

# Research Report

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## General Assembly I

### Increasing transparency in the trade of armaments to and within regions of conflict

**MUNISH '14**



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<b>Forum</b>	GA1
<b>Issue:</b>	Increasing transparency in the trade of armaments to and within regions of conflict
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## Introduction

The international trade of armaments has always sponsored conflict and war around the globe. The industry is considered to be a huge international business, wherein most of the sales (around 75%) go to developing countries. Whilst a business should always work in transparency, and making deals under-the-table is seen as illicit, it is notable that armaments to and within regions of conflict often do get traded in this particular fashion. In general, international trade is governed largely by universally accepted rules. However, the trade of arms has grown without such guidelines. The trade of armaments has also brought about more economies; research and development takes place affluently in terms of service to military, materials and facility advancement. Whilst the international arms trade exists all around the world, it is most present in conflict regions and unstable countries, such as the Middle Eastern region and the Central African Republic. Such countries have been in a state of despair and the sense of insecurity caused by a multitude of factors is growing, despite efforts from the United Nations. It has also been caused by the fact that there are groups with violent intent to assure their goals. Coming back to the commercial side, this means that the trade is not only limited to militaries with peaceful intent, but also to factions and other moieties that are ungoverned and destructive of nature, willing to bring across messages through committing violence against innocents.

These groups could be considered radical guerrilla organizations and often want to reach their goals through violence. This violence could be limited to the home country of the organization, but is often a threat to international security. Even when international security can remain unharmed, national security, as a matter of fact, is greatly at risk. When the conflict exacerbates, these organizations often get involved, capturing towns and killing innocents to bring across statements.

Clarity on this subject matter is of immense importance, as the whole international community is involved. It is imperative that nations start dealing with transparency in trade. All countries in the world trade arms somehow, and according to estimations made in 2012



by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the global military expenditure is almost 1.75 trillion US dollars. However, one might assume that the global military expenditure is much more extensive than this, since the figure only provides the expenditure that is known. The expenditures of terrorist organisations would presumably not be included in this estimate.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Conventional Weapons:

The term 'Conventional Weapons' is used in context of small arms and light weapons, including bombs, mines, shells, rockets, missiles and other cluster munitions. They are generally weapons that are relatively widespread and are not nuclear bombs or other types of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

### Transparency

Transparency in the context of trade deals with making sure that all the trade in the world is public information and that it can be governed, being one of the prerequisites for a free and efficient market. In the trade of armaments, this transparency is often lacking, and since weapons are harmful towards society there is an even greater risk that they are dealt with predominantly equivocally.

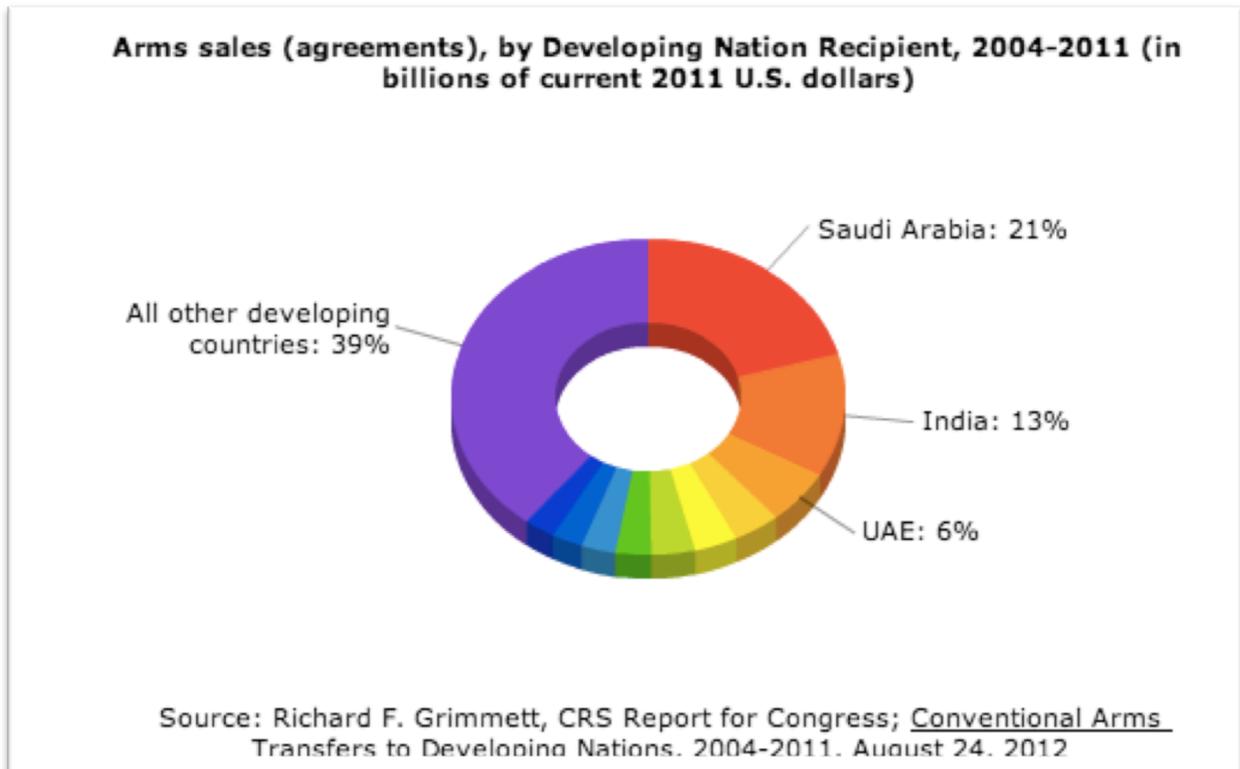
## General Overview

The arms trade is one of the most corrupt practices in the modern world. The import of arms to conflict regions fuels conflict and poverty, and often exacerbates the region's situation. The main argument for transparent trade is to ensure that the arms do not end up in the hands of human rights violators. While more developed countries, including the United States and the European Union, have developed a form of code of conduct to deal with the issue, these codes are filled with problems and flaws in the form of loopholes. While resolving the matter, this all should be the top priority.

There is a proposed international arms treaty, called the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) proposed by the United Nations General Assembly, which was created to overcome these impediments. However, due to financial benefits of the lack of transparency in the arms trade and due to political reasons, nations seem to be unwilling to agree to a code of conduct.



There are nations that benefit greatly from the export of arms with increasing competition for sales, going into areas and regions that have previously not been active or prominent, such as the more newly industrialized countries in the Middle East, the Gulf States, and India. They are the immediate countries that have growing military power, and can be seen in Figure 1 below. It provides an indication of the distribution of arms sales around the world, and how some countries are progressing at a much faster rate.



Showing arms trade agreements by imports. Notice how Saudi Arabia, India, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are not integrated in a section, showing to what extent they are involved in the arms trade.

Shah, Anup. Arms Sales (agreements), by Developing Nation Recipient, 2004-2011. Digital image. The Arms Trade Is a Big Business. Global Issues, 05 Jan. 2013. Web. 8 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.globalissues.org/article/74/the-arms-trade-is-big-business>>.

It is important to note that Saudi Arabia, India, and the UAE are three of the 18 countries not having signed the Arms Trade Treaty. This implies that they would rather deal with lack of transparency in order to import enough arms. Another country not having signed the treaty is Syria. This is fairly alarming as this is a region where conflict is at an extreme. Since the Arms Trade Treaty would allow only transparent trade, the nation decided to vote against in order to retain the trade being ungoverned.

The ATT has been signed by a large majority of countries, including the USA, and also two others of the Permanent Five Members of the Security Council: China and the

Russian Federation. All the P5 countries stand for global peace yet supply a great deal of the armaments and a lot of this is also sent to conflict prone countries. It is a remarkable contention, as these are the most powerful nations and are also the most controlling over the flow of arms.

Besides stating that the international transfers of arms should be authorized by a recognized state and carried out in accordance with national laws and procedures which reflect, as a minimum, states' obligations regarding arms, the Arms Trade Treaty further goes on to say that nations shall not authorize international transfers of arms which would violate their expressed obligations regarding arms, and where the arms might likely be used for violations under international law. The ATT also states that countries should take other factors into account before authorizing the transfer of arms internationally.

When society can be protected by measures to regulate and deal in transparency regarding armaments, such as is accomplished by utilization of the Arms Trade Treaty, the results can be significant. The likelihood of a conflict escalating will be limited if trade is controlled and monitored correctly due to the analysing process gone through with the ATT.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

The UNODA is a subsidiary of the United Nations that promotes nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and strengthening of the disarmament regimes in respect to other weapons of WMDs, chemical and biological weapons. Besides this, efforts also go to the area of conventional weapons, specifically land mines and small arms, which are often the weapons of choice in contemporary conflicts.

### Gulf States

The Gulf State countries, being the eight countries bordering the Gulf, are Bahrain, Iran, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. These countries have been increasing their military spending and arms procurement. Questions as to whether there may be any possibility of increasing the power of the military, including any build-ups, have been brought forward. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have taken the top positions in the region regarding the military expenditure and arms imports, while the rest of the Gulf is greatly involved in arms dealing. The fact that the transparency in the trade of armaments is extremely low exercises the possibility of harm to society.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December, 2006	The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 61/89 entitled “Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export, and transfer of conventional arms.”
December, 2009	The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 64/48. This resolution decided to set up a conference on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2012 “to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms.”

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- UN Conference on the ATT, held between 18-28 of March 2013. Here the first meeting took place regarding the situation of arms trade and how it is affecting the world on a social, but also political level. Here the countries came together to find a way to control this huge international business of arms transfers.
- The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which got adopted by the General Assembly on the third of June in the year 2013 and stands for regulating the international trade in conventional arms, from small arms to battle tanks, combat aircraft and warships.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

There have been numerous previous attempts to resolve the issue, such as the ordinary set up of guidelines and common standards for regulating international arms transfers in supplier control regimes, as well as regional organizations and groupings. The European Union and other participating states around Europe have agreed towards a general consensus regarding the control of their arms transport. Illicit trade has also been subject to control measures by the European States and other regional organizations.

There are countries that do see the issue of arms trade, such as the European Council, which stated at the United Nations General Assembly:

“We are committed to upholding, implementing and further strengthening the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation framework in the fight against threats which are tending to escape the control of national sovereignty, the challenges deriving from



destabilising accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons, from illicit or irresponsible arms trade, and from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which are creating new and growing hot-spots of international tension. In this regard, the EU welcomes the growing support in all parts of the world for an International Arms Trade Treaty and is firmly committed to this process.”

Especially the mention of the “irresponsible arms trade” and how that creates “new and growing hot-spots of international tension” is a clear notion of the issue. The fact that this is a statement from the Presidency of the European Commission shows that many countries are aware of the issue of the global arms trade.

## Possible Solutions

The problem of finding solutions lies in the fact that the flow of arms is incredibly difficult to regulate. The issue lies within the fact that it is an illicit measure, under the table where there is no record of anything, or that the flow of arms is necessary with defence as a reason.

It could be of use to find out where the armaments come from. As they are manufactured by privately owned companies, there could be put restrictions on them, such as embargoes, quotas and tariffs. This could halt the continuous production of weapons and especially during times of conflict this is an appropriate measure to make.

Besides this, applying the Arms Trade Treaty all around the world and limiting the trade between conflict regions is the primary objective that needs to be achieved. When arms get in the wrong hands through weak control of firearm ownership, weapon management, and misuse by authorized users of weapons, the results can be disastrous, especially in an already well-established conflict region. When aiming to reach the target of arms transfers in transparency, it is important to look at reasons why this is not the case as of yet. Of course there is the reason of transparency being a hassle, and it would be much easier to allow the deals to be made illicitly and it is also true to note that increasing profit margins as the conflict prone regions can also be involved in the transfer of armaments as well. This should be considered, but it is also paramount to take the political situation and economical situation of any state into account.



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