

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait have highlighted the problem posed by horizontal arms proliferation. Some think that the decline of the ideological and political blocks has made regional powers freer to pursue their expansionist dreams through the acquisition of modern arsenals, the centrepiece of which is a capacity for mass destruction. In this view, Saddam Hussein's Iraq is the prototype of what awaits the world. Ensuing events have shown that the great powers take this question very seriously: the Security Council authorized sanctions, military intervention, and the partial disarmament of Iraq. There are of course critics of the UN action in Iraq, for a variety of reasons. However, no one can deny that the war had certain positive consequences, in particular a heightened awareness of the dangers posed by arms proliferation and excessive military power.

It was especially disturbing to realize that Iraq had purchased one of the most potent arsenals in the Third World without much difficulty. Saddam Hussein was able to acquire chemical and biological weapons despite the prohibitions against them. He also began to develop nuclear weapons, regardless of his country's solemn undertakings when it signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In short, the industrialized countries provided him, whether intentionally or not, with the technology he needed to pose a menace to regional security.

The industrialized countries seem, however, to have realized the error of their ways in the meantime and have taken steps to prevent a repetition. Several initiatives have been announced to place further controls on the export of arms and sophisticated technologies. Countries such as Germany, which, as we now know, helped Iraq create its potential for mass destruction, have undertaken to tighten their export controls. Italy has adopted new legislation on weapons sales, and in the nuclear area, the United States has requested that a new list of dual-purpose technologies be drawn up and placed under export controls. Representatives of the five major powers have met to seek new methods of restricting the flow of conventional arms into the Middle East and they approved the idea of an international registry of weapons sales. Controls have been tightened on exports