

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Drowning in the "realist" mainstream

■ Though I found both the roundtable on "State Breaking, Nation Building" and "Gun Control For the World" (Summer 1991) generally informative and well-argued, I think that pessimism over the possibilities of arms transfer control was a bit overdone. Rational analysis soon leads to the conclusion that from a global point of view, arms transfers are predominantly a waste of resources, lives and property. From a national standpoint, things look different; each state feels threatened. The problem is how to make states feel safer. This problem has objective (threat) and subjective (perception of threat) sides. It is therefore equally important to work on the reduction of threats, and to work toward changed perceptions of international relations.

One important way to slow arms transfers is by making arms less attractive, and another is to make alternatives, economic development for instance, more attractive. It is here that Keith Krause's article fails. If we consider decision-making about arms, and not simply the mechanics of the international system, we see that there are other roads to arms transfer limitation than the one he outlines. For instance, if development aid is linked to arms purchases, this changes the relative prices of weapons and development, which, under normal circumstances, will have some effect on demand. It is this approach which is currently being discussed at the World Bank and the IMF.

Another consideration has its origin in Kant's "Eternal Peace." Democratic states, and governments which respond to the wishes of their

citizens, might have a different perspective on the relative costs of arms and other goods. Is it not possible, that the limiting of arms transfers is linked to democratization?

Analysis, even if it is devoted to peace and security has to be realistic and avoid wishful thinking. On the other hand, I expect such analyses to search for better solutions, not to drown in the "realist" mainstream.

*Dr. Michael Brzoska
Institut für Politische Wissenschaft
Hamburg, Germany*

No Enlightenment?

■ In the article on the "Enduring Legacies of the Persian Gulf War," CIIPS drew from only establishment institutions. The result was a foregone conclusion – there would be no enlightenment.

The moderator tried his best. He asked what the war's unique legacy would be. He got marginal replies, with careful avoidance of the real changes. He tried again: is there a fundamental conflict between the Islamic world and the West? Only Korany dealt with this directly in saying the gulf between Islamic and non-Moslem countries has increased. But to tell us why was evidently too dangerous.

It is quite useless for CIIPS to select an establishment panel and then expect its moderator to squeeze from them what they are not programmed to deliver. How about hearing, just once, what a dissident Arab Moslem has to say?

Boris Aldanov, Ottawa

Neither Rank-inflated Nor Austere

■ Your Summer issue ("From the Director") cited a statement attributed to me by Professor Desmond Morton which is partly incorrect. I have indeed pointed to the Dutch example of forces which are better equipped than ours at two-thirds of the budget, and I have called attention to the very high cost of an all-volunteer force as raised in Canada, with our equipment acquisition practices and excessive infrastructure and other politically

related costs. I have not ever described our forces as rank-inflated; their rank structure is driven by the Canadian Forces own particular mix of activities, roles, geographical spread and required command structure. Besides, why should a standard of austerity be expected of our military that does not apply elsewhere in the federal bureaucratic or political environment?

Gerard C.E. Thériault, Nepean

Editor's Note: The correspondent's note regarding how he was cited in the summer issue of *Peace & Security* is correct. The mistake is the fault of the editors, and we apologize to Mr. Thériault and to Desmond Morton for it. Mr. Thériault is a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute.

North Pacific dialogue – who's idea?

■ Professor Jeremy Paltiel, in "Beijing Sails Into Adverse Winds" (Summer 1991) is mistaken when he states that "Under former External Affairs minister Joe Clark, Canada cautiously accepted a longstanding Soviet initiative for creating an Asia-Pacific Security system ... exploratory talks were held in Victoria in April."

The Canadian initiative for establishing a North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue (NPCSD) was first introduced by the Secretary of State for External Affairs in speeches in Victoria, Tokyo, and Jakarta in July 1990. The NPCSD is not an acceptance of the Soviet "Vladivostok-Krasnoyarsk" approach to Asia-Pacific Security. The Soviet initiative includes a call for a Pan-Asia Foreign Ministers Summit Meeting to be held in Vladivostok in 1993, the proposal for USSR-USA-Japan discussions on North-East Asian security issues, and the establishment of a five-nation forum (USSR, USA, India, China and Japan) to discuss Asia-Pacific Security issues.

The Canadian approach to Asia-Pacific security issues rejects the

establishment of unnecessary mechanisms, avoids a bloc approach to security matters, and seeks to develop a "habit of dialogue" among concerned states in the region.

The NPCSD has two tracks – a non-governmental and a governmental element – and focusses on the North Pacific countries of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, the Soviet Union, the Republic of Korea, the United States, and Canada. Only in [the North Pacific] sub-region, where there is a significant concentration of conventional and nuclear forces, and where growing instability would have an adverse effect on Canada's political, economic, social and environmental interests, is there no multi-lateral forum to allow the timely discussion of policy.

The NGO (non-governmental organization) track of the Canadian initiative is designed specifically to explore issues and prospects for dialogue and to focus knowledge and awareness on the North Pacific. York University organized an international colloquium in Victoria in April to discuss, with academic and other NGO experts, various research approaches to North Pacific security issues.

The official, or governmental, track of the Canadian initiative is an open-ended process intended to explore the merits of establishing a regional dialogue. Such a dialogue must not be the result of an attempt to transplant European models or institutions. The sources of tension and the nature of the regional challenges in the North Pacific do not lend themselves to such an approach. Rather, approaches to enhance stability must accommodate the specific traditions, history and geopolitical dynamics of the region.

*Claude Boucher
Director of Policy Planning
External Affairs, Ottawa* □