CHAPTER VII
VII

CONCLUSION AND ASSESSMENT

What has been discussed in the preceding chapters combines facts with analysis on the basis of which a derivative evaluation can be made in order to indicate the extent to which India has made meaningful use of the United Nations processes with a view to serving its own as well as larger interests. In this chapter an attempt is made to present an overall assessment and conclusions.

Designed ostensibly to promote larger interests of the world community in the tasks of the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international peace and security and the promotion of general welfare, the United Nations has, as noted earlier, increasingly become an important instrument of national diplomacy. The organizational setting in which the United Nations operates has largely contributed to this. As discussed in earlier, the continuing conference system, the instituting of the permanent missions, the emergence of caucusing groups, and related factors have made the United Nations not only the nerve centre of the conduct of diplomacy in the traditional sense of the term, but also added a new
dimension. Political processes, debates, and rules of procedure are made use of by Member States to obtain what is often referred to as "collective legitimization" of their respective acts, policies and positions on a given question. All tactical tools of "corridor diplomacy" as well as "parliamentary diplomacy" are used to achieve the objective. Debates are made use of not only to score points, but also to influence public opinion in one's own country as well as outside; in that regard diplomats could make effective use of the permanent presence of the World Press at the United Nations headquarters. Again, what goes on in the United Nations leads to intensive interactions which are useful to conduct two facets of diplomacy: pursuit of one's own business and knowing the business of others. Collection of necessary information helps provide feedback to one's government for formulation of policies and strategies.

An effective role in the political processes of the United Nations demands of its participants not only traditional skill in diplomacy, but also something more. They have to have good understanding of the issues involved relating to the questions under consideration, debating skill and tactical use of rules of procedure to promote or oppose acceptance of a particular point of view. Hence the choice of personnel becomes important. To represent
government, and to negotiate on its behalf, experience and related personal traits could make quite a difference in the outcome regarding a particular question. Member States who seek to conduct their diplomacy effectively and vigorously are obliged to choose their personnel with great care. Equally, if not more, important is the question of planning strategy and co-ordination.

While examining India's participation in the diplomacy at the United Nations, one finds some institutional weaknesses. A study of diplomatic personnel comprising the Indian Permanent Mission at New York over the years indicates that India has not adhered to any policy pattern. This holds true for the period beginning early 1950s. Specifically in regard to diplomatic personnel at the Mission, India's personnel policy seems to follow no patterns of continuity and change. No due consideration seems to be given to meet special requirements of multi-lateral diplomacy. By and large, considerations of eligibility of personnel to be posted to different categories of stations—classified in terms of climate and comforts provided—appear to weigh much. Thus, a person with a rank of consul, say in Kuwait, is considered good enough to handle the work at the Mission in New York. However, in the case of the Permanent Representative, the record indicates that due consideration has been given to
experience. Almost all Permanent representatives appointed have had varying degrees of prior experience in the work at the United Nations. Nonetheless, whatever the experience and expertise of a Permanent Representative, he alone cannot make much difference unless he has a supporting team of competent diplomatic personnel. There have been several instances where diplomatic personnel were transferred without due regard to the principle of continuity and change in personnel. Substitutes sent were, very often, such personnel who had no experience of conference diplomacy or parliamentary diplomacy.  

1 All Permanent Representatives, before their appointment, gained experience in the work at the United Nations either working in a lower rank in the Permanent Mission or serving as a member of the annual delegations to the General Assembly earlier.

However, it should be noted that in the case of the deputy permanent representatives, this practice was not consistently followed. Persons who held the rank of deputy permanent representative (viz., N.P. Jain, Saad M. Hashmi, Salaran Haider) during 1971-80 were new to the work at the United Nations Headquarters. In comparison, the situation was better in the earlier decade when personnel (for instance B.C. Misra) who served in lower positions in the Mission were designated as deputy permanent representative.

2 For instance, in 1962 personnel changes affected concerned the Permanent Representative, two first secretaries and two attachés. One more first secretary joined additionally. Also, it may be intriguing to note that one attaché who joined the Mission in May served for a duration of six months only. In 1952, therefore, there were at least five new faces, while only two (a counsellor and a first secretary) were relatively old hands in the Mission.
As regards the position of delegations to the General Assembly, one notes that persons without any prior experience of the work at the United Nations have been included. This holds true specifically for the period since mid-sixties. An analysis of the relevant data shows that the non-officials/public figures thus chosen (without prior experience) are not included in subsequent delegations—a practice that was common during 1950s. In other words, experience acquired by a delegate during his first participation is not utilized in subsequent years. Obviously, the choice of an individual in the delegations, especially in recent times, is considered largely as a matter of granting political patronage rather than an attempt to utilise the services of experienced and knowledgeable individuals. It is difficult to measure, but one can very well surmise, the extent to which India's participation was adversely affected because of its personnel policy or lack of it.

Again in 1971, the deputy permanent representative, one counsellor and two first secretaries were replaced while remaining personnel were hardly one-year old at the Mission. Similar situation prevailed in 1973 also. Except the deputy permanent representative, a counsellor and two second secretaries, everyone else (i.e. the Permanent Representative, one counsellor and four first secretaries) was new.
Again, the mechanism concerning strategy formulation and the extent to which senior officials in the Ministry of External Affairs and in the Permanent Mission in New York are involved in the process largely remain undefined. Who is entrusted with the task of co-ordinating the work at the United Nations Division in New Delhi and the Mission in New York? How instructions are formulated and at whose initiative? No clear answers are available to these and related questions.

It should be noted that after Independence, as far as foreign policy matters, organization of the Ministry and training of diplomatic personnel were concerned, India had to start from the scratch. In those early years the question of evolving an institutionalized mechanism for the purpose of co-ordination and of formulation of strategy did not receive necessary attention. Indeed during those years, India’s participation at the United Nations and other international conferences was largely a role of taking initiatives on international issues and of providing moral leadership under the stewardship of Jawaharlal Nehru and as a result of fortuitous circumstances. Hence, India’s policies and interactions in the ensuing Cold War were one of exercising moderation and mediation. The question of planning of strategy was not given much thought nor was considered that much necessary. By 1960s the inadequacy
of the policies and the manner in which they were pursued in 1950s were clearly discernible. The admission of new members, the decline, if not the end, of bipolarity and other factors transformed the scenario at the United Nations, as also outside it. In the changed situation it was neither practicable nor desirable for India to provide the kind of moral leadership it demonstrated during 1950s. The complexity of issues which confronted India both at bilateral and multilateral levels called for a sophisticated approach. A policy involving exercise of mediation and moderation could not be a substitute for the conduct of diplomacy in a realistic manner to safeguard national interests. Thus, with the passage of time, the need for an institutionalised mechanism for co-ordination and formulation of strategy became imperative. Unfortunately, despite some efforts in that direction, that need has yet to be effectively met.
In the context of what has been noted above, it could be said that conduct of India's diplomacy during 1970s reflected certain advantages as well as disadvantages. At the beginning of 1970s, India's Ministry of External Affairs was nearly 25 years old. It comprised of well-trained and highly experienced personnel. There was more realistic understanding of the implications and intricacies involved in various international problems as well as bilateral issues. As the discernible changes in 1960s indicated, partly by choice and partly by circumstances, India adopted a low-key role in international relations during the period. Thus, in the years beginning 1970, in a sense, India was better equipped to deal with the situation, and in another sense it still lacked something which was needed to play an effective role to safeguard its own as well as larger interests. Both these weak and strong points are discernible in India's responses and interactions in the three questions that constitute the focus of analysis in this study.

The first question related to the conflict situation in India-Pakistan sub-continent in 1971. Ever since events took violent turn in East Pakistan in March 1971, India adopted a cautious approach. The ten-million refugee burden loomed large on the socio-economic and political life of India. India's plea to build up
pressure on Pakistan to enter into a political settlement with duly elected representatives in East Pakistan could not secure much support in the international community. Further, the American bid for rapprochement with China, and Pakistan's involvement in it, added new dimension to the situation and forced India to mobilise its resources to seek a speedy solution to the problem. At some stage, Indian calculations did not rule out, so it seems, military solution. In the fast changing syndrome of what appeared to be the lining-up of Washington-Rawalpindi-Peking, the Soviet strategy also changed. There was obviously a meeting of minds between New Delhi and Moscow and the result was the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty. The subsequent events that eventually led to an armed conflict between India and Pakistan would indicate that India had not ruled out, indeed had seemed to plan its strategy accordingly, seeking a solution to the problem by military means. In terms of achieving the objective (of "liberating Bangladesh"), one could contend that while its performance in the battlefield, by and large, deserved commendation, its conduct at the diplomatic plane—especially at the United Nations—left much to be desired.

India's responses at the United Nations on the question indicated a lack of preparedness for the same.
If, as a last resort, military action was to be taken, a part of the strategy should have been to build up support for India’s action among the Members of the United Nations. Given the realities of international politics, as also the political processes of the United Nations, India’s success or failure was largely to be decided in the battlefield. As such, what India could do at the United Nations was to minimise adverse reaction especially among smaller States and non-aligned countries from Africa and Asia. This called for skilful use of corridor diplomacy much before the war broke out. Obviously no serious effort was made in that direction. India, also, seems to have made not much effective use of rules of procedure and parliamentary devices. For instance, for an adroit diplomat at the United Nations it would not be difficult to delay by a day or so the final conclusions of debate on a given question.

It is noteworthy that the proceedings during the General Assembly lasted hardly for a day resulting in adoption of a resolution adverse to India’s position, and the only supporting vote obtained outside the socialist bloc was that of Bhutan; such traditional friendly countries of India as Yugoslavia and Egypt also voted in support of the resolution.

In so far as the deliberations in the Security Council were concerned, the Soviet Union—since India was
not a Member in it then—employed necessary tactics. Points of order were raised; meetings were sought to be adjourned to enable informal consultations; and a number of draft resolutions were introduced one after another. Here India also did its part, in the course of debates, its representatives refused to accept any resolution which did not recognise the "realities of the situation" and which did not provide for an immediate political settlement in East Pakistan.

On the other hand, some Members of the Council—sympathising with Pakistan's position—acted with alertness and promptitude. Once their resolution failed of adoption because of the Soviet veto, they lost no time in making use of the procedural device under the "Uniting for Peace" resolution (1950) in getting the question transferred to the General Assembly for its consideration. It was here that India was caught off guard. Obviously, the Indian strategy planners did not seem to take into consideration this possibility and the need to undertake necessary diplomatic groundwork. The wide membership of the Assembly and the variety of interests pursued by Member States therein required effective participation in the parliamentary diplomacy and corridor diplomacy to safeguard India's interest. To this end, expertise and experience of the entire diplomatic personnel needed to be pressed into
service. Indian diplomats were expected to seek endorsement of India’s position, or, failing which, to prevent endorsement of Pakistan’s position. It should be noted that the Indian Mission in New York could not meet the expectations in that regard. After a day-long deliberations on the question, the Assembly adopted a resolution, with 104 Member States voting in favour, despite India’s opposition. It was true that most Member States, especially smaller ones gave preference to uphold the principles governing territorial integrity, sovereignty of a Member State. However, the failure of the Indian diplomacy to contain the adverse reaction was too glaring to be brushed away. If India had done preparatory work, it might have been able to reduce the size of votes cast in opposition to India’s stance. Also, it should be noted that India failed to seek prolongation of the General Assembly’s consideration of the question. 4 If it had done so, it would have been possible to establish last-minute contacts both in national capitals and in New York to persuade or pressurise certain Member States especially those who expressed understanding, to a

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4 In fact, the President of the Assembly suggested at one stage that deliberations were likely to be prolonged and, therefore, voting could be deferred till next day. But he did not press the suggestion, as it faced opposition from the delegations of Tunisia and Yemen. General Assembly Official Records, session 25, Plenary, 2003rd mtg, 7 December 1974.
considerable extent, of India's position. The poor record of performance by the Mission on this count could perhaps be attributed to the personnel changes effected in 1971. These changes brought in four new faces while remaining were not much experienced in the work at the United Nations.5

Still wider is the question of co-ordination. In regard to military moves, planning strategy, co-ordination and implementation received, so the outcome showed, due attention. The same could be said about the efforts at diplomatic level. Interventions by India's representatives during the debates demonstrated exuberance rather than discretion. For instance, the Indian Permanent Representative, while taking part in debates in the Security Council, once made a statement without realizing its implications, that the Indian troops crossed the international border on the eastern front much before the commencement of war. Not surprisingly, Pakistan made use of this statement to its political advantage and attempted to malign India for "preplanned aggression". The weakness in India's representation and diplomatic interactions obviously prompted India to supplement it with a high-powered delegation, sent after the adoption of the General Assembly resolution. But

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5 See explanation in n. 2.
there was little left for this kind of diplomatic offensive. Military developments in East Pakistan presented a fait accompli, which could not be ignored by the Security Council. The reality of Pakistan's surrender and the emergence of Bangladesh had to be taken into account. This was reflected in the Council resolution adopted on 21 December 1971.

As regards the question concerning Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, India's actions and continuing interactions cannot, at this stage be subjected to definitive conclusions. However, some observations are pertinent here.

At the initial stage when the Declaration was adopted in 1971, India was able to have its viewpoint duly reflected insofar as the Declaration specifically referred to the objective of elimination of all manifestations of "great Power" military presence conceived in the context of their global rivalries.

India's interactions on the question in the later years could be presented in two broad phases. During the first phase, covering the period up to 1979, India largely found itself on defensive, since most of the proposals were not to India's liking. For instance, the
questions of renouncing nuclear options, of devising a mechanism for settlement of disputes among the States of the region, and of evolving a code of conduct were raised by some littoral States. India expressed its scepticism regarding the viability of the suggestion (made by Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and other States) for the demilitarization of the Indian Ocean region. India argued that this would not yield any practical result in a situation where areas in the vicinity of the Indian Ocean continued to have nuclear weapons. India, also, did not accept such verification arrangements that were not applicable to the nuclear-weapon States. Again, the arrangements (proposed by Pakistan and others) envisaging settlement of disputes among the littoral and hinterland States, India contended, might complicate the process of reaching satisfactory settlement through bilateral means. Likewise, in India's view, a code of conduct, suggested by some Members including Pakistan, was unnecessary as there was already the United Nations Charter embodying similar provisions in the global context. In sum, most of the interactions during this period reflected, from India's point of view, a mix-up of priorities. Most of the Members gave priority to the steps to be taken by the littoral and hinterland States at regional level, rather than to emphasize the urgent need
for complete elimination of great Power military presence in the area. The reasons were obvious. Some of the littoral States could easily be manoeuvred by the two super Powers to make demands which would divert attention from the main issue. Others seemed to have apprehensions emanating from India’s size and potentialities. This discouraging trend in discussions, evident in the first phase, was partly set right in the later years.

A new phase began in 1979 when the Soviet Union, the United States and other extra-regional maritime Powers joined the Ad Hoc Committee as its Members. Henceforth India could lead the discussions to what it considered the key issue. It re-emphasized, inter alia, the need for the removal of military base facilities maintained in the Ocean by outside Powers (implying thereby the United States base facility in Diego Garcia). India could, also, utilize the forum for refuting the arguments advanced by the United States that harmonization of views among the Members of the Ad Hoc Committee should precede the convening of a conference on the question. Further, it opposed the establishment of limited-membership working groups which might deny, in its opinion, the opportunity to the Committee to deal with the situation squarely. In other words, the great Power participation had enabled India to focus attention on issues which were vital to the common
interests of the littoral and hinterland States, and to question the justification for the continued presence of the great Powers in the region.

It may be noted that the peace zone question is likely to be a perennial one in the years to come. It is a question intimately linked to broader issues of international peace and security. It may be stated that India's interactions on the subject, in the past, were governed by these and related constraints. Under the circumstances, in sum, only through the collective efforts in the United Nations to build up international pressure against the escalating great Power presence, India may be able to safeguard its own as well as larger interests.

Pakistan's initiative in 1974 seeking establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia and the continued consideration of the proposal by the General Assembly in the following years, provided yet another test to India's conduct of diplomacy in the United Nations. By bringing the question to the United Nations, Pakistan's objective, as discussed earlier, obviously was to force India to make commitments on giving up its nuclear options, or, in case the commitments were not forthcoming, to "expose" India and mobilise moral and political pressure against India's nuclear policy.
Reacting to Pakistan's initiative, India pointed out that the consideration of the question at the United Nations should follow rather than precede prior consultations and agreement among the South Asian countries. It maintained that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in an isolated sub-region of South Asia might ignore the presence of nuclear-weapon Powers and the military bases of outside Powers in the context of great Power rivalry in the larger parts of Asia. Also, India emphasized that nuclear-weapon-free zones could not effectively check the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Reviewing the developments, it should be noted that more than one option was open to India to safeguard its interest involved in the question. Extending support to Pakistan's proposal was not in India's interest. The other alternatives were either to register its strong opposition and work against the endorsement of Pakistani proposal, or, to soft-pedal the Pakistani demand by adopting a low-key role and registering an "abstention" at the time of voting.

What has been India's response? India underlined its opposition to Pakistan's proposal not only by voting against, but also by presenting a counter-proposal.

Defending this, some Indian diplomatic personnel argued
that India's counter-draft secured endorsement of India's views by the General Assembly with more margin than Pakistan's draft.

Apparently these arguments did not reflect well-thought out strategy. India's changing responses substantiated this observation. In 1974 and 1975 India sponsored a counter-draft; but from 1976 onwards it chose not to do so. No explanation was forthcoming in defence of the change of tactic. Again, India reversed its earlier negative vote by abstaining on Pakistan's proposal in 1977. It may be too much to draw a conclusion that India realised the wisdom in resorting to abstention.

Further, the change of government in India in 1977 alone could not have caused the abstention, because the same government instructed for a negative vote in the next year.

Granting, for a while, that the political leadership was responsible for the above inconsistency in voting behaviour, it should be noted that the diplomatic personnel in the Ministry as well as the Mission in New York did not deal with certain aspects of the question with adroitness. The Indian Mission could not make use of Pakistan's shifting stances on the question. For instance, Pakistan did not include a request addressed to the nuclear-weapon States to co-operate for the effective realisation of the objective
of the nuclear-weapon-free zone, in the drafts presented in 1975 and 1976. The explanation offered for not taking political advantage of this important omission does not stand deep examination.

In sum, with a little more planning of strategy, adroitness, and alertness, India could have done much better than what it did in safeguarding its interest and image in the context of the nuclear-weapon-free zone proposal.

The foregoing analysis is a pointer to some definitive trends in India’s diplomatic interactions at the United Nations. In the context of the India-Pakistan conflict situation (1971), India attempted to supplement, to an extent, the political processes of the United Nations to achieve the objective of liberating Bangladesh by military means. In the peace zone question, it found the United Nations mechanism useful to the extent the elimination of great Power military presence remained the major focus of attention in the deliberations. On the other hand, when the United Nations forum was sought to be made use of by adversaries to its disadvantage in the context of the nuclear-weapon-free zone proposal, India seemed to advocate precedence to bilateral means of consultation, negotiation, and agreement.
In conclusion, the analysis made in this study emphasizes that the United Nations has become an integral part of international politics and diplomacy; it has evolved over the years as an actor in that system. The Organization should be taken into account on the basis of what it is rather than what it ought to be. Further, it is also emphasized that the United Nations has become a permanent rendezvous for the conduct of national diplomacy. The United Nations serves as an instrument to promote and safeguard national interests of Member States and, in the process, political advantages and disadvantages to the participants. Thus, Member States should take into account the possibilities and potentials of the United Nations to safeguard and promote national interests as well as larger interests. A policy so formulated can accomplish the desired goals only when it is accompanied by a well-organized mechanism of national participation, machinery for policy/strategy formulation, and institutionalized system of co-ordination. How lack of adequate attention to these and related inputs partly affected the conduct of diplomacy in the United Nations to a considerable extent is brought home in the three illustrative case studies. It is hoped that an effort will be made in the
years to come to eliminate these weaknesses in order that India's skill is enhanced to make effective use of the United Nations mechanism for safeguarding its national interests and promoting common interests.