

bulletin

No. 13

1 October 1999

Conflict Prevention: Opportunities and Challenges for Development Cooperation

by Reinhart Helmke

Never before has the relationship between armed conflict and development been so clear. Never before have armed conflicts constituted such an obvious impediment to development opportunities. United Nations policy as reflected in such key texts as the Agenda for Peace (1992) and the subsequent Agenda for Development (1994) firmly recognizes this linkage, and all UN peacekeeping operations since the end of the Cold War have been built on this model.

The need to integrate conversion and disarmament issues within development policy and cooperation is addressed here from the mostly operational perspective of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). There is an urgent need for international organizations like the UN and its affiliates to address post-conflict disarmament, demobilization, conversion, security, reintegration, and rehabilitation in a coherent, consistent, and timely manner in order to move towards sustainable peace and development. As such, a broader framework for social and economic conversion is necessary.

The Rehabilitation and Social Sustainability (RESS) unit of UNOPS formulates, monitors and evaluates projects involving post-conflict reconstruction, social rehabilitation, refugee and returnee resettlement, the demobilization of combatants, and demining. It provides the operational tools to put UN post-conflict policies into practice and supports a comprehensive approach to post-conflict and development. Its contribution is based on a set of principles which includes a focus on regions that have suffered physical destruction and where people have been uprooted, displaced, or exiled; an insistence on the absolutely non-discriminatory inclusion of all population groups in a specific target area; the promotion of local

empowerment and participatory decision-making; an emphasis on the integration of women in conflict resolution processes and the strengthening of local implementation capabilities.

This integrated approach has been taken in the PRODERE program, which UNOPS executed following the Esquipulas Peace Treaties in Central America, and in the CAREERE program in Cambodia where the broader framework comprised social and economic conversion at the local level, preceded by demining operations. The RESS unit also contributed to the Guatemala Historic Clarification Commission mandated by the United Nations to investigate and document human rights abuses in Guatemala's 35-year civil war. In February 1999, the Commission issued its report and presented it to the UN Secretary-General. Its conclusions as they pertain to the social and economic impact of conflict are significant, as they shed light on the importance of conversion for conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building and development.

It is now recognized that there are a number of macroeconomic consequences of the conflict which need to be addressed. Some are known, and their consequences for the development of Guatemala are clear. The Commission estimated that the

direct quantifiable costs of the internal armed conflict alone amounted to close to US \$10 billion, representing 120 percent of the country's GDP in 1990. The bulk of this amount came in the form of opportunity costs from lost production and the destruction of physical assets such as property and infrastructure. Other, less easily quantifiable losses such as foreign investments which did not take place owing to the conflict, are not included in the figure. It also found that the conflict was prolonged by the inability of the state to provide minimal social services in some of the neediest regions of the country, as its ability to collect taxes was seriously hindered. Over the course of the conflict, the budget deficit widened, thereby further weakening the state's capacity to promote development.

Unless seen within the overall context of post-conflict reconstruction, including the social and

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economic needs of society, crucial conversion projects such the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants will be of little impact. In many post-conflict countries, the lack of economic opportunities is compounded by the desperation of former combatants who see few civilian alternatives available to them. This dilemma has been at the center of UN peace processes in such countries as Angola and Mozambique. In the absence of constructive civilian jobs, peace appears to be unattainable.

While it is generally assumed that crisis situations provoke the total breakdown of the economy, there is always some form of economic activity which continues to be carried out, and in which socially irresponsible investors have a stake. Drug trafficking, for example, can form a lucrative occupation for well-equipped combatants under conditions that compare favorably with those offered by a position in the regular army. The principal challenge thus becomes one of promoting the change from a war economy to a peace economy.

In practice, this implies that international cooperation needs to ensure that its interventions are embedded within the broader framework mentioned throughout this paper. What is needed more than individual projects are comprehensive programs.

Reinhart Helmke, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, is Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). He serves as a member on BICC's International Board. This text is an abridged version of a presentation which Mr. Helmke gave at the conference *The Contribution of Disarmament and Conversion to Conflict Prevention and its Relevance for Development Cooperation*. (For further information on the conference please refer to page 3).

Staff Spotlight:



Hartmut Kühle

Hartmut Kühle (Germany) joined BICC in February 1997. He was initially involved in a one-year project on labor market measures for conversion sites in Germany. Since mid-1998 he has been conducting the German Defense Industry Restructuring project financed by the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung to examine survival measures and strategies applied by German defense companies in light of shrinking markets. Important issues include how companies estimate the impact of security policy changes, their expectations of national and European policy and the effects of the restructuring process on companies and on employment in the sector. The study focuses on large and medium-size enterprises from the main defense branches. Interviews with leading managers and works councillors (*Betriebsräte*) are conducted to gather up-to-date information. The project will be completed by the end of May 2000.

Hartmut Kühle studied economics at the University of Tübingen and worked as an editor at the German Institute for Correspondence Studies (DIFF). From 1973–1997 he was a senior researcher at the Economic and Social Research Institute (WSI) of the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) in Düsseldorf where his main interests were business cycle analysis, economic forecasts, foreign trade and foreign direct investment. He wrote his Ph.D. thesis on theories of crisis at the University of Bremen and served as editor of the social science journal “WSI-Mitteilungen” in Düsseldorf. Since 1978 he has been a member of the Foreign Trade Advisory Council (Außenwirtschaftsbeirat) at the Federal Ministry of Economics in Bonn. He has published on economic forecasts, globalization, European Monetary Union, industry restructuring, labor market and adjustment measures of defense enterprises.

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**Bonn International Center for Conversion
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 No. 13**

The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and facilitating the processes whereby people, skills, technology, equipment, and financial and economic resources can be shifted away from the defense sector and applied to alternative civilian uses.

This newsletter is published quarterly by
 © Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)
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International Expert Conference

On 30–31 August more than 100 international experts met in Bonn at the conference on *The Contribution of Disarmament and Conversion to Conflict Prevention and its Relevance for Development Cooperation*, hosted by BICC together with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the State Government of North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW).

The conference brought together three distinct but related communities: arms control, disarmament and conversion, conflict management and prevention, and development cooperation.

The objective was to facilitate dialogue by providing a forum to exchange views on concepts and for sharing practical experiences in an effort to foster linkages between them, particularly on overlapping issues. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his message to the conference, emphasized the need for “sustained attention” to these issues. The prevention of violent conflict at the end of this century involves more than repairing physical infrastructure once a war has ended. It also includes peace-building in its political, economic, social, cultural and psychological aspects. While there is a general recognition that the costliest peace is far cheaper than the cheapest war, governments, international organizations and aid agencies still find it easier to raise resources in response to wars that have already broken out and the damages they cause, than to mobilize the means to prevent these conflagrations in the first place.

The conference provided participants with an opportunity to discuss topics currently at the heart of international relations, and encouraged them to look for synergies and impulses emerging from the linkages between their often separate agendas. BICC plans to document the contributions and findings of the conference as part of its publication series.

The third meeting of BICC’s International Board took place on 30 August, in conjunction with the conference. This advisory board meets every two years to review and discuss BICC’s current work program, and to consider further research activities and possibilities for cooperation. The meeting was encouraging, and the many helpful comments and suggestions provided will be followed up by relevant BICC research staff.

For further information contact

→ Herbert Wulf at wulf@bicc.uni-bonn.de

Ford Fellowship Program launched

BICC is seeking applications for its new *Fellowship Program for Capacity-building on Disarmament, Conversion and Peace Policy*, a multi-year endeavor sponsored by the Ford Foundation. The program aims at capacity building in Latin America, Africa and Asia on issues related to disarmament, conversion, peace policies and post-conflict reconstruction. The duration is for approximately seven months, and fellows are expected to conduct a research project of their own design under the guidance of a senior researcher/project leader, and to participate in BICC’s general activities. While research subjects do not necessarily have to correspond to BICC’s current research priorities, they must relate to the general fields of disarmament, conversion and peace policies. Fellows receive a scholarship of DM 3.200 (currently equivalent to US \$1.750) per month, DM 370 for research materials, specific research support, literature, etc., and travel cost to and from Bonn. Those selected will generally be persons who:

- have, or are close to completing a Ph.D., or having comparable practical experience and whose last academic degree was obtained within the past 10 years
- have some experience in research, though not necessarily in the above-mentioned issue areas
- are familiar with the issues in BICC’s work program
- have a research project or a well-developed idea for a project which fits into BICC’s general program
- have a strong potential to benefit from the fellowship in the long run in their countries of origin or other developing countries
- have a good command of the English language.

Interested candidates should send a copy of their curriculum vitae and educational transcripts or documents pertaining to professional achievements, a writing sample in English of maximum 30 pages, an outline of a research project including an executive summary, research questions and objectives, methodology and work plan (maximum 6 pages) and three letters of reference related to prior professional experience.

Further information can be found on BICC’s
→ Internet Web site at <http://bicc.uni-bonn.de>

BICC Publications

In addition to its annual *conversion survey*, the BICC *disarmament and conversion studies* and other books, BICC publishes *reports*, *briefs*, and *papers*. These series analyze the international conversion process, report on conversion projects and experiences, and offer scientific as well as practical know-how. Forthcoming publications include:

BICC Disarmament and Conversion

New! *Studies, No. 1:*

Jörn Brömmelhörster (ed.), *Demystifying the Peace Dividend*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, Winter 1999/2000

paper 15: James Mulvenon, *Soldiers of Fortune: The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Military-Business Complex*, October 1999

Upcoming Events

European Armaments Industries, ESDI and Trans-Atlantic Cooperation organized by the Cicero Foundation, Paris, 16–17 December 1999. International seminar for military and foreign policy experts (ministries, embassies, university researchers). Contact: Ms. Valérie Cohen at cifo@compuserve.com

Conflicts and Religions in the Middle East organized by the Center for Research on Arms Control and Security (CRACS), Amman (JORDAN), 9–11 November 1999. Contact: Mohamad Hilal at hostmaster@jo.rdg.ac.uk

BICC Notes

The exhibition *ConverArt—The Art of Disarmament* will be presented in Paris at UNESCO from 26 October to 17 November 1999 on the occasion of the 30th General Conference. The German Commission for UNESCO submitted *ConverArt* as an official contribution to the International Year for the Culture of Peace 2000. Thanks to the German Foreign Office for their support and for contributing the information exhibit *Disarmament and Conversion—From the Cold War towards 2000*.

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BICC's Internet Service has had a face-lift!

The content remains the same but is now easier to access, with direct links from the Home Page to each program area. The new design will better distinguish the program areas and corresponding projects, publications,

events and other services—with design and colors matching those in BICC's new info brochure.

Please have a look and feel free to submit your
 → comments: <http://bicc.uni-bonn.de>

Herbert Wulf presented a proposal at the United Nations in New York on 9 July for a series of meetings to improve the **effectiveness of UN arms embargoes and travel sanctions**. Diplomats, academics, representatives from NGOs and others will meet to discuss details such as the language of sanctions, national implementation and monitoring. The project is funded by the German Foreign Office.

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BICC researcher Hartmut Kühle participated in the Arbeitskreis Wehrtechnik, the **defense industry working group of the German Metalworkers Union IG Metall**, in Frankfurt am Main on 9 September. The purpose was to prepare a common position for negotiations with the defense ministry on looming budget cuts and the impact on employment.

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On 11–12 September, Michael Brzoska attended a seminar on **Socio-cultural Aspects of Defense Restructuring** organized by the Department of Sociology of the University of Copenhagen. The focus was on the changing identities of the defense industry, the armed forces and military technology in the post-Cold War world.

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 → Michael Brzoska at mb@bicc.uni-bonn.de

The second “cercle stratégique franco-allemand” took place in Berlin on 17–18 September attended by Hartmut Kühle. Leading Socialist and Social Democrat politicians from France and Germany discussed security policy, the new defense situation and the **need to formulate a European security identity**. The cercle stratégique is organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the French foundation IRIS.

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The Norwegian organization FAFO and the Canadian Peace Implementation held a workshop on **Weapons Collection Programs** on 21–22 September in Montréal, Canada. BICC researcher Sami Faltas took part in the workshop.

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