

Chapter 4

External Threat and Internal Security

4.1 The stability and well-being of a society are necessary prerequisites for domestic security. In reality, domestic security and external security are to some extent interdependent. In many cases, the greater the degree of domestic security, the less is the vulnerability to external threat. We have therefore looked at the question of internal problems and their possible links to external security threats in small states.

4.2 Internal strife can come from a variety of causes or situations, such as militant political contentions, secessionist ambitions, economic deprivation due to national disasters or government inability to cope with economic problems, the effects of influxes of migrant labour or of political refugees and major issues of human rights.

4.3 Small states do not differ significantly from larger Third World countries in the core social, political and economic demands of their populations. The needs and expectations of the citizens of the newly independent states often have a certain urgency about them. Faced with such demands and often unable to meet them, states have been known, in their search for order, to increase the level of coercion with possible consequences for the weakening of democratic institutions. This, regrettably, can happen more easily in very small states where governmental control is often far more pervasive than in larger entities.

4.4 Dissension, whatever its immediate causes, ultimately stems from the difficulties faced by governments in delivering political, social and economic benefits in such a way as to steadily enhance the quality of life, while satisfying the sense of order and of justice within the society. In our contemporary interdependent world much of this capacity for domestic cohesion and stability necessarily depends, at least in part, on a favourable international arena. It may well be that, for small states, the

immediate regional environment is the one which matters most, and if that environment is harmonious and sustaining, their vulnerability is considerably reduced.

4.5 There is plenty of evidence that the vulnerability of a small state is likely to increase when internal dissension is at such a level that it comes to the notice of other countries. In the current world of instant communication, that point is very quickly reached.

4.6 Moreover, the link between internal difficulties and external security threats has a chain effect. States which have domestic dissension are far more vulnerable to external interference and exploitation of those situations, and that in turn can escalate them to such a level as to facilitate overt external involvement. Grenada, Lesotho and Seychelles are examples. Breakdown within a small state can render it more susceptible to direct interference or intervention by a larger neighbour or a regional hegemonial state since there is usually no counter power in the international system to prevent this. Some examples of internal situations which could be used as an excuse for external interference are: persistent violations of human rights, the physical spill-over of domestic unrest or of refugees into the territory of a larger neighbour and the harbouring of politically active dissidents from a larger neighbour state.

4.7 On the other hand, political tensions in the external environment can exacerbate otherwise minor domestic problems. Thus, in recent years, the Cold War echoes in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean have heightened political dissension in Seychelles and deepened political divisions in Jamaica respectively. The international economic environment is also of great importance for the well-being of small states and the inhospitable global economic setting with which they have had to contend over the past decade has compounded their difficulties in establishing or maintaining domestic order.

4.8 It is also very relevant that we are in a phase of international history marked by vast and rapid changes at all levels of human activity, including important changes in technology and modes of organisation. All states, large and small, developed and developing, find difficulty in coping with them. But they pose almost inordinate challenges for the small.

4.9 A consciousness of the realities of the interaction between the domestic and international arenas has therefore underlined our examination of measures which could contribute to enhancing the security of small states.