I

INTRODUCTION

The political processes and diplomacy within the United Nations, aside from its overt manifestation in voting records and public speeches, have been the subject of far too little attention. Its elusive processes, which are not easily understandable, have led to all kinds of criticism including that the world body is a trap for gullible diplomats and that it is a debating society wherein diplomatic tools are blunted and the objectives enshrined in the Charter obscured. Indeed, such a well-known practitioner and theorist of diplomacy as Sir Harold Nicolson is prompted to say—as if in disgust—that the world body is a "clumsy place"¹ for traditional art of negotiation and that what goes on there represent "exercises in forensic propaganda and do not even purport to be experiments in diplomatic methods".² Such criticisms are largely based on a study of the form and not the reality behind that form.

It is true that the United Nations, structured as a voluntary association of sovereign States, has not been

²Ibid., p. 91.
very effective in carrying out the objectives enshrined in
the Charter. But it is also true that, to recall a frequently
used cliche, the United Nations could be only what its
Member States are collectively willing to make it. Nonetheless,
over the years, the United Nations process has acquired a
momentum of its own; it is no longer a mere association, it
has increasingly become an actor and an integral part of
international politics.³

Another aspect that has been revealing, over the
years, is that the United Nations operational system reflects
the characteristic duality of our times. While drawing the
people of the earth together "in an unprecedented intimacy of
contact, interdependence of welfare, and mutuality of vul-
nerability",⁴ the world continues to be fragmented by
numerous sovereignties. Thus, while designed to promote
larger interests, its political processes are made use of
by its Member States to promote and safeguard respective
national interests. This is not to say that promotion of

³Cram R. Young, "The United Nations and the Inter-
national System", in Leon Gordenker, ed., The United Nations
in International Politics (Princeton, 1971), pp. 10-59. See
also Carol Ann Congrove and Kenneth J. Retitchett, The New
International Actors: The United Nations and the European

⁴This L. Claude, Jr., Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization
larger interests is blunted altogether. Indeed, the world body has constantly been striving to harmonize national interests of its Member States with wider interests of mankind. As the Secretary-General rightly puts it, "the history of the United Nations since its foundation has essentially been the story of the search for a working balance between national sovereignty and national interests on the one hand and international order and the long-term interests of the world community on the other." In the process, it may be noted, the United Nations forum has, inter alia, become a major centre of global diplomatic activity. As the largest permanent rendezvous, it provides an opportunity needed for the conduct of diplomacy in the traditional style. Thus, what goes on in the World Organization is not just debate and discussion for public consumption, or adoption of resolutions by majority of votes, but hard bargaining, arm-twisting, persuasion in utter secrecy.

Again, the day-to-day operations in the United Nations imply a political process characterized by long speeches, prolonged debates and discussions in accordance with established rules of procedure, formal conclusions—ordinarily expressed in the form of resolutions—passed by majority of votes of some description. This process,

generally referred to as "parliamentary diplomacy", may look simple to some and tedious to others; and yet it is a highly complex one involving great political implications. It should also be noted that it is not merely speeches, debates, but diplomacy that decides matters in the United Nations. The informal, intensive diplomatic interactions among the participants assume a great deal of significance in this regard.

It is in the context of the framework as noted above that this study seeks to examine how diplomacy is conducted in the United Nations, and the manner in which, and the extent to which, India takes part in it with a view to safeguarding and promoting its national as well as larger interests.

India has been a Member of the United Nations since its founding in 1945.\footnote{In 1945 and in subsequent one year, India's participation was largely an extension of additional representation of Great Britain. It was in October 1946 (that is, the second part of the first session of the General Assembly) a delegation (named by Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Vice-President of the Interim Government, and led by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit) representing the people of India for the first time joined the world community of nations.} India's record, particularly during 1950s and 1960s, clearly bears out that the position India took on all key issues—whether it was relating to the Korea conflict, Suez crisis, or the financial crisis—had been one
which would help to strengthen the United Nations as a non-
partisan and effective Organization independent of the control
by any single Power or group of Powers. This was possible,
partly because of the international situation overshadowed
then by Cold War, and partly because of the convergence of
India's national interest with larger interest.

Is India not playing so active a role as it had
played during 1950s? In this context, various aspects are
pertinent to be examined. Developments like decline, if
not the end of bipolarity, emergence of new power centres,
and growing membership of the United Nations caused notable
changes in the international scenario. For instance, with
the growing membership, diplomacy in the United Nations has
become truly global and more complex. It is also true that
the responses from various bodies of the Organization on
various issues involving India's vital interests have not
been favourable. As a result, so it seems, the United
Nations no longer occupies a place which it deserves in
India's foreign policy strategy. But the United Nations is
a fact of international politics. It cannot be wished away.
If India is to play an effective role in international
politics and make its contribution in the world body
effective, it must not only be ready to use the instrument
which the United Nations provides, but must know it and be
skilled to use it to safeguard its national interests and promote larger interests.

This study is an attempt in that direction. It seeks to analyze the political processes and diplomacy in the United Nations, emanating from its organizational setting. The first chapter examines relevant aspects regarding the organizational setting (such as permanent missions, caucus groups, deliberative bodies, procedural setting, Press, and the Secretariat) and its consequential framework of diplomacy—the "corridor" diplomacy and the "parliamentary" diplomacy.

An effective participation in the complex diplomatic setting at the United Nations demands of the participants not merely traditional skill, but something more. Likewise, questions of personnel, planning of strategy, and coordination need be given the attention they deserve. The second chapter attempts an analysis of the mechanism of India's participation and the changing patterns of its diplomatic interactions in the United Nations.

For the purpose of the present study, three specific questions have been chosen for intensive analysis. They are: the India-Pakistan conflict of 1971, the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. It should be noted that the set of issues in each of these select questions
involved India's vital interests and what transpired reflected varied patterns of interactions. Moreover, developments on all these three questions are fairly indicative of the extent to which the conduct of India's foreign policy has been successful in promoting its image and safeguarding its national as well as larger interests. An examination of these select questions in some details in three separate chapters also helps bring to focus the question of pattern of representation, forward-thinking in regard to strategy and co-ordination, and the place, if any, the United Nations occupies in India's foreign policy/strategy.

The last and sixth chapter embodies an overall assessment and concluding observations.

This study is based on UN documents, other official publications, secondary sources, and field work at the United Nations Headquarters, New York.