

investments were evident as long as a decade ago.¹ Finally, this definition highlights that proliferation is judged by its negative consequences. Transfers that may not have any destabilizing consequences in one regional context may be of great proliferation concern in another (for example, advanced fighters in Sub-Saharan Africa or Central America).

Proliferation thus occurs when the diffusion of weapons and weapons technologies accelerates to the point that it destabilizes conflicts, diverts increased quantities of scarce resources, or indicates a "breakout" from a previous stable regional or local balance of forces. The *policy goal* is often to slow the rate of diffusion of weapons, in order to allow conflict management and internal political processes to take effect, or to ameliorate the underlying conditions that give rise to conventional proliferation. Constraining proliferation hence does *not* dictate "freezing" existing military balances and weapons holdings: such a policy would be unacceptable to the military "have-nots" of the world.

Any "problem" whose scope is so broad that it includes Kalashnikov rifles and F-16 fighters is clearly not one, but many, problems. Again, for consistent usage, *conventional arms* can be divided into three categories: *major weapons systems*, *light weapons*, and *dual-use systems*. *Major weapons systems* encompass the seven categories of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers.² *Light weapons* can be defined as "those weapons that can be transported by pack animals and light vehicles" and include, in addition to portable weapons such as machine guns and small arms, precisely those weapons (such as heavy machine guns, light artillery and some missile systems) "that seem to fall between the cracks of every analytic system but that cause a huge amount of battlefield destruction."³ Such distinctions matter greatly when attempting to track the weapons trade: both the UN Register and the most widely available alternative data source (the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute *Yearbook*) use categories that exclude most light weapons and many dual-use systems.⁴

Some weapons systems are most significant because they have uniquely destabilizing effects on international and regional security. Examples would include intermediate or long-range missiles, weapons that target civilian populations, or weapons that are uniquely suited to terrorist or guerrilla usage (such as missiles that could be used to target civilian airliners). Some major weapons systems are particularly important because in some cases they can upset regional military balances by giving one state or "side" a decisive short-term military advantage. Examples might include precision-guided munitions and cruise missiles, or advanced artillery. Finally, light weapons can be important because they fuel civil wars and protracted social conflicts

¹ For an excellent discussion of this in the context of weapons of mass destruction, see David Kay, "Denial and Deception Practices of WMD Proliferators: Iraq and Beyond," *Washington Quarterly*, 18:1 (Winter 1995), 85-105.

² More details on the specific categories, and on the register itself, can be found in: Edward Laurance, et al, *Arms Watch* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Malcolm Chalmers, et al, eds., *Developing the UN Register of Conventional Arms* (Bradford: Bradford University, 1994).

³ This definition is from Karp, "Arms Trade Revolution."

⁴ The SIPRI *Yearbook* counts aircraft, armour and artillery, guidance and radar systems, missiles and warships, and excludes small arms and artillery under 100 mm. SIPRI, *Yearbook 1994*, 549. Data from the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency appears more inclusive (it includes "weapons of war, parts thereof, ammunition, support equipment, and other commodities designed for military use"), but is presented primarily in dollar terms. ACDA, *WMEAT 1993-1994*, 169. One source excludes light weapons, the other appears to systematically understate their value. For example, ACDA records no arms imports are recorded for Rwanda in 1990, 1991 or 1992, when we know from other sources that several million dollars of small arms were shipped to that country.