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ABSTRACT

The conference reported on in this document focused on the profound changes taking place in the world, changes characterized by their international nature and requiring multinational cooperation. The security of national borders continues to be a concern, but internal threats to governments are the more common phenomenon. The combination of poverty and mushrooming population in the developing nations presents a new threat to security in the North. Other security threats are drug-trafficking, terrorism, and increased worldwide conventional arsenals. New threats to the environment have caught the attention of world leaders. The transformation in global economic activity was targeted as an important change that has yet to be adequately addressed. Directly related to the economic transformation is the technological revolution. The United Nations (UN) has traditionally been handed many of the world's most insoluble problems. Given the recent successes of the UN in defusing regional conflicts and a generally more positive world attitude toward the institution, the outlook for the UN to effectively handle traditional security concerns has improved somewhat. The prospects are not as bright for dealing with new security issues. The problems emerging cannot be contained within national boundaries and are not prone to control either intra- or inter-nationally by governments. World leaders must recognize that the world is entering a new era and develop an agenda that ensures that peaceful change is possible. A list of the participants and the conference-opening address are included. (Author/JB)

International Agenda for the 1990s

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International Agenda for the 1990s

Report of the Twenty-third United Nations of the Next Decade Conference

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Executive Summary

This year's conference on the United Nations of the Next Decade focused on the fundamental and profound changes taking place in the world. Perhaps the most common characteristic of all these changes is that they are not confined within the borders of any one nation. They are global in proportion and so require multinational cooperation. These changes challenge both our abilities to identify the direction they are taking the world and the ability of our institutions to deal with them. The participants at the conference were asked to examine both those issues and to formulate an agenda for the 1990s.

New security threats are emerging that present new challenges to the world's political and economic systems. At the same time, many of the traditional security concerns remain. The security of national borders continues to be a concern, but increasingly, internal threats to governments are the more common phenomenon. Just as importantly, the combination of poverty and mushrooming population in the Third World presents a new threat to security in the North. It

was suggested that migration, not invasion, should give the developed nations more cause for concern. Other security threats at the close of this century are drug-trafficking, terrorism, and increased worldwide conventional arsenals.

New threats to the environment have once again caught the attention of world leaders. Polluted waters, the greenhouse effect, acid rain, and depletion of the ozone layer, are just a few examples of how the very survival of this planet has been placed in jeopardy.

The participants also targeted the transformation in global economic activity as one of the m ' important changes that has yet to be adequately addressed. Ex g economic terms or models are incapable of charting the activity or impact of the ever-expanding activities of transnational corporations and financial institutions. Lack of a body of law to govern relations between transnational entities and national governments makes the operating environment uncertain.

Directly related to the economic transformation is the technological revolution. One of the biggest questions yet to be answered is how to reconcile the increasing disparity between expanding technological capability and the capacity of society to adjust to it and capitalize on its potential.

The participants noted one other area in which the world is witnessing a fundamental change—the end of the post-World War II bipolar system. With the end of that era also comes a shift in the definition of global power from simple military might to economic strength. However, many participants cautioned that one should not assume military power has been replaced by economic power.

Institutional Capabilities

The United Nations has traditionally been handed many of the world's most insoluble problems, and the five listed above are no exception. While the participants identified characteristics of the United Nations that make it a less than optimal forum for solving those problems, the world lacks any better alternative. Given the recent successes of the United Nations in defusing regional conflicts such as the Iran-Iraq war and a generally more positive world attitude toward the institution, participants agreed that the outlook for the United Nations to effectively handle traditional security concerns has improved somewhat.

The prospects are presently not as bright for dealing with new security issues. The coming decade is a crucial one, not just for the United Nations, but the entire world system. The problems emerg-

ing, which we are just beginning to identify and understand, cannot be contained within national boundaries and are not prone to control either intranationally or internationally by governments. Yet the world political system is a nation-state system and it must attempt to cope with them. Our existing institutions are required to continue the struggle toward resolving the traditional concerns of the world—concerns such as disarmament, development, and human rights—as well as provide leadership and vision in confronting the new and profound changes ahead. This can only take place when world leaders recognize that we are entering a new era and choose to develop an agenda that ensures that peaceful change is possible.

Participants

Conference Chairman
Richard H. Stanley, President, The Stanley Foundation

Rapporteurs
David J. Doerge, Vice President, The Stanley Foundation
Jeffrey G. Martin, Vice President, The Stanley Foundation

Participants
Martti Ahtisaari, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, United Nations

Maurice Bertrand, Special Fellow, United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Otto Borch, Danish Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Dick Clark, Senior Fellow, Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies

Alexei I. Glukhov, Vice Deputy of Humanitarian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Ignac Golob, Head of the Delegation, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Yugoslavia

Peter Hansen, Executive Director, United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations

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Viktor L. Issraelyan, Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Professor and Consultant, Diplomatic Academy, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Tomohiko Kobayashi, Special Economic Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan

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Janez Stanovnik, President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, Yugoslavia

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Ruediger von Wechmar, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Kingdom

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Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Participants attended as individuals rather than as representatives of their governments or organizations.

Opening Remarks

Richard H. Stanley
President, The Stanley Foundation

This conference convenes at a time of great opportunity for progress toward global peace, security, freedom, and justice. We have selected the topic, "Agenda for the 1990s," because the time is right to talk about the opportunities and challenges facing the United Nations and the world community in the last decade of this century.

These new opportunities and challenges arise from changing world perceptions and realities. The world political system is evolving from bipolarity to multipolarity. The high cost and limited effectiveness of military systems are increasingly apparent. Global communication and information technology is becoming faster and cheaper to acquire. Economic interdependence is

Richard Stanley chaired the off-the-record discussion.

growing. The ability of national governments to control their economic future is seriously eroded, and the vital relationship between economic and social progress and lasting peace and security is increasingly recognized. No longer is it realistic for even the most powerful nations to premise their foreign policies on their unilateral abilities to achieve any objective anywhere. It is encouraging to me that the superpowers appear to be increasingly aware of today's changing circumstances.

These new world perceptions and realities are leading toward an era in which multilateral diplomacy is much more central, an era in which effective multilateral institutions are urgently important. However, because of its design, disuse, and abuse, the United Nations is not sufficiently equipped to meet the new opportunities and challenges. Our task at this conference is to explore how to shape and use the United Nations to meet the needs of the 1990s and to consider the scope and requirements of the even greater challenges beyond.

Emerging Superpower Interest

In the last year or two, the superpowers have shown new interest in the United Nations. Much attention focused on the initiatives of the Soviet Union. General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's September 1987 article in *Pravda* envisioned the United Nations playing a prominent role in a "comprehensive system of international security." That prompted Soviet sponsorship of UN resolutions articulating a vision of such a system. There have been significant shifts in Soviet policy toward the United Nations, most notably in paying back dues for peacekeeping operations and in a changing stance regarding international civil service for Soviet citizens.

The United States has also found more utility in the United Nations recently. US and Soviet diplomats working with and through representatives of Afghanistan and Pakistan completed an agreement for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. The agreement was negotiated with the help of UN mediation, and the United Nations is playing a key role in the monitoring of the transition in that war-beleaguered country. The United States has also pursued through the Security Council an end to the Iran/Iraq war, working primarily with the four other permanent members.

Why this new interest by the superpowers? I believe it stems from recognition that wise use of the United Nations can effectively serve their national interests in a changing world. This illustrates the reality of the emerging multipolar world in which more than one defi-

nition of national power is recognized and in which multilateral institutions assume greater importance.

Limits of Military Power

The world is moving away from a situation in which military power—particularly strategic nuclear forces—is the primary determinant in establishing superpower status. That was a basically bipolar world with the United States and Soviet Union at the centers.

Without question the massive nuclear forces and the awesome conventional capabilities of the United States and Soviet Union make those countries military giants on the world stage. Neither country can be trifled with, but over the last two decades both countries have learned hard lessons about the high cost and limited utility of their military muscle.

One cost is economic. Concentration on building up huge military forces has been a major factor limiting economic development in the Soviet Union. Likewise, while the United States has channeled resources into its military forces and exotic new weaponry, other countries have grabbed huge shares of the world market for consumer products. Producing and selling usable products have catapulted Japan and Western Europe into rivals with the United States for economic primacy in the world.

Nuclear weapons are unusable, and massive conventional arsenals have limited military value as well. In Vietnam and Afghanistan, the United States and Soviet Union found their military might insufficient to overcome a determined enemy. They have also discovered that the all-or-nothing nature of nuclear weapons leaves them with no value in achieving lasting solutions in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Kampuchea, Central America, Southern Africa, the Horn of Africa, or any number of other places in which the superpowers have declared themselves to have a special interest. To be sure, either country probably has sufficient conventional power to be able to prevail against foes such as the Vietnamese or the Afghan resistance if all of its forces were brought to bear. But in those instances and most likely in many others, the cost of using that force was prohibitive. In sum, military strength is no longer highly effective in achieving national political, economic, or even military goals.

Recognizing these facts, the two superpowers have undertaken serious negotiations aimed at reducing their arsenals. The Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty (INF) is already in force. The prospect of a strategic nuclear force reduction is real. The possibility also exists for negotiations toward reduction of conventional force levels.

In the past, military power has been thought of as the guarantor of national security. If that is less true now, what is to take its place? I believe the search for an answer to that question has led Soviet leaders to look hard at the security system outlined in the UN Charter and to suggest that it offers the elements of a new national security system suited to the emerging multipolar world. Thus we have the new support for peacekeeping operations and suggestions that the Military Staff Committee be revived.

While it is constructive to look at Chapters Six and Seven of the Charter, which include some key principles that can assist in establishing peace and security, I believe it is a mistake to think that the security system laid out in 1945 can work today. After all, the conceptual core of that system is based on unanimous agreement among the five permanent members of the Security Council on peace and security issues. That has not been a reliable concept during the past forty-three years, nor is it today.

Realization that military power has limited value does require that thought be given to other means of establishing and maintaining peace and security. The UN Charter contains useful principles. However, the machinery has limitations and is rusty from infrequent use. While it should be used as effectively as possible, a major overhaul is a necessary part of a long-term answer to the problem.

World Economy and Development

There are similarities, but also some differences, in the evolution of the world economic situation. In the past four decades the economic map of the world has changed from having one predominant economic power, the United States, to a situation in which there are two more reasonably comparable economic power centers, Japan and Western Europe. The Soviet Union leads a bloc of socialist countries which in comparison to the leading Western countries is still behind economically, but which is relatively much stronger than forty years ago. There are also emerging economic powers among the so-called Third World countries. The economic scene has shifted from near unipolarity to a clear case of multipolarity.

Interdependence among the major Western countries is a reality, but its depth, scope, and significance are still not yet understood fully. Developing countries, especially the poorest among them, are still heavily dependent on others, but it is clear that there are political, economic, and moral consequences involved in ignoring their plight. The socialist countries are reviewing their vision of how to organize and manage their national economies, and there is new in-

terest on their part in becoming more integrated into the rest of the world economy.

This set of circumstances leaves a variety of economic issues which need to be addressed. The world needs better policy coordination and management of the interdependence that already exists. Massive trade imbalances and monetary instability are evidence that there is much room for improvement. Development problems cry out for attention. Crushing debt burdens, chronically unstable commodity prices, and desperate poverty illustrate the substantial challenge in this area. Further integration of the socialist countries into the global economy will place new demands on the world economic community and institutions.

The framers of the multilateral institutions set up after World War II established the Bretton Woods institutions to deal primarily with management and adjustment issues. Specialized agencies were to operate in their own domains, and the United Nations was, in the words of Chapter Nine, to "promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development." The Charter envisioned the General Assembly and especially the Economic and Social Council making recommendations for the coordination of policies and activities of the specialized agencies.

This vision has never become reality. Today, ad hoc arrangements such as the Group of 7 have far more to do with economic management and adjustment questions than do the Bretton Woods institutions. Much of the economic activity in the world is beyond the control of national governments and the operations of commercial and nongovernmental entities is inadequately accounted for in intergovernmental circles. The specialized agencies operate very independently—some effectively, others less so—but often duplicate each other's efforts. Twenty years ago the General Assembly embarked on an attempt to address problems of inequity with the creation of a New International Economic Order. But the Group of 77 in the United Nations has found its political majority ineffective in imposing a new economic order. In the General Assembly all nations have an equal vote, but that does not reflect the reality of economic and political power in the world.

As in the peace and security area, the economic challenges of the remainder of the twentieth century require international cooperation facilitated in part by effective multilateral institutions. The UN system has parts which make a contribution, but overall it is inadequately prepared and insufficiently designed to meet the long-term requirements.

Social Problems

The world has long seen the need for expansion of human rights, for cultural preservation, for treatment and eradication of diseases, for promotion of educational opportunity, and for many other missions. International cooperative efforts to these ends were assigned to the United Nations and some of the specialized agencies. Indeed, many successes have been recorded. But that has not diminished the agenda. New challenges such as AIDS need to be met. Desertification threatens whole segments of human populations. Most of the world's people lack guarantees of basic political freedoms.

Beyond that, whole new sets of issues generally ascribed to the category of "global commons" present new challenges. These involve questions which clearly are beyond national control such as resource depletion, pollution, global warming due to the greenhouse effect, shifts in demographic composition, and the like. The need for an effective international response is apparent. The current set of multilateral institutions does not assure effective action.

Short- and Long-Term Requirements

Our challenge this week is to focus on what is ahead. As we approach the 1990s, we need to make the best of what we have while we seriously consider more fundamental changes for the future.

The world will continue to become more multipolar politically, economically, and militarily. While the major powers and superpowers will certainly command more attention than others, there are more centers of power, the defining characteristics of national power are broadening, and powerful nonstate actors are increasingly important. In this more multipolar world, the need for effective multilateral diplomacy and institutions is ever more apparent.

At present the United Nations is not sufficiently equipped to meet the upcoming opportunities and challenges. There has been too little effective institution building. It has been neglected by many of its members. It has been abused by some. It has real and significant structural deficiencies which limit its effectiveness. These lie most importantly in the Security Council which unrealistically requires major power agreement to function as designed, and in the General Assembly where there is an equally unrealistic assumption that all nations should be represented equally. The structural problems of the organization are not prone to short-term solution. On the other hand, those problems which stem from disuse or abuse by member nations have relatively more potential for alleviation in the near term.

Addressing these problems is not strictly the responsibility or province of the major powers. However, the big powers must provide leadership if effective actions to strengthen the United Nations and other multilateral institutions are to be implemented. There is a favorable climate developing now that would permit cooperative action.

Surely the thawing of the cold war is one of the major developments of the late 1980s and perhaps of the remainder of this century. Last December General Secretary Gorbachev visited Washington and joined President Ronald Reagan in signing the INF Treaty. In May President Reagan went to Moscow and engaged in serious negotiations on issues ranging from strategic nuclear forces to regional trouble spots to human rights. Two weeks ago the Soviet Communist Party Conference endorsed bold proposals for economic and political reforms. That same week, Mary Jo and I hosted three Soviet guests who were participating in the American/Soviet Walk, part of which went through eastern Iowa. Citizen exchanges and trade relations between East and West are multiplying rapidly.

Using the warmer relationship between East and West to facilitate the strengthening of multilateral institutions for the 1990s should be a priority action item for the leaders of the major powers. It should be a subject of serious discussion and negotiation between them. Those discussions, however, must also involve prominent figures from representative developing countries, because those nations are an essential part of strengthened or reformulated institutions. There have been encouraging signs of moderation from many of those countries in recent years, increasing hope that they will be constructive participants in such talks.

In our discussions this week, we need to look at an agenda for the United Nations for the 1990s that makes the best possible use of the institution that we have. How can this organization, flawed as it is, be employed more effectively in meeting the needs of a world which is evolving toward multipolarity and interdependence? At the same time we must begin thinking about a revised, or new, generation of multilateral institutions better designed to reflect world realities and the imperatives of a more just, free, peaceful, and secure world.

International Agenda for the 1990s

Introduction

The world is in an era of profound change. It is impossible to begin to predict how the world will look in the future. Enormous new challenges will confront the international system in coming years, and the current post-World War II institutions are inadequate to meet them. Yet these institutions are the only ones the world has. It is difficult to contemplate replacing political, economic, and social institutions when the terms that are normally used to describe the phenomena they address are insufficient for the coming age. Recognition of the fundamental nature of change, identification of the primary areas affected, and discussion of the direction of change are major contributions of this conference. As one participant put it, "one aspect of major change is intellectual honesty about what is happening in the world. We are on the verge of a better realization of the possibility of what can be done."

Recent events have made it clear that the United Nations has not outlived its utility. Changing policies by some member states have made it possible for the United Nations to facilitate the lessening of tensions in regional conflicts such as Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq, and Namibia-Angola. Participants at this conference saw a fairly high probability that this peacemaking role for the United Nations could be continued and enhanced in coming years. Perhaps even more important, there is an urgent need to cope with new threats to humankind, to define the terms in which changing world economic activity is described, and to promulgate international understandings that promote peaceful change. The world's political and economic institutions are poorly prepared for these latter tasks. World leaders, whether in or outside of government, must give priority attention to the emerging phenomena and to creative responses to the concerns they raise.

The rapporteurs prepared this report following the conference. It contains their interpretation of the proceedings and is not merely a descriptive, chronological account. Participants neither reviewed nor approved the report. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

Awakening to Global Change

All agreed that fundamental changes are occurring. Participants differed on the pace of change, the interpretation of observable trends, and the anticipated impact in both the near and long term. There was agreement that these changes, as fundamental and historically significant as they may be, should be viewed as a process, and not in terms of specific events as in marking the end of one era and the beginning of another. Emerging from the conference discussion were five general areas where fundamental global change has taken place, is taking place, and will continue to take place:

1. Security
2. Global commons
3. Economics transformation
4. Technological revolution
5. Post-World War II bipolar system

Security

Perceptions of security and threats against it have altered little since 1945. Security systems and alliances are still set up to protect national borders from aggression by hostile states. Yet while nuclear arsenals and powerful conventional weapons have made major wars (like World War II) increasingly unlikely and while superpower wars are unthinkable, the world has done little to adjust its thinking about security. Are there changes in the nature of threats to global security? The participants said yes. They identified many emerging threats to security, including: drug-related threats; low-intensity warfare; terrorism; increasing conventional armament, especially in the South; and domestic rather than external aggression. The emergence of these new faces of threat to security, coupled with the potential diminution of traditional threats through negotiations and arms control, call into serious question the utility of systems and strategies designed in the post-World War II cold war era.

Perhaps the most significant change in security considerations, and the one that received the most discussion, relates to demographic and development issues. Mushrooming population and growing poverty, along with other economic and social issues, will create grave instability in the majority of the world's population. Therefore, a new and powerful threat to global security will come not from East or West but from the South. Migration, always something of a problem, will become a nightmare as the number of refugees may grow to over one hundred million in the years to come. World population will increase by one billion by the year 2000 and nine hundred million of that will be in the South. One participant implored: "The world is more threatened by demographic problems

than by war . . . The Palestinian-Israeli war kills one thousand a year, poverty kills a million children . . . Are we blind to see the war in the Middle East and not to see that half the world is trying to escape to the North?"

Global Commons

Concerns about environmental problems are not new. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* warned of environmental threats from agricultural chemicals twenty-six years ago. What is different is the growing awareness that the world is a complex and interlinked system and that ecological problems are not confined to countries or regions. What is new is that mankind is in danger of fouling the global commons to the extent that survival is in jeopardy. Acid rain, depletion of the ozone layer, desertification, the greenhouse effect, destruction of rain forests, and ocean pollution are sobering examples of growing threats to global survival. The world has been slow to respond. Certainly the efforts of individual states and regions, like cleaning the Mediterranean Sea, serve as models of what can be done. Destruction of the global commons was not at issue forty years ago. Today it is not only a major risk that must receive attention, but it also demonstrates a need for changes in long-held views on state needs versus global needs concerning such issues as: population, property rights, and control of wealth.

Economic Transformation

Most participants viewed the current changes in global economics as being comparable to those brought on by the industrial revolution. The growth in size and power of nonstate economic actors such as transnational corporations (TNCs) and financial institutions has transnationalized global economics. As one example, 40 percent of international trade is intrafirm trade. Services like banking, insurance, communications, transportation, hotels, etc., now represent 50-60 percent of all new investment with manufacturing investment becoming a lesser share. Global economic activity is increasingly conducted by private actors beyond the reach of national governments to regulate their global activity. There is a near-total vacuum in international law and international institutions capable of dealing with this enormously important and fundamental global change. As one participant noted, "economics does not obey international law."

On a related question, most participants agreed that there was essentially no management of the global economy at a macro-level and that such management was very unlikely, if not impossible. Several noted that some degree of economic management is occur-

ring at a sectorial level but still agreed that nobody has a total picture of the global economy.

Another aspect of this transformation in the global economy is that, despite the enormous wealth generated in the West, the majority of the world has not benefited. Unfortunately this disparity threatens to worsen. As noted at the conference, those in poverty in the South are estimated at 1.1 billion in 1985, and they are projected to increase to 2.0 billion by the year 2000. The security implications have already been discussed, but poverty on this scale is a change of global proportion that demands attention for political and economic, as well as humanitarian reasons.

Technological Revolution

Technology developments in recent years—particularly in electronics and communications—have been startling. They are an inseparable part of the economic transformation. If production machinery was the driving force of the industrial revolution then technological progress is the engine of current economic change.

This revolution in technology has been described as both a boon and a threat. The pace of change in technology leaves little time for consideration of appropriate application or potential impact. It has raised both expectations and the potential for wealth creation. In some areas these have been fulfilled; in others expectations are unmet, development efforts have been derailed, and the promise of new technologies has been found hollow.

The technological revolution has brought the world instant communication and information, the rise of the service economy, increased production with lower employment, resulting changes in employment patterns, and changes in resource and energy demands. At the same time, the world will need 1.5 billion new jobs by the year 2000. With continuing development and commercial application of significant technologies, the world must reconcile the dichotomy of increasing technological capability and increasingly disparate benefits from it.

End of an Era

The bipolar, post-World War II era is coming to an end. Participants differed on the speed with which this process would unfold but concurred this is a change of major global significance.

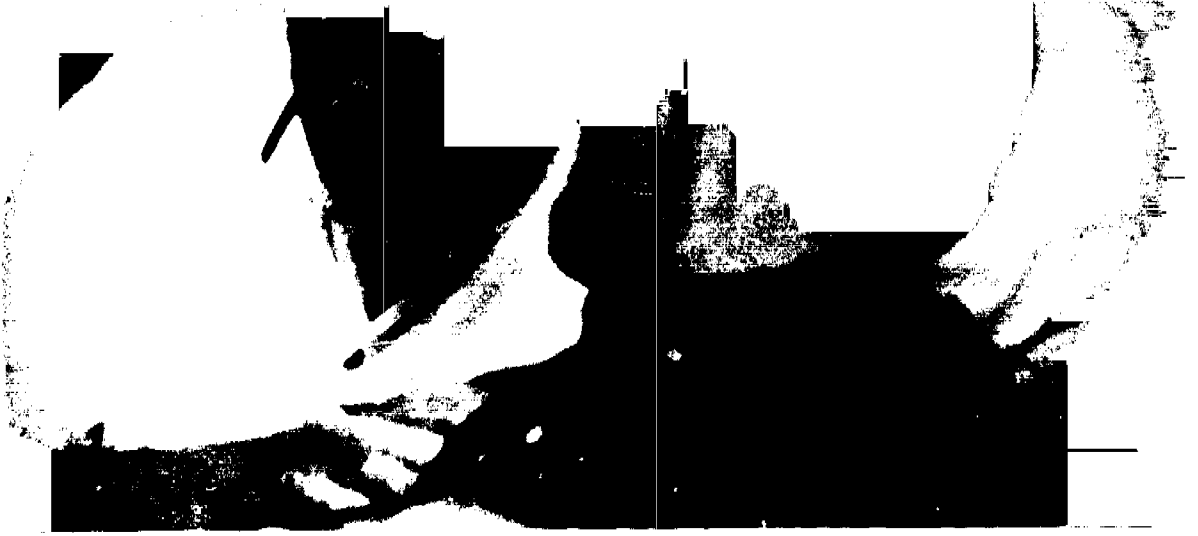
One factor affecting this change is that the definition of global power is shifting from the military toward the economic. Some participants thought that this shift is well along, illustrated by one remark that "the other real superpower then is Japan not the

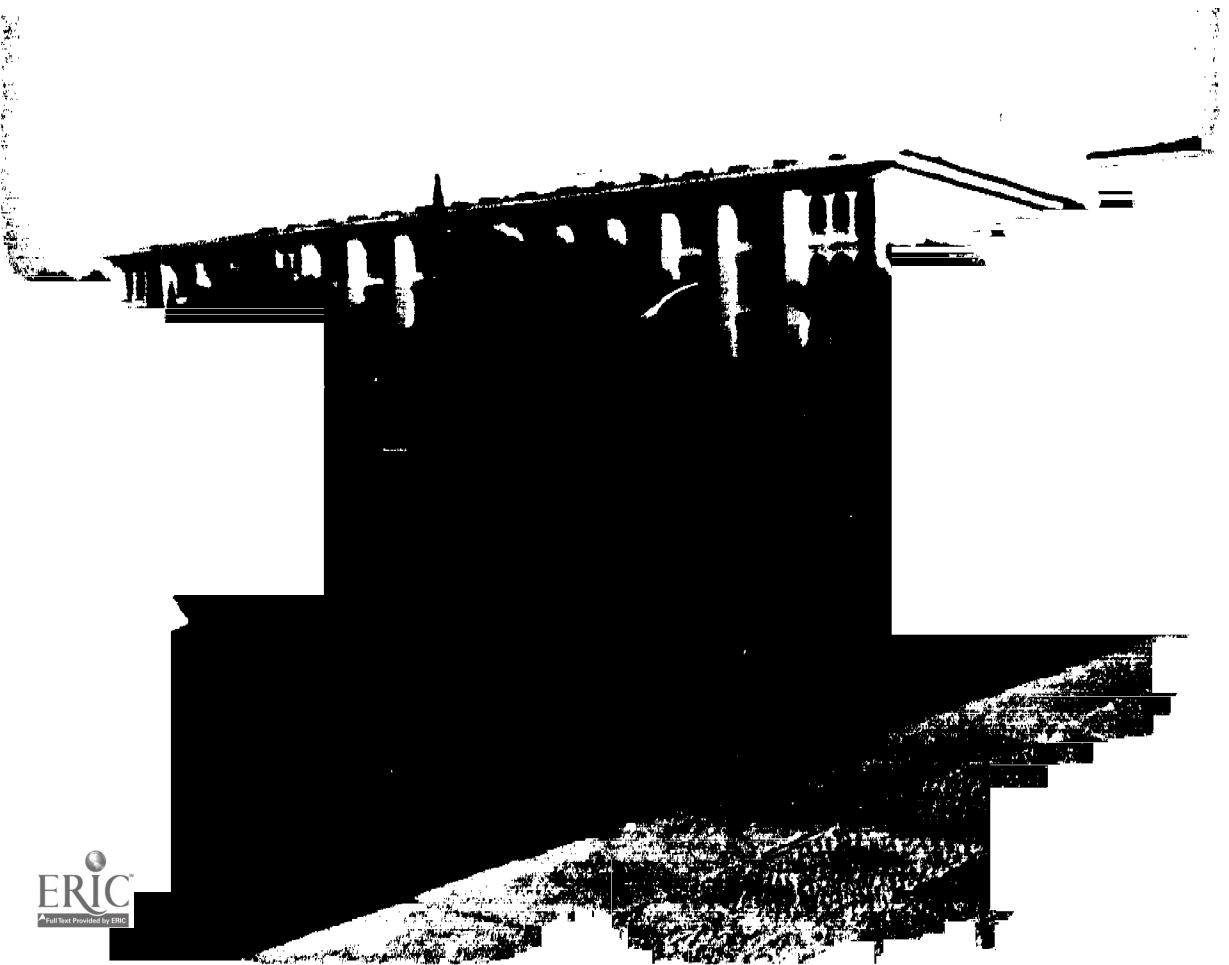
Soviet Union." While no one disagreed that global power was shifting significantly to the economic, several stated that military power is alive and well for now and into the future, thus continuing to ensure superpower status for the United States and the Soviet Union.

Evidence of the end of the post-World War II era was further provided by several participants who observed that the Soviet Union and the United States are just now becoming preoccupied with regenerating their power. They noted that the Soviets are making significant changes both domestically and internationally which will be of global importance. The Soviets seem to be attempting to stabilize political and security situations internationally, including most importantly improving relations with the United States, giving evidence that they sense the real power of the future is economic. The Soviet Union seems very keen on being integrated into the global economy, and if removing the threat posed to the West, particularly Europe, by its military strength is necessary, then that would be, and is being, done. Concurrently, the United States has welcomed improved relations with the Soviet Union, including progress on arms control negotiations. A new administration will influence the emphasis that the United States places on its economic regeneration.

Participants also discussed the prospects for growing multipolarity and diffusion of power away from the superpowers. Most agreed that there was evidence of such a shift, but some noted that multipolarity has historically referred to roles of nation-states and the rise of nonstate actors like TNCs with annual sales higher than many nations' GNPs makes the degree and significance of this trend very cloudy at best.

Several participants cautioned that military power will not go away or simply be replaced by economic power and that while these changes regarding the end of an era and the shift toward economic power are real, they will need to be mixed with the projection of traditional state power. There was also agreement that while the changing global political situation holds many opportunities, one should avoid euphoria over these developments. Some noted that the entry of the Soviets into the global economy may have destabilizing effects and create new kinds of competition. Others pointed out that it might be easy to overemphasize the past impact of East-West competition on the global situation.





Brioni's island setting served as a backdrop for relaxing social times and casual conversation.

Unavoidable Challenges of the Future

Change in the world is not new. What is new is that the fundamental and massive nature of the global changes now underway directly challenge the traditional ways of adapting to change. A requisite first step in meeting this new challenge is a change in perspective and a clear understanding of what is needed to deal with these global trends. If the world is in the throes of change and the systems and processes designed for the era are now increasingly obsolete, what new perceptions and concepts are needed to deal with this metamorphosis?

Categories, Terms, and Models. Nothing is more basic than the terms used to describe, classify, and measure the world and its processes. Yet the changes described here have rendered, as one participant noted, "the categories through which we view the world increasingly irrelevant." Participants agreed that across a wide range of issues the traditional terms, indicators, measurements, and categories simply are becoming less useful in describing, analyzing, or measuring the world. One example cited was that the nature of aggression has changed from massive to low-intensity and that terrorism and such things as drug-related violence are on the rise as nonstate security threats. This and other developments have left the world community confused about how to define the term "war" as evidenced by the constant internal debate over the issue when it concerns US involvement. Another glaring example is how the global economy is defined and measured. The transnationalization of the economy has led, according to several participants, to confusion over the concept of money supply, investment, and productivity. Trade is no longer only trade between nations as war is no longer only war between nations.

Closely related to this problem of terms and categories is the problem of creating new models for the economy, especially new development models. Several participants pointed out that current macroeconomic models are designed as closed systems even though the world is increasingly an open system. There was agreement that new, sustainable, nonexploitive development models, avoiding dependence on quick fixes of technology were needed. This makes the development of new, more accurate indicators a high priority as they would be necessary for use in these new models.

Two Billion Poor People. Two billion people living below the poverty level by the year 2000 in mostly urban areas in the South is a nightmare for the world. Demographics and development will not remain on the "back-burner" of global consciousness where they

have been in the past. What makes them a challenge is the new perspective they will require in the future. As the conferees outlined, migration and underdevelopment are likely to become security issues as opposed to only humanitarian and assistance issues. The issues are not new, but the sheer magnitude of poverty, population, development deficiencies, migration, and other problems certify the new and unique aspect of this massive challenge.

Communication and Leadership. Given the fundamental nature of global change the question was raised as to how to convince the world of the significance of what is occurring. How does one make governments see and hear when they choose to be blind and deaf; how does one make them consider the future and not just the next step; how does one motivate apathetic populations in the North and desperate people in the South? This was not put forward as a call for sounding alarms but only to point out the disparity between what needs communicating and the lack of a way to do it.

The problem of communicating these issues is closely related to the conference discussion concerning the importance of leadership. Most felt that the changing world would require innovative and visionary leadership to meet the challenges of the future. The challenge comes in finding that leadership. There was consensus on the need for national and international leadership but not much on how it might be developed. In any case accurate accounting, or understanding of the "big picture," is still required for issue identification and agenda setting.

"Politics is always timing," as one participant noted. Mikhail Gorbachev could not have succeeded in gaining control until the Soviet Union was ready to change. Now that the world is undergoing significant change, perhaps the timing will encourage the forms of leadership necessary to meet the challenges that lie ahead; then again, perhaps not.

Institutional Capabilities

If the new challenges are to be met, it will be necessary to have well-equipped institutions capable of facilitating peaceful change. Do those institutions exist today? In the past decade or so international organizations in general and the United Nations in particular have had waning support. Experts in the field have discussed a "crisis of multilateralism." One participant suggested that some of the dwindling support for the United Nations by its members may stem from an, as yet, unarticulated sense that they, as nation-states and their international institutions, are losing touch with the coming challenges and with the changing reality of the world.

Participants identified a number of, what the rapporteurs have chosen to call, constitutional characteristics of the United Nations which make it a less than optimal forum for dealing with the emerging world problems but, if used well, one which is still useful. These help generate what is now a quite widely agreed list of institutional problems but also suggest how the United Nations can still make a positive contribution.

Constitutional Characteristics

The United Nations is quite obviously a state-oriented organization—an association of member nation-states. (In fact, one participant said a more descriptive name for it would be "united states" since it draws together nation-states more than nations of the world.) In a world which decreasingly functions along nation-state lines, the institution's relevance is automatically called into question. If, after all, nation-states are gradually becoming less able to regulate or control world activities, it stands to reason that their association will not routinely be in the mainstream.

A second characteristic of the United Nations which applies especially to the General Assembly and most of its subsidiary organs is the principle of one-nation/one-vote. While this is a legal concept of considerable importance and one which most participants would not discard, it makes the organization unrepresentative of the distribution of power in the world. That can contribute to a situation where the least powerful and often least directly interested nations may stand in the way of a negotiated agreement between the most powerful and most directly interested.

That suggests a third constitutional characteristic of the United Nations—again, applying particularly to the General Assembly—namely, that it has come to function more as a world parliament for the enactment of resolutions with no chance of enforcement than as a negotiating forum for the resolving of differences among nations. Several participants suggested that this problem can actually make real world situations worse rather than better. For example, resolutions on a New International Economic Order (NIEO) undoubtedly reflected the views of the majority of the nations of the world. But the NIEO is a concept which, most economists agree, made little economic sense, and, in any event, was antithetical to powerful interests whose support was needed for its implementation. Years spent demanding its implementation may have been wasted energy which could have been better spent on trying to advance world economic analysis and creating new models for development. Likewise, many participants noted that the infamous Zionism/racism resolution even to this day makes it much more difficult for the

United Nations to play a constructive role in the Arab/Israeli conflict.

A fourth limiting constitutional characteristic of the United Nations relates to another of its major organs, the Security Council. The Charter limits the role of the Security Council to acts of aggression across borders. This severely limits the ability of the council to respond to new types of security threats such as intrastate fighting supported by outside forces or terrorism. It also means that the council specifically does not deal with the kinds of security threats which are emerging from the economic, environmental, and demographic global changes which are now taking place. In fact, none of the United Nations central organizations have those kinds of security threats on their agenda. This is a major shortcoming because, as one participant said, "We have institutions to deal with war. But war isn't the problem, security is."

On the positive side of the ledger, one of the constitutional char-

Participants' wide-ranging experiences brought multiple perspectives to the deliberations.

acteristics of the United Nations has been its ability to adapt to circumstances not anticipated by the Charter writers. The best examples probably reside in the security area. The innovation of peacekeeping forces is frequently cited as a major contributor to the ending of hostilities. Additionally, the role of the Secretary-General as a mediator in conflicts was not envisioned in the Charter, but over the years has become increasingly more important. Developments in that area continue to unfold as the current Secretary-General and his staff have played key roles in bringing about a cease-fire in the Iran/Iraq War and in negotiating an agreement to withdraw Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

A sixth constitutional characteristic of the United Nations is that it has provided a forum for calling attention to some global problems. International conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations have focused on the international aspects of such problems as the environment, population, and the status of women. Unfortunately, the programs of action developed at those conferences have often met with limited, if any, success.

Finally, the nearly universal membership in the organization by nation-states is important. It suggests that the United Nations is clearly one of the places to confront problems that are truly global in proportion and require pluralistic consideration.

Problems and Strengths

The negative characteristics of the organization make possible what the participants described as its major weaknesses, and the positive attributes help suggest strengths that could be built upon in forging a role for the United Nations in the 1990s.

Leadership. Lack of leadership is one of the major faults found in the organization. It is often noted that the process for selecting a Secretary-General almost guarantees that the person will not be a strong leader for the organization. This is because members—particularly the permanent members of the Security Council—have traditionally not been interested in having a strong Secretary-General who might challenge their unbridled pursuit of short-term interests. Recent shifts in Soviet policy and the advent of a new US administration gave some participants hope that the process for selecting a Secretary-General could be improved.

However, it would be a grave error to consider leadership as strictly a function of the Secretary-General. Member states should also be expected to provide leadership because the United Nations is a tool which members must use if it is to be effective. Some partic-

ipants think leadership from the United States and the Soviet Union is indispensable for the foreseeable future. Others suggested that the middle powers, who more than the largest nations have a need for the United Nations, should take a larger role in providing leadership. (Despite recent Soviet suggestions that the United Nations should play a major role in world security, it was noted by some participants that objectively the largest powers have the least need to pursue their interests through the organization.) However, the middle powers have not yet exerted as much influence as most people think they are capable of bringing.

Lack of Focus on Selected Goals. One participant noted that a recently published encyclopedia lists 12,480 global problems, and he said that the United Nations cannot say no to any of them. Member nations bring virtually any concern they have to the United Nations and it is added to the agenda of the General Assembly. Each of these items is "dealt with" in a resolution each year though it is likely that nothing will happen as a result of the resolution. Additionally, it is likely that the Secretariat will be asked to prepare a report on the subject. However, there are too many reports requested, many poorly qualified Secretariat officials, and inadequate resources, combining to result in trivial reports on serious issues.

Participants said that the United Nations urgently needs to set priorities and make decisions about where the organization can contribute effectively. This will require discipline by the members and the Secretariat.

Dysfunctional Bureaucracy. Numerous studies have said that the UN bureaucracy is too big and produces too little. This is in part because it is given too many silly tasks, but it is also a function of having virtually no personnel policy. The biggest personnel problem, it was noted by many participants, is that member states interfere in the hiring and placement of their nationals. This practice severely restricts the kind of executive action that could improve efficiency by moving personnel to places where they are most effective. However, it was also suggested that this problem is somewhat overplayed. Senior level Secretariat officials suffer from what one participant called "governmentitis"—a paralyzing affliction that causes them to anticipate negative government reactions. He said that some officials have overcome the "disease," defied governments, and lived to tell about it.

Negative Image. Vitriolic debate in the General Assembly and Security Council, it was suggested, has tarnished the United Nations' image as a place where disputes can be resolved. Some participants suggested that the tone of the debate and the resolutions

passed by the General Assembly have been too focused on expressing anger or on scoring debate points. A more moderate tone to the debate might contribute to an image of the United Nations as a more hospitable place for conducting serious negotiations.

Aging. It was suggested that the best ideas which the United Nations has developed are now quite old. Ideas such as peacekeeping and expanding the implied Article 99 powers of the Secretary-General go back to the 1950s. The most productive international conferences which focused attention on social problems were staged in the late 1960s or early 1970s. The United Nations, it was said, needs to demonstrate vitality by tackling new issues effectively.

Quality Civil Servants. There was consensus that in spite of the bureaucratic problems facing the organization, there are still many dedicated international civil servants doing good work at the United Nations. These are often people who have persevered in the face of fierce criticism and who are still committed to the ideals represented by the United Nations. They are an asset upon which to build.

Creation of International Law. The United Nations has proven itself to be a useful instrument for establishing international law. Most recently, the Law of the Sea Treaty was completed in the UN context. The problems in this area, however, center on the limited role of nations in some new areas and on the obstacles to serious negotiations in the United Nations.

Existence. The mere existence of the United Nations means that it is there for nations to turn to when other avenues for pursuing their interests have failed. That is a less than optimum role for the organization. But there is more than a little utility in having an institution which, for example, is able at long last to help end the Iran/Iraq War and which can be a forum for protesting the world's injustice.

Discussion of an international agenda for the 1990s sparked animated exchanges during conference sessions as well as breaks. (Photos opposite page.)

The United Nations' Role and Prospects for Change

In the absence of any better alternative, participants agreed that the United Nations will continue to muddle through. If there is to be reform sufficient to meet the challenges of the changing world, it will have to come from renewed interest by national and nongovernmental leaders because, as one participant said, "The United Nations is totally incapable of reforming itself."

Participants agreed that the outlook for the near-term future of the United Nations has improved compared to recent years. Renewed interest by the Soviet Union provides some of the fuel for that assessment. Additionally, the major Western powers, particularly the United States, may take a warmer view of the United Nations, especially if it can continue to help defuse regional conflicts. It will also help if the recent trends continue toward broadening human rights investigations and incorporating into economic discussions subjects of interest to Western nations, like entrepreneurship.

Participants also agreed that the United Nations is not well prepared to deal with the more long-term challenges presented by the changing shape of the world economy, continuing environmental degradation, and festering underdevelopment. These kind of issues present new security threats, but the world still really does not know how to talk about them, much less fashion solutions.

There was considerable disagreement about whether or not the changes which brighten the near-term future mark the beginning of a new era in which prospects for dealing with the long-term issues will improve. Some believed that current developments will foster greater attention and support for the United Nations, permitting it to continue to exist and evolve. Some hoped that significant reform of international institutions will be possible somewhere in the next decade. Others saw the need for significant reform but did not think the recent improvements stemmed from any recognition of the greater challenges ahead. In short, all agreed that there is an objective need for change to meet the long-term problems, but there is still much skepticism about whether the change will come.

Short-Term Role

The warming of the Soviet Union toward peacekeeping and the apparent desire of that superpower to disengage from regional conflicts that have concerned it raises the likelihood that the United Nations can perform more effectively in the near term. Some participants cautioned, however, that a warming of the cold war does not

necessarily mean that worldwide peace is about to break out. Likewise, even those who think the United States and Soviet Union are entering a major new era in their relationship do not think that a more secure world necessarily flows from that.

If the United Nations' best chance for performing more effectively in the short run is in the traditional peace and security area, participants suggested a number of measures to strengthen its capabilities:

- Peacekeeping capabilities should be improved. Primarily this involves providing adequate funding. However, some participants also thought more consideration should be given to creating a standing force that could intervene on short notice.
- Consideration should be given to reviving the Military Staff Committee. If there is more agreement among the permanent members of the Security Council to end regional conflicts, some participants reasoned that the Military Staff Committee could play a useful role. Additionally, this committee might also be instrumental in verification of arms agreements.
- Consideration should be given to restructuring the Secretary-General's office so that more staff is available to work on mediation. There should also be a unit that considers the economic aspects of imminent disputes, with the hope that more attention could be focused on prevention of conflict.
- Much more serious attention should be given to conventional arms control.
- The Secretary-General should make more use of fact-finding missions.
- The Secretary-General should continue to broaden the interpretation of his powers under Article 99.
- The Secretariat should further develop its early warning capabilities related to regional disputes.

Long-Term Role

If, as was asserted here, the coming decade will feature more economic competition and the rapid evolution of the world economy, the United Nations is poorly prepared to make a positive contribution. The role for international institutions in the economic and social areas, most participants agreed, is to help bring about peaceful change. It is also, one participant said, the traditional role of the state—to promote democracy and equity and to focus on long-term considerations. The United Nations' track record in this area is poor. It needs to become more successful. But if that is to happen, what are some of the tasks that it should perform?

Twenty high-ranking officials from the East and West and international experts met for a week-long examination of the challenge of a changing world and the role of the United Nations.

• The United Nations should be geared up to identify world problems. For example, it should be calling attention to the growing security threat posed by continuing poverty.

• New terms and models for global economic activity need to be defined. The United Nations could provide the analysis that helps describe such things as transnational activity which is not prone to discussion in such standard economic terms as "trade."

• In a similar vein, new measures need to be created for keeping track of economic activity. In service areas of the economy and in high technology areas like computer software, the need is especially apparent.

• The United Nations should be the place where rules of the road for new economic activity are negotiated. For example, transnational corporations and the nations in which they operate might function more comfortably if there were a body of law that offered more certainty to their operating environment.

• The United Nations could play a role in networking the efforts of nongovernmental entities which are working on problems with

global implications. For example, it was noted that numerous nongovernmental organizations and commercial concerns are working on desertification; however, their efforts are not very well linked.

- The Scientific Advisory Committee, a body that was used successfully in the 1950s, might be recomposed to focus on a specific global problem such as the greenhouse effect. If that were to happen. it should be convened at a high level, and only qualified scientists, not diplomats, should serve on the body.

Institution Building

In order for the United Nations to play any of these roles, there is a need for several factors: leadership, agreement on goals, sound organization, quality staff, and assurance of funding. Several ideas were advanced for strengthening some of these areas:

- Prospects for strong organizational leadership from the Secretary-General would be enhanced by improving the selection process. Several participants supported early discussions on the selection process and on what type of person is best suited for the job—the characteristics that are being sought. This would be followed by a search process. It was suggested that these matters should be an early agenda item for foreign ministers of the permanent members of the Security Council.
- Leadership is also needed from member states in setting priorities. Participants disagreed about the relative importance of leadership from the major powers or whether it is more likely and more effectively to come from the middle powers.
- A commission comprised of the heads of the largest specialized agencies should be created to integrate and coordinate the work of those agencies on economic and social problems and to provide a vision of the development of world trends. The members of the commission should have their first loyalty to the board and second to their agency.
- An economic security council on which nations participate according to their economic strength might be created as a forum for negotiation of international economic issues.
- Participation in negotiations should, as much as possible, be limited to those nations which have a direct interest in the issues being negotiated. Agreement among the principal nations concerned should not be held up by the relatively disinterested.
- A personnel policy for the Secretariat must be developed and enforced.
- The United Nations must have assurance that it will receive the funding it expects after a budget has been adopted and assessments levied. Some suggested that it might be prudent to lower the cap on assessments.

A Bridging Role

The participants at this conference came from varying backgrounds and often, by virtue of their occupations, looked at the issues discussed here from different perspectives. National and international civil servants are necessarily focused on day-to-day concerns. Scholars and nongovernmental observers often concentrate on broad trends and systemic change.

Often the holders of the competing perspectives undervalue their counterparts. Those who are concerned with taking concrete actions to implement policy in the next few weeks or months have little time for those who focus on sweeping change. Likewise, scholars and philosophers may dismiss near-term concerns as shortsightedness. Bridges between the two perspectives are needed, and the participants at this conference suggested a role for the United Nations that may help it be that kind of bridge.

Like changes in the ecosystem, changes in the world economic and political processes are hard to see on a day-to-day basis, but the fact that changes have taken place can be documented and common sense suggests that further changes are inevitable. The development of structure to support the new processes typically lags behind. It is not necessary to accept any one description of the future to know that preparation for change is prudent. Equipping the United Nations to play a role in monitoring, measuring, and describing the global changes that are underway is a concrete action that those charged with short-term responsibilities should be able to appreciate. It also acknowledges the validity of the assertion that change is occurring—an acknowledgement which the scholars are due and the world requires.

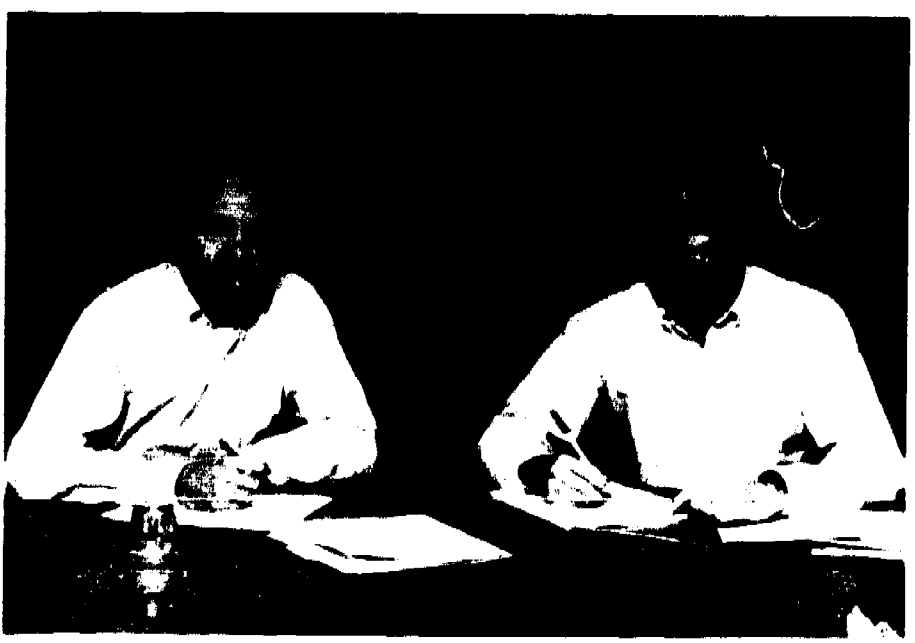
Conclusion

Developing an agenda for the last decade of this century requires recognition that the post-World War II era is ending. Just as there has been generational change in leadership in the Soviet Union, there is a need for a generational shift in thinking about global problems.

Many of the issues which have dominated the agenda for the past forty-three years remain: the threat of war, disarmament, development, human rights, etc. However, there are also new threats to security, concurrent economic and technological revolutions, and profound environmental threats which require attention and which, in many cases, make discussion of the old issues in traditional terms obsolete.

It has been often noted that historically wars between the major powers of the time have punctuated the end of an era. Those wars have been followed by the establishment of a new order, and in this century both new orders have included ambitious attempts at improving state-to-state relations through international organizations. The presence of nuclear weapons makes the old way of ending eras impossible to survive. It places additional demands on institutions of the current world order—to continue to address the traditional concerns while taking on the even greater challenge of facilitating evolution to a new era.

The participants at this conference agreed that the United Nations is fairly well-prepared to deal with some traditional security concerns. It is not now, however, well-equipped to make a serious contribution toward facilitating peaceful change. That problem needs urgent attention from national leaders and their counterparts outside of government. Preparing for the future is a short-term necessity.



Rapporteurs Jeff Martin and David Doerge

Chairman's Observations

The United Nations' "Agenda for the 1990s" must include those reforms and actions needed to enhance human progress in the midst of continuing and fundamental global changes. These changing circumstances, discussed knowledgeably by conference participants, include shifts in the nature of security issues, growing importance of preserving the global commons, internationalization of economic activity, new and more pervasive technologies, and a waning of the post-World War II bipolar era toward a greater diffusion of power, which is increasingly defined in economic terms. These changes stress and often exceed the competence of the nation-state; they are rendering international institutions obsolescent; and they are demanding more effective multilateral management of global problems.

During the course of the discussions, I sensed a renewed interest in, and opportunity for, the United Nations to become more effective as the universal multilateral institution. In recent months, the United Nations has had a number of successes. These draw attention to the institution, enhance its support, and reveal both its potential and its need for continuing reform and development.

The United Nations suffers from an excessively large mandate. It needs sharper focus. Its structure is imperfect and must be reformed. But perhaps most significant, its members have demonstrated too little commitment to the need for institution building and too little recognition that the United Nations can be no more effective than its members choose to make it.

It is in the peace and security area that the United Nations has had its most visible recent successes. Recognizing that these successes have been made possible in part by improved East-West relations, it is appropriate to explore what reforms in structure and procedure will allow continued successes even in times of greater tension. Further, the nature of peace and security threats is rapidly changing. Classic warfare across national boundaries, the threat envisioned by the founders of the United Nations, is a much smaller part of the total threat to peace and security than was the case forty years ago. An instructive and valid concept proposed by conference participants was that issues such as poverty and mushrooming populations will increasingly be the real security threats of the future.

The United Nations' economic and social activities are perhaps the greatest area of need for reform and focus. Current discussions

on realignment of structure and practice are far too timid. Particularly in these areas, the United Nations must more sharply prioritize its activities. Its role should be a more restricted one. Rather than trying to deal with all economic and social problems, the United Nations should address only those where it has comparative advantage and competence. One area of comparative advantage is derived from the universality of UN membership. This is a necessary base for developing global agendas, building consensus, and calling attention to global issues of increasing urgency. Universality gives the United Nations advantages in dealing with issues of democracy, including promotion of human rights and encouragement of justice and equity.

At the same time, it seems evident that a more representative approach to decision making will be more effective in prioritizing and focusing the work of the United Nations. Consideration should be given to using groups constituted formally or informally more nearly like the Security Council than like the General Assembly to provide leadership in economic and global commons issues. Regional approaches also offer promise on selected matters.

The agenda of the 1990s is both long and vital. Serious discussions on fundamental UN reform must continue. While it is unlikely that the United Nations will be reformed radically in the short term, it is certainly appropriate to begin thinking about a third generation of international institutions which will be needed for the future. All nations and peoples must exercise their collective responsibility for the future as well as with increased determination to be guided by long-term, rather than short-term, perspectives. They must give serious, long-term commitment to building and developing the international law and institutions needed for survival.

In our discussions in Brioni, I sensed a greater optimism and hope for building and using effective international institutions. May this be a source of renewed commitment and effort toward a world in which peace is secure and freedom and justice prevail.

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UN-Related Publications

Science and Technology for Development, Report of the Nineteenth United Nations Issues Conference. February 1988, 32 pp.

The United Nations and the Future of Internationalism, Report of the Twenty-second United Nations of the Next Decade Conference. June 1987, 32 pp.

Administrative and Budgetary Reform of the United Nations, Report of the Eighteenth United Nations Issues Conference. February 1987, 28 pp.

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