

The  
United  
Nations

THE OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES LECTURES

*delivered at the Harvard Law School  
in April 1961 under a fund established  
out of a legacy at the Law School from  
the late Justice Holmes.*

THE OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES LECTURES . 1961

# The United Nations

Constitutional Developments,  
Growth, and Possibilities

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## Foreword

These Holmes lectures were delivered on April 17, 18 and 19, 1961, the week of the abortive Cuban invasion. Months earlier I chose the United Nations as the subject of the lectures because I felt that amid professions of faith in the Charter there has been in recent years a perceptible decline in the use of the United Nations for the peaceful settlement or containment of international conflicts. The Great Powers seem content to use the United Nations as a diplomatic weapon in the Cold War, avoiding its use as an instrument to aid in the finding of peaceful solutions or accommodations. There are, to be sure, reasons accounting for these adverse developments—ideological differences between the East and the West and marked contrasts in social and economic conditions between the North and the South. But if the growing tendency of the Great Powers to downgrade the United Nations is not arrested and reversed, we may lose our last best hope of peace on earth.

A consensus among the Great Powers on new approaches to peace through the United Nations is urgently needed. It is my hope that these lectures may stimulate thinking on how such consensus is to be achieved.

May 1, 1961

Benjamin V. Cohen.

