

### *Small Arms Survey 2001: Profiling the Problem*

At least 500,000 people are killed each year by small arms and light weapons. They die in an astonishingly diverse number of ways: as combatants in internal and inter-state wars; as participants in gang fights and criminal battles; as casualties of government-sponsored or condoned violence and terror; as innocent civilians trapped in deadly wars and social conflicts; and as victims of suicide, homicide or random acts of violence.

The causes of the violence behind these deaths are complex and multi-faceted, and the easy availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons is only one part of the story. Still, this statistic—half a million deaths each year—ought to catch our eye. After all, it is higher than the number of deaths in almost all recent wars. Thus, it is no exaggeration to call small arms and light weapons ‘the real weapons of mass destruction’. While they may not devastate entire cities or populations within a space of a few seconds, they are implicated in more than 1,300 deaths each day.

Aside from their direct role in armed conflicts and violence, small arms and light weapons are also widely used in ‘peacetime’ situations to terrorize individuals, to control or subdue groups and communities, to influence politics, to profit and amass personal gain, and to undergird and maintain power. Throughout the world—in both poor countries and rich ones—socially marginalized or desperately impoverished people may resort to violence in order to survive or to gain a tenuous foothold in society. At the same time, others—driven by power or greed—may use weapons to consolidate and build their positions. Over time, the result is a pervasive sense of social danger, insecurity and anxiety, exacerbated by self-perpetuating cycles and cultures of violence.

In worst-case scenarios, the end result is a totally corrupt or collapsed state. Only more effective national, regional and international measures to regulate various aspects of the small arms and light weapons problem can help break this vicious circle.

#### *Concerted international action*

Against this backdrop, governmental and non-governmental efforts have been galvanized to counter the proliferation and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons in recent years. Yet effective long-term policy requires reliable and comprehensive information and analysis on

all aspects of the problem—something that has been relatively rare to date. The *Survey* is intended to fill this gap.

Such a contribution is sorely needed since several characteristics of small arms and light weapons make them an uncommonly difficult and politically contentious issue for the international community to address. These include:

- The *nature* of the weapons—lethal, easy to use and transport, difficult to track, and relatively simple to maintain in circulation for a long time;
- The large *number* of producing companies and countries, which makes supply-side control a difficult logistical challenge;
- The legitimate *use* of these weapons for national and/or individual security and defence, and the acquisition or retention of such weapons when governments fail to guarantee the physical safety of their citizens;
- The ‘grey’ and ‘black’ *markets* in such weapons, which are often linked to transnational crime and drug trafficking, and to the activities of non-state actors;
- The *relationship* between light weapons flows, situations of economic insecurity and deprivation, and the ensuing social and political conflicts;
- The disarmament *requirements* of post-conflict settings, including the demobilization and re-integration of ex-combatants; and
- The differing national *norms* for firearms possession, use and reporting.

Small arms constitute a relatively new issue on the international agenda. So it is not surprising that there is still little agreement on the precise contours of the problem. It has been variously defined as an arms control and disarmament issue, a human rights and humanitarian law issue, a public health or economic development issue, a problem of post-conflict disarmament, or as an issue of terrorism and criminality. In the absence of a broad overview, each perspective focuses a different lens on the problem and advocates different solutions. There is also no agreement on which weapons are of greatest concern: pistols and revolvers, which are most numerous; military assault rifles, which are widely used in conflict situations; or hand grenades and high-tech portable military equipment, which cascade into civilian hands.

Whatever the perspective, three issues are clear.

*First*, controlling small arms and light weapons—which are responsible for most of the deaths and injuries, especially of civilian non-combatants, in recent wars—is of vital importance to the contemporary international security agenda. Precisely because small arms are so ubiquitous and have legitimate military and civilian uses, efforts to regulate and control them must be carefully crafted.

*Second*, as much of the work in the *Survey* shows, small arms and light weapons are more than just an arms control and disarmament issue. In his *Millennium Report* (2000), UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed out that:

Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development. The proliferation of small arms sustains and exacerbates armed conflicts. It endangers peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. It undermines respect for international humanitarian law. It threatens legitimate but weak governments and it benefits terrorists, as well as the perpetrators of organized crime.

Finally, small arms and light weapons do not proliferate by themselves. Rather, they are designed, produced and procured in response to demand by governments and/or civilians. They are sold, re-sold, perhaps stolen, diverted and maybe legally or illegally transferred several more times. Ultimately they are used and re-used, during or after conflicts. At each juncture in this complex chain of legal and illicit transfers, people—brokers, insurgents, criminals, government officials and/or organized groups—are active participants in the process. Regulation and control of small arms and light weapons must proceed from this simple fact.

### *Goals and objectives of the Small Arms Survey*

The primary goal of the *Small Arms Survey* is to provide reliable information and analysis on all aspects of the problem of small arms and light weapons proliferation. Persuaded that transparency is a cornerstone of national and international accountability—as well as an indispensable element in effective policy-making—the *Survey* is an *independent transparency mechanism* that serves many audiences. Our work is based on the conviction that greater transparency for all small arms and light weapons issues will improve international, regional, national and human security.

Yet the task will not be easy. Until recently, such an initiative would have been considered virtually impossible. Even today, the available data are far from complete. Still, enough information exists with which to sketch an outline of the situation and to provide a 'roadmap' showing the way forward.

The *Survey* is committed to collecting and analysing the best available open-source data, and to sponsoring primary and field research that will generate new data. The *Survey* also carefully assesses and verifies the reliability of data before using it in its publications, and our research work is governed by four principles:

- *Using a multidisciplinary approach:* The problem of small arms and light weapons must be approached from a broad, multidisciplinary perspective. Proliferation and misuse are not purely an arms control and disarmament issue. Equally important (and context-specific) are the crime control, humanitarian law, economic development and public health perspectives.
- *Studying the multiple societal effects:* Far greater attention must be paid to the economic, social and human costs and consequences of small arms and light weapons proliferation and use. Only when the costs in terms of lost growth, stalled development and distorted allocation of government or household investment are quantified will the opportunity cost of inaction become irrefutably clear, and the benefits of even simple regulatory measures evident.
- *Examining different levels of the problem:* Small arms proliferation is not exclusively an international issue. It is also one with important regional, national and local dimensions.
- *Engaging multiple actors:* Small arms proliferation and control is no longer simply an issue for governments. Increasingly, non-governmental actors, including researchers and advocates, have a crucial role to play in shaping and developing policies in this area. Indeed, they are often the essential actors in the grassroots implementation of various global, regional or local measures.

What role might the newly launched *Small Arms Survey* play? A significant one, we hope. But this publication is only the most visible product of the activities of the *Small Arms Survey* project as a whole. Since its establishment in 1999, our Geneva-based resource centre has served as a node in the network of small arms research-based activities that includes field projects, occasional papers, conferences, workshops and other outreach activities. Our overall aim is to become a well-utilized international centre of excellence and expertise on all small arms and light weapons issues.

## *Introducing the Small Arms Survey 2001: Profiling the Problem*

The seven chapters in this year's *Survey* address many of the most prominent small arms and light weapons issues. In this first edition, subtitled 'Profiling the Problem', we have chosen to present a broad overview of the state of the world's knowledge and awareness on different aspects of these wide-ranging issues.

In many cases, through a combination of comprehensive data collection, careful estimation techniques and best judgement where sources conflict or are unclear, we have sought to fill a few large gaps in our collective knowledge. Such a global overview is the first step in identifying more specific problem areas, topics for future research, and additional 'missing links' that can be supplied in future editions.

Chapter One (*Products, Producers*) concentrates on production, identifying more than 600 firms in at least 95 countries that produce small arms, light weapons and/or associated ammunition and parts. These figures are significantly higher than previous estimates. The major producers include: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, the United States and—although hard data are difficult to come by—probably China. Although an estimate of the global value of annual production is still premature, available information suggests that, despite an increase in the types of small arms being produced, the market itself is not expanding. It may, in fact, be shrinking as a result of the recent downsizing of global armed forces and consolidation of defence industries. Nevertheless, the re-circulation of existing small arms and light weapons, and their longevity, suggests that global stockpiles continue to grow.

Chapter Two (*Stockpiles*) seeks to estimate global stockpiles of small arms and light weapons. It focuses on individual-use firearms, including military-style weapons belonging to armed forces, handguns and sidearms used by national police forces, and guns in civilian possession. Based on extrapolations from limited existing data, it concludes that, worldwide, there are at least 550 million small arms and light weapons, not including illicit civilian weapons. About 41% of these—226 million weapons—are in the arsenals of national armed forces, while 56%—some 305 million weapons—are in legal civilian possession. Only 3% are held by the world's police forces, and most surprisingly, less than 1% of such weapons are in the hands of insurgent groups.

Chapter Three (*Brokers*) highlights the crucial role played by arms brokers, dealers, transport agents and their associated networks in transferring small arms and light weapons. In the past, most brokers operated under the tacit or explicit aegis of state security apparatuses. Today they have increasingly taken on the role of independent private actors who exploit loopholes in laws and regulations, and sidestep the weak regulatory capacities of some states, to provide arms to conflict zones. The lack of harmonized national or international legal instruments, in addition to the absence of information-sharing arrangements between states, makes it particularly difficult to catch brokers directly engaged in illegal activities since transactions are carefully designed to circumvent, bend or break the fewest laws. The *Survey's* research does suggest, however, that the number of people engaged in arms brokering and shipping is actually quite small, and that they often operate in complex, fluid and opaque networks.

Chapters Four and Five (*Legal and Illicit Transfers*) present an overview of the legal, grey and black markets in small arms and light weapons. The *Survey* estimates the annual value of the legal small arms trade at between US\$ 4–6 billion. The top exporters for which reliable information is available are: the United States, the Russian Federation, Germany and Brazil. Other less transparent states that are likely to be major players include Bulgaria, China and Israel, for whom reliable information is not yet available. In all, more than 60 states are involved in the legal export of small

arms while almost *all* the world's countries are importers of varying quantities of small arms and light weapons.

The illicit trade in small arms—transfers that engender 'crime, conflict and corruption'—while far more difficult to assess, appears to comprise less than 20% of the total trade. The so-called 'grey market'—covert transfers conducted by governments or government-sponsored entities—appears significantly larger than the wholly illegal 'black market'.

Chapter Six (*Effects*) focuses on the social and economic impacts of small arms and light weapons proliferation and availability 'after the smoke clears'. It documents the relationship between availability and use, and highlights the similarities and differences between the direct and indirect effects of small arms use in the North and the South. The chapter also documents a broad array of indirect effects, including increasing insecurity for humanitarian relief workers and operations, the privatization of violence, strains on public health systems, increased violent criminal activity, and reduced economic activity and socio-economic development. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) estimated the direct and indirect costs of violence at US\$ 140–170 billion a year for Latin America alone. Such a figure clearly indicates the pressing need for further research on the effects of the use and availability of small arms and light weapons.

Chapter Seven (*Measures*) surveys the wide array of proposed or partially implemented multilateral measures at the global, regional and sub-regional level to 'tackle the small arms problem'. The aim is not to present a comprehensive analysis of all existing measures and initiatives, but to provide an introduction and overview of major efforts, to guide readers to other sources, and to lay a foundation for further in-depth studies. This chapter focuses especially on the recent development of regional instruments in the Americas, Africa and Europe, as well as specific multilateral efforts within such bodies as the OSCE, NATO and the UN (e.g. the *Firearms Protocol* being negotiated within the Crime Commission of the ECOSOC). It also sets out the major issues identified for the July 2001 *United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*.

### *The challenges ahead*

This first edition of the *Small Arms Survey* raises as many questions as it answers. Future issues will be devoted to addressing them. They will not present annual 'snapshots' detailing changes over the previous calendar year since the available data and nature of the problem make such a year-to-year survey inappropriate. Instead, the *Survey* will focus on particular issues and regions; refine the analysis and estimates of stockpiles and transfers; follow the development of regional and global initiatives; and highlight problem areas that warrant greater policy attention. Two important issues the *Survey* will focus on in future editions are the humanitarian and developmental impacts of small arms and light weapons proliferation and use.

In addition to refining our estimates of global weapons stockpiles, future editions will provide regional and sub-regional breakdowns to highlight areas of concern. We will also broaden the scope to include stocks and flows of other small arms and light weapons, including larger, more sophisticated weapons that are not in wide circulation, but nevertheless pose grave security risks. Efforts to track transfers will also focus on specific regions and sub-regions, especially those most seriously affected by conflicts and instability.

As an increasing number of states become able and willing to furnish reliable information on their transfers of small arms and light weapons, there will be an urgent need to present these data

in the clearest, most comprehensive and most harmonized fashion. Future editions of the *Survey* will analyse the strengths and weaknesses of existing national reporting practices and present suggestions for common definitions and standards to increase the utility and comparability of information. The *Survey* will also treat the growing problem of weapons brokering, and the link to other lucrative activities (e.g. trade in diamonds, drugs, tropical timber and other 'conflict goods'), analysing case studies, as well as providing details on the activities of prominent arms brokers.

Activities undertaken in the context of the July 2001 *United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects* will also be examined in next year's *Survey*, especially since this groundbreaking conference is likely to shape policy initiatives and priorities for years to come. Finally, such issues as marking and traceability, stockpile management and security measures, plus newer issues, such as the relevance of international instruments covering the transport of dangerous goods and the tracing of domestic production chains, will be covered in subsequent issues of the *Survey*.

Ultimately, the concerted efforts of all actors in this important disarmament arena will be successful only if the use of such weapons in peacetime, conflicts, wars and post-conflict struggles abates, and if individuals and communities can live their lives in greater safety and security. The role of the *Small Arms Survey* will be to monitor and report on these efforts, to raise awareness of their relevance, and to provide policy benchmarks in the years ahead.

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## Summing up disarmament and conversion events Arms control in crisis and disarmament at a turning point?

Today indicators for disarmament and conversion signal stagnation or even a reversal for the first time in over a decade. It seems that disarmament is at a turning point: arms control negotiations are in a crisis; efforts at conflict prevention and conflict resolution are a mixed bag of successes and failures; and conversion has slowed down. Despite this there is still much conversion work ahead, especially in reintegrating demobilized armed forces personnel and redundant defence industry workers in Eastern Europe as well as in military base redevelopment.

This introduction will look at the reasons for the crisis in arms control negotiations, will summarize the findings of disarmament and conversion trends, will draw attention to ongoing wars and conflict resolution efforts as well as to the prevailing trend of opting for a military solution to conflicts, and will, finally, draw conclusions, identifying possible future ways of revitalizing the disarmament and conversion process.

### *Crisis in arms control negotiations*

A number of failed or stagnating negotiations on weapons of mass destruction symbolize the depth of the crisis in international arms control. But paradoxically, up to now, the crisis of institutionalized

(negotiated) arms control has not led to the complete end of disarmament. Arms control of the classical type between opposing blocs of military alliances has been in crisis since the mid-1990s. However, in contrast to *negotiated* arms control, disarmament can be carried out either on the basis of an arms control agreement, or unilaterally. Disarmament reduces military forces numerically (weapons, military personnel, etc.) and/or military power and renders conversion necessary: as long as financial, human and material resources are being freed from the military sector, there is also a need to convert them in order to avoid unnecessary social or economic effects or adverse political reactions.

Despite the highly visible gridlock in arms control negotiations, governments have reduced their military forces substantially: weapon systems have been decommissioned, troops demobilized, arms production capacities reduced, military bases redeveloped for non-military purposes, and military expenditures cut. The numerical reduction of military forces has actually been happening until recently and is continuing in a number of countries and in certain sectors, but the year 2000 may prove to be a turning point in numerical, quantitative disarmament.

How serious is the decoupling of actual disarmament from institutionalized arms control? Will governments continue to disarm unilaterally and convert military resources to non-military use as they did in the second half of the 1990s or will this decoupling process put an end to disarmament and conversion? What can arms control do to curb the currently prevailing intra-state armed conflicts and how effectively can it do this? What priorities are necessary to make arms control a facilitator of future disarmament and conversion?

Despite the crisis in arms control there have recently been successful arms control agreements. Arguably, the most important one was the extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in May 1995 and the NPT Review Conference in April/May 2000. Unfortunately, this success story is called into question by the actual behaviour of the nuclear-weapon states, who have not come to terms on a comprehensive test ban or a fissile material ban, let alone complete nuclear disarmament—a requirement of the NPT. Another accomplishment was the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines, which took place outside the classical forums of arms control. Similar efforts stimulated by the landmine convention are now being undertaken to control the proliferation and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons.

Two aspects underlying the crisis of traditional arms control require particular attention: the increasing military dominance of the United States; and changed perceptions of military threats.

#### HEGEMONIC SUPERPOWER

Many post-Cold War arms control agreements were made possible because the Soviet Union, and later Russia, were in a weak position. The possible revitalization of Russia was seen in the United States and NATO as a realistic option. Reductions in military postures both in NATO and in Russia were therefore perceived as mutually beneficial. But with the continuing disintegration of the Russian military and the obvious loss of Russia's status as a military superpower, the US interest in strategic stability through bilateral arms control diminished; the bilateral superpower relations shifted to a clear and growing US dominance. Increasingly, with the Soviet threat gone, the United States believes it can control smaller states militarily, even if these states aim at nuclear capabilities or other types of weapons of mass destruction. The US concept is increasingly focusing on limiting the weapon systems of other countries without limiting its own room for action as the only global military power. This is most clearly illustrated by its plans for a National Missile Defense system.

This policy has long-term consequences. The limits of classical arms control demonstrate the logic of the well-known security dilemma. Wherever a hegemony exists or armaments are asymmetrically distributed, arms control is likely to come to a stand-still. The 'haves' do not see an incentive to give up their superior position, and stimulate arms acquisition among the 'have-nots' just by defending their superiority. Nevertheless, unilateral disarmament or regional confidence-building can create trust and may instil a sense of assurance, spilling over into further rounds of arms control ('disarmament spill-over'). It is still too early to judge whether the disarmament of the 1990s will prove to be self-sustaining or will be reversed, as some indicators tend to suggest.

#### NEW MILITARY THREATS: NEW FORMS OF ARMS CONTROL

Many countries have started to reassess military threats and, consequently, the structure of their armed forces. The number of long-range military interventions has increased. Multilateral UN peacekeeping missions have moved to centre stage in the discussion of new and future military missions. Regional and internal wars have become the focus of attention. This has not only entailed preparation for such missions, but also required that the weapons primarily used in such wars—landmines, small arms and light weapons—be placed on the international arms control agenda.

Classical arms control, as it developed during the Cold War, has proved inadequate for the new situation. Clearly, the central problem in wars of today is not the lack of international stability but the destructiveness of the weapons and their enormous cost. The most prominent example of the emerging reorientation of arms control are the negotiations of the landmine convention: the practice of holding on to certain types or numbers of weapon systems by such countries as the United States, Russia, China and India is typical of classical arms control, but to the majority of countries who became party to the convention, this was unacceptable. 'Like-minded states' successfully negotiated the landmine treaty in a new forum, labelled the 'Ottawa process'. Civil society organizations—NGOs—became a new actor in arms control. The new combination of 'like-minded' governments and a diversified network of nationally or internationally operating NGOs who made this treaty possible is the only guarantee for compliance.

There is no reason to be over-enthusiastic. Many states—mine producers as well as mine users, from the United States to Yugoslavia, from Russia to Pakistan, from China to Burma—are not party to the convention. Even states who are party to the convention have continued to plant anti-personnel mines. Non-compliance is not punished. Certain types of mines which are dangerous to people are not prohibited. Moreover, additional research and development has been stimulated by the landmine treaty in order to circumvent its provisions. Whether similar treaties are attainable, for example in the area of small arms and light weapons, will be demonstrated by the *United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*. At the beginning of the new millennium, small arms control has enormous scope for improvement. Yet the credibility of both exporting as well as importing countries could be improved if the present political declarations are underpinned by stricter regulations concerning the movements of small arms.

#### *BICC findings: disarmament at a turning point?*

Disarmament is easier than arms control. Each government can unilaterally decide to disarm and need not wait for arms control agreements. This is exactly what many states did during the second half of the 1980s and particularly during the 1990s and is confirmed by BICC's measure of

disarmament and the potential for conversion, the BICC Conversion, Disarmament, Demilitarization and Demobilization (BIC3D) Index. This gives a value of 30 for the world in 1999, indicating that military sectors had shrunk by 30% worldwide between the transition phase around the end of the Cold War and 1999.

Despite this historically unique reduction in arms, military forces are still enormous. Global military expenditures are estimated to have amounted to US \$686 billion in 1999 (in 1993 prices); the present stock of major conventional weapons is still over 422,000 pieces; 21.7 million military troops still serve in the world's armed forces; and almost 8 million employees work in the arms industry. Thus, almost 30 million people still earn their living directly and fully in the military sector.

Furthermore, high-risk strategies in the field of weapons of mass destruction are still applied.

**Military expenditures—Growing again:** After several years of decline, global military expenditures were on the rise again in 1999. This new development reverses a trend that has seen a drastic reduction in military expenditures and clearly signals a halt, or even a reversal, of disarmament and conversion. Although the majority of countries are still continuing to reduce their military expenditures, some of the bigger spenders such as the United States, France, Germany, China, Russia, Brazil and Australia increased or announced the growth of their expenditures in 1999–2000.

**Military research and development—Anti-cyclical trends:** Global expenditures on military research and development were not as strongly affected by the sharp decreases in the early 1990s as other parts of the budget. While military R&D expenditures in Russia were reduced dramatically, those in Western market economies only shrank slightly. During the period of reduced defence production in the 1990s, the development of new weapon technologies and weapon systems was prioritized to preserve technological capabilities. R&D seems to have done the job of bridging a period of reduced procurement. With the reversal in military expenditures described above, R&D efforts are slowing down. This could, in turn, mean new demand for conversion at military labs.

**Industry restructuring and conversion—Continued internationalization at a higher level of production:** After the rapid worldwide decrease in military production, there is now indication that the decrease has not only slowed down and stopped in recent years but might have already been reversed. At least in some of the major arms-producing countries, such as the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Russia and Japan, production has increased again. Unlike production, however, employment in the arms industry has continued to decrease. After a number of mega-mergers in previous years, particularly among the large arms companies in the United States, attention has now turned to international co-operation agreements and acquisitions. However, in the military sector, this process of globalization is much less advanced than in many other industrial sectors. While conversion and diversification of defence production continues in smaller companies without much public attention, larger companies tend to concentrate on their core defence business activities.

**Demobilization and reintegration—The need for co-operation with other programmes:** The number of soldiers world-wide has continued to decline for the tenth year running, although the process has also slowed down. From the peak of 28.8 million in 1987, it was down to 21.7 million in 1999. While some countries (Russia, Germany) have plans for further cuts in their armed forces, demobilization programmes are still ongoing in others, particularly as a result of post-war rationalization (as in Cambodia, East Timor and Sierra Leone). Similar programmes will be required if peace agreements are reached in other countries. Most post-war demobilization programmes are conducted simultaneously with, or as an integral part of, a more general reform of the security sector which includes the democratic control of the armed forces. In recent years, actors in development co-operation have recognized the fact that they can no longer exclude security issues, but must address them as part of a strategy for sustainable development.

**Base closure and redevelopment—Long-term redevelopment tasks still ahead:** The restructuring processes of armed forces worldwide have greatly reduced the number of military bases. This has been heavily concentrated on Europe as well as on a limited number of countries elsewhere (Australia, Panama, the Philippines, South Africa, the United States and Vietnam). A large array of bases freed by the military still need to be redeveloped, and new civil economic usage needs to be identified. Furthermore, it can be expected that additional rounds of force restructuring, rationalization or demilitarization processes will create new tasks for base redevelopment (for example in Germany, Northern Ireland, Russia, South Africa and the United States).

**Surplus weapons—Political declarations have to be followed by action now:** The slowing pace of nuclear disarmament has increased the risk of proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction. While the global market for new conventional arms shrank after the political changes of 1989–1990, the arms industry has been sustained by an expanded market for the upgrading of used weapons. From 1990 onwards, the total number of armoured vehicles, warships, missiles and military aircraft held by all states in the world fell continuously. By 1999, it was almost 30% lower. New initiatives to lessen the impact of contemporary wars, such as the campaigns against landmines and small arms, have had some success in their own terms. The issue has become high on the international policy agenda. Partly in response to the growing pressure from civil society, governments are increasingly addressing the threats to human security posed by small arms, but, in practice, political declarations have not yet been fully implemented.

### *Wars, conflicts and conflict resolution*

The year 2000 saw several changes in wars and in conflict resolution—both for the better and for the worse. The United Nations engagement in solving conflicts, as well as the efforts by other international regional organizations, experienced both promising accomplishments as well as discouraging shortfalls. Positive and encouraging developments have now paved the way for a process of demilitarization, disarmament and conversion. On the other hand, a number of long-lasting wars and conflicts still continue. In such situations, there is little hope for peace settlements, and thus, at the end of 2000, also no prospect for disarmament, demilitarization and conversion.

In contrast to the ongoing conflicts (such as those in the Caucasus region particularly in the Russian region of Chechnya), Yugoslavia is getting back into the international community. The process of secessions and splitting-up of the country has come to a halt. While the war in Kosovo dominated the international debate in 1999, Yugoslavia turned from being a troubled spot to a place of hope, although not without problems. The security situation in and around Yugoslavia changed completely in 2000: immediate security threats decreased rapidly despite the problems related to autonomy aspirations in the region, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro. With the improvements in this region, it seems that Southeast Europe's prospects for peace, security and development might now be more attainable.

The process in Northern Ireland has moved back and forth between a possible decisive breakthrough on the road to peace and the breakdown of the fragile co-operation between the parties of the conflict. During 2000, the debates and negotiations demonstrated the importance of the role of the 'arms issue', particularly in relation to small arms and light weapons. Disagreement on decommissioning the arms of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was one of the stumbling blocs.

There is hope of improvement with regard to North Korea's role in the international community. For decades North Korea has been a source of concern because of its military ambitions. Steps have now been taken to resolve questions concerning North Korea's missile and nuclear programmes. The

government agreed to a temporary moratorium to their missile programme in 1999, but it is still unclear whether North Korea has given up its missile exports or not. Just as importantly, the complicated road to negotiations between North and South Korea was opened up in 2000.

While there had been great hope for a lasting peace between the people of Palestine and Israel after several rounds of negotiations, the process turned violent in the second half of 2000. The two adversaries called for a temporary freeze on most diplomatic contacts and the original Oslo Peace Agreements of 1993 and 1995 are far from being implemented, although no irrevocable steps have yet been taken.

The war between Eritrea and Ethiopia ended with a peace agreement in December 2000. Both governments are now prepared to negotiate their territorial disagreements. However, between 50,000 and 100,000 people died and millions of dollars' worth of military equipment and training were delivered to these two poverty-stricken African countries while the bloody war continued between them. A thorough process of demilitarization, disarmament and demobilization is now required to bring both countries back onto the road to sustainable development.

At the end of 2000, the volatile situation in Sierra Leone seemed under control after a period of turmoil and internal violence. Almost 13,000 UN peacekeepers and civilian police were based in the country, while the United Kingdom had over 400 troops there helping to restore law and order. Whether the situation will improve in 2001 or whether violence will spread again is an open question, given the roller-coaster experience in that country. The number of combatants willing to disarm will be an important factor. The war in Sierra Leone is the archetype of a conflict driven by greed, not grievance. Unfortunately, the diamond-funded rebels offer better material benefits to soldiers than government demobilization programmes. Economic interest in Sierra Leone's diamonds seems to be a never-ending source of renewed fighting and breach of peace agreements. International efforts to restrict the trade in 'blood diamonds' were strengthened in 2000, but it is difficult to control this commodity.

While the situation in Indonesia and neighbouring East Timor was of great concern at the end of 1999, it has now improved, although a number of regional aspirations for autonomy are still unresolved. While the fighting in East Timor has come to a halt, the situation still requires a strong UN peacekeeping presence. Almost 8,000 military peacekeepers and over 2,300 police and civilian personnel were based in East Timor in the Fall of 2000.

### *The tendency to opt for a military solution*

It is popular now to call for a more human-centred approach to security. The security of the people rather than states should be the primary concern of security policy. In contrast to many such political declarations, the UN Secretary General's *Millennium Report* made it clear that wars in the 1990s 'have violated, not so much borders, as people'.<sup>1</sup> The world of power politics at the beginning of the new millennium—with the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction still looming and the often-practised approach of military intervention—stands in stark contrast to such concepts of human security. The military is still often seen as the primary problem-solver.

Although international relations are no longer dominated by the animosity between the superpowers, the nuclear deterrence system still exists. Even at the operational targeting level, both Russia and the United States are still aiming their nuclear arsenals at each other. Many nations hold on to excessive conventional military capacities way beyond their legitimate security and defence needs. This is partly due to resistance to reform and inertia in the military sectors, but is also partly

because many governments still consider military solutions to be the primary alternative to diplomatic negotiations and political solutions. Although reliance on nationally based military security policy seems outdated in the age of globalization, many governments still hold on to such concepts.

At the same time, in many countries where the prospect of external aggression has been greatly diminished or is now non-existent, the traditional emphasis on self-defence as the primary function of the military has been called into question. Greater prominence is attached to other, secondary, functions such as international peacekeeping or peace-enforcement operations; humanitarian assistance and emergency aid in cases of natural disasters or war-related catastrophes (such as movements of large numbers of refugees); in combating drug trafficking, poaching and other forms of transnational crime undertaken by armed groups; internal intervention in politics or to combat separatism or calls for autonomy. However the tendency to emphasize non-core functions of the military can lead to 'mission creep' of the military, to unclear civil-military relations or even to reduced democratic control and the reduced accountability of the military.

Military intervention by the United Nations as a last resort cannot be ruled out completely. The international community has repeatedly discovered that 'no amount of good intentions can substitute for the fundamental ability to project credible force if complex peacekeeping ... is to succeed'<sup>2</sup>. However, a number of armed interventions in the past were clearly not the option of last resort: not all channels of non-military intervention were tested before the military was called upon. On the other hand, states have not always been able to agree on intervention in cases of gross violation of human rights and genocide, as in the case of Rwanda in 1994.

The dilemma of when and where to intervene remains. Organized mass murder and gross violation of human rights require a decisive answer. However, even at the level of the United Nations, there has in practice been little consistency in military intervention. Weak states are subject to such interventions far more often than strong ones. The self-critical UN report on peacekeeping—labelled the Brahimi Report—not only proposes concrete measures to make United Nations peacekeepers fit for future tasks, it also includes a critique of member states which look for military 'quick fixes' without appropriately considering the long-term requirements for solutions to conflicts or giving the United Nations the necessary resources.

### *Conclusions: the road to revitalization of disarmament, arms control and security*

This short analysis of arms control, disarmament, conversion, conflicts and military-based security policy illustrates that many states have been able to disarm without formal international agreement but often without giving up their military capability. However arms control agreements would have facilitated larger steps in disarmament; they could have prevented new rounds of armament and instability and built up confidence which, in turn, would have made it possible to sustain the dynamics of the disarmament process. Some of the enhanced functions of the military provide opportunities to make use of the know-how and equipment amassed in the military sector for genuine security purposes. On the other hand 'mission creep' of the military does not guarantee efficient and effective use of resources.

To revitalize arms control, disarmament and security, several areas seem particularly promising:

- **Controlling the role of the military in conflicts:** Elevating the functions of the military to peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and other non-core tasks needs to be applied with great caution. Not each and every conflict requires a military answer. On the contrary, military intervention can be counterproductive and has indeed been so in a number of cases. The

argument for the need for an enhanced role of the military is sometimes used by the military in order to justify their existence and avoid substantial cuts to their budgets. Civilian leaders on the other hand are often motivated by humanitarian concerns and want to make use of the expertise of the armed forces. However, intensified roles of the armed forces can lead to wasted resources and a decrease in democratic control of the military. Thus, clear democratic control over such military intervention is necessary.

- **Strengthening the United Nations peacekeeping capacity:** Since much more is expected of the United Nations than simply providing a buffer between warring parties, the United Nations must be given the means to break the cycle of violence when called upon. The lack of political will on the part of UN member states to provide the necessary human, financial and material resources has been amply documented. At present, the United Nations cannot guarantee a real and sustained commitment to assist when needed. This situation can tempt unauthorized organizations to intervene—as in the case of the NATO in Kosovo in 1999. The United Nations charter must remain the basis for international peace operations.
- **Intensifying disarmament:** Arms control should aim at intensifying disarmament and making the trend sustainable. This is particularly pressing in the area of nuclear weapons. The aim must remain complete nuclear disarmament. The promises of the nuclear powers to eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons must be accompanied by deeds. In addition—and despite the new-found force levels in the 1999 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty—substantial additional steps in conventional disarmament and arms control are possible.
- **Limiting technical modernization of weapons:** Arms control negotiations could aim to slow down the rapid process of modernization. This applies, for example, to new technologies of missile defence but also to conventional technologies. Policies of technological military dominance, as presently practised within NATO and particularly in the United States, have to give way to co-operative security strategies. The savings, in comparison to a new arms race, could make treaty limitations on technological development attractive.
- **Controlling small arms and light weapons:** A particularly promising area of arms control—in view of the casualties in predominant conflicts and wars—are the efforts to effectively control the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
- **Reducing military expenditures:** There is almost no experience in negotiating the reduction of the direct cost of the military and arms. During the Cold War, suggestions for the reduction of military expenditures were made within the UN system. Surprisingly, these proposals have not been taken up again in recent years, although the present increased transparency in military expenditures would favour such an approach. Instead, the discussion within NATO is that the European allies allegedly spend too little on defence.
- **Implementing selective initiatives:** While it is important to have the major powers participate in arms control and disarmament, one should not rule out selective initiatives by ‘like-minded states’ if the major powers refuse to co-operate. It is not unusual that the signatures of important governments are missing on arms control treaties. The Ottawa Convention is not an exception. If the reduction of the destructiveness of weapons is the main goal, such initiatives could mean progress. Opportunities for ‘like-minded states’ to set new norms are high in the area of ‘humanitarian’ arms control.
- **Assisting disarmament financially and technically:** Increasing disarmament assistance is urgently required. Often the cost of disarmament is a decisive barrier to quick and complete implementation, for example, in the case of landmines and chemical weapons. Assistance is

being given by a number of states, however sums are minimal in comparison to the global total of military expenditures.

Now that rearmament seems to be on the agenda again in a growing number of countries, the importance of arms control and democratic control of the military is increasing. Reaffirmation of arms control and revitalization of civilian control over the military could act as a barrier to a new arms race and facilitate human security at a lower level of armaments and a lower level of military engagement.

*This text is the introduction to the Conversion Survey 2001: Global Disarmament, Demilitarization and Demobilization by the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC). BICC documents and analyses worldwide disarmament and conversion efforts, including military demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and disposal of surplus weaponry. ISBN: 3-7890-7343-1*

#### Notes

- 1 United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Document A/54/2000, paragraph 193, p. 31, New York, 2000.
- 2 United Nations, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, UN document A/55/305 and S/2000/809 dated 21 August 2000, Executive Summary, p. 1.