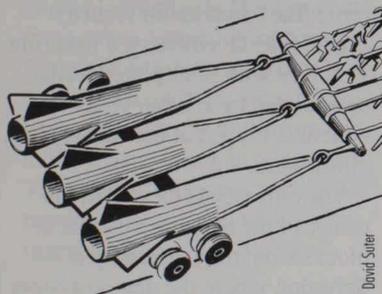


ages on the understanding that they would play a part in the containment process.

But, post-war supply constraints and later, the declining ability of major powers to offer large military aid packages coupled with limited purchasing power in the Third World, led to relatively modest procurement programmes in this period. By the 1970s much of this equipment was either obsolete or had been destroyed in wars. Moreover, obsolescence is a relative term – by the 1970s the major arms suppliers were prepared to sell more sophisticated equipment than before. Consequently, the amount of arms traded to the Third World rose significantly through the late-1970s, fueled by export revenues or credits and justified by military demands for an increased defence capability.



IF THE DEFENCE MODERNIZATION programmes which took off in the 1970s can be seen as the result of a merging of military demands and prevailing economic conditions, the situation in the 1980s can be explained in a similar way. The economic conditions for continued procurement no longer exists. But, nor do the demands for modernization programmes; requests for new frontline equipment carry less weight in the light of this past procurement. Thus, many Third World countries are now in a position where restraint is more feasible than before.

In addition, armed forces are in a much worse bargaining position. In many instances they are being forced to argue against the laws of diminishing returns and in some countries, such as in South America, their political power is much reduced. There is another factor: under pressure from the international development community, Third World governments are developing a cautious approach

to defence. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has already taken Peru to task on defence expenditures and the World Bank is starting to show a growing concern over the scale of defence allocations and how they are spent. Certainly neither the Bank or the IMF would contemplate a confrontation with governments over defence expenditure. But, a more subtle approach appears to be showing limited returns.

If the Third World is showing a tendency towards restraint, it is by no means certain that this situation will continue. It is, after all, a compromise, and the process has not been accompanied by conspicuous moves towards disarmament. Given that advanced military technology is prone to rapid obsolescence, pressure for re-equipment will rise towards the end of the century. While the gaps between modernization programmes can be extended by attempts to upgrade and refurbish existing systems, there are technical limitations and the process is expensive. Third World countries will not be able to sustain another process of modernization on the scale of previous programmes. If there is economic recovery in the Third World over the next two decades, it will not be sufficiently dynamic to absorb the costs of another round of modernization.

THIRD WORLD GOVERNMENTS must address their external and internal security problems; they cannot do otherwise. Yet, the options open to them, apart from conventional re-armament, are limited. Arms control agreements in the Third World are largely cosmetic. Although there have been efforts to normalize the regional security environment in South America, for example, these will take time to develop into a credible peace process. In some countries the security issue is particularly stark. In Nicaragua, Lebanon and Southern Africa and, arguably, in states such as Pakistan, survival is the key issue. Too often the genuine security problems faced by Third World countries are forgotten.

Third World leaders are keen and quick to point out that the current complexion of international politics affords no leeway and that defence and security must be a first charge on the national purse. Often heard is the argument that development is meaningless without first ensuring security and national viability, and the deliberate manipulation of national sentiments to this end is usually successful.

Disturbing though the security dilemmas are for Third World countries, hard choices have to be made over the next decade. If Third World countries are incapable of sustaining orthodox defence programmes in the future then alternatives must be sought. Otherwise, the strategy which seeks to guarantee security at all costs will be self-defeating and the armament-underdevelopment process will be pushed to its most logical and dangerous point. If present security dilemmas render unilateral disarmament a dangerous option a new security regime must be found. Border disputes, ethnic crises, irredentist claims, sub-imperial rivalries and regional conflicts must be confronted with a view to finding rapid solutions. At the same time, any alternative and more settled security environment must be complemented by a radical appraisal of orthodox defence policies. Here, current thinking around concepts of transarmament and nonoffensive defence should be applied to the specific regions of the Third World.

'TRANSARMAMENT' IS A TERM USED by Norwegian researcher Johan Galtung as an alternative to 'disarmament'. To 'disarm' implies leaving a society defenseless. To 'transarm', on the other hand, involves changing from one sort of defence to another. The essence of both transarmament and non-offensive defence is the search for alternatives. While there are no set formulae for these alternatives, they are fundamentally concerned with how to uncouple the making of defence policy from the current fetishism for advanced military technology. They look to a form of defence which minimizes the

threat to others, exploits available resources, reduces military expenditures and generally, breaks the links between armament and dependency, underdevelopment and conflict.

For too long Third World countries have been dependent upon an armament culture which is inappropriate for their security needs. Arms imports and, in many cases, indigenous production programmes have introduced into Third World countries weapons systems which are inefficient, expensive and broadly counter-productive.

The development of an alternative approach to defence would have another beneficial effect; it would enable the Third World to put pressure on countries in the North to accept conventional arms limitation. A system of transarmament and alternative security would reduce the demand for arms from the North. This would deprive defence industries in the North of the economic relief which stems from reducing unit-costs through export to the Third World, and in turn force governments of the industrialized nations into detailed reviews of defence policy which they have so far avoided.

It would be somewhat naive to think that transarmament will appeal to military decision-makers on the basis of logic alone. However, a unique situation is emerging which effectively places conventional arms limitation in direct line with the interests of Third World governments. This is surely the most compelling argument for taking this analysis and debate much further and at the same time moving beyond the shibboleth of disarmament and development. □

Further Reading

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