

Note taker: Noel Kelly  
Time: 14:30-16:00 PM

**SIPRI Armament and Disarmament Cluster Meeting**

Monday 4 April 2023 - **@14:30PM** in SIPRI seminar room and Zoom

**Participants:**

Dan Smith, Sibylle Bauer, Vincent Boulanin, Laura Bruun, Nan Tian, Diego Lopes, Lorenzo Scarazzato, Xiao Liang, Kolja Brockmann, Lauriane Héau, Lora Saalman, Wilfred Wan, Tytti Erästö, Nivedita Raju, Vladislav Chernavskikh, Siemon Wezeman, Ana Carolina de Oliveira Assis

**Agenda**

- SIPRI Director Dan Smith with A&D cluster - SIPRI strategy discussion.

The current SIPRI 5-year strategy began implementation in November 2019 and expires in 2024. Dan is seeking an exchange of thoughts with all clusters, the outreach team and operations team, towards developing a new SIPRI strategy as requested by the SIPRI Governing Board (GB).

Ideas and thoughts are welcomed in this meeting and beyond with time to contribute before a new strategy is agreed by late 2024. Discussion may continue in different combinations as ideas for a new strategy develops.

From this process, Dan wants to produce for the GB meeting in May a report with some ideas about the development of a new strategy.

To what extent do we need a big change from the current strategy to reflect events and their impact on peace and security over the past 5 years? The objective in the current strategy (2019-24) is about supporting a global conversation on issues we are studying, and based on principles we stand for, abiding by agreements, wanting peace and respect for international law. Our involvement in this conversation aspires to be based on evidence and facts attained through our research. We disseminated as well as we can and our research reputation over several years have given SIPRI a distinct convening power. This is reflected in events such as the Stockholm Forum and Stockholm Security Conference or other smaller events and dialogue activities. Remaining part of the conversation with our contribution remains ever more important.

However, there are more questions to ask about the strategy. One way to think about SIPRI is to think of ourselves as part of the knowledge industry. It is suggested SIPRI should always be looking for what are the new things to work on and add to what we are currently doing. Our thought process for this exercise should be on what/why rather than how and how much?

Dan's own current thoughts on niche areas adding on to what we are already doing is a mix of themes and geographies. In terms of themes, there are a lot of opportunities to strengthen up our work on cyber (security – resilience – hacking – surveillance – dual use). We are doing work in this area but could put more institutional weight into it. The second theme mentioned is ecological security and described as the next step along from the environment of peace work (EOP). We started with climate change and its impact on security and then SIPRI produced an EOP report, a major report on this theme. EOP allowed the work to not just cover climate change but also other aspects of the environmental crisis on insecurity. The next step is to examine new areas of ecological disruption whose impact on security has not yet been studied.

In terms of geographies, Colombia is highlighted and the border area with Venezuela (perhaps more). Somalia is also suggested either alone or in the Horn of Africa context. Colombia and Somalia because both have a confluence of problems coming together. Conflict, governance, crime, climate change, trafficking are problems common to both. Northeast Asia is highlighted as the frontline of insecurity between the USA and allies and China and its allies in the same way Europe was during the US and Russia Cold War.

### **Cluster feedback**

On geographic regions other countries/regions suggested are Central Asia – Afghanistan and Pakistan that nexus – issues of extremism, crime, and climate issues are mentioned. The other nexus highlighted is, China and India suggested as somewhat overlooked with border incidents and so on. One could go broader and think Indo-Pacific and the competition one sees between India and China in Africa. More generally, competition for resources and economic rivalries are leading to escalating tensions between India and China. Myanmar is highlighted as perhaps a thematic case – how does democracy and adherence to basic principles of human rights influence security both in a state and in

neighbouring countries? Sudan is also mentioned as a similar example. As a region Europe should be part of this strategy, and again in a thematic way the topic of conventional arms and the role they play could be examined further.

(Education) Building on the lack of knowledge noted among students, media, and other sectors about our topics, and the role of certain international institutions, and indeed more broadly the ethics involved, we could try and get funding to support education travel and providing courses (SIPRI on tour).

On the cyber element – what would be the specific issues where SIPRI could have something unique to say? Do we want to engage in established conversations or something new?

A conversation has happened about cross-cluster work on resilience, with a lot of synergies that could be tapped into. Within the cyber security/realm there is a very strong and articulated concept of resilience but that type of resilience also touches upon food security and establishing and maintaining supply chains. This topic also touches on the environment and other areas in which it's necessary to be resilient. Perhaps if we want a larger way to articulate and organise the principle of what we want to be working on this might be one strand. Currently a cross cluster project being worked on is looking at cyber posture, cyber incidents, and threat perceptions, and mapping them on a spectrum (a resilience spectrum) and making policy recommendations. This project touches on China, Russia, US, and EU within all of that.

A further point highlighted is an idea for a project on collateral damage. This idea references civilian information and communications technologies (ICT) products and services being seen as legitimate military targets. This is something that touches on the space domain. Lora and Nivi have written a chapter (for SIPRI YB) on cyber and space and this confluence, and obviously this points to Starlink, and other things that within the Ukraine crises may be seen as legitimate targets in the future. Another topic identified within the Ukraine crises is the intersection between cybercrime and cyber warfare. Further research will be pursued, and this touches on within the cyber domain how it's starting to crossover from industry into military conflict and countries. Once again, if we want to have an organising principle then perhaps resilience could be one but also the cross-domain nature of cyber and how it's being leveraged. This could be applied to other technologies. Cyber governance is a very well-established topic, and several institutes are doing work in this area, but we could give it another angle if we pull in other actors.

Lora will be part of a conversation on AI, cyber, and other emerging technologies with India happening in the coming months. If we wanted to pull some of that Indo-Pacific angle mentioned earlier this may be a further way.

SIPRI are not trying to do everything about any one country but finding those areas of intersection, of connection with different topics within a geography whether your starting point is the theme or geography this makes it interesting.

The topic area of delivery systems (intentionally not just missiles) both in terms of their conventional and non-conventional use is referenced. How do we approach this topic at SIPRI? There's mapping the arms transfers, SIPRI has done work on drones, and then a focus went mostly over to autonomy and that type of system, and recently we've done work on different missile technologies and the overlaps of dual-use technology and missiles in space area. We don't really have an organising principle but often do focused work on one specific aspect and quite often rely on outside help to have some baseline knowledge and expertise. As we have done a lot of work over the past five years, perhaps we could pursue this work in a more organised fashion. If we take Ukraine as an example, we are seeing

a wide range of different delivery systems being used in different ways. The hypersonic debate comes up there and a lot of education is needed to explain what this means and doesn't mean.

When considering if a guiding programme/project to cover delivery systems was possible one needs to think firstly about definitional questions. These would need to be worked out and addressed. What are we talking about – what is included and what was not included? The depth and breadth would need to be worked out.

The conversation returned to cyber as we touched on resilience, but the other side is vulnerabilities. What degree of vulnerability that comes with increasing cyber sophistication and dependence? What are the strategies for resilience? Not just to do with cybersecurity programmes and software itself but other aspects to the social resilience. This links to conversation going on during the pandemic about possible the lack of resilience in societies except that many societies showed a good degree of resilience in the short to medium term during the pandemic.

The whole question of mobilisation and relation to cyber – one of the observations from Ukraine is the mobilisation of informal armies, of cyber volunteers and cyber professionals for the different contestants in the War. Another interesting part of this mobilisation is the mobilisation of opinion. The resilience to the information warfare that happened in this domain. The question of decoupling was raised – and project idea mentioned. There is interesting issue which arises – if cyber actors such as IT companies are providing support in a very active way to one party or another during an armed conflict to what extent are they participating as combatants in the outcome? There is an active conversation now between SIPRI, ICRC and some IT companies in an informal way but it would be interesting to back it with research both on the legal side and the scale of the issue.

The recent well published call for a pause on AI development for six months – only highlights further the speed at which technological development moves and is currently far outpacing the speed at which potential regulators may be thinking and ready for it.

On crime – is an area within peacebuilding challenges which does not get properly investigated. We did some work on small arms and crime in Europe but there's much more looking globally that could be done. Colombia case highlighted – since 2016 peace deal with FARC there has been more deaths and more deforestation despite the agreement and driven by crime.

On the decoupling issue – a position of interest was expressed to explore cross cluster collaboration and the question of technology and great power competition. There would be interesting elements to explore for the different clusters. Referencing recent discussions with Apple - it is suggested to frame this as research on the unintended consequences of civilian leadership in innovation – described as one of the key trends. We see civilian big tech leading innovation in the ICT sector that has unintended consequences for peace and security. We see civilian technologies are being securitised by some actors – for example we see some actors do not want China to attain certain technologies. We see more export control or further cyber security considerations if we access or buy Chinese products. The collateral damage also effects developing countries where they get trapped in the competition between great powers and even denied access to some technologies that would be good for their economic development. Developing states may be forced to take sides – if we buy Chinese technology what does it mean politically speaking? There it could be an entry point for collecting a lot of information and joining different dots. This could generate a lot of interesting projects in the different clusters both for the regional programmes and the thematic.

In the educational field there is a lot we can take forward, building on what we have already done. There is much we do as a model at SIPRI in terms of diversity and having different perspectives on one issue that is not replicated in most universities or think tanks around the world. This connects back to

the idea of peace research capacity building that we have in the current strategy but there are a lot of ways we could take this forward in different ways. On the notion that conceptual thinking has gone to hard security again and discussion around disarmament and peace being out of fashion in the political discourse - SIPRI could play a role as a peace research institute to investigate this discourse and see how these issues are framed and how people are using different terminologies. Using the new AI technology, one could do an interesting analysis of speeches and see how certain terms disappear and other terms come up.

The concept of a single security space is an interesting one to connect different parts of research SIPRI are doing. The bigger question - what kind of spending is prioritised? Who gets to decide on what one spends money on? What kind of resource choices are being made? An interesting one - this connects a lot of the work. This includes work we want to do but have not had funding for such as work on procurement decisions and about procurement decision making.

We are not at the cutting edge of using AI tools to do our research. This would be an interesting area to get more into including for our databases. To know more about this technology and how it is being utilised and how we can do that a lot more.

Returning to geographic discussion and how geopolitics today infuses all our work. It's about researchers in the different clusters communicating continuously with each other about how these things link up in the different research programmes and clusters. It's important to have an intellectual environment which makes it possible to say all our work is infused by an understanding of a single security space, within which some of our concerns fall under the heading of hard security, some fall under the terminology of human security, and some under the terminology of ecological security. Yemen as an example is highlighted – is Yemen a hard security problem? A human security problem? A problem of insecurity in the natural environment? The answer to all three of those questions is yes. It's the intersection of those problems which creates the disaster for the people of Yemen. It's about infusing every aspect of our work without necessarily making a research theme out of all the things we are infusing our research with.

Question - on issues of gender, diversity and inclusion, and ways of working at SIPRI – how does this fit into the strategy at SIPRI in term of topics and infusing this work? There have been discussions on whether there should be a programme or a couple of dedicated gender researchers. These discussions included whether we should try to be covering the gender dimensions of peace operations, - the impact of climate change, - impact of food insecurity, - of gender dimensions of conflict and insecurity and peacebuilding in West Africa. Gender dimensions when it comes to work on WMD or new technologies or wherever it may have come up. For practical reasons – the thought is to try and do it everywhere rather than try to focus it on any one topic. We are doing good work, but it is diffused throughout the institute at the moment.

What about the narrative of security? We've got disarmament, peace, and security but currently disarmament is increasingly taken away from peace and security in the current debate. Peace and security does not mean disarmament for many people. Who makes that narrative? Who produces that story? What is security? What is peace? Who makes the decision about these things in policymaking circles? How is that working? A project was reference previously done about decision making processes in arms acquisitions – not looking at what they were doing but rather how they were doing it and who was involved.

Improving the databases – since the turn of the century at least something new has come from one of the databases. In first decade of noughties arms production was revamped, in 2010s' the milex database was extended backward from 1988 to included data from 1949. In this decade, there remains a lot of interest in improving the milex database to finally include disaggregated milex data figures.

There has been a high demand for this data for many decades and for ways to get this information. The pros - is once established it opens a whole range of new research questions related to milex that hitherto have not been explored. This would also help add precision to existing research questions that research has investigated from the cost of milex to the determinace side. This would not only add to the academic literature and community but to people working in the policy sphere. From engaging with other institutes about best practices and resource management – once you get a better and more precise disaggregation of what our data can give then one can contribute to the debate and help with the transparency oversight part.

The process and engagement on a new SIPRI strategy will be continued!