

is not an unhopeful one. If one is, nevertheless, tempted to reflect that the United Nations has been able to do little more than talk about the basic causes of tension—great power rivalries, racial discrimination, economic and social disparities, ideological suspicions, to mention only a few, or has even helped to exaggerate them, it is salutary to reflect on what might have happened if the United Nations had never existed. It is conceivable that these basic causes of tension, if unchecked or given no outlet, would have led to a major conflict, as has happened twice before in this century.

What Kind of United Nations Do We Want?

Underlying these problems is a fundamental issue—what do its member states wish the role of the United Nations to be? Dag Hammarskjöld's last Annual Report on the work of the Organization, submitted shortly before his death, dealt at length with this question. He put the issue in the following terms:

On the one side, it has in various ways become clear that certain Members conceive of the Organization as a static conference machinery for resolving conflicts of interest and ideologies with a view to peaceful co-existence within the Charter, to be served by a Secretariat which is to be regarded not as fully internationalized but as representing within its ranks those very interests and ideologies.

Other Members have made it clear that they conceive of the Organization primarily as a dynamic instrument of governments through which they, jointly and for the same purpose, should seek reconciliation but through which they should also try to develop forms of executive action, undertaken on behalf of all Members, and aiming at forestalling conflicts and resolving them, once they have arisen, by appropriate diplomatic means, in a spirit of objectivity and in implementation of the principles and purposes of the Charter.

Mr. Hammarskjöld then made crystal clear where he stood on this issue:

The first concept can refer to history and to the traditions of national policies of the past. The second can point to the needs of the present and of the future in a world of ever-closer international interdependence where nations have at their disposal armaments of hitherto unknown destructive strength. The first one is firmly anchored in the time-honoured philosophy of sovereign national States in armed competition of which the most that may be expected in the international field is that they achieve a peaceful co-existence. The second one envisages possibilities of intergovernmental action over-riding such a philosophy, and opens the road towards more developed and increasingly effective forms of constructive international co-operation.¹