

Introduction

Traditionally, *security* has been a public good, provided by governments to their citizens. Conceived in narrow military terms, security from the threat of external armed attack has been provided through national armed forces: by military spending on soldiers, their equipment, and the defence infrastructure.

Even in these restricted terms, however, security remains a notoriously slippery concept. Despite growing international concern with curbing "excessive military spending," or "destabilizing arms acquisitions," the question of "how much security is enough?" has never been satisfactorily answered in a systematic way. Over time, patterns of military spending ebb and flow in response to a wide variety of factors, including changes in the regional and global threat environment, alliance and assistance relationships, the level of economic development of a state, weapons acquisitions cycles, changes in the nature of government and of civil-military relations, bureaucratic and institutional decision-making processes, and internal threats to regime security.¹ But specifying precisely which factors are important, and which concerns legitimate, has always been difficult, if not impossible.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of security expenditures in many states in recent times has also been their relative isolation from public debate and scrutiny. Military spending was treated as immune from the choices that characterized most public sector spending. Put simply, there was no "guns versus butter" tradeoff: governments and publics simply assumed that an adequate "number of guns" needed to be procured in order to provide the peaceful and secure conditions for "butter production." Military expenditures choices were *prior to* and distinct from other decisions about how to allocate scarce resources to education, health care, social welfare, or other public spending. In addition, determining how to meet the national security needs of the state was the main prerogative of national officials, and was seldom subject to domestic debate or multilateral oversight.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, the artificial division between security issues and other aspects of economic, political and social development has been eroded. There are several reasons for this, but three stand out. The first has been the emergence of broader conceptions of security that include not only external threats of organized violence, but threats to human well-being that can emerge from internal conflict, economic deprivation, weak or poor governance, or repressive regimes. These broader conceptions can be found in a wide range of national and multilateral policy statements. As the Canadian government has noted, for example:

¹ For a summary of these factors, see Robert West, "Determinants of Military Expenditure in Developing Countries: Review of Academic Research," in Geoffrey Lamb with Valeriana Kallab, *Military Expenditures and Economic Development*, World Bank Discussion papers 185 (Washington: World Bank, 1992), 113-145.