

Nevertheless, when we asked our respondents directly to name the most influential members, the response favored the United States by a wide margin. Of the large majority that named the two superpowers, three-quarters estimated that the United States was out in front. Frequently, it was noted, the Americans seemed indifferent to the outcome of votes, or even to the way their allies were leaning. A number observed that the US seemed to enjoy its "Lone Ranger" role.

On issues the US judged to be of paramount importance, however, such as Arab moves to expel Israel, or Cuba's attempt to inscribe Puerto Rico on the UN agenda, the United States exerted its full influence, and the result could not be in doubt. The Soviet Union followed the Third World majority, it was contended, rather than giving it leadership. Its invasion of Afghanistan had probably cost it more respect than the US had lost through its bully tactics in Central America and elsewhere.

More certain is the influence gained by the United States as the principal source of the UN's financial support. Although decidedly less generous in per capita terms than the Scandinavians or Canada, US contributions, assessed and voluntary, remain by far the most substantial. An American threat to cutback, or withdraw, is difficult to ignore, and US wishes are quietly taken into account in the drafting of most resolutions. Soviet contributions are much smaller, and yet almost as grudging; indeed the two superpowers now collaborate in efforts to hold down the UN's relatively modest budget. It is hardly surprising that Soviet influence is notably weaker than that of the US in dealing with issues, such as international development, that are costly.

### **Third World leaders**

When we asked our interviewees to name the most influential member of the Third World majority, India emerged far in front, with almost twice the mentions given the second place runner, Yugoslavia. India was also rated as second only to the two superpowers in overall UN influence. Comments suggested that this was a tribute as much to the quality of India's officials as it was to its size and relative maturity.

Ranked fourth and fifth in overall UN influence were France and Britain. Notably *not* mentioned were two weightier members of the western community, Japan and West Germany. This suggests that influence is perceived to accompany permanent membership on the Security Council. France and Britain enjoy the further advantage of having former colonies in the organization. Britain is generally considered to have fielded better representatives at the UN. France's slightly higher rating in perceived influence may therefore be related to its reputation for independence. When we asked "which members of the UN are most closely associated with the United States?" three-fourths of the respondents said "Britain"; well down the list came West Germany and Israel, with several mentions of Canada. No one suggested France! Under Mitterrand, moreover, France has appeared more sympathetic to the United Nations and the Third World.