

THE DISARMAMENT, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

COMPENDIUM OF UNIDIR ANNUAL YOUTH DISARMAMENT

ESSAY COMPETITION'S BEST ESSAYS

2022





FOREWORD

by Dr. Robin Geiß

UN Institute for Disarmament Research Director

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) believes in the power of today's youth to bring about lasting, positive change in arms control and disarmament. As described in the Secretary-General's Disarmament Agenda, "young people have tremendous force to bring about change in the world... And they have proved their power time and time again in support of the cause of disarmament".¹

The UNIDIR Global Youth Disarmament Essay Competition is one of our key efforts to engage young people via research activities on disarmament matters. In the second quarter of 2022, UNIDIR also hosted a Model UN Conference on Disarmament in partnership with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea and the Geneva International Model United Nations. This publication is therefore just one example of UNIDIR initiatives to engage and promote youth in disarmament. We hope that this compendium, showcasing the best essays received in the first edition of UNIDIR's Global Youth Disarmament Essay Competition, will set in motion deeper and broader engagements with young people to further enrich our conversations on disarmament. We hope that these essays also inspire more young people to share their innovative ideas and perspectives as we all face urgent arms-related issues causing human suffering and reversing our development gains. UNIDIR is committed to undertaking initiatives that promote the role of Youth in cooperation on disarmament and non-proliferation.

UNIDIR would like to sincerely thank all participants who wrote and submitted their essays for this first competition. We were delighted to read so many inspiring ideas about disarmament, security and development that made the selection of winners challenging. UNIDIR would also like to present its compliments to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations in Geneva for its support to UNIDIR's work on youth and disarmament. Finally, I wish to sincerely thank the UNIDIR team that supported this initiative, in particular Joshua Bata, Larissa Pacheco, Matilde Vecchioni, Ruben Nicolin, Theo Bajon and Pablo Rice.

November 2022

¹ United Nations (2018) Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament. (New York: Office for Disarmament Affairs), <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/sq-agenda/en/>>



MESSAGE

from H.E. Ms. Yoon Seong-mee
Head of Delegation of the Republic of Korea
to the Conference on Disarmament

Initiatives on ‘Youth and Disarmament’ present an opportunity to promote and strengthen the role played by young people in security, disarmament and development more broadly. These efforts recognize that young people are key agents of social change and reaffirm the positive contribution that their views and insights offer in attaining sustainable peace and security. These initiatives, therefore, represent our collective commitment in listening to and working with youth across the globe.

As part of our efforts in strengthening cooperation and inclusive dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation, the Government of the Republic of Korea has committed its support to ‘Youth and Disarmament’ initiatives of UNIDIR. We have been, therefore, delighted to support the UNIDIR Global Youth Disarmament Essay Competition, which represented a great contribution and collaborative effort in facilitating a constructive engagement with the youth in disarmament. It has been a great pleasure to witness the incredible diversity and quality of engagement on this initiative. With these, we send our warmest congratulations to the winners of the Global Youth Disarmament Essay Competition, and we hope that this publication can only encourage higher engagement of the youth in the field of disarmament.

November 2022

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INTRODUCTION

The UN Secretary-General's 'Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament' highlighted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development took an important step towards articulating how arms control, peace, and security contribute to development.² The Disarmament Agenda emphasized that considerable work is required to bring the historical relationship between disarmament and development back to the forefront of international consciousness. A part of this vital work is engaging the young generation to harness their force for change and providing them with a platform to enter highly specialized fields, such as disarmament.³

The Disarmament Agenda and the UN General Assembly Resolution on Youth, Disarmament, and Non-proliferation (A/RES/76/45) both call for youth empowerment to examine disarmament and development challenges and propose innovative approaches for increasing peace and security in the 21st century.⁴ UNIDIR sets itself to support these initiatives by raising awareness on vital disarmament issues and promoting the power of youth in arms control and disarmament with a special focus on research.

UNIDIR'S GLOBAL YOUTH DISARMAMENT ESSAY COMPETITION

The first annual UNIDIR Global Youth Disarmament Essay competition was launched in 2022, responding to the calls for giving a voice to young people on the connections between disarmament and development. The Republic of Korea generously supported this essay competition.

The theme of the first UNIDIR Global Youth Disarmament Essay competition was the 'Disarmament, Security and Development Nexus'. Students and young professionals aged between 18 to 29 years old were invited to submit an essay that explored one of the following areas:

- Disarmament, economic growth, and inequalities;
- Disarmament for sustainable cities;
- Innovative disarmament efforts in light of the 21st century's environmental challenges;
- Gender mainstreaming for sustainable disarmament and development.

The number of submissions received and the diversity of participants sharing their perspectives and insights signify the success of this year's Global Youth Disarmament Essay competition. UNIDIR received 121 essays from participants from 38 countries. This publication presents the top 5 essays, as selected by a Panel of international experts and UNIDIR staff. It showcases the next generation's views on disarmament, security, and development at the local, national, regional, and global levels. The five best essays of the competition are listed on the next page in order of rank from the overall winner to the fifth-place essay.

² United Nations (2018) Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament. (New York: Office for Disarmament Affairs), <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda/en/>>

³ Ibid.

⁴ United Nations (2018) Securing Our Common Future; General Assembly, "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation resolution", UN Document A/RES/76/45 2021

1

Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas and Increasing Respect for the Laws of War



“My essay focused on explosive weapons in densely populated areas, where I argued that promoting the rules of armed conflict and understanding of the human costs of urban conflict is a prerequisite for disarmament.”

Layal Al Ghozi | Bahrain

Layal is a Bahraini research assistant based at the International Institute for Strategic Studies office in the Middle East. She obtained her LLM in International Law and Security from the University of Glasgow, specializing in the laws of armed conflict, laws of the UN, and international human rights law.

2

Human Security: A Bridge Towards Disarmament



“I decided to submit an essay because, as the UN Secretary-General notes, ‘there is a lot that remains to be done,’ and this essay competition seemed to me like a good starting point.”

Ludovica Castelli | Italy

Ludovica is a European Research Council-funded Doctoral Researcher at the Third Nuclear Age project, University of Leicester. Within the project, she studies the theoretical and methodological foundations of the Nuclear Domino Theory in its application to the Middle East.

3

A Gender Perspective on Disarmament: When Women (and Girls) are not only Victims but also Agents of Violence



“I participated in the essay competition because I wanted to acknowledge that every day, women and girls suffer, but also fight for their freedom and that it is time for them to be guaranteed what they have long demanded: participation.”

Zahra Bel Arache | Morocco and Italy

Zahra is a graduate student in International Security Studies at the University of Trento and an honours student in Political Science at the Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa. Her interests include disarmament, non-proliferation, new technologies and gender studies.

4

National Choices, Global Effects: Discussing Micro Disarmament, Development, Peace, and Illicit Flows of SALW in Brazil



“The international community must pay attention to how recent changes in Brazil’s gun policy will influence levels of armed violence and obstruct peace nationally and beyond.”

André Duffles Teixeira Aranega | Brazil

André has a Bachelor’s degree in International Relations. Currently, he is a Master’s student in International Relations at the Institute of International Relations of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (IRI/PUC-Rio).

5

Stopping Strategic Decoupling: The Disarmament, Security and Development Nexus



“The UNIDIR essay competition allowed me to emphasize the subliminal risks coming along with global strategic decoupling – a circumstance specifically important to the disarmament, security and development nexus.”

Zino Roos | Germany

Zino studied economics. Currently, he addresses global issues as a research fellow of Public Management and Public Policy at Zeppelin University.

EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

IN DENSELY POPULATED

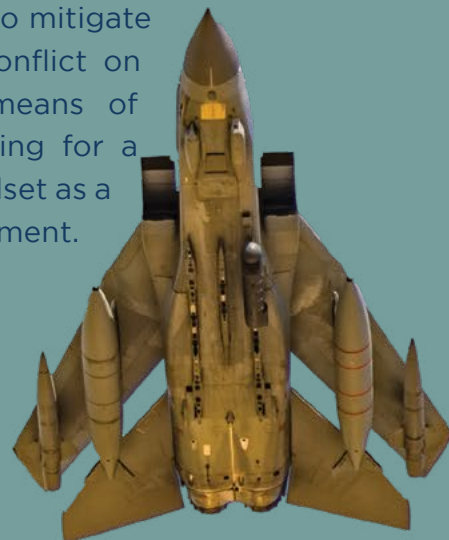
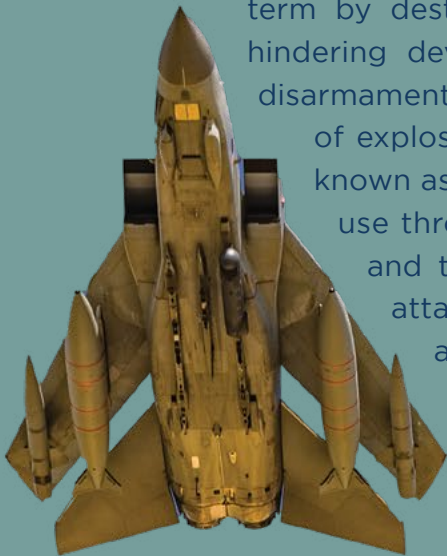
AREAS AND INCREASING

RESPECT FOR THE

LAWS OF WAR

LAYAL AL GHOOZI

The use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas poses risks to civilians, both in the immediate sense and in the long term by destroying critical civilian services, hindering development. While there are no disarmament measures prohibiting the use of explosives, the rules of war, otherwise known as humanitarian law, prohibit their use through distinction, proportionality, and the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. Therefore, this essay addresses the need to induce compliance with existing rules of war as a way to mitigate the impact of conflict on civilians, as a means of disarmament, arguing for a cultural shift in mindset as a prerequisite to complete disarmament.



Introduction

Disarmament measures have failed to address the use of explosive weapons in heavily populated areas, while the laws of war prohibiting the use of these means of warfare are being flouted, setting back human security and development efforts. Setting this against the backdrop of heightened threat perceptions influencing a global arms race and an increase in military expenditure, coupled with a decline in respect for the fundamental rules of war,¹ disarmament becomes necessary to counter conventional violence and promote development and the redistribution of resources for socioeconomic purposes. Disarmament is a multi-pronged set of measures that is barren if not complied with, therefore the focus should be not only on drafting regulations and commitments, but also enforcing them across all actors involved in conflict. This essay argues that a shift in culture in favour of disarmament is needed. This is possible by facilitating a better understanding of the long-term impact of conventional explosive weapons on human development and security, which in turn generates better respect for the rules of war prohibiting their use, in line with the Secretary-General's 'Our Common Future' agenda.² While the ultimate goal is to evoke a reduction in military spending and transfer the resources used for arms towards economic and social development, disarmament will not immediately result in the redistribution of funds towards development. Instead, fostering a broader shift in culture towards respecting the rules of war and understanding the effects of conflict on civilian populations should be the immediate goal.

Context: Urban Warfare and Human Security

The Secretary-General's agenda 'Our Common Future' claims that the protection of civilians in armed conflict has become a 'central disarmament concern' since the end of the Second World War.³ Today's conflicts are increasingly centred in urban areas surrounding civilian populations and involve irregular armed groups,⁴ dragging civilians into the battlefield due to the 'fog of war' which conflates civilians with legitimate targets.⁵ Indeed, urban conflict poses practical and humanitarian challenges to the laws of armed conflict as civilians, proximate to the battlefield, are directly targeted

or face injury and death incidentally as a result. Increasingly, unlawful means and methods of warfare are used to undermine the morale of the belligerents, whether through besieging and starving the population; targeting schools, hospitals, homes and objects indispensable to civilians; or by using indiscriminate conventional weapons in densely populated areas, illustrating its devastating impact on human security. With civilians representing 90 per cent of victims of war,⁶ chances of socioeconomic development are exponentially reduced if not eradicated by conflict.⁷ Generating an understanding among belligerents of the long-term effects of explosive weapons in urban settings will therefore help belligerents to comply with the rules of war that prohibit the use of these weapons within close proximity to civilians. Shaping this cultural understanding would contribute effectively to disarmament.

Development

Development and disarmament are mutually reinforcing. While a poor standard of living can drive conflict, conflict equally drives people to poverty and frustrates development standards.⁸ Disarmament focuses on human security since it entails eliminating, regulating, and reducing armaments and military expenditure with the aim of maintaining international peace and security, upholding the principles of humanity by prohibiting weapons which cause unnecessary suffering and superfluous injury, preventing and resolving armed conflicts, and protecting civilians.⁹ These goals are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which commits states to eradicate poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women.¹⁰

Disarmament contributes to a range of SDG's including Target 3 on good health and well-being and Target 4 on quality education.¹¹ Significantly, Target 16 of the SDGs aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".¹² In order to do so, this necessarily requires the reduction of all forms of violence (Target 16.1). This is attainable through disarmament measures which

¹ Secretary-General of the United Nations, 'Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament', 2018 <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sg-disarmament-agenda-pubs-page.pdf>>, p. 5

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, p. 7

⁴ United Nations, 'Urban Warfare Devastates 50 Million People Worldwide, Speakers Tell Security Council, Calling for Effective Tools to End Impunity, Improve Humanitarian Response', 2022 <<https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14775.doc.htm>>

⁵ Federico Sperotto, 'The Fog of War', *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali*, (2015) 82:2.

⁶ Secretary-General of the United Nations, 'Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament', 2018 <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sg-disarmament-agenda-pubs-page.pdf>>, p. 34

⁷ Scott Gates et al., *The Consequences of Internal Armed Conflict for Development* (Part 1), (Stokholm: SIPRI, 2015)

⁸ Reaching Critical Will, 'Disarmament And Development' <<https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Resources/Factsheets/disdev.pdf>>

⁹ United Nations, 'Disarmament' <<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/disarmament>>

¹⁰ World Health Organization, 'Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)', 2018 <[https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/millennium-development-goals-\(mdgs\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/millennium-development-goals-(mdgs))>

¹¹ Reuters, 'Factbox: Schools Under Fire In War Zones', 2016 <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-humanitarian-summit-education-factbox-idUSKCN0YEQ6>>

¹² United Nations, 'Goal 16' <<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>>.

would prohibit and restrict the use of certain weapons and establishing controls for arms, but also through educating and training State armed forces and non-State armed groups on complying with the rules of war to avoid causing unnecessary or superfluous injury. Likewise, Target 16.6 requires the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, attainable through measures to allow for transparency and confidence-building measures such as reporting military expenditure to international bodies like the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures.

In 1987, the General Assembly held the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. The conference concluded that disarmament and arms control measures are necessary for the redistribution of military expenditure towards socioeconomic development and job creation, and are required to eradicate poverty.¹³ This largely depends on the direct contrast between unmet socioeconomic needs and military spending.¹⁴ While important, consolidating an understanding of the rules of war and the effect of conventional explosive weapons on the civilian population are fundamentally needed to enhance disarmament efforts, especially since explosive weapons are not prohibited as a type of weapon.

Explosive Weapons and Their Impact

The use of conventional explosive weapons like bombs, missiles, mortars, rockets, artillery and others in densely populated areas challenges the prospects of meaningful and sustainable development of societies by destroying essential civilian services. This stretches beyond immediate physical injury or death. Increasingly, essential services and civilian objects like water facilities, schools, medical units and hospitals face attack, creating a stream of problems that reverberate in the long term,¹⁵ setting development standards decades behind. The direct impact of blast and fragmentation caused by explosive weapons and their wide destructive radius, as well as the indirect and reverberating effects, stifle development by destroying essential infrastructure and services.¹⁶ When schools are destroyed, education becomes an added challenge.¹⁷

Likewise, when bombs destroy homes and force people into displacement, girls and women tend to be relegated to their 'traditional' household tasks to cope and are exposed to a higher risk of sexual violence in refugee camps,¹⁸ while boys and men may be thrust into the conflict,¹⁹ setting gender inequality decades behind.²⁰ Thus, peace is necessary for continued development.²¹

The added challenge of non-compliance with the rules of war by warring parties makes the use of explosives in populated areas an even more significant phenomenon. Growing disregard for the laws of armed conflict, otherwise known as international humanitarian law (IHL), means that objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population are often deliberately targeted to undermine the war efforts of belligerents. In 2019, the Secretary-General and the ICRC President issued a joint appeal on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Cities,²² appealing to parties of armed conflict to refrain from bombing and shelling cities and populated areas as the destruction of critical infrastructure undermines the functioning of basic services. For instance, water facilities in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen have been weaponized regularly and other critical services indispensable to the survival of the civilian population are deliberately targeted using explosive weapons.²³

For example, the attacks against sanitation, water, and healthcare facilities in Yemen has resulted in the spread of cholera throughout the region, with more than 2.5 million suspected cases.²⁴ This is largely attributable to the use of indiscriminate explosive weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets due to their wide destructive radius and the environment they are used in whether directly or indirectly. Beyond the immediate destructive impact on critical services, the destruction of such services makes it difficult to reach treatment of infected individuals and limit the spread of disease, while waste management becomes affected and water sources contaminated, limiting clean water supplies.²⁵

Since the war erupted in Yemen, its Human Development Index (HDI) has declined exponentially.²⁶ In 2022, the HDI of Yemen would have been set back to 26 years.²⁷

¹³ United Nations, 'Draft Report of the Conference to the General Assembly: International Conference On The Relationship Between Disarmament And Development', 24 August-11 September, New York, 1987 <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/143189?ln=en>>, para. 6

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Simon Bagshaw, *Reducing the Humanitarian Impact of the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas*, (New York: OCHA, 2017)

¹⁶ Mark Zeitoun and Michael Talhami, 'The Impact Of Explosive Weapons On Urban Services: Direct And Reverberating Effects Across Space And Time', *International Review of the Red Cross* (2016) 98:1.

¹⁷ United Nations, 'Goal 4' <<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>>

¹⁸ Simon Bagshaw, *Reducing the Humanitarian Impact of the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas*, (New York: OCHA, 2017) <<https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/OCHA%20Compilation%20of%20Military%20Policy%20and%20Practice%202017.pdf>>, p. 10.

¹⁹ Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ulrike Krause, *Gender, Violence, Refugees*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019)

²⁰ Kristine Anderson, *Tearing Down the Walls: Confronting the Barriers to Internally Displaced Women and Girls' Participation in Humanitarian Settings*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 2019) <<https://www.refworld.org/docid/5cd17b2d4.html>>

²¹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 'The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Sustainable Development Goals' <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/UNODA-SDG-Primer_v2.pdf>

²² Secretary-General of the United Nations, 'Note to Correspondents: Joint Appeal by the UN Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Cities', 2019 <<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2019-09-18/note-correspondents-joint-appeal-the-un-secretary-general-and-the-president-of-the-international-committee-of-the-red-cross-the-use-of-explosive-weapons>>

²³ Peter H. Gleick, *Water as a Weapon and Casualty of Armed Conflict: A Review of Recent Water-Related Violence in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen*, (New York: Wiley, 2019) 6:4 WIREs Water

²⁴ World Health Organization, 'Cholera Situation in Yemen', April 2021 <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WHOEMCSR434E-eng.pdf>>

²⁵ Qin Xiang Ng et al., 'Yemen's Cholera Epidemic is a One Health Issue', *Journal of Preventive Medicine and Public Health*, (2020) 53:4

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme, 'Briefing Note for Countries on the 2020 Human Development Report: Yemen' (2020)

²⁷ Jonathan D. Moyer et al., *Assessing the Impact of War on Development in Yemen*, (Geneva: UNDP, 2019), p. 6.

The conflict has destroyed critical health and education infrastructure, while malnutrition is widespread and more than half the population is afflicted with food insecurity.²⁸ This is a great setback to the SDGs.²⁹ Therefore, compliance with existing IHL is necessary.

Non-Compliance

There are no prohibitions on the use of explosive weapons. However, the rules of IHL stipulate that indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks must not be mounted. The effects of explosive weapons, given their wide destructive radius, cannot be limited as required by IHL since they cannot be directed at a specific objective.³⁰ The most fundamental rule in IHL is that of distinction, where military objectives and civilians or civilian objects must always be distinguished.³¹ While explosive weapons aimed at military objectives may be legitimate, in densely populated areas the likelihood of civilian proximity is much higher and foreseeable as is the likelihood of explosives being indiscriminate. Likewise, the principle of proportionality prohibits attacks against military objectives which are “expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated”.³² Therefore, groups must carefully assess whether an attack is likely to harm civilians both directly or indirectly.

Moving Forward

There are currently no treaties prohibiting the use of explosive weapons, except for the IHL rules stemming from the principles of distinction, proportionality and prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. In order to consolidate the application of such principles, adopting soft law measures such as political commitments, guidelines or declarations³³ prohibiting the use of these weapons in populated areas would encourage States and non-State actors (through special agreements) to consider civilians affected by the use of explosive weapons, especially given the diverging views on their use.³⁴ States and non-State actors are urged to review their military doctrines, rules of engagement, policies and practices to ensure that explosive weapons are not used as a matter of policy in populated

areas. This would garner an understanding that conflict creates ripple effects and harms development and human security, which necessarily require integrating gender perspectives. A preventative policy of avoidance, for example similar to that endorsed by the Secretary-General and the ICRC, is important. Importantly, in order to induce transparency and accountability, these practices would have to be willingly presented to the Secretary-General.

Although non-State armed groups are bound by IHL, they cannot sign IHL treaties. Instead, special agreements should commit them to international obligations. This would encourage them to comply with international standards of humanity and feel a clearer sense of obligation. The work of some organizations like Geneva Call and the ICRC have proven that negotiating with armed groups and compelling them to sign and commit to ‘deeds of commitments’³⁵ can be effective.

Equally, an important yet often overlooked step is the dissemination of IHL to all streams of society. This would ingrain a cultural understanding of the rules of war, both in peacetime and during conflict in line with international obligations.³⁶ Spreading knowledge of IHL and the principles of humanity helps to promote respect. This is because non-compliance with IHL points to a broader cultural understanding geared towards increased militarism and military expenditure, primarily due to tension and mistrust among belligerents. In order to induce compliance with the rules of war and to minimize harm to civilians, efforts to mainstream and spread awareness of IHL are needed, especially spreading consciousness of the impact of explosive weapons in protracting conflict. Likewise, efforts are needed to increase the understanding that avoiding the use of explosives in populated areas would contribute to achieving SDG 16 and its goals.

Conclusion

Contemporary armed conflicts increasingly drag civilians into the battlefield, posing risks both in the immediate term and the long term as objects necessary for the survival of the civilian population are destroyed. This affects development efforts by destabilizing everyday life and basic services.

²⁸ World Bank, ‘Yemen: Immediate Priorities for Post-Conflict Recovery of the Health Sector’, 2017 <<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/349331508408515508/yemen-immediate-priorities-for-post-conflict-recovery-of-the-health-sector>>

²⁹ Secretary-General of the United Nations, ‘Note to Correspondents: Joint Appeal by the UN Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Cities’, 2019.

³⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross, ‘Rule 12. Definition of Indiscriminate Attacks’, 2005 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule12>

³¹ International Committee of the Red Cross, ‘Rule 1. The Principle of Distinction between Civilians and Combatants’, 2005 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docindex/v1_rul_rule1>

³² International Committee of the Red Cross, ‘Rule 14 Proportionality in Attack’, 2005 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docindex/v1_rul_rule14>

³³ Reaching Critical Will, ‘Towards a Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas: States Need to Ensure that Expressed Commitments Translate into Real Impacts on the Ground’, 2019 <<https://reachingcriticalwill.org/news/latest-news/14451-towards-a-political-declaration-on-the-use-of-explosive-weapons-in-populated-areas-states-need-to-ensure-that-expressed-commitments-translate-into-real-impacts-on-the-ground>>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Geneva Call, ‘A New Deed of Commitment on the Prevention of Starvation and Addressing Conflict-Related Food Insecurity’, 2021 <https://www.genevacall.org/doc_starvation/>

³⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross, ‘Rule 143. Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law among the Civilian Population’, 2005 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docindex/v1_rul_rule143>

The use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas accelerates this further due to its indiscriminate effects, especially in urban settings where civilians bear the brunt of conflict. While the ultimate goal of disarmament is to outlaw the use of arms, the prerequisite to this is an understanding of the rules of war and inducing compliance with the existing rules of IHL. This would effectively require the dissemination of IHL teachings and inducing States and non-State actors to make political commitments and to adopt a policy of avoidance when it comes to explosive weapons.

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HUMAN SECURITY

A BRIDGE TOWARDS DISARMAMENT

LUDOVICA CASTELLI



This essay argues that the narrative of disarmament should reconsider the role of human security as a potential driving force towards disarmament, rather than exclusively a by-product of its achievement. For too long the pursuit of nuclear disarmament has focused on traditional ‘peace and security’. But in a contemporary global environment dominated by the existential challenges posed by climate change, energy poverty, and demographic growth, collectively defined as human security, the time could hardly be more expedient for a different approach to nuclear abolition. Through an analysis of the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons’s (TPNW) accession dynamics, this essay shows how human security interests have been increasingly critical in the decisions of States – especially non-Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) States of the Global South – to legally and actively commit to the goal of disarmament.

*The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development took an important step towards articulating how arms control, peace and security contribute to development. Beyond addressing illicit arms flows, there remains a vast potential to operationally link the implementation of disarmament objectives with many other Sustainable Development Goals, in order to bring the historical relationship between disarmament and development back to the forefront of international consciousness.*¹

With these words, four years ago, the Secretary-General's 'Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament' reaffirmed the importance of disarmament as a bridge towards more sustainable socioeconomic development. Here, the relationship between disarmament and global socioeconomic advancement is outlined as causal and unidirectional, with the latter being a positive by-product of the former. While it has been widely substantiated that the least diversion of the world's economic and human resources to arms positively impacts economic growth,² most overlooked is how the concept of sustainable development might play a critical role in promoting and achieving the goal of disarmament. In other words, development and disarmament in a bidirectional causal relationship in which development is not solely a positive by-product, but rather a motivating factor encouraging States to commit to disarmament. The challenges of today go beyond the State-centric paradigm of peace and security, and involve multiple individual-centric dynamics, ranging from climate change to energy security, environmental security, food security and others. All of these are a central part of 'human security' – an academic paradigm that grew out of the ashes of the Cold War to challenge State-centric views of international politics. Academic studies have shown how "economic interests appear to be key predictors of treaty commitment preferences in other domains, including human rights, the environment, and arms control".³ The attitude of States – especially non-BRICS States of the Global South – vis-à-vis disarmament has shown how human security interests are increasingly critical in the decision to legally and actively commit to this goal.

A useful contemporary example of this dynamic is the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the first legally binding international treaty to comprehensively ban nuclear weapons. As of 11 April 2022, the TPNW had 60 States Parties, while a further 29 States had signed but not yet ratified. In total, 89 States are either States Parties or signatories to the Treaty.⁴ Interestingly, only some specific regions seem to be more receptive to the TPNW. Africa counts 9 ratifications and 20 signatures (33.7 per cent of global signatures and ratifications), the American Continent (excluding Canada and the United States) counts 22 ratifications and 6 signatures (32.5 per cent of global signatures and ratifications), the South Pacific counts 10 ratifications and 2 signatures (13.9%), and South Asia counts 6 ratifications and 4 signatures (11.6%). Unsurprisingly, most of these regions are also nuclear-weapon-free zones, namely regions in which States have committed themselves not to manufacture, acquire, test, or possess nuclear weapons. As a consequence, these States' adherence to the TPNW is to be viewed as an additional reiteration of their already existing commitments to disarmament. Nonetheless, while being vocal supporters of disarmament, many of these States carefully calculated the potential costs and benefits of signing and ratifying such a treaty.

A closer look at the bargaining involved in agreeing the TPNW is helpful to understanding the logic of accession and the specific global distribution. Just as socioeconomic considerations – in the specific form of assistance and promotion of nuclear technology – were central in developing countries' decisions to embrace the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in the 1960s, the TPNW's reiteration of the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy has been equally key in achieving such success. In fact, while art. VI enshrines a key bargain of the NPT – disarmament for non-proliferation – it is art. IV⁵ that contains the key to the Treaty's success and is a valuable tool that also underpins the TPNW: "the inalienable right of its States Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination".⁶ Access to nuclear technology for disarmament has been the core

¹ Secretary-General of the United Nations. 'Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament', 2018, p.7 <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sg-disarmament-agenda-pubs-page.pdf>>

² See Izumi Nakamitsu's foreword in Perlo-Freeman, Samuel et al. 'Rethinking Unconstrained Military Spending', UNODA, 2020 <<https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/op-35-web.pdf>>; see also Michel Spies. 'United Nations Efforts to Reduce Military Expenditures: A Historical Overview', UNODA, 2019, <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/OP-33-web.pdf>>

³ Yonatan Lupu. 'Why Do States Join Some Universal Treaties but Not Others? An Analysis of Treaty Commitment Preferences', Journal of Conflict Resolution 60, no. 7 (2016): 1219-1250, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002714560344>>

⁴ See <<https://banmonitor.org/tpnw-status>>

⁵ "Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty", <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text/>>

⁶ Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1970, <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text>>

bargain that has underpinned the non-proliferation regime since Atoms for Peace – give up the military potential of the atom to fully enjoy the peaceful benefits of it. The costs and benefits of joining the NPT as laid out in the text of the Treaty itself are quite straightforward. On the cost side, non-nuclear States give up the right to possess or create nuclear weapons. In return, parties agree to the “fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy”.⁷ This formula – credited to Nigeria, Italy, and Mexico’s proposals during the NPT negotiations – provided an opportunity for developing countries to put their socioeconomic priorities at the forefront, and thus ensure that the non-proliferation regime would shape and cement as a fair and equitable quid pro quo. The TPNW formula runs on similar mechanisms; in fact, we could say that the preamble acts as a written guarantee that art. IV of the NPT would not be affected by the signing of the TPNW, thereby emphasizing the disarmament pledge while securing access to technology.⁸ This specification is of profound relevance when it comes to the calculations that developing countries make before signing a treaty, striking a crucial compromise between securing access to technology while pushing for disarmament. The ratio of such a compromise can be found in the increasing convergence between nuclear disarmament, nuclear energy, and climate change. There is growing acceptance that nuclear technology might be part of the solution to the climate crisis and also a key tool in promoting nuclear disarmament. In this light, it is not surprising that a specific category of States – tangentially prone to disarmament and eager for nuclear energy – has chosen to embrace the TPNW’s thrust.

When the NPT entered into force in 1970, sensitive nuclear technology was widely considered to be out of the reach of most States. While it might no longer be the case today for a number of States (e.g. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) States), another group – particularly the non-BRICS States of the Global South – deeply rely on the NPT’s art. IV. Moreover, many of these States are currently faced with the dual imperatives of improving energy security (70 per cent of future energy demand is expected to come from non-OECD States in 2040) and of

promoting an energy transition that favours climate change policy needs. In this light, nuclear technologies have been increasingly regarded as a ‘present solution’, as argued by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director Rafael Grossi, “with much more to offer to a world that is struggling to respond to the climate emergency and other urgent problems”.⁹ As of today, all 13 States producing at least one-quarter of their energy from nuclear power are OECD States whose nuclear power reactors have mostly been in operation for over 30 years. However, the current demand for nuclear energy comes almost entirely from developing countries in the Global South. Among the 30 States planning, starting, or contemplating nuclear power programmes, the majority of them are in Central and Southern Africa and the Middle East, followed by Central and South America, Central and South Asia, and Oceania.¹⁰ The most recent projections provided by the IAEA show higher trends compared to the previous years, reflecting a growing recognition of climate change challenges and of the increasingly accepted role of nuclear energy in reducing emissions, but also the gradual adoption of a strategy to deal with future trends in world energy consumption, expected to grow by nearly 50 per cent by 2050.¹¹ Notably, most of this growth comes from non-OECD States, which account for about 60 per cent of the world’s electricity consumption,¹² are highly dependent on fossil fuels – and thus responsible for about two thirds of global CO2 emissions – and whose energy demand is expected to grow much faster than that of developed countries due to demographic growth, economic growth, and urbanization.

“Energy is the backbone of any strong development”, argues Nii Allotey, director of the Nuclear Power Institute at the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission.¹³ It follows that sustainable development, in the form of nuclear energy, emerges today as an increasingly powerful potential driving force behind the quest for nuclear disarmament. In other words, the entanglement between nuclear energy, disarmament, and energy security offers a good basis upon which to craft a new strategy aimed at incentivizing States towards disarmament. The TPNW demonstrates how developmental interests have driven emerging countries’ decisions to further commit to disarmament as a way to stress “further support

⁷ Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, 2021, <<http://undocs.org/A/CONF.229/2017/8>>

⁸ Andrew Futter and Olamide Samuel. ‘The Global South: Access to Nuclear Technologies and the Ban Treaty’, 21 March 2022, <<https://basicint.org/the-global-south-access-to-nuclear-technologies-and-the-ban-treaty/>>

⁹ International Atomic Energy Agency. ‘IAEA and Industry Leaders Join Forces to Boost Nuclear Technology’s Role in Addressing Global Challenges’, 22 September 2021, <<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/pressreleases/iaea-and-industry-leaders-join-forces-to-boost-nuclear-technologys-role-in-addressing-global-challenges>>

¹⁰ World Nuclear Association. ‘Nuclear Power in the World Today’, August 2022, <<https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/current-and-future-generation/nuclear-power-in-the-world-today.aspx>>

¹¹ US Energy Information Administration. ‘EIA Projects Nearly 50% Increase in World Energy Usage by 2050, Led by Growth in Asia’, 24 September 2019, <<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=41433>>

¹² International Energy Agency. ‘Statistics report: World Energy Balances, Overview’, 2020, <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/23f096ab-5872-4eb0-91c4-418625c2c9d7/World_Energy_Balances_Overview_2020_edition.pdf>

¹³ Laura Gil. ‘Is Africa Ready for Nuclear Energy?’, IAEA, 3 September 2018, <<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/is-africa-ready-for-nuclear-energy>>

from developed countries regarding the transfer of technology, capacity building and financing”.¹⁴ Developing countries have been denouncing for years the scarce emphasis on art. IV, as well as the lack of commitment from developed countries to mitigate barriers such as the reluctance of private investors to invest in capital-intensive nuclear projects without government assistance, long and uncertain construction and licencing times, and chronic regulatory delays. As a consequence, many developing countries have started to signal reluctance to bear the cost of implementing a significant number of legal and technical innovations developed to actively strengthen the non-proliferation regime, whereas the benefits of abiding by this architecture are not ensured. The Ambassador of Zimbabwe to the United Nations, speaking after the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in Africa, captured this perspective when he observed:

*In view of the critical energy challenges facing developing countries, especially those in Africa, the development of nuclear energy can make an important contribution to their sustainable economic development. It is my delegation's view that Africa should be allowed to benefit from nuclear energy without any constraints or obstacles being put on its way.*¹⁵

Traditionally, peace and security have been framed as the primary reasons why disarmament must be pursued. Today, these two challenges are joined by others that are equally pressing in terms of time: climate change, energy poverty, and demographic growth. In the words of Mahbub ul Haq:

*The world is entering a new era in which the very concept of security will change – and change dramatically. Security will be interpreted as: security of people, not just territory. Security of individuals, not just nations. Security through development, not through arms. Security of all the people everywhere – in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, in their environment.*¹⁶

Human security, as a point of intersection between development and security,¹⁷ might thus be seen as the primary driver incentivizing States to choose to actively support disarmament. As previously stated,

developing countries have primarily viewed TPNW accession as a matter of socio-economic developmental interest, at the heart of which stands access to nuclear technology with its many applications (for electricity production, but also in food and agriculture, industry, medicine, scientific research, transport, water resources and the environment). Accordingly, their decisions to sign and to ratify it have first and foremost depended on whether they perceived the process itself and the Treaty concluded as enhancing such interests or at least as not undermining them. This rationale might provide disarmament advocates with a key to achieving broader TPNW membership and, more broadly, a greater propensity to support the disarmament path. The narrative of disarmament should therefore reconsider the role of human security as a potential driving force towards disarmament, rather than a by-product of its achievement. What the NPT defined as the ‘access to nuclear technology for non-proliferation’ bargain should be reframed by disarmament advocates – and the TPNW itself – as ‘greater access to nuclear technology for disarmament’.

¹⁴ 18th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, ‘Final Document’, 2019, NAM 2019/CoB/Doc.1

¹⁵ Amb. Boniface Chidyausiki. Statement of Zimbabwe during the General Debate of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, 12 October 2009, <https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/lcom/lcom09/statements/12Oct_Zimbabwe.pdf>

¹⁶ Mahbub ul Haq. Reflections on Human Development, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 115

¹⁷ Luke Johns. ‘A Critical Evaluation of the Concept of Human Security’, 5 July 2014, p. 8, <<https://www.e-ir.info/2014/07/05/a-critical-evaluation-of-the-concept-of-human-security/>>

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A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON DISARMAMENT

WHEN WOMEN (AND GIRLS)
ARE NOT ONLY VICTIMS BUT
ALSO AGENTS OF VIOLENCE

ZAHRA BEL ARACHE

Warfare has always been considered a purely masculine activity, with women traditionally viewed as passive, vulnerable subjects who rely on men. Nonetheless, as combatants, women (and girls) play an active role in contemporary armed conflicts. However, after the ceasefire, female ex-combatants are rarely offered a seat at the round table of peace and disarmament talks. Accordingly, this essay highlights how the narrative that views women solely as victims remains deeply embedded in post-conflict peace negotiations resulting in their exclusion from disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes. The essay also provides concluding insights on how to increase female ex-combatants' participation in post-conflict projects.



Introduction

Warfare has always been considered a purely masculine activity,¹ with women traditionally viewed as passive, vulnerable subjects who rely on men. This narrative also demonstrates that, even though the women, peace, and security agenda² was established more than two decades ago, its implementation is still considerably based on the perception of women as helpless victims. Nonetheless, as combatants, women (and girls) play an active role in contemporary armed conflicts. Indeed, female insurgents³ have been involved in non-State armed groups in nearly 60 countries⁴ over the last 50 years, where they play a complex variety of roles: they may be assigned to non-combatant tasks (e.g. as spies, porters, cooks, messengers, sex slaves, recruiters of additional combatants, mine-clearers, administrators, etc.), or, in some cases, they may engage in leadership roles aimed at carrying out and even directing armed attacks.⁵ Furthermore, as reported in Secretary-General António Guterres' Agenda for Disarmament, according to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Target 5.2):

*All States should also incorporate gender perspectives in the development of national legislation and policies on disarmament and arms control, including consideration of the gendered aspects of ownership, use and misuse of arms; the differentiated impacts of weapons on women and men; and how gender roles can shape arms control and disarmament policies and practices.*⁶

Nevertheless, after the ceasefire, female ex-combatants⁷ are rarely offered a seat at the round table of peace and disarmament⁸ talks. Not unexpectedly, the Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women acknowledged the United Nations' inability to empower women by including them in the peacebuilding process as participants, signatories, and mediators.⁹ As a result, the primary aim of this essay is to highlight how the narrative that views women solely as victims remains deeply embedded in post-conflict peace negotiations and disarmament efforts. To that end, the reasons underlying female ex-combatants' exclusion from disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes will be thoroughly

investigated. In this regard, some feminist scholars attribute the lack of women's participation in peace negotiations and DDR efforts to four phenomena: attributions of agency, gendered hierarchy in rebel groups, a failure to consider intersectionality's effects in DDR projects, and the patriarchal dynamics that characterize the post-conflict process. Furthermore, in the conclusion, some insights will be provided to draw attention to female ex-combatants' participation in post-conflict area reconstruction.

Agency

Over time, feminist researchers have focused on the various dynamics that have resulted in the historical tendency to downplay the participation of women and girls in armed conflict. In this context, Alexis Leanna Henshaw has identified four critical elements that contribute to the exclusion of female ex-combatants (of non-State armed groups) from post-conflict peace programmes: agency, hierarchy, universalism, and patriarchy. Concerning the first aspect, agency, it is sometimes compared to the 'women victimhood myth', according to which women in armed groups fight because they are forced to.¹⁰ There is a widespread belief that women cannot intentionally commit acts of serious violence and that, if they do, it is due to traumatic uncontrollable events such as rape, kidnapping, insanity, and lost honour that makes them act irrationally. Adult women fighting in armed groups were frequently labelled as 'camp followers', 'abductees' and 'bush wives',¹¹ linguistic examples that clearly indicate how women are always perceived as victims or objects rather than actors capable of violence. This is also an issue for girl soldiers. During post-war negotiations, rebel groups that want to avoid stigma or prosecution for recruiting and employing child soldiers refer to girl soldiers as 'unaccompanied minors' rather than 'child soldiers' to make their role in the conflict less evident.¹²

Hierarchy

Another crucial factor that may explain the origins of female ex-combatants' exclusion is the presence of a distinct hierarchy in armed groups. Hierarchy addresses the division of labour in the political economy of war, namely between productive labour (i.e., that which causes war through, for example, violence) and reproductive labour

¹ John Keegan, *A history of warfare*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 76

² United Nations Security Council, Security Council resolution 1325/2000 on women and peace and security, S/RES/1325, 31 October 2000

³ A 'female combatant' could be defined as a biologically female individual who joins a non-State armed group. In this regard, it is critical to emphasize that women and girls in insurgent groups do not have to fight to be classified as 'female combatants'. Indeed, even if they do not participate in combat activities, they are frequently treated as belligerents by their local society, which has a significant impact on their reintegration into society; Payson Ruhl, "Insignificant exceptions": Confronting sexism in armed conflict through gender-aware disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, 2019, Claremont McKenna College Senior Theses 2111., p. 12

⁴ Twenty-one states in Africa, nine in the Americas, thirteen in Asia, eight in Europe, and eight in the Middle East; Carol Cohn, *Women and wars: Contested histories, uncertain futures*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), pp. 149ff

⁵ Alexis Henshaw, "Female combatants in postconflict processes: Understanding the roots of exclusion", *Journal of Global Security Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2020, p. 1

⁶ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Securing our common future: An agenda for disarmament*, 2018

⁷ Combatants become ex-combatants once they decide to demobilize

⁸ In this essay disarmament is intended as micro-disarmament, according to the concept theorized by Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1995, i.e. the elimination of all forms of small arms that are used in intra-State violent conflicts including from rebel groups; Edward Lurance, *The new field of micro-disarmament: Addressing the proliferation and buildup of small arms and light weapons*, (Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 1996), p. 7

⁹ United Nations Security Council, United Nations Gender Equality Chief, Briefing Security Council, points out 'systemic failure' to integrate women in peacekeeping, mediation, SC/13554, Meetings Coverage, 2018

¹⁰ Even though it has been proven that women and girls are more likely to appear in groups characterized by forced recruiting, this does not imply that all women in armed groups were compelled to become insurgent soldiers. According to some studies, female combatants are more common in communities where women have a higher level of education and are more involved in the labour force; Reed Wood, Jakana Thomas, "Women on the frontline: Rebel group ideology and women's participation in violent rebellion", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2017

¹¹ Alexis Henshaw, "Female combatants in postconflict processes: Understanding the roots of exclusion", *Journal of Global Security Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2020, p. 67

¹² This happened in the 2000s DDR process in Sierra Leone, where girls were denied the possibility to participate in DDR and were instead relegated to victims' services; Megan Mackenzie, *Female soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, security, and post-conflict development*, (New York: NYU Press, 2012)

(i.e., cooking, nursing, recruitment and socialization of new combatants, and sex work). This gendered division of labour does not imply that productive and reproductive tasks are exclusively performed respectively by male and female combatants since in certain rebel groups women engage in armed combat roles.¹³ Because roles are not neatly divided between men and women, DDR analysts who still refer to the 'combatant' and 'non-combatant' dichotomy tend to misidentify women's roles during a conflict. As a result of the United Nations' and other international organisations' special emphasis and efforts on disarmament in post-conflict zones, dealing with combatants frequently takes precedence over regulating the status of non-combatants. In other words, only armed rebels benefit from DDR projects, and because women are rarely defined as such, they are generally excluded.¹⁴

Intersectionality

The third factor emphasized by feminist researchers is the concept of universalism (i.e., the idea that all women's issues can be globally analysed using the same universal formula), which is viewed as a failure to address more complex intersectional identities. In fact, initiatives aimed at demobilizing women rarely consider the intersectionality¹⁵ of gender, race/ethnicity, and class. Outcomes of this issue include the underrepresentation of female soldiers in DDR programmes and the continuance of societal stigma, which leads to self-demobilization. This stigma associated with demobilization alludes to the fact that when women and girls are required to return to their native community, sometimes they need to participate in burdensome tribal purification ceremonies. In Sierra Leone, for example, many female combatants missed important rituals to become adults owing to the fighting. As a result, while international organizations regarded them as adults (since they had reached the legal age), they and local communities still considered themselves as children.¹⁶ As a result, knowing the context's absolute significance is critical to meeting the intersectional needs of women and girls who are ex-combatants. On the other hand, standardized demobilization programmes for women are more likely to fail, causing female ex-combatants to self-demobilize.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is maybe the most fundamental factor of exclusion. As previously stated, it is not uncommon for female ex-combatants to be excluded from DDR programmes, which all too frequently replicate patriarchal power dynamics while assisting in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies. If we refer to the process of rebuilding society after conflict as a type of State formation and rely on the Weberian perspective, it can be noticed that the State-building process is characterized by a link between violence, power, legitimacy, and masculinity.¹⁷ According to this viewpoint, the family patriarchy is the modern State's paradigm, in which males are legitimate leaders who use physical force to defend their families.¹⁸ As a result, it is possible to argue that the power dynamic is dependent on the presence of something that has to be protected. In this situation, post-conflict State-building would obscure women who have challenged gender norms by actively perpetrating violence to protect themselves and their families. Where DDR processes included policies concerning the conjugal order (i.e., reuniting families, former combatants' sexuality, and social relationships), women and girls were forced to remain silent about sexual violence episodes which led the government not to warn that girls were avoiding DDR to self-demobilize.¹⁹ In addition, in some cases rebel commanders were complicit in preventing women in their army from receiving DDR benefits by concealing their membership in the rebel group ranks. For example, when the violence ended in Sierra Leone, commanders took guns away from female combatants to avoid them being listed in the official DDR registry.²⁰ It appears that DDR initiatives based on a return to the status quo ante are androcentric, in the sense that they reflect masculinist dynamics. Accordingly, these programmes may exclude women from decision-making roles, relegating them to low-skilled employment (e.g., hairdressing, soapmaking, or beekeeping), and pushing them to abandon their place in the public sphere. Once again, women may not find post-conflict efforts effective or useful, so they avoid participating in them and prefer self-demobilization.²¹

¹³ There are reported cases of female combatants becoming, for instance, perpetrators of sexual violence (e.g., gang rape, sex trafficking, sexual humiliation, against both male and female subjects); Megan Mackenzie, *Beyond the band of brothers: The US military and the myth that women can't fight*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

¹⁴ Megan Mackenzie, *Female soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, security, and post-conflict development*, (New York: NYU Press, 2012)

¹⁵ Intersectionality could be defined as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender of an individual or a group which overlaps with a system of oppressive hierarchies/discrimination disadvantage. In addition, this concept highlights the importance of taking into consideration the context to better understand the differences between women's experiences; Sara Salem, "Intersectionality and its discontents: Intersectionality as traveling theory", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 2018

¹⁶ Megan Mackenzie, *Female soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, security, and post-conflict development*, (New York: NYU Press, 2012)

¹⁷ Max Weber, *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Megan Mackenzie, *Female soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, security, and post-conflict development*, (New York: NYU Press, 2012), pp. 89ff.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ In this regard, it is worth noting that some young female combatants returned to the areas previously occupied by their insurgent group to work as prostitutes, a decision that may have been influenced first by a lack of job opportunities and successful job training programmes for women, and second by a relevant demand for sex work from the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group as well as United Nations staff and peacekeepers; Megan Mackenzie, *Female soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, security, and post-conflict development*, (New York: NYU Press, 2012), pp. 76, 124

Conclusion: How to increase female ex-combatants' participation in DDR projects

Historically, women and girls have been underrepresented in DDR programmes. As a result, there is an urgent need for more inclusive and effective peace agreements and DDR processes, as preliminary research suggests that including women from both sides of a conflict in peace process produces more successful results than in previous settlements.²² A successful example is the gender sub-commission comprised of both FARC female ex-combatants and female national government personnel included in the Havana Peace Talks for the conclusion of the Colombian FARC war.²³ Various studies on post-conflict situations, on the other hand, have indicated that female non-combatant rebels who feel undervalued and ignored by peace agreements can develop serious resentment, transferring their discontent to their families and communities.²⁴ In this vision, the architects of DDR programmes should be aware of the particular needs of demobilized rebel women from armed groups. Work must be done to eliminate the social stigma that affects rebel women and girls who want to be reintegrated into their society, while also considering the intersectionality of gender, age, race/ethnicity, religion, and other factors. Furthermore, DDR programmes should no longer be defined by the combatant/non-combatant dichotomy since the fact that armed combatants are still seen as the most important recipients of DDR efforts must be eradicated.²⁵ Additionally, the concepts of disarmament and combatant must be substantially redefined.²⁶ All of these objectives may be met more effectively if women are encouraged to participate in the design of post-conflict projects, as in Colombia. It is past time to abandon the notion that women are solely victims of armed conflict violence. They may knowingly participate in this violence in response to heinous situations such as poverty, ethnic or religious abuse, or restrictions on civil and political rights. Because they are fighting to improve their condition, women deserve a seat at the table of disarmament and peace negotiations, as provided by the less implemented pillar of the women, peace, and security agenda: participation.

²² Council on Foreign Relations, Women's Participation in Peace Processes, 2020, <<https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>>

²³ Virginia Bouvier, Gender and the role of women in Colombia's peace process, (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2016)

²⁴ Alexis Henshaw, "Female combatants in postconflict processes: Understanding the roots of exclusion", *Journal of Global Security Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2020, pp. 70ff

²⁵ Given how fundamental the act of committing violence is in war, those who engage in violent acts are defined as the pivotal drivers of conflict; Alexis Henshaw, Making violent women visible in the WPS agenda, 2017

²⁶ Alexis Henshaw, "Female combatants in postconflict processes: Understanding the roots of exclusion", *Journal of Global Security Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2020

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NATIONAL CHOICES,

GLOBAL EFFECTS

DISCUSSING MICRO-DISARMAMENT, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE, AND ILLICIT FLOWS OF SALW IN BRAZIL

ANDRÉ DUFFLES TEIXEIRA ARANEGA



Brazil is the second-largest producer/exporter of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the Western hemisphere, the world's third-largest exporter, and a key source of legal/illegal firearms in South America.

Brazil's strategic relevance in this illicit market must be acknowledged, especially considering the ongoing international expansion of its main transnational criminal organization (i.e., the First Capital Command) and how the recent transformations in its gun policy will influence levels of armed violence and obstruct peace nationally and beyond. This essay provides evidence-based assessments concerning relevant trends in micro-disarmament, development, peace, and illicit flows of SALW in Brazil.

Introduction

The current gun policy in Brazil is threatening short- and long-term attempts to promote sustainable disarmament, development, and peace at the national and regional levels. Here, evidence of how this policy will affect the global level and of how national choices produce global effects will be provided. Indeed, if one considers the basis on which the international gun control regime was built over the last four decades, the principles of the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, and the related resolutions of the General Assembly, one could argue that the current pro-gun policy promoted by the Bolsonaro government is threatening our future. This essay is divided into two parts. The first section highlights important considerations about the interrelationship of disarmament, security, and development. The last section discusses the Brazilian context based on four topics: micro-disarmament, development, peace, and illicit flows of SALW.

Disarmament, Security, and Development: A National, Regional, and Global Issue

The discussions associated with the interrelationship of disarmament, security, and development are not a new phenomenon, but a policy-oriented agenda largely connected to the building of the international gun control regime.¹ In summary, this interrelationship can be described in the following manner. It concerns the connections among disarmament policies as measures to promote peace-related initiatives, security as a research agenda and policy realm with human beings as its major referent object, and development as a universal right² capable of countering chronic threats³ to human life.⁴ Another way of underlining this interrelationship is to consider some of the premises of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). After all:

*The proliferation of various types of weapons has tremendous impacts on many spheres of human life and nature, ... including those relating to peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), economic growth (SDG 8), health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), and safe cities and communities (SDG 11).*⁵

Indeed, one could argue that the interrelationship of disarmament, security, and development is a national, regional, and global issue. Firstly, if one or several States in single or multiple regions of the world do not promote disarmament policies, then its peace-related initiatives will most likely fail. Secondly, if its security is not thought of or maintained with the goal of achieving human integrity and its potential, then human security will not be achieved. Lastly, if development is not considered or promoted as a universal right, then chronic threats will increase and expand towards different levels (i.e., from the individual to the global). When these trends are partially present in a national, regional, or global context, sustainable disarmament, development, and peace are unlikely to be achieved. However, the combination of these trends at the national, regional, and global levels turns sustainable disarmament, development, and peace into a utopia.

Micro-Disarmament, Development, Peace, and Illicit Flows of SALW in Brazil

The Brazilian context is a perfect case study of how strong is the interrelationship of disarmament, security, and development at the national, regional, and global levels. This essay provides evidence to this matter by discussing relevant trends in micro-disarmament, development, peace, and illicit flows of SALW in Brazil.

Micro-disarmament is a concept created “to draw attention to small arms and light weapons, and the unique set of problems created by the proliferation and accumulation of this class of weapons in the post-Cold War era”.⁶ After all, due to several consequences arising in the post-Cold War era⁷, it became clear to several scholars, governments, and international institutions that SALW are involved in virtually all acts of violence that cause death or damage around the world (both at the interpersonal and collective levels) and during times of both war and formal peace.⁸ Not by chance, there is a strong advocacy movement around the globe contributing to legal reforms and social mobilizations under coordinated action among governments, multilateral agencies, international institutions, and NGOs against the armed violence caused by the proliferation, misuse, and availability of SALW.⁹

¹ Peter Batchelor and Kai Michael Kenkel, *Controlling Small Arms: Consolidation, Innovation and Relevance in Research and Policy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014); United Nations, *The Relationship between Disarmament and Development in the Current International Context* (Department for Disarmament Affairs: New York, 2004), <https://unoda-web.s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/assets/HomePage/ODAPublications/DisarmamentStudySeries/PDF/DSS_31.pdf>

² This notion of development as a universal right only became widespread in international forums after the release of the 1994 Human Development Report, where the ideas of ‘human security’ and ‘human development’ first appeared in UN documents. The report is available at <<https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1994en-completenostat.pdf>>

³ For example, famine, diseases, repression, poverty, or aggression towards human integrity

⁴ Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Neil Macfarlane and Yuen Foong Khong, *Human Security and the UN: A Critical History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006); Glenn McDonald, ‘Measures: informing diplomacy – the role of research in the UN small arms process’ in *Controlling Small Arms: Consolidation, Innovation and Relevance in Research and Policy*, ed. by Peter Batchelor and Kai Kenkel (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014)

⁵ See <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/sustainable-development/>>

⁶ Edward Laurance and Sarah Meek, *The new field of micro-disarmament: Addressing the proliferation and buildup of small arms and light weapons* (Bonn: BICC, 1996), p. 10

⁷ Michael Klare, ‘Light Weapons Diffusion and Global Violence in the Post-cold War Era’, in *Light Weapons and International Security*, ed. by Jasjit Singh (New Delhi: Indian Pugwash Society and the British American Security Council, 1995); Edward Laurance, ‘The Small Arms Problem as Arms Control: A policy-driven research agenda’, in *Controlling Small Arms*, ed. by Batchelor and Kenkel; Peter Lock, ‘Armed Conflicts and Small Arms Proliferation: Refocusing the research agenda’, *Policy Sciences* 30, no. 3 (1997)

⁸ Batchelor and Kenkel, ‘Controlling Small Arms’, (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 2; André Duffles Teixeira Aranega and Kai Michael Kenkel, ‘Gun Policy, Violence, and Peace: Examining the challenges faced by civil society and the state in Brazil’, in *Peace and Violence in Brazil: Reflections on the Roles of State, Organized Crime and Civil Society*, ed. by Marcos Alan Ferreira (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), pp. 179–80

⁹ Adèle Kirsten, *The Role of Social Movements in Gun Control: An International Comparison between South Africa, Brazil, and Australia*, Centre for Civil Society, Research Report (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2004); Adèle Kirsten, ‘Advocacy: defining the small arms control agenda’, in *Controlling Small Arms*, ed. by Batchelor and Kenkel, pp. 172–97

Also, if one considers the increasing circulation of firearms throughout the globe (i.e., more than one billion as of 2017),¹⁰ especially in the case of SALW, “a recipient state or non-state actor has the option of multiple sources, eliminating dependence on one supplier or a national government”.¹¹ However, one should not forget the strategic role of regional suppliers of legal/illegal SALW in these cases, since, as the US case presents, the closer a country is to a regional supplier of weapons, the greater is the proportion of weapons seized in the country that were originally manufactured in the former.¹² Last but not least, another relevant issue to be considered is the fact that, in most States, “manufacturers and the gun lobby have a close relationship with the state”.¹³

These are only a few examples of the several relevant issues involving micro-disarmament and all of them are to be found in the Brazilian context. First, “patterns of firearms circulation are determinant for the distribution of violence within Brazilian society”, where evidence-based studies show that “armed violence has highly selective and unequal effects in Brazilian society and reflects race, gender, and age, with firearms as one of the leading causes of mortality in the country today”.¹⁴ Second, despite strong pro-gun movements in the country, the rapid growth of urban violence on one side, and the need for arms control on the other, led Brazilian NGOs and civil society initiatives to build one of the most emblematic cases of an arms control movement in the world,¹⁵ leading to the enactment of specific evidence-based legislation responsible for reducing armed violence in Brazil:¹⁶ the 2003 Disarmament Statute.^{17,18} Third, it is important to consider the circulation of firearms in Brazil, since the evidence shows that more than 50 per cent of the firearms in the country are illegal.¹⁹ Fourth, due to its position in the global market of SALW,²⁰ Brazil sustains a strong regional market for firearms trafficking²¹ capable of affecting the security of other countries. At last, “pro-gun interests have historically managed to shield the Brazilian national arms industry from being well-regulated”,²² which is a clear indication of how deep are the connections between the pro-gun lobby and the Brazilian State. As a matter of fact, the current President (and his major supporters) not only was part of what is called the ‘Bullet Caucus’ in the Chamber of Deputies²³ but he is also the most prominent authority involved in the deregulation of the Statute.²⁴

¹⁰ Small Arms Survey, Press Release, March 29, 2018, <<https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/database/global-firearms-holdings>>

¹¹ Laurance and Meek, *The new field of micro-disarmament*, p. 10.

¹² Mark Bromley, Marina Caparini and Alfredo Malaret, ‘Measuring Illicit Arms and Financial Flows: Improving the assessment of Sustainable Development Goal 16’, *SIPRI Background Paper: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2019, p. 19

¹³ Roxana Cavalcanti, ‘Armed Violence and the Politics of Gun Control in Brazil: An analysis of the 2005 referendum’, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 36, no. 1 (2017), p. 47, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.12476>>

¹⁴ Aranega and Kenkel, *Gun Policy, Violence, and Peace*, p. 177

¹⁵ For example, the ‘Rio Disarm Yourself’ campaign, the ‘Rio, Put that Gun Down’ campaign, the national peace campaign called ‘Enough! I Want Peace’, the ‘Choose Gun Free, It’s Your Weapon or Me’, and the campaigns associated with the destruction of guns deliberately handed to Brazilian authorities by members of civil society and the weapon buyback programme involving both the government and civil society

¹⁶ Homicide rates would have increased by 11 per cent between 2004 and 2007 if the Statute had not been enacted

¹⁷ Aranega and Kenkel, *Gun Policy, Violence, and Peace*, p. 182; Antônio Rangel Bandeira, *Armas para quê?: O uso de armas de fogo por civis no Brasil e no mundo, e o que isso tem a ver com segurança pública e privada* (São Paulo: Casa da Palavra, 2019), pp. 169–70; Daniel Cerqueira and João Mello, ‘Menos Armas, Menos Crimes’, *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* (2012), <http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/index.php?option=com_content&id=15101>; Daniel Cerqueira and João Mello, ‘Evaluating a National Anti-Firearm Law and Estimating the Causal Effect of Guns on Crime’, *Economy Department PUC-Rio* (2013), <<http://www.econ.puc-rio.br/uploads/adm/monitorias/a391441ce7920f54e99445a0422d2e60874b2c0c.pdf>>; Daniel Cerqueira et al., *Atlas Da Violência de 2019*, Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2019), <https://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/index.php?option=com_content&id=34784>; Daniel Cerqueira et al., *Atlas Da Violência de 2020*, Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2020), <https://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/index.php?option=com_content&id=36488>

¹⁸ Evidence shows the Statute saved 197,202 Brazilian lives between 2004 and 2016

¹⁹ Pablo Dreyfus and Marcelo Nascimento, ‘Small Arms Holdings in Brazil: Toward a comprehensive mapping of guns and their owners’ in *Brazil, the Arms and the Victims*, ed. by Rubem César Fernandes (Rio de Janeiro: Viva Rio/ISER, 2005), pp. 26–49.

²⁰ Thanks to specific public and private arms industries, such as Forjas Taurus S.A, the Brazilian Cartridge Company (CBC), and the Brazilian War Material Industry (IMBEL).

²¹ Marcos Alan Ferreira, ‘Transnational Organized Crime and Structural Violence in Brazil’ in *Post-Conflict Security, Peace and Development: Perspectives from Africa, Latin America, Europe and New Zealand*, ed. by Christine Atieno and Colin

Robinson (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), p. 43

²² Aranega and Kenkel, *Gun Policy, Violence, and Peace*, p. 187

²³ Fiona Macaulay, ‘Bancada da Bala: The growing influence of the security sector in Brazilian politics’, in *In Spite of You: Bolsonaro and the New Brazilian Resistance*, ed. by Conor Foley (New York: OR Books), 2019, pp. 56–70

²⁴ The Brazilian gun control law, the Disarmament Statute, has suffered several transformations during the last four years. For more precise information regarding these changes, see Aranega and Kenkel, *Gun Policy, Violence, and Peace*, as well as the studies produced by the Igarapé Institute and the Sou da Paz Institute.

In relation to development, Brazil shows clear indications of how disarmament is connected to the former since studies based on robust statistics have shown that armed violence in Brazil has a serious socio-economic cost of 5.9 per cent of its GDP per year.²⁵ Indeed, considering that firearms are the primary instrument used in homicides in Brazil,²⁶ one should not ignore the damage produced by SALW in both human development and human security in the country. Especially considering that child and youth homicides increased by 476 per cent and that the homicide rate increased by 485 per cent between 1980 and 2014,²⁷ which is an alarming indicator considering how this affects the country's productivity and the overall human cost of armed violence.

Moving forward to the topic of peace-related issues, one must acknowledge the following fact: "if peace is interpreted as the absence or the significant reduction of violence in a society",²⁸ then there must be no doubt that Brazil's real history is one of violence,²⁹ embedded in "brutal and cruel episodes of internal conflict rooted in a historical context of exploitation, inequality, and prejudice".³⁰ Both in terms of historical and contemporary events, the promotion of peace in Brazil faces several obstacles when we consider the overall social and chronic violence embedded in this country's history. Thus, the increasing circulation of SALW is, indeed, one of these obstacles.

After discussing all these issues, one might ask: how do these considerations about Brazil help us to identify any kind of threat to our future at the global level? It is here where we can begin to identify the role of illicit flows of SALW in this manner, that we start to pin down the most alarming conjuncture beyond the national level. It is here where we understand how national choices can produce global effects. First, it was recently argued that the current Brazilian gun policy will increase levels of armed violence and obstruct peace nationally and regionally. After all, since Bolsonaro's victory in the 2018 election, several presidential decrees, legislative bills, and government agency ordinances have made the Disarmament Statute more flexible and have encouraged the wide dissemination of firearms and ammunition in the country – not to mention the obstacles to tracing ammunition used in crimes. These dangerous political choices are extremely in the opposite direction to

what is there to be found in the scientific literature on gun control, such as the following: "the flexibilization of gun laws increases firearms circulation, firearms-related mortality (in the form of homicides, suicides, and accidents), opportunities for diversion to criminal activity, firearms trafficking, and decreased gun prices in the illegal market".³¹

Indeed, if one considers that "firearms traffickers seek to smuggle their product from countries with weaker gun laws to those with stronger laws",³² then Brazil's strategic relevance for transnational criminal organizations in the illicit trade of SALW will increase considerably. This is a very alarming situation, especially when we are all living in the moment where its major criminal organization, the First Capital Command, is expanding its reach on a regional and international scale.^{33,34} Second, although foreign military weaponry is constantly being trafficked into Brazil,³⁵ Brazilian weaponry is the most associated with criminal activity and responsible for the high levels of armed violence in the country.³⁶

This means that, just as in the case of US weaponry, Brazilian weaponry has a stronger chance of being diverted to violent non-State actors both inside and outside Brazilian territory when compared to weapons manufactured in other countries. As a result, this also means the First Capital Command might be able to transport, sell, or use these weapons throughout the world (along with other foreign weaponry) in order to advance its strategic goals. All of this evidence gives support to a dangerous reality: what is happening in Brazil is indeed threatening our future on a national, regional, and global scale. The Brazilian context is proof of how, more than ever, the discussions about the international agenda built on the inter-relationship of disarmament, security, and development must be remembered as a top priority on the world stage.

²⁵ Daniel Cerqueira et al, *Atlas Da Violência de 2019: retratos dos municípios brasileiros* (Rio de Janeiro: Ipea, 2019)

²⁶ Luciana Phebo, 'The Impact of Firearms on Public Health in Brazil', in *Brazil, the Arms and the Victims*, ed. by Rubem César Fernandes (Rio de Janeiro: Viva Rio/ISER, 2005), pp. 9–36.

²⁷ Julio Jacobo Waiselfisz, 'Homicides of children and adolescents in Brazil', Igarapé Institute, 1, <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017-12-04-Homicide-Dispatch_4_EN.pdf>

²⁸ Marcos Alan Ferreira, 'Peace and Conflict in Brazil', in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, ed. by Oliver Richmond and Gëzim Visoka (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 1

²⁹ Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Heloisa Maria Murgel Starling, *Brasil: Uma Biografia* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015)

³⁰ Aranega and Kenkel, *Gun Policy, Violence, and Peace*, p. 175

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 181

³² *Ibid.* p. 192

³³ Bruno Paes Manso, Camila Nunes Dias, *A Guerra: A ascensão do PCC e o mundo no crime no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora Todavia, 2018); Marcos Alan Ferreira, 'Brazilian Criminal Organizations as Transnational Violent Non-State Actors: A case study of the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC)', *Trends in Organized Crime* 22, no. 2 (2018); Marcos Alan Ferreira, 'Transnational Organized Crime and Structural Violence in Brazil', pp. 37–54; Ana Isadora Menegueti and Marcos Ferreira, 'Transnational Gangs in South America: The expansion of the Primeiro Comando da Capital to Paraguay', *Urban Crime* 1, no. 2 (2020); Carolina Sampó and Marcos Ferreira, 'De la Fragmentación de las Estructuras Criminales a una Proto-Mafia: Un Análisis del Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) en Sudamérica', *Revista de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional*, 6 no. 2 (2020)

³⁴ Recent evidence based on official investigations shows that the First Capital Command operates in the following countries: Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Suriname, the Guianas, Uruguay, the United States, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Italy, England, and France

³⁵ Such as material coming from the United States, Argentina, Italy, Germany, Spain, Austria, the Czech Republic, Belgium, China, Israel, the Russian Federation, countries of the former Soviet Union, and Switzerland

³⁶ Pablo Dreyfus, Benjamin Lessing and Jorge César Pursena, 'The Brazilian Small Arms Industry: Legal production and trade', in *Brazil, the Arms and the Victims*, ed. by Rubem César Fernandes, (Rio de Janeiro: Viva Rio/ISER, 2005), pp. 64–125; Pablo Dreyfus and Nicholas Marsh, *Tracking the Guns: International Diversion of Small Arms to Illicit Markets in Rio de Janeiro*, PRIO (November 2016), <<https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=301>>; Bruno Langeani, Marcello Fragano, and Melina Risso, *De Onde Vêm as Armas do Crime: Análise do Universo de Armas Apreendidas em 2011 e 2012 em São Paulo* (Instituto Sou da Paz, 2013); Bruno Langeani and Natália Pollachi, *De Onde Vêm as Armas do Crime Apreendidas no Sudeste?: Análise do Perfil das Armas de Fogo Apreendidas em 2014* (Instituto Sou da Paz, 2016)

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STOPPING STRATEGIC DECOUPLING

THE DISARMAMENT, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

ZINO ROOS

Today's global trends in modern warfare, the complexity of military interactions and the struggle for a new world order leverage disarmament to an essential tool of counteraction. In this vein, it becomes clear how tightly intertwined disarmament is with the practical implementation of security and development. However, being a reflection and driver of strategic decoupling - the growing factual and ideological gap between the great powers - armament poses a yet more radical risk to security and development by undermining multilateral dialogue. To countervail this in the long term, the youth occupy a particularly responsible role.



Introduction

Escalating tensions between NATO and the Russian Federation, unending conflicts in the Middle East, prevailing civil wars in Africa – the planet we traverse on is perilous and cruel, and so are the statistics which verify these sobering conditions. Rising military spending, increased global production of war machinery and a proliferation of weapons in legal and illegal realms mark the current landscape. This not enough; the impulsive tensions between great powers and the emerging innovations of modern warfare accumulate to an explosive mixture, leveraging it to an essential threat to international affairs and domestic policies.

The United Nations recognized this circumstance. By setting up an agenda for global disarmament under the Secretary-General's guidance,¹ it places the youth as a potential driver of disarmament processes at the very forefront of this war against war.² Armament is not an isolated course of action, but a process intimately linked to global security and development. In this nexus, the youth will occupy an essential role to secure our common future.

This essay's aim is to acknowledge this new reality and to contribute to the youth's commitment. By explaining how the current international momentum changes the playing field of military activities, it provides a general overview of how disarmament is linked to development and security. Building on this, the essay further shows that beyond the tangible practical dangers of armament practices to economic growth/inequality, sustainability and quality of human life, there is a more subliminal, yet less-mentioned risk looming in the shadow: armament as an ideological threat to global development and security dialogue. Representing both a reflection and driver of 'strategic decoupling' between major powers, the author shows how armament puts pressure on multilateral discussions, drives the world's attention away from realizing the 2030 Agenda and thus poses an ideological threat to the global community. To counteract this, global disarmament becomes the tool of choice.

Tension-Laden World Order and Today's Warfare

The current environment of international security is fragile and vulnerable. After the United States dominated the Cold War, we experienced a relatively peaceful time under its dominion within the last decades. However, today's international arena is stormed by other emerging powers. Since the Cold War, the conversion from a bipolar to a unipolar and eventually to the current multipolar world order, having the United States, the Russian Federation, China and Europe at its forefront, increases international complexity and facilitates clashes of interests.³ As States drift ideologically apart and lose respect of international norms and institutions, armament spending and security arrangements reach unprecedented heights.⁴ These tensions among major powers are accompanied by worrying military trends. Today, the assessment of conflicts too often draws on linear and mechanistic thinking and thus does not capture their complex nature. The dynamics of 'ethno-terrorism' or the recent developments of domestic conflicts reflect how the lines between different types of armed conflicts blur,⁵ leaving different actors, that is internal, external, involved and uninvolved ones, under high tension between these lines. The increasing dominance of intra-State rather than inter-State conflicts exacerbates this.⁶ Ultimately, a third factor changes the battlefield we know: technological innovation. Machine learning, artificial intelligence, swarm technology, lethal autonomous systems and more bring fundamental changes to military power⁷ and open new dimensions of war to be occupied as the strategic relevance of cyberspace and outer space demonstrates.⁸ Concomitant with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, statistically the real weapons of mass destruction,⁹ the potential threats endanger human rights, international principles and the pillars of global peace and security.

The Disarmament, Security and Development Nexus

These trends cultivate our understanding of why armament is a serious threat and no abstract danger – the war in Ukraine shockingly demonstrates this. The causal

¹ United Nations, 'Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament' (2018) <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sg-disarmament-agenda-pubs-page.pdf>>

² General Assembly, Youth, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Resolution A/RES/76/45, 2021

³ N.A. Simonia and A. V. Torkunov, 'New World Order: From Bipolarity To Multipolarity', *Polis – Political Studies*, 3, (2015), pp. 27–37; Susan Turner, 'Russia, China and a Multipolar World Order: The Danger in the Undefined', *Asian Perspective*, 33(1), (2009), pp. 159–84

⁴ SIPRI, *World Military Spending Rises to Almost \$2 Trillion in 2020*, April 26, 2021, <<https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2021/world-military-spending-rises-almost-2-trillion-2020>>

⁵ Giorgio Gallo, 'Conflict Theory, Complexity and Systems Approach', *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 30(2), 2013, pp. 156–75

⁶ Tom Woodhouse, Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Polity, 2005

⁷ James Johnson, 'Artificial Intelligence & Future Warfare: Implications for International Security', *Defense & Security Analysis*, 35(2), (2019): 147–169

⁸ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, *Electronic and Cyber Warfare in Outer Space*, (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2019).

⁹ Asif Efrat, 'Toward Internationally Regulated Goods: Controlling the Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons', *International Organization*, 64(1), (2010): 97–131.

relationship among disarmament, security, and development – linking them together in a ‘nexus’ – illustrates how disarmament can pave the way to foster practical implementation of development and security measures. In this vein, disarmament is no longer an isolated process, but builds on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Reviewing them, it becomes clear how intimately linked disarmament is to three specific dimensions of the SDGs: economic growth/inequality, sustainability, and quality of human life.¹⁰

It has long been recognized how the voracious hunger for military equipment results in unprecedented spending. As Shivaji vividly illustrates, “with the price of an advanced fighter aircraft, three million children, say, in the developing world could be inoculated against major diseases”.¹¹ These grotesque proportions make clear how armament spending literally torpedoed social and political needs, leading to a redirection of financial means away from the disadvantaged and thus motivates them to engage in armed activities as alternative sources of income. Disarmament addresses these issues and builds on Goals 8 and 10 of the SDGs. Decreasing the proliferation of weapons and disarming parties on a global scale can contribute to yet another element guiding today’s development and security practices: sustainability. Controlled flows of weapons foster urban safety and mitigate the risk of urban destruction. Beyond this, life below water and on land can enjoy higher degrees of protection if the use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons is substantially limited.¹² As such, disarmament responds to Goals 11, 14 and 15 and contributes to more sustainable living. Ultimately, it is the life one has ‘reason to value’¹³ as a fundamental principle of development and security which benefits from a less-armed world. Arms-based violence is responsible for direct health impacts on humans, such as loss of life, maiming or psychological stress, and indirect impacts, for instance insufficient medical infrastructure or the spread of diseases.¹⁴ Disarmament thus increases human well-being, but also fulfils educational purposes as safer learning environments can provide a nourishing ground to elaborate on peace and other developmental principles to avoid future armed interactions. Education is specifically key as it provides a more nuanced understanding of armament-related problems, especially

on the role of gender. Among others, toxic masculinities, gender-based violence, or the underrepresentation of specific groups of gender in (dis)armament forums determine how vulnerable one is in his or her militarized environment. This is specifically, but not solely, relevant to women and girls.¹⁵ Eventually, disarmament activities cannot just counteract these imbalances, but also fuel gender-supportive attitudes. Doing this, disarmament underpins the SDGs by addressing Goals 3, 4 and 5 and fosters a higher quality of human life.

Mind the Gap: Armament as a Strategic Decoupler

So far, it can be seen how disarmament determines the practical realization of development and security. However, behind these linear correlations there is one interconnection in the nexus which has received only scant attention: disarmament as a tool to defang armament’s ideological threats to the global development and security discourse.

To understand this, one needs to understand history. Today’s global political economy is largely shaped by the achievements grounded in the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations after the Second World War. Embedded liberalism facilitated market-based mechanisms and characterized the international economic and political terrain. Boosting cooperation built on the ‘Rule of Law’, legalism benefited multilateral interactions by providing a clear set of guidelines all parties could rely on.¹⁶ In this course of time, the United States – serving as the most powerful hegemon – provided peace, stability, cooperation and openness, especially when the bipolar power distribution collapsed in favour of the West after the Cold War (ibid.). Today, however, the unipolar dominance of the United States has disintegrated, opening the way for other powers to rise and to lock themselves into a retaliatory logic.

As a war “between clashing systems of government characterized by industrial competition, information subversion and cyber warfare”,¹⁷ armament is both a reflection and driver of this global process. In line with mercantilist theory, today’s great powers seem to return to a nation-focused maxim and protect their interests by drawing on the means of security.¹⁸

¹⁰ United Nations, ‘Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament’, 2018, <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sg-disarmament-agenda-pubs-page.pdf>>

¹¹ Ganguly Shivaji, ‘Disarmament-Development Linkages: Some Basic Issues’, *India Quarterly*, 40(1), (1984), p. 106

¹² Gert Harigel, ‘Chemical and Biological Weapons: Use in Warfare, Impact on Society and Environment’, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2001; Arjun Makhijani, Howard Hu and Katherine Yih, *Nuclear Wastelands: A Global Guide to Nuclear Weapons Production and Its Health and Environmental Effects (1st ed.)* (MIT Press, 2000)

¹³ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999), p. 10

¹⁴ Salahaddin Mahmudi-Azer, ‘Arms Trade and Its Impact on Global Health’, *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*, 27(1), (2006), pp. 81-93

¹⁵ Dyan Mazurana, Roxani Krystalli and Anton Baaré, ‘Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Reviewing and Advancing the Field’, in F. Ni Aoláin et al. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Henri Myrtilinen, *Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women Peace and Security Agenda* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2020)

¹⁶ Robert O’Brien and Marc Williams, *Global Political Economy: Evolution & Dynamics (5th ed.)* (Macmillan education, 2016)

¹⁷ Michael W. Doyle, ‘A New Cold War?’ UI Paper no. 2, *Utrikespolitiska institutet*, 2018

¹⁸ O’Brien and Williams, *Global Political Economy*

The rise in armament spending is the last piece of puzzle verifying the exorbitant proportions of this trend,¹⁹ which can be referred to as strategic decoupling, that is the increasing factual and ideological gap between States in political and economic domains. The China-US relationship illustrates this: the bipartisan consensus in the United States to thwart Chinese ambitions, the bilateral protectionism, and the disentanglement of the two powers' structures, for example in transnational production or finance, indicates how the States drift apart. Business logic is replaced by strategic rivalry²⁰ and other players, such as the Russian Federation, engage in this even more radically by waging wars of aggression.²¹ Global defence spending and intersecting security alliances fuel this interplay, which increases the complexity of multipolar power relations to a degree far different from the bipolar distribution during the Cold War.²²

This armament-driven 'gap' between the parties leads to two fundamental problems: the erosion of development and security efforts and the preoccupation of powers with the volatile security situation. In the current logic fear becomes the currency of control. And armament determines how much one can afford. Among the trial of strength between China, the Russian Federation, the United States and – to a lesser extent – Europe, some agents will want to stay neutral, but our interconnected political economy proves this to be impossible. To convey the message of power and to win the favour of minor actors in the system, mighty States use armament widely to transfer the image of strength and protection.²³ This multidomain deterrence is strategically complemented by the coeval erection of independent global mechanisms with which States try to secure themselves a place at the very top of the food chain. China, for instance, proves this by realizing large-scale development projects (e.g., the Belt and Road Initiative; Dollar, 2019), by increasing its global attractiveness (e.g., lifting millions out of poverty; OECD, 2012) and by establishing institutions which offer public goods (e.g., the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank; Wang, 2015) competitive with existing development channels, such as the World Bank. Although these trends also allow for positive outcomes, they fulfil a distinct purpose: to enlarge spheres of influence.

This leverages weapon arsenals to more than a reflection of current relationships,

but to an object stimulating reciprocal decoupling in many domains. Under these harsh conditions new, incompatible ideologies emerge which undermine multilateral dialogue on security and development, and by drawing global attention away from realizing what really matters, the 2030 Agenda, putting it at stake altogether. The historic example of development illustrates this danger. As an idea which reflects global power relations,²⁴ development evolved historically from an economic strategy²⁵ to an overarching, people-centred approach.²⁶ With development being an evolving product of long-term international exchange, it now seems constructive debates are torn into the ideological rift between the great powers. This inevitably affects development practices.

Concluding Words

It is rightly acknowledged how tightly intertwined disarmament is with security and development, specifically to the dimensions of human life quality, economic growth/inequality, and sustainability. However, the role of armament in the global trend of strategic decoupling illustrates that not just practical implementation of security and development is endangered, but also the way how both elements become subjects of dialogue. Armament, with its retaliatory, deterring nature creates thick layers between parties, leaving past achievements and future goals at risk.

The trends we see might evolve slowly, but their temporal, spatial and social distance deceive us. This essay has not just been guided by literature, but also by intuition. As a young student, I worked for the aerospace industry and observed how the battlefield dimensions of cyber and space are no longer unreachable for conflict; I supported the German Ministry of Defence and registered how armament divisions are reorganized to react to the new perceived dangers; and now, as a researcher on public policy, I feel how sensitive exchange from one political and economic system to the other has become. It will be us, the youth, who take over the baton of the current generation in future and who then shape the ideologies with which we interact. The consequences of global alienation have already entered the present, thus, as key agents, it is our responsibility to perceive the trend, to understand its roots and to counteract it as a collective.

¹⁹ SIPRI, *World Military Spending Rises to Almost \$2 Trillion in 2020*, April 26, 2021, <<https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2021/world-military-spending-rises-almost-2-trillion-2020>>

²⁰ Gideo Rachman, 'The Decoupling of The US and China Has Only Just Begun', *Financial Times*, August 17, 2020

²¹ Anis Bajrektarevic, *Unavoidability of Sino-American Rift: History of Strategic Decoupling – Analysis*, 2021; Ibrahim Muradov, 'The Russian Hybrid Warfare: The Cases of Ukraine and Georgia', *Defence Studies*, 22(2), 2022, pp. 1–24

²² Hugo Meijer, 'Shaping China's Rise: The Reordering of US Alliances and Defence Partnerships', *East Asia International Politics*, 57(2), 2020, pp. 166–84; Viljar Veebel, 'NATO Options and Dilemmas for Deterring Russia in the Baltic States', *Defence Studies*, 18(2), 2018, pp. 229–51

²³ Lora Saalman, *Multidomain Deterrence and Strategic Stability in China* (Stokholm: SIPRI, 2022)

²⁴ Jessica Schafer, Paul A. Haslam and Pierre Beaudet, 'Meaning, Measurement, and Morality in International Development' In P.A. Haslam, J. Schafer and P. Beaudet (Eds), *Introduction to International Development: Approaches, Actors, Issues, and Practice (3rd ed)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 2–24

²⁵ Colin Leys, *The Rise & Fall of Development Theory* (East African Educational Publishers, 1996)

²⁶ Katie Willis, *Theories and Practices of Development (2nd ed.)* (London: Routledge, 2011)

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ABOUT THE UNIDIR GLOBAL DISARMAMENT ESSAY COMPETITION

General Awareness Raising of Disarmament Issues Among Next Generations: Global Disarmament Essay Competition

The UN Secretary-General's 'Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament', highlighted that while the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development took an important step towards articulating how arms control, peace and security contribute to development", there is a lot that remains to be done "in order to bring the historical relationship between disarmament and development back to the forefront of international consciousness".

In order to contribute to this effort, the first annual UNIDIR Youth Global Disarmament Essay competition was held in 2022. The initiative invited students and young professionals aged between 18 and 29 years to prepare and submit an original essay of no more than 2,000 words on the theme of "the disarmament, security, and development nexus, including with reference to the Secretary-General's Disarmament Agenda entitled 'Securing Our Common Future' and the United Nations General Assembly resolution on Youth, Disarmament and Non-proliferation (A/RES/76/45). The essays explored the following areas, among others:

- Disarmament, economic growth, and inequalities;
- Disarmament for sustainable cities;
- Innovative disarmament efforts in light of the 21st century's environmental challenges;
- Gender mainstreaming for sustainable disarmament and development.

Applicants were invited to draw on their personal experience, whether at the local, national, regional, or international level. All papers have been reviewed anonymously on the basis of their originality, intellectual rigour, relevance to the theme of the competition, and clarity of expression.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Participation Criteria

- Age-range: 18-29 years old as of submission date.
- UNIDIR encouraged applications, without distinction, on the basis of gender, racial, ethnic or social origin, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, disability, nationality, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- UNIDIR has the right at any time to require proof of identity and/or eligibility to participate in the essay competition. Failure to provide such proof may result in disqualification. All personal and other information requested by and supplied to UNIDIR for the purpose of the competition must be truthful, complete, accurate, and in no way misleading.
- Availability to travel to Geneva during 2022. While it is the responsibility of the candidate for obtaining the necessary visa to enter Switzerland and complying with swiss entry regulations regarding Covid-19 pandemic, UNIDIR will provide administrative assistance to facilitate the travel, and will cover all related costs (cost associated with obtaining a visa and cost associated with performing a PCR test).

Technical Requirements for the Submission

- One essay per person.
- Essays must be submitted by an applicant acting in their own personal capacity and not on behalf of an organization, company, or government.
- All essays must be an original work by the applicant in their own words, except for quotations from published and unpublished sources, which are clearly indicated and acknowledged as such. The articles submitted for the competition may undergo a thorough review for plagiarism and may be disqualified if any evidence of plagiarism is found.
- The essay must not have been previously published.
- Word-length: 2,000 words (excluding footnotes and bibliography).
- Abstract: 100 words.
- Language: English.
- Format: MS Word document.
- Only entries submitted by date and time will be considered. UNIDIR will confirm via e-mail the receipt of all essay submitted. If the applicant does not receive a confirmation within 48 business hours of sending a submission, s/he can contact UNIDIR to ensure receipt.
- The submission email should contain "Essay Competition 2022_"applicant's family name" in the subject line.

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UNIDIR is a voluntarily funded, autonomous institute within the United Nations. One of the few policy institutes worldwide focusing on disarmament, UNIDIR generates knowledge and promotes dialogue and action on disarmament and security. Based in Geneva, UNIDIR assists the international community to develop the practical, innovative ideas needed to find solutions to critical security problems.

CONTACT US

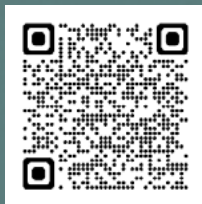
United Nations Institute
for Disarmament Research
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Telephone: +41 (0)22 917 11 41

Email: unidir@un.org



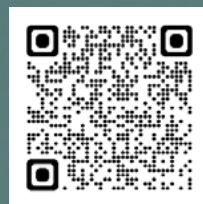
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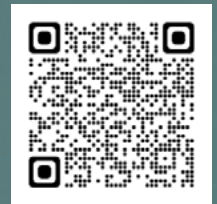
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