Epilogue: some necessary conditions for demilitarisation

Geoff Harris

You cannot solve a problem using the same consciousness that got you into the problem in the first place (Albert Einstein)

Overview

In chapter 1, demilitarisation was defined as a significant and sustained reduction in the power and influence of the military, as indicated by reductions in miles, military personnel and force projection. It was also seen as a process working towards a society where the nonviolent resolution of conflict, and personal and social justice, are emphasised. Seven reasons for the demilitarisation of SSA were outlined:

1) The nature of warfare has changed.
2) The meaning of security has changed.
3) Military expenditure retards economic growth and development.
4) The military negatively affects human rights.
5) The military is ineffective in resolving conflicts.
6) There are ethical, moral and spiritual reasons not to deal with disputes by force.
7) There are cost effective alternatives to the military.

Chapters 2 to 9 presented eight alternatives to the current military as ways of achieving security. In order to compare these with the current military approach, we use cost effectiveness analysis. This is an economic technique which is used where the benefits of an undertaking – in this case security – are valuable but not measurable this is termed cost effectiveness analysis. In essence, cost effectiveness involves comparing the costs of obtaining a similar amount of security (a subjective opinion, given that it is not measurable) from a number of different means of achieving security. It is not appropriate, incidentally, to argue that any of these methods do not guarantee security; the same argument can be mounted against the military. The discussion in chapter 1 concerning the general weakness of the deterrence argument is relevant here; the avoidance of invasion or internal war may be due to a lack of dis-
However, necessary as price tags and rational arguments are, we know that they frequently make little difference to governments. The reasons may include a different interpretation of the same data, inertia, and the influence of pressure groups, both domestic and foreign, from inside and outside government. However, it is entirely necessary, in keeping with the principles of good governance, to increase the rationality of milex decision-making and the next section examines three ways of doing this.

Making milex decisions more rational

1. Stop using past milex or ‘rules of thumb’ to justify present milex

The overwhelming determinant of the level of milex in any year is that of the previous year. This is not only because of the ease of incremental budgeting, so that each ministry gets much the same this year as in the last, but also because of the difficulty of making large cuts, for example, to a budget which goes largely to meet personnel costs. At the same time, security situations and the way society thinks about security do change over time and milex should reflect and not ignore such changes. Past milex levels should be given little consideration when determining future milex.

Several rules of thumb are commonly used as guides to an appropriate level of milex. One is that a country’s milex to GDP ratio should approximate the regional or world average, with the latter seeing around 4.5 per cent. The inappropriateness of such a rule is illustrated by Japan, which has a constitutional limit restricting milex to one per cent of its GDP. The size of its GDP is such, however, that it is the world’s second biggest milex spender in MER terms (i.e., when converted to US$ at market exchange rates), with 6 per cent of the world total in 2002, and seventh in PPP (purchasing power parity) terms (Skons et al. 2003, p.305). A second rule of thumb is that milex should not exceed government expenditure on health plus education.

Table 12: Alternative ways of achieving security: relative costs and effectiveness

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<tr>
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<th>Likely effectiveness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>High</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Befriending neighbours</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate-high</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting democracy and development</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building dispute-resolution capacity:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educating in conflict resolution and management</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establishing conflict resolving Institutions</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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Cost effectiveness analysis, then, has provided something of a ‘price tag’ for policymakers. In a totally rational world, governments would respond by reallocating resources away from the military towards these alternatives.

However, necessary as price tags and rational arguments are, we know that they frequently make little difference to governments. The reasons may include a different interpretation of the same data, inertia, and the influence of pressure groups, both domestic and foreign, from inside and outside government. However, it is entirely necessary, in keeping with the principles of good governance, to increase the rationality of milex decision-making and the next section examines three ways of doing this.

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The perceived security situation + a minimum level of milex  
⇒ A required level of military capability ⇒ An acceptable level of security

If threats are non-existent, the appropriate level of military capability (and milex) is zero whilst having an aggressive neighbour might justify high capability and high milex. This principle is in fact applicable to any ministry. There is no sense, for example, in building and equipping a number of hospitals to cope with a possible outbreak of smallpox, when the possibility of an outbreak is extremely low. We have already seen from the experience of Latin America that a country can survive, and even flourish, without a military.

It is possible to focus too much on the level of milex rather than the process by which spending is determined and this can mean that the political power imbalance which allows the military to act as a ‘special case’ is not addressed. One way of tackling this is through the budget process.

2. Use a rational budget process

At its simplest, a budget is an income and expenditure statement i.e. the expected income and the planned expenditures over the next year. However, a budget means much more than this because it reflects – or should reflect – national values, objectives and priorities. A rational national budget means a close link between planned expenditures and national objectives. The annual budget process has four stages and at each stage there are opportunities for rationality to be pushed aside.

First, there is the formulation stage, when the distribution of funds between the different ministries and the allocation of funds within each ministry are proposed. The first is made by some combination of the Ministry of Finance, the Cabinet and the head of government. The second is made by the relevant ministry, guided by the government’s national objectives, the specific objectives of that ministry and input from the different components which make up the ministry. Both aspects involve backwards and forward adjustment of what the components of a ministry says it needs, what the ministry therefore says it needs and what the Ministry of Finance says it has available until a final draft budget is reached. An important factor in budget formulation, particularly in respect of the allocation to any ministry, is the relative strength of the Ministry of Finance compared with the spending ministries. A key question is whether the budget proposed is consistent with the government’s national objectives and with the specific objectives of the particular ministry.

Second, the proposed budget goes to parliament to be debated, possibly modified and passed. The standing committees of parliament may also play a role in changing and passing the budget. Key questions include whether there is enough information provided (i.e. is there sufficient transparency?) for parliament to change a budget? In any case, how much power does the parliament have to change a budget? Hopefully, its committee(s) will have been heavily involved in the formulation stage and so the need for changes by parliament will be limited.

### Table 13.2: A simplified example of programme budgeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Resources needed</th>
<th>Costs per annum</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Protect nation from invasion</td>
<td>1. Defensive armed forces</td>
<td>10,000 infantry personnel 5,000 artillery personnel</td>
<td>Wages (23,000 @ R80,000 pa) Food (23,000 @ R10,000 pa)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,000 transport personnel 5,000 airforce personnel</td>
<td>etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>400 vehicles 70 helicopters</td>
<td>R80 per km x 10,000 km pa R800 per hour x 600 hours pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satellite surveillance of border regions</td>
<td>2. Satellite surveillance of border regions</td>
<td>Type Y satellite 50 specialist personnel</td>
<td>Hire costs R30 m pa Wages (50 @ R170,000 pa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Prevent illegal drug imports</td>
<td>1. Naval patrol programme</td>
<td>5 class Z vessels</td>
<td>Crew wages (500 @ R80,000 pa) Vessel operating costs (1,500 days @ R25,000 per day)</td>
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The third stage – disbursing the funds – is generally straightforward but there can be additional sources of funds, known as off-budget incomes, which are more likely to come to the Ministry of Defence than to other ministries (see Hendrickson and Ball 2002). The fourth stage involves auditing the individual transactions carried out during the year, and also the financial procedures used by the ministry, in order to determine the extent of efficiency and the possible presence of corruption.

Outcome assessment is a possible addition to the budget process but is likely to be carried out infrequently, perhaps when the defence sector is subject to a review or white paper. Outcome assessment examines the overall consequences of a ministry’s expenditure – for example, the extent to which the financial resources used by the military have contributed to national security. This has two aspects: first, what has been the outcome in terms of security and, second, could the same outcome in terms of security have been achieved in a less costly way?

Outcome assessment is difficult because of the problem of actually measuring the output of the military (e.g. compare the number of children immunized by the Ministry of Health with the number of attacks or invasions prevented by the Ministry of Defence). But an assessment of outcomes is necessary and can be guided by the national objectives and those of the Ministry of Defence. One way forward is to assess the actual programmes established by the Ministry of Defence to meet its objectives. The technical term for this approach is programme budgeting and it requires the following:

- A statement of the ministry’s objectives;
- A set of programmes to meet each objective for the budgetary year in question, listed in order of priority;
- An estimate of the resources required – personnel, equipment etc – for each programme;
- An estimate of the costs of these resources; and,
- A procedure to evaluate performance in carrying out the programmes.

A programme budget for the Ministry of Defence could follow the form in the highly simplified example above. The Ministry has clearly specified objectives and programmes to meet each objective. Each programme is estimated to need a certain number of personnel and equipment which can be costed. The overall budget request should be the total of the right hand column. This programme budgeting guides both the total budget request and the most efficient allocation between programmes of a ministry.

3. Treat defence as a normal ministry

It is clear that for the budgeting process and programme budgeting to work effectively (achieving the desired outcomes) and efficiently (doing so at the least cost), there is need for a good deal of transparency and openness. However, in many countries, the military has been allowed to operate as a special case, with much less need to provide a detailed budget, justify its expenditures and evaluate its performance than other ministries. What might justify special treatment of the military?

It is often asserted that a more detailed military budget will provide information of use to a potential enemy and that military budgets should contain very little information. There are several answers to this assertion. First, mikes is an input measure and is not particularly useful as a measure of military strength (Hagelin and Skons 2003, p. 283).

In addition, cross-country comparisons of mikes are not meaningful unless the countries concerned use similar ways of defining and measuring it. Second, a budget would never include strategic information such as the location and strength of military units, or its plans of attack or defence, which might be of use to an internal or external enemy. Third, much information relevant to assessing military strength is already readily available in a number of widely-distributed annual publications. For example, the Military Balance provides numbers of military personnel and holdings of five categories of heavy weapons for each country; the SIPRI Yearbook provides information on the purchase of heavy weapons; the publications of Jane’s Information Group provide detailed information on military weaponry (e.g. the speed, range and armament of armoured vehicles and aircraft). It is very difficult to imagine any data from an annual budget which would add anything concerning military strength to what is readily available from other sources. Fourth, if the deterrent argument is accepted, it is in the country’s interests for potential enemies to be aware of its military strength. If they do not know, they may assume weakness and be tempted to attack. Secrecy may be more justified if a country is militarily weak and wants to hide this from potential enemies (Elworthy 1998).

Overall, much of the military’s demand for secrecy seems to be unnecessary. It is also out of line with moves for greater Parliamentary power over the military e.g. the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces [DCAF] (2002) has produced a ‘Model law on the Parliamentary Oversight of the State Military Organization’ with the goal of ‘ensuring maximum permissible transparency of the state military organization’ (Article 1, paragraph 2 (e)). Article 6, paragraph 2 of the law requires Parliament to ‘legislatively establish a list of information relating to the state military organization that is subject to compulsory disclosure’...
It may be believed that the military is different from any other ministry because the very survival of the state and its territorial integrity depends, assuming the existence of willing and able invaders, on the military. As we have argued earlier in this book, this belief, which is linked strongly to the idea of deterrence, may be out of date. Invasions of one country by another are now rare events. As regards internal wars, Collier and Hoeflfier’s (2002) comprehensive study found that high miles on the part of developing countries does not deter internal rebellion and that low miles does not encourage it; internal rebellion occurs, or does not occur, for other reasons.

Overall, the deterrence argument for a large military seems to be out of date and this is reinforced by the development of the concept of human security, which emphasizes protection from a range of non-military threats, including environmental degradation, infectious diseases and economic deprivation. In any case, we would want to emphasise what Gareth Evans (1995) has termed, in his discussion of cooperative security, ‘reassurance rather than deterrence’. Uncertainty and possible misunderstanding are more likely to be a threat to peace than knowledge.

The case for treating the military as a special case (except, perhaps, in wartime) seems weak and leads Hendrickson and Ball (2002, p. 1, 12) to conclude that from a governance perspective, what matters is that the same principles of accountability, transparency, comprehensiveness and discipline which apply to other portions of the public sector should also apply to the security sector, in particular the military. Requests from the armed forces [for budget funding] need to compete for funding within the budget process on an equal footing with requests for other purposes.

There are many pressures for increased miles – from the military itself, from arms producers, from foreign governments – and these are supported by widely-held beliefs about the nature of security and how it is achieved. One of the necessary conditions for demilitarisation to occur is a change in the way society thinks about the military and security.

### Necessary conditions for demilitarisation

1. **A change of mindset**

   The well-known UNESCO statement asserts that ‘Since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed’. Fundamentally, what needs to change for demilitarisation to become a reality is a radical change in what Ross (1987) termed the ‘militarism of the mind’ into a culture of peace. Such a change may occur rapidly as the result of a crisis, as with Panama and Haiti (see chapter 12), or it may be more gradual and be built on careful planning coordinated by a National Ministry of Peacebuilding, as discussed in chapter 11. It may begin as a groundswell among the masses and/or it may be inspired by a committed leader. It may be entirely indigenous or it may be supported by international agencies, NGOs or governments.

   This change in mindset will involve a population feeling more secure. It is possible that this may occur simply by disbanding the military, as in Haiti. More usually, however, they will need to be convinced that arrangements are being made to meet their needs for security in the absence of the military. As noted in chapter 1, security has a much wider meaning that simply the threat of invasion. If this narrow aspect of security is regarded as relatively unimportant by society – by comparison, say, with economic security – it may be possible to use resources released by demilitarisation to build economic security. More generally, as the alternative ways of achieving security are introduced, feelings of security, widely defined, will increase. Neighbours can support a country’s decision to demilitarise, and help nurture the new mindset, by appropriate confidence building measures (e.g. assurances of peaceful intent and perhaps, statements about their own plans to demilitarise.)

   This willingness to think differently must extend to the military. It could consider, in conjunction with its regional counterparts, a programme of common security. As Oscar Arias (1996, p. 17) has noted, ‘The present situation of each country maintaining its own military forces is as wasteful as if every house in a community maintained its own fire engine.’

2. **A demilitarisation plan**

   Whether demilitarisation is rapid or more gradual, it needs to be based on a plan which meets the needs of society and does so using appropriate means. That is, the process of demilitarisation itself must reflect the new mindset, and specifically the need to manage or resolve conflicts by nonviolent and democratic means. The benefit of a gradual approach is that a careful plan can be worked out; the danger is that countervailing forces may gain strength and the opportunity to demilitarise may be lost. Each SSA country needs to have a demilitarisation plan, ready to be brought out at an opportune time.

3. **An organization to implement demilitarisation**

   The number of tasks involved in demilitarisation, and their complexity, means that they cannot be left to a range of government departments; these, in any case, will have their own specific agendas. An organizational structure needs to be established (chapter 11 suggested a National Ministry of Peacebuilding).
to plan and implement the tasks of demilitarisation. Of necessity, it will be a senior ministry, outranking the Ministry of Defence in particular, and staffed by competent personnel who are committed to a demilitarised society.

4. Adequate financing arrangements

A fourth necessary element is adequate financing. It is tempting to think that demilitarisation will result in a ‘peace dividend’ which is available for other government purposes, but experience suggests this is unlikely. Demobilisation and reintegration is complex and expensive as indicated, for example, by the experience of Mozambique (Ball and Barnes 2000). Demobilisation and reintegration need to be well planned and well funded to avoid the real possibility that ex-fighters will recommence fighting or resort to crime and banditry. Where demobilisation follows the end of a war, some sources of wartime finance, including ‘war taxes’ and the cavalier exploitation of natural resources, may no longer be available. Then there are the additional costs of the alternative means of achieving security. Almost certainly, foreign financial aid will need to be tapped. The various sources of finance are listed in Table 14. In the discussion that follows, I will assume that demilitarisation is occurring following the end of war; parallel reasoning would apply if the decision was made during peacetime.

The first item in Table 14 is the traditional peace dividend and involves the diversion of expenditures away from war into other government expenditure categories. There will also be saved expenditure by non-government forces. In both cases, resources potentially become available for demilitarisation. However, while a reduction in military spending is feasible to some extent, such a reallocation may offer only limited possibilities of a peace dividend in the short-term. While weapons expenditure may be rapidly reduced in the post-war period, weapons do not often make up the bulk of military expenditure. Rather, personnel costs absorb most of the military budget, and, unlike weapons, these cannot be so rapidly reduced. Where threats to macro-insecurity persist in the immediate post-war period, the possibilities of a peace dividend in the short-term become even more limited.

The fiscal implications of peace can also initially be discouraging. There can be a redirection of spending from the military to the civilian sector and governments can reduce their revenue raising, thus allowing the private sector to retain more financial resources. Whilst such peace dividends may be large when compared to the time of armed conflict, they may be very small when the yardstick used is the pre-war situation. Indeed the ability to raise revenue may actually decline in the post-war period. In wartime Ethiopia, for example, the state used coercive revenue-raising measures which had to be abandoned when peace was achieved. Often, the only major revenue increase is the enhanced flow of foreign aid that typically follows the end of war. Thus there should be no expectation of any substantial domestically-generated peace dividend, either for the economy or for the government in the short-term, as expenditure needs will be high and revenue raising capacity low. In addition, if there was a peace dividend, there would be pressure from bodies such as the IMF to use it to cut budget deficits or allow tax cuts.

With the uncertainties of armed conflict at least diminished, incentives to save rather than consume immediately will increase for those with sufficient income, although there may be pressure to spend on deferred consumption items. Incentives facing business people and the government to invest in physical capital will also expand. We return to a discussion of investment shortly.

Government may receive increased revenue via the taxation system but will be subject to two constraints: first, given the desire to involve the private sector in recovery efforts, a government will be careful not to remove too much of that sector’s investible surplus. Second, the population’s willingness to pay high taxes in order to win the war is not likely to continue when the war ceases. Finally, if there is some kind of market structure for securities, a government may be able to sell bonds to its citizens.
Foreign sources have the particular advantage of being in the form of foreign exchange, a supply of which is essential to buy the imports necessary for recovery. Development assistance can come from other countries, from multilateral bodies such as the IMF, the World Bank or regional development banks as well as from NGOs. Apart from the last, this assistance may be conditional; in fact, there may be demands for government expenditure constraint at the very time when such expenditure is or seems essential for recovery. The experience of a number of countries is that the financial resources needed for recovery have come at the price of a virtual handing over of control of economic policymaking; Mozambique is a classic example (Flank 1993). On the other hand, generous foreign contributions may be crucial in overcoming opposition to demilitarisation by enabling the compensation of individuals and groups who would lose out in consequence. There has been some innovative thinking about a Global Demilitarisation Fund (Renner 1994, p. 49-57; United Nations Development Programme 1994, p. 66,77), which would draw its funds from a share (say 1 per cent) of each nation’s military budget plus a share (20 per cent for industrial countries, 10 per cent for developing countries) of the savings in miles which most countries are expected to make.

The willingness of foreign commercial banks to lend and that of local and foreign business people to invest in productive assets or shares will depend on an optimistic assessment of the likelihood of returns and profit. The end of a war does not in itself signal the beginning of economic security. Despite the onset of peace, potential investors may continue to be cautious in committing their investment funds, due to a perceived lack of economic security. Paul Collier (1994, p. 8) notes that the ‘real’ peace dividend derives from a gradual recovery of confidence which includes the repatriation of financial and human capital from abroad.

At the risk of oversimplifying matters, it is ultimately in the international community’s interest to invest in war-to-peace transitions. Not only will the cost of intervention for the international community rise if peace is not maintained – as peacemakers, peacekeepers and peacebuilders are called in again – but peace brings inherent environmental, cultural and spiritual benefits to the international community, let alone the citizens of the country concerned. While less immediately tangible, these benefits far outweigh the short term costs of financing war-to-peace transitions.

Reasons for optimism

There are reasons for quiet optimism amongst those committed to demilitarisation. First, the situations which currently exist are a consequence of choices made by individuals and groups of individuals for reasons which seemed important at the time. We can work to change individual and societal thinking so that a new reasoning can lead to new decisions. This is no easy or short term task but it is possible.

Second, there is concrete evidence of changes in mindsets and consequent structural change. We have discussed the experiences of Costa Rica, Panama and Haiti. We know that apartheid, the divided Germany and the Cold War came to an end, and did so by nonviolent means. We need to spread the news of the power of nonviolence. A commitment to nonviolence normally has both a moral and a pragmatic foundation. An individual may reject violence against others on the grounds that it is never or hardly ever acceptable but also because of a belief that non-violence actually works. Case studies of successful non-violent actions are detailed by Stephen Zunes et al in their Nonviolent Social Movements (1999), in Mary King’s Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jnr (1998), and in Ackerman and Duvall’s A Force More Powerful: a Century of Non-Violent Conflict (2000).

A note on strategy

The military is a powerful, well-organised institution in many countries and it has powerful supporters. Attempting demilitarisation directly, at least during normal times, is likely to be a much harder task than the indirect approach of building up the alternative ways of achieving security. These will require long term effort but, when the time for demilitarisation is ripe, the minimal contribution of the military to security will be obvious. The most important immediate task is the establishment of a National Ministry of Peacebuilding as a senior ministry to oversee the implementation of these alternatives. It will be deeds, rather than words, which will be the measure of such a ministry’s effectiveness.

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