

**TRANSNATIONAL PROCESSES IN
THIRD WORLD MILITARIZATION**

HELENA TUOMI & RAIMO VÄYRYNEN:
**Transnational Corporations, Armaments and
Development: A Study of Transnational
Military Production, International Transfer
of Military Technology and Their Impact
on Development.** Tampere Peace Research
Institute Research Reports, No. 2/1980.

The increasing militarization of the international system has three, not entirely unrelated, facets: the quantitative and qualitative arms race of the superpowers and their political-military blocs, the diffusion of the capacity to produce fission bombs via the process of nuclear proliferation, and the accelerating spread of highly sophisticated weaponry via the international arms trade. Recent trends provide ample cause for pessimism with regards to all three and, to the extent that any hope of restraining (or even reversing) these trends is permitted, a more adequate comprehension of their nature will be called for. The volume by Tuomi and Väyrynen advances our understanding of the third process by probing previously unexplored dimensions of the arms trade.

While a non-negligible body of literature has emerged around the commerce in weapons and military materiel, the book can claim originality on several grounds. To begin with, the unit of analysis in most studies of the arms trade is the exporting (and/or importing) nation. The emphasis might be on the role of its polity or on that of its economy but it will involve, in either case, the national level of analysis. Although this is the natural domain of the international relations scholar, it may yield a rather emaciated picture of reality if not supplemented by other foci. A large part of Tuomi and Väyrynen's merit lies in their emphasis on the armsproducing transnational corporation which, in its capacity as exporter, purveyor of technology, and producer abroad, is a major vehicle of the global spread of advanced (and highly expensive) weaponry. Furthermore, their study is not limited, as could have been anticipated, to firms originating in Western developed nations but includes a survey of military

industries embodied in socialist economies as well. For understandable reasons, the treatment is somewhat less exhaustive here than in the rest of the book but it represents, nevertheless, one of the best publicly available compilations of information on the Soviet Union, the European socialist states, and the People's Republic of China. Thirdly, the authors present an extremely rich and well documented body of *quantitative* data on military production and transfers at the level of business entities; this should provide researchers with a foundation for rigorous hypothesis testing at a level of disaggregation which may not have been previously feasible.

The study draws heavily on extant dependency literature for its theoretical guidance and, in particular, on the notion of an international division of labor, maintained by a structure of transnational economic activity, and yielding asymmetrical benefits to industrialized and developing states. The authors do not experiment with alternative models but they do put the chosen paradigm to good use. An important conclusion of their case studies is that, given the nature of transnational military production and commerce, dependency becomes a foregone conclusion for many developing societies. Even when a conscious decision is made to substitute endogenous military production for imports, a natural reliance on external productive inputs and, especially, foreign technology controlled by TNCs, will replace the previous reliance on the finished military good from abroad. The lessons of import-substitution industrialization can thus be generalized to military production with no relief in terms of either dependency or the drain on scarce foreign currency.

The empirical analyses contained in the volume are undeniably valuable; some doubt may, on the other hand, be expressed concerning the normative conclusions which are drawn. In a context of international coercion born of inequality among states, the authors are unwilling to suggest that developing nations should forswear their quest for increased military capacity. Rather, they suggest that a technology-intensive (and highly dependent) defense posture should

be replaced by a less expensive, but potentially more effective, combination of total societal mobilization for defense (including a readiness for non-violent resistance) and a labor intensive approach to military matters. The model is thus of the successful wars of national liberation in this century and would seem appealing under the assumption that the main function of military power in the Third World is to deal with threats from the first two worlds. Arms acquisitions in developing nations seem, however, to be at least as much guided by perceptions of objective regional conflicts of interest (and local predatory intentions) and by the need to placate a restless and politically potent military establishment with sophisticated hardware. The alternative defense posture might, therefore, correspond quite imperfectly to actual circumstances — despite its obvious abstract appeal. It is also well, in this reviewer's opinion, to vest some of the responsibility for controlling the deleterious arms trade with the home countries of the arms producing transnational corporations.

Ultimately, the design of an effective policy may call for additional work, it will, however, require an adequate understanding of the empirical issues and Tuomi and Väyrynen have made a very substantial contribution in this regard.

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