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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Study on concepts of security

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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FINLAND

[Original: English]

[6 August 1986]

1. The study on concepts of security (A/40/553, annex) provides a general analysis of various concepts of security. As the study duly recognizes, the concept of security contains many different elements such as military capabilities, economic, social and technological development as well as political co-operation, including the role of international organizations. There is no commonly accepted view - and this is also reflected in the study - of how these diverse elements are in particular cases combined to, on the one hand, reduce insecurity and to produce security and co-operation, on the other, between nations in the international arena.
2. As it stands, the study provides a general overview of the many facets of security in today's world. It clearly brings out the fact that security is a relative rather than an absolute term. The very general nature of the study makes it rather difficult to use the study as a guide to understanding any specific issue of international security. Therefore, it might be useful to take some of the issue areas outlined in the study for further and more detailed scrutiny.
3. One such issue area might be the concept of deterrence. It is one of the basic concepts of security on which even the most elementary definitions and perceptions are subject to controversy. Yet, the concept of deterrence, be it nuclear or conventional, stands in the centre of today's security considerations. It might be, therefore, extremely valuable to carry out a study, initiated and sponsored by the United Nations, on the various concepts of deterrence. The result of the study, a widely accepted work on basic definitions and concepts of conventional and nuclear deterrence, would be useful for both practitioners and scholars of international relations.
4. It might, furthermore, be worth while to look separately into some larger entities of security concepts, starting from what the study itself calls the "imperative and most urgent" of problems, namely, that of disarmament.
5. The endeavour should then deal with issues of lesser immediate gravity, but by no means negligible, such as economic inequalities, overpopulation and environment. Various special organizations of the United Nations should be induced to contribute to a conceptual and factual treatment of questions pertaining to their domain of interest. At some later stage their observations could be integrated into a comprehensive in-depth study on the totality of security concepts.
6. No doubt all efforts to understand the phenomena of insecurity are commendable and deserve the careful attention of all Member States.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

[Original: English]

[4 September 1986]

1. The study on concepts of security (A/40/553, annex) contains some valid observations. It rightly states, for example, that "it is vital for the maintenance of international peace and security that States strictly follow the fundamental rules of the Charter of the United Nations". It also makes the very important points that "the threat of war cannot be dealt with effectively without a prior analysis of and effective measures directed at the roots of international tensions and antagonisms that often give rise to competition in the fields of nuclear and conventional arms", and that "security policies ... must deal effectively with the broader and more complex questions of the interrelationship between military and non-military elements of security".
2. Regrettably, however, the bulk of the study is inconsistent with these basic tenets. Armaments are viewed as the cause, rather than a symptom, of tensions or discords between States, while arms control and disarmament measures tend to be presented as the primary cure for all the ills of the world. Moreover, the catalogue of long-proposed arms-control measures focuses almost entirely on those of the two major nuclear Powers and the two major alliances. As with most United Nations studies in the disarmament field, the report notes the accumulation of weapons by other States only in passing, and pays little attention either to the impact of that phenomenon on international security, or to ways of controlling it. The report mentions that there have been some 150 armed conflicts since 1945 in which between 16 million and 25 million people lost their lives, but it ignores the telling fact that the vast majority of those wars, some of which are still being waged, occurred between non-aligned developing States. The report correctly noted that the world is becoming increasingly interdependent, but interdependency is a two-way street: while the policies of major Powers affect the rest of the world, the responsibility of all other States for the effect of their policies on international stability and peace must also be subjected to a serious analysis.
3. In dealing with its intended main topic, concepts of security, the report also fails to take into account a number of fundamental facts that must be addressed forthrightly in any objective and meaningful study of this complex subject.
4. In describing the concept of peaceful coexistence, the study totally disregards the interpretation given to that concept by its chief proponent. According to that widely proclaimed interpretation, peaceful coexistence is to apply only to State-to-State relations; it is not to inhibit continued ideological struggle" but, on the contrary, to intensify it. By both words and deeds, however, it has also been made clear that under the concept of peaceful coexistence no free competition of ideas is allowed and that the field for "ideological struggle" is to be open only in one direction - to expand the area already under the political system advocated by the proponent of the concept. History has shown that any attempt at political and social change by the peoples of States within that area is stifled, by armed intervention if deemed necessary, and any support, even sympathy, for such change from the outside is denounced as interference in the internal

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affairs of those States. Thus, as interpreted and practised by its standard-bearer, the concept of peaceful coexistence is patently one-sided. It is not a security concept, but a crass example of how ideas laudable in and of themselves are twisted and exploited for the self-serving purposes of an expansionist Power.

5. Contrary to the impression given by the respective section of the report, non-alignment does not necessarily reflect a shared concept of security. Some States, while professing non-alignment, are closely associated with one of the super-Powers. Many non-aligned States, while challenging the related concepts, rely for their national security to a significant extent on balance of forces, both regional and global, and the benefits they indirectly derive from a credible nuclear deterrent. It is also clear that while some non-aligned States favour regional arms control, many others are strongly opposed to it. But the most dramatic evidence of the fact that security interests and perceptions of non-aligned States not only differ but can even clash is the tragically long list of armed conflicts between such States.

6. The study argues that nations should move towards common security. By definition, common security requires a high degree of harmony in the general outlooks and policies of States. Where such harmony exists, common security is a natural result, with the States involved no longer arming themselves for protection against one another. The fact, however, that those States remain concerned about maintaining effective defensive capabilities makes it clear that they feel the need to defend themselves from potential threats from other quarters. The report correctly notes that security concepts are affected by a variety of factors - political, military, ideological, economic, cultural, etc. How the differing and sometimes diametrically opposed objectives, values, practices and traditions in all these areas can be reconciled is an extremely complex and difficult question. It is one, however, that must be resolved if any movement by States towards common security is to become a realistic option. To minimize this fundamental problem, as the report does, only fosters illusions and does not contribute to the objective of a more peaceful and secure world.

7. Human rights represent one of the areas where the differences in policies and practices of States are perhaps most visible. The report contains a welcome recognition of the negative effect on international security resulting from human rights violations. In discussing and making recommendations on this important question, however, the report is highly selective. The practice of apartheid is abhorrent, but, unfortunately, not the only one requiring attention in this context. For a study to be objective, it cannot remain silent about other massive violations of human rights, and their repercussions for international security, in such countries as, for example, Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Kampuchea, and Nicaragua. Nor can it ignore the continued breaches of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act by some of its signatories.

8. For both substantive and financial reasons, stated in its explanation of vote, the United States opposed General Assembly resolution 38/188 H, which initiated the study on concepts of security. Nevertheless, it has examined the completed study

without prejudgements. While the foregoing comments are by no means exhaustive, they do reflect the basic conclusion resulting from that examination, that is, that, regrettably, this study only confirms the serious concerns conveyed by the United States to the Secretary-General in response to General Assembly resolution 40/152 K regarding the ways in which United Nations studies in the disarmament field have been initiated and carried out. The United States hopes that the suggestions contained in that response will help improve the quality and value of such studies in the future.
