



WEAPONS OF PEACE

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Disarmament and arms limitation are spheres inextricably linked to international security. No examination of the threats, challenges and changes to collective global security would be complete without reviewing developments in these areas. General and complete disarmament (GCD) has been the objective of the United Nations (UN) for many years. While GCD, per se, may seem a nebulous concept, it has translated broadly into seeking the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and the regulation of conventional weapons commensurate with the legitimate defence needs of countries and consistent with common security.

The current focus, however, has been on the proliferation of WMDs to those states and non-state actors outside the 'club' of the five Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nuclear-weapon states and the three non-NPT nuclear-weapon-capable countries. There are two important reasons why this emphasis is inadequate. Firstly, it ignores the fundamental linkage between WMD proliferation and WMD disarmament. If all WMD possession was delegitimised, the politico-military task of arresting proliferation would have indisputable legitimacy and greater success. Secondly, and more relevantly, it ignores the dominant role of conventional weapons – including landmines and small arms – in the conflicts that are currently being waged throughout the world, the mounting global military expenditure (estimated at over US\$ 800 billion per year), and the fact that terrorist groups continue to use conven-

Jayantha Dhanapala reconnoitres around strategic moves being made on the world scene to end or contain armed conflict on a global scale.

tional weapons, small arms and explosives in their terrorist acts.

Attention to the first issue clashes inevitably with the nuclear-weapon reliant postures of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Until changes take place in these policies, little progress can be expected on WMDs – despite the urgency derived from the enormous lethality of those weapons and the ever-increasing danger that the taboo over their use may soon be broken. More wars may therefore be fought to prevent WMD proliferation, more pre-emptive counter-proliferation measures may be launched, and asymmetric and crude use of WMDs may be attempted by terrorists despite all precautions.

The second issue presents the international community with a viable area for policy action. In bringing this area to the policy forefront, we can reduce the incidence and intensity of conflict and make more likely the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This does not mean that we will not run into the vested interests of major powers that are among the largest exporters of conventional arms. Nor will solutions be readily accepted – especially in areas of protracted conflict and by non-state actors. However, the propensity for enhancing common security in the short term lies clearly in this area.

The significantly increased role of conventional weapons arises from the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs

(RMA) with the application of information and computer technology to weapons manufacture. Thus, precision-guided weapons and other sophisticated weaponry have been used in recent wars and have led to their increased demand.

Global agreements and ongoing initiatives have already addressed the problems confronting international peace and security through the unbridled use of conventional arms. They relate to regional arrangements or to the prohibition of inhumane weapons. It is in the conventional weapons area that peace and development – and ultimately, human security – is directly affected. The outlay for weapons manufacture and purchase diverts resources from urgent people-centred development needs. More arms have necessarily not led to more security. The actual use of the weapons results in deaths and destruction of property. Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) alone is said to account for 500,000 deaths per annum. SALW supplies exacerbate civil conflicts, creating insecurity and instability in countries and hampering development. Nowhere, therefore, is the nexus between disarmament and development more apparent and real than in the area of conventional weapons. The need for remedial action is, therefore, especially urgent.

A number of policy options are available to the international community. Some of them will impinge on state sovereignty and the right – under Article 51 of the UN Charter – to defend themselves in the event of an armed attack. On the state sovereignty argument, it must be recognised that the world has moved on since 1945; and if collective security is to be preserved, then compromises are necessary along the lines recommended by the December 2001 Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State



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WMDs

Sovereignty – 'Responsibility To Protect'. There are also disarmament and arms-limitation treaties and conventions to which states are legally bound, and where proven violations require action by the Security Council acting together.

These may be made on the lines of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), whereby specific limits are agreed upon for the different categories of conventional weapons. These could be encouraged in other regions, with the lessons learned being disseminated by the UN through seminars and workshops. Not every region will accept these arrangements, in view of varying levels of confidence and trust. However, the Latin American region may be a starting point, since inter-state relations have reached a level of maturity and amity. Such an arrangement would help in the combating of terrorist groups, insurgents and drug cartels which are also armed. Such arrangements are best negotiated under the aegis of regional organisations such as the OAS and the African Union. Where such organisations do not exist – as in Asia – the task could be undertaken by sub-regional bodies such as ASEAN and SAARC.

These measures of the UN – CAR and SIRME – are voluntary, but have had good participation from over 100 states. The CAR alone covers 95 per cent of the conventional arms trade in the seven categories where reporting is recorded. It is vital that universality be reached in these instruments; and also that, in CAR, we extend the register to include all categories mentioned in the CFE. This will not happen easily, but agreements reached at the UN Group of Governmental Experts on CAR in 2003 can provide the momentum for further progress. It will require political decisions at the highest level. If the developed countries and the five permanent members of the Security Council agree, then gentle persuasion of other countries will be possible with the UN Secretary-General in the lead.

These have been opaque – largely because some governments would like to keep it that way in order to profit from arms exports and to hide the illicit smuggling of arms to destabilise other countries. The code of ethics which individual countries or groups of countries – such as the European Union in respect of SALW – have in place has been inconsistently applied and has had little impact. At the 2001 UN Conference on the illicit trade in SALW, considerable heartburn was experienced by an overwhelming majority of states because one state refused to agree to a ban on the supply of arms to non-state groups. As a first step, the marking and

tracing of weapons is vital – with distinctive and indelible markings made by international agreement at the point of manufacture. Arms transfers to countries under arms embargoes by the Security Council should be punished severely by the International Criminal Court or by special tribunals. From 1998-2002, SIPRI records that the US (41%), Russia (22%), France (9%), Germany (5%), UK (5%) and China (5%) were the largest conventional arms suppliers. This reveals that the five permanent members of the Security Council – which has "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" – have it in their hands to determine if arms should be supplied to countries or not.

The concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones has been very successful since the first zone was created in 1968, and proposals have now been made for zones free of WMDs. In regions recovering from conflict where peacekeeping missions are involved, or where peace building is being attempted, conventional weapons-free zones may be experimented with, beginning on a limited scale. Monitoring missions will be needed to implement such zones. Missile-free zones are another possibility in specific regions, either as a measure incorporated into Security Council resolutions on particular conflicts, or voluntarily arrived at through bilateral or multilateral agreements.

These underpin the rule of international law through treaty regimes, and this area needs to be expanded through freshly negotiated multilateral treaties on conventional weapons. The ICRC and humanitarian NGOs have worked hard in researching new weapons that conflict with humanitarian principles – pushing for bans on laser weapons, for example...

This research must continue, even as weapons laboratories invent new weapons – some of them based on new physical principles. National academies of sciences must also take the lead in sounding alarms on new types of weapons that contravene humanitarian principles. Restraints on missiles have to be negotiated.

This is an important step. At the moment, the UN Secretary-General's excellent initiative is confined to nine principles drawn from the human rights, labour and environment areas with a view to better corporate citizenship.

Since the arms industry – with production alone employing about eight million people – is a vital component in the effort to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable global economy, it has to be included in the principles governing the global compact.