplomacy to move toward their broad strategic ends. The key to this door, I believe, is in a new approach to the problem of community of interests that lead, in turn, to common action.

Now certainly we should continue to search for common interests with the Soviet Union. Some of these may already exist and it may well be that, in the realm of security, agreement can be reached with the Soviets on elimination of testing and, possibly in the future, some agreement on surprise attack. Perhaps ultimately there can be some agreement on Antarctica; perhaps something substantial in the medical field; conceivably something in the field of space, although doubtless not at the present time. But my point is that, if our search for other common interests depends on a mutuality of understanding and common values with the Russians, I think we are licked before we start. We can and should gamble that one day that understanding may deepen, and we should pave the way

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for it, and leave all the doors ajar. But today the search for common interests needs to be differentiated and sorted out.

The aim should be to devise actions to move in limited ways toward our own concept of a better world order which can eventually emerge from the present disorders and strife. If this is a feasible policy for the United States to follow in the present world situation—and I think it is—how can we use the tool of diplomacy that from the start seemed to symbolize a better kind of world order, but failed to live up to expectations?

In terms of long-range objectives, I believe the thing that has defeated the UN is the lowest common denominator theory. A world community was postulated from which law and order would flow, but the basis for true community—a genuine consensus—was lacking. We have clung to our long-term vision but as its major premise collapsed it became drained of any real meaning. To me, the fallacy in this reasoning is its all-or-nothing nature. Such an approach is doomed to futility and failure in an age of religious wars.

Actually, when the need to overcome this failure was seen to be great, we found a way out of the dilemma by organizing regional and collective security organizations outside of the UN. In this way communities of interest and value have been given recognition. Law and other organizing principles depend on such community. Indeed, even apart from the Soviet Union, our earlier approach to the international recognition of human rights foundered on the absence of such a community in much of the non-Communist world.

What I am asking here is whether, in the same way we succeeded in organizing a limited form of collective security, we can develop some other common interests in the form of action, within realistic limits, in pursuit of the longer vision. Now it is doubtful if the majority of other nations would go along with any scheme to develop these interests *outside* the framework of the UN. This means that we need to find courses of action that do not depend on securing the agreement of the Soviet

Union, but which can still be pursued within the United Nations. These should be things which we conceive to be in our national interest, but which are also in the larger interest, and possibly even in the interest of the Soviet Union. One day the Russians might join, just as they came to join the International Atomic Energy Agency, and may well join the UN space agency before they are through. The proposal, in short, is to try to make a break-through here by the creation of imperfect, incomplete segments of community, but solidly based on shared interests and values.

I will make a couple of illustrative suggestions as a partial answer to the question of what we can do realistically except wring our hands, mark time, or choose solutions such as Charter revision which are uncommonly stupid tools of diplomacy because, while they are aimed at the Russians, they can be sabotaged by their victims.

We speak of a rule of law with frequency, but with considerable indifference to what it really means. President Eisenhower spoke in his State of the Union message recently about new uses for the International Court of Justice. I myself have written pessimistically on the potentialities of legal methods in an age of rather lawless politics. But particularly if the U.S. feels it can now accept a more binding commitment, I am very intrigued with the possibility of the UN, on American initiative, drafting a new protocol on compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, which would be binding on those who joined it only as to matters involving those countries. What if fifty or forty or even thirty nations agreed to use legal processes to resolve legal disputes among themselves? If only twenty countries subscribe we will still have a legal order encompassing twenty countries with the same values of justice, without tying our hands with others. Thus a beginning will have been made, and those who are ready for more enlightened relationships will be offered a means of action, instead of being dragged down always to the level of the most narrowly nationalistic and shortsighted of the nations.

I realize that the Statute of the Court already provides a means for the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, such as it is. I myself see great political virtue in doing it afresh and publicly, in a special conference called by the UN at the suggestion of the U.S. government. There is also virtue in having the UN call such a conference rather than having it negotiated at the UN itself, since it would not have to be limited to present UN members. I don't know if those who followed our lamentable lead in attaching reservations to the Statute of the Court when we

accepted it in 1945 would follow a new American lead in abandoning those reservations. But there is only one way to find out, and it should be done with maximum political advantage—and maximum U.S. Senate participation. If the Russians didn't come in for fifty years, there would still be the beginnings of a more lawful world with respect to those legal disputes within that world, the adjudication of which would not be dependent on agreement with the Soviet Union.

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Outer space is another area where we might be tending to give up before we really start. A disarmament agreement having to do with the *control* of ballistic missiles or of military outer space objects does depend exclusively on agreement between the Russians and the Americans, and anything else is a delusion. But the present UN program has been purposely disconnected from the disarmament problem and has to do only with peaceful applications of space technology. Why not have fifty—or forty—or thirty nations agree on an action program designed to harmonize their efforts bearing on the peaceful uses of outer space? A separate treaty could be signed which would bind the signatories, but without in any way affecting military competition with the Russians. A coordinating UN agency or body would be set up, and the U.S. scientific community would be mobilized to advise and help it, thus incidentally giving some of our scientists an additional form of political motivation that they keenly feel the need of. A drafting group on space law could be set up. Such an agreement could call for a research pooling within the framework of the UN, better public information and understanding about space, which is desperately needed, and a sense of participation by many countries which may have something to contribute. Its prime purpose would be symbolic, and it is high time we understood that three-fourths of the UN is symbolism. But it would have content as well. The parallels with the International Atomic Energy Agency are obvious, even to the point of the "haves" contributing *ex gratia* out of their stockpiles, so to speak. Even before then perhaps one of our American shots ought to be a "UN shot" and have the UN flag on it.

In the same vein, new technologies are getting so far ahead of our political capabilities that the old laments about the political lag in this field have become monstrous understatements. We ought to consider making serious proposals, through the UN, for intensive investigations bearing on the solution of common global problems that will soon affect

every human being, building on the experience of the International Geophysical Year. Scientists are in general agreement that solutions must be found urgently for such common human problems as dwindling water supply—the cheap conversion of sea water, particularly in the arid zone; the need for sources of energy—atomic or solar power; over-population; disease; and so on. Agencies of the UN are working on some of these, but there might be great advantages in moving them to the level of public and political impact. Perhaps the British method of the Royal Commission should be adopted, with blue ribbon special bodies set up *ad hoc* to seek breakthroughs in each field, following where possible some of the patterns set by the IGY. Their reports could package whole areas of problems, put a price tag on their solutions, and bring them to world attention with maximum impact.

Still another U.S. initiative would be to offer to internationalize the Panama Canal, under as stringent conditions as we wish, perhaps analogous to a strategic UN trusteeship, and on a reciprocal basis, with the aim of trying to take strategic international waterways out of politics as future sources of conflict. The list of possible uses of the UN to achieve other broader purposes could be extended further.

It used to be that the idealists were by definition “for” the United Nations, and people who called themselves realists were, at a minimum, skeptical about finding any real diplomatic and political values in it. I hope what I am suggesting now is a new application of realism to the UN for the purpose of carrying out impulses which might be called idealistic, but which in the long run might be the only avenue of salvation for our society. Here realism lies in finding alternative ways to carry out important

purposes in a way that will utilize and in the process strengthen the UN.

I have not tried to recite here all the possible values of the UN or, conversely, all of its defects. An important value of the UN as a tool of Western diplomacy both in the short and long run has to do with the political education of the new states, many of which must be called micro-states, now coming to membership in the society of nations. These states, in combination, will increasingly hold a high card in the UN as they learn to play both sides against the middle and to dominate the proceedings with their parochial views and interests. I can think of no better way to educate them regarding their responsibilities and also about U.S. purposes than to trump that high card by focussing attention on concrete goals that effect them along with everybody else, and on which the U.S. is prepared to lead the way.

Our diplomacy has a tactical problem here to get the support of other nations to bring about certain ends that we wish to achieve, particularly if the Russians are opposed. But what we would propose has no direct connection with the Cold War, and moreover has universal appeal. I do not think our problems are hopeless of solution, although I do not minimize the acute difficulty we experience in responding rationally and potently to the challenges being thrown at us. I do think that if we can transcend some of the deep grooves into which our official thinking has tended to fall, we might well rescue an important national and international asset from inevitable decline. Above all, we would, I think, find that the American role in world politics could become more satisfying to us, and once again the hopeful agent of history that we were once taught was its deepest meaning.

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