

pay for multilateral organizations or actions that it cannot control to its satisfaction, and other nations are reluctant to merely acquiesce in actions controlled by the United States. Later in this chapter, Ambassador Amer Araqin recounts his experience while a member of the Iraqi delegation to the United Nations with the attempt of the US Ambassador to have him withdraw a resolution on Puerto Rico and his opposition to US policy on Iraq and Palestine. He states that "the second Gulf War represented the total failure of the Organization" and suggests certain reforms which are needed. Ambassador Sergey Lavrov states later in this chapter that there is agreement on the need for reforming the United Nations to meet the challenges of the new millennium, but not on the specific reforms needed. He states, "It will take intense negotiations to reduce these various ideas to a common denominator and reach agreement on optimal approaches to strengthen the UN system." Although he does not criticize the United States directly, he does criticize unilateralism, pointing out that "a consensus among the UN's members would be worth much more than any unilateral action since it promotes a global approach to the solution of the modern world's inescapably global problems." Multilateral diplomacy will not disappear, since technological and environmental changes and the growing number of both state and nonstate actors in the post-Cold War era require its use. The changing realities of the post-Cold War era, however, will necessitate further restructuring and reform of multilateral organizations and even greater skill in multilateral diplomacy.

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## THE DIPLOMAT AT THE UNITED NATIONS: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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The founding of the United Nations system over fifty years ago, its evolution, and its wide-ranging interests and activities have no parallel in human affairs. The United Nations occupies a central and unique place in world politics, and it plays a leading role on the world diplomatic stage with an expanding cast of players, which now includes multilateral organizations, regional institutions, governments, commercial interests, nongovernmental entities, and individuals. More than two generations of diplomats have now served their countries at the United Nations, learning through experience the ins and outs of multilateral diplomacy and how to work in a very challenging and demanding environment.

One of the most significant changes in multilateral diplomacy has been the increase in UN membership, growing from 51 member states in 1945 to today's 191. The United Nations played a major role in the decolonization process, and this brought a large number of developing countries, which had been colonies, to independence and membership in the United Nations—the lion's share of them gaining independence between the mid-1950s and the mid-1970s.<sup>1</sup> This expansion of the nation-

international organizations and the possibilities of successful cooperation between them. Such matters should be included in training programs. In addition it would seem that the vast network of intergovernmental bodies and institutions that exists today for the management of transnational problems poses a challenge to governments, especially with respect to the organization and operation of the foreign ministries and other government agencies with relevant responsibilities for international relations.

### Some Requirements for the Multilateral Diplomat Today

The increasing use of telecommunications technology and the new developments in that field are likely to have a profound effect on the operations of multilateral organizations, on governments, and on diplomatic activities pursuant to the work of those organizations. The sheer volume, variety, and complexity of the operations of those organizations—the United Nations, in particular—and the vast quantity of information and documentation generated have made the task of diplomacy difficult for all concerned. The United Nations and its member states have been moving rapidly toward the greater use of the Internet in multilateral diplomacy. Indeed, it was anticipated that, by the end of the 1990s, diplomats would be able to search thousands of UN documents in any of the official languages, including any resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on the previous day, and then immediately forward this material to their capital, with comments (see United Nations 1996). The Internet should also help diplomats to overcome the situation in which a single country may take one position on a particular matter in a specialized agency and another in ECOSOC. It also should be of particular aid to small developing countries, given the limited resources of their national ministries. The prospect that diplomats and governments will be able to link up quickly and easily and to discuss related matters that are being dealt with in a variety of bodies is very encouraging.

What, then, is required of the individuals engaged in diplomatic work in multilateral organizations? Brian Urquhart argues, "The art of multilateral diplomacy . . . consists to a large degree in long and intricate negotiations, contacts and conversations. . . . Multilateral diplomacy is usually a laborious and nerve-racking process that requires great stamina as well as intuition, intellect, understanding and negotiating ability" (Urquhart 1972, xiii). And what type of person is best suited to this work? Perhaps it ought to be said at the outset that some persons discover, on being sent to the United Nations, that they have a natural aptitude for the multilateral environment, which is different in important respects from a bilateral one. Of course, some diplomats have worked in both, as well as in their national

ministries, and this three-dimensional experience is useful, if not essential, particularly in the matter of coordinating the work on specific issues. This coordination is especially helpful to smaller countries, with their relatively limited resources. It is inevitable that some persons will be posted to work in multilateral organizations without having had much experience in diplomacy in any form. But experience, for example, in government agencies whose work has international dimensions can be an asset to the new diplomat as well as to the multilateral organization itself.

In the multilateral system, diplomats play multiple roles. First and foremost is their function as the representative and promoter of their country's interests. But the United Nations seeks to serve the interests of the global community, and its members must also contribute to that endeavor. In some instances regional interests are involved, and these also demand consideration. Not to be overlooked is the frequent possibility of some positive fallout for a country in this process. Johan Kaufmann notes, "A country can build up its influence in the United Nations to be used in pursuit of its own objectives in the future"—whether these are related to UN issues or to matters outside the organization (Kaufmann 1980, 11). Another part of the multilateral diplomat's role is to serve as political adviser to national authorities on particular issues, but it is also his or her role to be guided by the instructions of national authorities. On some issues where special knowledge is required, the diplomat has also to be both student (tutored by the appropriate national ministry on particular issues) and researcher (able to delve into the subject on his or her own).

The community in which the UN diplomat operates is composed of the representatives of other governments, UN staff at all levels, and representatives of the media and of NGOs. Within each group there is great diversity in nationality, culture, race, and interests. And the contacts between and among the members of this community can take place at any time, formally or informally, in committee rooms or lounges, at receptions, lunches, dinners, and other events.

It would be difficult to develop a profile of the typical diplomat at the United Nations or any other multilateral organization. In fact, diplomats present an infinite variety. But it is possible to list some of the most desirable characteristics for those who aspire to such work. Fluency in a second language, one of the six officially used in the organization, is an important asset for the multilateral diplomat. Even more important, perhaps, is a good education, along with a capacity to learn, for there is much to learn in such work. Today, some special knowledge of international economics (including trade matters) can be a very useful asset, as can a background in international law, since there is so much technical content related to these fields in the issues that diplomats have to address. Then, too, since many is-

ties and relationships in the international sphere have roots in the past, a background in history can be useful. Of course, formal training in international relations offers a good basis for this work, too. In an increasingly complex and changing world, all training programs for diplomats must keep abreast of developments and of activities in the UN system. In this respect, training programs offered by the UN Institute for Training and Research have been of special value.

For work in the United Nations especially, it helps to have an outgoing personality and a capacity to establish good personal relationships—even with representatives of countries whose positions on important issues are opposed to one's own. These characteristics will also go a long way toward overcoming differences of culture and race and of interest and are especially helpful for diplomats who are new to a multicultural milieu. The ability to speak convincingly at meetings and to prepare statements for oneself or for one's seniors is essential for diplomats at the United Nations, as are negotiation and arbitration skills, since these are the dominant activity of multilateral diplomacy today. The UN's seemingly endless series of meetings, committees, working groups, regional caucuses, and other encounters are the venue in which these skills are in demand. Diplomats have extraordinary opportunities to practice their leadership skills at the highest level in the United Nations, because the presidents and chairpersons of the General Assembly, the Security Council, and other bodies, agencies, and committees are drawn from the ranks of government representatives. An effective president or chair of a UN body calls for a sound understanding of the structure, workings, and evolution of the organization, as well as a command of the procedures and rules of the body.

The increasing role and presence of NGOs at the United Nations require of diplomats and their governments an understanding of that dimension of multilateralism; the nature of the participation of these interests, at both the national and the global levels; their interaction with delegations; and the fact that in some instances individuals from such organizations are included in national delegations. Moreover, NGO-sponsored seminars and conferences outside the United Nations provide UN diplomats with opportunities to broaden their horizons—and with platforms for expressing their views on particular issues. This is also a venue for correcting some of the public's serious misperceptions of the United Nations and even, in some cases, of the diplomat's own country.

Notwithstanding the prominence of recent debates on the relevance of the United Nations for particular nations or problems, the United Nations and other multilateral organizations will continue to play an essential role in diplomacy. Diplomats today will find their work in such organizations just as demanding as did diplomats of yesterday, if not more so.

### Notes

1. The United Nations' role was vital, but the colonial territories made a significant contribution by demanding, agitating for, and negotiating independence and in some cases fighting wars of liberation.
2. The records show that Bandung in 1955 was a meeting of twenty-nine heads of state of Africa and Asia and was followed six years later in Belgrade by the First Conference of Heads of State and Government. Therefore, the NAM was conceived at Bandung and born in Belgrade.

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