

the non-permanent members engaged in collective mediation. But the circumstances which produced such a response were highly unusual: the crisis was a direct confrontation among four of the five permanent members. It is more customary for some non-permanent members to align themselves with one or more permanent members to form an issue-specific coalition capable of producing a majority decision.

Despite these obvious constraints, non-permanent members can render useful, and at times essential, services in managing, mediating and settling international conflicts. With the exception of China, all permanent members are industrial states. In contrast, non-permanent members provide a more representative sample of the world at large. They can bring a specific perspective and influence to bear on regional conflicts. Occasionally they can instill a greater dynamism in the activities of the Council, where permanent members have shown a predilection for caution. In some instances, non-permanent members can act as proxies for Great Powers, introducing and supporting resolutions that would otherwise be difficult to market. At times, non-permanent members can mediate between the entrenched positions of the superpowers. They may moderate the extreme positions of smaller nations, which are more inclined to be flexible in the intimate forum of the Security Council than in the General Assembly. Even as an allied power, Canada has occasionally been able to mediate on an *ad hoc* basis in East-West conflicts by coming up with a suitable compromise formula or by providing the necessary drafting skills in formulating a resolution. The scope for Canadian mediation has been much greater, however, when issues are less directly related to the central East-West conflict: for example, the disputes over Kashmir and Cyprus, the question of independence for Indonesia and, more recently, Namibia.

Another opportunity for non-permanent members to influence the operation of the Security Council comes with the position of President of the Council, an office which rotates among all members of the Council on a monthly basis. The office of the President provides the incumbent with considerable prestige, formal authority to call meetings of the Council, and discretionary power to initiate informal consultations between the parties to a conflict and members of the Council. In this capacity, Ambassador Hans Tabor of Denmark adroitly negotiated the adoption of three successive ceasefire resolutions which terminated hostilities during the 1967 Middle East war. Similarly, Canada's Ambassador William Barton guided the complex negotiations on the controversial renewal of the Cyprus peacekeeping mandate during his presidency in 1977.

CANADA'S HISTORICAL RECORD ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In every instance, the Canadian decision to seek election to a seat on the Security Council was preceded by a careful assessment of the expected gains and costs of membership.

On the positive side, membership could affirm Canada's continuing belief in the principles of the UN Charter, and that might help overcome some of the criticism and pessimism concerning UN performance. It was also argued that Canada could help to foster world peace because of its experience with peacekeeping, and its ability to take a balanced position on major conflict issues before the UN, such as Cyprus, the Middle East and South Africa. Membership on the Council would also enhance Canadian prestige within the entire UN system and thereby provide extra leverage to influence decisions on peacekeeping, decolonization and the advancement of human rights. Finally, it was hoped that membership on the Council would enhance Canadian public interest and media coverage of UN affairs.

At the same time the liabilities of Council membership did not go unnoticed. Having a seat on the Security Council often compels the Canadian government to define its policy with greater precision and in greater depth, thereby risking criticism and retaliation at home and abroad. Security Council membership might divert attention and resources from other issues and could complicate election to other UN bodies. The calculations of possible gains and losses have given increasing attention to the impact which Council membership would have on Canada's bilateral foreign relations with the United States, as well as with other countries.

Although the perceived advantages of being on the Security Council have outweighed any counter-arguments, the final decision to seek election was often determined by a sense of duty more than any real enthusiasm. The decision to stand for the 1958/59 term, in particular, was taken with considerable reluctance. Ultimately, it was the argument that Britain needed a friendly voice on the Council to overcome its alienation from the United Nations after the recent Suez debacle which prompted the Canadian government to seek election.

The vigour with which the Canadian government conducted its recent campaign for election for the 1989/90 term thus contrasts with past behaviour. Three factors may help explain this divergence. First, the recent situation was unusual in the sense that it was a genuine election by the General Assembly rather than the customary confirmation by that body of the two candidates sponsored by the West European and Others Group. Second, the Mulroney government is particularly eager to give demonstrable proof of its continuing multilateral engagement in order to counteract the criticism that, following the Free Trade Agreement, bilateral relations with the United States have become the preoccupation of Canadian foreign policy. Finally, recent international developments like the Iran-Iraq ceasefire, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Namibia accord have created a strong expectation that the Security Council will become a more effective and active instrument of international peace and security, thereby making Canadian membership a more desirable proposition.