



Disarmament and Globalisation Project

Summary of the working paper

The Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS



Project Summary and Rationale

Twenty years ago, international political and strategic studies included a major focus on nuclear and conventional disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Indeed, disarmament had been a significant feature of international public policy since before the First World War. Today, while the topic has broadened to include biological and chemical weapons, as well as some transfer control initiatives on conventional weapons and small arms, it is almost exclusively studied under the title of 'non-proliferation'. Disarmament has almost disappeared from Western-led academic, civil society, and international political debate. The recent weak progress on disarmament by the international community compounds the current real world problems of conventional and low-intensity war and the threat of nuclear war. Destabilising accumulations of weapons damage the balance of rich economies and the development of poorer ones. Following the 'golden decade' of arms control the international security debate has reverted to serious differences of opinion between the U.S. and Russia which threaten to undermine the real progress made. Politically, there is now both timeliness and an urgency of this proposed new start.

The academic shift away from disarmament as a whole in favour of a compartmentalized approach follows changes in governments' strategies, especially the change of US-led policy from mutual reduction and control towards pre-emption and assertion of the rights of 'haves' against 'have-nots'. One by one the painfully created foundations of global security are being undermined, discarded, halted in mid-construction or simply allowed to decay: ABM, BWC protocol, IAEA protocol, START, INF, CFE, NPT, NSG are all examples. Opportunities to move further on tactical nuclear arms or space weapons have been lost. At the same time new nuclear weapons, missile defences and space weapons are being developed by a number of states and agreements such as that between the U.S. and India on nuclear technology threaten those foundations of arms control that have so remained intact.

The continuation of the Nunn-Lugar programme and recent initiatives to revive the FMCT talks are positive signs. Useful innovations in practical – including non-violent – methods of controlling dangerous commodities including nuclear materials, for example in transport and logistics, have come gradually as the disarmament and arms

control mainstream has both dwindled and split. The novel legislative approach embodied in UNSCR 1540 is certainly a step in the right direction in the battle on illicit WMD transfers but it has suffered through problems of implementation at the state level. Efforts to create new initiatives for example on the “illicit trade” in small arms and light weapons are floundering on narrow conceptions of security sector reform (SSR) and the international rule of law.

With respect to conventional arms, the overwhelming vote in the General Assembly in December 2006 for a coordinated UN process to consider the feasibility, scope and parameters of a global Arms Trade Treaty reflects an increased international concern in arms control debates with humanitarian, human rights and development standards and impacts. However, to achieve these ends, this concern needs to also be directed at initiatives to reduce holdings of major weapons systems, ordnance stocks and production, and not only to the control of the conventional weapons trade. Moreover, the parallel surge of interest by the international donor community, reflected in the OECD Development Assistance Committee, in using such standards to measure the success of security sector reform requires the development of an integrated, risk-based approach to equipment and weaponry, and hence to disarmament, in the re-shaping of military, security and policing institutions – one without the other will not deliver sustained security.

What is needed is not to set aside the useful aspects of the new, piecemeal approach towards proliferation but to reunite them with a renewed ‘classical’ process based on strategies towards disarmament and the use of treaty and rule of law methods - with the associated principles of equity, objectivity, universality and transparency. This new combination could achieve a more rational division of labour and subsidiarity. Such an approach should fill dangerous gaps in the pattern of coverage and effort, and minimise the double-think and double standards that are rife in current policies and practices.

The renewed interest in the United States in achieving a WMD Free World, led by Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, indicates that the tide may have turned in the United States. The international challenge is to ensure that this is not a false dawn similar to the rejection of nuclear weapons by General Butler and others in the mid-

1990s. Congressional resistance to proposed new nuclear weapons and the concrete nature of programmes such as NTI's are strong and positive indicators as is the engagement of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. An international coalition must build upon the important precedents set by the Canberra Commission, the Blix Commission, governmental initiatives by the likes of Norway, Germany and the UK, and non-governmental reports from BASIC to Amnesty across the spectrum of human security.

This project is designed to help re-energise an international constituency capable of carrying through a realistic risk-based global disarmament agenda with an effective trajectory for arms control based on applied international and development studies and public policy. It aims to link in with existing government-led diplomacy, such as the New Agenda Coalition, and civil society initiatives including the Nuclear Threat Initiative in the U.S. The project will develop research and public policy to address these problems in consultation with governments, security service officials, academics, relevant business associations, non-governmental organisations and wider civil society. It is envisaged that these stakeholders will be consulted through a possible summit of Heads of State and government in 2009, the NPT Review in 2010 and by 2011 be well placed to chart ways forward into the second decade of the century.