

PREFACE

"Gun lobbies" in the United States and elsewhere have often admonished the general public with slogans such as "guns don't kill people, people do". While few would disagree with the inherent truth of that statement and most would reason that due attention should be paid to this second aspect of gun control, logic clearly supports the contention that such a focus of attention should not detract from the first. Both factors -- possession and intent -- deserve to be dealt seriously and in parallel.

A similar dichotomy exists when considering the non-proliferation aspects of arms control with respect to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and conventional weapons. Using a higher level of both altruism and balance than is likely to be found in the gun control debate, Keith Krause reminds us that, in terms of non-proliferation, all of the estimated 23,000,000 war-related deaths since 1945 have been from the use of conventional not nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons and their potentially cataclysmic effects will continue, of course, to warrant first priority on the non-proliferation agenda. At the same time, however, it is incumbent upon the international community to focus increased attention on coming to grips with the proliferation dangers posed by the uncontrolled, regional and worldwide acquisition and dissemination of conventional weaponry.

In examining the conventional weapons scenario to the end of this decade, Professor Krause has identified some of the significant factors likely to affect the development of control mechanisms. One generic problem is that advanced technologies in the non-WMD arena are becoming increasingly available indigenously or in markets outside of so-called "first tier" nations. Supply-side management in the future may simply not be good enough. The challenge for the remainder of this decade, therefore, is to demonstrate that proposed proliferation control mechanisms are of equal benefit and necessity in promoting the security interests of all parties.

Professor Krause, in his analysis relating to the maturing conventional arms transfer and production system, identifies one initial attempt by the international community to recognize and to meet the challenge posed by the proliferation of conventional weapons. That mechanism -- The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms -- is dealt with in considerable detail by Edward Laurance in the second paper.

Professor Laurance outlines the background relating to the Register and quantifies its success to date. He describes the success of the Register in initially reaching levels which surpassed what many of its supporters would have dared to hope.