

Mansour Khalid

Security, Development and the Environment. A Third World View

Alle landes sikkerhed trues af våbenkapløb, økologiske ødelæggelser og af de enorme forskelle i livsbetingelser, der eksisterer i verden i dag. Både landene i Nord og i Syd skal gøre en indsats, hvis disse forhold skal ændres. Dels må de enkelte lande gøre en fornyet indsats, og dels skal samarbejdet mellem dem forøges. Afspændingen mellem Øst og Vest gør, at vi måske nu har bedre muligheder for at gøre noget end tidligere.

The world today is witnessing the dawn of a new era. Glasnost and Perestroika are not only inducing change in the Socialist World, their impact is global. Witness developments in Angola, Afghanistan, the Gulf War and hopefully soon, Kampuchea. This change is a blessing for Africa, if only its leadership knew to capture the historic moment to grasp the historic nettle. It would equally be a blessing for the developing countries as a whole if they knew how to help direct superpower competition toward the building of a better world. But this cannot take place in a vacuum, it has to be preceded by home-spun policies; policies that address the root causes of conflicts within and among states. Those conflicts are compounded in Africa by the natural disasters which stalked the Continent and brought it perilously close to apocalypse. What addles the wit, however, is that we are yet to take cognizance of the unfolding drama. Famines alone should have left an indelible scar on our honour and credibility as leaders. In effect, the situation in many African countries, including my own – Sudan – is evocative of a master plan, by those who are and were at the helm, to destroy their countries.

First there is a need for states to do more than paying »lip service« to the principles of non-alignment; peaceful co-existence, respects of territorial integrity and constructive co-operation. Our foreign policy, were it to be worth the name, should be made relevant to our countries' priorities and aspirations; national unity, economic development and peaceful coexistence. A foreign policy that does not play a catalytic role in the process of self-actualisation in the political and economic fields will have no credibility. Internally, our countries should strive to resolve conflicts peaceably; the use of force cannot be an end in itself, it is a means to an end. But as long as dominant groups remain oblivious to the injustices brought about by their own policies on other groups, force become an inevitability. One cannot help recalling Oliver Tambo's remark to the British Tory MPs who met with him for the first time in twenty years: »Why do you make it difficult for your friends by blowing up cars with landmines?« asked the MPs; »Why is this the first time that Tories have talked to us in twenty years?« answered Tambo.

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The sources of conflict, are not only political, there are also those inherent in economic marginalization. Efforts to bring about a new international economic order (NIEO) have failed abysmally; the North-South dialogue was entombed in Cancun despite the valiant efforts of Northern friends of the Third World; Palme, Trudeau and Kreisky. Even the term NIEO is now considered a bad word and has almost disappeared from the annals of the UN. The countries of the Third World, however, were aware throughout and since the days of Bandung that their future, first and foremost, lies in collective self-reliance. Self-reliance obviously begins with regional integration. In this connection, the picture in the developing countries is not all doom and gloom; there are a few success stories to be emulated. For example, there is the model of the ASEAN countries who represent a formidable economic force in Asia. In Africa, the nine SADDCC countries are pace-setters for that Continent. With a population of 70 million, Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Zambia and Malawi have managed to create a flexible system of economic co-operation, transcending ideological divides, which would ensure for the region: food security, joint utilization of common waters, complementarity in resources, and a capability to design regional projects. Both the ASEAN and SADDCC have learned how to isolate the political from the economic and to distinguish between major and minor contradictions. For instance, SADDCC has tolerated, for the sake of wider and beneficial economic integration, Malawi's imperceptive policies towards South Africa as well as the continued membership of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in the South African Custom's Union.

Without such co-operation and with increasing population pressures, the demands on, and rivalry for, scarce resources, whether locally or across international boundaries, shall inevitably intensify the potential for confrontation in the years ahead, with the obvious increase in the danger of wider conflict.

As the World Commission (The Brundtland Commission) pointed out in its report in 1987, »major conflicts within or among nations ... can arise from the marginalization of sectors of the population and from ensuing violence. This occurs when political processes are unable to handle the effects of environmental stress resulting, for example, from erosion and desertification. Environmental stress can thus be an important part of the web of causality associated with any conflict and can in some cases be catalytic.«

Poverty, injustice, environmental degradation, and conflict, the report continued, interact in complex and potent ways. One manifestation of such conflicts which did not receive much attention in political literature is the phenomenon of environmental refugees. According to the Brundtland Report, »the immediate cause of any mass movement of refugees may appear to be political upheaval and military violence but the underlying causes often include the deterioration of the natural resource base and its capacity to support the population«. The recording refugee crises in the countries of the Horn of Africa – Ethiopia, The Sudan and Somalia – where military conflicts and environmental degradation interact and combine, are a case in point. In the disastrous year 1984-85, some ten million Africans were on the move in search of food and security, accounting for two-

thirds of all refugees worldwide. Thirty-five million Africans people suffered from famine. Many fled to the cities, swelling the ranks of urban discontent and escalating the urban decay. In effect, the root cause of that decay is to be found, in the first place, in the collapse of the rural economy. Other environmental refugees fled across national boundaries, heightening the tension between states.

In southern Africa, countries threatened by South Africa belligerence, especially Mozambique, have become trapped in a poverty spiral as rural populations flee the land in search of security, with resultant food shortages and widespread neglect of the land. In South Africa itself, the inhuman policy of Apartheid institutionalises both conflicts and environmental degradation by allocating, through the 'homelands' system, 14 per cent of the nation's land to 72 per cent of its population. Young blacks of working age flee the overcultivated and overgrazed 'homelands' to seek work in the cities where they encounter extreme socio-economic inequality and racial segregation, as well as the squalor of the overcrowded townships. They fight back. Repression intensifies and the victims seek refugee over the border – whereupon the South African regime widens the conflicts into neighbouring states. The entire region is caught up in the ensuing violence, which could well ignite wider conflict, drawing in major powers.

In West Africa, less affected countries have found themselves with no choice but to accept environmental refugees from the Sahel, as they flee the encroaching desert in their hundreds of thousands. Such impoverished people, arriving in large numbers, place enormous burdens on the environment, clearing forests and marginal lands unsuited to agriculture in their efforts to produce something to live on, moving on when the ruined, eroded and rapidly desertifying land will yield no more, and this destruction is occurring now at the moment.

Such destruction is occurring in many parts of our Continent, and the inevitable ingredients of conflict are all too obvious. All this can go on for only so long before tensions explode into violence and war. We should take no comfort from the fact that drought and famine appear to have eased a little in the past three years; there is worse to come and the underlying causes are still unresolved: political marginalization, social injustices and economic deprivation. Environmental degradation is worsening in most parts of the African continent. Inevitably, there will be conflicts, and inevitably these will intensify as the human pressure on our diminishing resources grows more intense. Today, Africa has 550 million people, nearly half of them under fifteen. By early next century, if present trends continue, our continent's population will pass the one billion mark.

We have spoken of the pressure on land, but what about water? Our global use of water doubled between 1940 and 1980. It is expected to double again by the end of the century. Already 80 countries, with 40 percent of the World's population, are suffering from water shortage. With the kind of population increases I have mentioned, there can be no doubt that competition for water – for irrigation, industrial and domestic use – will increase.

So far, I have spoken of environmental degradation as a cause of conflict within the developing world. I need not speculate on the superpowers' readiness to draw their superpower protectors in when they feel threatened.

I would also invite you to consider conflict as a cause of breakdown in our sustainable use of the environment, for environmental breakdown as both a cause and the main effect of human deprivation. That deprivation is at the root of the conflicts which will inevitably proliferate throughout the developing world.

Armed conflicts are inextricably tied to arms acquisition and competition, which, in turn, creates major obstacles to sustainable development by making huge claims on scarce material resources. As the Brundtland-report has made plain, armament »pre-empts human resources and wealth that could be used to combat the collapse of environmental support systems, the poverty and the underdevelopment that in combination contribute so much to contemporary political insecurity. And they may stimulate an ethos that is antagonistic towards cooperation among nations whose ecological and economic interdependence requires them to overcome national or ideological antipathies«.

The cost of the 'arms culture' is high. Arms competition is fuelled to a large extent by powerful vested interests in the military-industrial complex driven by a desire for economic benefit or support of allies. The world arms market witnessed in the last two decades significant changes with the entry of Third World arms vendors: Brazil, Yugoslavia, North Korea, South Africa and Israel, the latter has excelled in upgrading military junk from World War II such as tank fire control systems, aircraft bomb-ejection racks, battle-field surveillance radars, as well as mini sub-machine guns. Nonetheless, the industrial nations still account for most of the military expenditure and production and the transfer of arms; the world conventional arms trade which is set at \$50 billion is still dominated by the superpowers. However, the arms culture is not confined to them; it is present also in the developing world, fostered by the desire of many governments to seek security through the acquisition of arms, to the point that violence became an element of foreign policy either by way of threat and blackmail or intimidation. Arms are also used by governments in the Third World, some evocative of Graham Green's nightmare republic, to suppress their own people; evidently security means different things to different people. All this is a reflection of the global militarisation of politics. But if the superpowers, who can afford the folly of military expenditure, are now reaching out to minimum deterrence, or recognising the disservice of such expenditure to their own development and to the improvement of the lot of their citizens, the poor countries who are languishing in the mire of underdevelopment should not be oblivious to that.

Priority should therefore be given to disarmament in the Third World, particularly the control of lethal weapons such as nuclear warheads, chemical weapons, multiple stage rockets, and missile guidance systems.

It is today a matter of common knowledge that within a decade or so ten countries in the Third World may acquire nuclear weapons: India, Pakistan, Libya, Iraq, North and South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, Argentina, and Israel. The latter may already be in possession of such weapons according to the recent revelations about the Demona Complex and the hesitant and contradictory statements of Tel Aviv on the matter. This equally applies to South Africa where leaks on recent nuclear explosions in that country were unconvincingly dismissed by the Apart-

heid regime. None of those countries, particularly those who are fairly advanced in their nuclear research and experimentation, is deterred by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); there is abundant evidence that some of them are still persisting in their dangerous gamble whether driven by so-called security considerations or the imperatives of an offensive political agenda. But unless the two superpowers declare a moratorium on nuclear testing, i.e. a total ban on such testing, there is no way in the world for NPT to be effectively implemented. The total ban, it may be recalled, was broken in 1982 at the behest of the US.

The other lethal armament that needs to be addressed is chemical weaponry. Unlike nuclear armaments, they are easy to manufacture and the chemical agents required for their production are readily available; such as hydrogen cyanide used for weapons that inhibit supply of oxygen to the blood or phosgene and chlorine used for the manufacture of choking agents that destroy the lungs. Like the NPT, the Geneva Protocol of 1925 on chemical weapons is inadequate, for though the Protocol bans the use of asphyxiating and poisonous gases and bacteriological methods of warfare, it does not ban their development. It is noteworthy, however, that because of the trauma caused by the death of a 100,000 persons in the First World War such weapons were not used in the Second World War, except in the case of Japan against China.

Nonetheless, according to the authoritative »Chemical and Engineering News« (14/4/1986), four countries are now certain to have chemical weapons: the US, the USSR, France and Iraq. The same report informs that eleven countries, though not confirmed, have such capability: China, North Korea, Vietnam, Israel, Egypt, Syria, Ethiopia, Burma, Thailand, and Taiwan. A close look at this list, if true, reveals how such countries may have been inspired by a desire to return like for like, a recipe for mutual suicide. It is, therefore, imperative that a two-pronged effort should be undertaken, firstly to resolve the root causes of conflict and, second, to energise the UN role in this respect. A new impetus to the UN debate on chemical weapons which commenced in 1960 is certainly given by the agreement between Reagan and Gorbachev in November 1985 to give high priority to the curtailment of chemical weapons.

Military spending by developing countries has increased nearly five-fold since the early Sixties. The high level of spending on arms has undoubtedly contributed to the inhibition of development and the severity of the debt crisis in Africa. The Continent's arms imports rose between 1971 and 1982 by 18.5 per cent, and the Continent's military spending rose by 7.8 per cent per year. One country, Libya, has increased its expenditure on arms from \$371 million in 1973 to \$4.5 billion in 1983.

This is hardly a situation that can be allowed to persist, there is a lot of sense in the proposition advanced recently by Willy Brandt. Brandt, launching his new book *World Armament and World Hunger* in London in April 1987, called for the establishment of a World register of arms sales. The World expenditure of \$3 billion a day on arms, Brandt said, amounts to »a death sentence for millions of hungry human beings because the resources which they would need for living are actually spent on armaments«.

The danger in this massive acquisition of arms is inherent in the fact that in the developing world as a whole, there are still some 40 unresolved disputes simmering. Without citing them because they are well known to you, there are numerous territorial disputes over resources and over the movements of deprived people. Such disputes in Africa alone could boil over into regional, perhaps even worldwide, conflict.

There are of course no military solutions to political, let alone environmental, insecurity. The quest for security takes on a completely different cast once we abandon the notion that it is acquired primarily through military strength. The nation-state is inadequate when it comes to dealing with threats to shared ecosystems. Threats to environmental security can only be dealt with by joint management and multilateral procedures and mechanisms, and that is not only true of the developing world.

A shared understanding of the stresses that can produce conflicts can lead to successful co-operation among nations. We in Africa now have a number of regional and sub-regional organisations through which we share resources such as rivers and lakes peacefully and to mutual benefit. I referred to SADD and their commendable efforts, of which the Zambesi Action Plan is only one example. That could equally have been the case with the Nile, Niger and Lake Chad. Such forms of co-operation transcend ideological and political differences and are, in the wider World context, the way forward to mutual trust and, beyond that, to the new era of multilateralism and growth on which true security depends.

Mutual global security can only be achieved in the supreme, overall framework of a global, sustainable development of our planet's resources. By sustainable development I mean a form of economic development which allies itself with the environment, including natural resources, enabling Humanity to meet its needs today, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs also. It is the opposite of the tendency to plunder and exploit natural resources for immediate gain, which has led us to the present crisis of global environmental insecurity.

Only a few years ago, all this must have seemed fanciful. Today, we face such a combination of environmental crisis – massive and growing poverty, global warming and climatic changes, desertification, deforestation, pollution of seas and rivers, the effects of acid rain, the extinction of species, the population crisis – that it is evident to all that humanity must find a way of managing the planet as a shared home, enough for the lip service we have been paying to all those causes since 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. To achieve any of this, we must start by bringing about a new era of sustained growth that will not merely make the rich richer, further widening the gap between industrial and developing nations, but seek a pattern which will foster a more equitable, balanced and fair distribution of the world's wealth. I am not speaking here of aid, but of the world web of international economic relations which can only be made possible through a return to multilateralism in the best interest of all of us.

The sort of radical thinking which built post-Second World War economic and political recovery and produced many of our great international institutions is called for again, on a scale never before seen in human history. This, as the World Commission has bluntly stated, must happen now. Tomorrow may be too late.

Some major changes can be afforded, at the expense of the military-industrial complex, at the expense of superpower competition on arms; a matter which is within our reach given the new spirit of disarmament induced by the fresh breath of sanity coming out of the Moscow Summit. »The chief outcome of the Moscow Summit has been the fading away of the Cold War.« »Looming on the horizon is an approach to a kind of interaction to overcome regional conflicts; a better understanding of the character and problems of the two societies; development of co-operation in many fields, from outer-space to medicine«, those are not the words of a starry-eyed dreamer; they come from Nikolai Shishlin, Head of the Information Department of the Soviet Communist Party (International Herald Tribune 13/6, 1988).

It is now our role in the Third World to challenge the superpowers for competition on an agenda of human survival. Let us look at the facts:

- the FAO Action Plan for tropical forests would cost \$1.3 billion a year over five years, the equivalent of half day of military expenditure worldwide
- implementing the UN Action Plan to combat desertification would cost \$4.5 billion a year during the remainder of this century, the equivalent of less than two days of military spending
- the UN Water and Sanitation Decade, although given only a small fraction of the support needed, would have cost \$30 billion a year throughout the 1980s, the approximate equivalent of ten days of military spending
- the supply of contraceptive materials to all women already motivated to use family planning would cost an additional \$1 billion a year, the equivalent of ten hours of military spending, on top of the \$2 billion spent today.

Such comparisons give an idea of what dramatic changes can be brought about in achieving a new World order, and at relatively low cost. To achieve such changes, however, a new political will is needed, and that is the urgent international priority of our times.

The real threat to global security lies in the cancerous poverty which threatens to destroy the future for all of us. In Africa we know that, from bitter experience in recent years. Today we have the means to eradicate that poverty and set the World on a new course towards sustainable prosperity, by-passing the conflicts which lie all around waiting to be exploited militarily. Military reactions to political problems or environmental stresses may produce military solutions, storing problems for the future. Such reactions cannot produce solutions to the more fundamental crises we face.