ENVIRONMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY

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The link between environment, development and security is not readily acknowledged because it is fundamentally subversive of the conventional wisdom and paradigm of **International** relations. Encompassing contentious questions about thorny issues such as national sovereignty, intervention, development, security and human rights, it redefines the imperative of survival in international politics within a context of global politics. In so doing, this linkage underpins an alternative awareness of the emerging international society from the established structures of the interstate system. Accordingly, it meets resistance from the North which sees itself as the chief executive of the 'New World Order' in which its ideas have apparently triumphed, and also from the South, where national sovereignty and state-centric realism exercise a compelling hold against all odds. What the environment -development - security nexus militates towards is a new culture of world politics which transforms attitudes consonant with meaningful interdependence. This also entails the recognition of the importance of non-state actors as determined by their functions in world politics and the progressive democratisation of the activity itself.

Security: Interstate System or International Society?

The distinction between **system** and **society** is of primary relevance to the idea of a new culture of world politics, particularly in the aftermath of the cold war. In investigating the environment-development-security nexus and its requirements, it is important to identify whether existing structures are conducive to it and in what way. It may well be the case that with the ostensible ideological hegemony of the post cold war world and the explicit international concern with the domestic sources of insecurity at present, the domestic analogy of **society** better approximates international political activity with all the normative connotations this entails. The question nevertheless remains as to what kind of society it is and what kind of society it should be.

Accordingly, another distinction may be pertinent. The environment-development-security nexus may only be

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fully comprehended within a world society context, but initially it will have to gain recognition within one that is better described as **international** society.

System, the favoured characterisation of international politics by state-centric realists, depicts an interaction between cohesive units called states which mechanically replicates habitual behaviour according to unchanging rules. These rules are expressions of an overarching and axiomatic self-interest which in turn is defined by the ambiguous concept of power. The principal rule is, of course, sovereignty of the individual units and their mutual respect thereof. Consequently, overall system maintenance becomes synonymous with the balance of power, best described by Vattel as 'a state of affairs such that no one power is in a position where it is preponderant and can lay down the law to others' (cited in Bull [1977:101]). From this essentially anti-hegemonic ethos springs the notion of an 'anarchical society' - anarchical in the sense of an absence of government rather than chaos.

The realists' presumption is to claim monopoly over objectivity and to proclaim their value-free credentials through the elevation of power to the status of a self-evident truth. No vulgar moralising for them. Competition, conflict, self-interest - these are the driving forces regardless of how asymmetrical they may be. For four decades we had two super-powers, and governments always invited them to intervene in their affairs. Neither in the spirit nor in the letter was the system impugned in this formulation and in any event if there was any doubt, the system was so constructed as to turn intervention itself into an essentially contestable concept. There was one coin and it had two sides.

Of course the practice was different. Simultaneously with the deadly minuet of the East-West relationship was the grossly asymmetrical North-South tug of war. Different aspects of security were emphasised - the balance of military power on the one hand and economic dependence on the other. In the assertion that each side stressed that dimension of security that served their interest, realism was vindicated in the theory and practice of international relations.

The point to stress at this juncture is that according to realism this is natural and would always be. No account of change is necessary because even if the players change, the ground rules cannot. Realism presents itself as natu-

ral and intrinsic to the activity of politics itself. Competing ideas and moral arguments are dismissed as dangerous irrelevances to the business of politics and by extension to development and security.

International society has different assumptions and emphases. The individualism of the component units is tempered by notions of collective responsibility and a more positive acknowledgement of the merits of interdependence. Instead of the exclusive reliance upon the balance of power, the stratagem for security is collective security. A community of states is defined according to shared values and, through international organisation and law acquires the resources to deter and punish threats to itself. The policeman to enforce law and order from the domestic analogy is pertinent here. The community is indivisible and therefore the notion of security holistic. A threat to anyone is a potential threat to everyone and as such requires collective action.

The interventionary opportunities are manifold in international society and in practice the solid realist virtue of prudence operates to remind people that the path to hell is paved with good intentions. Sovereignty is not so much superseded by a higher value, but rather there is the expectation that its exercise would incorporate the other shared values that distinguish the community - which today can be identified as good governance and economic liberalisation.

A clearly identifiable collective legitimacy is central to the *raison d'etre* and operation of international society where intervention is not taboo but a constant option. Collective legitimacy may in practice be labelled collective acquiescence in the prevailing power configuration but that, too, is indicative of the ties that bind. The ties that bind any society are at no time entirely voluntary or involuntary. Alternatively, the costs and benefits of being a part of, outweigh those of being apart from.

It is the contention of this article that with some qualifications international political activity better approximates society than system in the post cold war world. From the Gulf to Bosnia, Somalia and Cambodia, not to mention Mozambique, the Middle East, Angola and the structural adjustment conditionality that affects the South, international intervention has become part and parcel of the contemporary political architecture.

Through international financial institutions and multilateral security organisations, good governance and trade liberalisation criteria are the order of the day. Cultural relativism is fighting a rear-guard action along with purist notions of national sovereignty, in the face of a seemingly unstoppable wave of interdependent linkages. Both the UNCED in Rio and the Human Rights Congress in Vienna were parallelled by simultaneous discussions between relevant non-governmental organisations. The debate now is not about the linkages *per se* or the actors but about their respective content and functions.

Environment - Security - Development Agenda

The security agenda is widening in the era since the cold war. It is not that the non-military aspects of security are a recent discovery or indeed even the linkage between environment, development and security. What is new is the DISPOSITION to consider them legitimate items on the interstate security agenda.

Success nevertheless in agenda-setting is quite a different matter to success in agenda implementation as the North-South balance of power has shown. A consensus on agenda implementation requires a change in attitudes, the self-conscious construction of a new paradigm - in short a cultural change. As will be discussed below, the thread of continuity that links the original Group of 77 demands (1963) to the New International Economic Order, Charter of Economic Rights and Duties (1974), the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 (1992), attests to this inability to move beyond agenda-setting.

This is indeed what is old about the New World Order - the demonstrable limitations of the South, the enduring and compounded asymmetry of the North-South relationship which allows for the assumption of international society and the sanctioning of hegemony as universal consensus. However as the costs of the cold war percolate and the preoccupation with domestic concerns are expressed through introspection in place of the earlier insularity in the North, there is the possibility that the growing awareness of the scale of the environmental problem will blossom into political pressure for a more enlightened understanding of its implications.

In a recession-hit North this would seem unlikely. Protectionism in trade and cutbacks in aid would be given greater prominence than arguments about the responsibilities and sacrifices associated with the future of the planet and sustainable development.

At the same time there are signs that the obsession with the standard of living is now being challenged by arguments about the quality of life. They grow out of the concerns of persons, for the world they inhabit and their children would inherit, for the consequences of the expenditure of their tax dollars and the cost of living. Once galvanised into the groups of civil society they could become more politically effective and like the popular pressure for good governance and human rights criteria in developmental assistance, environmental consciousness could be expressed as a domestic source of foreign policy.

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Indeed, it is this journey on the part of the South as well - of moving away from the allure of conspicuous consumption to the qualitative concerns of sustainable development - that lies at the heart of the environmental-development-security nexus. Yet it is a long journey and one that requires assistance along the way. Therein lies the dilemma.

The internal-external divide is crucial to the political psychology of Southern states and central to their pretensions. Having inherited the baggage of state-centric realism as part of their colonial legacy they are trapped in the obsessive assertion of sovereignty and at the same time by the compelling need for external assistance to buttress it in military security and economic development terms. In the domestic arena, governments bread in the belief that their function is that of provider of welfare and well-being and protector against external attack, often plead circumstances beyond their control to explain poor performance. The circumstances beyond their control explanation has a variation - the external threat - that is invoked to justify the state in its role as predator on the rights of its citizens.

In Africa, Asia and Latin America there are environmental issues of decertification and river water management that have important repercussions for security and development, and alternatively domestic conflicts which result in environmental degradation and large-scale movements. The environment development security component of these issues goes unheeded because of the zero-sum realist preoccupation of Southern states and the imposition of this upon the evolving nation and state-building process. Given the realist bias of states, environmental issues are often used as levers of influence and coercion in pursuit of narrow self-interest rather than explored as profitable avenues of cooperation for mutual benefit. Consequently, environmental factors are manipulated to the detriment of national development and security, though ostensibly for their enhancement.

These are not issues that necessarily require external intervention or assistance for their resolution. External involvement in the context of the cold war often compounded rather than cured and in its aftermath, would sap the legitimacy of the interventionary agent and local state. Bilateral or regional action or a combination of both is required at one level, and the conscious provision of democratic space to various groups to defuse nation-building tensions at another, to resolve these problems. Water in the Middle East is wrapped up in the Israeli-Palestinian antagonism amongst others; and in the Tigers-Euphrates basin, with Iraqi-Syrian rivalry and Kurdish nationalism. In South Asia Indian insistence on bilateralism over sharing the Ganges waters with Bangladesh stands in the way of constructive exploitation of the subcontinent's water resources.

Whether future wars in the Middle East are to be fought over water, or economic prosperity in South Asia held hostage to Indian military security fears, empowerment of groups that are alienated from over-centralised and coercive states and a more enlightened grasp of the potential of interdependence is necessary on the part of Southern states to solve the more localised disputes encompassing environmental, development and security concerns. It is worth quoting from the conclusion of a study [Hassan, 1991:65] on the host of environmental issues in South Asia which have security implications:

> The study indicates that in South Asia environmental deterioration has a very direct and immediate impact on the economy of the state, which in turn affects social relations in ways detrimental to political stability. Environmental degradation has clearly undermined the political order in South Asia, and is continuing to do so, thereby prolonging and generating national and international tensions.

Another study, published in winter 1992-93 on water resources and instability in the Middle East, concludes that the unresolved water - related economic and strategic issues do not necessarily constitute a major threat to regional security but are a source of tension. Aware of the realist bias of states, Beschorner (1992/93:71) emphasises that -

> the long-term cooperative development of international water resources in the Middle East thus presents the greatest challenge to policy - makers within and outside the region ... These are objectives which are widely considered desirable, but they are only practicable so long as the water issue is not separated from its wider political context.

The Not So New NIEO

W hilst localised environmental issues lie within the competence of the South and provide opportunities for a change in perspective, the over-arching global issues necessitate Northern cooperation and the paradigm shift in attitudes demanded since the 1980s.

The arguments about interdependence and life-boat ethics, of one planet, islands of prosperity in a sea of poverty, are well known. That they are still valid is also known. What is now being suggested is that environmental degradation constitutes a security threat and developmental concern that is not bound within territorial limits. It affects all and most importantly, in political terms it challenges the well-entrenched orthodoxy that all the South has to do is develop according to the Northern model. Prescribed and manufactured by the North, swallowed by the South, it is now a pill for the North to digest. To pursue the analogy, the remedy threatens to be worse

than the malady. Can the remedy be interrupted and the malady arrested?

Southern governments would only undermine their legitimacy if they were to even attempt to redirect their development strategies and the rising socio-economic demands for mass consumption on the part of their burgeoning populations. Structural adjustment programmes that are to effect the change from traditional and socialist stagnation to dynamic capitalist modernity have taken their toll in losses of legitimacy. Poverty alleviation programmes have partly ameliorated this through some democratisation of the development process, but populist rhetoric and revivals of ethnic chauvinism designed for the same purpose have aroused unreal expectations without reinforcing legitimacy.

There is a widespread perception fed by the North's advocacy of modernisation and proclamation of victory in the cold war, that the pressures for mass consumerism are so great that any attempt to slow the pace of liberalisation or dampen socio-economic demands is fraught with immediate political risk, regardless of long-term wisdom. Political self-interest and short-term regime survival are paramount. One must also add that in the global village of mass communication, also known as the world market, the South is bombarded with images of conspicuous consumption that are meant to, and do, make up their life expectations. Such advertising and such imitation have a powerful momentum of their own which is good for international business but bad for the planet!

Taking these considerations into account, the South Centre (the follow-up office of the South Commission) produced a paper in preparation for the Rio Summit entitled 'Environment and Development: Towards a Common Strategy of the South in the UNCED Negotiations and Beyond' (The South Centre, 1991). The concerns it outlined and the emphases it placed, reflect the persisting and intractable nature of the North-South relationship, mentioned above.

As a representative sample of Southern views, it is worth quoting at length. It testifies to the scope of Southern aspirations and to the extent of their fears and shortcomings. Although written before Rio, it is valid as an enduring political position paper that links past, present and future concerns into a negotiating strategy.

Under the heading 'Strategic Considerations for the South', the Centre stresses that in the UNCED and negotiations concerning the conventions on climate and bio diversity, the South should ensure that it has adequate 'environmental space for its future development' and that global economic relations are restructured so that 'the South obtains the required resources, technology, and access to markets enabling it to pursue a development process that is not only environmentally sound but also **rapid enough to meet the needs and aspirations of its growing population**' (emphasis added).

A comprehensive negotiating strategy for the South which included the pooling of technical resources and the establishment of mechanisms to maximise collective advantage, a firm pledge to avoid agreements, that were not attached to international action, definite commitments on North-South development and, perceptively, a public information campaign to publicise and canvass support for Southern positions in Northern public opinion were also proposed.

The South Centre argues that the 'essential question, in the context of the North-South dialogue, is how the burden of adjustment is to be shared in an equitable manner' (1991:3). Crucial to this, in its view, is a steadfast Southern insistence upon the principle 'that the development of the South can in no way be compromised by the North's pre-emption of the global environment space' (1991:4). The North must assume the burden of global environmental adjustment as the principal culprit in environmental degradation and its beneficiary. The Centre stresses that

> ... the concept of sustainable development does not mean only that the needs of the present have to be met without prejudice to the satisfaction of future needs. It means also that the needs of the North should be met in ways that do not compromise the satisfaction of the present and future needs of the South (1991:7)

The report points out that the introduction of the environmental dimension into the development process further widens the resource gap in the South. Consequently, the crux of the environment - development issue is the increased volume of resources needed by the south for development that is 'adequate in terms of tempo and at the same time is environmentally sound' (1991:8). In this connection, the report argues that the concept of 'additionality' which had featured in preparatory meetings - essentially the additional costs of incorporating environmental concerns into specific projects - must be broadened if it is to be of practical utility. Without resources for overall development, the gains of environmentally sensitive projects would be mitigated.

Turning to the negotiating strategy, the Centre warns, in a reflection of power realities and the prevailing pattern of interaction, against Southern acceptance of legally-binding agreements and even non-binding declarations in one area without corresponding Northern commitments to meet Southern aspirations. The fear is of cross-conditionality which, given the balance of power in the North's favour, could be built into the conditionality of multilateral financial institutions [1991:6-7].

The central thrust of the Centre's recommendations and the distinguishing feature of the South's position at Rio and beyond, is to emphasise that the developmental concerns of the North-South dialogue are inextricably bound up in environmental concerns, and that any attempt to delink the two would be disastrous.

Noting that Agenda 21 would address perennial items on the North-South agenda such as:

- poverty, economic growth and the environment,
- commodities and the environment,
- international trade and the environment,
- structural adjustment and the environment,
- external indebtedness, resource outflows and the environment, and
- big industrial enterprises, including transnational companies, and the environment,

the Centre recommends that this opportunity be seized to 'restart the North-South dialogue and negotiations on development.' (1991:10).

With regard to the negotiating process, the recommendations recognise the Rio summit would be the beginning of a process and that both parallel and follow on consultations would be necessary. On the question of institutional arrangements, the traditional Southern position is reiterated; 'democratic governance and transparency within the UN system and an integrated vision of a problem that has hitherto been approached in a piecemeal fashion' (1991:14). What is sought is a move away from the World Bank/IMF stranglehold on international development assistance through a not so veiled reference to the democratic pretensions of the 'New World Order'.

UNCED

The South Centre's recommendations notwithstanding, the Rio UNCED produced mixed results. Whilst the evidence for international society was to be found in the convening of the conference itself and in the recognition accorded to the Brundtland Report on Environment and Development (1987) which served as a intellectual antecedent to it, the claims of a more realist international system were upheld in the enduring polarisation of views along the North-South axis.

This will not go away. Those who argued in vain that this was the central power configuration in international relations and not the East-West antagonism, will always be vindicated as long as the culture of state-centric realism holds sway. The move away from system to society, as discussed above, does not entail wholesale jettisoning of state-centric realism but the attempt to accommodate it within the format of inter-dependence. As such, as in any society, distributive justice and burden-sharing will be

salient issues along with the apportioning of responsibility and mechanisms for accountability, but they will also be essentially contested concepts.

UNCED produced a 27-page Declaration of general principles for environmentally friendly development-binding agreements on climate change and bio-diversity (the latter was not signed by the US at Rio) and the 720-page Agenda 21 document (see Keesings, June 1992: 38947).

The Rio declaration posited the goal of establishing a 'new and equitable global partnership' and confirmed the environment-development link as well as the particular responsibility of the richer states in this regard, given the pressures they place upon the global environment. It also acknowledged the sovereign right of states to exploit their natural resources, thereby ruling out any suggestion of external intervention on environmental grounds. This concern was covered in the provision that states should not exploit their resources in a manner that would be injurious to be environment of other states. In this respect the declaration is a compromise that is open to interpretation, should the need arise.

The declaration also posited general principles regarding the rights of women, free trade and poverty eradication. It incorporated the 'precautionary principle' that the absence of conclusive scientific data should no be used against the enactment of measures to halt environmental depreciation.

The essential elements of Agenda 21, presented as a 'blue print for action', dealt with the implementation of UNCED resolutions. To this end a Sustainable Development Commission has been established under the auspices of the UN General Assembly to oversee progress towards the realization of UNCED objectives. The Global Environment Facility (GEF), jointly administered by the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is to co-ordinate the essential additional funding to the South for sustainable development.

The binding Bio-diversity Convention which the US refused to sign at Rio (an action reminiscent of its attitude towards the UN Law of the Sea treaty), outlined steps to preserve ecologically important areas and species and envisaged a listing of globally important areas in the future. Significantly, the convention provided access for Southern states to technology and financial resources for the purpose and for compensatory payments to the South for the extraction of genetic resources. This provision is an extension of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) arguments about sovereign control over natural resources and raw material which are used to Northern manufactures and sold to the South at commercial rates. It is especially relevant to the activities of biotechnology companies and it was US concern for the latter that

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determined Washington's refusal to sign the Convention at Rio. Finally the Convention recognizes the role of indigenous people and rural communities in preserving bio-diversity and identifies them as primary beneficiaries of conservation efforts.

The Convention on Climate Change called for limitation on the emission of 'greenhouse gases' such as carbon dioxide (CO_2). In the face of US opposition, no binding date was set for reductions but it was recommended that the North should aim to stabilise such emissions at 1990 levels by the target date already agreed by the European Community - the year 2000.

UNCED had also intended to produce a binding Convention on tropical forest use, but succumbed to resistance mounted by timber exporting states led by Malaysia. Instead, a non-binding Statement of Forest Principle consonant with sustainable development principles was agreed upon. Opposition to a binding convention was largely on the grounds of national sovereignty and illustrates the Southern attitude and dilemma with regard to the environment-development-security nexus. The South is not unilaterally going to take the initiative in foregoing the export-oriented and mass consumption development strategies imposed upon it without corresponding and proportionate sacrifices by the North.

Conclusion

At the outset it was stated that the environment-development-security nexus was fundamentally subversive of the established paradigm. It demands that in a world of burgeoning populations, mass consumption and nation - and state-building conflicts, development and security have to be redefined and the environment cannot be ignored. Existing structures and institutions will find this difficult. They are mobilisations of bias and values from a different ethos and are therefore bound to project these concerns into their consideration of this linkage. This is the practical policy-making reality of global security management.

What prospects, then, are there for a mature appreciation of the argument that the environment-development-security nexus does not have to be a zero-sum one?

We have to deal with states but states have to deal with people. Citizens or persons are relegated to the periphery in the traditional paradigm of international relations but have a habit of asserting themselves as instruments of change. They are indeed the catalysts for the new culture of world politics mentioned above. However, the manner in which they will assert themselves with regard to this important linkage is not necessarily going to be harmonious or non-conflictual. The establishment of a holistic view of security as the conventional wisdom of the day will come on the heels of exhausted conflict and competition of the old paradigm, if it is to come at all.

In the South - and it is my suspicion that it is here that this drama will be principally enacted - the challenge is not sustainable development, if Doomsday scenarios are to be averted. This term is now being laden with pejorative connotations of 'environmental imperialism' and the whole gamut of neo-colonialist fears. It is not the way to initiate a constructive dialogue about global survival. Benign intent needs to be demonstrated on both sides about mutual benefit.

Instead of sustainable development, 'replicable development'[1] would be more appropriate. It captures the developmental aspirations of the South and the environmental fears of the North in a manner that is not prejudicial to security.

The 'replicable development' issue will be with us and at the heart of international security concerns, if not at the forefront, in the future. The promise of the good life as an eternal allure and relative deprivation is a powerful force.

Note

1. I am indebted for this term to Dr.Gamani Corea, former Secretary General of UNCTAD and member of Sri Lanka's delegation to UNCED.

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