

DISARMAMENT AND CONVERSION: GENERAL AND RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVES

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Summary

Survival of humankind and implementation of national and international strategies of sustainable development require vast material and intellectual resources, which are available neither in “unengaged” form, nor in “stored” form, in individual nations or international organizations. In such a situation, disarmament and conversion may qualify as efficient forms of rechanneling the finite resources of the biosphere and of humankind, towards a solution of the most important problems affecting the peaceful and sustainable future of progressive civilization, both on the Earth and in the rest of the universe. Properly planned and implemented, under conditions of irreversible disarmament and arms control measures, conversion opens a hopeful perspective for the transfer of material resources, and the utilization of the versatile expertise of the military establishments of many nations, in peaceful endeavors aimed at sustainable development. This article analyzes the dynamics of the arms race and the historical experience of arms control and disarmament, in the framework of providing favorable conditions for the solution of global problems and the transition to sustainable development. Special attention is paid to conceptual foundations, organizational forms, and specific methods of implementation of conversion projects in the Russian Federation. Conversion in the Russian space and missile industry is also examined. The experience of conversion in the Russian Federation is compared with similar experiences of some other countries. Specific features of conversion in the interests of sustainable development are analyzed.

1. Introduction

Hammering swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks is an ancient dream of humankind. After many centuries of efforts aimed at making the world a better place for living and future generations, there is a clear understanding that this important area requires serious attention, as well as huge material and intellectual resources. The destructive force of contemporary weapons and other military equipment is so great that a small fraction of them, used intentionally or by chance, will cause damage to society and biosphere, on a scale that compares with the greatest natural disasters in the history of civilization and the losses suffered by the belligerents in the bloodiest wars of the past. The mere fact of the availability of modern weaponry, to say nothing of the valuable material and intellectual resource wasted by the military industry, and during the course of military research and development, makes the prospects for establishing a balance between nature, technology and society, rather gloomy. This is why the problem of arms control and disarmament is not limited only to curbing arsenals of the most destructive weapons. To a greater extent, it is a problem of the rational use and rechanneling of resources from wasteful military applications to the urgent needs of living and future generations, whose hopeful perspective for the future is one of transition to sustainable development.

From the viewpoint of economic theory, the military spending of a nation amounts to throwing part of its capital into the ocean. But in drawing this conclusion, objective science and honest politics go further, stating that the capital thrown away into the abyss of the arms race becomes a bonanza for a handful of arms manufacturers. Many of them are ready to sacrifice the destiny of future generations, and the fate the biosphere, to their desire for new profits. From here, it necessarily follows that to be feasible, disarmament must be followed by thoroughly planned programs and strategies, aimed in the long run at the transition of individual nations and the world community as a whole to sustainable development. In any form and in any country, the arms race consumes resources and means of production, which could otherwise be used to raise the living standards of large groups of the population. Efforts to improve living conditions are most effective when there is a free exchange of the results of technological progress between nation states. This process is held back by mutual fear and suspicions connected with the arms race.

As the world community reaches the third millennium, disarmament and conversion are viewed as efficient tools for rechanneling to productive purposes the resources previously allocated to military activities. Such resources were accumulated by many countries, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, in their desperate efforts to take the upper hand over the enemy by creating arsenals of the most sophisticated weapons for wars that the majority of humankind eagerly desired to avoid. The deadly logic of the Cold War deprived civilization of vast material and intellectual resources, which when and if properly used, could make individual countries and the world community at large much more prosperous and happy, and less vulnerable to local, regional and global threats. This vision could form the bulk of the agenda of the United Nations and many other international organizations working for the better future of the human race. Evaluation of the possibilities of diverting material and intellectual resources, which for many decades have been used for military purposes, towards peaceful purposes, is one of the

most complex problems of worldwide disarmament efforts. These efforts are made now in closer interaction with national, regional and global programs, and projects for socioeconomic development. The economics of disarmament is thus incorporated into the economics of sustainable development.

Conversion goes beyond a mere reshuffling of people and money. It involves a political and institutional transformation. Although the military sector could take over some civilian responsibilities, such an approach falls short of the degree of public accountability and democratization of decision-making that conversion promises. Moreover, since the war-making capacity of the defense departments would remain relatively unconstrained, a shift away from military priorities could easily be reversed. The importance of conversion projects and programs for individual nations, major regions, and the world community at large, grows from decade to decade, primarily because of the growing number of challenges that face humankind as it implements plans and strategies for socioeconomic development, using for this purpose new scientific knowledge and technological innovations. One of the urgent tasks, implementation of which will be assisted by effective national and international efforts in the field of conversion, is transition to sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development envisages the widest possible use of scientific, technological, economic, managerial and professional resources allocated to military activities of different scale and nature, in peaceful activities related to environmental protection and sustainable development.

2. Conversion for Sustainable Development

Broadly speaking, strategies for sustainable development involve monitoring the environment, the assessment of monitored data, coordination of scientific work, management of negotiations, encouragement of new patterns of international cooperation, dissemination of information, and raising public consciousness on environmental issues. The costs of implementing these strategies are yet to be calculated with any degree of certainty. Material and intellectual resources that could contribute to worldwide progress towards sustainable development are already engaged in many areas of human activity and may be rechannelled or reallocated by specially argued and thoroughly planned coordinated actions of national and international scale. Conversion projects and special transfer of technology programs may become a reliable source of energy and resources for sustainable development.

The utilization of military-related resources for implementation of national strategies of sustainable development would essentially depend on two major steps: an inventory stage identifying their suitability, and a political action plan to ensure their availability; each of these would have its own requirements for cost benefit analysis. Military-related resources vary greatly from one nation to another in size, composition and technological level. No matter what the specifics are, these resources comprise in principle: manpower, including regular armed personnel, conscripts, and civilian, technical and support staff; the professional skills and technical know-how of commanders and soldiers, and of the professional workforce of the military industries, and also that of scientists, technicians and other staff in institutions and agencies supporting military establishments; equipment of all kinds, from handguns to tanks, ships and from aircraft

to advanced laboratory instruments and military factory equipment; funds allocated by the government for salaries to employees in the various branches of defense, for maintenance of existing equipment and for research, development and procurement of new equipment; infrastructure covering land use, capital stock, production plants, machinery, factories, design bureaus and buildings in various stages of their useful life; and technological capabilities, including ongoing R&D endeavors. For the performance of military missions, modern military establishments have developed highly sophisticated technologies which have largely drawn upon five major fields: nuclear, space, materials, information and biotechnology. Experts name among these several technologies which are also applicable to missions related to sustainable development. They are sensors, satellites, computers, communication networks, global positioning systems, and methods of simulation and modeling. In some instances, environmental applications of information technology have either already been undertaken or are underway. In others, the underlying technology can be adapted.

The process of conversion in the interests of sustainable development is only at its initial stage. Growing awareness of the decision-makers and better public understanding of the real value of military-related resources and the potential of military establishments for sustainable development opens up hopeful perspectives for improvement of the global ecological situation.

3. Disarmament, Conversion and Sustainable Development in the Framework of Global Problems

The concept of sustainable development is applicable to the urgent task of the creation of a new planetary partnership for protection of the integrity of the planetary environmental and developmental system. It also lays the groundwork for energetic cooperation of all nations, aimed at solution of the global problems which endanger the survival of civilization on Earth. Humankind is bound by a common environmental destiny, which has a unique integral and interdependent nature. As stated in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, human beings are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Not a single part of the biosphere of the Earth can claim immunity from anthropogenic impacts such as habitat alteration or destruction, ozone depletion or climate change, loss of biological diversity or desertification. Such risks and dangers, originating from human activity, are exacerbated by natural disasters, which cause ever more damage to societies in different parts of the world.

Serious consideration of national strategies of transition to sustainable development requires radical revision of the role of war as a means of resolution of disputes among nations and inside sovereign states. Wars have occurred continuously throughout the long sweep of human history, unequivocally establishing them among the characteristic endeavors of humankind. The wars of the second half of the twentieth century have resulted in much loss of life, other casualties, destruction of property, and social disruption, but they have also led to environmental damage and ecological disruption—matters of growing public awareness. Damage to the human environment is of growing concern because of the awakening demands of an ever-increasingly overpopulated world. Moreover, concern for nature has been reinforced by the numerous military

demonstrations of ecological devastation as an intentional strategy of war. The armed forces have available a large array of destructive weapons and techniques to carry out their missions. In some instances they exert additional pressure on the enemy by cutting it off from the necessary outside or internal sources of supply of food, fuel, raw materials, and other essential commodities. Arsenals of weapons, which are available to a number of nations, are capable of devastating the ecology of large areas with nuclear weapons, chemical and biological agents, and other means of mass destruction. New generations of conventional weapons have high explosive power and other destructive abilities that promise to make them ever more ecologically harmful.

The complexity and intractability of the environmental problems that have worried the world community for many decades demand not only continuous scrutiny and adequate scientific assessment, but also the formulation of effective strategies to mobilize the required resources. While elaborating such strategies, the decision-makers should do their best to gain the widest possible support from the wider public, both within and outside their own countries, since protection of the environment is indeed a crucial condition for human survival.

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Biographical Sketch

Grigori Sergeevitch Khozin was born in 1933 in Novosibirsk, Russia. He was educated at the Institute of Foreign Languages, Moscow, 1956, and School of Journalism, Moscow State University (post-graduate course, 1963).

Academic achievements: Degrees from Institute of US and Canadian Studies (History), and Academy of Science, USSR; Dissertation 1971, *US Space Program: Government Policy Implications (1957-1970)*; Doctor of History. Institute of US and Canadian Studies. Academy of Science, USSR; Dissertation 1985, *Global Problems and US Foreign Policy: Theoretical Concepts, Mechanisms of Implementation, Trends in Foreign Policy (1960s-1980s)*.

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