

# Summary and Recommendations

## The Causes and Consequences of Conventional Proliferation

The global proliferation of conventional weapons has earned a prominent place in the post-Cold War foreign policy agenda. The human and material toll of the relatively unconstrained flow of conventional weapons is large: the vast majority of the 20 million war-related deaths since 1945 have been in conflicts fought exclusively with conventional weapons, and the thirty-nine major ongoing conflicts in 1994 have been fueled by arms, especially light weapons, that have been amassed in the world's arsenals. Conventional proliferation is perhaps the last remaining important issue on the arms control and non-proliferation agenda that has not been comprehensively addressed.

Several contradictory pressures make the issue of conventional proliferation uncommonly complex. These include:

- the right of states to self-defence, and to the weapons they deem necessary for security;
- the decline in the political and strategic considerations that fueled the arms trade;
- the increase in the economic pressures for arms producing states to export weapons;
- the impact of changing conceptions of security that highlight the internal and economic consequences of unconstrained proliferation.

At the same time, the end of the bloc-to-bloc confrontation has brought to the forefront international concern with the consequences of internal and regional conflicts, the threats to "human" or "societal" security created by protracted conflicts or authoritarian rule, and the impact on development of the economic resources devoted to armaments and armed forces. Other "non-military" threats to security have also risen in prominence in recent years, including such issues as resource depletion, environmental degradation and economic disparities, while at the same time, traditional military threats to security, although they may have waned, have not disappeared.

The problem of conventional proliferation can be defined as:

*the diffusion of weapons, associated technologies or expertise that produces an adverse effect on local, regional or global security and stability.*

In light of a broader understanding of security, however, the "problem" of conventional proliferation is really three related clusters of problems, each of which has a different set of appropriate solutions (explored in chapter five). Unconstrained conventional proliferation can:

- fuel regional inter-state arms races and lead to increased conflict and even war;
- exacerbate internal conflicts, thwart progress towards democratization and good governance, and entrench authoritarian rule;
- as part of broader military expenditures, consume scarce resources that could be devoted to social and economic development.

Each of these three clusters of problems possesses a different set of solutions that can be advocated:

- The problem of interstate conflict must be tackled with measures that deal with major weapons systems and military technologies, and concentrate on arms control, transparency, and confidence-building;
- The problem of good governance and internal conflict must be tackled with measures that deal with light weapons, and concentrate on micro-disarmament, demilitarization, conflict resolution, and post-conflict peace-building.