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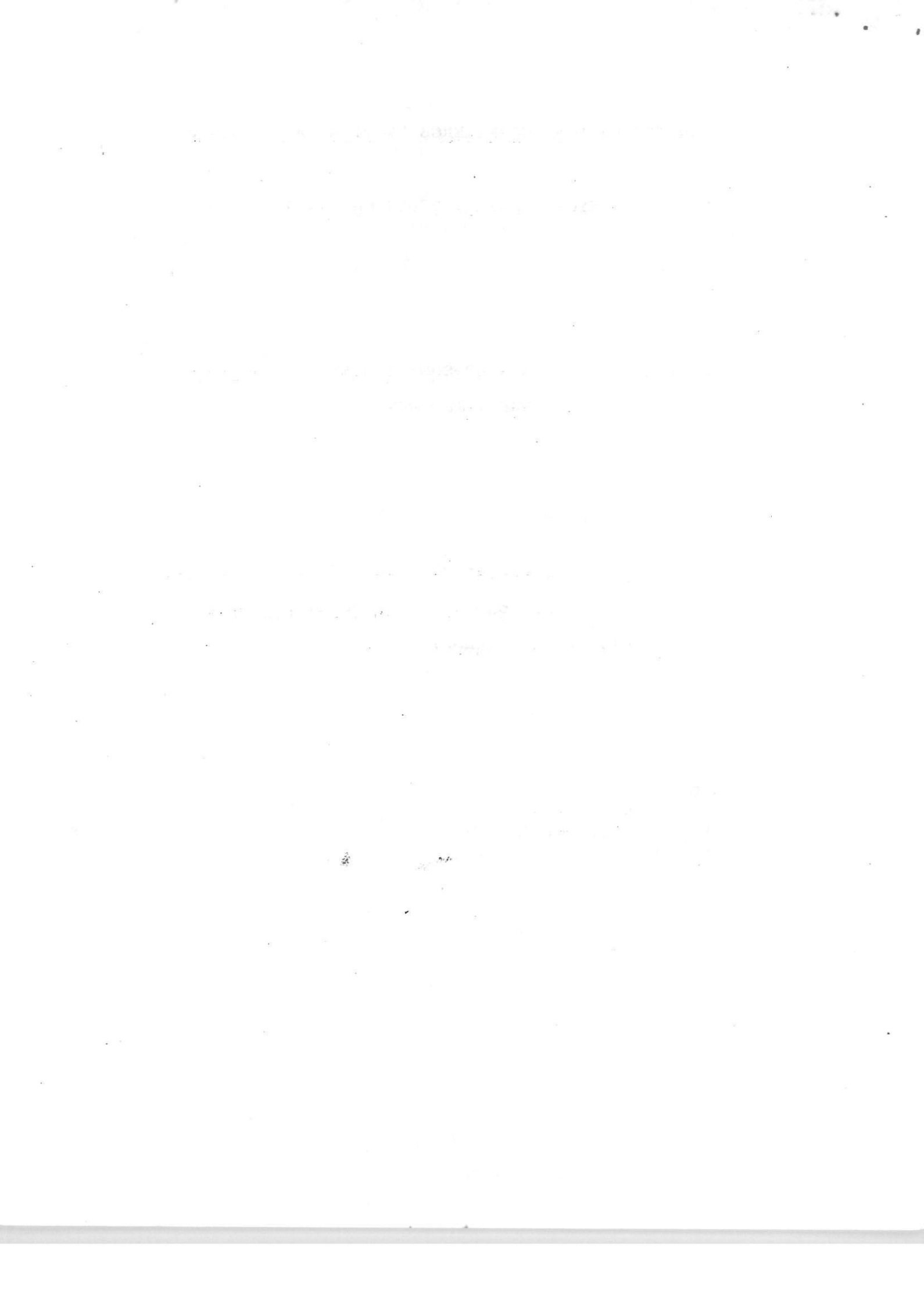
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DISARMAMENT AND DISORDER-SOME ISSUES OF INTEREST FOR
THE THIRD WORLD*

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(*Preliminary version- The views presented here are
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People and institutions committed to the principle of disarmament tend to consider that the arms race and the various processes of armamentism that are still plaguing the World constitute by themselves a form of disorder. The aim of the views that will be presented here is not to contradict such vision which the author largely shares.

Nevertheless, it is evident that disarmament being a very complex political and strategic issue may bring, until a different form of order is created by it, a time that could be propitious for some disorder that would be in everybody's interest to avoid or minimize. This is very clear in the case of the confrontation of the main military alliances that have finally initiated a complex process of disarmament that, in spite of the most positive expectations that creates, does not exclude some legitimate concerns based on the new political realities that derive from the agreements.

Problems originated in the implementation of disarmament agreements may be of various kinds. A number of them are going to be the subject of presentations in

this Conference and I shall not deal with them at any extent.

But, as far as the problem of disorder emanating from disarmament agreements concern also developing countries it is my intention to deal with two of the problems that are of essential interest for them in this respect.

The first one concerns the position of developing countries with respect to the disarmament initiatives and agreements that are, finally and encouragingly, taking place among the superpowers and the military alliances. Prior to that, it should be taken into account that many developing countries are parties to most of the disarmament agreements convened on a multilateral basis. Some characterized exceptions can be noted with respect to the NPT and the environmental weapons convention. While the last one may be modified, the former has gained more support due to the INF agreement and other negotiations.

A note should be made also of the fact that for a number of years developing countries were actively requesting in all fora the agreements that are now happening. Therefore, in principle, these countries should find reasons to applaud in the understandings that are shaping the new political and strategic relationship in the Northern Hemisphere. And they do so.

But, it is clear that we are not at the end of the road; the contrary is more the case and many things are still to be done.

Then, politically speaking, there is reason to believe that developing countries ought to continue claiming for additional measures of disarmament. Account should be taken of the fact that not only in nuclear terms but also in conventional capabilities there is still an unbridgeable difference among these countries and the nuclear weapons and militarily significant States that continue to be overarmed.

There are a number of serious consequences for developing countries arising from the said agreements and at least one or two are going to be of paramount importance.

First, the result of disarmament agreements achieved so far leaves almost intact the existing military capabilities of the countries involved. This would be of great significance if, eventually, the the said countries decide to use force against a developing country. The unfortunate recent events in the Middle East and others in the eighties proved beyond any doubt that no developing country -and even no country at all- would be match for the technological advance and military strenght of the United States and it is essential to keep this fact in mind.

Second, and more important, there is still no consensus policy towards developing countries in matters deriving from the disarmament agreements recently agreed upon. The first lesson for developing countries from the decades long history of unbridled arms competition is that it would be unwise to reproduce and perpetuate the race that so painfully is coming to an end; and that they would not have the slightest chance of achieving via any amount of expenditures in arms the political capabilities of the countries that are trying to escape from the arms spiral.

This is even more important for countries that are desperately fighting not so much for development as for survival amidst crises of various types that compound the dire state of their social achievements. Therefore, it can be considered a political responsibility for the international society in general and for every developing country in particular, to see that the arms race that is perhaps coming to a halt in the industrialized world is not "imported" by poor countries.

This is a tremendous political task. First, for countries that have so recently convened arms limitations and reductions in the sense that weapons included in agreements should not be transferred except in some very special circumstances. A second task would

be to desaccelerate the output of their military industries and their conversion so as to reduce the preasure for arms exports.

This warning is not unnecessary. There are a number of ominous news concerning the search for new outlets for the arms industry whether based in capitalist countries or in the previously socialists ones. Informations published in a recent issue of Newsweek Magazine were most worrisome. Since, according to that souqce, 87% of arms sold to developing countries in the late eighties came from the Permanent Members of the Security Council with the well known "concentration in the Middle East, it is not too soon to start looking differently into the matter.

There were voices herad in this respect. Mr. McNamara, former Prsident of the World Bank proposes to cut financial assistance to developing countries if their military expenditures are not above an "optimal level" and the Government of Japan is also giving consideration to this matter. In the words of the Prime Minister there was a very important additional political element. The policy may be reviewed -he said- not only to countries with large military expenditures but also towards those engaged in military assistance.

This is essential because while there are many

areas where developing countries could more usefully spend their scarce resources, not much has been put forward with respect to the responsibility of industrialized countries in terms of restraint of sales of weapons.

This is most important. The pressure from the industry should be carefully weighted against the experience that has shown that massive sales of weapons made possible that these were sometimes used against the very producer country and also in many cases the paradox that extending additional credits for arms exports may conclude not only in the probability of the debt not being paid but also of the country being compelled into providing ever increasing amounts of assistance to countries growing poorer.

As a consequence, the first "peace dividend" that developing countries should search for in the situation originated by the disarmament agreements would be to make sure that they will not be called upon to give new sustenance to the arms race nor will be pressured to incur into additional debts for the purpose of acquiring larger arsenals.

The exceptional cases we were referring to before may include, for instance, the possibility of arms being provided to countries struggling to preserve

democratically elected governments. This is essential since there is a growing worldwide compromise with that system.

Here, the main problem would be to ascertain that the arms transfers really serve such a specific purpose and that under no circumstance they could be used to threaten neighbouring countries. This could be better achieved by a system of guarantees that may include in some instances, forms of verification. Needless to say that in these cases, the political aim of the transfer should translate into concessionary or free of charge terms. It is clear that in this case there would be no real political gain if countries submitted to security threats by anti-democratic forces are requested to go deeper into foreign indebtedness for the purpose of defending the very system that is becoming a worldwide paradigm.

There is another significant fact in the present circumstances with respect to arms and developing countries. Most assessments coincide in that there has been a noticeable reduction in terms of military expenditures both in general and as a percentage of the gross national product and also of

arms procurements in many developing countries.

The perennial exceptions are of course countries in the Middle East and a few in Asia or Latin America. In the first case, they have been for many years now the biggest spenders in arms procurements and recent events in the area may have not reduce their appetite. Some countries in the Pacific area have performed well economically and it is evident that in many regions, irrespective of the economic conditions there is now a great deal of interest in the most modern "combat tested" types of weapons. Needless to say that it would be pathetic if some or many of those countries embark into a race for the acquisition of the newest types of weapons that are exponentially more expensive than other "conventional" ones.

This unfortunate possibility has yet to materialize except for the Middle East where the opinion of the Secretary of State of the United States in the sense that the area is already overarmed and that no additional acquisitions would be conducive to peace may go unheeded. For the time being the economic crisis visiting most developing countries have imposed the already indicated reductions in arms acquisition or even military expenditures.

The interesting thing is that in almost no circumstance the fact has been formalized into any

agreement or even understanding on a bilateral or regional basis. There is ground to think, therefore, that among the said countries what have happened is a kind of de facto reduction in expenditures as a result of financial constrains; without, until the contrary is proven, any real willingness to reduce them.

It is true that, especially in the case of Latin America, there have been numerous calls for reductions in military expenditures and in arms but no concrete agreement has so far been achieved. It is evident that at this juncture and for a long time ahead, there is almost no possibility of developing countries finding additional means for increasing acquisitions. This is not unrelated to the fact that, again in the case of Latin America, there has been almost a complete return to democratically elected governments that saddled with huge external debts in part originated in weapons procurements, are in no hurry to restore the levels of acquisitions prevailing in the seventies when the coincidence of military regimes and the easy access to foreign loans contribute to change the strategic position of the area.

It is both interesting and also somehow alarming that despite the fact that in Latin America there have already been, as indicated, a number of political indications that a new security concept should

be sought, nothing apparently has happened.

There are basically two documents that should be taken into account. The first one is the Compromiso de Acapulco, Mexico, adopted at the first meeting of the Heads of State of the Rio Group in 1987. It was pointed out there that regional security should include both aspects of peace and stability but also the political, economical and financial vulnerability of the region. For that purpose, mention was made of a compromise to promote initiatives for disarmament and international security, encourage reciprocal confidence and regional solutions to problems and conflicts in the area, contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions, work for the establishment of zones of peace and reinforce co-operation against drug-traffic and terrorism.

Even more concrete were the orientations of the Galapagos Declaration issued by the Presidents of the Andean Group of Countries in Ecuador in 1990.

In this, elements like the following were included: peace, security and co-operation are inherent to development; the significance for the region of the linkage between disarmament and development; the scourge of drug traffic and its criminal association with terrorism; the adoption of confidence building measures in the fields of political, economical and

military co-operation particularly in border areas; establishment or improvement of confidence building measures and practical procedures including immediate bilateral consultations to avoid or overcome border incidents; exchanges of information and regular meetings of the armed forces; co-ordination of policies for the struggle against drug-traffic and terrorism; co-operation of the armed forces in development projects of common interest; etc.

Let us keep in mind that these two political declarations were produced at the Head of States levels. Technically nothing else would have been necessary for both of them being the object of urgent work by all sectors concerned within every member country of the said Groups. But, and this is a very vexing problem, apparently nothing or very little have happened. The explanation would be based then in the assumption that the orientations given were merely beautifully worded flights of rhetoric on the part of the main political responsables of defining visions for their countries or, and this is more worrisome, that the sectors that should be actively giving shape to those visions -diplomacy and the armed forces- simply do not consider that they are being requested to produce the concrete proposals that would embody the purposes put forward by their leaders.

At any rate, this is not a healthy thing. It is

a fact that large areas of Latin America, specially South America, have been spared open conflict for a very longtime , that the processes of economic integration and political consultation are growing more institutionalized and that there is a widespread conviction that no dispute -irrespective of its legitimacy- may have any possibility of being solved by military means.

Therefore, such reluctance to go along with the purposes of changing the nature of security relations in the area is of no little consequence. In fact, it also represents a willingness on the part of some institutions to maintain a certain view of security that is running counter to the will of peoples and the orientations of legitimate authorities. The possibility of explaining this situation as a result of mere negligence or lack of understanding of the intended purpose may be too ingenuous.

And, this is a very serious matter for it can take us to explanations about the fact that limitations occurring are not the result of agreements but only of financial impossibility to continue expending. This may not be unrelated to an element of political culture whereas elected governments tend to believe that leaving "security" matters in the hands of "specialists" e.g. armed forces could contribute to the maintenance of the

system.

This, of course, is not the best possible situation neither from an strategic or political point of view but the reluctance of politicians to go into real aspects of security is, at least in a number of latin american and certainly other developing countries, a very serious one.

Therefore, what we are having now in many developing countries, is a form of unwritten, unnegotiated and perhaps even unwanted disarmament. Whether this situation is going to be transformed into formal negotiations and agreements particularly on a regional basis is to be seen. The case of Latin America where apart from political and economic aspects there is already in practice a number of confidence building measures military and political should be of special relevance. In Africa that may be even more necessary since the continent has been plagued by not a few wars since independence.

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Summing up, a time of over important political decisions is here for developed and developing countries. For the former, to decide on the convenience of continuing with the fabrication of weapons that they

themselves are trying to limit in their reciprocal relations. In other terms, if what could be a good business for a segment of the industrial sector would be a good policy for the country and the stability of international relations.

For the developing countries, there is no *less* responsibility. They should take a look at their arms expenditures and procurements of the last thirty years and decide whether they are more secure now than then. For developing countries security goes much further than military preparedness. Concentrating efforts where efforts should be concentrated -that is making viable national societies- would be a sign of maturity. All support should be given to them in this endeavour.