

During the Cold War, there were periodic unsuccessful attempts at controlling the arms trade. In the early 1950s the U.S., France and the United Kingdom signed an agreement to control exports to the Middle East, an agreement which became moot when the USSR began exporting into that area. In the late 1970s in the United States, the Carter administration embarked on a series of policy initiatives designed to stem the flow of arms, all of which came to naught in the face of the realities of international politics. Attempts within the United Nations to deal with the international arms trade, and in particular to establish an arms register, met up with the similar realities.⁶ In 1968 the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) decided to return to the effort at making arms trade data transparent in the form of a register, but only with information from non-governmental sources. To sum up, when the Gulf War created an international consensus that the arms trade can lead to negative consequences and something should be done to reduce such negative consequences, nothing resembling a multilateral regime existed to deal with the problem.

It is therefore not surprising that in the wake of the Persian Gulf War there was an unprecedented outpouring of more traditional arms trade control proposals from defence trade publications,⁷ the CEO of Daimler-Benz,⁸ supplier governments,⁹ recipient governments¹⁰ and European organizations.¹¹ Contained in these proposals were policies to tighten up export procedures and begin to develop more international controls. On 29 May 1991, President Bush announced the 'Middle East Arms Control Initiative,' calling for the five largest arms supplier nations (the U.S., USSR, France, the U.K. and China) to meet in Paris to 'establish guidelines for restraints on destabilizing transfers of conventional arms, as well as weapons of mass destruction and associated technology.' The proposal also called for expanding the talks to other suppliers and permitting states in the region to 'acquire the conventional capabilities they legitimately need to deter and defend against military aggression.' To implement the regime suppliers would commit to 'observe a general code of responsible arms transfers, avoid destabilizing transfers, and establish effective domestic export controls on the end-use of arms or other items to be transferred.' The proposal also called for a consultative mechanism. Further, it was recommended that a freeze be put on surface-to-

⁶ For a brief but complete summary of these actions see Herbert Wulf, 'The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms,' in *SIPRI Yearbook 1993: World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 533-44.

⁷ 'Unify Arms Control,' *Defense News*, 22 April 1991.

⁸ 'EC Ponders Single Policy to Regulate Arms Sales,' *Defense News*, 1 April 1991.

⁹ 'European Governments Take Steps to Tighten Military Export Controls,' *Defense News*, 1 April 1991; 'Italians Seek Global Forum on Arms Sales,' *Defense News*, 11 March 1991; 'France to Urge Export Policy Coordination,' *Defense News*, 8 April 1991; 'Canada Prods United States on Arms Sales,' *Arms Control Today*, June 1991.

¹⁰ 'Egypt Proposes Regional Arms Control Plan,' *The New York Times*, 5 July 1991.

¹¹ 'EC Ponders Single Policy to Regulate Arms Sales,' *Defense News*, 1 April 1991; 'EC Export Control Scheme Planned,' *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8 June 1991.