

MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY, SUMMITS, AND THE UNITED NATIONS

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Since our discussion concerning law will have been undertaken in vain if there is no law, in order to open the way for favourable reception of our work and at the same time to fortify it against attacks, this very serious error must be briefly refuted. In order that we may not be obliged to deal with a crowd of opponents, let us assign to them a pleader. And whom should we chose . . . ? (Grotius 1925)

Diplomacy is one of the oldest forms of human intercourse. The need for "pleaders" to negotiate for states predates the city-states of ancient Greece and Rome, and although multilateral diplomacy is nothing new, it clearly came into its own as a major diplomatic tool in the twentieth century. The two Hague Conferences in 1899 and 1907 and particularly the advent of the League of Nations in 1920 also symbolize the transition from the reliance on bilateral diplomacy to modern-day multilateral diplomacy.¹ In 1945, as Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson noted in *Politics Among Nations*, the United Nations was built on "three political assumptions." The first involved the unity of the great powers after World War II, which would enable the organization to react to any "threat to peace and security, regardless of the source." The second factor was that their com-

and conferences. In fact, Williams is pessimistic about the future of arms control agreements because of US objections and opposition. Unlike the Clinton administration, the Bush administration, Williams maintains, has no commitment to multilateral institutions, organizations, and agreements. He believes that the "2004 US presidential election may in self in part be a referendum" on the administration's lack of "support for and commitment to multilateralism."

There is another significant factor, which must be addressed when one evaluates the various uses and the value of diplomacy, including diplomacy conducted under UN auspices. Jessica Matthews concludes that national governments "are not simply losing autonomy in a globalizing economy. They are sharing powers—including political, social, and security roles at the core of sovereignty [italics added]—with businesses, with international organizations, and with a multitude of citizens groups, known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs)" (Mathews 1997, 50). Her general view is that most conflicts these days are "intra-state" in nature because security threats between states have decreased since the end of the Cold War. In her judgment, the issue of "human security" has become so significant a factor in global politics that it rivals (and in some cases displaces) the older preoccupation with national security. Many believe that human security issues may be what are behind much of the support which terrorists receive from passive populations and may be the recruiter for active participants, such as suicide bombers.

One of the basic reasons for the decline of the nation-state as the principal actor in the international arena has been the increasingly activist role played by thousands of NGOs worldwide. There are some, for example, in Amnesty International who even claim that the organization is "the arm of the U.N. for human rights" (Mathews 1997, 53). Clearly, NGOs have influenced national governments, and they do play a very serious and important role in the UN system. It is the focus on human rights by NGOs which has led the UN Security Council to broaden the definition of "international peace and security" to include what traditionally would be defined as interstate conflict outside the purview of the Charter.¹⁰

Finally, George Kennan addressed the fundamental issues of UN-sponsored diplomacy fifty years ago. He noted that the "concept of nationality and national sovereignty" had been elevated by the UN to "an absolute value it did not have before." He criticized the "one government, one vote" principle as a "glorification" of national sovereignty by making it the "exclusive form of participation in international life." (Kennan 1951, 95-96) The UN has always operated on a contradictory basis. It reasserts national sovereignty through its voting practices in the General Assembly while it recognizes, evaluates, and offers solutions to problems caused by nationalism or reinforced by state sovereignty. This contradiction has never been

adequately resolved. But as Rieck Terpstra suggests, "The importance of the UN to small countries goes beyond the abstract issues of sovereignty. The United Nations is a practical solution to the political, financial, and/or human resources that are required in order to participate effectively in the international arena."

What ultimately needs to be done is for the UN to help inspire the creation of a true coalition of the willing, of citizens, individually or as members of groups (NGOs), to act as Hedley Bull suggests, as "local agents of the common good" (Bull 1991). Perhaps, the real alternative, then, to Kenneth Waltz's anarchic structure of world politics is to foster what Ken Booth calls a global "community of communities." However indirectly, the UN can assist in the process of global community building through its diplomatic sponsorship, even when these meetings involve "citizen-diplomats" as major players.

Robert Kagan maintains that the "United States must sometimes play by the rules of a Hobbesian world. . . . It must refuse to abide by certain international conventions that may constrain its ability to fight effectively. . . . It must live by a double standard. And it must sometimes act unilaterally, not out of a passion for unilateralism but . . . because the United States has no choice but to act unilaterally" (Kagan 2002, 1). The record on unilateral American action, however, is decidedly mixed. The United States has won a war, but it has alienated its allies, it has diminished the effectiveness of post-World War II institutions it was instrumental in creating, and it has not won the peace. Multilateral diplomacy and UN diplomacy are not perfect, but they can bring together nation-states, NGOs, members of civil society, and other nonstate actors in effective alliances to confront and perhaps to resolve vexing global issues, which continue to make this world a difficult and dangerous place for all of its inhabitants.

Notes

1. World War I obviously did not signal the end to bilateral diplomacy, but it did usher in a new era based on the creation of more nation-states, the beginning of the end of Eurocentric global politics, the increasing use of multilateral diplomacy through international organizations, and the frequent reliance on summit-level conferences between and among world leaders.

2. See Michael Beschloss's excellent account of the failed 1960 Paris Summit in *May-Day/Eisenhower, Khrushchev and the U-2 Affair* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

3. In fact, summit diplomacy at the UN rarely occurs involving heads of state. It is more appropriate to evaluate the UN in this regard when the organization, through special conferences or summits, becomes a diplomatic forum for a discus-

sion and possible resolution of a major global problem. The issue today, however, is not UN-sponsored conferences; it is whether or not multilateral diplomacy at any level, as opposed to unilateral action, still has any relevance.

4. The NPT was negotiated at the UN in 1968 and went into effect in 1970 for a twenty-five-year period, thus requiring the convening of a review and extension conference at the United Nations in 1995.

5. As Immanuel Wallerstein has warned, "Today, the United States is a super-power that lacks true power, a world leader that nobody follows and few respects, and a nation drifting dangerously amidst a global chaos it cannot control" (Wallerstein 2002, 63).

6. Margaret Doxey notes, for example, in "Constructive Internationalism: A Continuing Theme in Canadian Foreign Policy" (1989), that only through "coalitions" can nations such as Canada "exercise an influence on (global) policy-making." This was a paper presented at the International Studies Association convention in London.

7. From 1990 to 2003, the UN has sponsored major conferences dealing with the issues of human security, from the World Summit on Children in 1990 to the International Conference on Finance for Development in 2003. The number of conferences has increased because it is clear that many problems are so universal that the older forms of diplomacy are inadequate and often inappropriate, especially in implementing proposed solutions.

8. Fomerand has noted that the "outcome" of these conferences "can lead to the creation of new sources on international law." He has cited Conventions on Discrimination Against Women (1975) and the Climate Change and Desertification and the Biodiversity Treaty (1992) as examples.

9. Michael Posner noted in "Rally Round Human Rights," *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1994-1995), "Human Rights advocates, such as Amnesty International and hundreds of national rights advocacy groups around the world, rely on international human rights standards that set minimum requirements for governments."

10. The decision by one hundred governments to ban landmines in September 1997, over the objections of the United States and without the participation of Russia and China, is ample evidence of how important NGOs can be on major global issues. It is the first time in seventy years that an active weapons system has been banned. Many observers credit NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, the Vietnam Veterans of America, Handicap International of France, and the Veterans Advisory Group of England, with the successful conclusion of the treaty negotiated in Oslo. The 1997 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Jody Williams and to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the umbrella NGO responsible for coordinating the global antilandmines effort. The late Diana, Princess of Wales, also contributed to the antilandmines effort in 1997 in well-publicized trips to Bosnia and Angola.

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the environment, and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, have been added to the diplomat's agenda. The real challenges of the diplomatic profession derive from the tendency to bypass and even reject multilateral institutions and organizations, the addition of new actors to the global political arena (from the often constructive role played by NGOs to the global ways destructive role played by terrorists), and the general scrutiny which diplomats and diplomatic transactions are subjected to by the public, mostly through the global media. But the greatest threat that the UN system faces in the coming years may be the political and economic abandonment by its most important member state, which would undermine the credibility of the system as a whole.

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CITIZEN DIPLOMACY

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In the original edition of this book my task was to reflect on multilateral diplomacy in arms control by recounting my experiences as a US delegate to the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference. I limited my comments in that volume to the issues and events surrounding that particular conference. That is impossible to do on this occasion, for not only did I go on to work on another major arms control effort, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), after the NPT Conference, but in 2003 the NPT, the CTBT, and even multilateralism itself have been under siege in recent years. I regret to say that the US government for which I worked in the 1990s is at least in part (and in large part, I must say) responsible for the precarious state these core treaties are in today. Nevertheless, the assault on arms control and multilateralism transcends these treaties, so I must perforce broaden my comments to deal with other critical issues.

Again, I shall begin by recounting my personal experience as an arms controller. Upon the conclusion of the NPT Review Conference in May 1995, I received my second posting as a William C. Foster Visiting Fellow to return to Washington, D.C., to become the "special advisor" to the deputy director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. The euphoria of the NPT indefinite extension was still high when the interagency