

319. Laurance, Edward J. "The UN Register of Conventional Arms: Rationales and Prospects for Compliance and Effectiveness." *The Washington Quarterly*. Vol. 16, No. 2, Spring 1993, pp. 163-172.

Laurance argues that two events increased awareness of conventional weapons proliferation: the end of the Cold War, and the Gulf War. With the subsequent failure of the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council to regulate the arms trade, transparency was considered as an alternative. In December 1991, UN Resolution "Transparency in Armaments" was adopted by a vote of 150-0 and the UN Register of Conventional Arms was created.

Citing Michael Moodie, Laurance claims there are three alternative courses for the Register. One possibility is that it will develop a new approach to confront the security problems of the post-Cold War world. Another is that it will create a sharp new divide between North and South. A final alternative would see the Register become yet another sterile exercise in arms restraint. Writing before the publication of the Register's first annual report, Laurance maintains that the first option remains the most likely.

In chronicling the work of the 1992 Panel of Experts (convened to detail the structure of the Register), Laurance emphasizes the importance of their ability to produce a consensus report. This unanimity built on momentum which began with the adoption of the original resolution (46/36L) by a vote of 150-0. It is hoped that this momentum will influence states to participate.

Laurance also examines the reasons for participation and non-participation. On the one hand, states will submit reports as a result of three factors: first, having approved the Register's development, it is likely that inertia will cause a significant number of states to participate; second, some states (e.g. Italy) have domestic laws which require maximum transparency; and, finally, much of the information being requested is already publicly available (e.g. in reports by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) or the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)), and therefore disclosure poses no serious security risks. On the other, three reasons are formulated which would prompt states not to participate: first, the political culture and penchant for secrecy in some states will be a difficult obstacle to overcome; second, some countries will wait and see how other countries react before participating themselves; and, finally, the export controls necessary to produce the data are lacking in some states (e.g. former Soviet Union states).

To promote the Register's development, Laurance suggests that the U.S. take a leading role. If the U.S. maximizes its transparency, it would set the reporting standard. He stresses, however, that the Register is not a universal solution. It covers only the legal arms trade, is not a control mechanism, and has no formal verification scheme (except cross-checking the reports of importers and exporters). As a result, it must be pursued in conjunction with other arms control efforts.