

resources necessary to secure arms. Furthermore, they can argue, attempts to limit their arms acquisitions represent an indefensible double standard when industrial countries devote very much larger resources, both absolutely and in many cases relatively, to military ends. This factor will be an important obstacle to achieving any kind of arms traffic limitation regime, as will the difficulty of achieving genuine restraint and compliance among the various sales-hungry suppliers.

However, it appears that among a number of developing countries there is a growing resistance to excessive military influence and expenditure. Simultaneously international aid donors and institutions are becoming less tolerant of the negative macro-economic impact of military expenditures and imports in troubled, debt-ridden economies. The movement toward some limitations on Third World arms expenditures and imports will depend on a recognition of the legitimate security concerns of many countries, and the promotion of confidence-building and arms limitation schemes among them, together with effective supply restraints and conflict resolution mechanisms. As the specific conflicts discussed below demonstrate, even serious pressure on the arms supply to belligerents does not necessarily lead to any quick resolution and diminution of armed conflict. However, over time, more effective restraints would certainly reduce the destructive toll, if not the incidence of these eruptions.

Canada and Five Regions of Conflict

As the 1990s dawned, there were some two dozen substantial violent conflicts underway in the world in which Canada had a significant interest, and some potential for influence. Even countries which claim global reach and responsibility have recognized that their means of influence are limited in the face of such a panorama of conflict. Thus Canada, as a middle power, must be supportive of collective multi-lateral efforts to alleviate and resolve all conflicts, while focussing Canadian energies on those few conflict situations where this country might make the most positive difference. This selection is always a matter of judgement and debate, and the effort of aspiring peacemakers to contribute to peaceful resolution is almost always met with complexity, frustration and frequently with suspicion and hostility. Five regions of current conflict are discussed briefly below – they are not necessarily those of most importance from a Canadian point of view, nor those where the potential Canadian contribution to resolution is most promising, but each raises key questions and possibilities as the decade turns.