

PEACE THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE ARMS RESTRAINT

by Saul Mendlovitz

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Militarism is the willingness, however regrettable, to use organized violence for a broad range of objectives, from self-defense to aggression for conquest. Demilitarization is a social and political process aimed at changing this willingness and, for our purposes, changing the capacity to use armed forces. In pursuing the question of how to demilitarize the globe, it is useful to review some aspects of the present military system.

Since 1945, between 140 and 150 situations of violence in the world, including civil armed conflicts, are generally agreed upon as having been wars and have resulted in 40 million battle-related deaths, some 200-250 million wounded, and perhaps as many displaced individuals and refugees. All these deaths have been a result of "conventional" weapons: nuclear weapons have not been used, and the best information seems to indicate that fewer than 25,000 of these deaths are due to chemical and biological weapons. In the big wars — Korea, Middle East, Vietnam, Iran-Iraq, Iraq-Kuwait, Afghanistan, former Yugoslavia — the weapons inflicting death and wounds were artillery tanks, air strikes, and the like; but since 1993, 80 to 90 percent of individuals killed or wounded (mostly civilians) have been victims of light and small weapons.

Land mines, which have been banned by most states (with the glaring exceptions of the United States and China) have been featured



prominently in mass media because they impact upon civilians and are costly and difficult to remove. It is clear, however, that AK47s and other hand-held weapons account for much more harm, perhaps by a magnitude of ten. Some 750 million weapons of this sort are flowing around the world through channels governmental and nongovernmental, licit and illicit. A recent UN study highlighted the role of small arms and light weapons not only in insurgencies, but also in terrorism and organized crime.

The present global military system allows for unilateral military organization decision-making within the context of the UN Charter. Under Article 39, the Security Council has authority to deal with threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression. At the same time, for this article to be invoked, the votes of the permanent members as well as a majority of the Security Council are required. The system has no standing military police forces, let alone compulsory jurisdiction before a court to deal with disagreements between states. In our view, this system is inadequate to deal with organized armed violence and needs changing fundamentally.

A transnational consortium of the International Association of Lawyers

Against Nuclear Arms, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, International Peace Bureau, and World Order Models Project is currently working to promote a political process which would, as a first step, culminate in a defensive security system. "Defensive security" is defined here as a structure of the military forces of states that suffices for the prevention of possible aggression, but is insufficient for attack. The establishment of a global military regime that prohibits offensive capacity by states would obviously be a major paradigm shift, equivalent perhaps in impact to the elimination of the slave trade in the movement to abolish slavery.

This project builds upon the document *Study on Defensive Security Concepts and Policies*, which results from a General Assembly resolution requesting the Secretary-General to submit a report on this topic with "the assistance of qualified governmental experts and taking into account the views of member states and other relevant information." The report was issued in July 1992 and asks member states to respond to it, indicating the manner in which members may achieve the goal of defensive security.

Within this context, two draft treaties have been formulated: *Limitation and Abolition of International Arms*, by the above consortium, and *Reducing Conventional Weapons and Conventional Wars*, by Jonathan Dean in conjunction with the Washington, DC branch of the United Nations Association. In addition, Randall Forsberg, originator of the Nuclear Freeze Movement in the early 1980s and now chair of the

Institute of Defense and Disarmament, is an active participant in the formulation of the project and in a political program aimed at organizing a public movement.

As presently constituted, the project calls for implementing the following principles and steps in the near to mid-term future:

1. Building on the present voluntary UN Arms Register, a process will be initiated calling for mandatory reporting (transparency) on arms holdings, production, trade, military budgets, and military personnel.



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2. Negotiations should begin to establish an agreed-upon reduction in "conventional" holdings, production, and trade, down to the levels of defensive security.

3. The national-defense role of armed forces would be limited to defense; they would not be available for "protecting vital interests."

4. Collective means of conflict prevention and defense would be strengthened. Mediation, arbitration, and compulsory jurisdiction before appropriate tribunals on matters dealing with violations of international law would be established.

In addition, it is foreseen that there would be global constabulary forces, under strict civilian control, to deal with aggression, crimes against humanity, genocide, and internal civil wars.

Work is currently underway to integrate the two treaties into a single document available in 1998. The integrated draft will represent the view of the sponsoring organizations, although discussion of various issues will undoubtedly take place. For example, what ought to be the composition and role of global police forces? To what extent should enforcement against violations of international law be an initial step, and to what extent would Security Council approval through its present processes need to be modified? How would one deal with forces in various

states which are less oriented to national territorial defense? To what extent will global armed forces be utilized to intervene in civil wars?

This project has been placed on the agenda of The Hague Appeal for Peace (HAP), which is planning a major conference in June 1999 commemorating the centennial of the First Hague Conference, which produced the first codification of the laws of war. There is good reason to believe that defensive security and a draft convention will be a major element in the HAP conference. It is hoped that citizen groups and private organizations throughout the world will not only sponsor this project, but initiate dialogue and political action within their polities so that the governments of the world will enact an appropriate treaty to accomplish the project's purposes. ♦