

ARMS CONTROL AT SEA*

Seven tenths of the Earth's surface are covered by water. The sea, with the boundless possibilities it offers for communications and military manoeuvres, is of vital importance in any regional or global conflict.

It is therefore surprising that for several decades sea warfare received scant attention on the part of experts; moreover, it has hardly ever been included on the agenda of the various bodies dealing with disarmament and arms control.

As a result of specific events such as the South Atlantic conflict in 1982 and more recently the Gulf crisis, the situation has changed, and experts are now showing renewed interest in the issue of sea warfare. Rear Admiral Hill's book is an excellent example of this new trend.

The goal set by this former senior British naval officer and member of the British Ministry of Defence Central Staff was indeed an ambitious one: the book first of all serves as a reminder of the efforts made so far in the field of arms control and identifies areas where progress might be achieved. The latter part of the book examines the past, current and future role of arms control in improving international security.

The author begins by explaining the basic differences between two parallel approaches, namely *disarmament* and *arms control*. Rear Admiral Hill favours the second approach – a more realistic one in his opinion – and lists its main objectives, which are to reduce the likelihood of conflict, limit the damage caused by war, cut defence expenditure and, last but not least, improve mutual security.

In the second chapter, Rear Admiral Hill gives a very clear description of the objectives of maritime power, particularly in economic and military terms.

The next chapter contains a useful and detailed review of the main maritime arms control measures adopted between 1800 and 1939. Although most of them are now outdated (such as the USA/UK treaty limiting the number of warships allowed to be stationed on the Great Lakes), Rear Admiral Hill's analysis is extremely interesting in that it shows that almost all the arms control measures we are attempting to introduce today, such as the creation of demilitarized zones, restrictions on the use of certain methods of warfare and prohibitions of certain types of weapons, were already applied in the 19th century.

The author then goes on to study the agreements reached in the post-1945 period, all of which he considers have been marked by two new and decisive factors: the emergence of the superpowers and the development of nuclear weapons.

* *Arms Control at Sea*, by Rear Admiral J.R. Hill, Routledge, London and New York, 1989, 229 pp.

The following chapters contain a most interesting review of the policies of military engagement adopted by the major maritime powers and an analysis of the potential role of various means of warfare, such as nuclear weapons, conventional armaments and submarines.

In each case, the author examines the (very few) arms control treaties pertaining to these different methods of warfare and possible developments in this regard, never hesitating to express an opinion on their appropriateness or feasibility.

The author here puts forward some fairly unconventional views, going so far as to affirm that certain arms control procedures in force or currently being negotiated might in fact turn out to have globally *destabilizing* effects.

Generally speaking, the author appears extremely sceptical about arms control measures at sea. (He himself remarks rather wryly that some might feel his book should have been called "*No Arms Control at Sea*")!

The last chapter is the least convincing part of the book, perhaps because the ideas it propounds are less fully developed. Rear Admiral Hill puts forward a few suggestions for improving mutual security, which is indeed the ultimate objective of arms control. He rejects abrupt changes and drastic measures and instead favours the adoption of uni- or multilateral confidence-building measures.

Arms Control at Sea provides a wealth of clear and accurate information, especially regarding the historical background, and an extensive critical examination of the issues at stake. It will doubtless prove most useful to all experts on the subject.

Antoine Bouvier

HUMANITÄRES VÖLKERRECHT INFORMATIONSSCHRIFTEN

*A new German-language periodical
on humanitarian law*

The *Review* is happy to introduce its readers to *Humanitäres Völkerrecht, Informationsschriften*, a new periodical entirely devoted to international law and to the Red Cross that will be of particular interest to German-speaking readers. It is published jointly by the German Red Cross and by the Institut für Friedenssicherungsrecht und Humanitäres Völkerrecht (IFHV), University