DISARMING MILITARY INDUSTRIES

Disarming Military Industries

Turning an Outbreak of Peace into an Enduring Legacy

Peter Southwood

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*yet much remains
To conquer still; peace hath her victories
No less renowned than war*

John Milton

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List of Abbreviations

ABM	– Anti-ballistic missile
ACDA	– Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
BWB	– Federal Office of Military Technology and Procurement
CBO	– Congressional Budget Office
DoD	– Department of Defense (US)
EAC	– Economic Adjustment Committee
EC	– European Community
EIU	– Economist Intelligence Unit
FRG	– Federal Republic of Germany
GDP	– Gross Domestic Product
GNP	– Gross National Product
HMSO	– Her Majesty's Stationery Office
ICBM	– Intercontinental ballistic missile
IECC	– International Economic Conversion Conference
MIRV	– Multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle
MoD	– Ministry of Defence (UK)
NATO	– North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OEA	– Office of Economic Adjustment
R&D	– Research and development
RDT&E	– Research, development, testing and evaluation
SALT	– Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SIPRI	– Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLBM	– Submarine-launched ballistic missile
UK	– United Kingdom
UN	– United Nations
UNESCO	– United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	– United States of America
USSR	– Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	– Warsaw Treaty Organisation

Conventions

\$	– United States dollars
billion	– thousand million

Preface

Some time ago I was having lunch in the company of a retired official from the British Ministry of Defence. Conversation turned to the prospects for disarmament. He said that this could never be possible as 'millions' of people in the United Kingdom depended on the manufacture of armaments for their jobs. In reply I pointed out that, far from employing millions, just 400 000 were directly or indirectly engaged in the production of weapons for the British armed forces, which was a significant but not overwhelming number. This news clearly surprised him but the view that disarmament would be a threat to vast numbers of jobs remains an enduring illusion shared, I suspect, by a great many people despite so much evidence to the contrary.

During a period in which a window of opportunity has opened up for significant cuts in the nuclear and conventional forces of the major global powers, it has become more important than ever to demonstrate that the conversion of military industries to peaceful purposes is indeed feasible. Further pressures to pursue this path arise from a variety of sources. There is the seemingly unstoppable escalation in the costs associated with each new generation of defence equipment at a time when defence ministries can barely maintain, or are even forced to cut, their budgets in real terms. Reinforcing these constraints is the dramatic reduction in public support, since the early 1980s, for higher military spending in countries like the USA and UK, particularly in the face of President Gorbachev's 'peace offensive' and the Soviet Union's numerous unilateral initiatives to cut their armed forces and weaponry. Finally, there is likely to be a growing recognition that, if the strategic threat from the East has diminished, then there are sound economic and social reasons for switching resources from the military to the civilian economy.

This book sets out to present the evidence that the West can cope successfully with disarmament and to identify the strategies and policies which need to be adopted in furtherance of that end. It is, therefore, addressed directly to policy-makers and practitioners as well as to scholars and to peace researchers, in particular. I also believe that this work is sufficiently free of jargon to be comprehensible to the interested lay reader.

Underlying this narrower question of defence conversion is the grander theme of peace itself. For those concerned with the bigger questions of peace theory and peace research the Introduction and the second part of Chapter 7, in particular, are intended to set conversion in a wider context. (Conversely those uninterested in such matters might prefer to ignore these sections.) I am conscious that in my efforts to face 'reality', but not to be so enslaved by it as to be unable to change it, I may have ended up satisfying no one: the practitioner will disdain the Utopian, the Utopian the practical. However, in my world there is room for both.

This perception of the world has been greatly influenced by the seven years I have spent at the School of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, first as an undergraduate and later as a postgraduate undertaking the doctoral research which formed the basis for this book. It would be impossible to exaggerate the value to me of that experience. I lighted on the School as one who, emerging from the darkness of the night, finds a temporary shelter which he never imagined could have existed there at all. The excitement at the intellectual freedom, and the challenge of a subject so much at the centre of thought and action, has turned every previous difficulty to advantage. For this I owe a lasting debt of gratitude to the School, its staff and students, and to the Quakers who did so much to make it possible.

I would like, in particular, to offer a special thanks to my former supervisor Dr Tom Woodhouse for his encouragement and constructive comments both on the original thesis and an earlier draft of the book. During the actual research many other individuals were also very helpful, including my colleagues Steve Schofield and Russell Fleming and all those involved in the Arms Conversion Group. They ensured that I was always able to work in a stimulating environment and was never isolated intellectually. Whatever merits this book has owes much to them – its faults are, of course, mine alone.

The entire research programme was funded by a generous grant from the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust to whom I extend my sincere thanks. The interest and encouragement of one of the Trustees, Chris Greenfield, was much appreciated.

I am very grateful to Louise Rhodes who, having played a major role in typing my long thesis, willingly agreed to take on the further task of typing the manuscript for this book. Addition-

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The interest and support of my parents and other relations and friends during the writing of this book was also appreciated.

Finally, thanks are due to the following sources who kindly agreed to allow me to use certain excerpts in this work: Figures 2.1 and 2.2 are reproduced with the permission of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI); Figure 10.1 is reproduced with the permission of Macmillan Press; Figure 10.2 is reproduced with the permission of Professor Peter Wallensteen and Olof Frensborg; Table 1.1 is Crown copyright and reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO); Tables 5.2–5.4 are based on SIPRI data reproduced with the permission of Oxford University Press; and Table 8.1 is reproduced with the permission of the Bulletin of Peace Proposals.

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PETER SOUTHWOOD

Introduction

In so far as there is a popular notion of the conversion of military industries it is generally associated with that of beating 'swords into plowshares', an idea derived from Old Testament prophecies. This turning of the instruments of war into the instruments of peace symbolises the link between conversion and the concept of peace itself. Although the meaning of conversion and how far it does, or does not, relate to achieving disarmament and the establishment of a peaceful society can only be made clearer later in the book, it will be apposite now to provide a preliminary overview of the relevance of conversion to research into peace issues.

The meaning of peace has been an object of much controversy. Wiberg, in a review of peace theories and findings derived from articles published in the *Journal of Peace Research* between 1964 and 1980, noted that the concept was usually defined in terms of either positive or negative peace. 'Negative peace' refers simply to the absence of violence or war, whether at the international or any other level. 'Positive peace' has changed its meaning over time, at first being seen in terms of the integration of human society and increased cooperation, while later the notion of structural violence emerged, (especially under the influence of Galtung), and positive peace was redefined as the absence of such violence.¹ This structural violence, though much criticised for lacking an empirical basis and for its normative content, was useful in highlighting the causes of human suffering (like poverty and starvation) arising not from physical violence but from the character of specific human institutions. A society could not really be described as peaceful while such suffering existed, even if no actual physical violence were present.

Another way of looking at the question of positive peace is to consider the oft-repeated statement that 'nuclear weapons have kept the peace in Europe for the last forty years'. Just as a room full of armed men from two opposing sides could scarcely be described as an example of a 'peaceful relationship', even if there was no actual fighting going on, so a world dominated by nuclear arsenals with immense destructive potential could not, in terms of positive peace, be construed as an acceptable basis for peaceful relations between nations.

Nevertheless it is probably true to say that most emphasis, within peace research, has been given to negative peace. As will become evident later in this book, the conversion of military industries is implicitly allied to this notion of peace and has been criticised by some peace researchers for being wedded to an armaments-based security concept and for its inattention to the underlying causes of arms races and wars.

The study of the post-Second World War arms race, as a process, has been the subject of much research, including the development of mathematical models based on the work of Richardson and others. These models concentrated on interaction between the parties involved, though by the 1970s greater interest was shown in domestic forces in arming nations, especially the power of military-industrial complexes. This, too, had a bearing on the conversion debate which, in the 1960s, had tended to be technical and economic without taking sufficient account of political constraints on turning military industries to peaceful purposes. Allied to this topic is a major and recurrent theme in peace research: the economic consequences of armaments and disarmament. A key question here is the role of high levels of military expenditure in national economies and whether it is essential for, or detrimental to, the overall performance of the economy.² The burgeoning arms trade, particularly between the industrialised countries and the Third World, forms a subsidiary but significant aspect of this issue.

Leading on from this study of arms races is the related concern of peace researchers with understanding the causes of war (though whether arms races themselves cause wars is doubtful, but worthy of more attention).³ In terms of conversion the focus of attention ought, perhaps, to be on the functional alternatives to war and the building of peace structures to tilt the world in a more peaceful direction. It might be expected that non-violence, which has been on the agenda of peace research from the beginning, would feature prominently in building positive conditions for peace. In fact, though, only the most radical versions of conversion (known in this book as peace conversion) have even touched on these options; this provides further evidence that the conversion of military industries has been overwhelmingly allied to negative peace and, so far, has contributed little or nothing to an understanding of positive peace. There are reasons for this which will become evident later in the book but, for now,

it will suffice to note that conversion has not, in general, been a particularly radical let alone a Utopian concept. Now and again, though, proponents of defence conversion have made genuine efforts to grapple with the deep-rooted issues of arms races and the war-making machinery, suggesting that conversion need not necessarily be tied solely to negative peace.

There is, though, a real difficulty in relating traditional and more radical approaches to conversion, analogous to Wiberg's observation that the relationship between positive and negative peace is not well understood, and that little has been learnt on how to create the former without sacrificing the latter.⁴ His view might equally well be applied to the relationship between the conversion of military industries and peace conversion and whether the latter can be pursued without losing whatever prospects there might be for the former.

Thus the major contribution of conversion, so far, has been to demonstrate, not the condition for peace, but that the economic consequences of disarmament (whether partial or complete) are manageable and would most likely be beneficial to the civilian economy. More recently it has been argued that conversion does not even have to wait upon disarmament; conversion planning can begin immediately, and such planning will actually help create the political pre-conditions for disarmament by reassuring those whose livelihoods currently depend on the arms race.

So the central theme of this book is conversion as a process and, specifically, the scope for implementing conversion programmes and the effectiveness of current conversion policies. The emphasis throughout is on assessing the forces for and against conversion at both the macro- and the micro-level, rather than on a purely economic or organisational exercise.

There is a further significant dimension. Labour unions in the Western defence industries have taken an increasingly positive attitude to defence industry conversion since the mid-1970s (though apathy and even hostility are still very evident). This raises the question of industrial democracy and whether trade union initiatives on conversion, within individual factories, have any scope for successful implementation. While only a subordinate theme in this book it is one of relevance to short- and long-term perspectives for conversion programmes at the micro-level. Additionally it helps to explain the emphasis in the book on diversification and conversion within military industries and

companies, rather than through closure of defence firms or bases and the dispersal of human and material resources to new civilian industries. While the two types of conversion are complementary (rather than exclusive) the obvious preference of the unions for the factory-based variety has been evident in the writings of peace researchers and labour organisers over the last decade.

When the 1980s began the prospects for disarmament had rarely looked bleaker but, at the time of writing, when the decade is drawing to its close the possibilities for deep cuts in the level of nuclear and conventional armaments have, arguably, never been better in post-war history. These recent developments have heightened awareness of the conversion issue. Yet this book is not primarily concerned with tracing the causes, progress or prospects of current disarmament and arms control negotiations. Rather its objective is to try to provide a deeper understanding of how far the opportunities for conversion of military industries can be utilised, and the barriers overcome, in widely varying circumstances. In that sense the perspective is a longer-term one, at once sensitive to the issues of the moment while also transcending them, in that a theoretical framework is offered that will take account of pervading economic and social structures as well as rapidly changing technologies and markets, and shifts in policies and opinions.

Before this can be done, though, there is a need to look back over the last forty years or so and ask, much as Wiberg did of peace: 'What have we learnt about conversion?'