

"The power to act continues to reside almost exclusively with the respective governments. The role of the United Nations is to enable them to act in concert, effectively and in the common interest."

This means negotiation -- in other words, diplomacy.

Conceptions of Diplomacy

The old conceptions of diplomacy -- Harold Nicholson called it "the management of international relations by negotiation" and Sir Ernest Satow "the conduct of business between states by peaceful means" -- still apply. But they apply in a new environment. There are more states and more diplomats than ever before; communications are much easier and faster; popular knowledge and interest in international affairs is much greater; international organizations proliferate; and the subjects of diplomacy tend to embrace most aspects of national activity.

We use the term multilateral diplomacy to describe diplomacy in the context of international organization, in this case the United Nations. I understand it to refer to the discussions, negotiations and debates, both private and public, which take place at the United Nations on the common ground of the Charter. The public aspects of this process have been called parliamentary or conference diplomacy, and the very phrase conjures up both opportunities and dangers. In the words of Dag Hammarskjöld:

"It can serve to form public opinion. It can subject national policies and proposals to the sharp test of world-wide appraisal. It can activate the sound instincts of the common man in favour of righteous causes. It can educate and guide."

On the other hand, "open diplomacy may easily become frozen diplomacy." The too easy satisfaction of domestic public opinion or the gaining of a propaganda advantage tends to engage national prestige and thus to inject an element of rigidity and gamesmanship into the process of negotiation. Diplomats must be leaders as well as servants. "No diplomat", as Mr. Hammarskjöld put it, "is likely to meet the demands of public opinion on him...unless he understands this opinion and unless he respects it deeply enough to give it leadership." As Count Metternich is said to have remarked, diplomacy "is the art of avoiding the appearance of victory", and I should add that voting victories are no exception if they do not help to bring consent and agreement.

We come back, therefore, to the conception of quiet diplomacy as an essential complement to the idea of conference diplomacy. I shall discuss some examples of such diplomacy later in this lecture. Let me say a word first about some of its techniques and some of its effects. A common technique is the establishment of advisory committees to help the Secretary-General perform the tasks which may be entrusted to him by the Security Council or the General Assembly. Such committees had important functions during the early years of the Suez and Congo peacekeeping operations. Their composition, schedule of meetings and role have depended on the special circumstances of each case. The peacekeeping committees were composed of representatives of member states. In other cases, the members may be chosen for their technical