

# Project Introduction

## Disarmament and Conflict Resolution

The global arena's main preoccupation during the Cold War centered on the maintenance of international peace and stability between states. The vast network of alliances, obligations and agreements which bound nuclear superpowers to the global system, and the memory of the rapid internationalization of disputes into world wars, favored the formulation of national and multinational deterrent policies designed to maintain a stability which was often confused with immobility. In these circumstances, the ability of groups within states to engage in protest and to challenge recognized authority was limited.

The end of the Cold War in 1989, however, led to a relaxing of this pattern, generating profound mobility within the global system. The ensuing break-up of alliances, partnerships, and regional support systems brought new and often weak states into the international arena. Since weak states are susceptible to ethnic tensions, secession, and outright criminality, many regions are now afflicted by situations of violent intra-state conflict.

Intra-state conflict occurs at immense humanitarian cost. The massive movement of people, their desperate condition, and the direct and indirect tolls on human life have, in turn, generated pressure for international action.

Before and since the Cold War, the main objective of the international community when taking action has been the maintenance and/or recovery of stability. The main difference between then and now, however, is that then, the main objective of global action was to maintain stability in the *international* arena, whereas now it is to stabilize *domestic* situations. The international community assists in stabilizing domestic situations in five different ways: by facilitating dialogue between warring parties, by preventing a renewal of internal armed conflict, by strengthening infrastructure, by improving local security, and by facilitating an electoral process intended to lead to political stability.<sup>1</sup>

The United Nations is by no means the only organization that has been requested by governments to undertake these tasks. However, the reputation of

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<sup>1</sup> James S. Sutterlin, "Military Force in the Service of Peace," *Aurora Papers*, No. 18 (Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Centre for Global Security, 1993), p. 13.

the United Nations as being representative of all states and thus as being objective and trustworthy has been especially valued, as indicated by the greater number of peace operations in which it is currently engaged. Before 1991, the UN peace operations' presence enhanced not only peace but also the strengthening of democratic processes, conciliation among population groups, the encouragement of respect for human rights, and the alleviation of humanitarian problems. These achievements are exemplified by the role of the UN in Congo, southern Lebanon, Nicaragua, Namibia, El Salvador, and to a lesser extent in Haiti.

Nevertheless, since 1991 the United Nations has been engaged in a number of simultaneous, larger, and more ambitious peace operations such as those in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Mozambique and Somalia. It has also been increasingly pressured to act on quick-flaring and horrendously costly explosions of violence, such as the one in Rwanda in 1994. The financial, personnel, and timing pressure on the United Nations to undertake these massive short-term stabilizing actions has seriously impaired the UN's ability to ensure long-term national and regional stability. The UN has necessarily shifted its focus from a supporting role, in which it could ensure long-term national and international stability, to a role which involves obtaining quick peace and easing humanitarian pressures immediately. But without a focus on peace defined as longer-term stability, the overall success of efforts to mediate and resolve intra-state conflict will remain in question.

This problem is beginning to be recognized and acted upon by the international community. More and more organizations and governments are linking success to the ability to offer non-violent alternatives to a post-conflict society. These alternatives are mostly of a socio-political/economic nature, and are national rather than regional in character. As important as these linkages are to the final resolution of conflict, they tend to overlook a major source of instability: the existence of vast amounts of weapons widely distributed among combatant and non-combatant elements in societies which are emerging from long periods of internal conflict. The reason why weapons themselves are not the primary focus of attention in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies is because they are viewed from a political perspective. Action which does not award importance to disarmament processes is justified by invoking the political value of a weapon as well as the way the weapon is used by a warring party, rather than its mere existence and availability. For proponents of this action, peace takes away the reason for using the weapon and, therefore, renders it harmless for the post-conflict reconstruction process. And yet, easy availability of weapons can, and does, militarize societies in general. It also

destabilizes regions that are affected by unrestricted trade of light weapons between borders.

There are two problems, therefore, with the international community's approach to post-conflict reconstruction processes: on the one hand, the international community, under pressure to react to increasingly violent internal conflict, has put a higher value on peace in the short-term than on development and stability in the long-term; and, on the other hand, those who *do* focus on long-term stability have put a higher value on the societal and economic elements of development than on the management of the primary tools of violence, i.e., weapons.

### **UNIDIR's DCR Project and the Control of Arms during Peace Processes (CAPP)**

The DCR Project aims to explore the predicament posed by UN peace operations which have recently focused on short-term needs rather than long-term stability. The Project is based on the premise that the control and reduction of weapons during peace operations can be a tool for ensuring stability. Perhaps more than ever before, the effective control of weapons has the capacity to influence far-reaching events in national and international activities. In this light, the management and control of arms could become an important component for the settlement of conflicts, a fundamental aid to diplomacy in the prevention and deflation of conflict, and a critical component of the reconstruction process in post-conflict societies.

Various instruments can be used to implement weapons control. For example, instruments which may be used to support preventive diplomacy in times of crisis include confidence-building measures, weapons control agreements, and the control of illegal weapons transfers across borders.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, during conflict situations, and particularly in the early phases of a peace operation, negotiations conducive to lasting peace can be brought about by effective monitoring and the establishment of safe havens, humanitarian corridors, and disengagement sectors. Finally, after the termination of armed conflict, a situation of stability is required for post-conflict reconstruction processes to be successful. Such stability can be facilitated by troop

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<sup>2</sup> Fred Tanner, "Arms Control in Times of Conflict," Project on Rethinking Arms Control, Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, PRAC Paper 7, October 1993.

withdrawals, the demilitarization of border zones, and effective disarmament, demobilization and demining.

Nevertheless, problems within the process of controlling weapons have cropped up at every stage of peace operations, for a variety of reasons. In most cases, initial control of arms upon the commencement of peace operations has not generally been achieved. This may be due to the fact that political negotiations necessary to generate mandates and missions permitting international action are often not specific enough on their disarmament implementation component. It could also be that the various actors involved interpret mandates in totally different ways. Conversely, in the specific cases in which peace operations have attained positive political outcomes, initial efforts to reduce weapons to manageable levels - even if achieved - tend to be soon devalued, since most of the ensuing activities center on the consolidation of post-conflict reconstruction processes. This shift in priorities from conflict resolution to reconstruction makes for sloppy follow-up of arms management operations. Follow-up problems, in turn, can result in future threats to internal stability. They also have the potential to destabilize neighboring states due to the uncontrolled and unaccounted-for mass movement of weapons that are no longer of political or military value to the former warring parties.

The combination of internal conflicts with the proliferation of light weapons has marked peace operations since 1990. This combination poses new challenges to the international community and highlights the fact that a lack of consistent strategies for the control of arms during peace processes (CAPP) reduces the effectiveness of ongoing missions and diminishes the chances of long-term national and regional stability once peace is agreed upon.

The case studies undertaken by the DCR Project highlight a number of recurrent problems that have impinged on the control and reduction of weapons during peace operations. Foremost among these are problems associated with the establishment and maintenance of a secure environment early in the mission, and problems concerned with the lack of coordination of efforts among the various groups involved in the mission. Many secondary complications would be alleviated if these two problems areas were understood differently. The establishment of a secure environment, for example, would make the warring parties more likely to agree on consensual disarmament initiatives. Likewise, a concerted effort at weapons control early in the mission would demonstrate the international community's determination to hold the parties to their original peace agreements and cease-fire arrangements. Such a demonstration of resolve would make it more difficult for these agreements to be broken once the peace operation was underway.

The coordination problem applies both to international interactions and to the components of the peace operation. A peace process will be more likely to succeed if there is cooperation and coordination between the international effort and the nations which immediately neighbor the stricken country. But coordination must not simply be present at the international level; it must permeate the entire peace operation as well. To obtain maximum effect, relations must be coordinated among and within the civil affairs, military, and humanitarian groups which comprise a peace operation. A minimum of coordination must also be achieved between intra- and inter-state mission commands, the civil and military components at strategic, operational and tactical levels, and the humanitarian aid organizations working in the field; these components must cooperate with each other if the mission is to reach its desired outcome. If problems with mission coordination are overcome, many secondary difficulties could also be avoided, including lack of joint management, lack of unity of effort, and lack of mission and population protection mechanisms.

Given these considerations, the Project believes that the way to implement peace, defined in terms of long-term stability, is to focus not just on the sources of violence (such as social and political development issues) but also on the material vehicles for violence (such as weapons and munitions). Likewise, the implementation of peace must take into account *both* the future needs of a society and the elimination of its excess weapons, *and also* the broader international and regional context in which the society is situated. This is because weapons that are not managed and controlled in the field will invariably flow over into neighboring countries, becoming a problem in themselves. Thus, *the establishment of viable stability requires that three primary aspects be included in every approach to intra-state conflict resolution: (1) the implementation of a comprehensive, systematic disarmament program as soon as a peace operation is set-up; (2) the establishment of an arms management program that continues into national post-conflict reconstruction processes; and (3) the encouragement of close cooperation on weapons control and management programs between countries in the region where the peace operation is being implemented.*

In order to fulfill its research mission, the DCR Project has been divided into four phases. These are as follows: (1) the development, distribution, and interpretation of a *Practitioners' Questionnaire on Weapons Control, Disarmament and Demobilization during Peacekeeping Operations*; (2) the development and publication of case studies on peace operations in which disarmament tasks constituted an important aspect of the wider mission; (3) the

organization of a series of workshops on policy issues; and (4) the publication of policy papers on substantive issues related to the linkages between the control of arms during peace processes (CAPP) and the settlement of conflict.

The first case study examined the way in which three international peace processes (UNOSOM, UNITAF, and UNOSOM II) struggled with the issue of controlling and managing light weapons in Somalia. The second volume focused on the Commonwealth Monitoring Force (CMF) in Rhodesia, the third on the complex missions in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNPROFOR), the fourth study looked at the UN mission in Cambodia (UNTAC), the fifth examined the UN operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), and the sixth volume addressed the United Nations observer mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). This study is concerned with the combined efforts of the Multinational Force (MNF) and United Nations mission in Haiti (UNMIH) to manage the restoration of the democratically elected Aristide government in Haiti. The paper is presented with a summary of the responses regarding this mission which were obtained through the Project's own *Practitioners' Questionnaire on Weapons Control, Disarmament and Demobilization during Peacekeeping Operations*.

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