

existing conventional weapons in which such a "zero" norm could be developed, and the nearest equivalent (agreement not to deploy a new technology to a specific region) has been bedeviled with conceptual and practical problems. The absence of a roughly bipolar situation in most regional conflicts (and the overlapping nature of many conflicts), also means that "equality" or "parity" cannot be used as the basis for agreement either. One need only imagine how difficult it would be to reach agreement on the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty today, after the dissolution of the bloc structure that made it possible.

The second argument against efforts to control the proliferation of conventional weapons is that controls on conventional proliferation in some sense violate the legitimate right of states to build arsenals for self-defense, and to determine the composition of these arsenals. This central objection is raised by states in the South that perceive controls on the conventional arms trade (and especially on technology transfers) as an attempt by the North to deny them the same rights of self-defence as Northern states possess. It is also part of a larger anxiety concerning the evolving multilateral "peace and security activities" (in the UN and elsewhere) in which Southern states do not feel treated as partners, let alone as equal ones. This perception has been highlighted by Bosnian claims that the UN embargo against arms transfers to the former Yugoslavia has disadvantaged them in their fight against Serb forces.<sup>33</sup>

The third argument is that since the dominant powers in the system are also major weapons exporters, and thus have an interest in exporting arms to maintain their arms industries, efforts at controlling proliferation will be self-defeating. Early efforts by the United States to control conventional arms transfers under President Carter, for example, failed in part because of the reluctance of European states to participate in the negotiations.<sup>34</sup> The more recent effort by the Permanent Five members of the Security Council to coordinate their transfers (in particular to the Middle East) was bedeviled not only by Chinese reluctance to participate (and by the Chinese withdrawal from the arrangement over American aircraft sales to Taiwan), but by a sense that American policy, especially in the Middle East, was not driven by any discernable restraint.<sup>35</sup> Agreements to transfer more than \$18 billion in American weapons to the region in 1990, and more

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<sup>33</sup> This claim is being brought to the International Court of Justice.

<sup>34</sup> See Lawrence Franko, "Restraining Arms Exports to the Third World: Will Europe Agree?" *Survival*, 21:1 (1979), 14-25.

<sup>35</sup> For details on the Permanent Five initiative, see ACDA, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1990*, 23-24; see also President Bush's address to the Air Force Academy, 29 May 1991 (and the accompanying White House fact sheet) unveiling his "comprehensive arms control policy for the Middle East." For details on American transfers to the Middle East since 1989 see Grimmett.