Jan Eliasson: Peace, Development and Human Rights: The Indispensable Connection

Talare
Jan Eliasson
Politiker

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Let me first of all say how happy and proud I am to be asked to deliver the prestigious Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture in Uppsala. This is the place where this great son of Sweden grew up and studied and the home of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. It is also the home of the university that honours his memory with a Dag Hammarskjöld chair, for 26 years occupied by Professor Peter Wallensteen. It has been an honour and inspiration for me to have served twice as Visiting Professor in the distinguished Department for Peace and Conflict Research.

Today, exactly 50 years ago, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, died in a plane crash in Ndola, Zambia. It was a shock to the world. Hammarskjöld was on a mediation mission to the Congo and had, during his eight years as Secretary-General, become a symbol of the pursuit of peace, development and human rights. His death occurred at the height of the Cold War – the shameful Wall was being built in the middle of Europe – and nuclear war was a not so distant nightmare.

I learnt about Hammarskjöld's death as a navy cadet in the middle of an exercise in the northern Baltic Sea. It was the day after my 21st birthday. I remember my sense of loss and emptiness, listening to the news on a short-wave radio. A vaguer, less reliable, recollection is that I promised myself to work on the issues that dominated Hammarskjöld's professional life.

Today it is appropriate to ask ourselves why the memory of Hammarskjöld is so alive and present. He has become a legendary Secretary- General and a role model for his successors. My presidency of the General Assembly 2005-06 coincided with the 100th anniversary of his birth in Jönköping, Sweden, on 29 July 1905. It was moving and powerful to experience the outpouring of respect for and appreciation and admiration of Hammarskjöld's work and personality.

There are many reasons for the glow of his memory: his integrity, courage and impartiality; his diplomatic skills and attachment to the UN Charter; his championing of the rights of smaller and weaker nations. Personally, I am impressed by his cool composure in crisis situations. And I am fascinated and intrigued by his passionate involvement in art, music, literature, philosophy, religion as well as his love of nature, in parallel with the demanding tasks that confronted him as UN Secretary-General. I will come back to this at the end of my lecture.

It is important to first note and discuss how the world has changed since Hammarskjöld's time. History is a permanently changing landscape. Some challenges remain the same. Others are new and beg for effective methods of management and problem-solving.

Hammarskjöld's world was one of polarisation and great power rivalry based on ideology and clashing interests. A tenuous peace between the blocs was upheld on a morbid balance of terror – massive armaments and mutually assured destruction (MAD as a fitting acronym). His world was a world with only 50 to 60 nation states – decolonisation had just started. Development assistance had hardly begun. Human rights norms were established, primarily through the Universal Declaration of 1948, but were to a degree languishing in the shadow of the Cold War. Issues related to human rights were seen by many as internal affairs. The nation state was the primary and dominant actor, together with defence alliances. International and regional organisations were taking their first steps after the horrors of the Holocaust and the Second World War.

These were features of the working environment of Dag Hammarskjöld. He skilfully managed to establish for himself and the UN a diplomatic and moral platform, at times challenging the powerful permanent members of the UN Security Council. His largest audience and power base were the nations and peoples beyond the permanent members of the Security Council, who were pinning their hopes on a strong United Nations, international rules and multilateral solutions.

What about today's world? Some problems seem to be of a permanent nature – the Israeli-Palestinian conflict being the primary example. This was a major item on Hammarskjöld's agenda – and remains on Ban Ki-moon's. Similarly, the

Congo, Hammarskjöld's last mission, is still struggling to achieve peace and prosperity. However, many issues are new or have taken on new dimensions. The dramatic developments in North Africa and the Middle East are of historic significance. Global challenges are dominating not only the UN but also the agendas of regions and nations. Global is in the end local. Just consider the issues related to climate change and environmental destruction as well as migration, terrorism, organised crime and communicable diseases. These are challenges that are truly common to all. They are also affected by the revolutionary developments in communications and media.

The world is shrinking at an accelerating speed. Challenges transcending territorial borders confront and enter nation states to a degree never before seen in human history. Globalisation is taking place on many levels and with many actors. It is bringing about positive change, but also causes clashes between sovereignty and internationalism as well as fear among people about the pace and direction of change.

Here lies the challenge for the United Nations and its member states in today's world. How can we turn international cooperation and interdependence into positive concepts and realities? How do we make the outside world a source of promise and potential – and not a peril or problem? How do we reach the ideal goal in an interdependent world – that good international solutions, are ultimately in the national interests of states? And how do we organise ourselves to deal effectively with problems in an interdependent world?

My main message today is that lasting solutions require that the pursuit of peace, development and human rights must take place in parallel. There is no peace without development; there is no development without peace; and there is no sustainable peace and development without respect for human rights. If one of these three pillars is weak in a nation or a region, the whole structure is weak. Therefore, walls and barriers between these areas must be taken down. The problems must be placed in the centre and all actors who can influence them must be mobilised around the solution. In the end, shared responsibility must be recognised and a division of
labour accepted. Let me elaborate this primary thesis of mine.

In his time, Hammarskjöld was aware of the inter-relationship between peace, security and human rights. In his Erskine Childers Lecture for 2011, Henning

Melber of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation quotes from his speech to the American-Jewish Committee in New York on 10 April 1957: “We know that the question of peace and the question of human rights are closely related. Without recognition of human rights we shall never have peace and it is only within the framework of peace that human rights can be fully developed.”

In another address – this time in New Delhi on 3 February 1956, Hammarskjöld stressed the importance of the socioeconomic dimension to security: “Economic and social problems should rank equal with political problems. In fact, sometimes, I feel that they should, if anything, have priority,” he said. Hammarskjöld had long argued that ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council of the UN, did not have the place in the hierarchy of the main organs that it deserved. After all, Hammarskjöld claimed, the Security Council primarily dealt with settling urgent and violent conflicts. It was equally important to focus, through ECOSOC, on eliminating the economic and social causes of conflicts. Very little has happened in this regard since Hammarskjöld’s time, including strongly needed interaction between the UN (ECOSOC and UNDP) and the Bretton Woods institutions in Washington DC (the World Bank and the IMF, the International Monetary Fund).

On 14-16 September 2005, 155 heads of state and government and 188 countries met at the UN Headquarters in New York. This was the largest gathering of world leaders in history organised to set the UN on a new course, one more aligned with meeting the challenges of the 21st century. The basis for the discussion was Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s report “In Larger Freedom”, which in turn built on the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. After long and arduous negotiations, a World Summit Outcome document was finalised and adopted on 16 September 2005 by the General Assembly under Swedish presidency. I can assure you that it was a solemn and unforgettable occasion!

In a key paragraph in the Summit Outcome, the following text was agreed and adopted:

"We acknowledge that peace and security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and well-being. We recognise that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing."

This recognition, in my view, constitutes a powerful political affirmation of the need to better integrate the work within the UN system. All efforts within one pillar in separation from efforts within the other two pillars can yield only limited and short-term results. I saw this myself when during 2007-08 I mediated on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the Darfur conflict together with Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim of the African Union. The conflict deepened poverty. Rampant poverty increased bitterness and desperation. And human rights abuses perpetuated fear and hatred, endangering both peace and development.

The key question now is to what degree the UN and its member states are aware of and are willing to draw consequences from the important General Assembly declaration on interdependence in September 2005. The record is not impressive. Very few organisational changes have taken place to integrate efforts both at headquarters and in the fi eld. The turf battles still rage in spite of some progress, for example, in the humanitarian sector. In the Darfur mission, we were frustrated at the lack of recovery programmes alongside humanitarian efforts. A water well, a school, a health clinic in a village could have demonstrated to the population and rebel
leaders that peace was a better option than war. This could have increased the chances of bringing all factions to the negotiating table.

In my current assignment as UN Advocate for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), I often hear that the human rights dimension is not included in the goals. This is wrong from two perspectives. Firstly, in the human rights system economic and social rights are indivisible from political and civil rights. Secondly, the 2005 Summit Outcome document underlines that progress on development is interlinked with and reinforced by progress on human rights.

In all fairness, the situation is beginning to change. In the World Development Report 2011, issued by the World Bank, a strong case is made for the interconnection between security, development and good governance (which in my view includes respect for human rights). The report highlights the recurrent cycles of weak governance, poverty and violence. Not one low-income country coping with these problems has yet achieved a single Millennium Development Goal!

The president of the World Bank, Robert B. Zoellick, makes the point that separate disciplines are not well integrated to address interrelated problems. Noting that "stove-piped" agencies are ill-suited to cope with such problems, he formulates the challenge of "bringing security and development together to put down roots deep enough to break the cycles of fragility and conflict".

Some of the main conclusions of the 2011 World Development Report are particularly important:

» Investing in citizen security, justice and jobs is essential to reducing violence;
» institutional legitimacy is the key to stability;
» institutions need to change, international agencies and partners must adapt procedures, and assistance needs to be integrated and coordinated.

The stakes are high. A civil conflict costs the average developing country 15 to 30 years of GDP growth – apart from large-scale human suffering and untold sacrifices.

Looking ahead, what can we do to translate the concept of interdependence into practical policies and institutional transformation in a longer and larger perspective? The World Bank is evidently now on its way, together with its partners. But this is not enough. The concept has to penetrate the UN system as a whole, as well as regional organisations, governments, the business sector, the academic world and civil society

If not, the world will not be able to deal effectively with the global challenges of today and tomorrow. The problems are simply too complex, too multifaceted and too difficult for one actor to solve alone. We have to realise that "together" is stronger than "alone". We have to accept and strive for shared responsibility, and, in effect, an international division of labour.

A model for action could be to place the problems in the centre, not the institutions, and then ask ourselves who are affected by or can influence the problems. One example, which is close to my heart, could be the scarcity of water and the sanitation crisis in the world. The struggle for water is about

health and survival. Eighty-eight and a half million people do not have safe drinking water. Two and a half billion people do not have sanitation facilities, a euphemism for toilets. Almost 4,000 children under the age of five die every day due to lack of water or sanitation. In my work in Africa I have seen this shameful situation with my own eyes – children dying from diarrhea, dysentery and dehydration.

To deal with this scourge, the UN should take action on the basis of the Millennium Development Goal on Sustainable Development, including water and sanitation. The World Bank has an important role in developing infrastructure both in rural and urban communities.
The affected governments must give water and sanitation issues higher priority and improve the government structures, both nationally and locally, to deal with them. The donor community should also give higher priority to water and sanitation projects in their development assistance. The business sector should provide technology and training. The research and science community should develop new methods of water purification and conservation, as well as innovative sanitation solutions. Finally, civil society – organisations like Water Aid International, of which I am part – should assist local communities around the world and at the same time conduct effective advocacy vis-à-vis world public opinion.

Such mobilisation around the problem and such sharing of responsibility among the relevant actors could make a huge difference for many millions of people around the world. Apart from water, a similar case could be made for issues like environment and climate, migration, health, education and food security. This approach would improve our chances to affect root causes of problems and thereby get closer to lasting solutions.

In a deeper sense, such a division of labour could also help alleviate the feelings of hopelessness and helplessness among many of us when we face huge global problems. We would realise that something can be done on many different levels and by many different actors. We could more easily identify our own role and responsibility. We would realise that nobody can do everything – but everybody can do something.

Accepting shared responsibility should also lead to a change in our traditional work culture, where problems are dealt with “vertically” by one organisation in

separation from others. We need to think and act “horizontally” and break down walls between sectors and disciplines. It is the inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach that is the modern and effective method for confronting the global challenges of today and the future. This is far from the jealous “turf battles” and condescending reactions to anyone who comes close to our own professional pursuits. In fact, we will find that opening the door to outside actors will bring new perspectives and a more creative environment for all concerned.

The UN could start by taking a holistic and problem-oriented approach within its own structure and machinery. Breaking down the walls between the organs responsible for dealing with peace and security, development and human rights would yield substantial returns. The World Bank and the UN system should strengthen their cooperation. The regional organisations and the UN should cooperate more systematically in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. And governments, the private sector, universities and the civil society should accept horizontal, cross-cutting approaches and organisation.

A case where such a method could now be applied is the challenge of dealing with the dramatic situation in North Africa and the Middle East. It is of historic significance that the countries going through this revolutionary transition do so in a post-conflict environment of peace, with social and economic development, and with respect for human rights. We know that they themselves have the primary role and responsibility, but the outside world also has an obligation to assist. This is a matter of solidarity but also a matter of enlightened self-interest in today’s interdependent world.

I shall end with some reflections on Dag Hammarskjöld, which to me are relevant for the discussion of a holistic and integrated approach to world problems. My point is that Hammarskjöld to a fascinating degree had a rich, wide-ranging and even complex personality, which positively affected his professional life.

Dag Hammarskjöld was a man of nature and a man of culture. Nature and culture were to him rich sources of inspiration and energy.
His professional life could not be divorced from his private life. In fact, many of his colleagues asked themselves – how did he find the time to be such a great

Secretary-General while having such extensive and time-consuming encounters with nature and culture?

In my view, his immersion in these spheres in fact helped make him such a towering leader. As Sverker Åström, his younger colleague and later my diplomatic mentor, once wrote: "Hammarskjöld was a remarkable Swede and world citizen – a paradise bird among us sparrows and crows."

Hammarskjöld was a committed hiker and had a deep attachment to the scenic mountain areas of northern Sweden. He once wrote: "We all sometimes need stillness and perspective. We all have our means to find what we seek. I have come to most strongly miss the Swedish mountains which offer solitude and distance, not by flight from reality but by meeting a reality different from professional and daily life." In another illustrative reflection, he says: "The mountain gives us new and rich possibilities to get to know ourselves. It can reveal weaknesses, both of the mind and the body. But it can also prove that we have unimaginable resources."

Hammarskjöld's relationship to arts and culture has a similar deep, absorbing, almost passionate quality. He was a member of the Royal Swedish Academy, which selects Nobel laureates in literature. He read widely, both prose and poetry. While Hammarskjöld was Secretary-General, he played a key role in the Academy's award of the Nobel Prize to the French diplomat and poet Saint John Perse.

He was an ardent student of religious philosophers like Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart, as well as of Martin Buber, whose Ich und Du (I and Thou) he was busy translating from German into Swedish at the time of his death. In fact, his translation notes were found in his briefcase after the plane crash in Ndola in 1961.

He was a close friend of the artist Barbara Hepworth, whose sculpture "Single Form" is placed in front of UN Headquarters in New York. The correspondence about art between the two is congenial and reflects a twin-soul relationship. When Hammarskjöld took the initiative to establish a meditation room at UN Headquarters, he decided to make it a room of stillness and simplicity with a big, solid iron ore structure in the half-lit room. Outside the room is a glass mosaic by Marc Chagall. Many thousands of people – including exhausted UN staff – have reflected, slowed down and found peace of mind in this magical room.

And, of course, music. Hammarskjöld introduced classical music into the opening ceremony of the General Assembly. Beethoven's "Eroica" symphony was one of the first to be performed. Sture Linnér, one of his collaborators, has told a story about being invited to Hammarskjöld's residence for dinner. No conversation took place – only music was played. At the end of the evening, Hammarskjöld noted that they had had a wonderful evening together!

These examples demonstrate how nature, art and culture were integrated parts of Hammarskjöld's life. It is easy to sense how these elements, in combination with religious mysticism, expanded his mind and formed his reflections in Markings, published after his death ("Waymarks" would be a better translation of the Swedish "Vägmärken").

It is sobering, however, to note Sverker Åström's comments on Hammarskjöld's religiosity and his constant self-exploration and inner battles over moral and ethical issues as documented in his private diaries: "In his joyful, rather boyish appearance and intense identification with his professional role there was, in fact, not much that indicated personal, metaphysical brooding or painful struggles with his conscience."

My concluding point is that the holistic approach to solving problems in a world of interdependence has an equivalent in how we as human beings approach these problems. Integrating different aspects, breaking down walls and recognising the mind-expanding and dynamic effects of crossing borders in all respects are relevant both on a policy and a personal level. Dag Hammarskjöld's leadership as UN Secretary-General is in this respect a model for the future.

Källa
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