

EDITOR'S NOTE

Just as we were going to press the events of 11 September sent shock waves around the world. The questions raised by the contributors to this issue dedicated to RMA could not be more timely. The intersection of American military thinking, that country's fervent belief in high-tech solutions, and the reality of terrorism on its own soil will be a confusing crossroads for the American public and its government.

Experts, novices and pundits alike are debating what sort of 'war against terrorism' will be waged—will the United States stick to its belief in remotely fought wars with the assistance of technology, or will this be a conflict of an entirely different nature? What will be the costs? And what will be the longer term impact on American military strategy and thinking (and hence the perceived value of RMA)? As concisely noted by T. Delpuch, 'The ability to listen to every single telephone conversation worldwide does not mean being informed and even less being able to convert this information into knowledge of the adversary.'

Despite the fact that nearly all of our authors wrote their contributions before the attacks, each one highlights that one serious repercussion of developing high-tech weapons is that unequally matched adversaries are likely to react using asymmetrical warfare—a fact chillingly confirmed in North America. Long discussed in the arms control community, asymmetric warfare—whether through terrorism, cyber-attack or acquisition of WMD—will need to be further discussed as we try to develop appropriate and effective responses.

The Bush Administration's previous single-minded pursuit of National Missile Defence—with all its financial, political and diplomatic implications—will undoubtedly feel the impact of public and political opinion. It is too early to tell how these attacks will influence both domestic and international perceptions of NMD and the greater issue of defence spending.

This event has drawn more people than ever before into the security debate; increasing numbers are considering what it means to be secure. What will be the trade-offs in a country that prides itself on the protection of individual freedoms? This growing discussion on human security—and security in a globalized world—is long overdue.

It is somewhat paradoxical that a crescendo of increasingly unilateral moves by the United States was shattered by the terrorist attacks. Nation after nation has stepped forward to pledge their support to a unprecedented multilateral effort to bring those responsible to justice. We can only hope that this co-operative attempt at coalition-building might give pause to those promoting increasingly isolationist security perspectives.

Lastly, the fact that technological evolution permits a constantly changing array of possibilities for new weapons systems is well documented. Yet nearly all of the debate to date has covered the

implications of RMA for the current and future battlefield. By contrast, the central question to be addressed with this issue of *Disarmament Forum* is: what are the implications of RMA for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament? Current events make this question all the more relevant. While it is evident that the terrorist attacks on the United States will influence military, security, disarmament and arms control thinking—on the part of both doves and hawks—what remains to be seen is how security, disarmament and arms control can possibly be strengthened by these events and by the serious reflection that we must do regarding global and human security in the twenty-first century.

The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* is dedicated to the role of non-governmental organizations in disarmament and non-proliferation. A combination of recent developments—from the civil society-fuelled push for a mine ban convention, to the growing alarm about small arms, to the words of the Secretary-General welcoming the participation of civil society as partners rather than spectators—beg a closer examination of the facts on the ground. What is the role played by NGOs in disarmament and arms control? Is their participation valued, and if so, by whom? What lessons can be learned from recent NGO/civil society ‘victories’? We also hope to address one of the longer term ripple effects of the 11 September attacks: how the valuable humanitarian work on arms control and disarmament undertaken by NGOs, so often dependent on philanthropic funding and grants, will be impaired in the turbulent financial period ahead. Fears are arising that funders will be shifting their emphasis away from non-proliferation and disarmament activities. This, coupled with weakened global financial markets, could have long-term effects on the NGO community and thus on global and human security.

Amidst tightened security and cancellations of General Assembly high-level debate and the CTBT Article XIV Conference, UNIDIR’s hosted an extremely successful seminar, *Time to Control Tactical Nuclear Weapons*, at United Nations Headquarters on 24 September. The seminar was the first to include non-governmental experts at the United Nations in New York since the terrorist attacks two weeks earlier. As the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala pointed out, the fact that the UNIDIR seminar proceeded as planned shows the importance that the United Nations attaches to the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Official government representatives from over 50 countries, experts in the field and NGO participants discussed the relevance of TNWs in the evolving international security framework, assessed the weaknesses of the 1991 Unilateral Declarations and the ways they could be strengthened, and considered how development and testing of new nuclear weapons could affect the stability of the TNW regime. The roundtable on TNWs and terrorism was particularly appreciated. The seminar was co-sponsored by UNIDIR, the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at Monterey Institute of International Studies, Global Green Cross/Green Cross International, and Peace Research Institute Frankfurt. Please see the activities section for more information about UNIDIR’s TNW project.

Jackie Seck, UNIDIR’s Research Programme Manager, is leaving UNIDIR to become a Treaty Implementation Officer at the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in New York. UNMAS serves as the UN focal point for co-ordination of mine-related activities. While we will miss working with her on a daily basis, we look forward to continued collaboration with Jackie in her new capacity and wish her the very best in her new endeavour.

Kerstin Vignard