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POLITICS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: NATIONAL AND COLLECTIVE INTERESTS

Introduction

International politics is basically an interplay between and among national interests projected and pursued through the foreign policies of nation-states. National interest is, in fact, the ultimate determinant that guides the nation-states in their diplomatic pursuits. The scope and range of national interests depend, however, on the perceptions and capabilities of each nation-state and as Raymond Aron rightly observes, "the plurality of concrete objectives and of ultimate objectives forbids a rational definition of 'national interest...'"¹

The question that arises here is—how are a country's national interests related to those of other countries or to common interests arising out of the growing interdependence of nation-states? Hans J Morgenthau says, "the national interest of a nation that is conscious not only of its own interest, but also of that of other nations must be defined in terms compatible with the latter. In a multinational world this is a requirement of political morality; in an age of total war it is also a condition for survival."² How does this process of mutual accommodation at the multilateral level takes place in the present-day polycentric world? What problems does this

1. Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (New York : Doubleday, 1966), pp. 91-92,
2. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 74-75.

accommodation process engender in the politico-security and socio-economic interactions among nations? How are these problems faced particularly in the context of growing interdependence of nations? What roles are played by the network of present-day international organizations which are the outcome of mankind's common endeavour to face shared problems? These queries bring us to studying the dynamics of international organization.

It would first be worthwhile to start with a definition of international organization. As with all complex and dynamic concepts, the definition of international organization may at the best appear elusive. However, the problem can be approached at three different levels.³ First, international organization can be defined in terms of its intended purposes. Second, it can be defined in terms of institutional structures and third, international organization can be viewed as a process of institutional regulation of relations among nation-states and non-state actors. The international, or otherwise known as inter-governmental, organization can thus be defined as, "the process by which states establish and develop formal, continuing institutional structures for the conduct of certain aspects of their relationships with each other. It represents a reaction to the extreme decentralization of the traditional system of international relations and an effort of statesmen to adapt the mechanics of that system to the requirements posed by the constantly increasing complexity of the interdependence of the states".⁴

International organizations, whether universal or regional in membership, are created as arrangements for facilitating cooperation among member states. It rests upon a dualistic conception of international relations which acknowledges both conflictual and

3. Theodore A. Coulombis and James H. Wolfe, *Introduction to International Relations: Power and Justice*, (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 1981), p. 252.
4. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 8 (New York: The Macmillan and the Free Press, 1972), p. 33.

cooperative relationships as basic features of the multi-state system. "In principle, international organization represents an attempt to minimize conflict and maximize collaboration among participating states, treating conflict as an evil to be controlled and cooperation as a good to be promoted."⁵ The Covenant of the League of Nations or the UN Charter, both 20th century creations in the aftermath of the two World Wars, bear testimony to the dualistic approach.

Certain rules and procedures are set in an inter-governmental organization as the framework of conducting multilateral relations among its member states. Such institutional structures do not, however, represent some kind of supra-national organization or world government. The institutions of the European Community with certain policy-making and executive authority to act on behalf of the community as a whole, independent of the governments of member states, are remarkable innovations and they indicate the promise of developing a full-fledged federal arrangement among the Community members. On the whole, however, international organizations depend upon the voluntary acceptance by nation-states of obligations of membership, upon the consensus among governments about programmes and policies, upon persuasion and political influence rather than on coercion and enforcement. Although some organizations, such as the UN Security Council, have been endowed with executive authority, their capacity to function is predicated upon the processes of political accommodation at the multilateral level.

The international organizations are the institutionalized expression of the consciousness of national leaders that in an age of growing interdependence, both of issue areas and nations, the national interests would best be served by an orderly mechanism of interstate behaviour. While international organization tends to develop certain degree of corporate interests and viewpoints, they ultimately serve as instruments of the foreign policies of member states. Therefore, it reflects the variety of viewpoints and purposes prevailing among national

5. *Ibid*, p, 34.

governments. The quest for maintaining order through some multi-lateral structure does not involve repudiation of national interests or their subordination to an overriding internationalism. Rather, it calls for readjustment of national interests in conformity with demands of the day and hence pursuance of those interests and values within the framework provided by the international organizations.⁶

Since the emergence of the United Nations, the world has undergone great changes—many of them unexpected and unforeseen. The international system with the evolving East-West antagonism, manifest in cold war, moved in a direction that often conflicted against the assumptions and operational principles of the UN Charter. Decolonization proved to be a much speedy process than it was thought to be and its consequence, the impact of the Third World majority in UN membership was not foreseen. As a result, the United Nations has also changed—both in terms of task expansion and institutional proliferation—to adapt to these new realities.

These developments and their accommodation process in the United Nations have given rise to intense controversy and debate over the policy directions and control of the activities of the Organization. Such issues as the admission of new members, the integrity of the veto power, defining the nature of aggression, the expansion of competence of the General Assembly, the strict dichotomy between political and functional agencies, the financing of the UN system, the competence of the Specialised Agencies and above all, global negotiations under UN auspices proved to be the areas of intense debate. There has been a trend towards polarization of member states into distinct blocs over these issues and the development of shifting patterns of alignment of states and groups of states in the debates and votes of the General Assembly. These trends have also been accompanied by a marked policy preference of bilateralism over multilateralism by some major powers, most notably the USA who retrospectively is the most active of the UN

6. *Ibid*, p. 35.

founders. The USA withdrew its membership from the UNESCO and is reportedly considering withdrawal from some other Agencies. This spectre of withdrawal is a new phenomenon in UN politics.

Looking at the state of affairs in today's UN organizations, some apposite questions can be raised—why did the United Nations fail to articulate some form of collective viewpoints over issues of its main concern? How do the member states, individually or as a group, relate to the Organization? What is the nature of interplay between national and collective interests in UN politics? Are they really irreconcilable? These are among the issues that will be dealt with in the present paper in the light of the conceptual framework discussed above. The first part of the paper briefly reviews the experiences of international organizations till the second World War. The second part analyses the Charter provisions of the UN and their implementation today and the last part attempts to locate the approaches of the major groups of member states in the UN.

Experiences in International Organizations till 1945

Although the process of international organizations of a modern type had its origin in the 19th century, largely in Europe, one can trace their ancestry back to the early years of recorded civilization. During the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.) between Sparta and Athens, the Greeks became involved in the intricacies of international bargaining, such as, alliances, negotiations, dependencies and cooling-off periods. It is suggested that the alliance-dependency systems of Athens and Sparta might be regarded as embryos of modern regional defense organizations.⁷ The Greek city-states are also reported to have evolved the first model of a general-purpose international organization—the Amphictyonic League—originally conceived as a religious organization of 12 neighbouring tribes, gradually expanded its functions to include the protection of its members from aggressive acts, from both within and without. The

7. Theodore A. Couloumbis and James H. Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

League conferences were held occasionally and those considered guilty of acts of aggression were to be confronted collectively with all available means.⁸ Also during the Persian, Macedonian, Roman and Byzantine empires, there were systems of international regulation and interdependency through providing rewards as well as sanctions to subject peoples and territories.

However, the evolution of the modern nation-state system since the 17th century in Europe served as the basis for multinational conferences, the first of which was the Congress of Westphalia in 1648 after the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). The industrial revolution of the 18th century in Europe resulting in mass production and development of communication precipitated the expanded level of interstate relations. The movement of goods, services and people increased manifold both within Europe and between Europe and other continents. Thus, the increasing level of interaction among the independent state-actors warranted the gradual evolution of modern international organizations, both along political and functional lines.

The first effort to institutionalize the dominant role of the great powers of Europe was undertaken by the victorious anti-Napoleonic coalition at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The Congress devised the 19th century balance of power system and also established categories of diplomatic envoys, general principles for the navigation of international rivers and provisions against slave trade. While the resultant Concert of Europe as the product of a consensus among great powers did not assume the character of a standing political organization, the same pattern, as later modified by the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, functioned until World War I as the framework for a system of occasional great-power conferences. However, while the Concert of Europe was based purely on power politics involving the then great powers only and keeping the small powers mostly as objects rather than participants in it, the Hague Conferences admitted the small powers not only of Europe but also of Latin

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 256-57.

America for collective political deliberations. The egalitarian concept of 'one-nation one-vote' reflected in the Hague and resolutions adopted by majority vote gradually became acceptable rules in the international organizations. The Hague Conference, meant to occur every seven years, were convened in peace time and designed to remove the causes of crisis and war, thus being preventive in nature. They were, in fact, exercises mainly in arms control where the participants sought to make the system of power politics safer in the context of developing war technology. The 1899 Conference produced major regulatory instruments, such as the Convention for the pacific settlement of disputes (which established the Permanent Court of Arbitration) and Conventions on the laws of land and naval warfare. The 1907 Conference produced ten more Conventions on neutrality and laws of warfare.⁹

Scholars of international organizations trace the precursors of 20th century organizations in the developments during the 19th century. A.J.R. Groom is of the view that while the Congress System can be likened to the League Council and the UN Security Council (the institutions of the great powers), the Hague Conferences were that of the small powers.¹⁰ Inis Claude also views "three major

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streams of development" in the 19th century as ancestors of 20th century institutions. He also equates the Congress system with the UN Security Council and the Hague Conferences with the General Assembly. The third stream of development was the creation of

9. *Ibid*, p. 260.

10. A. J. R. Groom, "The Advent of International Institutions", in Paul Taylor and A.J. R. Groom (eds.) *International Organization : A Conceptual Approach* (London : Frances Pinter Ltd, 1978), p. 21.

specific-purpose agencies, usually called Public International Unions, such as, the International Telegraphic Union (1865) and the Universal Postal Union (1874). These Unions were designed to facilitate inter-governmental cooperation in socio-economic and technical fields, analogous to those of today's UN Specialized Agencies. The administrative structures developed by those Unions (Conference, Council and Secretariat) have been subsequently adopted by the 20th century organizations.¹¹

However, the gradual industrialization of the US and Japan and slow growth of nationalism in the colonial world resulted in a marked decrease in the Eurocentricity of the system of international organizations. The Monroe Doctrine (1823) of the US was a proclamation of regional independence of Latin America against European intervention, thereby restricting intervention only to the US. Unlike in Europe where no single power could dominate, in Americas the US aspired of hegemony over the Continent. From 1899 the Conferences of American states were held regularly and in 1910 the Pan American Union was established. The Union together with a series of inter-American Conferences reinforced the Monroe Doctrine. Experienced as it thus became in international organizations, the US played a major role in framing the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations.

From above review of the 19th century international organizations, it is evident that the supremacy of the powerful nations over the weak ones continued to be the main features of the system. Imperialism and colonialism are the global manifestations of the same phenomenon. The strategy in attaining this objective was to maintain a balance of power among powerful European nations through a series of agreements and understanding. Whenever the balance was disturbed, war broke out and a new balance of power was sought to be established.

11. Theodore A. Coulombis and James H. Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

The outbreak of the World War I is ascribed by many to the balance of power system gone berserk. This was coupled with the virtual absence of an effective international organization that could have a moderating influence over the factors that led to war. Therefore, after the traumatic experiences, the League of Nations was created in 1919 to provide institutional structures that would prevent wars. President Wilson of the US was almost evangelical in his vision about the League which was to initiate an inner transformation of international relations based on entangling alliances. The League and its affiliate, the International Labour Organization (ILO) represented the first attempt to combine into one general organization the disparate elements of institutional development that emerged during the 19th century. The League Covenant also attempted the creation of a system of collective security, hitherto unknown, that was to replace power politics. The Covenant provided the League with (1) a Council that emphasized the needs and capabilities of the great powers, (2) an Assembly for all member states and (3) a Secretariat. But both the Council and the Assembly in practice could take decisions on all important issues only on the basis of unanimity of all member states. The US did not finally join the League because of the Senate's refusal to ratify the League Covenant.

During the first decade of its functioning, the League showed initial success in settling some issues that involved small and medium-sized powers. But later, it proved failure to crises which involved the great powers such as Japan's occupation of Manchuria, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and Germany's expansionist behaviour towards Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia. This was due to the conflicting national interests of the great powers that openly unravelled in League politics. The British saw the League as an improved version of the Concert of Europe, serving their interests in a better way through playing a balancing game. The French were concerned about sanctions as guarantees against renewed German aggression. The Axis Powers—Japan, Italy and Germany, with renewed strength,

were interested to expand their colonial holdings and change the power balance in their favour. In such a situation, the sanctioning powers of the League could not be made effective against Japan and Italy who withdrew in anger from the League, although USSR was expelled from the League in 1939 because of its aggression against Finland. Therefore, too much concentration on national interests as distinct from collective interests coupled with lack of universality in the League membership doomed its failure to contain the second World War.

The United Nations : the Charter and its Implementation

After World War II the League was superseded by the United Nations, a general organization which derived its major features from the 19th century heritage and the experiences, both positive and negative, of the League. Let us first have a look at the UN Charter and its genesis, for this would help locate how the member states relate to it.

In 1945 the United Nations was founded by the victorious alliance to ensure global peace and security (collective good) in a better and effective way. The conception of peace as can be elicited from the UN Charter contains two elements : (a) maintenance of international peace and security through some collectively-organized armed deterrent ; and (b) international economic and social cooperation to create conditions of stability and well-being, necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations.¹² The Security Council with its five permanent members—Great Britain, China, France, USA and USSR—was given 'the primary responsibility' of realizing the first element of peace. The second pillar of peace, i.e. welfare measures aimed at increasing the living standard of peoples, rehabilitation of war-shattered economies and humanitarian relief were thought to be achieved through some international machinery. The Economic and

12. *UN Charter*, Chapters VII, IX-X.

Social Council (ECOSOC), its five regional Commissions and a number of Specialized Agencies and Programmes were to be gradually engaged for the purpose.

It is to be recalled here that the main features of the UN were devised while war was still in progress and the United Nations was a direct creation of the wartime alliance. Only those states that had signed the 'Declaration of United Nations' of 1 January 1942 (through which the allied powers committed to unitedly wage war against the Axis Powers) or had declared war on the Axis Powers by March 1945 were allowed to become the founding members of the United Nations. Even Sweden and Finland were debarred from founder membership because of their neutrality during the war.¹³ The pioneers among the original members were the Western Alliance and the Soviet Union. It may be recalled that because of some reservations the US opted out of the League of Nations and USSR was expelled from it in 1939. Naturally the two, by then, the most powerful nations with antagonistic politico-economic systems were in the forefront to have a new organization as their own creation. At the periphery were 20 Latin American countries, many of which rushed to declare war on the Axis Powers in early 1945 in order to qualify for UN membership. There were only 3 founder member states from Africa—Liberia, Egypt and Ethiopia and 8 founder member states from Asia. Some of the Asian states—India, Lebanon, Philippines and Syria were still under colonial or mandatory rule. Therefore, the formation process of the UN had its impact on the Charter competence.

The more comprehensive powers apparently assigned to the UN, compared with the League, for the maintenance of peace owes to the then prevailing vision that the UN should be a "League of Nations with teeth",¹⁴ an Organisation that would have at its disposal

13. Sir Anthony Parsons, "The United Nations and International Security" in G. R. Berridge and A. Jennings (eds), *Diplomacy at the UN* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1985), p. 49.

14. *Ibid*, p. 50.

military staff with a Chiefs of Staff Committee drawn from the five permanent members of the Council.¹⁵ Unlike the League Covenant, the UN Charter confined the veto right only to the Security Council where the permanent members are authorized to veto certain decisions of a substantive non-procedural character. The veto right of the major powers meant that peace can be enforced only as an agent of the great power concert. Together, the two other concessions acceded by the Charter to national sovereignty of the member states greatly circumscribed the enforcement powers of the UN. Article 2(7) reserved to member states "matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state" and Article 51 provided member states "the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence". Therefore, these loopholes would allow any scheming nation to wiggle out of its commitment to the Charter if so desires. And that is what exactly happened in reality.

The idea behind veto might have been positive under the hypothesis that the nations holding dominant position in the UN would always act on the side of peace. In fact, such a vision rested upon the fear that threats to peace in post-war time were most likely to come from vanquished powers. But immediate post-war realities proved quite different than expected. An intense ideological rivalry set in motion a cold war that split the world permanently into two rival politico-military power blocs. It was never thought that the 'quasi-umpires' of conflict resolution would themselves play the role of both direct and indirect aggressor. As a result, the collective security provisions of the Charter could not be materialized. Many member states, then, taking refuge to Article 51 of the Charter entered into regional military alliances and bilateral security pacts. This implied 'selective security' with the principle of 'some for some' and not 'all for all' as the collective security envisaged. Therefore, from the mid-50s onward the Security Council (or, exceptionally, the General Assembly) increasingly took to peace-keeping operations, innovated

15. *UN Charter*, Article 14.

by Dag Hammarskjold as a conflict-control device in the recurring tensions and conflicts, mostly among the Third World nations. But the East-West split and their spread in the Third World actually circumscribed, in geographical terms, the UN involvement in particular disputes, limiting it to those areas outside of either superpower's sphere of influence, or as Dag Hammarskjold described, "beyond the no man's land of the cold war."¹⁶ In fact, of all the international crises and wars since 1946, the UN could intervene (i.e., called for cease-fire and withdrawal) in less than 20 percent of the conflicts, and in only about a half of these has the UN met with "success" namely, compliance by the parties soon after UN directive.¹⁷ Sir Anthony Parsons, therefore, rightly observes that, "major evolution of the United Nations away from the design drawn up at San Francisco has been that the Organization, from being a potential instrument of coercion and enforcement, has become an instrument of persuasion."¹⁸ The active peace-making efforts through the good offices of the UN Secretary General bear testimony to this.

As for the second pillar of peace, that is, providing general welfare measures to create "conditions of stability and well-being" in the member states, it may be mentioned that by 1945 the social

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scientists in Europe and America identified some relationships between socio-economic variables and the outbreak of war. But this was

16. Inis Claude, *Swords into Plowshares*, 4th ed. (New York ; Random House 1971), p. 313.

17. J. A. Finlayson and M.W. Zacher, "The United Nations and Collective Security: Retrospect and Prospect", in T.T. Gati (ed.), *The US, The UN and the Management of Global Change* (New York : NY University Press, 1983), p. 164.

18. Sir Anthony Parsons, *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

then limited only within the Eurocentric cultural bounds.¹⁹ Those findings coupled with the shattered economies of Europe during the war found reflection in the Charter for "international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character."²⁰ For the purpose, the UN emphasis then, was on agreed inter-governmental cooperation, rather than a centralized management or a restructuring of the post-war economic order. The strategy was based on functionalism which treats the promotion of welfare as an indirect approach to the prevention of war.

With such a perspective, initially the UN activities were focused upon providing the much-needed humanitarian and material assistance for reconstruction of the war-torn member states of Europe. Then gradually, the UN system with its proliferating agencies and programmes took initiatives to meet the most pressing needs of the ever increasing number of developing countries who were joining the World body as a result of decolonization. These UN activities in the developing countries, which came to be known as 'Development Programmes', presently account for more than 80 percent of the material and human resources of the Organization. But all these programmes are mostly based on voluntary contributions of the rich North and not on shared responsibility as the poor South would like. The demand for establishment of a New International Economic Order to replace the existing imbalanced economic order is built on the premise that cooperation for development is a matter of commitment to the UN Charter and not one of charity.

Approach of the Major Groups of Member States to the UN

Like all the international organizations of the past, the United Nations, as mentioned, was a creation of the 'winners' who sought

19. R. E. Bissel, "US Participation in the UN System", in T.T. Gati (ed), *op. cit.*, pp. 85-6.

20. *UN Charter*, Article I (3).

to establish new rules and mechanisms to direct the decentralized international system in a new direction. But, how and by whom this 'new' direction would be provided was not adequately laid in the Charter. What emerged instead in reality was that the interests and objectives of a handful of member states or at the best a group of them were tried to be safeguarded by the Charter provisions. Otherwise the veto power would not have been used the way it has really been and the pious supposition that global considerations would override the narrow interests of the veto-holders would have prevailed. On the other hand, the 'losers' are always willing to have a radical transformation of the order that made them so. However, the dichotomy between the 'winners' and the 'losers' of the World War II gradually got blurred with cross-changes of sides and new polarizations of 'East-West' and 'North-South' came to the fore in post-war years. In fact, the UN actions particularly of the later years can be attributed to attempts by nations on the losing side, both economically and politically, of the power equations of the present world. As a result, individual national interests coalesced into group, not collective, interests and this has turned the UN largely into a reflection of bloc politics. Broadly speaking, three groups of countries with identical interests over issues of vital concern can be identified : The West, the Soviet bloc and the Third World.

The West

Although countries of the West are not a monolithic grouping at the UN, some shared interests, mainly East-West issues and world politico-economic order in general keep them united. However, the approach of the Western countries towards the UN had changed dramatically over time since its inception. Retrospectively, the members of the Western alliance headed by the USA were the most active in founding the UN and framing its Charter. At the Dumberton Oaks Conference in 1944 it was the USA who favoured a strong role for the General Assembly as the Organ in which all the member states would be represented and which would be the most

democratic of all UN organs. Although Soviet Union and Britain had reservations they accepted the American position.²¹ Again it is the Western countries who played the pivotal role in incorporating the twin elements of peace maintenance in the Charter. In the early years of the UN when the Security Council was nearly paralysed by the frequent use of Soviet veto, the US in order to neutralise its effect initiated the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution which was adopted by the General Assembly on 3 November 1950. This resolution empowered the Assembly to recommend collective enforcement measures in cases where Security Council fails. Thus, the West to a large degree helped the General Assembly's ascendancy to have more power and competence. Again the US was always on the side of decolonization deliberations in the UN, which significantly helped the dissolution of the colonial empires. This was at a time when the US had a majority support both in the Council and the Assembly.

But the tide began to flow in a different direction when the UN was to mirror the quantitative and qualitative changes that had been taking place in the world since the 1960s. As a result of the rapid decolonization in Africa, the voting power in the Assembly passed to the Group of 77 which through the Non-aligned Movement began to project independent postures in international arena. Together with political independence, the developing countries were becoming vocal about ending their economic dependency on the West. These postures were manifest together in 1964 when the UNCTAD became a permanent subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. The Arab oil embargo in 1973 and the resulting quadrupling of oil prices supported by the developing countries infused a new sense of power in them. Mooted first by the Fourth Summit of the Nonaligned in 1973 held in Algiers, the resolution for the establishment of a NIEO was adopted by the 6th Special Session of the General Assembly in 1974. A Programme of Action was also adopted to implement it. From

21. Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations, *United Nations*, Vol. I (New York and Toronto : Worldmark Press Ltd, 1976), p. 7.

then onward began the polarization between the rich and the poor, dubbed as the North-South divide. These meetings led the then UN Ambassador to the UN John Scali to make a strong-worded statement to the Group of 77 which read in part : "The most meaningful test of whether the Assembly has succeeded in this task of bridging the differences among member states is not whether a majority can be mobilized behind any single draft resolution, but whether those states whose cooperation is vital to implement decision will support it in fact. When the rule of the majority becomes the tyranny of the majority, the minority will cease to respect or obey it, and parliament will cease to function. Every majority must recognize that its authority does not extend beyond the point where the minority becomes so outraged that it is no longer willing to maintain the covenant which binds them."²²

Thus began the Western disenchantment with the world body. This has been fuelled by passing of anti-zionist and anti-apartheid resolutions by the General Assembly. In the global meetings of the 70s and early 80s the US repeatedly tried to drive a wedge between the oil-importing developing countries and the OPEC and also between the LDCs and the NICs. But these efforts failed. It may be mentioned that position of the Western countries towards the North-South dialogue is not identical. There are "hard-liners" like USA and Britain, 'soft-liners' such as, France, Canada, Austria, the Benelux and Scandinavian countries and there are countries choosing the "middle path" like Germany and Japan. But the Western countries in general are against any restructuring of the present order and the result is a stalemate in the North-South dialogue. In case of sanctions against South Africa, there are also some dissensions within the Western bloc. The Netherlands, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries favour sanctions, but recently USA and Britain again vetoed sanctions in the Security Council.

22. Robert F. Meagher, "United States Financing of the United Nations, in T.T. Gati (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 111.

The US has also been at the forefront of a campaign against what it calls the "Politicization" of US Agencies in their policy programmes and advocates greater autonomy and independence of the functional agencies from the political authority of the Assembly. In protest against 'overpoliticization' and 'mismanagement' in the UNESCO, USA and Britain withdrew from it recently. In policy deliberations of the UN Agencies USA often stands alone against the international community. The Reagan administration gave clear indication of favouring bilateral aid policy towards the Third World coun-

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tries instead of multilateral and made the World Bank renounce what they viewed as the Keynesian approach under McNamara and to be supplanted by an emphasis on supply-side economics and market forces. Accordingly, the US took a policy of aid contraction in the IDA, the Bank's soft-loan affiliate and healthy expansion of the Bank's hitherto little-known affiliate—the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the "free enterprise window" which lends exclusively to private industry in the Third World.

It follows, therefore, that there is discontent among member-states and they are polarized over the way the UN has been used as a forum for world politics. Lingering bitterness exists over the Third World majority in the Assembly and its supposed ability to inject an 'anti-US' and 'anti-Western' bias into the UN votes. The Third world is also criticised for using bloc voting to ensure its dominance in the Assembly. Ironically, it was the US who introduced the concept of bloc voting when a majority of the founder countries were pro-West. Now the US is less and less interested to divert issues from the Council to the Assembly for deliberations because of obvious reasons. As a result, most of the East-West issues are discussed with the Soviet Union outside the UN.

At present the US approach towards the world body swings between indifference and hostility. It plays defensive at the UN and rises in the UN forums primarily to answer the charges of others, not to take initiative. Observers are alarmed by reports that the US administration favours aid only to its allies and that it is keeping tabs on all anti-US votes registered at the UN. When Zimbabwe refused to go along with a pro-US Council resolution on the downing of a South Korean passenger jet by the Soviets in 1983, the State Department slashed its proposed economic aid to Zimbabwe from \$ 75 million to \$ 57 million.²³

This Western dissatisfaction is reflected in the contraction of their contributions towards the UN budget and multilateral assistance. The stipulated 1 percent of GNP of the developed countries as ODA by 1990 is far from realization. The US aid to Third World amounts to even less than 0.3 percent and what is worse, less than 20 percent of it is multilateral assistance. The concern over supposedly rapid increase in the UN budget led the US in 1968 to cast its first negative vote on the question of the UN budget.²⁴ Although the regular budget has increased from \$ 19.6 million in 1946 (with 51 members) to about \$ 800 million at present (with 159 members), the per capita budget has gone up much more slowly. Besides, due to manifold increase in inflation and depreciation of US dollar, the currency of the UN, the increases are not great. The West alleges that the 23 leading countries contribute 90 percent of the budget while the Third World who controls 80 percent of the votes in the Assembly pays only 10 percent of the budget. It may be mentioned that although US pays 25 percent of the assessed budgets in the US system, it is much lower in the list if one judges contribution on per capita basis and still further down the list if one ranks contributions as a percentage of GNP.²⁵ In October last Washington as if to encourage cost-cutting

23. *Asiaweek*, 5 April 1985, p. 28.

24. Robert F. Meagher, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

25. UN Department of Public Information, *Image and Reality* (New York : 1983), p. 33.

announced that it would contribute only \$ 100 million to the 1986 UN budget, less than half of the \$ 210 million US assessment. That shortfall which equals about 13 percent of the total UN budget sharply worsened the continuing financial squeeze at the world body.²⁶ The financial crisis of the UN can be ascribed obviously to its extraordinary expansion of activities and accompanying bureaucracy of the UN system, but the erosion of faith in the international organization among some quarters of its membership appears to have contributed to a great extent to the crisis.

The Soviet Bloc

The relations of the Soviet bloc countries headed by the Soviet Union towards the UN also significantly changed. At the time of founding the UN, the USSR was most active in incorporating the veto power in the Charter. Soviet Union then foresaw the consequences of a world body controlled by the western countries. In the initial years, therefore, Soviets used veto at random which on occasions deadlocked the Security Council. Then it was utterly on the defensive to neutralize Western domination. By 1976, of the 143 veto used by the permanent members, Soviet Union alone applied it 110 times.²⁷ In the 50s and 60s the decolonization process and liberation movemets in the colonial empires gave the Soviets political opportunities for extending its influence in the Third World. Now that the Third World is at odds with the West over Middle East, Israel, South Africa and North-South dialogue, the Soviet strategy is to fuel anti-Western sentiments among the majority membership. But the Third World never felt enchanted with Soviet propaganda and hardly failed to challenge any Soviet action whenever it went against their interest. This was manifest in their absolute condemnation of the Soviet-backed Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea and Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Like the US, the Soviet Union is also less interested now in diverting issues from the Council to the Assembly,

26. *Time*, 17 November 1986, p. 34.

27. Theodore A. Coulombis and James H. Wolfe, *op. cit.*, Table-11, p. 270.

for there it finds more difficult to drum up support from the majority. Ivor Richard, former British Permanent Representative to the UN writes, "I can recall no Soviet initiative that struck me as an attempt to advance global cooperation, whether in the Security Council, the Assembly or ECOSOC, where their contribution was inevitably ideological and never financial."²⁸

The UN as the most representative body has always been used by the Soviet bloc as a forum for ideological propaganda about the virtues of socialism and vices of capitalism. In reality, their contributions to global cooperation is very insignificant. Some of the Soviet bloc countries have withheld funds for UN peace-keeping forces, notably in West Asia, which they say should not have been deployed.²⁹ It may be recalled that the Soviets also refused to pay for peace-keeping operations in the initial years. Although Soviet Union pays about 13 percent of the assessed budgets in the UN system, its voluntary contributions directed at Third World development is almost nil. Moscow has a lamentably poor foreign aid record and its assistance is directed mainly at close allies.

It may be mentioned that the Soviets turned down the invitation to attend the Cancun mini-Summit on global cooperation held in 1981. The Soviets maintain the traditional position they have developed over years in the international forums about their non-involvement in the North-South dialogue, which they explain along the following lines:

- a) The main responsibility for the provision of ODA lies with the Western countries as colonial powers;
- b) They continue to exploit the Third World through brain drain, the MNCs and repatriation of profits from investment in the developing countries; and

28. Ivor Richard, "Major Objectives and Functions of the UN : The View from Abroad", in T.T. Gati (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 59.

29. *Asiaweek*, 5 April 1985, p. 29.

(c) They are their main trading partners and profit from it.

These arguments no longer impress the Third World and they try, albeit to no avail, to have the socialist countries change their posture. Ivor Richard further writes, "As an argument it is specious; as a defense it is wearing pretty thin. For the Soviets then, one of the dangers they perceive in the UN is that it might actually begin to resolve these economic issues. Their interests seem to lie more in the continuation of the grievances of the Third World, not in their resolution."³⁰

Like the US, the Soviets also have shown their readiness to threaten to cut off its contribution to UN programmes it finds objectionable. In February 1985 the Soviet Representative on the Governing Body of the ILO Leonid Kostin warned that his nation might adopt financial sanctions against the Agency which allegedly interferes in the internal affairs of the socialist countries. Citing the decision of Poland to withdraw from the ILO in protest against its condemnation of trade union affairs there, Kostin advocated reforms if ILO was not to lose its universal character.³¹

The Third World

In sharp contrast to the approaches of both the West and the East to the United Nations, the goals and strategies pursued by the Third World is quite different. Although the developing countries formed majority among the original founders of the United Nations in 1945 (31 founder members were from Asia, Africa and Latin America), today's Third World majority in the Organization entails a difference. This lies in the development of a common perception of identical political, economic and social needs by this group of majority nations and their unified articulation in the form of new demands and priorities in the United Nations.

30. *Ivor Richard, op. cit.*, p. 60.

31. *Asiaweek*, 5 April 1985, p. 30.

Although the developing countries clustered within the Group of 77 differ among themselves in ideologies, political systems, stages of development, their geographical position, their economic and military strength, they are bound together by a shared heritage of colonial past, poverty, underdevelopment and vulnerability. The factors and compulsions that bind them together are certainly stronger than those that tend to drive them apart. Most of these countries are yet to consolidate their hard-earned independence which is to be accompanied by a minimum level of economic development. In a world where power rivalry still dominates global politics, the UN organizations (with exception of the Security Council) with 'one-country one-vote' is undoubtedly a political and economic blessing. The small and militarily weak nations believe that the fear of a strong condemnation by the international community represented in the Assembly serves as a deterrence against the likely aggressors from marching into their territories.

Being economically and militarily weak, these new nations cannot afford directly to cause annoyance to big powers through their policy postures. The UN serves as an arena where these small states unitedly can project their views on global issues with objectivity of judgement based on non-alignment. There would have been difficulty if these states had to express their views bilaterally on issues, sensitive to the major powers. Besides, the UN serves as the main conduit of diplomacy for a great number of developing countries, who cannot afford to have a good number of diplomatic missions around the world. "We try to do all our lobbying and our diplomacy using the UN as a meeting place," says Fathulla Jameel, Foreign Minister of the Maldives.³² In the UN a small Third World country also gets opportunity to make its views heard on a global scale, to air its own security and development problems to drum up international support and assistance.

32. *Ibid.*

If one looks at the profile of the UN system four decades after its creation it may appear that the system is predominantly serving the Third World, newly-emergent from colonial rule. This is true both in case of political as well as functional agencies of the UN. The latter's activities directed towards the Third World include both peace-keeping and peace-building efforts. Most of the 15 peace-keeping operations undertaken by the world body have taken place in the Third World. In like manner, the UN peace-building efforts, meaning uprooting the causes of domestic violence and politico-economic instability, are almost totally directed towards the Third World. Quantitatively the amount the UN system spends for development of the World's poor is ridiculously small relative to the needs, but it has a relieving impact for poor economies.

However, all these mostly charity-dependent development activities of the UN system are based on the North-advocated 'politics-free' functionalism. Besides, the North's approach to Third World development is still based on the governing principles of the IMF-World Bank-GATT system introduced in the mid-1940s and the exclusiveness

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of real power-weilding has been enshrined in the weighted voting rights in the IMF and World Bank. This was at a time when most of the Third World was still under colonial subjugation. These organizations in essence reflect the interests of the Western members of the UN. Moreover, the post-war industrial economies prospered on cheap energy and raw materials derived from the developing countries. Today the latter experience a different story in their development pursuits. As a result, the developmental gap between the North and South only widened.

Therefore, from the mid-60s onward the struggle of the Group of 77 to narrow down this gap through restructuring the existing economic order over time crystalized into the demand for the establishment of a NIEO. The demands for a NIEO include, among others, transfer of resources and technology, greater access to Western markets for Third world manufactures, higher and stable prices for commodities and above all, restructuring of the World's monetary and financial system so as to give the South an effective share in decision-making. But the North seems still unwilling to part away with well-entrenched dominance over the present order. The UN system as a reflection of the post-war multifaceted changes and developments mirrors these vital concerns of the overwhelming majority of its membership and it is likely to continue to provide the forum for the Third World's bargaining and negotiation with their developed counterparts in both East and West.

Conclusion

International organizations, particularly the United Nations, although established with lofty ideals, could hardly live up to the expectation. The problem arises in implementation process where the envisaged collective interests do not coincide with particular national interests. As a result the United Nations tends to become a mere

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'tool' that governments employ when it is useful and leave aside when it is not. The primary responsibility for this sorry state of affairs obviously goes to the major powers on whom the international community reposed responsibility and confidence in good faith. Through withdrawal politics either in terms of membership or of financial contributions and through regressive diversion towards bilateralism at the cost of multilateralism, the major powers have shattered the basis of such confidence and faith.

Viewed from another perspective, it might be argued that the intense controversies and continued debate over issues of global concern is indicative of the emergence of a distinctive political process within the United Nations. From the point of view of institutional development, it might suggest the maturing of the United Nations, for the intensity of the political contest is a measure of the significance attached to the Organization. Dag Hammarskjöld once wrote that the UN represented "the beginning of an organic process through which the diversity of peoples and their governments are struggling to find common ground upon which we can live together in the one world which has been thrust upon us before we are ready."³³ Whether the process of articulation of group interests in the United Nations will mature into the articulation of collective interests or whether greater convergence will emerge between individual national interests and the collective goals of a 'one world' is a question that would remain open for debate for a long time to come.

33. *Ivor Richard, op. cit. p. 53.*