

Report from the Working Group on SIPRI's Research and Activity Agenda For SIPRI's Strategic Review

1. Key strengths

SIPRI's research and activity agenda has a number of key strengths, which are the basis for the Institute's global reputation, including its rank as number 4 among world think tanks. Key strengths in research areas include: the data and analysis of global developments in international arms transfers; military expenditure; nuclear biological and chemical weapons; peace operations; and armed conflicts and organised violence, SIPRI has also periodically facilitated "track 2" diplomacy and has supported capacity-building activities.

Another key strength is the variety of output, based on high-quality research. These outputs include policy analysis and advice in reports and other formats, academic publications, the SIPRI Yearbook, data launches, capacity building, international dialogue, and papers presented at treaty regime-related meetings). This mix of - and cross-fertilization between - activities has an impact on both the quality of research and SIPRI's global outreach much of which helps to bridge gaps between academic analyses and the requirements of policy demands at an operational level.



A third key strength is SIPRI's international staff supported by a communications, library and editorial department.

2. Key challenges

Key challenges to SIPRI's research and activity agenda include:

- (1) How to maintain SIPRI global reputation in an increasingly competitive environment for research institutes generally.

- (2) How to strengthen and develop existing in-house expertise, including data programmes, as a basis for anticipating emerging global challenges to remain in a position to shape our own research agenda.
- (3) How to address the lack of research coordination and fragmentation at SIPRI.

3. Two-to-three key actions for the next 6-12 months

The short-term proposals are to improve co-ordination of research at SIPRI and reduce fragmentation. Key ideas include:

- Twice-yearly sets of “Outlook discussions.” One set would be within each research programme (similar to ‘away days’ already held by some programmes), while the other set would be cross-programmes. These would aim to be forward looking, and include creative brainstorming sessions on new project ideas and research gaps in order to remain in a position to shape and stay ahead of the agenda.
 - A return of regular meetings of the RSC to exchange ideas and obtain feedback on work in progress and project proposals was discussed in this context.
 - A cooperative internal review process for proposals to help ensure that they are consistent with SIPRI’s core goals and interests. Driven by those writing a proposal, this could simply involve proposers holding a meeting to invite SIPRI staff to participate in a collaborative review session.
- **Car park:** Taking full advantage of external visitors to help expand our research agenda. Outside experts should be encouraged to come in to talk about their work, which is useful. It would also be useful to get their input on research needs or gaps that SIPRI could help to fill.

4. Draft text for 3-5 year work plan

SIPRI should build on its core strengths, while adapting its research and activity agenda to new and emerging global challenges. If SIPRI considers entering new areas of research, these new areas must remain closely-linked to SIPRI’s core research strengths:

- international arms transfers
- military expenditure
- nuclear biological and chemical weapons
- peace operations
- armed conflicts and organised violence
- arms control and non-proliferation

Future research should be directly linked to these areas in order to preserve SIPRI’s reputation of excellence in these fields and to effectively utilize SIPRI’s existing in-house expertise.

When considering a new area of research, SIPRI should conduct due diligence on whether there is a clearly defined gap in that area that SIPRI could fill. SIPRI should not delve into “overcrowded” areas of research unless a thorough literature review reveals that there is a clear opportunity for SIPRI to add unique value.

To improve the coordination of research, there is a need to clarify the role and need of a 'Research Coordinator'. Such a role is already present for the Yearbook, which remains a valuable role. We also propose the establishment of an electronic 'notice board' for internal sharing of information on developing projects. In the medium term, we propose a new position as Research Administrator, whose tasks would include facilitating the various co-ordination mechanisms (e.g. maintaining the electronic notice-board, and acting as secretary to the RSC and the proposal review process).

5. Crazy ideas

“Back to the future”