

Chapter 3

The Threat Scenario

The range of security threats to small states

3.1 With the working definition of national security as “the absence of threat to the capacity to govern, protect, preserve and advance the state and its peoples consistent with the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states”, a threat to security can be legitimately interpreted as any type of specific action or situation which could damage national integrity. However, in offering this interpretation, it should be acknowledged that no government, not even of the most powerful states, is able to function entirely free of some form of external constraint. Certain constraints, for example, automatically flow from the fact that membership of an international community is founded upon agreed principles of conduct, including the principle of non-intervention itself. But do small states face external constraints both qualitatively and quantitatively different from those that are general to all states by virtue of their membership of an interdependent international community? We believe they do.

3.2 The special position of small states is borne out in all three major categories of threats to security: threats to territorial security resulting from incursions to both military and non-military sources; threats to political security, which can involve a broad range of actions that are deliberately intended to influence, and in some cases bring about a specific change in the threatened state's national policies; and threats to economic security, involving action that can have the effect of undermining a state's economic welfare and which, additionally, can also be used as an instrument for political interference.

3.3 In our outline of small states' economic characteristics, we noted that many islands were particularly prone to natural disasters like hurricanes and typhoons. The catastrophic effects of such non-man-made events on

a small country are such that we have felt it right to include them within the general category of serious threats to economic security.

THREATS TO TERRITORIAL SECURITY

(i) Military threats

3.4 A notable peculiarity of small states is that, principally because of their size, a military attack on a part of the state, if it takes the form of an actual occupation is automatically a threat to the whole state given the proximity of the invading forces to the rest of the country. This is true even in multi-island states if the attack is directed at the island or islands where population, administration and business centres are concentrated.

Direct aggression and/or invasion by forces of another state or other agencies

3.5 Such territorial violations can arise from historic territorial claims or the pursuit of hegemonial ambitions or spheres of influence by a super-power/major power/neighbouring power. The goal need not be annexation, but may be punitive or to ensure a particular political outcome. The incursion could also come from foreign-based national dissident elements seeking to overthrow the government, major operators trading in arms or drugs, or from mercenaries. Criminal elements are usually linked to one or other of the two preceding categories; there have been instances when they have actually attempted to seize an outlying island of a small island state as a permanent location for their activities. There are also occasional acts of piracy within a maritime zone.

Establishment of foreign bases

3.6 Security problems can also arise when military bases and naval facilities are provided to major countries by small states. This would be so particularly if the facility serves a nuclear purpose in some way. While the ultimate threat of being in a nuclear combat zone would only occur in wartime, there is the possibility in normal times of subversive activities by domestic groups hostile to the presence of such facilities.

Island states and secession

3.7 Multi-island small states are particularly prone to attempts at secession and external as well as internal forces may sometimes be used to foster such secession. (Where the threat is non-military in character the conflict can be long drawn-out and debilitating both politically and economically.)

(ii) Non-military threats

3.8 Non-military threats to territorial integrity are usually instigated by private non-governmental sources and they occur far more frequently than the military threats.

3.9 Small states have experienced like other states an increase in the activities of arms, drugs and other types of smugglers. Islands are particularly favoured as way-stations in arms and drugs trading and, when located off-shore of a continent, are even used, illegally, for the production of lucrative drug crops. For example the Prime Minister of Belize recently described this problem as a very serious threat to the security of his country of even greater significance currently than the Guatemalan claim to Belizean territory. The drug threat can also have devastating social effects when a substantial proportion of a small country's youth population becomes addicted and/or a considerable section of its adult population becomes involved in the trade and is ready to support it with arms if felt necessary.

Trespass of economic zones

3.10 A widespread and very disturbing practice is the trespass of small states' EEZs by foreign fishing vessels. This is an extremely serious threat, not only because of the major economic loss but because the incursions are often by vessels of the major world maritime nations and a small state cannot usually effectively police its vast sea holdings.

THREATS TO POLITICAL SECURITY

3.11 Threats to a nation's political security, can assume many guises.

Political and economic pressure for policy changes exercised by large states

3.12 Such pressure can be applied directly or indirectly, in the context of bilateral and multilateral relations. Small states located close to a great/super power are especially vulnerable and can even be coerced into agreements, alliances, or formal economic relations; for example, the relationships established between South Africa and its neighbours, including the large states. Attempts may also be made to co-opt a small state into major global military geopolitical arenas either by its agreement to provide facilities for bases or by its open commitment to a sphere of influence. Moreover, in regional bodies which include great/super powers and in international economic and financial institutions small states can be pressured to the will of the states with economic and military leverage.

Destabilisation or subversion attempts resulting from political objectives of larger powers, or externally-based dissidents

3.13 International politics since 1945 is replete with examples of these types of political security threat. Their incidence has been greatly facilitated by the continuing expansion of new forms of travel and communications techniques, which have had the effect of increasing the openness of small states to the outside world. If they choose it is also relatively easy for major states to threaten the core social, cultural and political values of small societies by influencing the media and the non-formal education system, co-opting sectors of the elites, or forming alliances in particular with the business sector, trade unions or elements of the military. Overseas-based national dissidents can often be very effective abroad, because of their increased access to media, publicity, arms and funds as well as the clandestine political support which they often receive from official or private sources in the metropolises.

Spill-over political effects of major policy changes in member countries of a region

3.14 The spread of ideological conflict between the super powers has caused serious intraregional dissension when one state in an hitherto politically uniform or tolerantly pluralistic region becomes virtually a standard-bearer for a specific political ideology, as was the case with the effects of Grenada's change of policy on the rest of the Caribbean. Furthermore there is now an increasing danger that the same phenomenon could occur as the result of the spread of fundamentalist religious ideologies. Small states are also very sensitive to the efforts of extra-regional powers seeking to extend their influence to new areas, or to any attempt by powers traditionally operating in the region to increase the level of their influence. There have also been cases of a small state feeling its sense of security seriously threatened by a flood of political or economic refugees fleeing to it in order to escape the consequences of the internal policies of a neighbouring country.

Adverse impact of hostile or unsympathetic reporting by foreign media

3.15 This is a particular danger of our time given the pervasiveness and effectiveness of the media. It is likely to become a matter for even more concern as technology improves satellite broadcast techniques, thus permitting penetration without dependence on a national connection. Also, since the media of a small country usually depends heavily on the international news agencies, its society can be very vulnerable to externally-generated information. News and rumour travel quickly in a small state, and governments can be at a disadvantage in countering any subversive effects of news which has the imprimatur of an international agency.

Attempts at extra-territorial jurisdiction

3.16 This is a very subtle type of threat which can be wielded only by the largest powers. Such a country may insist that its own laws and regulations applicable to companies operating within its boundaries must also apply to their subsidiaries operating in other states. The commercial activities of these subsidiary companies can thus be seriously restricted and this can act to the detriment of the small state in which they operate.

Undermining of social and cultural identity

3.17 While small states like other states stand to benefit from interaction with the rest of the international community their integrity and stability can sometimes be threatened by deliberate and aggressive penetration of their culture and core values. Such penetration is sometimes designed to change lifestyles and create new consumer markets without respect for local priorities. It can influence the young particularly and alienate them from their own society, encourage discontent because of aroused but frustrated ambitions, and have serious negative effects on national cohesion and loyalty.

Importance of the Geopolitical Factor

3.18 It must be borne in mind that threat-perception varies not only over time but also within a region. Even within states, the perceptions of threat by decision makers does not necessarily reflect those of the people.

3.19 The small states we have identified as the subject of our study exist in a wide range of locations and circumstances and their history, experiences and level of development vary markedly. Thus, while they have been categorised and given some unity in our definition, the problems of vulnerability which they face are often very different. Although it was not feasible for the Group to examine the specific threat-situations for each of the 31 countries under survey, we found it essential to distinguish the most significant regional geopolitical factors that directly affect their security.

(a) In the Caribbean

3.20 From the geopolitical perspective, relative proximity to one of the world's two super powers has been a key factor for all the Commonwealth Caribbean countries, and is seen by them as having both advantages and disadvantages. Their proximity to continental Latin American nations, as well as to each other, has rendered many of them vulnerable to illegal immigration and a variety of externally based and controlled illicit operations like smuggling, the drug trade and piracy. On the other hand, the fact that the islands are separated by comparatively short distances

has proved a decided advantage in helping them to build on the natural links flowing from ethnic ties and a similar colonial development. This sense of a distinctive Commonwealth Caribbean identity, initially fostered by the establishment of The University of West Indies in the 1940s during the colonial period, has manifested itself in the creation of a number of important regional bodies: CARICOM, the CDB and the OECS.

3.21 In the Western hemisphere the concept and practice of spheres of influence has been entrenched for a century. The fact that its dominant great power has since become a super power has created a special dynamic which has distinctly shaped regional foreign relations and increased the political and economic pressures. By the end of the sixties with the passing of British rule from most of the region the United States moved to take an even more active role in regional affairs. The United States has in any case always conceived of the Caribbean as *mare nostrum* an 'American lake' as it has been called. Strategic trade routes pass through the region. The United States has bases there in its own territories, for example Puerto Rico and its investment in and trade with the region is very high. The Caribbean is a major location of oil refineries serving the American market.

3.22 The spread of the East/West ideological conflict to the wider region initially came about because of the Cuban revolution. Thus, in the seventies, because they were viewed by Washington as left-leaning, Jamaica and Guyana felt the weight of American disapproval, both directly in their bilateral relations with the United States and in the attitude adopted towards them by international agencies under American influence. Charges of United States-inspired destabilisation were made by both Governments.

3.23 The region, while historically pro-Western, had generally sought to hold to a non-aligned position on Cold War issues. In the eighties, however, the perception of the region as an area of major strategic interest with consequent super power competition, the events in Grenada and the development by some states of close links with Cuba and Eastern Europe led to an increasing pressure on the Caribbean states to declare their alignment with one side or the other. Nevertheless this same period witnessed the growth of non-alignment in the region.

3.24 The level of development of the region plus the proximity to the United States mean that the media, local and overseas, operates with great freedom and concern has been expressed that, over the last two decades, it often distorts and exaggerates situations, affecting public issues and opinions both internally and externally and leading indirectly to destabilisation.

3.25 Belize and Guyana, the two CARICOM countries on the mainland each have territorial disputes with a larger neighbour, Guatemala and Venezuela respectively, and have been subject to political pressure and territorial incursions by them. Each has been unable to join the regional agency, the Organisation of American States (OAS), because its Latin neighbour has objected to its entry until the territorial dispute is settled.

3.26 Concern has been expressed in The Bahamas, that the neighbouring super power has attempted to exercise extra-territorial jurisdiction by compelling Bahamas-based corporate financial entities with branches in the United States to disclose information on their commercial operations, contrary to the banking laws of The Bahamas and in open breach of accepted concepts of national sovereignty. Banking is such a central segment of The Bahamas' economy that such actions could constitute a threat to the continued survival of its role as an off-shore banker.

3.27 The Grenada events of 1983 are the most dramatic demonstration of the problems inherent in the location of small states near to a dominant power. They also provide an example of the use of forceful pre-emptive action because of the fear, warranted or not, that the competing super power might co-opt a hemisphere regional state into its geopolitical network and establish a military base.

3.28 The region has also experienced other types of incursions. Given that most island states consist of several, and in one case even hundreds of islands, there is the phenomenon of incursion into territorial waters in cases of hot pursuit into outer islands of criminal or dissident elements. For the states with land borders there have also been cases of deliberate military incursion by a neighbouring state. Political and economic refugees have also moved into neighbouring small states, both land-based and island, in sufficient numbers to be considered a minor social, if not economic, threat by 'host' countries, especially because of the strong cultural differences of the migrants, e.g. Guyanese into Suriname, Haitians into The Bahamas.

3.29 Secessionist ambitions are constantly below the surface in regional politics and are capable of becoming actual threats particularly at times of economic stress, e.g. Antigua and Barbuda, St. Christopher and Nevis.

3.30 As a region of small states sharing the same language and having long-established historical links with the neighbouring super power, the Caribbean is particularly concerned about its extreme permeability to the values and social movements of the larger society and the constant cultural erosion which it experiences as a consequence.

(b) In the Pacific

3.31 Despite the obstacles of vast distances and the high costs of inter-Pacific flights, these Commonwealth countries have, like their Caribbean counterparts, been able to build on closely related ethnic stock and a common colonial heritage to create their own sense of regional identity. They also have the advantage of traditionally close co-operative links with both Australia and New Zealand dating back to pre-independence days, which led to the establishment of the South Pacific Forum (SPF) and its secretariat, the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC), as joint ventures. Their other main advantage is that so far the South Pacific has not become a strategic arena in the East-West struggle.

3.32 In this region there is no strong sense of immediate political and military threat. But as against this, a major security issue of concern is the use of certain neighbouring small island countries as sites for French and United States nuclear tests and of the Pacific Ocean as a general dumping area for nuclear waste. Given the close relations with Australia and New Zealand and the pro-Western tradition of the area, it has been said, at the South Pacific regional colloquium, for instance, that their greatest 'threat' could in the long run be from the activities of their friends. These small states feel vulnerable, and think their sense of sovereignty is infringed, whenever any other state in their region makes a sudden change in security or economic policies without consultation with them. This is particularly so in respect of policies related to nuclear matters.

3.33 The gradual build-up of super power rivalry in the South Pacific is also coming to be seen as being a source of potential threat. There is also rising awareness of the possibility that certain middle powers from outside the region could extend their influence to embrace the area.

3.34 There are a number of local issues which are perceived as having a potentially disruptive impact on the whole region. A major case is the border problem between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The lingering colonial issue of the political evolution of New Caledonia is also causing concern as developments there could lead to serious domestic physical conflict. The potential threat lies in the possibility that the region could become involved because of close ethnic and political links. Another concern is the secessionist threat—a significant issue in Papua New Guinea in 1976 and for Vanuatu in 1979.

(c) In the Indian Ocean

3.35 The strategic location of the Indian Ocean states has meant that they are the subject of super power rivalry, particularly in respect of the desire to co-opt them into the global strategic network by way of their

hosting bases. The prospect of an expansion of the nuclear presence in the Indian Ocean is also a primary concern. Unlike in the Caribbean and the Pacific, they have not constituted themselves into a distinctive geopolitical group.

3.36 These states are even more isolated than those of the South Pacific. However, an advantage of isolation is that in certain circumstances separation from other nations by larger tracts of ocean can offer a small state a natural element of protection by discouraging external security threats. But by the same token that very isolation can in other circumstances be used to advantage by those who may be determined to instigate such a threat. And, of course, distance from other countries as well as between component islands, especially when a small state also happens to be removed from the main global communications and transportation links, can also be a serious impediment to development.

3.37 The Republic of Maldives' northerly position close to the Indian subcontinent has set it apart, both geographically and politically, from the other two small states. It has, therefore, very naturally focused on establishing links of co-operation with its more immediate neighbours and is participating in talks on the formation of a South Asian Regional Co-operation Association (SARC), likely to include three other Commonwealth countries, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Mauritius and Seychelles on the other hand share a similar colonial history, having both been French territories before coming under British rule. For their part, they value the strengthening of links with the neighbouring French-speaking countries of Réunion and Madagascar, for example, through the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC); and both are also members of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU). Mauritius has developed firm, if controversial, economic links with South Africa.

3.38 The isolation of these states makes them specially vulnerable to attacks by mercenaries and dissidents as has been demonstrated in the case of the Republic of Maldives, Seychelles and the Comoros. Such politically motivated incursions are usually planned and financed abroad and thus the activities of dissidents based overseas, particularly in metropolitan countries, with designs on overthrowing their governments, are seen as a potential threat. Related to this there is a strong concern over the destabilising impact of foreign-based media reporting on the policies of these small, isolated countries, which on the other hand are seldom able to get adequate international media exposure for the views of their own governments.

(d) In Africa

3.39 The translation from the geographical to the geopolitical situation is self-evident in the case of the three landlocked African small states,

Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. For them the overwhelming physical proximity of South Africa is the dominant political reality in respect of their national security. It was precisely the recognition of this reality that led them to join with five other African states in setting up the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980, as a means of strengthening their capacity to reduce their economic dependence on South Africa.

3.40 The situation in Southern Africa is a classic case of a stronger power seeking to dominate its borderlands in the political, strategic and economic spheres. This manifests itself in a variety of forms which impact not only on the security and economic progress of the smaller states of the region but also on the larger neighbours. Using its strategic and economic advantages South Africa is in a position to apply a stranglehold on the development of its neighbours, in particular by means of the control of the commercial, financial, industrial, transport and skilled-manpower sectors. The commercial heritage through pre-independence links with South Africa ties these small states into an import-export lifeline that serves to sustain Pretoria's control over vital sectors of their economies and limits their prospects of economic independence.

3.41 The long-standing threat in the region has been intensified in recent years by the determination of South Africa to continue its apartheid policy by intimidating and destabilising all its neighbouring states, both large and small, which are opposed to apartheid. It pursues this through a constant exercise of coercive bilateral diplomatic and economic pressure. Its apartheid policy has also created a substantial flow of refugees to its neighbours whose presence is not only an economic problem for the host country but provides opportunity for South African intervention. Thus, latterly, emboldened by the United States' recent advocacy of a policy of 'constructive engagement' South Africa has consistently harassed the countries bordering it both through direct military incursion and through a range of subversive and destabilising techniques.

3.42 The threat thus posed by South Africa to the small states in the region, and for that matter to the larger neighbouring states, is of a special and unique nature. It is not just political or territorial but also cultural inasmuch as it is designed to ensure the retention of the majority black population as a permanent under-class.

3.43 The Gambia's geopolitical situation on the west coast of Africa seems rather less threatening. Although it is surrounded on three sides by its larger neighbour Senegal, the two states have managed to maintain harmonious relations, particularly through the special Confederation Pact known as Sene-Gambia. And through its membership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), it has also

established co-operative links with other countries in West Africa, including the three Commonwealth countries of Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

(e) In other regions

3.44 For the two Mediterranean island states, Cyprus and Malta, close proximity to powerful mainland countries has historically been by far the dominating geopolitical influence. Cyprus' proximity to Greece and Turkey, traditional rival nations, has resulted in the division of its people into two ethnic communities, and its position almost off-shore from the Turkish coast was an additional encouragement to Turkey to invade the northern part of the island in 1974. It is in many respects a classic case of a small state defenceless before a powerful interested neighbour and caught up helplessly in the power game of major political and military forces in the world.

3.45 Malta's location midway between Sicily and the north coast of Africa has meant that for centuries it has been treated as a vital sea-lane control point; although its strategic importance in this respect may recently have diminished with the revolutionary development of modern warfare technology, it remains potentially in a highly vulnerable position.

3.46 Both these countries derive certain benefits from being able to participate in various European regional organisations. But they also suffer the disadvantage of having to operate on an individual basis as very small states within these bodies, since they have no national ties linking them with each other and there are no other newly independent developing small nations in the region with which they could form a geopolitical grouping sharing similar interests.

3.47 Brunei is the only Commonwealth small state in South East Asia. Despite having more adequate natural resources than most other small states, Brunei is nevertheless subject to prevailing regional pressures. However, its security concerns would appear to have been considerably alleviated since its admission, on gaining independence, to the influential Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). This body comprises Brunei's two closest neighbouring states, Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as three other major regional countries, Singapore, Philippines and Thailand.

THE ECONOMIC HAZARDS

3.48 Threats to economic security seldom take overt forms. They are mostly concerned with the ever-present dangers for economic indepen-

dence, economic stability and economic progress arising from weakness and vulnerability and from exposure to a wider variety of relatively strong external economic forces.

Narrow economic structures increase exposure to external and internal shocks

3.49 Small size is usually associated with undiversified economic structures and a tendency to concentrate on industries with unstable external demand—thus enhancing exposure to external economic shocks. In many cases, high dependence on external sources for strategic supplies such as food and energy widen this exposure. Internal shocks also tend to be severe. Pervasive economic damage results from time to time from cyclones, volcanic eruptions, farm diseases and pests.

The erosion of multilateral co-operation increases exposure to external influences and control

3.50 A further threat to economic independence and security arises from the rise of bilateralism in international trading and financial arrangements at the expense of multilateral co-operation, which is being eroded. Multilateral co-operation is of special value to small states, whose weakness becomes more exposed in bilateral relations.

Economic co-operation arrangements with major states may pose risks for long-term economic independence

3.51 The need to have predictable concessional resources and assured markets have led many small states to seek and maintain economic co-operation arrangements with major countries. The major powers themselves may have strategic and commercial interests in such arrangements. In today's world of tight aid budgets and restrictive trade access, in terms of the options available such bilateral or regional arrangements have a significant importance to the development of small states. The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) and the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA) are examples of such arrangements. However, small states would need to ensure that their interests are fully protected in negotiating such arrangements and that over time the arrangements do not compromise their security and their regional and wider economic interests.

The economic advantages of foreign military bases and naval facilities could pose risks for long-term independence and security.

3.52 The provision of facilities for military and naval bases has economic attractions for small states. They can, however, have socially damaging effects, particularly in small communities. Although the attractions of such bases are becoming less, the desire to retain a particular base on the part of a major country may encourage it to exercise political influence in the host country and the presence of foreign bases can generate internal

dissensions and external pressures. This is another case where an arrangement voluntarily entered into could lead to long-term adverse political and social consequences to the weak partner, who may later find it difficult, for economic reasons as well, to end the relationship. Conversely foreign bases can be hostages to fortune, both regarding the domestic politics of the host country and the nature of the bilateral relationship with the external power. The host state may have some leverage over the external; it may nonetheless become caught up in a complex web of domestic and international politics over which it has little control and which ultimately causes more problems than it solves.

Undue political and economic influence exercised by foreign business interests can have harmful consequences for security and progress

3.53 Another threat is from unscrupulous foreign business firms and 'adventurers' that are attracted to the tourist industry and off-shore financial activities on which small states increasingly rely to secure economic progress. The heart of the problem is the weak power and administration of small states and the encouragement these economic activities give to corruption, fraud, commercial crime, drug trafficking, prostitution and political interference. There is an increasing incidence of criminal intent in foreign business ventures in small states and besides the administrative, economic and political problems this causes, it carries serious security implications.

Inadequate capacity to monitor and police the EEZ could encourage intrusion and conflict

3.54 Small states do not have the administrative and security capacity to delineate and monitor effectively their EEZs and to deter foreign intrusion. Many of them have thus not been able to prevent illegal exploitation by foreign deep-sea fishing fleets.