



Bonn International Center for Conversion

B · I · C · C

bulletin

No. 63

July 2013

Combat drones are not planes

For the majority of international law experts, the deployment of combat drones in armed conflicts falls within the limits of legality. However, most of them consider “targeted killing” by the United States in its “war on terror”—in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia—to be in violation of international law. Targeted killings in countries against which no war has been declared contravenes the UN Charter and undermines the rule of international law. The lines dividing war and peace have been further blurred by President Obama’s decision during the Libya conflict to refuse demands from Congress for a say in the matter. As commander-in-chief, he argued that such parliamentary oversight was unnecessary because the use of drones did not endanger the lives of any US-American soldiers and the deployment of drones did not constitute an act of war. It is the CIA, as a non-military institution, that draws up hit lists for the attacks. Once the President gives the go-ahead, the victims can be eliminated at the push of a button. In some cases, attacks are carried out on grounds of suspicious behavior alone.

Executions by the executive—without war being declared, without parliamentary control and without rule-of-law procedures—are removing one of modern democracy’s major achievements: giving the people ultimate authority over matters of war and peace. Moreover, the possibility of eliminating alleged terrorists or insurgents anywhere in the world without putting one’s own soldiers at risk lowers a state’s inhibitions against resorting to a military option.

The perceived military advantages of combat drones have already wet appetites worldwide. The West’s monopoly of armed drones did not last long. More than eighty states now have reconnaissance drones. At a recent air show, China presented 27 different types of drone, including armed systems,

made by Chinese producers. Iran, too, claims to have developed its own combat drone.

Since computers process any information much faster than human beings, the trend towards automated and autonomous operation is inexorable. The scope for human decision-making is noticeably diminishing. But we have to ask: just how secure is the software code needed for autonomous control of drones against outside interference? What vulnerabilities lie in the IT itself? It is assumed that the combat drones of the next generation, or the one after that, will no longer need a human pilot at the control center. This foreseeable trend leads to a situation in which decisions on life and death are left to computers. We will then have the automation of an undeclared war. This diffusion of responsibility throws up some very serious legal, political and ethical questions and is at the core of the debate on whether combat drones are “ethically neutral”. Ducking the question by equating drones with planes fails to grasp the seriousness of what is at stake.

When it comes to exercising military force, Germany cannot be compared to the United States. The differences are too great in terms of the political system and division of powers. The two countries’ experience of war in the “short 20th century” (Eric J. Hobsbawm) are worlds apart. In Germany, neither the executive nor the secret service decides on the use of military force. This is the prerogative of parliament alone. Nevertheless, any decision on procuring combat drones must take into consideration what is happening in the United States and the consequences of drones for security policy and the rule of law.

We repeat our demand for combat drones to be banned under international law. We believe that urgent steps should be taken to prevent the development of such weapon systems before they evolve a deadly dynamic of their own. It is vital to reassert the valuable insight, gained during the nuclear era, that security cannot be achieved against each other but only with each other. Efforts are needed to revitalize arms control and disarmament initiatives. We realize that preventative

arms control in the sense of containment of future weapon systems has rarely worked in practice. Experts expect drones to emerge as the weapon of the 21st century. Drones have been called the “weapon of post-heroic societies that want a high level of security but are only willing to make small sacrifices to get it” (Herfried Münkler).

Nevertheless, we do not accept that a rise of the drone is unstoppable like some law of nature. Novel weapon systems are developed and deployed by human beings. And it is human beings who can prevent them from spreading. Is this utopian thinking? Not long ago, the self-proclaimed realists declared nuclear weapons to be indispensable and dismissed the critics as idealists. But the tide has since turned. Fearing unchecked proliferation, these very same realists are now calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons worldwide. And it did prove possible to establish treaties banning weapons in the case of landmines and cluster bombs, despite the refusal to support the process from the outset. There is an old adage in politics that government should be farsighted, *gouverner, c'est prévoir*. Germany must start advocating an international ban now. Once the arms build-up in combat drones gets into full swing, it may be too late.

Extract from “Peace Report 2013. Editors' Statement: Current Developments and Recommendations” (translated into English, http://friedensgutachten.de/tl_files/friedensgutachten/pdf_eng/fga2013_Stellungnahme_englisch.pdf).

Marc von Boemcken et al. (eds.). 2013. *Friedensgutachten 2013*. Münster: Lit-Verlag

Bonn International Center for Conversion
bulletin No. 63

BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting peace, security and development through applied research, advisory services and capacity development.

This newsletter is published quarterly by
© BICC

Pfarrer-Byns-Straße 1, 53121 Bonn, Germany.

Responsible for this issue: Susanne Heinke,
Heike Webb (editing, layout).

Phone: +49-228-911960
Fax: +49-228-91196-22
E-mail: bicc@bicc.de
Internet: www.bicc.de



This publication is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License -
[cf. creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

Staff Spotlight



Luuk van de Vondervoort

Luuk van de Vondervoort joined BICC in January 2013. He works as a Technical Advisor to the Government of South Sudan on small arms control, in particular on improving arms and ammunition management. Based in Juba, his main counterparts are the South Sudan Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control, and all the organized forces. The long-term aim of the project is to limit the number of illegal weapons in the hands of civilians, reduce crime, and diminish the chances of unintended explosions of ammunition occurring.

Before he started at BICC, Luuk worked in Juba with the South Sudan Law Society, a local civil society organization, mainly doing research on the nascent mining and minerals industry in the world's youngest nation. He also worked in Eastern DRC with a local civil society organization on a Search for Common Ground project, developing and executing trainings for the Congolese Armed Forces in human rights, criminal law, and conflict resolution. Before that, Luuk was a trainee at the security policy department of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, examining licence applications from Dutch firms that wanted to export defense equipment.

Luuk holds a BA in Language and Culture Studies from Utrecht University, an LLM from VU University Amsterdam in Law and Politics of International Security, and an MA in Legal and Political Theory from University College London. He also spent some time at the University of Bologna, during which he quickly improved his cooking skills. In addition to that, Luuk enjoys reading and, of recent, has started playing Ultimate Frisbee in Juba.



For further information

please contact Luuk van der Vondervoort
at vondervoort@bicc.de

Peace Report 2013

On 4 June, the four leading German peace and conflict research institutes presented the Peace Report 2013 (Friedensgutachten 2013) at the Federal Press Conference in Berlin. The editors Dr. Marc von Boemcken, BICC (this year's lead), Dr. Ines-Jacqueline Werkner (FEST), Dr. Margret Johannsen (IFSH), and Dr. Bruno Schoch (HSFK) warn of the use of armed drones and examine critically German arms exports policy.

In Berlin, the editors met planning staff representatives of important ministries and of the development and defense committees. They discussed with working groups of the Green Party, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the *Linke*, and discussed the Peace Report with Ruprecht Polenz, member of German parliament and chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as well as with the chair of the SPD, Sigmar Gabriel.

Furthermore, they met with Pax Christi and other organizations of the peace movement, held a talk at the Humboldt-Universität and an open discussion in the French Church, organized by the Protestant Academy Berlin and WiIS.de.

On 18 June, a discussion on contradicting interests of economic- and foreign policy regarding arms exports took place at the premises of the EKD in Brussels between Dr. Marc von Boemcken, lead editor of the Peace Report 2013, brigadier general Bernd Schulte Berge, head of the section military policy at the permanent mission, Dr. Franziska Brantner, member of the European parliament, member of the committee for foreign affairs and spokesperson for foreign affairs of the parliamentary group The Greens/DFA, Jan Grebe, BICC and chair of the expert group on arms exports of the Joint Conference Church and Development (GKKE), as well as Prof. Dr. Michael Brzoska (IFSH) when presenting the Peace Report 2013.

→ For further information please contact Marc von Boemcken at boemcken@bicc.de



The Chad example

The Future of Growth—Economic Values and the Media was the topic of the 6th Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum from 17 to 19 June at the World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB). On 18 June, BICC conducted the workshop “Commodities and Foreign Investors—Protecting the Rights of Communities and Conflict Prevention (the Chad example).” The workshop dealt with the risks imposed on local communities in the international resource economy, exemplified by the case of petroleum production in Chad. Chadian oil exploration at the beginning of the millennium led to the World Bank financing a model project which propagated economic and social development for the country's poor Doba region and Chad's overall population. In 2008, the World Bank had to admit the failure of its project and withdrew from the international oil consortium for petrol production in Chad. Despite achieving oil revenues of more than US \$9 billion, today Chad is ranked 184 out of 186 on the UN's Human Development Index, lower than before oil production started in 2003. Why was the promise of development through oil wealth doomed to fail? If the extraction of natural resources is linked to an increase in conflict, how can the ramifications of resource exploitation in conflict regions be better understood by conflict studies? Which role can the media play—last but not least in informing consumers in the North of their responsibilities and about possible remedies?

These and other questions were discussed by Delphine Djiraibé, Co-Founder of the Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights, Dr. Korinna Horta, International Finance, Human Rights and Environment Campaigner, Urgewald, Fabian Selg, Freelance Researcher associated to BICC, Martin Zint, Journalist, and Lena Guesnet, Researcher at BICC (moderator).

The panelists gave the following recommendations as 'lessons learned':

- A moratorium is needed in the beginning—“Don't let things be pushed!”
- “Communication helps”—Even authoritarian governments do not like to be blamed and shamed.
- Geospatial intelligence can be a tool for assistance, e.g. for more transparency.
- “When oil is produced, conflicts will increase!—Put conditions in place beforehand.”

→ For further information, please contact Susanne Heinke at pr@bicc.de

Publications

Conrad Schetter. 2013. "Book review: Policing Afghanistan by Antonio Giustozzi." *International Affairs* Vol. 89, No. 4, pp. 1074–75.

Jan Grebe. 2013. „Parlamentarische Kontrolle und Transparenz von Rüstungsexporten“. Bonn: BICC, July. <http://www.bicc.de/publications/publicationpage/publication/parlamentarische-kontrolle-und-transparenz-von-ruestungsexporten-390/>

Jan Grebe. 2013. "Harmonized EU Arms Exports Policies in Times of Austerity? Adherence to the Criteria of the EU Common Position on Arms Exports." Bonn: BICC, June. <http://www.bicc.de/press/press-releases/press/news/harmonized-eu-arms-exports-policies-in-times-of-austerity-369/>

BICC Focus 12. Utz Ebers and Marie Müller. 2013. "Legacy of a resource-fueled war: The role of generals in Angola's mining sector". Bonn: BICC, June. <http://www.bicc.de/press/press-releases/press/news/new-publication-bicc-focus-12-368/>

Marc von Boemcken et al. (eds.). 2013. *Friedensgutachten 2013*. Münster: Lit-Verlag.

BICC Brief 48. Elke Grawert and Christine Andrä. 2013. "Oil Investment and Conflict in Upper Nile State, South Sudan." Bonn: BICC, May. <http://www.bicc.de/publications/publicationpage/publication/oil-investment-and-conflict-in-upper-nile-state-387/>

BICC Notes

From 25 June to 3 July 2013, Conrad Schetter, Director for Research, and Michael Dedek, Director for Administration, visited projects and cooperation partners in Khartoum, Sudan, and Juba, South Sudan.

In South Sudan, BICC is running two projects: one provides technical support to the national DDR Commission (Capacity-development and technical advice), and is financed by Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW). The other is a project funded by the German Foreign Office and advises on how to deal with the local small arms and ammunition stockpile.

In Khartoum (Sudan), both Directors visited a project also funded by the German Foreign Office in which BICC gives technical assistance to the Sudanese DDR Commission.

The Directors met with the project staff as well as with representatives of the South Sudanese/Sudanese partners, GOs and NGOs (e.g. UN, EC, GIZ, KfW, MAG) and the German embassies. The

cooperation partners both in Khartoum as well as in Juba underlined their appreciation for BICC's work and expertise.

→ For further information please contact: Conrad Schetter at schetter@bicc.de or Michael Dedek at dedek@bicc.de



On 17 and 18 June, the conference "Smart Technology in SALW Control: Civilian Protection, the UN-PoA, and Transfer Control" (SmartCon), planned and organized by BICC and the German Foreign Office, took place at the premises of the Foreign Office in Berlin.

The six panels of the conference looked at the issue of information technology in Small Arms and Light Weapons control, ranging from the technological side to legal frameworks, like the United Nations Programme of Action (UN-PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons. This included questions regarding the applicability in least developed countries and post-conflict settings, shipment, tracing, and access limitations as in so-called smart guns.

The keynote speech of Ambassador Rolf Nickel, German Foreign Office, and the welcome address of Conrad Schetter can be found at <http://www.bicc.de/press/press-releases/press/news/salw-conf-372/>

→ For further information please contact: Marc Koesling at koesling@bicc.de

BICC, UNU (UN University) and ZEF (Center for Development Research) participated in the German Development Day on 25 May 2013 in Bonn. In a 'science tent' on the Muensterplatz, they presented their work for sustainability, development and peace with a focus on Africa.

"Your engagement. Our future" was the motto of the first German Development Day. Events in Bonn and 15 other German cities showed the diversity of development cooperation and were organized by the Engagement Global gGmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

→ For further information please contact: Susanne Heinke at pr@bicc.de