

# FOREWORD

The importance of open and democratic civil–military relations in any society can never be overstated. Mutual engagement and dialogue between the defence and security establishments and the broader civilian population – especially in a troubled region like sub-Saharan Africa – is an indispensable tool in the resolution of conflicts, the building of peace and the entrenchment of democracy.

The challenges of civil–military relations – including the long and complex processes of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in the post-conflict societies of our region – are rendered even more daunting by the syndrome of weak or failing economies, which bring urgency to the debate of resource competition between the military and the social and developmental needs of the civil populace. The region’s general economic malaise, coupled with a rising political consciousness caused by the embracing of democratic values over the past decade, has increasingly made defence spending a focal point of this debate, breaking with the traditional secrecy which often shrouds matters of such a nature. There is an increasing realisation that financing of defence and security programmes cannot be isolated from broader developmental programmes and procedures, which in a liberal political dispensation lend themselves to the controls of prioritisation and open scrutiny. The civil–military relations debate is also about identifying the causes of strained civil–military relations and how these can be remedied before fragile situations deteriorate. This process seeks to place peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts at the centre of human development, in the realisation that sustained development remains elusive in the absence of peace.

As has been experienced in the region, war (inter- and intra-state) has devastating effects on both the nation and the individual – effects that include the destruction of social and economic infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, homes, bridges, railway lines, factories, etc. War destroys agricultural activities by uprooting and displacing farming communities. It destroys the economy of the nation and undermines economic development, giving rise to poverty, unemployment, inequality, bad governance, human rights violations and general lawlessness. Among the most serious consequences of war is the phenomenon of refugees and internally displaced persons, which has devastating psychological and socio-economic effects on both the region of displacement and the hosting community. Displaced persons have to live with the trauma of large-scale violence and the loss of homes, property and relatives, while hosting communities have to contend with the increased burden on their meagre economic resources.

The foregoing adverse effects of war make the debate on civil–military

relations an even more urgent one. When the military establishment and the civil population are well bonded through a culture of mutual understanding and cooperation; when a nation's development priorities and security needs are recognised and respected by both the military establishment and the civil populace through open dialogue and constant interaction, intra-state – and subsequently inter-state – armed conflict becomes less likely.

For such debate to be of any significance, however, it should not be confined to the closed environments of workshops, seminars and other forums of intellectual discourse; it should be disseminated to all who hold a stake in the peaceful coexistence of society at local, regional and continental levels. This is an opportunity which must be seized today, knowing that tomorrow might be too late, and that those who seek peace must themselves become the makers of peace. Peace starts with the originators and facilitators of such debate, for it is they who hold the primary power to change communities and nations for the better.

Although never having experienced civil war itself, Zambia is as equally urged as any other nation in the region to promote good civil–military relations because it faces internal economic and political pressures arising from conflicts of interest by various political and economic forces.

In the light of these considerations, the Defence Sector Programme at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), in cooperation with the Dag Hammarskjöld Chair at the Copperbelt University (CBU) and the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF), held a workshop in Ndola, Zambia from 19 to 23 April 2004. The aim of the workshop was to exchange views on civil–military relations and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, enhancing the capacity of the defence sector and civil society. The aim was also to support the ISS objective of enhancing and informing the security debate in Africa. This book is the product of the deliberations that were undertaken during this period.

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World order is moving inexorably toward sub-regional, regional and continental groupings, making conflict and violent human displacement no longer an intra-state national phenomenon, but one whose effects reverberate across borders. Thus, no one country in a given region can enjoy peace if it is surrounded by turmoil. It is hoped that as the debate on civil–military relations gains ground and begins to bear fruit, a culture of peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts will be advanced in the region.

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