

FROM NATIONAL SECURITY TO COMMON SECURITY

A) Conceptualizing Common Security

Human experience has shown that when two parties, be they individuals or states, want peace, the way to do it is to build institutions together. In building *common* institutions through which to govern their relationship, the parties develop a framework of rules and procedures to provide them with security through due process of law. The truest test of sincerity of any nation professing to desire peace is, therefore, its willingness to *create and affirm the authority of global institutions of common security*. Global common security is the alternative to national military security.

The term common security can be used in two ways. In the first, common security refers simply to an existing condition between two adversaries who have a preponderance of nuclear force: they share a level of security in common. Ultimately, the one can only be as secure as the other because their security is inseparably linked. A popular illustration of common security as an existing condition is that of two people in a canoe: the person at one end cannot achieve security by trying to destabilize the person at the other.

The second use of common security is as *a policy objective to be achieved*. We may say we must work for common security, which means we want to move from the existing low level of common security (in fact, a common insecurity) to a level of higher common security. In the prologue to *Common Security*, the report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues--known also as the Palme Commission after its chairman, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme--Former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance uses common security in this second sense as something to be achieved:

"No nation can achieve security by itself. Both we and the Soviet Union are, and will remain, vulnerable to nuclear attack. The fact is that there are no real defenses against nuclear armed missiles--neither now nor in the foreseeable future. To guarantee our own security in this nuclear age we must, therefore face these realities and work together with other nations to achieve common security. For security in the nuclear age *means* common security."¹

Implicit in the idea of common security is recognition of the need for cooperation. Attempts to achieve security through unilateral actions aimed at gaining advantage over the adversary, such as by building more arms, are an anathema to common security. Instead the focus must be on actions and developments which *simultaneously enhance the confidence of both sides in their relationship*. This includes arms control, but goes far beyond arms control. The real goal and most basic requirement of common security is confidence that force will never be a factor in the relationship.

Central to common security, therefore, is the need for reliable *common institutions* for the peaceful resolution of international disputes and the prevention of war among states. Cyrus Vance writes:

¹ Common Security, Report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues (Palme Commission), New York, 1982, p. 163.