

Disarmament Commission

Measures to combat the supply of weapons to terrorist groups



Forum:	Disarmament Commission
Issue:	Measures to combat the supply of weapons to terrorist groups
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Introduction

The harmful impact of the lack of control on the global arms trade is something the United Nations has to face daily in its work to eradicate the arms trade to terrorist groups. The armament industry and market are ambivalent; they are necessary to guarantee the independence and sovereignty of nations, but at the same time they produce ways to violate the independence and rights of others. The different weapons available have caused human suffering, political repression, crimes and terror amongst civilian populations in multiple regions of the world and uncontrolled arm transfers can lead to the destabilization of the security of a region as well as severe violations of human rights. The Islamic State (IS) for example, which is often referred to as the best organised terrorist group, possesses weapons which have been manufactured in over twenty-five different countries in the world including the United States, China, Russia, France and Germany. The Islamic State has also managed to gather weapons and equipment, by seizing the stocks of the national armies in the countries where the group is implanted. It is principally the responsibility of governments to provide security and protect their population, which is why it is imperative that they show responsibility in their decisions concerning international arms transfers.

Definition of Key Terms

Terrorist group

A terrorist group is a structured group of two or more persons, established over a period of time and acting in concert to commit terrorist acts. (European Union, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3Al33168>)



Terrorist acts

This term refers to the unlawful use of violence and intimidation especially against civilians with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public in the pursuit of political aims. (Oxford Dictionary)

Arsenal

According to the Oxford Dictionary, an arsenal is a collection of weapons and military equipment.

Arms Trade

The building of defence production facilities and licensing fees paid as royalties for the production of military equipment, including, weapons of war, parts thereof, ammunition, support equipment, commodities designed for military use as well as dual-use equipment when its primary mission is identified as military and military services such as training, supply operations, equipment repair, technical assistance and construction. (www.armscontrol.org)

General Overview

The current global armament market

According to the numbers published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2015, the number of weapon transfers has increased by 14% between 2011 and 2015 with respect to the numbers from the period between 2006 and 2011. 58% of these transfers originate only from the United States and Russia whilst 74% of the transfers come from the 5 main arm-exporting countries: the United States, Russia, China, France and Germany.

The United States maintains its position as first weapon provider in the world with 34% of the global sales. Its main costumers are Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Turkey. Russia is the second biggest exporting country, providing mostly weapons to India and China.

Between 2011 and 2015, the main importing countries were India, Saudi Arabia, China, United Arab Emirates and Australia that accumulated together 34% of all global importations. [3]



The 10 largest importers of major weapons and their main suppliers

Share of international arms imports (%)				Main suppliers (share of importer's total imports %) 2011 - 2015		
Importer	2006 - 2010		2011 - 2015	1st	2nd	3rd
India	8.5	+	14	Russia 70	USA 14	Israel 4.5
Saudi Arabia	2.1	+	7	USA 46	UK 30	Spain 5.9
China	7.1	-	4.7	Russia 59	France 15	Ukraine 14
UAE	3.9	+	4.6	USA 65	France 8.4	Italy 5.9
Australia	3.3	+	3.6	USA 57	Spain 28	France 7.2
Turkey	2.5	+	3.4	USA 63	South Korea 9.5	Spain 8.9
Pakistan	4.3	-	3.3	China 63	USA 19	Italy 4.6
Vietnam	0.4	+	2.9	Russia 93	Ukraine 2.6	Spain 0.9
USA	3.6	-	2.9	Germany 21	Canada 11	Norway 8.1
South Korea	5.7	-	2.6	USA 80	Germany 13	Sweden 2.2

Source: SIPRI © DW

Fig 1: The 10 largest importers of major weapons and their main suppliers

The different origins of weapons possessed by terrorist groups

Weapons from previous conflicts

The organization CAR analysed a sample of more than 1,000 different weapons used by terrorist groups found in conflict-ridden areas in the North of Africa and in the Middle East to try and determine their origin. Among all the analysed military equipment, numerous weapons have proven to be weapons manufactured during previous conflicts. A small percentage of the weapons from the sample analysed by CAR had even been manufactured as far as 1945 or in the former Soviet Union.

A few decades later, the war between Iran and Iraq in the 1980 was a key event in the development of the global arms market as it is today. During this period Iraq became the world's first weapon importer: the military equipment that was annually sold to Iraq represented up to 12% of the global arms market and together, Iran and Iraq made up one sixth of all transfers. During this period, the Iraqi army accumulated a very wide stock of military equipment, which for the most part, was not duly secured or controlled by the coalition forces or the Iraqi army. [7]

When the first Gulf War broke out in 1991, Iraq and Iran had both accumulated a large arsenal of weapons from imports from around the world as well as from domestic production. The Iraqi stockpiles included over 5,000 battle tanks, 6,000 armoured personnel carriers, 3,000 towed artillery and 500 self-propelled artillery systems. A portion of this military equipment was destroyed during the first Gulf War, however a very large amount of weapons made it intact through the 1990s and were later distributed subsequently by the Iraqi army throughout the country to counter further attacks. [5]



Iraq was later also flooded with weapons after the invasion led by the United States in 2003. The market generated by the weapons brought by the Americans continued after the retreat of the American army in 2011.

Weapons intended for other groups

According to various organisations such as: Amnesty International and Conflict Armament Research, a large part of the weapons held and used by terrorist organizations paradoxically come from countries which are trying to fight against these groups. The Islamic State (IS) for example, which is often referred to as the best organised terrorist group, possesses weapons which have been manufactured in over twenty-five different countries in the world including the United States, China, Russia, France and Germany. The Islamic State has managed to gather weapons and equipment, by seizing the stocks of the national armies in the countries where the group is implanted.

This is particularly true in Iraq for example, which is a precious source of weapons for terrorist groups. According to the report published by Amnesty International in 2017, more than 20 countries supply weapons and munitions to Iraq. The Iraqi authorities, which supply the Popular Mobilization Units since their creation, draw their important quantity of modern equipment from the stocks of the regular army. These stocks mostly stem from the United States, Russia, China and Eastern Europe. Because of an uncertain and unreliable system of traceability of the weapons that are sold to the Iraqi armed forces, it is very difficult to know where the weapons go, once they enter the Iraqi ground. This, associated with the complex and changeable nature of the conflict, favours terrorist groups in Iraq but also in Syria who profit from the leakage of national stockpiles, opportunistically seizing arms and ammunition that are left unwatched or unprotected by the authorities.

On the other side, countries that export weapons also have a part of responsibility. For example, the United States are not only the largest producers of weapons in the world, they also are the largest consumers as well as the largest exporters (34 % of the world total market). In September 2016, an audit made by the American government revealed that the Department of Defence did not possess precise and updated archives on the numbers and the location of a big quantity of weapons sent to the several countries in the North Africa and in the Middle East (such as Kuwait and Iraq). The total cost of these weapons is around one billion euros. Therefore, even arming national authorities or popular rebel groups inevitably comes with important risks if these weapons are not tracked down and looked after carefully.

[2]



Weapons purchased through illicit trading

Finally, according to the UN Experts Panel, a significant part of the Islamic State and other terrorist group's arms stem from illicit trading. The UN Security Council noted, "an extensive informal economy in the region has evolved to smuggle arms". These illicit transfers are encouraged by two factors: the large stockpiles that are dispersed through some countries such as Iraq and Syria and the longstanding tradition of private gun ownership in those same two countries. The UN experts believe that the terrorist make black market deals with some of their enemies such as the Syrian or the Iraqi army, as well as private traders who get arms via well-established smuggling routes and illicit arms markets.

Furthermore, the weapons used by terrorists to carry out terrorist attacks in European cities in the last few years are also mostly purchased through illegal trading and black markets. For example, gun experts who investigated after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015 discovered that the weapons used during the attack came from the Balkans and Eastern Europe: some weapons are believed to have come from Slovakia, who in the meantime has tightened its regulations for the possession and sale of weapons under the pressure of the European Union, and other arms been traced to Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This shows that the illegal trafficking of weapons is also a pressing issue in Europe. [6]

The Human Rights impact of the proliferation of weapons in conflict-prone areas

These illicit trading of weapons and the little control that governments have proven to have over the stockpiles of weapons in their countries have lead to countless violations of human rights and a lot of human suffering.

All the terrorist groups accused of severely violating basic human rights and international humanitarian laws have done so using by using weapons and ammunitions either diverted from military stocks or acquired through illegal trafficking. For example, terrorist groups such as the Islamic State have managed to intercept stocks of ammunitions that are left unwatched or unprotected by the authorities to spread violence and commit war crimes through Iraq and Syria.





Fig 2: Figures around the world arms market

Major Parties Involved

United States of America

Since 1990, the United States of America have been the world's biggest arms exporter. Lately, the United State's export of weapons has been fuelled by the armed conflicts in the Middle East as well as the tensions in Asia. During the period between 2012 and 2016, the United States sold a large range of weaponry to at least 100 countries over the world. During that period, the United States' exports accounted for more than 33% of the global arms exports, which represented an increase of 21% in comparison with the period between 2006 and 2011. Even though the exported arms were sent to countries all over the world, states in the Middle East represented 47% of the United States arms exports. [1]

Russian Federation

Close behind the United States, Russia is the second most important weapon-exporting country in the world. Russian arm exports represented 23% of all global exports providing over 50 countries in the world as well as the rebel forces in Ukraine. Like the United States, Russian arms exports grew during the past five-year period, but only by 4.7%.



India represented 38 % of the total Russian exports, and Vietnam and China imported an extra 11 per cent each.

France

During the past few years, several cities in France were subject to terrorist attacks. The weapons used during most of these attacks have underlined a general arms control problem in France. The weapon control regulations were tightened in France after bombings that happened in 1995 in the metro in Paris and more recently in 2012 after a shooting spree in Toulouse. For example, military-grade guns are banned in the country and people who want to own a handgun or hunting rifle have to pass very strict tests that check both their background and mental health. However, the origin of a large number of the weapons used in the terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016 has proven that even though France has very strict weapons laws, the government has important difficulties when it comes to tackling the flow of illegal arms across the European borders. The European borders are porous and black markets have proliferated as the number of weapons traded illegally has grown rapidly over the past few years. [4]

Iraq

Iraq is a precious source of weapons for terrorist groups. According to a report published by Amnesty International in 2017, Iraq imports weapons from more than 20 countries over the world (mostly the United States, Russia, China and Eastern Europe). The Iraqi authorities, which supply the Popular Mobilization Units since their creation, draw their important quantity of modern equipment from the stocks of the regular army. Once the weapons sold the Iraqi authorities cross the border, it is very difficult to know where these weapons end up since the Iraqi system of traceability of the weapons is very uncertain and unreliable. This favours terrorist groups in Iraq but also in Syria who profit from the leakage of national stockpiles, opportunistically seizing arms and ammunition that are left unwatched or unprotected by the authorities.

Conflict Armament Research

Conflict Armament Research (CAR) is an independent arms-tracking organization based in the United Kingdom where it was founded in 2011. The CAR specialises in tracking the movement of ammunition, conventional weapons and other related military material internationally and more specifically in conflict prone zones such as Iraq, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria. The CAR teams "document weapons at the point of use and track their sources back through the chains of supply". CAR also works in collaboration with the



EU-funded Global Weapon Reporting system iTrace where the organization uploads all their verified findings.

Timeline of Key Events

These are some of the key events in the development of the global arms market and weapon stocks over the world as they are today.

Date	Description of Event
1980s	War between Iran and Iraq: very large amounts of weapons accumulate in the Middle East.
1991	Gulf War: A portion of the ammunition accumulated during the 1980s was destroyed, but a very large amount of weapons remained intact and was later distributed throughout the country by the Iraqi army to counter further attacks.
2003 - 2011	American invasion of Iraq: Iraq was later flooded with weapons after the invasion led by the United States in 2003. The market generated by the weapons brought by the Americans continued after the retreat of the American army in 2011.
2006	United Nation Conference to fight against the illicit trade of small and light weapons.
2013	Adoption of the Resolution 2117 (S/RES/2117). Arms Trade Treaty signed.
2014	The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) enters into force

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Arms Trade Treaty, 24th of December 2014
- The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, 7th of December 2015 (**A/RES/70/49**)
- Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, 7th of December 2015 (**A/RES/70/20**)
- The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, 5th of December 2016 (**A/RES/71/48**)



The Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

The Arms Trade Treaty entered into force on the 24th of December 2014. It has been ratified by ninety-one states and it has been signed but not ratified by 42 states, including the United States of America. The purpose of the ATT is to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons in order to promote peace at different levels, international co-operation and transparency and to reduce human suffering caused by the trade of weapons. The main aim of the Arms Trade Treaty is to lower the casualties caused by the illegal trade. The ATT's impact has been limited by the fact that it has not been ratified by most of the biggest arms exporting countries.

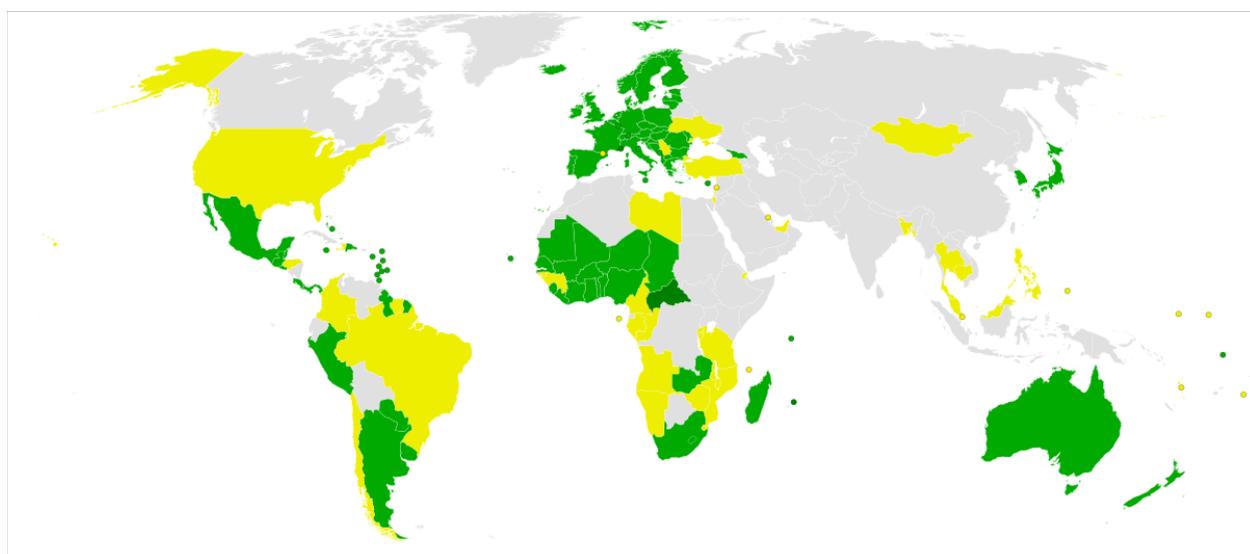


Fig3: Map showing which states have signed or ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

■ Signed ■ Ratified ■ Acceded

The “iTrace” website

iTrace is a project funded by the European Union and by the German Government. The project consists of two parts: a programme of in-conflict field investigation combined with the world's most important public access weapon tracking database. This website provides policy makers and investigation groups with accurate, trustworthy and detailed information about weapon transfers to develop efficient weapon management and control. This website also plays a key role in the implementation of international arms control agreements and convention such as the Arms Trade Treaty.

Possible Solutions

All countries exporting important quantities of ammunition could establish legislation to prohibit the export of arms to any country or group who could potentially use them to perpetuate war crimes or any form of abuse of human rights as well as to any region where they are likely to be diverted and intercepted by such groups. More transparency from the exporter as well as from the importer is also imperative in all the stages of the process.

Working on international strategies to prevent important quantities of weapons to accumulate in unstable regions where terrorist groups are implanted in order to prevent these weapons from being intercepted is also a solution to take into account.

A solution to consider is that countries that import large amount of weapons and ammunition should invest more resources in order to make sure this military equipment is securely registered and stocked. National armed forces and police should also be trained for this purpose.

Taking measures to improve border security in order to fight against the illegal flow of weapons and ammunition is also worth considering.

As well as, taking measures to increase international cooperation and assistance, particularly by sharing useful information on conventional arms imports and exports, stockpiles, type of weapons, quantity, authorised end use and end user in order to facilitate the trace small arms and light weapons and to combat the illegal trade of weapons.

Furthermore, taking measures to combat corruption amongst the military and police forces in order to fight against the illicit trade and diversion of weapons and ammunition is a crucial solution to take into account.

Lastly, establishing and implementing strict standards of accountability for keeping record of all imports and exports and managing stockpiles. Assistance should be provided in the establishment and maintaining of such systems to all countries that need it. The application of these standards should also be overseen.



Appendices

Appendix A

International Instrument to enable states to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner,

http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/international_instrument.pdf

Appendix B

Arms Trade Treaty

<https://unoda-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/English7.pdf>

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