

SIPRI's Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme: A Future for the Research Agenda

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SIPRI will always remain inextricably linked to the global research agenda of chemical and biological disarmament. Right from its inception thirty years ago, SIPRI formulated the formidable goal of studying all aspects of chemical and biological warfare (CBW) with the clear aim of freeing the world from the spectre that has haunted industrialising societies since the turn of the century. One of the CBW Project's early yields still stands as a monument in disarmament literature. I am, of course, referring to the six-volume series entitled 'The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare' published in the early seventies. So great is still the demand after 25 years that a reprint is being considered.

In a sense, the SIPRI CBW researchers — past and present — ought to consider themselves lucky aunts and uncles. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention saw the light in 1972. Despite its obvious flaws, it was quite an achievement in a polarised global system. Twenty years later the Chemical Weapons Convention was born. By any standard, this was a huge baby and in the end a caesarian was needed to prevent it from suffocating in the womb. Today, while suffering from the anticipated teething aches, the CWC's gravest problem is that it is still connected to the respirator machine and that some consulting doctors are actively considering euthanasia. *[Of course, some of these doctors otherwise profess to be respectable pro-life lobbyists...]* So yes, we are lucky, yet concerned CBW researchers.

Having said that, CBW must be one of the most exciting research areas for the foreseeable future. The CWC places us all in the laboratory of tomorrow's regime formation. It raises fundamental questions about the role of international organisation in global cooperation.

First, being the archetypal global verifiable disarmament treaty, the CWC regime must withstand the structural strain of today's expanding regional security agendas. Unsurprisingly, the Middle East, which remains extremely sceptical of global regimes before

regional security is assured, counts many holdout states, despite its repeated confrontation with CW or threat of CW in the past decade. Its linkage of regional chemical and biological disarmament to the elimination of the nuclear threat in the area and other security matters is a challenge to the Western global issue-by-issue approach that should not be taken too lightly.

Second, after last year's events in Tokyo, the problem of chemical and biological proliferation to sub-state actors is sadly no longer a theoretical possibility. In other words, the chemical and biological threat has already moved down to the level of individual security, irrespective of conditions of war or peace. The phenomenon is too new for its implications to be already fully understood. Therefore, institutes such as SIPRI must help to define this novel research agenda before sub-state proliferation leads to the erosion of the democratic content of our civil societies.

Finally, and perhaps most important, treaties such as the BTWC and the CWC are far more than simply arms control agreements. Indeed, once these weapons are banished from the face of the earth, what is left are definitions of qualified trade and cooperative relationships between the developed and developing world characterised by export controls and conditional access to technology and knowledge. Frustrations among the latter group will directly challenge the legitimacy of global disarmament. India's stance on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, for instance, comes as no surprise to those familiar with the hassles over Article 10 of the BTWC and Article 11 of the CWC. The current competition between nonproliferation or counterproliferation strategies on the one hand and arms reductions on the other directly challenges the legitimacy of disarmament regimes. Counterproliferation lumps chemical and biological weapons together with nuclear arms, sophisticated conventional weapons and missiles as if the BTWC and CWC did not exist. It thus denies both agreements their role as deproliferation treaties, by which states parties explicitly commit themselves to abandon any such armament programme in progress, destroy any existing stocks and pledge never to acquire such capabilities in future.

To conclude, our answer to the question whether the SIPRI CBW research agenda still holds a future is a most resounding 'Yes, more than ever'! In view of shifting policy priorities and changing allegiances, the international community faces the daunting task of synchronising regional and global security agendas. If in the area of CBW, SIPRI offered a unique neutral ground where scientists from East and West exchanged views on disarmament during the Cold War, then today it can and must create this same neutral territory in which minds from the industrialising and industrialised world can meet. In this way, the SIPRI CBW Project can contribute to overcome the growing gap between those who favour the global security approach and those who seek regional answers to their security needs first.