No. 68/12

THE UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL ORGANS AND
MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin to the United
Nations Institute for Training and Research, New York,
May 21, 1968.

I was pleased and honoured to receive Chief Adebo's invitation to
deliver the inaugural lecture of the programme of lectures and seminars
for diplomats which is being organized by the United Nations Institute for
Training and Research. I understand that the object of the programme is
to promote knowledge and understanding of the United Nations amongst those
of you who work here as members of permanent missions. I am sure Chief Adebo
will agree that the best way to learn about the United Nations is to work
here for a period of years. Those of you who have done that will perhaps
wonder what more there is to learn. And yet we all know how easy it is,
experts or not, to mistake the wood for the trees. My purpose tonight is
the modest one of helping you to stand back from your desks for a glance at
the skyline. If you reflect afterwards that it is not after all an unfamiliar
sight, I hope it will not be considered superfluous to have reminded you it
is there.

... Dag Hammarskjold once began a lecture as follows:

"One of the many contradictions of life is the frequency
with which we refer to ourselves as living in a period of change
and rapid development, while, on the other hand, we are so often
reluctant to acknowledge the need for adjustment in our ways to
the changes which actually take place."

The United Nations and its associated agencies and subsidiary bodies
represent the conception of change. Diplomacy and its ways tend to
represent the difficulties of adjustment. U Thant once made the same point
more dramatically:

"What strikes me is the common factor in all these crisis
situations...the gulf that separates practice from precept."

He went on to make a plea that governments make a conscious effort "to
return to accepted standards of international morality and to refashion
their international conduct in accordance with the precepts of the Charter".

I have neither the moral authority nor the political audacity to propose in this lecture a way out of the dilemma pointed to by these two eminent states-men. I remind you of it to emphasize the significance of conduct, of example, both personal and national, as a factor in international relations. Institutions techniques, organizations and arrangements, however designed and however efficient will not suffice unless individuals in positions of responsibility both inside and outside government make unremitting efforts to reach the goals which are set out in the Charter.

The League of Nations and the United Nations

In 1938 I was a member of the Canadian delegation at the eighteenth Assembly of the League of Nations and I have been a delegate many times to the General Assembly of the United Nations. Both bodies are the evolutionary product of previous systems of multilateral political negotiation, even though the usual technique for international relations has always been bilateral diplomacy. Indeed, in 1625 Grotius wrote:

> "It would be advantageous, indeed in a degree necessary, to hold certain conferences of Christian powers, where those who have no interest at stake may settle the disputes of others, and where, in fact, steps may be taken to compel parties to accept peace on fair terms."

The Congress of Vienna, in 1815, and subsequent conferences, brought about changes in the technique of diplomacy and these have evolved into the present state of international organization.

Both the League and the United Nations have helped to make it easier for the modern state to conduct its international business. We do not think of the League as anything more than an organization of sovereign states, and indeed this has been the juridical basis for the United Nations. Yet both bodies have provided improved means for negotiation and a more efficient framework for diplomacy. Neither has been a substitute for ordinary processes of diplomacy. What they have done is to add a new dimension, basically the principles of the Covenant and the Charter, to the context of these processes.

Of course, the United Nations represents a higher rung on the ladder of international progress -- it has far more members, it has more powers, it embraces more activities than the League did. The authority of the Secretary-General has been increased. The rights of the individual are given prominence in the Charter as they were not in the Covenant. But the more one examines the two organizations the more their functions seem basically the same. We should neither be concerned nor surprised at this, for we should not expect radical innovations in the development of international organization. The real changes in the world since 1945 are not in organization but in the distribution and concentration of power, in the effects of technology and in the expectations of men everywhere for a better life. We have somewhat improved the international instruments for dealing with these problems. We have not made it certain that we can deal with them. In the words of the first Secretary-General of the United Nations:

"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 Hammarskjold:

"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. Hammarskjold
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

competence and may act in their personal capacity -- the expert committees dealing with scientific, and to some extent financial, subjects are a good illustration. Working groups of larger committees which are instructed to meet privately and without records are also useful means of accomplishing business quickly and, in some cases, effectively. One should not overlook, as well, the technique of holding private meetings of the Security Council, although it is usually preferable for the members of the Council to meet together privately as representatives and not formally as Council members. I think, too, that the idea of holding regular meetings of the Council to discuss general questions of concern to the Council because of its responsibilities under the Charter, rather than particular issues brought to its attention by member states, is worth exploring.

I should emphasize, as well, the role of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat in promoting agreement and in representing the common interests of the organization and its members. If the Secretariat is to introduce this element of balance and conciliation, it is essential that it remain independent and impartial.

Finally, the UN offers unique opportunities for communication and understanding between governments that might otherwise find it physically awkward or politically difficult to communicate. Working relations between delegations are usually continuous, informal and intensive. The individuals concerned become not only aware of the issues which are common to the international community as a whole but tend to look at these issues in terms of a common responsibility for finding ways and means of dealing with them. Charter principles and purposes, past experience and precedents, the leadership of the Secretary-General, the atmosphere of informality and the pressure of common problems -- all these elements tend to forge out of disparate resources the nexus of multilateral diplomacy.

General Assembly

The large increase in membership of the General Assembly over the past ten years has both widened and restricted the opportunities for multilateral diplomacy. It has widened them because there are far more contacts, discussions and meetings amongst 120 or more members than there could be between 70 or 80 members. Furthermore, the subjects on the agenda of the Assembly have become more varied, reflecting the particular interests and objectives of the new states. If the experience of the last 18 months can be considered evidence of a trend, the Assembly will be in session for longer periods. In addition to the regular sessions of the Assembly, we have had in the past year or so a special session, an emergency special session and a resumed session.

On the other hand, the opportunities for diplomacy have to some extent been restricted by the ease of achieving a two-thirds majority for resolutions which are supported by member states from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Until recent years, the voting rules usually implied that the sponsoring states had to take into account the views of other members and groups of members and to accept amendments before a vote was called on their resolutions. Now it is possible for resolutions on certain subjects, particularly resolutions relating to colonial issues and to issues of economic development, to be

passed by a large majority without prior negotiation with the minority.
A look at the voting record of the last session of the Assembly, for example,
indicates that very few resolutions were adopted by a simple majority. On most
colonial issues, there was a fairly consistent minority, varying between ten or
12 states and occasionally rising to 30 states, which opposed resolutions
favoured by the majority, but in no case did these majorities fall below 80
votes except on the questions of Gibraltar and Oman (I refer only to recorded
votes). Some observers have detected over the past ten years a trend toward
unanimity in Assembly recommendations. While this may have been true in the
early sixties, it now seems to be the case that differences between the
developed or wealthy states and the rest over the kinds of actions which are
appropriate for the United Nations to take in the development field or in
dealing with certain colonial questions have reached a point close to deadlock.
If I am right, the diplomatic function of the organization has suffered damage
and there may be some cause for apprehension about the Assembly's future role
in this respect.

I do not wish to exaggerate this anxiety. There have been many examples
of determined and successful efforts to reach agreement on difficult issues
and other examples where agreement may not have been reached but where honest
and persistent attempts were made to do so. Let me mention some of these
examples to illustrate the distinctions involved. A resolution was adopted in
1955, when I was the chairman of the Canadian delegation, which resulted in the
admission of 16 new members, and which may be cited as an example of what I shall
call "middle-power diplomacy". The 28 sponsors of the resolution were widely
representative of the membership with the exception of the great powers. The
latter split their vote -- China voting against, France and the United States
abstaining and the U.S.S.R. and the United Kingdom voting in favour. However,
all to some degree lobbied against the resolution and were only persuaded
to act positively in the Security Council after the Assembly had shown that
there was overwhelming support for the expansion of the membership. The reasons
for this support were summarized in my statement at the time, which I quote
because I think it is still relevant to the situation today:

> "Our support of the draft resolution is based on a philosophy of
> United Nations as we see it, a United Nations which is as near
> universal as possible. We are aware of the fact that the expansion
> of the United Nations will introduce more voices, perhaps in some
> cases discordant voices, into a community where there is already much
> discord. We realize that by bringing in these members we may be
> swelling the opposition occasionally to measures which we shall
> undoubtedly be supporting. Unquestionably, it would be easier to
> sit back and prolong the present situation indefinitely out of fear
> of unknown consequences but in our view to do so would be a sterile
> attempt to preserve a restricted arrangement which is bound to be
> swept away sooner or later. We cannot ignore the nature of the
> world as it exists. If the United Nations is to survive and if it
> is to play the great role intended for it, then it must reflect
> the real world, not a partial world of our contriving. We see no
> reason to face an expanded and almost universal United Nations with
> timidity, to think only of the disadvantages and to forget the
> enormous opportunities."

The second kind of diplomacy practiced in the General Assembly may be illustrated by reference to efforts by Canadian delegations over the years to improve peacekeeping practices and procedures. We might call this "functional diplomacy". I mean by this that the supporters and opponents of particular resolutions are not divided by geography or size but by a conception of their functions as members of the United Nations and of the proper functions of the United Nations as an organization. For the last two years, both Canada and Ireland have introduced or supported resolutions on peace-keeping with somewhat different objectives but with a broad cross-sectional appeal. At the twenty-first session, for example, a Canadian resolution on peace-keeping was co-sponsored by seven states -- three from Western Europe, two from Latin America, one from Africa and one from Asia. The Irish proposals that year had support from a number of states in these areas as well. However the permanent members were divided; none supported firmly the Irish resolution and two were opposed to the Canadian resolution. It was this split which in the end led to the relative lack of success of the resolutions. I say relative, because the Canadian resolution received 52 votes in committee, with only 14 opposed, but could not be brought to a vote in plenary. The reasons it was put aside in plenary are complex, but essentially it was the fear on the part of many states that the resolution would further deepen the differences between the great powers on the future role of the United Nations in the main-tenance of peace and security. I should not go so far as to say that opposition by one or more permanent members is necessarily decisive in the Assembly. Indeed, it is quite clear that this is not the case for resolutions dealing with colonial questions. But on a subject such as peace-keeping, where the issues go to the heart of the purposes and future of the United Nations, it is doubtful that the Assembly would be wise to insist on arrangements which are unacceptable to either the United States or the U.S.S.R.

A third kind of diplomatic negotiating at the United Nations might be called "group diplomacy". The latter is concerned with issues which, by and large, attract the support or opposition of regional groups and where group cohesion is relatively strong. On some questions, a number of groups will take the same general view of an issue and in combination they can find the votes to pass resolutions which are unacceptable to a single group. There may or may not be an attempt to reach general agreement before the resolution is put to the vote. Let us take the case of South West Africa, for example. Resolution 2145 was adopted in 1966 by a very large majority (114 to two, with three abstentions) but there was a great deal of negotiation behind the scenes which made possible the eventual result. Negotiation took place primarily between representatives of the African and Asian groups and representatives of the Western European and Latin American groups, although I should point out that the Western European-and-Others group does not generally delegate representatives to act on its behalf on substantive issues, and it was on an informal basis only that certain members did so act in this instance. The objective of the negotiation was to reach agreement on the wording of the termination of South Africa's rights under the mandate and on the terms of reference of any committee which might be set up to study the future of the United Nations responsibility for South West Africa. It was only after a willingness to compromise on both sides that agreement was reached, and then only after the defeat of an amendment proposed by the United States which would have made somewhat less direct the responsibility of the United Nations for the territory.

The subsequent history of the South West Africa issue in the United Nations did not bear out this promising beginning. At the next session of the Assembly, in the spring of 1967, no agreement could be reached despite intensive efforts; 30 states, mostly Western, abstained on the resolution which established a United Nations Council for South West Africa. When the subject came before the twenty-second session of the Assembly in the autumn of 1967, the deadlock remained unbroken, there was little negotiation, and most of the Western group again abstained, although the resolution itself was supported by 92 member states. This was an example of what might be called the "majority variety" of group diplomacy, although in fact it is hardly appropriate to speak of diplomacy if there is little or no attempt to conciliate differences of view between important groups of states.

The Assembly's attempt last summer to find a basis for the solution of the Middle East crisis was also an example of the failure of group diplomacy at the United Nations. In this case, the failure did not arise from a lack of negotiation but from an inability to reconcile, despite heroic efforts, two conflicting positions which were held by approximately equal numbers of states (on the one side the Latin American group, most of the Western European-and-Others group and almost half the African group -- on the other side the Eastern European group, most of the Asian group and over half the African group). The task of persuading the parties and their great-power supporters to make concessions on this issue could only have been achieved on one of two conditions: either an agreement between the United States and the U.S.S.R. about the elements of a solution which they would then try to persuade the parties to accept, or agreement on a "grass-roots" resolution which would reflect through its co-sponsorship world public opinion. Both methods were tried but neither succeeded and, as you will recall, the Assembly had to adjourn without adopting a resolution on the fundamental issues at stake.

Suggestions have been made from time to time for changes in the procedures of the General Assembly, some of which would imply Charter amendment, designed to adjust the principle of sovereign equality, or one-nation-one-vote, to the discrepancies in the influence and power of member states. It has been pointed out, however, that the Assembly is not a parliament but a diplomatic meeting. A parliament can pass legislation by majority vote. The Assembly can in most cases adopt only recommendations by majority vote. Recommendations addressed to member states will not achieve their ends unless they obtain the backing of powerful and influential members, and even then wide co-operation is by no means assured.

Of course, the Security Council is the United Nations organ primarily responsible for taking action and the members of the Assembly can always explain the lack of practical results to particular recommendations by the refusal of the Security Council or its permanent members to agree. But it is not satisfactory for the Assembly to make repeated recommendations which are ignored or forgotten. Either the process I have called group diplomacy must be made to work better than it has (and this can only happen if the leading member states are prepared to make appropriate compromises), or some institutional innovation may be desirable to facilitate negotiation. I do not think that proposals for weighted voting of one kind or another are practical at the present time, nor am I convinced that this system would be desirable even if it were practical.

A more promising direction in which to look for a solution might be through the further development of representative committees of limited size which would be more or less in continuous session. This practice has become increasingly common at the United Nations, in any event, even though the principle of equitable geographical distribution which is usually followed in establishing the membership of such committees may not be the most effective in achieving the purpose I have in mind. Perhaps more attention should be paid to such criteria for membership as the contributions which member states are making or may make to the particular activity which is the subject of the committee's competence. It might also be considered whether the Assembly's voting procedures should be changed so as to ensure that on certain kinds of questions -- for example, those involving peace and security -- the Assembly would not be able to make recommendations without an important majority of the membership voting in favour.

Multilateral diplomacy in the Assembly, as in the Council, has also suffered from the absence of important states. I have already quoted remarks I made on this subject 13 years ago. We all know the difficulties of implementing the ideal of universality; none better than the Government of Canada, which made proposals on the question of Chinese representation in the United Nations two years ago, without success. However, I would like to draw attention to the suggestions made by the Secretary-General from time to time that non-member states should be enabled to maintain observers at United Nations headquarters and at other United Nations offices. Some of these states follow this practice now. Others do not, for one reason or another. I agree with the Secretary-General that it would be desirable for the Assembly to give him a clear directive as to the policy to be followed in future on this subject.

Security Council

If, as I have suggested, the diplomatic functions of the General Assembly have been somewhat inhibited in recent years by the practice of "majority" diplomacy, the reverse seems to be the case in the Security Council. Since the expansion of the membership of the Council from 11 to 15 in 1966, the latter has tended to fulfill a function resembling the fourth purpose of the United Nations: to be "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations". The nine votes necessary to enable the Council to take a decision are easier to prevent under the new composition than to secure. Thus an incentive is created to negotiation and compromise. No single or group point of view can be assured of finding a majority. What used to be called the hidden veto is now distributed more evenly among all the members of the Council and the veto itself has virtually disappeared from its proceedings. Over the past three and a half years, only one question has failed to be decided because of a veto, although occasionally no decision has been taken because of failure to obtain the required majority. There have been other questions which have not been settled by the Council because no resolutions were put forward - the Vietnam and Korean questions, for example. Most questions which were the subject of a decision by the Council during this period were decided unanimously or by consensus. This means that most of the business of the Council is now done in private consultation behind the scenes; in these consultations one can find the best illustrations of multilateral diplomacy in the UN today.

To take the case of the Arab-Israel dispute, the Council devoted 33 of its 46 meetings in 1967 to this subject alone, but far more time was spent by the representatives in negotiations outside the Council chamber than was spent inside. Seven resolutions were adopted after the outbreak of fighting on June 4 -- five relating to a cease-fire, one to the welfare of the refugees and one to a political settlement of the dispute. In addition, a consensus was expressed by the President on arrangements for the supervision of the cease-fire. It has been said that the Council was not able to prevent the fighting and this is true, although efforts were made by some member states, including Canada, to have the Council intervene before June 4. On the other hand, not enough attention has been paid, I believe, to the remarkable achievement of the Council in adopting a resolution on November 22, 1967, which outlined certain principles for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Adoption of this resolution came after several months of negotiation. It was based on the principle of a balance of obligations and responsibilities on both parties to the dispute, and its unanimous adoption lent great weight to its recommendations, even though these were not decisions in the sense of binding commitments under Article 25 of the Charter.

The first Canadian representative on the Security Council, General A.G.L. McNaughton, pointed to some of the principles underlying this kind of multilateral diplomacy in a speech over 18 years ago, before the Council became a casualty of the great-power deadlock which followed the events in Korea that summer:

"First, the Security Council is not in a position to embark on armed intervention.... In consequence, it can usually do little more in the initial stage than to call on the parties engaged in the dispute to stop fighting and to start talking, and to offer them the means by which they can work out a settlement through negotiations rather than by conflict.

"It is, I believe, most important that, when the Council calls upon the parties to cease hostilities, it must make such a call both universal and impartial. The Council should, therefore, make it plain that, in calling upon the parties to end hostilities, it is not prejudging the ultimate political solution which may be achieved through its good offices.

"Thirdly, to the greatest possible extent the responsibility of solving a political problem should be left primarily with the people who are immediately affected by it.... There is a great advantage in stability through having an agreed rather than an imposed conciliation, and this procedure has the useful effect of strengthening the sense of responsibility at a point where this is essential to a healthy political life."

I have quoted these somewhat lengthy remarks because I think it is significant that the Council is still faced with the same choices in its efforts to achieve the peaceful settlement of disputes, although in the interim the United Nations has added the tool of peace-keeping by military forces to its repertoire of peaceful settlement procedures. Its new-found

capacity to negotiate and to reach agreement over the past few years, to which I have referred, has been applied with success not only to the situation in the Middle East but also to situations which have threatened peace in Cyprus and the Indian sub-continent. In the case of Rhodesia, it has gone further and decided for the first time on a programme of sanctions. In none of these cases has the Council actually been able to bring about a settlement of the disputes in question. But I am optimistic that the procedures which the Council has set in train in the Middle East and in Cyprus will lead to constructive results.

In the end, of course, it must be the parties who by their actions will make these results stable and permanent, in so far as permanent results are possible at all in international relations. I should be the first to agree that methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes can be improved and that more attention needs to be given to the suggestions which are made from time to time by the Secretary-General or by member states for their improvement. In particular, I would draw attention to the recommendations which have been made by the present Secretary-General and by his predecessors respecting the opportunities provided in Article 34 of the Charter for the Council to enquire at an early stage into any situations or disputes which might lead to international friction, without waiting for the parties directly concerned to come to the Council first. Fact-finding commissions have probably not been employed as much as they should have been by the Security Council, and I have noted with satisfaction the recent resolution of the General Assembly requesting the Secretary-General to establish a register of names from which such commissions might be drawn.

Nevertheless, the United Nations cannot enforce the settlement of disputes. All it can do is make it easier for the parties to settle their own disputes. In that capacity the permanent members have a special role. We all know that it is their concurrence which gives special weight to the Council's resolutions. It is their continued activity and diplomacy behind the scenes which will help to ensure that these same resolutions are respected and implemented. Only in cases of a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace, or an act of aggression can the Council go further and take decisions which may lead to the use of coercive measures against particular states. Such decisions imply the end of diplomacy and for that reason are a last resort. Yet the threat of such decisions is important. Chapter VI of the Charter, on peaceful settlement of disputes, would not have the same weight or the same point if it were not followed by Chapter VII, on the maintenance of international peace and security. If we must not resort lightly to the measures described in Chapter VII, neither should we neglect or dismiss the provisions of this chapter. I think it would be helpful, therefore, if the members of the Council could agree to investigate again the possibility of negotiating the agreements called for in Chapter VII for the provision of armed forces, assistance and facilities necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.

I do not wish to leave the subject of diplomacy in the Security Council without mentioning the question of permanent membership. Mr. Hammarskjold used to speak of the need for the United Nations to keep new conflicts outside the sphere of bloc differences or to bring them out of this sphere, if necessary, through solutions aiming at the localisation of conflict. The United Nations has done this with success in some areas. It has not been able to do so in Eastern Asia, partly because the permanent member chiefly concerned is not represented at the United Nations. Clearly the Council will be handicapped

until this matter can be settled. I should go further and suggest it is not too soon to begin thinking about the whole question of how the status of permanent membership can be brought into harmony with present and future trends in world politics.

Office of the Secretary-General

The authority of the Secretary-General under Article 99 of the Charter to draw the attention of the Security Council to any situation which may threaten peace or security gives him wide powers of discretion and responsibility. These powers have been developed substantially in actual practice over the past 20 years. For example, Dag Hammarskjold's visit to Peking in 1955 was based on his authority under Article 99. He took the same view of his responsibilities in the Middle East in 1956 and after and in Laos in 1959. In other words, it is not required that the Secretary-General should act necessarily on the basis of instruction or guidance from the Security Council or from the Assembly. In the case of the Congo, Mr. Hammarskjold took it upon himself to interpret the resolutions of the Security Council in ways which he thought best expressed the common view. The present Secretary-General has done the same thing in regard to Cyprus. I draw attention to his remarks on the subject at Queen's University in 1965:

> "...the Secretary-General must always be prepared to take an
> initiative, no matter what the consequences to him or his office
> may be, if he sincerely believes that it might mean the difference
> between peace and war. In such a situation, the personal prestige
> of a Secretary-General -- and even the position of his office --
> must be considered to be expendable. The second cardinal considera-
> tion must be the maintenance of the Secretary-General's independent
> position, which alone can give him the freedom to act, without
> fear or favour, in the interests of world peace."

Of course, all three Secretaries-General have been guided, where they had no alternative, by the principles and purposes of the Charter, of which they may be said to have been the chief interpreters. But they have made use of the device of advisory committees, established informally and operating intermittently, particularly in respect of the conduct of peacekeeping opera-tions. This is a system which in my view could be developed even further, in default of the implementation of the relevant provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter. The Security Council is not usually in a position to manage the implementation of its decisions, either because the basis for consensus is too fragile for explicit articulation or because the Council is too burdened with other duties. Nor is it fair to expect the Secretary-General in every case to carry out ambiguous and politically controversial instruc-tions. There is room here for a third level of consultation, which would take into account not only the interests of the Security Council and the Secretary-General but also the interests of those states which may be required to participate in implementing decisions of the Council but do not have the privilege of membership on the Council at a particular time.

Conclusion

It is a common experience in foreign offices that the urgent requirement drives out the considered idea, although much that is constructive and permanent may emerge from the press of action. The same is true at the United Nations. The record of debate in the political organs and their committees is strewn with ideas and proposals for improving the techniques and facilities for multilateral diplomacy, but there is little or no time to develop them at leisure. Perhaps the Assembly should make provision for some kind of continuing review of the methods of international co-operation which are practiced at the United Nations. In any event, I am confident that this new series of studies for diplomats will lead to fresh thought being given to the subject. Without wishing to appear subversive, may I suggest that the diplomatic profession could also do with its share of young members who raise questions about received ideas?

S/C