

the increase in the number of states, and their impact upon international politics. The magnificent UN success in promoting decolonization and self-determination has led to the strengthening of the concept of national sovereignty. That concept is the antithesis of multilateralism — the core of a functioning UN. We are now embarking on the difficult process of adjusting to this paradox. The UN's membership has expanded more than three-fold since its establishment, and there has been a marked change in the political focus at the UN as well as in how it operates. There is little general agreement on the direction of international relations between developed (who have both the power and resources to implement UN decisions) and developing states (who now form the overwhelming majority) to take or force decisions in the UN.

Readjustment of the international power balance has been exacerbated by three factors in the 1980s:

- 1) a severe economic recession has restricted the amount of funding available;
- 2) a deepening hostility in East-West political relations, particularly between the USSR and the US has had a political spillover into various UN bodies; and
- 3) the administration in the USA in the aftermath of the Vietnam war and the Iranian hostage incident has sought to reassert American global influence by emphasizing its power in bilateral, as opposed to multilateral, relationships.

Whether the attitudes of the US or the emphasis on sovereignty by Third World states is cause or effect, interdependence is more than ever a fact of international life. The world needs the UN to provide a means for working out the balances, compromises and adjustments among conflicting interests. And the UN needs the active cooperation of all members, particularly the five permanent members of the Security Council, and especially the two superpowers.

US attitudes

It is taken for granted that the USSR has always had an ambivalent attitude towards the UN. It is a matter of concern however when some of that ambivalence is displayed by the USA. The UN would be very much less effective without the full and active participation of the USA. It is sometimes forgotten that in the immediate post-1945 period, there were fears that the Americans would avoid responsibility, not that they would seek to monopolize it. The Reagan administration has, up to now, displayed a thinly-veiled contempt for the UN, in the tradition of the isolationists of the 1920s who rejected the League of Nations. That attitude was apparent in September 1983, when, as a direct fallout of the Korean airline incident, a Soviet Aeroflot plane which would have carried Foreign Minister Gromyko to the opening of the General Assembly was denied permission to land at civilian airports in New York and New Jersey. The US State Department offered a military airfield as an alternative, but this offer was refused by the