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INCLUSIVE PEACE AND SECURITY

Editor Robin Luckham



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This article has been reissued as part of *IDS Bulletin* Archive Collection Vol. 49 No. 1A April 2018: 'Inclusive Peace and Security'; the Introduction is also recommended reading.

Peace and Development

Willy Brandt

The thought has passed through my mind that there is really no need for another analysis of the state of the world; of the growing number of problems; of the immense dangers; of the continuing incapacity to turn our affairs to the better. There are a great number of proposals and recipes, in almost all areas. They range from economics to armaments; from money and finance to hunger; from drought and deforestation to the rapid growth of the world's population. There is a wide choice for everyone willing to choose. The supermarket of world problems and their solutions offers a complete inventory. There is hardly a gap on the shelves.

However, demand is not very strong. And this is so in spite of the fact that one must grant that most of those who carry responsibility for their people and nations genuinely would like to solve the world's problems. I do not want to paper anything over. Of course, there are those who are unable to do anything even if they wanted to. And there are those who are the authors and victims of ideological presumptions, including the nice but hardly effective preachers of a world without force.

Yet exciting contradictions are a sign of our times. The technical capacity to solve most problems has increased almost as much as the ability to destroy everything. Science and technology have empowered mankind in both respects, and beyond all earlier expectations. Scientific and technical insights grow at seemingly unlimited speed. We realise new dangers as much as new problems. But it seems as if mankind is helpless in the face of the irrespressible flood of new discoveries — still being unable to master the opportunities which have become available.

Here one cannot but remember the genius of Albert Einstein, who had the gift of reducing highly complex processes to a simple formula. I am referring to his statement that the atomic bomb has changed everything except the thinking of people. *Homo*

sapiens has developed the technical, and in a narrower sense the economic, capabilities of his brain much faster than his political and community building capacity. Or one could also say that the formation of character and of moral values has not kept pace with the rapid progress of technology. Yet these are the qualities needed to live and to deal with oneself, with others, with one's neighbours — among nations as much as among people. The economy is oriented towards output and profit, today no less than 2,000 years ago. Weapons are geared towards easier handling, greater distance and higher accuracy in the same way as for the past 2,000 years. And the conflicts between people and nations, including the criteria by which they are evaluated — sovereignty, prestige, power, dominance, hatred vis-a-vis the enemy — unfortunately all these too have not changed much.

There is one exception, however. It seems to have been dawning slowly that we must no longer behave as we used to behave some 100 or even 50 years ago if we all want to survive. The fear of human history coming to an end could be a reason for hope. But normally fear is not a reliable guide. Where then are we to find the strength for a rethinking, and according to what criteria?

If survival is the top priority then the preservation of world peace is the most important objective, dominating all others. To sharpen the point: there is no need to worry about cooperation and mutual interests if we fail to avoid a nuclear holocaust, or to prevent continent-wide famine. Only if we avoid self-destruction will we be able to continue quarrelling about our different ideas, about the best way to achieve happiness for all. In global terms this means that there is no alternative to common security (as elaborated three years ago in the report of the Independent Commission on International Security and Disarmament Issues under the chairmanship of Olof Palme, the Swedish Prime Minister).

The world can afford the coexistence of peoples and nations with the multiplicity of their ideas regarding the way towards welfare or happiness. Peoples and states may even turn their backs on each other as long as they do not dispute each other's right to exist. This holds globally; but it also applies regionally. The world might even be able to afford regionally limited conflicts, terrible as they may be. The Gulf War, for instance, is a frightening example of how a military conflict of this kind can start with arms supplied by both superpowers, who are nevertheless incapable of controlling what is happening.

At the same time, interdependencies are increasing and the need for cooperation is growing. The debt crisis and high US interest rates are a threat not only to the nations of Latin America but also for many of the poorer developing countries. Drought and large-scale starvation in Africa do not stop at national borders. The energy-crisis — which is far from over and which is not just an oil crisis; the threat of a drinking water crisis; the various ecological threats which have been so much neglected in the past — all these problems extend across borders between nations and political systems. My own country, for example, the Federal Republic of Germany, suffers from acid rain and dying forests no less than its neighbours, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland.

In sum, many of our problems are of a global nature, they are system-bridging, and their number is growing. Reason calls for the adoption of global rules far beyond the traditional forms, and it calls for mechanisms which guarantee the observation of such rules.

Yet, egoism and narrow-mindedness have so far prevented progress in areas where the East-West conflict and North-South issues interact. It shows a considerable degree of stubbornness if people still refuse to admit that rising world-wide military expenditures are not only politically damaging but do a lot of harm economically. Those 1,000 bn US dollars or more which the world will spend on military purposes this year amount to a death sentence for millions of human beings, who are deprived of the resources which they would need for a living.

But there is another obstacle to our ability to see ourselves as partners in common security, namely the lust for power. Nobody can deny that the desire for power in individuals as in nations is a strong motivation which we cannot explain away. One could even see our history as a process in which unrestricted force has had to give way step by step — and in spite of many setbacks — to the rule of law. Each treaty voluntarily agreed to is another step in this direction.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year the United Nations stands as a symbol of the steps we have taken forward — and of the unavoidable difficulties associated with them. The mechanisms of the Security Council and the veto may be taken as evidence of the cool realism of its founders who knew that it would have been too much to expect the world organisation to overcome real power by schematic majority rule. But one might also say that joint decisions, agreed rules and comprehensive arrangements within the United Nations as well as elsewhere demand the cooperation of the powerful, especially of the superpowers.

Here we have witnessed a development since 1945 which in the context with which I am concerned nobody has expressed better than President Raul Alfonsin of Argentina, who belongs to the group of six heads of state and government from five continents who got together last year to voice their own and many other people's concern over the lack of progress in regard to arms control. In January this year at their meeting in New Delhi the President of Argentina stressed the legitimate interests of big powers, and superpowers in particular, regarding their security from each other and thus their ability to defend themselves. But he called attention to the undeniable fact that their military forces and their weapons arsenals have grown far beyond their defensive requirements. They have acquired the capability — only the two superpowers have it and nobody else — to eradicate all life from this planet. Thus their power has become a threat to all people. The decision to use those weapons is exclusively theirs. This implies that a few individuals and their advisors, small elites, hold the power to destroy the basic right of all people, their right to live. It is unacceptable to the five billion people and to the 160 nation-states to which they belong that they should have to trust in the wisdom and restraint of a small group of people in one or two capitals not to abuse their power and not to make that one irreversible mistake. The preservation of world peace is too fundamental a human right and a right of nations to be left to the leadership of superpowers alone.

From that right to life all those of us with less power derive our right to put pressure on the two superpowers to limit their power and to agree on common rules of conduct in the interest of maintaining world peace. This would not take away their power and I do not suggest that one can neglect political differences. But the global rule of preserving world peace must become effective, especially for those capable of its destruction. When the President of the United States and the leader of the Soviet Union meet in the near future the world does not necessarily expect them to become friends. Or that they would do

away by magic with their differences. We do expect, however, that they take steps to end the threat of an all-destroying world conflict. This would mean at least an interruption of the arms race while negotiations continue. It implies negotiations about critical regions of the world as much as about destabilising military programmes. It also means facing up to the linkages between the arms race and development, between hunger and weapons, making this issue part of the agenda.

To me the aim of such an urgently needed summit should be nothing short of an agreement which rules out a third World War. Peoples and states must demand such an agreement since otherwise security will not be established, neither in East-West relations nor in North-South problems. On the basis of such an agreement many issues would be easier to handle, and the export of East-West controversies into the Third World could probably be reduced. A halt to further arms build-ups would become plausible. And the ever increasing accumulation of destructive machinery would come to be seen as even more perverse.

Next year when the United Nations hold their special Conference on Disarmament and Development, once more drawing on the work of the group of experts chaired by Inga Thorsson, it will be necessary to limit the presentation of boring propaganda slogans on the one hand and the discussion of abstract theories on the other. We should also not be held back by self-declared realists who accompany their lack of initiative with nice rhetoric about the fact that disarmament and development are each important objectives in their own right — so that therefore there need be no linkage between them.

Now, with regard to North-South problems let me recall some of the proposals — ranging from emergency measures to proposals for structural reform — presented by the Independent Commission which I chaired. Most of our findings remain valid today. It would have been better if one could actually claim that some problems had been solved in a positive sense. Unfortunately this is predominantly not the case, and many issues today present themselves in still more serious terms. Many of the same questions came up again when the representatives of non-aligned countries formulated their suggestions for a comprehensive dialogue and also when the late Indira Gandhi raised the possibility of organising another North-South summit in the second half of 1985. Instead of these proposals being implemented, however, in the area of money and finance we see considerable skills being applied to patch up holes, whereas the required reforms are being avoided. The same goes for international trade and other areas well known to all of us.

No approach is yet in sight which might set in motion what has come to a halt in such a frustrating way. I am referring now to the intended 'global' discussion under the roof of the United Nations about those issues which are important for a re-ordering of world-wide economic relations. The responsibility for their complete failure has to be borne by different addresses. But one thing is quite clear: a general deadlock would not have occurred if important countries had been willing to move.

I underscore the paramount responsibility of the superpowers. At the same time, I want to warn the big countries not to allow the destruction of multilateralism and its institutions, unsatisfactory as they may sometimes be. Europe should realise that it has to play a role in counteracting negative developments. There is no reason why Europe should always wait for others. And much less should it jump on band wagons which may be big but moving in the wrong direction.

Speaking about unilateralism I want to add that there remains more room for it in a peace preserving function, more than many people believe. This would require a better equipment of the peace preserving facilities of the United Nations. And a fresh look should be taken at the mediating competence of both the Security Council and the Secretary General.

At the same time it is of elementary importance that we others who have neither bomb nor veto power no longer lose sight of the linkages between crises of security, world economy and environment. An independent clearing office for 'Peace and Development' could bring together concrete ideas from all over the world and in this way help with the constructive linking of East-West and North-South issues.

I have come close to making proposals of the kind whose practical value I questioned at the beginning of this article. Presumably it has become evident where, in my view, the key lies in seeking the solution to our most pressing problems. Pressures will lead nowhere as long as they are about isolated issues like indebtedness, commodities, food, birth rates, soil erosion, deforestation or other environmental degradations. Or, for that matter, about military budgets and the absurdity of allocating funds for armaments that are lacking for education or health care. The key to a solution not of all but of many problems is in the hands of the superpowers. The question is whether they succeed in limiting their fruitless conflict and their power to destroy the world, at least to the extent of agreeing on rules which make World War III impossible.

This cannot mean that the rest of us should hide behind the responsibility of the nuclear giants. We must do what our own responsibility calls for. This

includes the application of all possible pressure and telling the powerful of this world what they owe mankind.