

Minute taker: Noel Kelly

Time: 14:30-15:45PM

SIPRI Armament and Disarmament Cluster Meeting

Zoom virtual meeting, Monday 2 November 2020

Participants:

Sibylle Bauer, Elena Haapaniemi, Sepideh Soltaninia, Lena Kappelin, John Batho, Elin Elmgren, Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, Andrea Eduardo Varisco, Kolja Brockmann, Giovanna Maletta, Laura Robin, Shannon Kile, Tarja Cronberg, Vitaly Fedchenko, Tytti Erästö, Petr Topychkanov, Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, Nan Tian, Pieter Wezeman, Siemon Wezeman, Diego Lopes Da Silva, Alexandra Kuimova, Alexandra Marksteiner, Ekaterina Klimenko, Matina Selmi, Vincent Boulanin, Laura Bruun, Luke Richards

Agenda

- Updates from Operations
- Updates from Outreach (Communications and Editorial)
- Presentation with Q&A: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database - TIV (trend indicator values) and the AT database methodology - Siemon Wezeman
- Updates from Sibylle/SMT/EUNPDC
- Opportunity for programmes to raise issues of Cluster-relevance
- Reports from other Clusters
- AOB

Updates from Operations - Lena

Reminder on projects ending this year – emails will be sent out to those concerned on the reporting requirements required towards the donors. Read those emails and get back to Lena or Jenny if any questions.

Reporting back on strategic grants – Operations are in the process of finalising the deadlines for the various programmes to report to their DOS who in turns reports back to management. They are trying to streamline all the various sub-projects into comprehensive report that will be sent to the MFA at the end of March. Information will be forthcoming.

Updates from Outreach (Communications and Editorial) - Alex

A backgrounder paper titled '*Autocracy is on the rise: Should we expect military spending to follow?*' by Diego was published in October. Ahead of the German MFA '2020. Capturing Technology. Rethinking Arms Control' Conference held on 5/6 November in which SIPRI is a thematic partner, two reports on the governance of AI are to be published: '*Responsible Artificial Intelligence Research and Innovation for International Peace and Security*' by Vincent, Kolja and Luke and '*Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence: Can the European Union Lead the Way in Developing Best Practice?*' by Vincent, Netta, Laura and Luke.

Updates from EUNPDC/SMT – Sibylle and Giovanna

EUNPDC – Giovanna

The recently published EUNPDC papers were highlighted in the October cluster meeting of 5 October (please see the minutes) and no new papers have been commissioned since.

The major upcoming event is the Annual Conference organized by IAI and held online during 12-13 November and preceded by the Network annual meeting to be held on 9 November. The Next Generation workshop will now be held on 25 November. It is clarified that there is no restriction numbers wise from SIPRI in participating in the Next Generation workshop. It is hoped to broaden the audience and cluster staff are encouraged to participate and as of this date it is still possible to register.

SMT - Sibylle

Recent developments regarding the Swedish initiative to develop a nuclear disarmament centre of excellence announced by the Swedish Government: A call had gone out through the Swedish Research Council (Veternskapprådet), with a deadline by Friday 13 November and Stockholm University, the Physics Department at Uppsala university and SIPRI will be putting in a joint bid.

It has already been flagged to team leaders that NIS may have some extra funds for next year in addition to the core grant already received. Required now is some short concept notes by December on what kind of issues we would like to pursue. Research staff are advised to discuss ideas with your programmes.

The deadline for UD grant concept submissions is the 13 November. Some suggestions have already been received by the DOS but research staff are reminded to get some concepts down on paper by the deadline date.

On current office use this remains in line with the official Swedish authorities' guidance.

Sibylle had a call with the Flemish Peace Institute (FPI) and current Interim Director Nils Duquet, and they expressed an interest in further close collaboration with SIPRI. This includes FPI making their premises available for events they could host or be co-hosted. Once physical meetings are possible again in Brussels this is worth keeping in mind.

Stockholm Security Conference 2020 – Ekaterina

Preparation are well underway and registrations links are up and staff are reminded to share and promote with networks. The invitations will go out this week to the Stockholm SIPRI networks. All sessions are being promoted through the SIPRI social media channels.

Peace and Development - Martina

Dr Simone Bunse has arrived at SIPRI and is the Content Manager for the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development at SIPRI. The concept note is being worked on and a call for proposals is anticipated to be sent out around the third week of November. The expertise mapping exercise is nearly done and will be shared with all and we plan to keep it as a living document and stored on our intranet.

Presentation with Q&A: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database - TIV (trend indicator values) and the AT database methodology - Siemon Wezeman

The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database contains information on all transfers of major conventional weapons from 1950 to the most recent full calendar year. It is a unique resource for researchers, policy-makers and analysts, the media and civil society interested in monitoring and measuring the international flow of major conventional arms.

The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database can be used to generate detailed written reports (trade registers) and statistical data (trend indicator values, TIV). SIPRI statistical data on arms transfers relates to actual deliveries of major conventional weapons. To permit comparison between the data on such deliveries of different weapons and to identify general trends, SIPRI has developed a unique system to measure the volume of international transfers of major conventional weapons using a common unit, the trend-indicator value (TIV). To read more about the TIV and sources and methods, please see:

<https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/sources-and-methods>

In summary it's not financial data, and not numbers of equipment that is measured, but rather the basis is all systems that are similar have the same value.

Building on this presentation AMEX plan to write up a full manuscript guide for the arms transfers database. Moreover, a project proposal is currently underway for a workshop in 2021 as the AMEX team plan a major review and overhaul of the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

Questions

A question was asked about variabilities and *what metrics are used to assess the real ability of a weapons system?* Reliability is not one of the main points reflected in the arms transfers estimation, but some things are similar to assess more than others like for example engines.

There are many things to consider in assessing reliability, but we don't know all the answers as many are well kept secrets or one only hears about after the fact.

How do you keep the sustainability of your data and account for changes over time? State policies change and some states may be reticent or less forthcoming about sharing information at some point even if not always. As open sources shrink due to state policies on holding information secret how does one manage this situation? The explanation given is it used to be more difficult to find information than it is these days. We have many more sources and alternatives than we used to have, and the internet has made a major difference. Sources on arms procurement are sometimes difficult to find but we look at arms transfers, and this means there are two parties to the picture and not one. The bigger problem is the things we cannot see like what sort of software and technology is hidden in the system being transferred and this is a growing black hole. However, we are confident that most of the big transfer deals are captured overall.

How do you estimate *data about non-state groups*?

Much of this activity is illegal and hidden and we will not say we have that whole picture. Moreover, much of the weapons going to non-state actors are of the smaller type and so more easily concealed. We know at some points certain weapons are there and being used by a group that have come from an external source and not within the state in question. We have an internal database not made public that tracks the information we can, but we need more sources before ever commenting in public.

As the *value of a weapon may be different over time* do you adjust values accordingly?

We have a problem there as we look at the value as a military tool. We want to compare every weapon with a benchmark system. To do that we can only use very recent benchmark systems and all the systems for which we know the whole production costs are not very useful as there may be many different costs involved in it. AMEX will update their benchmark systems and sometimes very clearly update the older systems and identify they have become less valuable as a military tool or possibly you find new information for a system and change the calculation up. It is a continual battle to monitor the systems by either adding new systems or changing existing ones. How will we manage going forward? There are things we do not know and will not be able to know or that we cannot measure. There is no good answer at the moment as part of it becomes more the qualitative description of the transfers and how they fit within the bigger picture of their impact both negatively and positively. Therefore, not so much on the statistics but more on where this fits in this context. However, this is of course stepping away from the TIV approach and needs thinking through.

It would be good to have a workshop either next year or in 2022 to discuss in more detail how we can improve what we do and go forward. It is suggested to have the first round here with experts within SIPRI and build from there with a bigger workshop. It would be good to find out who out there are exploring these issues and trying to open up this black box.

When was the TIV created and by whom? They were created at the beginning of the database in SIPRI back in 1969 and former board member Mary Kaldor was involved at that time. There was also a sounding board of Swedish military experts involved at the time but the problem with it is that not all the documentation of that time has been properly saved and some information disappeared over time.

Next steps going forward

There are many questions that spin out of this and it would be good to have a brainstorming session in a smaller group and link some of the expertise we have here in SIPRI. It would be good to hear how emerging tech is developing and having an impact with current weapon systems. How could one develop a methodology for the TIV going forward that is meaningful? This could be a really interesting discussion and proposal to take forward. Another really interesting angle is to fit it into a regional context because we know all the different militaries in the world are also trying to make estimates and understand how their systems compares to other countries. Perhaps much of this information is not available but there must be a lot of thinking out there about military strength and military capacity.

We look forward to fresh thinking and taking the discussion forward.

AOB

The next A&D cluster meeting is on 7 December @ 2:30PM.