2 East–West and North–South Interrelationships in the Eastern Mediterranean

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Introduction

Since the Second World War and the explosion at Hiroshima the future of humankind has been threatened by the impending danger of a nuclear holocaust. It is neither surprising nor unwarranted that responsible scientists and intellectuals concentrate their attention on this problem, trying patiently to build on that basis of understanding which made detente possible. Today, however, detente is threatened. Indeed, numerous experts seem to be exceedingly eager to pronounce its death. A complacency in mutual recrimination between East and West is carelessly undermining the basis of understanding which was so difficult to reach.

The reason for such a negative turn in events does not, however, lie in a direct failure of the detente process *per se*. The foundations of that policy still hold. A fundamental balance exists because nuclear arsenals still guarantee mutual assured destruction. Also, no serious crisis is developing in Europe which might lead to the belief that one of the two sides would consider resorting to war.¹ Tensions in Europe have been far worse many times in the past, and even the death of Josip Broz Tito has not precipitated the kind of crisis that many predicted. Still, detente is being temporarily shelved because events which are not directly connected with
relations between East and West impinge upon these relations, creating disturbances which increase the perception of vulnerability of both sides.

These disturbances are the consequence of two large sets of conflicts. The first set comprises all conflict between countries, or different forces from various countries (ranging from groupings of countries to guerrilla groups), exclusively belonging to the Third World. This type of conflict we shall call 'South–South'. The second set comprises all conflict between countries or other groupings, one of which belongs to the Third World and the other to the industrial world. This type of conflict we shall call 'North–South'. North–South conflict also exists at the global level, as embodied in relations between the Group of 77 on the one side and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and CMEA countries on the other. This definition of North–South conflict is only preliminary. Later elaboration will show that North–South conflict can also occur between two countries both belonging to the Third World, or both belonging to the OECD, given certain circumstances.²

Both South–South and North–South conflicts are not necessarily resolved by military means. Some of them might have no strategic implication at all, or just a very marginal one. However, crises are not independent, random events. They interrelate and their simultaneous occurrence hinders any action to solve them. When we consider the reality of the South–South and North–South sets of conflicts as a whole, we cannot but acknowledge that it has very serious implications for East–West relations and balance.

The distinction between South–South and North–South conflict is analytically necessary, although the two are strictly intertwined, one kind of conflict leading almost necessarily to the other. It must be stressed from the outset, however, that South–South conflict is relevant to the East–West balance only inasmuch as it has North–South implications.

The relevance of South–South and North–South conflict to the East–West balance is a result of the growth of global interdependence, which was in the making in the 1950s and 1960s, but was recognised only in the 1970s. Previously, we had a situation in which developing countries were very economically, strategically and politically dependent on the industrial world, while the reverse was not true: the industrial world could do without relations with