

A new status quo?

"Our vital goal is to secure a stable supply of reasonably priced oil."
(...) This is why it is important to provide protection for more reasonable oil-producing nations, and to create circumstances in which they are rewarded for pumping oil."

"Why to Fight - And Why Not to" by Zbigniew Brzezinski in *Newsweek*, August 27 1990.

"There will always be some dissatisfaction in the distribution of the the world's territory because of historical grievances, changing economic needs, and the sentiment of minorities in areas of mixed population.. Any system of collective security which so stabilizes the territorial *status quo* that peaceful rectification is deemed impossible will be subjected eventually to attack by coalitions of the dissatisfied. Practical security, therefore, requires effective procedures for changing the *status quo* when justice or wise policy demands."

Quincy Wright, *A Study of War*, University of Chicago Press, Second Edition, Chicago 1965, p 1341.

The recent unanimous decision by the UN Security Council to impose economic sanctions on Iraq was historic.

But does it mean that a new international order, reflecting the fundamental aims of the UN is now emerging? Will we finally see concerted international action to promote economic development, to control the exploitation of natural resources and to protect the environment? Can the UN achieve more than a new status quo, aimed at securing "a stable supply" of natural resources and established through armed force by a new coalition of big powers?

To take a genuine step forward the UN must prove its capacity to establish

positive peace, ie "to change status quo when justice and wise policy so demands."

This perspective is reflected in a number of articles in this issue of RMR:

Economic development, natural resources, and regional cooperation

Paul Aarts and Gep Eisenloeffel present findings (pp 6 - 9) from a research project on economic development in the Arab Gulf region. The authors strongly argue for regional cooperation as a necessary precondition for a balanced regional economic development, a policy where the exploitation of natural resources will play a central role.

As long as power and control over immense natural resources is exercised by undemocratic regimes armed conflicts are bound to develop.

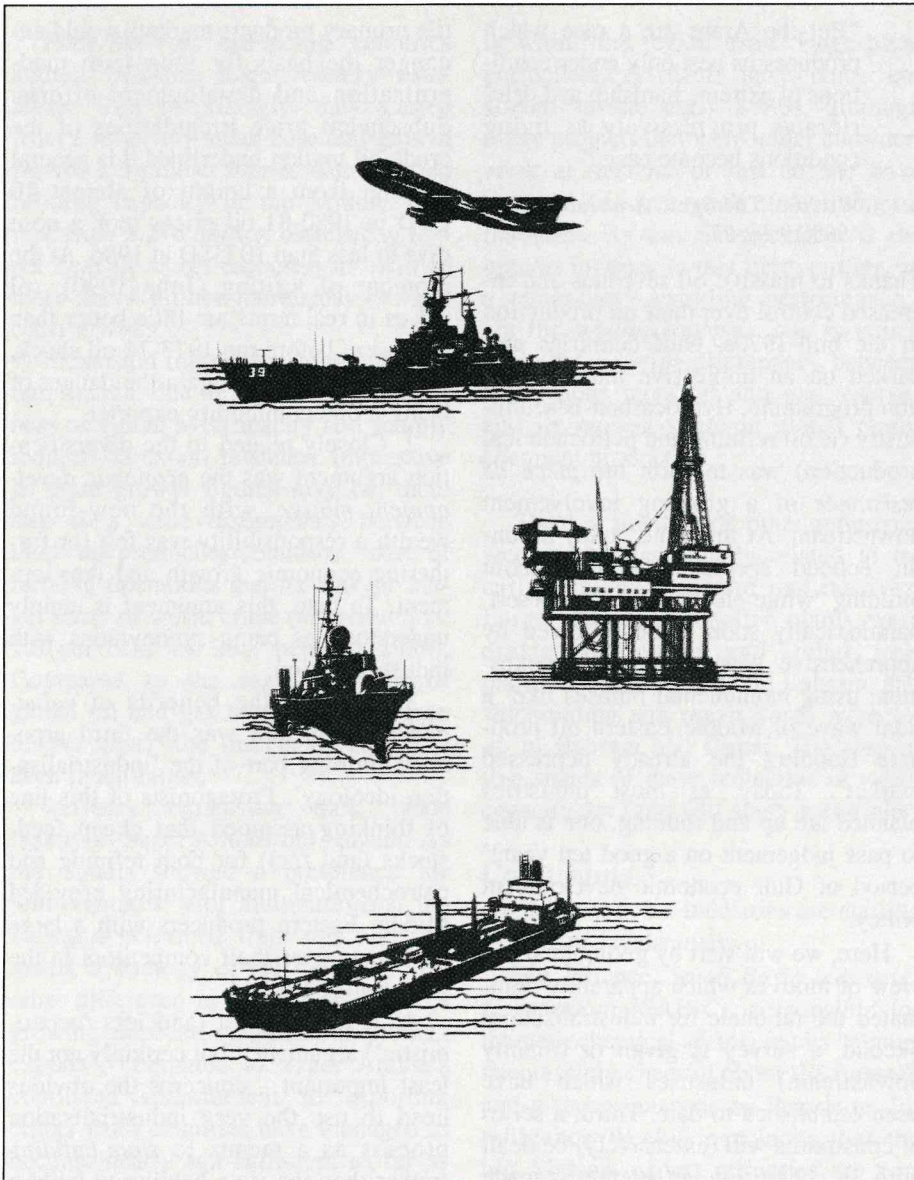
Pressure must therefore be exercised, not only on the parties in specific conflict, but also on the TNCs and outside powers that (continue to) supply undemocratic regimes with the technology and weapons which enable them to continue policies that do not promote regional economic development, thereby threatening regional and global stability.

Economic development and new strategic minerals

The rapid development of new technologies, as illustrated in our series of articles on new strategic minerals by Gill Burke (pp 10 - 27) offers new hope.

Not only do new materials and new technology make it possible to increase productivity, to reduce waste of scarce resources and to avoid extensive destruction of the environment, but they will also make old weapon systems obsolete and thereby make a new approach to arms control possible.

It is therefore essential to monitor how the new strategic minerals are used by the TNCs that control mining, marketing and research. New codes of conduct for the TNCs must be developed



by the UN, not only relating to transfer pricing, taxation, etc, but also to the social and ecological aspects of investment and transfer of technology.

Economic development and mineral agreements

To negotiate efficiently with the TNCs the developing countries need access to relevant background information and support from experienced negotiators. To achieve this a permanent natural resources network (see p 28) for the col-

lection and distribution of relevant data must be created. This can only be done through joint efforts by national governments and international institutions, primarily within the UN system.

However, at present no such system has been developed. The Raw Materials Group has therefore, with support from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), collected a large number of mineral contracts. A selection of these will be published in the coming issues of RMR and the whole

archive will be available to interested researchers and scholars.

The contracts published in our series can be read and evaluated within the analytical framework of an introductory article published in this issue (Modules for mining agreements, by Albrecht Stockmayer, pp 29 – 39).

We welcome comments and questions on different problems raised in this article and in the forthcoming series. We also hope that a debate will on these questions will contribute to some of the demands formulated by the participants at a recent ECOSOC session:

“a dissemination of vital information to all interested constituencies, including national institutions of higher learning.”¹, and “a systematic development of stores of information on individual transnational corporations and on joint ventures.”²

A well organized natural resources network and dissemination of vital information are both necessary to strengthen the negotiating capacity of developing countries.

Without this capacity and other “effective procedures for changing the status quo”, the world economy and world politics will remain in a state of instability:

“It was noted that the failure of developing countries to have wide access to capital and technology would have negative implications for the stability and growth of the world economic system as a whole, developed countries included.”³

Notes:

¹ Commission on Transnational Corporations, Report on the Sixteenth Session (2-11 April 1990), UN Economic and Social Council, Official Records, 1990, Supplement No 6, p 45.

² Ibid p 40.

³ Ibid p 13.