

Secretary-General to degenerate into such a charade? The selection has always been determined by the five permanent members of the Security Council. The idea of a more popular election by the General Assembly was rejected at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944 and again at San Francisco in 1945. The General Assembly has served as a rubber-stamp, in keeping with the language of Charter article 97 that the "Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council."

Clearly, a viable candidate must have the support of the major powers to do the job. And so given the harsh realities of the Cold War, the great powers settled for the lowest common denominator. In order to avoid a veto, the most important part of a prospective candidate's *curriculum vitae* became credentials as a presentable diplomat who would make no waves; and a secondary notion concerned rotation of the post among regions. Of course, some of the permanent five developed other criteria; for instance, Paris has always insisted that candidates be reasonably fluent in French.

HAMMARSKJÖLD SOMEHOW SLIPPED BETWEEN the cracks and astonished the permanent five; he was supposed to be a non-political technocrat from the Marshall Fund, but ended up as the most dynamic of the five individuals who have occupied his post. Nonetheless, in selecting secretaries-general, there has been too little consideration of leadership qualities or management skills. The 1971 appointment of Waldheim, and his routine reappointment in 1976, provide *prima facie* evidence of egregious oversight. The selection process has come to be characterized by disinterest and by inadequate consultation and research; it needs a radical overhaul.

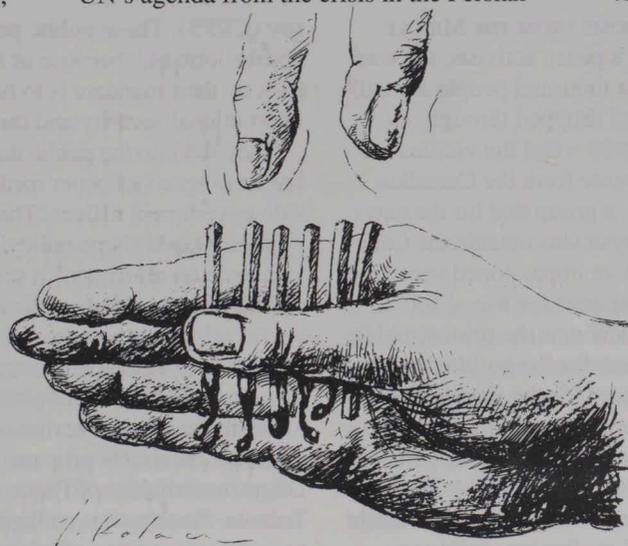
Major corporations, newspapers, and universities seek the best men or women available as chief executive officers. The upheavals in international politics in the last few years are making it increasingly evident, even to governments, that the interests of UN member states, individually and collectively in the long run, would also be better served by forceful leadership than politically acceptable mediocrity.

The post-Cold War era means that many obstacles which had hitherto impeded or prevented the effectiveness of international institutions are vanishing. After some four-and-a-half decades of limping, the prospects for vigorous strides toward multilateralism are brighter than at any time since World War Two. There is opportunity for vigorous international leadership.

The Charter itself is vague about qualifications, stating in articles 100 and 101 that the Secretary-General and staff members "not seek or receive instructions from any authority external to the Organization" and reflect "the highest standards of efficiency, competence

and integrity." But the system needs more specific guidance. It is time to seek a candidate for the top job who is highly literate, culturally sensitive, autonomous and creative, who has convictions, dynamism, and also a good dose of common sense.

What are the main elements of the job description? The central preoccupation – both when the Charter was drafted and today – is international peace and security. The UN's involvement in conflict management, stimulated by the burgeoning demand for UN military services beginning in 1988, was boosted by the Gulf War. The range of tasks emerging for the UN's agenda from the crisis in the Persian



Gulf include coercion, the forcible delivery of humanitarian relief, the administration of a war reparations fund, and destroying Iraq's chemical and nuclear weapons capacities. They erode the shibboleth of national sovereignty enshrined in article 2(7) of the Charter. Whereas the traditional interpositional and buffer-force peacekeeping operation of the past required an executive of detachment, caution, and tact, the tasks that are now on the horizon require more vision and daring.

Moreover, the UN Secretary-General must be a vocal advocate of human rights and educate the public about development and environmental matters. Making better use of the United Nations as "bully pulpit" to embarrass and cajole governments also necessitates someone with vision and a penchant for risk-taking. In addition to managing the global agenda, the Secretary-General needs to manage an increasingly large and complex bureaucracy, an army of blue-helmeted soldiers, and a legion of researchers, technicians, and humanitarians.

THERE IS A CRYING NEED TO LOCATE A FIRST-class administrator who can find new ways to create synergy among inchoate organizations of the so-called UN "family" of specialized agencies (FAO, WHO, ILO, etc.). These reflect a sectoral approach to the world when increasingly the international system requires more

global and synthetic approaches to problem solving. Further, the growing number of non-governmental organizations active in the same sectors need to work in harmony with the United Nations system.

A central challenge for the next UN CEO will thus be to make better use of an extremely decentralized system of international governance. "Coordination" and "comparative advantage" are theoretical concepts that hardly exist in practice. For example, it is hard for a seasoned observer even to master the acronyms of the host of governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental agencies actively responding to a natural disaster in Bangladesh or a man-made catastrophe in Kurdistan. Efforts are made at present not only by governments without much reference to other governments, but also by United Nations organizations without reference to other parts of the UN or non-governmental system. This must change.

Admittedly, the post of Secretary-General may actually be three or four jobs. While no single individual may be adequate to perform all the tasks, the choice of a person who is not even the best candidate for any one of them, which result the present process of selection guarantees, is unacceptable.

THERE IS NOW SPECULATION IN NEW YORK that Perez de Cuellar might consider a shortened additional term, say a year or two. While the incumbent himself has reiterated that he intends to step down, it would be difficult to reject a unanimous appeal to stay on from the five permanent members. France has always been his strongest backer, and more recently the Soviet Union and China have made positive noises about his accomplishments.

This interim solution would in fact be quite sensible if, as a *quid pro quo*, the Security Council were to establish an independent search committee who would seriously look for an autonomous and creative man or woman to do the job. Many often forget that the practice of running for the secretary-generalship as one were a politician running for parliament in the West only began with Waldheim. In fact, the best person may be involved in other work and not have the time or inclination to lobby for the position. Almost certainly the best person would not be actively running his or her own campaign.

It is high time for the United Nations to broaden the talent pool beyond the usual governmental suspects who are well-connected in New York. The person could well be an African. But far more important than geographical origins should be old-fashioned competence and qualifications: a fearless, outspoken, and articulate champion of international peace and justice with dignity, a professional and a leader for the future. □

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