With regard to the intensive debate on the reform of the Security Council before, during and after the UN World Summit in September 2005, China argued that only a concept getting the broadest possible majority in the General Assembly should be voted on and that the General Assembly should take the necessary time for reform (cf. UN Doc. A/59/PV.111, 11 July 2005, 13-14, and UN Doc. A/60/PV.48, 10 November 2005, 3). In other words, it rejected in diplomatic disguise all reform models presented to the General Assembly and all proposals for increasing the number of permanent members of the Security Council with veto right. Here again, the PRC did not fulfill the expectations of the Third World countries that it would fight for their interest to be more strongly represented in the Security Council, but fought for the preservation of its own privileged position as permanent member of the Council.

Oskar Weggel


UN Policy, France

Together with the USA, the United Kingdom, Russia, and China, the French Republic is the Security Council’s fifth permanent member with veto power (Veto, Right of Veto). As an important former colonial power and victorious ally in World War II, France became a founding member of the United Nations (History of Foundation of the UN). Due to decolonization and nuclear armament France’s relationship with the UN was difficult and distanced for the first years. About 1965, the situation changed. France became the ‘spokes country’ of the developing world. But from different international activities – like interventions in Africa – there arose questions of France’s credibility. The end of the Cold War has opened up new possibilities. France actively participates in the work of the no-longer blocked Security Council, and participates intensely in peacekeeping (Peacekeeping, Peacekeeping Operations). Contributing 68.37 million US
UN Policy, France

Dollars to the UN budget in 1998, France is the fourth largest financial contributor to the UN. (→ Budget)

I. Principles of French UN Policy

The United Nations are not the highest priority for the French foreign policy. The fundamental principles of independence and of preserving France’s rank in the world determine the French foreign policy. The United Nations is in this context of minor significance. At the same time, the United Nations functions as a foreign policy instrument, an important source of information and a barometer of international diplomacy. French people’s interest in and knowledge of the UN is low as – correspondingly – is public pressure on the French government and its policy towards the United Nations (→ Public Opinion and the UN).

II. France and the Foundation of the United Nations

During the time of the UN foundation, the political influence of France was low. Though France received a permanent seat with veto power in the Security Council, this decision was not taken before June 1944 with the “Tentative Proposals for a General Organization” which were the basis for the first draft of the UN Charter. The provisional French government of General de Gaulle was not invited to the following, important conferences of Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta. France could not influence substantial topics before the UN-founding conference of San Francisco (25 April to 26 June 1945), where important aims were achieved. French became an official language (→ Languages, Official) and one of the working languages (→ Languages, Working) of the United Nations. Plans for international trusteeships and mandates on French colonial areas were prevented (→ Trusteehip Council). In San Francisco, France signed the UN Charter (→ Charter of the UN) and became a founding member of the United Nations.

III. France and Decolonization

Decolonization affected France’s relationship to the United Nations very much, as the United Nations put strong pressure on the former colonial power France. One example is the “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to the Colonial Countries and Peoples”, General Assembly resolution A/RES/1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960. It was not only former colonies putting pressure on France, but also the USA and the USSR. The French government regarded any pressure as intervention in internal affairs (→ Intervention, Prohibition of; → Sovereignty). From the French point of view, colonies were an integral part of French national territory and the people’s right on self-determination (→ Self-Determination, Right of) was guaranteed within the French empire as well. Several colonial wars showed France’s uncompromising attitude and provoked massive international criticism. The result was a far-reaching isolation of France within the United Nations.

In 1954, the Indochina war ended after eight years and in 1956, France recognized the independence of Morocco and Tunisia. In the same year, the Suez crisis finally showed the limits of colonial powers Great Britain and France, and peaceful decolonization of Black Africa started. With the end of the Algerian war (1954-1962), decolonization was mainly finished for France. The French government was relieved of international pressure, and their relationship with the United Nations normalized.

Due to the community of Francophone states, numerous bilateral treaties and the Franc Zone (Communauté Financière Africaine), former African colonies stayed under French influence and remained a central field of interest to France. Due to its special position in Africa, France defined itself as ‘spokesman’ of the developing world and therefore France’s position in the Security Council was legitimized in its opinion. For Africa, France interpreted this role as a power of order, resulting in nu-