

little or no progress can be made towards controlling or curbing it. It is against this backdrop and with this goal in mind that the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security held a conference on international arms transfers.

In 1982, an estimated \$28,850 million dollars (US) worth of weapons changed hands, with more than 35 times as many rifles and 115 times as many handguns as in 1975. This represents a three-fold increase in volume (in real terms) since 1967. In addition to this expansion in volume, there is also the arms trade has also shifted in the last 25 years. In the 1960-75 period, roughly 88 percent of the weapons transferred went to the developing world. By 1978-82, the proportion had risen to over 90 percent.

The growth and the negative implications for the developing countries of high levels of spending on armaments, has sharpened the debate in recent years. On the one hand, there is the argument that high levels of spending on arms and on military establishments in general, consumes scarce resources that could be more productively used in other sectors. Such spending, it is also argued, contributes to excessive militarization of society in the less-developed parts of the world. This side in the debate is often cast in terms of the link between disarmament and development, the first being a pre-condition for the second.

On the other side, there is the argument that many, if not most, states that purchase modern weapons have legitimate "security" needs that must be met. There are external threats to deter or defend against, in some cases threats even to national survival. The international trade in arms is seen simply as part of the way and work of international politics in an imperfect world, an endemic feature unlikely to change or diminish unless the nature of international politics itself changes.

In either case, without a better understanding of what drives both the suppliers and the recipients in the international arms transfer system,

1. This is not to say that the arms trade is entirely unregulated. All countries have an obligation under the UN Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Health Organization and Non-Proliferation Treaty. The term "transfer" is used more generally than "trade" or "sales", because it encompasses those transactions that may be made as gifts or as part of other arrangements.