

Militarism and human rights

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Over the past fifty years the United Nations has affirmed a corpus of international human rights of which the most significant legal formulation is the International Bill of Human Rights which encompasses the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. International lawyers consider the Universal Declaration to have the status of customary international law, establishing a common standard by which to judge states' actions. The global community has exerted an extraordinary amount of energy articulating these norms and codifying human rights principles in international law. This is true progress: a yardstick has been developed to measure the degree to which nations uphold or violate the most basic human dignities. Yet despite global advance in defining normative goals and rights, there has not been similar success in pushing states to implement a human rights agenda. This has led to cynicism about the UN and other intergovernmental organizations. Human rights proclamations and declarations are not followed by significant action to alleviate suffering. As a result, human rights treaties and resolutions are often greeted with scorn and derision, as though, to recall Sartre, principles such as liberty, equality, and fraternity were little more than 'chatter, chatter'.¹

Part of the problem lies in the fact that there are often direct conflicts between different claimed rights. Western political systems often prioritize civil and political liberties, claiming that these rights 'trump' other claims. Freedom and liberty are frequently manipulated by governing elites and ruling majorities to deny other collective human rights, including subsistence rights. Few actions are taken to meet the entire spectrum of rights articulated in the International Bill of Human Rights. To make human rights the cornerstone of domestic and foreign policy means determining the often difficult trade-offs between rights that must be made in order to build a just society. There are

* The author is grateful for the comments of Dale Lappe, Nancy Mitchell, Michael Smith and Maurice Williams on earlier drafts of this article.

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Preface', in Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 22.

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conflicts between rights, and resolution of such conflicts might require the accommodation of different values. The metaphor of rights as trumps that override all competing considerations is only partially useful. Real life is more complex. The United Nations, for example, has affirmed both a people's right to self-determination and a people's right to development. In the name of self-determination and liberty, an astounding quantity of military weapons systems have been purchased around the world. Yet these military expenditures consistently impede economic development. These nations appear to be denying their people basic economic rights in the name of military preparedness to protect the right to self-determination and freedom.

This article will explore the following questions: How does a society provide a 'basic right to physical security' without compromising other basic human rights? Are there trade-offs between rights to physical security and rights to subsistence? What is the economic impact of high levels of military spending on economic well-being? Do such expenditures create real security? Why do the citizens in the most militarized societies feel the least secure? Do recent proposals from the United Nations point to a means of achieving a better balance between conflicting sets of human rights claims? How do we in the West incorporate these concerns into a coherent foreign policy agenda?

Military spending and subsistence rights

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, asserted that 'development cannot proceed easily in societies where military concerns are at or near the centre of life. Societies whose economic effort is given in substantial part to military production inevitably diminish the prospects of their people for development...Preparation for war absorbs inordinate resources and impedes the development of social institutions.'² Jack Matlock, a former United States ambassador to Moscow, makes a similar point in relation to the *required* weapons spending for new members joining NATO: 'It's extraordinarily unwise for these countries to shoulder these costs when they must pay the costs of meeting their social needs.'³

Webster's Dictionary defines militarism as a 'policy of maintaining a strong military organization in aggressive preparedness for war'.⁴ Militarism thus includes the disposition to maintain national power by means of strong military forces projecting menacing arms potency capable of deterring or compelling enemy nations. The Secretary-General and the ambassador argue that militarism represents a structural choice that accords military priorities and arms spending a higher priority than meeting basic human needs. Are these distinguished diplomats right? Are there dire economic consequences to high levels of military

² Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An agenda for development* (New York: United Nations, 1995), p. 20.

³ *New York Times*, 29 June 1997.

⁴ David B. Guralnik, ed., *Webster's new world dictionary of the American language* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1972), p. 901.

spending? And if so, what are the human rights implications of militarization? The negative effects of militarism on society overall are often dramatically shown through analysis of the policies of repressive governments in the less-developed world—from Myanmar (Burma) to Iraq to Syria. These dictatorial regimes clearly choose militarism over human rights. In this article, however, I will undertake a tougher task. My hypothesis is that there is a global trade-off between militarism and economic growth which impacts on the protection of rights. High levels of military spending in less developed *and* developed countries prevent all of these from fulfilling the basic economic and social rights articulated in the International Bill of Human Rights.

A useful beginning may be made by examining the effect of military spending on the United States, given its pivotal role in that economy. If significant military expenditures have a positive impact on the US economy, it will be difficult to argue that less developed nations should not pursue such policies. This analysis is particularly important given the publicity in the new media worldwide about the 'growth' and 'success' of the US economy in the mid-1990s. What is the relationship between military expenditure and the state of the US economy?

The United States spends a significant amount of its overall national wealth on weapons systems and standing armies. Current military planning calls for a 'defence' budget of well over \$250 billion a year, plus inflation, well into the twenty-first century, averaging over \$680 million a day.⁵ Over 42 per cent of the entire world's military expenditures are made by the United States. The federal government spends four times as much on the military as on education, job training, housing, economic development, and environmental protection combined.⁶ The US government has relied on the military budget above all to stimulate the economy. The Keynesian 'logic' that military spending can prevent a recession/depression has not been challenged by any administration since the Second World War. The economic prosperity of the United States during that war left a deep impression. In the 1930s the country experienced the Great Depression, with unemployment rates hovering around 25 per cent. In 1944 the unemployment rate dropped to 1.2 per cent. The public's willingness to finance a large military establishment is linked to the perception that these expenditures perform a positive overall economic function in the national economy.

With defence spending consuming one-third of the federal budget, scholars have documented the effect of such expenditures on the federal budget deficit.⁷

⁵ *New York Times*, 29 April 1997.

⁶ The political justification for the current US defence posture is an expansive conception of national security. The Pentagon argues for the ability to fight the equivalent of two Gulf wars simultaneously on different sides of the globe. War planners assume that the US will get no help from allies and that the war must be won in a matter of weeks. For alternative approaches to national security, see Michael H. Shuman and Hal Harvey, *Security without war: a post-Cold War foreign policy* (Boulder, CO, Oxford: Westview, 1993); Michael Klare, *Rogue states and nuclear outlaws: America's search for a new foreign policy* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995).

⁷ See David P. Calleo, *Beyond American hegemony: the future of the Western alliance* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), pp. 109–26; Paul Kennedy, *The rise and fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 514–35.

During the Reagan years the United States spent \$2 trillion on defence while cutting taxes. The resulting budget deficit, combined with high interest rates and large trade deficits, sent the economy spinning. Further, while the United States in the 1990s devotes around 5–6.5 per cent of its GNP to defence, its major economic competitors, Japan and Germany, allocate a smaller proportion (approximately 1 per cent and 3 per cent respectively).⁸ As a result, the United States consistently has less capital to invest in civilian industries. Scholars attribute the relative decline of the US global economic position *vis-à-vis* Japan and Germany since the 1970s to this draining of scarce capital from civilian industries. It has been estimated that for every 1 per cent of GNP devoted to military spending, overall economic growth is reduced by about 0.5 per cent. In the long term, Japan thus grows at a rate approximately two or three percentage points faster than the United States, all other things being equal. Ron Smith, for example, has used regression analysis to calculate the ratio of investment to gross national product against the GNP growth rate, unemployment, and military expenditure as a percentage of GNP. He discovered a powerful correlation between increases in defence spending and decreases in investment spending, supporting the argument of a trade-off between defence and economic growth.⁹

There are two key points here: the enormity of the military budget; and the economic difference between expenditure and investment.¹⁰ Mainstream economic thought has long viewed military expenditures as an impediment to economic progress because they are merely outlays for goods and services and not investments. Adam Smith in *The wealth of nations* probably said it best: 'The whole army and navy, are unproductive labourers. They are the servants of the public, and are maintained by a part of the annual produce of the industry of other people. Their service, how honourable, how useful, or how necessary soever, produces nothing for which an equal quantity of service can afterwards be procured.'¹¹ Military expenditures are designed to meet an immediate goal. Investments, on the other hand, are designed to increase future resources.

The diversion of significant amounts of national resources towards non-productive military expenditures results in long-term decline in productive capacity and efficiency. This has occurred in the United States. Since the mid-1970s, the US government has documented the decline in the American stan-

⁸ Ruth Leger Sivard, *World military and social expenditures*, 16th edn (Washington DC: World Priorities, 1996), pp. 48–53; Ruth Leger Sivard, *World military and social expenditures*, 14th edn (Washington DC: World Priorities, 1991), pp. 54–6.

⁹ Ron Smith, 'Military expenditure and investment in OECD countries, 1954–1973', *Journal of Comparative Economics* 4, 1980, pp. 19–32. See also Karen Rasler and William Thompson, 'Defense burdens, capital formation, and economic growth', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32: 1, 1988, pp. 61–86.

¹⁰ See Lloyd J. Dumas, 'Finding the future: the role of economic conversion in shaping the twenty-first century', in Lloyd J. Dumas, ed., *The socio-economics of conversion from war to peace* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995).

¹¹ Adam Smith, *The wealth of nations* (New York: Modern Library, 1937), p. 315.

dard of living. Despite current 'growth' indicators in the national economy, it has in fact become harder to climb out of poverty in the United States in the last two decades. The US economy has become less and less hospitable to the young, the unskilled and the less educated. This lack of equal opportunity limits the viability of liberal rights.¹² The Census Bureau, for example, reported that the percentage of full-time workers with low earnings grew sharply in the 1980s, despite the economic expansion that brought increased prosperity to the affluent. The Bureau defined low earnings as \$12,195 a year, expressed in 1990 dollars and adjusted for inflation. At the end of the 1970s, 12.1 per cent of all full-time employees earned below the equivalent of \$12,195, which was then \$6,905. By 1990 that figure had risen to 18 per cent.¹³ The number of American children living in poverty grew by more than 1 million during the 1980s, and in 1989 about 18 per cent of children in the United States lived in families with incomes below the federal poverty line, including 39.8 per cent of all black children, 38.8 per cent of American Indian children, 32.2 per cent of Hispanic children, 17.1 per cent of Asian-American children, and 12.5 per cent of white children.¹⁴

These trends are continuing. For example, the Census Bureau reported in 1994 that the typical American household saw its income decline in 1993, and more than a million Americans fell into poverty in that year. In 1994, Labor Secretary Robert Reich declared, 'America is in danger of splitting into a two-tiered society. This is not anyone's idea of progress.'¹⁵ And, in 1992, when President Clinton came to office, 48 per cent of the working poor did not have health insurance, and three years later in 1995, despite a 'growth' economy, the situation was unchanged; 9.4 million citizens still do not have health insurance.¹⁶ Inflation-adjusted wage rates for the median worker fell in the 1980s and continued to decline sharply in the 1990s. From 1989 to 1997, real wages for the majority of workers in the middle—the vast American middle class—continued to erode, with the median worker's wage falling by 5 per cent since 1989.¹⁷

A key factor in the absolute decline in the living standards of most Americans since the 1970s is the amount of capital spent for non-productive military purposes. US military spending contributed to a decline in competitiveness. For much of the Cold War, manufacturing productivity growth in most European nations averaged twice the US rate, and in Japan was often three times that of the United States. The Europeans and the Japanese could drop the prices of their goods more quickly than American firms. Investment was a key factor in

¹² See William F. Felice, *Taking suffering seriously: the importance of collective human rights* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 117–20.

¹³ *New York Times*, 12 May 1992.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, 8 July 1992.

¹⁵ *New York Times*, 7 Oct. 1994.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, 1 Aug. 1997.

¹⁷ *New York Times*, 4 Aug. 1997.

productivity growth. US arms production diverted engineers and scientists from civilian projects. Some of the brightest, most highly skilled people no longer worked directly to increase the productivity and competitiveness of the nation's manufacturing sector.¹⁸

Academic studies from the 1980s to the mid-1990s confirm the negative relationships between militarism and economic growth. Steve Chan, for example, concludes that the evidence is clear for advanced Western economies: military spending does not encourage or facilitate sustained economic growth. In the long run, 'these expenditures are more apt to have a negative than a positive impact on investment, inflation, employment, balance of payments, industrial productivity, and economic growth. The evidence on the United States...indicates especially significant costs in these regards.' Heavy defence spending 'seems to have a particularly important impact in dampening capital formation and investment, which in turn reduces economic growth in the long run'. Chan also notes the 'customary preference of officials to finance defense and war by running budget deficits rather than by cutting other programs or raising taxes, [with] much of the cost of this spending shifted to future generations'.¹⁹ These conclusions were confirmed in a 1995 study by Alex Mintz and Randolph Stevenson that was grounded solidly in neoclassical economic theory. Using longitudinal data from 103 countries, they demonstrated that increases in non-military spending contribute to growth significantly more than increases in military expenditures. Military expenditures had either a negative effect or no effect on growth in about 90 per cent of the cases. Mintz and Stevenson demonstrated that a shift away from military spending significantly contributes to economic growth in the long run.²⁰

The central purpose of economic activity is to create material well-being. A healthy economy produces and distributes consumer goods and services to satisfy material needs (e.g. refrigerators) and producer goods (e.g. machinery and transport equipment). Goods or services that do not contribute to material well-being are opportunities lost and therefore represent economic costs. The production of military goods and services is a non-contributing activity. An economy that is persistently dominated by military production will divert critical economic resources to non-contributive activities and experience a long-term decline in productivity. Investment to improve efficiency in the civilian sector will have been stifled.²¹ This tendency for defence activities to divert resources away from public and private investments more able to promote

¹⁸ Robert W. DeGrasse, Jr, *Military expansion, economic decline* (New York: Council on Economic Priorities, 1983), pp. 55-73.

¹⁹ Steve Chan, 'The impact of defense spending on economic performance: a survey of evidence and problems', *Orbis*, Summer 1985, pp. 413-14.

²⁰ Alex Mintz and Randolph T. Stevenson, 'Defense expenditures, economic growth, and the peace dividend: a longitudinal analysis of 103 countries', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39: 2, 1995, pp. 283-305.

²¹ Dumas, 'Finding the future', p. 7.

growth, leads Sandler and Hartley to conclude that the net impact of defence spending on growth is negative.²² When defence activities take scarce resources, including research and development funds, from private investment, long-term growth is impeded.

Many argue that high levels of military spending create jobs. However, according to Robert DeGrasse, 'most industries selling to the Pentagon create fewer jobs per dollar spent than the average industry in the American economy'. DeGrasse has documented how seven of eleven manufacturing industries selling the greatest volume of goods to the military—including the three largest, which together account for over 40 per cent of the Pentagon's purchases from the private sector—create fewer jobs per dollar than the median manufacturing industry. Three simulations demonstrate that transferring military expenditures to either civilian government spending or tax cuts creates higher employment. For example, shifting \$62.9 billion from military purchases to personal consumption expenditures created some 1.5 million jobs.²³ Moreover, the Congressional Budget Office of the US Congress, using two different models of the US economy, concluded in 1992 that the use of the peace dividend to reduce the federal deficit would benefit the economy in the long run.²⁴ There is also an indirect negative effect of military spending. Mintz and Huang, for example, analysed the indirect impact of arms expenditures on education spending. Their empirical study indicated no negative short-term effects but demonstrated a significant indirect long-term trade-off between spending on defence and on education. The negative effect on education was felt to be attributable to the impact of military policies on investment and growth. Over a 'longer time period, military spending crowds out investment, which reduces growth, thereby affecting the amount the government spends on education programs'.²⁵

In summary, there are at least three different ways in which military spending restricts economic growth in the United States. First, it leads to a decrease in investment and thus retards the expansion of civilian industry; second, it leads to lower employment and an inefficient use of labour resources; and third, it takes resources away from civilian research and development, impeding non-military innovation and growth and siphoning off highly qualified engineers and labour from the civilian sector. The result is a diversion of resources away from the collective human rights of education, health care and subsistence. The implementation of basic economic and social rights depends upon a shift in scarce resources away from militarism and towards these areas of human need.

²² Todd Sandler and Keith Hartley, *The economics of defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 220.

²³ DeGrasse, *Military expansion, economic decline*, pp. 23–36; quotation at p. 29.

²⁴ Congressional Budget Office, *The economic effects of reduced defense spending* (Washington DC: CBO, 1992), p. 9.

²⁵ Alex Mintz and Chi Huang, 'Guns and butter: the indirect link', *American Journal of Political Science* 35: 3, 1991, pp. 752. See also Alex Mintz and Chi Huang, 'Defense expenditures, economic growth, and the "peace dividend"', *American Political Science Review* 84: 4, 1990, pp. 1283–93.

Militarization, of course, is a global phenomenon. Expensive and sophisticated weapons are sought and purchased everywhere in the name of security and self-determination. Worldwide military spending of \$815 billion in 1992 equalled the income of nearly half the world's people. Military expenditures in developing countries rose three times as fast as those of the industrialized countries between 1960 and 1987; from \$24 billion to \$145 billion, an increase of 7.5 per cent a year, compared with 2.8 per cent for the industrialized countries. In 1990/1 the ratio of military to social spending (calculated as military expenditures as a percentage of the combined education and health expenditures) was an astounding 373 per cent in Syria, 222 per cent in Myanmar and 190 per cent in Ethiopia. Some of the poorest countries are among those which spend more on their military than on education and health: Angola, Mozambique, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, as well as Ethiopia and Myanmar.²⁶ Did these expenditures provide security? Unfortunately not. In developing countries, the chances of dying from social neglect (from malnutrition and preventable diseases) are 33 times greater than the chances of dying in a war from external aggression.²⁷ Yet US arms and military aid continue to flow to countries that face no significant external enemy. As a consequence, the function of the military in these countries often becomes internal repression (as was heinously demonstrated in Guatemala throughout the 1980s). The human cost of military spending in developing nations is enormous. The statistics are numbing. Twelve per cent of military spending in developing countries could provide funds for primary health care for all, including immunization of all children, elimination of severe malnutrition and reduction of moderate malnutrition by half, and provision of safe drinking water for all. Four per cent could reduce adult illiteracy by half, provide universal primary education and educate women to the same level as men. Eight per cent could provide basic family planning to all and stabilize world population by 2015.²⁸

Rethinking 'security'

The attitudes that sustain large and deadly military machines did not fall with the Berlin Wall. The logic is mesmerizing. The world is a dangerous place divided into sovereign nation-states, each seeking to improve its position in an anarchic international system. There are few opportunities for cooperation. Each state maintains the right to be free from the scrutiny and intervention of other states in its internal affairs. Each nation is surrounded by danger and must protect itself to survive, which gives rise to a preoccupation with power, particularly military power. Internalizing this acute sense of danger makes it

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human development report 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 34, 47-51.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

easier to accept high taxation to pay for militarization at the expense of social development. Yet such militarization in the name of security and peace often backfires and creates conditions of insecurity and conflict. Further, such expenditures consistently undermine the ability of nations to fulfil other international human rights, in particular economic and social rights. 'Security' defined solely as the heavily armed defence of one's borders, can subvert the secure lives of the people living within those borders. How does a nation provide a basic right to physical security without compromising other human rights? What types of military and other expenses should be budgeted to attain physical security?

Feminist peace researchers and other scholars in peace studies distinguish between negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace and negative security stem from a desire to inhibit the existence of a destructive entity. Deterrence and the conventional 'realist' power politics paradigm are examples of negative peace. Here, security is the result of cancelling one threat by another: threats and counter-threats cancel out the actual use of force and create 'negative' peace. The goal is to be able to threaten someone else, as in a householder's purchase of a gun for protection from crime. A secure state is therefore one that is able to counter any military threat it may face. Negative peace refers to the absence of war and other direct violence.²⁹ Positive peace and positive security, on the other hand, reflect the desire to eliminate the threat by addressing its cause. The objective is not to counter the threat but to end all threats by addressing the source of the problem. The goal is to cure the disease rather than simply to address its symptoms. Central to positive peace is not just the absence of war and violence, but also the protection of human rights and social justice. The elimination of underdevelopment and institutionalized poverty are considered signs of peace.³⁰ Positive security, for example, would embrace serious arms control negotiations and agreements. The proliferation of all types of arms (conventional, biological, nuclear) makes conflict more volatile and escalation more likely. When the US, French, British and German governments subsidize arms exporters and fail to take the lead in disarmament measures, they exacerbate the threat and undercut their own security.

In the pursuit of positive security, scholars have argued that territorial security is less important than peoples' security; they urge a reconceptualization from security through armaments to security through sustainable human development. The *Human development report*, for example, outlines seven main categories of threats to human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political. The critical threats are poverty and malnu-

²⁹ Maria Stern, *Security policy in transition* (Stockholm: Padrigger, 1991), pp. 26-8; Robert Elias and Jennifer Turpin, 'Introduction: thinking about peace', in Elias and Turpin, eds, *Rethinking peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p. 4; Johan Galtung, 'Violence, peace and peace research', *Journal of Peace Research* 6: 3, 1969, pp. 167-91.

³⁰ Elias and Turpin, 'Introduction', pp. 4-5.

trition, inadequate education, environmental degradation, population pressures and inadequate health care.³¹ US citizens, for example, must ask whether the current Pentagon justification for a \$250 billion military budget (the ability to fight two Gulf wars simultaneously with no help from allies) should take precedence over these other human security needs. Proponents of positive peace describe conditions of insecurity in pollution, war, sickness, oppression and poverty. Transformation towards positive peace must involve the participation and support of the world's peoples; it cannot be attained by a few leaders alone. Peace is not merely the resolution of isolated conflicts, a return to a prewar condition. Rather, peace involves attention to conditions of cultural destruction, malnutrition, disease, poverty, and discrimination based on race, gender and sexual orientation. Peace thus includes economic well-being, self-determination, human rights and ecological issues.

The enduring tension between militarism and human rights

Militarism describes one type of society and world vision; international human rights describe a very different world. The two visions are incompatible. To implement a human rights agenda means sacrificing the fixation with military growth and military spending.

Human rights claims evolve over time. There is a strong link between the growth of new human rights and social development. As modern global society has matured, accompanied by deep ecological interdependence, new threats to the individual and the group have surfaced. To combat these threats, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have raised issues of environmental balance, economic growth, social equality, refugee relocation, drug interdiction and disease eradication. Global cooperation between state and non-state actors is seen as critical to addressing this perplexing new agenda of world politics. Accordingly, the list of human rights claims keeps growing. Complex social relations give rise to these demands as new claims are made to alleviate suffering. What appears fundamental in one historical era may not be in another. Human rights claims today have no relation to a primitive state of nature where people's lives were dominated by a few essential needs. As Norberto Bobbio points out, there are no current charters of rights which do not recognize the right to education, which broadens as society develops to include secondary and university as well as primary education. Yet none of the better-known descriptions of the state of nature mentions such a right.³² International human rights today are a product of this particular historical period.

The International Bill of Human Rights incorporates civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It acknowledges human needs of survival,

³¹ UNDP, *Human development report 1994*, pp. 24-5.

³² Norberto Bobbio, *The age of rights* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 53.

well-being, identity and freedom. In the late twentieth century, collective human rights of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity/race have been added to this framework. The goal is to create political, civil and socio-economic rights which enable all individuals through group membership to develop a valuable, independent life in civil society. We now have the ability to create a world of humane governance informed by these normative priorities. Perhaps in other times such an ambitious agenda was not possible, but there is no question that today with new economic developments, technological breakthroughs and innovations in communications, we have the ability to protect basic human dignity.

It is now commonly accepted that it is not possible to achieve significant progress on human rights without subsistence needs (food, sanitation, education, etc.) being met. It is also impossible to achieve human rights progress and development in societies controlled by repressive and corrupt regimes. The government can be the main obstacle to achieving either economic or political rights. Most United Nations scholars and human rights activists promote an interdependence between the two sets of rights (civil/political and economic/social/cultural), and criticize those who make too sharp a distinction between them. Economic and social rights are complementary to libertarian principles found within civil and political rights. They are both symbiotic and mutually dependent. Civil and political rights can be enacted only if everyone has a minimum of economic security.

This human rights agenda can also only be implemented within a framework of peace. Militarism has neither created a world of peace and stability, nor protected the human right to physical security. Overemphasis on military superiority undermines the ability to build regimes of trust and harmony. The arsenals of the war system are symptoms of deep conflict. Arms control and disarmament and the demobilization of armed forces are prerequisites to providing the institutional framework within which nations may pursue implementation of the corpus of international human rights law.

International security and stability are dependent on domestic security and stability. The roots of conflict within domestic societies are often the result of economic, social and environmental pressures which cause poverty and unemployment and pit one community, class, sex or ethnic group against another. Human rights as the core of domestic and foreign public policy can provide a route for the achievement of peace and stability. Preoccupations with 'balance of power' and military prowess can only continue to produce a world of insecurity and war. Policies based on outmoded notions of *realpolitik* exacerbate insecurities. The irony is that human rights policies provide the clearest road to achieve the 'realist' objectives of security and stability. Long-term interests in international stability should compel governments to explore human security and positive peace.

It is commonly accepted that totalitarianism and human rights are incompatible. The negative impact of militarism on basic human rights must also be

understood. A militarized society exists in contradiction to basic human rights and negates the opportunities for human freedom.

Inhibiting militarism

The collective human right to self-determination and the individual human right to personal security are fundamental needs of every human community. For this reason, proposals for immediate and unilateral disarmament consistently fail. As long as societies and individuals feel threatened, the need will be felt to possess armaments to keep aggressors at bay. But could security be achieved without militarism?

Three clear areas in which a beginning could be made in inhibiting militarism while protecting personal security rights are curbing arms sales; initiating steps towards common security and basic deterrence; and launching institutions of war prevention and preventive diplomacy.

Limiting arms sales

Global military spending since the Second World War totals at least \$30–\$35 trillion. Enormous resources are needed every year just to maintain superfluous military equipment. Converting military industries is the first step to the release of resources needed to implement international human rights.

In the United States the 'lock' that the military-industrial complex has on the government was again demonstrated in August 1997 when the Clinton administration decided to lift a 19-year-old ban on weapon sales to Latin America. Reversing the ban imposed by President Carter in 1978, the administration announced that it would now consider allowing arms sales on a 'case by case' basis. The reversal was a huge victory for military contractors like the Lockheed Martin Corporation and the McDonnell Douglas Corporation.³³ From Thucydides to present-day political scientists, it has been noted that the influx of new weapons into a region sets off arms races and rekindles traditional rivalries. Nations either acquire arms or form alliances with distant states to balance out the perceived military power of their neighbours. The Clinton administration, however, in an Orwellian twist, asserts the opposite: its spokesperson claims that lifting the ban will stabilize the region and promote democracy. Selling F-16s and other high-powered weaponry to Latin America will have, in fact, the opposite effect.

For the United States, a programme of positive peace would be based on converting a military-based economic system to a civilian-based system. The conversion process can begin with a restriction on arms exports. No longer can such weapons sales be justified as a means of preserving jobs and stemming eco-

³³ *New York Times*, 2 Aug. 1997.

conomic decline. According to the annual arms survey of the Congressional Research Service, the US share of the international weapons trade grew by nearly 23 per cent in 1996, to \$11.3 billion in orders, representing 35.5 per cent of the global market.³⁴ Conversion must begin by transforming these military industries to civilian enterprises. Clearly, cooperative security, positive peace and Third World development are not enhanced by the sale of high-tech weapons systems. The defence technologies developed during the Cold War can be redirected towards productive civilian ends.³⁵ A compulsory registration of arms sales and transfers should be established under UN auspices. World conflicts and the fires of war are fanned by these sales. The NGO community can play a key role in publicizing illegal and surreptitious sales of arms.

Basic deterrence and common security

Since the end of the Cold War, serious scholars and policy-makers have argued that the US military budget should be dramatically reduced. The implementation of international human rights depends upon the execution of such proposals. Theories of common security and basic deterrence, as opposed to national security and extended deterrence, help frame the issues.

William Kaufmann and John Steinbruner from the Brookings Institution, for example, argue for a common approach to security in which the military establishments of various nations are all 'on the same side...defensively configured, and...primarily committed to providing mutual reassurance'. This would require nations to 'systematically limit offensive capabilities that might support ground invasions or might undertake long-range bombardment to achieve some political objective'. Before joining the Brookings Institution, Kaufmann had been a top adviser to Democratic and Republican Secretaries of Defense from 1960 to 1980, and Steinbruner had spent 15 years as director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution.³⁶ Kaufmann and Steinbruner list key rules for cooperative defence strategies. Modern ground forces in any given area should be kept 'low enough to signal defensive rather than offensive intent'. Air forces should be altered to 'favor defense over deep interdiction'. Formerly secret information about 'basic research activities, new weapons deployment plans, and major operational exercises' should be published. Only small nuclear forces should be maintained, exclusively for retaliation. And strict, joint controls on weapon exports and related technology should be imposed. The cooperative security budget projected by Kaufmann and Steinbruner would save the United States approximately \$424 billion over a ten-year period.³⁷

³⁴ *New York Times*, 16 Aug. 1997.

³⁵ See Domenick Bertelli, 'Military contractor conversion in the United States', in Lloyd J. Dumas, ed., *The socio-economics of conversion from war to peace* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995).

³⁶ William Kaufmann and John Steinbruner, *Decisions for defense: prospects for a new order* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1991), p. 70.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-4.

Michael O'Hanlon, also of the Brookings Institution, argues that the United States could prudently cut defence spending by as much as 10 per cent without risking its ability to respond to simultaneous regional crises or to maintain global commitments. His proposal would generate an additional \$100 billion in cumulative savings beyond the Clinton administration's projections over the next seven years.³⁸ Randall Forsberg, the Director of the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, goes much further. She argues that if the United States adopted a 'cooperative security' policy, annual military spending could be cut by 80 per cent by the turn of the century. Savings would come to \$180 billion per year. She believes that such an approach to security is a prerequisite to stopping the global proliferation of armaments and arms industries. Her plan is based on reducing conventional forces to non-offensive defences, decoupling nuclear weapons from the deterrence of conventional war, and replacing unilateral military intervention with multilateral peacekeeping.³⁹

Whether the scale of change is as modest as Kaufmann and Steinbruner's and O'Hanlon's, or as ambitious as Forsberg's, the resources released could then be used to meet America's human security needs: health and environmental security, rebuilding decaying infrastructure, etc. However, to avoid devastating layoffs, a comprehensive, proactive conversion policy for the United States would have to be in place. A great deal can be learned from the post-1945 experience when the United States reduced the defence component of its economy from about 40 per cent of GNP to about 6 per cent in just two years. Despite this huge shift, levels of employment and consumption were maintained through proactive public policies. Scholars have recently outlined a number of such policies which could be implemented today.⁴⁰

Institutions for peace

To implement this ambitious agenda, it will be necessary to develop new institutions specifically committed to demilitarization and human rights. Since the end of the Cold War, a plethora of proposals for the restructuring of the UN has been produced.⁴¹ The following ideas could be useful first steps in the construction of global institutions dedicated to overcoming militarism and establishing a framework of common security.

³⁸ Michael O'Hanlon, *Defense planning for the late 1990s: beyond the Desert Storm framework* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995).

³⁹ Randall Forsberg, 'Defense cuts and cooperative security in the post-Cold War world', *Boston Review* 17: 3-4, May-July 1992.

⁴⁰ See J. Lynch, ed., *Economic adjustment and conversion of defense industries* (Boulder, CO, Oxford: Westview, 1987); Alejandro E. Nadal, 'Military R&D: the economic implications of disarmament and conversion', *Defense and Peace Economics* 5: 2, 1994, pp. 131-51; UN, *Economic aspects of disarmament: disarmament as an investment process* (New York: United Nations, 1993); Anthony Voss, *Converting the defense industry*, (Oxford: Oxford Research Group, 1992).

⁴¹ See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An agenda for peace 1995*, 2nd edn (New York: United Nations, 1995); Richard Falk, *On humane governance: toward a new global politics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 207-40; Saul H. Mendlovitz and Burns H. Weston, eds., 'Symposium: preferred futures for the United Nations', *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems* 4: 2, Fall 1994.

- Militarism and human rights*
- 1 The creation of a new International Verification Agency. This could help create confidence that disarmament enhances rather than undermines security. Reagan's quip to Gorbachev, 'trust but verify', holds true internationally. Effective inspections and monitoring arrangements are essential to verify compliance with disarmament agreements. This new agency could be charged with inspection responsibilities for nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmament. The Chemical Weapons Convention established the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to verify global adherence to the treaty. The new International Verification Agency could draw on this experience and expand the verification function to cover other armaments.⁴²
 - 2 The creation of a Global Demilitarization Fund as proposed by Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias. Arias calls on the nations of the world, both rich and poor, to 'commit themselves to at least a 3 per cent a year reduction in their military spending levels over the next five years'. The rich would be asked to earmark only one-fifth of these savings towards the demilitarization fund, and the developing countries would contribute perhaps one-tenth. The money raised could address other human security needs, such as those arising from famines, natural disasters and resource depletion.⁴³
 - 3 The establishment of a 'crisis management centre' at the UN to enable proactive mediation and dispute resolution measures to be taken effectively. The centre would undertake an international monitoring function to ensure compliance with demilitarization and human rights norms. The UN will need an independent capacity to verify information and gather data on its own. Such monitoring could help end illegal shipments of arms and technology across borders and deter illegal tests of missiles or warheads.⁴⁴

Human rights as the cornerstone of public policy

For the vast majority of individuals on the planet, human rights remain a fantasy, a utopian dream, aspirations for some long-distant future. To these individuals human rights just do not seem feasible in today's world of intractable geopolitical rivalries, massive arms races and unspeakable human suffering. Human rights can also provide a fairy-tale façade which serves to disguise the often vicious nature of autocratic and/or highly inegalitarian societies. Acting

⁴² Michael Renner, 'Budgeting for disarmament: the costs of war and peace', *Worldwatch Paper* 122, November 1994, p. 44.

⁴³ UNDP, *Human development report 1994*, p. 59.

⁴⁴ Robert C. Johansen, 'Reforming the United Nations to eliminate war', *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems* 4: 2, Fall 1994, pp. 471-2.

'as if' certain rights were authentic often inhibits people's ability to recognize when they are, in reality, unrealizable.⁴⁵

International human rights can, however, move beyond the realm of utopia and serve as the cornerstone of domestic and foreign public policy. Only through public policy can human rights mitigate militarism. As outlined above, a human rights public policy agenda means moving towards positive peace and common security. If the global community is serious about this, bold and dramatic action is needed. Some argue, for example, that a new Human Rights Council should be established to coordinate and organize the work of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Centre for Human Rights, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the human rights components of the specialized agencies, and regional intergovernmental organizations.⁴⁶ The Human Rights Council could establish a framework that would enable these organizations to consolidate their efforts and prioritize human rights strategies for peace and development. It is no longer enough just to point out the interrelationships between peace, demilitarization and human rights. Human rights strategies must direct public policy towards peace and development. Human rights are not utopian dreams, but tools to inform and guide policy.

⁴⁵ See Bertell Ollman, 'Introduction', in Bertell Ollman and Jonathan Birnbaum, eds, *The United States constitution* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), p. 6.

⁴⁶ B. G. Ramcharan, 'Reforming the United Nations to secure human rights', *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems* 4: 2, Fall 1994, pp. 513-14.