

The Political Dimension: Response and Recommendations

10.1 In the 1985 *Vulnerability* report a range of measures were suggested to reduce vulnerability which continue to be relevant since they were based on an analysis of the basic character and condition of small states. The recommendations stressed the development of skills, the need for an unrelenting diplomatic effort, maintaining and strengthening democracy, varied and relevant security provisions, appropriate regional institutions and sustained and adequate international financial and technical assistance over a wide range of areas. While many states have taken steps to implement the recommendations at the national and/or regional levels, the efforts have been limited more because of lack of financial and technical resources than because of lack of will. In the wake of the Grenada crisis and the *Vulnerability* report there was some donor interest but that has not been sustained, especially as there was no evidence of a significant threat pattern in conventional terms. Each seemed to be *sui generis*, were usually dramatic acts of discontent rather than revolutions and were not repeating themselves.

10.2 Small states have therefore had to take or maintain the initiative in developing security policies for themselves. This chapter will examine the measures open to enhance the political security of small states at national, bilateral and regional levels where small states can expect to define agendas and policies particularly suited to their needs.

The National Level

10.3 Small state security starts at home. It has a number of dimensions but three in particular stand out. The deployment of sufficient enforcement capabilities to anticipate and manage internal threats to the state and to meet minor external aggression; the maintenance of social integrity; and most importantly the development of policy capacity.

Enforcement capabilities

10.4 There are 20 Commonwealth small states with professional military forces: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, The Gambia, Guyana, Jamaica, Lesotho, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Papua New

Guinea, Seychelles, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, and Tonga. All small states have police forces and intelligence capacity and most have developed para-military capabilities and in the case of island states, coastguard provision. Few countries have a significant air wing.

10.5 The level of armed forces per capita and their configuration varies from state to state but the one common denominator is that all lack the capability to mount sustained or major unilateral operations beyond their home state. The armed forces are therefore oriented to internal security. Even here they can be seriously constrained in action against determined resistance or prove to be inadequate against a major external intervention, as the case of Cyprus demonstrates. In such circumstances the recruitment of external forces is a temptation. The intended use of mercenaries in Bougainville was a case in point and also an example of the perils that can attach to such action. This, of course, is not to be confused with legally sanctioned stationing of armed forces who may, as in the case of the Gurkha forces in Brunei, be primarily of foreign origin.

10.6 Where professional armed forces do not exist police forces have in many instances acquired para-military capabilities. This is the case in the Eastern Caribbean and for Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. Coastguards may also be separately established or be part of the armed forces or the police. The value of an effective coastguard has come to be recognised more and more in recent years and despite its cost there has been a relative expansion of this provision in the small island states. International efforts to develop the national capacities of small states in the surveillance and monitoring of the coasts and EEZs as well as the high seas are being undertaken on a regional basis. In the smallest states internal security is provided by police forces.

10.7 There have been significant efforts to improve information and intelligence networks and to upgrade and diversify the defence establishment. Intelligence has become especially important as criminal activity has internationalised. Nevertheless there has not generally been any significant increase in defence forces or defence budgets or any substantial aid grants for the upgrading of their equipment or technical competence. Objectively, however, the states are exceptionally vulnerable, and there is a need to bolster the provisions for enhancing their conventional security as the potential for new insecurity scenarios is high in the more open post-Cold War arena where the focus of attention is on other, more pressing, theatres.

Social integrity

10.8 The social cohesion of small states is essential whether the country is socio-culturally homogeneous or plural. It is not simply a matter of

ethnicity – although this constitutes the most divisive and potentially most destabilising cleavage in some small states – but is also a question of groups who may be disadvantaged or feel themselves to be so. These include fundamentalist sects and immigrants as well as broader categories such as women and youth.

10.9 The growth of fundamentalism in recent years is a matter of concern to many small states, particularly as it is clear that in the past fundamentalist movements have been linked to mass suicide, secession and to coup attempts. There is no easy answer to this question. While it may be monitored via intelligence, it has to be accommodated or countered in a wider social context in which the aims and values of the country are known and shared by the majority.

10.10 Small states are hosts to long-stay visitors and immigrants as well as providers of emigrants. The attractions can be climate as in the case of retirees and higher income earners in the Caribbean and the South Pacific or economic opportunity provided by tourism and relatively higher standards of living compared to their own developing countries as in the Indian Ocean and the African states. It can also be a matter of geography as in infiltration over porous borders in enclave states or islands in the path of a refugee exodus. In the face of such population movements most small states have been tolerant and even welcoming when incomers bring scarce skills and financial resources. Economic citizenship programmes are being promulgated by many small states as a means of securing much-needed scarce foreign exchange earnings as well as attracting investment. But small states will also need to be increasingly aware of pressures on the carrying capacity of the state and in the case of islands on the erosion of cultural distinctiveness. National policies to address these issues may be needed sooner rather than later and in the case of citizenship programmes policies for control and monitoring of abuses by holders of such citizenships should be strengthened.

10.11 It is not at all clear whether women or youth suffer any greater disadvantage in small states than in larger ones. In the case of women it might be inferred that because small states tend to be conservative and traditionalist women will not be treated equally with men. At the same time women have reached high office in some small states and in the Caribbean they currently have a higher proportion successfully completing higher education than do men. In the case of youth there is again a better record of achievement in education in smaller states than in larger ones, although this is offset by more limited employment opportunities and a corresponding interest and desire for emigration. In both cases the real questions are equalities of opportunity in education

and employment as well as the wider issue of social justice. Women of whatever age and in all societies need to be secure from personal violence and be empowered to take control over the key decisions affecting their lives. Likewise youth need encouragement and instruction, not least in good citizenship where through cross-cultural, cross-racial and cross-religious group projects in the fields of social welfare, education and recreation they can provide the cement of national integration.

Policy capacity

10.12 The promotion of representative and responsive government is vital to the security of small states. Without it there will be discontent, distress, disorder and potentially disaster if the state implodes or becomes subject to hostile intervention. To guard against such calamities small states need to develop a consensual, adaptive and effective policy capacity. This demands more than the creation of a coherent and efficient executive and administration – important as these are. It also requires a large measure of agreement about the ends and means of security, which requires, in turn, legitimacy and openness in the political system and the ability to combine defence, foreign and domestic policies into one integrated security policy.

10.13 Legitimacy and openness are best served where popular participation in politics, including the opportunity openly to dissent, is assured and when the basic rights of citizens, including entrenched provision for the protection of minority groups, are widely respected and guaranteed by law. In a word, when good governance prevails. This is now widely understood and is a central feature of membership of the Commonwealth as set out in the Harare Declaration of 1991 and reaffirmed in the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration in 1995. Fortunately, small states meet most of the criteria for good governance most of the time. Those that do not, as well as some that do but have felt the need for wider approbation, have taken significant steps in this direction in recent years. Among recent instances that may be cited where the Commonwealth has played a crucial role are the observation of elections in the Seychelles in 1992 and 1993 which marked a transition from a one-party to a multi-party system of government; the Lesotho elections in 1993 which saw a change from military rule to multi-party democracy; elections in Namibia in 1994 which consolidated the democratic process in the country; and in St Kitts and Nevis in 1995 which confirmed long established democratic practice. On the other hand Presidential elections held in The Gambia in 1996 have been criticised, leading to freer Parliamentary elections in 1997. Other recent assistance has included the Secretary-General's 'good offices' in resolving tensions between

the armed forces and the government and the armed forces and the police in Lesotho and a similar 'good offices' role played by the Secretary-General in Papua New Guinea in early 1997. Offers of 'good offices' and technical assistance have also been made in Swaziland in the area of constitutional review.

10.14 The need for an integrated security policy at national level not only arises from the need for a multidimensional approach but also from the need to broaden the security debate in small states. All too often the security of such states is the responsibility of only a few individuals who meet infrequently and respond only to the immediate issues in front of them. A wider vision is lacking. Yet, it should be apparent that such a vision, emanating from publicly accountable mechanisms through which threats and vulnerabilities are perceived and assessed, resources are allocated, and policies are selected and implemented, constitutes an indispensable basis for a credible and shared national security policy which will uphold public order and meet external threat. The need for secrecy on intelligence matters and even force levels in the smallest states is understood, but this needs to be traded off against a consensus on security in government and opposition which only a bipartisan approach to security will guarantee. More generally, such an approach, when widened to incorporate expert advice from a range of senior administrators across a gamut of government services, will not only ensure all eventualities are foreseen as far as possible but as importantly enjoy public confidence, which in itself is of inestimable value in providing the bedrock of security in small states.

Bilateral Arrangements

10.15 The security of many small states has in the past been enhanced by a variety of formal arrangements or informal 'understandings' between small states and regional or great powers that the latter will come to their support in times of distress or acute need. This has been the case in the Caribbean, the South Pacific, the Indian Ocean and should have been the case in Cyprus under the Treaty of Guarantee which formed part of the independence arrangements for the island in 1960 but which proved counterproductive and ineffective in 1974. The countries which small states have looked to to provide such support have been the United States, Britain and Canada in the Caribbean; the United States, Australia and New Zealand in the South Pacific; and India in the case of the Maldives.

10.16 The involvement of the United States has at times been contentious, especially in the Caribbean. Relations with Britain and Canada have been good and their involvement has been welcomed.

British armed forces were stationed in Belize under a special understanding which strengthened Belizian security in the face of Guatemalan claims on its territory and Britain and Canada have provided support for the regional security system in the Eastern Caribbean as well as to individual Caribbean states.

10.17 The security 'understanding' between the small states in the South Pacific and Australia and New Zealand is often held up as a 'model' form of association. It is not without its critics, but on the whole evaluations are positive and tensions in relationships are less acute than for US relations in the Caribbean. Australia has a long-standing relationship with Papua New Guinea and New Zealand is influential in several of the Polynesian islands. The fact that both are members of the South Pacific Forum and take its deliberations seriously has acted as a legitimating mechanism. So also is the belief that neither wish to assume a dominant role in regional affairs.

10.18 The small states in the Indian Ocean have been given security assistance by India and in the case of the Maldives in 1988 this proved crucial. France maintains an interest and involvement in the South West Indian Ocean. Its presence is not contested as it is in the South Pacific and so its influence is generally seen as benign. Security assistance has also been provided by Tanzania in the case of the Seychelles and now that South Africa has emerged from apartheid its role in Indian Ocean and Southern African security is likely to grow.

10.19 The continued military weakness of small states means that temporary assistance will almost certainly be needed to repel an invader (including any substantial mercenary action); to defeat secession (especially in outlying islands); and to quell or contain protracted urban riots, coup attempts, or any combination of disturbances, especially if they are on any scale. In the absence of effective collective security through the UN or regional security mechanisms, small states will necessarily have to turn elsewhere for assistance, and even with regional involvement extra-regional help may be required. It will also be necessary on a more routine basis if effective intelligence networks are to be established and international crime combated and punished. The issue is therefore not so much the involvement of major and regional powers but the terms on which they do so and the extent to which they will remain committed to help them. In an age of competing resources small states will have to make every effort to encourage in such powers the development of a sense of voluntary responsibility for, and stewardship of, regions in which they have had a beneficial presence.

Regional Security

10.20 In the *Vulnerability* report great stress was laid on the potential of regionalism for bolstering the operational capacity of small states and thus enhancing their security. This remains true, and it must be noted that over the last decade these states have made significant gains in this direction, in that regional networking and practical co-operation have been well developed at both the governmental and non-governmental levels. The governments are well aware of both the problems and the possibilities. Regionalism implies regional bureaucracy and services and the financing of these, especially where the agency is only made up of small states, has been a daunting problem for these states.

10.21 At the same time the current thrust in the Caribbean to develop an Association of Caribbean States, which will include all of the societies of the wider region, is an example of a renewed commitment to regionalism. Another is the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative which has attracted membership from 14 states and yet another the widening and deepening of the Southern African Development Community. While much of this has been impelled by globalisation there has also been a security component, either implied or prior to such developments and it is clear that regional programmes in security are likely to grow in number.

The Caribbean

10.22 In 1982 the Eastern Caribbean states, including Barbados, created, through a Memorandum of Understanding, a Regional Security System (RSS) involving a force constituted by mixing military, coastguard and police units. The RSS played a supporting role in the Grenada events of 1983, in Trinidad in 1990 and in Haiti in 1994. In 1996 the arrangement was upgraded into a treaty. The treaty specified that the RSS should have contingency plans for assisting member countries in national emergencies i.e. including drug interdiction, marine pollution, search and rescue operations and natural disasters. The emphasis on these activities is in accordance with a shifting perception of threat which in the early years was directed more at political instability and mercenary activity.

10.23 When it was first established the RSS attracted significant technical and material support from the United States, Canada and Britain, but this has declined significantly in the post-Cold War years. Since regional governments are also experiencing acute budgetary pressures the RSS is faced with major operational constraints. Nevertheless, RSS forces have been deployed annually since 1985 in military training

exercises and the number of regional and extra-regional countries involved have grown in recent years. There is clearly a need for such a security system and as an imaginative, low-cost example of self-help the RSS deserves sustained international support.

The South Pacific

10.24 In the South Pacific there has been a deepening of the regional security arrangements in a voluntary collective effort involving the two regional powers as well as the small states. Security arrangements depend very much on regional networking and co-operation and on ad hoc arrangements for peacekeeping forces.

10.25 In respect of illegal movement of arms and drugs, an awareness of increased permeability to criminal activities has led the SPF to take measures to deepen regional co-operation. Thus, in 1988, they established a Regional Security Committee which has, as one of its main responsibilities, the developing of a common approach to the control of weapons throughout the region. In 1995 the Forum also agreed on establishing 'Regional Support Arrangements' and ordered the development of appropriate mechanisms. The Honiara Declaration of Law Enforcement Co-operation (1992) is another example of increasing regional co-operation and has focused on legislative drafting assistance, improvements to the drug enforcement capabilities of regional police and customs agencies, and assistance to regional prisons and immigration to establish specialist regional fora.

The Indian Ocean

10.26 As noted earlier, regional organisation among small states in the Indian Ocean is weak. There are numerous regional organisations on the littoral involving Africa, the Middle East, South and South-East Asia, most of which were either products of the Cold War or political and economic co-operation following decolonisation. The new post-Cold War security landscape and new global economic agendas, however, are providing opportunities for developing new regional associations which may directly or indirectly enhance the security of the small Indian Ocean states.

South Africa

10.27 The SADC has recently taken a decision to transform the Frontline Group of States into an Association of Southern African States with specific security responsibilities. The intention is to proceed slowly and the most likely areas for regional security co-operation are diplomatic co-ordination, joint mechanisms for preventing and combating

crime, exchanges of intelligence, and measures to curb drug trafficking and illegal immigration.

10.28 In 1993 the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) created a 'Mechanism for Conflict Resolution, Management and Prevention' (CRM) to deal with the growing problem of conflict in Africa, both internal and external. The CRM is guided by the principles of sovereignty and non-interference and functions on the basis of the consent and co-operation of the parties to a conflict. The primary emphasis is on anticipating and taking action to prevent the outbreak or escalation of a conflict and hence avoid the need to resort to complex and expensive peacekeeping operations which African states would find difficult to finance. The creation of the CRM has been welcomed by the international community as a whole.

Nuclear weapon free zones

10.29 Many small states have been active in opposing nuclear weapons. One measure they have taken in their region is to promote zones of peace or nuclear weapon free zones. The first moves in this direction were taken in Latin America with the conclusion of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967 which established a nuclear-free zone. The idea of a 'zone of peace' was then promoted by some states in the Indian Ocean where it was directed at constraining and removing superpower competition. It has failed to make much headway. More successful has been the conclusion of the Treaty of Rarotonga in 1985 establishing a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific and the signing of the Treaty of Bangkok in 1995 and the Pelindaba Treaty in 1996 which, respectively, have established nuclear weapons free zones in South-East Asia and Africa. A number of Commonwealth small states have already signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Commonwealth Heads of Government have expressed their support for the establishment of nuclear-free zones based upon arrangements freely arrived at by all states in the regions concerned. They have also expressed support at Auckland for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as a major step toward strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and efforts for global nuclear disarmament, with its ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Recommendations

10.30 In line with recommendations advanced in the *Vulnerability* report (see Annex), we reiterate the proposition that small states will need to address military and political security at several levels. We also acknowledge that small states will need to develop flexible multi-purpose

programmes that promote internal cohesion as well as meet external threats. Finally, we underline the importance of developing effective intelligence and law enforcement capabilities to combat and punish international crime.

10.31 Small states which maintain a defence establishment are best served when that establishment is configured to carry out a diversity of functions including development projects and disaster relief. **Small state defence forces need to liaise closely with other government agencies and to acquire a range of paramilitary skills.** They can also gain from being part of a regional security programme when that programme relates primarily to the needs and concerns of small states within a distinctive regional setting. This is an important qualification as regional security has assumed greater prominence with the end of the Cold War and regional powers may have an agenda distinctly different from that of smaller states.

10.32 **Small states need to be mindful of the position of global powers.** The *Vulnerability* report cautioned against bilateral defence arrangements with a foreign power, seeing it as an option only in the last resort and only if a small state is under a real military threat from an identifiable enemy. This continues to be sound advice and is particularly pertinent to the present when the future shape of the international system is so unclear. At the same time there are many areas of overlapping interest between small and global powers, particularly in detecting and combating global crime. In such instances there is a case for **small states to actively seek the support of global powers to provide appropriate security assistance, subject to safeguards concerning national sovereignty.**

10.33 As already noted, small states tend to be more democratic than larger states and to have a good record on human rights. But as can also be shown small states can be at risk from personalist ambition and petty tyranny which is difficult to counter or redress given the pervasiveness of politics in small states and the relatively larger role of government in social and political affairs. **Small states must ensure that mechanisms are in place to limit would-be dictators and to support democratic processes.** A number of these were recommended in the *Vulnerability* report and we endorse them as practical measures which will promote internal cohesion (see Annex).

10.34 We also note that issues of human rights and good governance are now part of the international development agenda. **Small states have a vested interest in ensuring their domestic regimes are politically acceptable apart from the intrinsic value of maintaining democratic and accountable government in accordance with the principles set out in the Harare declaration.** At the same time the conditionalities

imposed by international agencies or donor countries through structural adjustment programmes or debt management can have deleterious consequences for social cohesion by widening the gap between rich and poor and limiting the range of free or subsidised services which are targeted at and of particular benefit to the disadvantaged. In the design and implementation of such programmes the particular place of government in small states needs to be recognised and particular care taken over the implementation of policies such as privatisation and public sector reform.

10.35 The phenomenal growth of international crime has impacted on all states but small states are especially vulnerable because of their geographical location and characteristics and because they have only limited interdiction capabilities. This particularly applies to the twin threats of drug trafficking and money laundering although other criminal activities such as smuggling, illegal migration and unlicensed use of exclusive economic zones remain as matters of concern. To combat such threats effectively small states necessarily rely on others, particularly in respect of intelligence, detection and prosecution. **Efforts to develop information networks and securing external assistance and training to enhance their self-reliant defence efforts should remain a priority of small states.**

10.36 The *Vulnerability* report drew attention to the efficacy of regional intelligence networks in providing a routine flow of information and intelligence. There have been developments in this area but experience has also pointed to limitations and in **respect of international criminal activity a wider strategy is required**. Small states have begun to address these matters through adherence to relevant international conventions such as the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and the adoption into commercial practice and national law of recommendations made by the Financial Action Task Force on money laundering. Much, however, remains to be done.

10.37 There is a **special role for the Commonwealth** in this area. Recent meetings of Finance Ministers and law enforcement officers from Commonwealth countries have addressed these issues and the Commonwealth Secretariat has an active programme of technical support. Small states are especially reliant on such fora to inform themselves of the issues and to put their views across as there is a danger that their legitimate interests in establishing offshore financial sectors could be ignored by larger states seeking tighter international regulation. At the same time small states have a duty to themselves and others to ensure that compliance is effective. In most cases this will require

considerable technical assistance which the Secretariat is well placed to provide given the resources to do so. We recommend that **priority be given by the Commonwealth Secretariat to practical measures to help small states combat drug trafficking and money laundering at national, regional and international levels.**