

---

## Chair Report

United Nations General Assembly

[GA2]

*“Global Arms Trade and its Impact on International Security  
and Armed Conflicts”*

---

**President Chair: Saeed Rahman**

**Co-Chair: Zoha Fatima & Jayden Lee**

---



# Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Table of Contents</b>                                  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Introduction</b>                                       | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Definition of Key Terms</b>                            | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Major Parties Involved and Their Views</b>             | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Time Line of Events</b>                                | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Previous Solutions and Attempts to Solve the Issue</b> | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Relevant United Nations Documents and Resources</b>    | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Questions to Consider</b>                              | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Possible Solutions</b>                                 | <b>15</b> |
| <b>Conclusion</b>   | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Bibliography</b>                                       | <b>17</b> |

# Introduction

The global arms trade has a profound impact on international security, often fueling conflicts, exacerbating humanitarian crises, promoting illicit trading, and destabilizing entire regions. Countries are often found supplying arms to boost their economic interests or assist allies in warfare. Countries tied to major power blocks tend to require military assistance from other member countries during times of war.

The global arms trade was valued at over \$138 billion in 2022, based on estimates from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). This amount encompasses official arms transfers from various countries, with major exporters including the United States, France, and Russia. Projections for 2024 indicate that the demand for arms is likely to remain strong, fueled by ongoing conflicts and political tensions, particularly in regions such as Europe and the Middle East.

As global demand for arms continues to rise, the proliferation of various types of weapons increases. Countries need to make a choice; will they strengthen their national defense and military by joining the global arms trade market, or prioritize ethical responsibilities by refraining from it to prevent potential harm? The export of weapons, particularly in regions with unstable security, almost always tends to be followed by regional conflicts and violence, as well as the possible usage of weapons by non-state actors.

Statistics on the volume of weapons received by non-state actors in 2024 are difficult to determine due to the secretive nature of these arms transactions and the diverse channels through

which weapons are supplied. Nonetheless, NSAs are gaining greater access to increasingly advanced weaponry. This shift presents significant challenges to global security and stability, as these groups become more capable of engaging in conflicts and conducting operations that threaten both regional and international peace.

Countries will need to match a delicate balance between their own security and avoiding the long-term instability of the region. Meanwhile, criticism such as that the global arms trade violates international humanitarian law still exists. Many countries have been accused of using weapons supplied by their allies to commit violations of IHL, such as targeting civilians or engaging in indiscriminate attacks during conflicts.

In conclusion, nations must carefully navigate between their security interests and the broader consequences of their actions. Achieving a sustainable balance is crucial to fostering regional stability and upholding humanitarian principles, ultimately ensuring a safer and more just world for all.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):** Forum of countries emphasizing sovereignty and independence from a major power block (Ie; NATO and EU).

**Non-state actors (NSA):** Individuals or organizations with significant political influence but not allied to any country.

**Terrorism:** Unlawful use of violence or threats against civilians to instill fear and achieve political or ideological goals.

**Embargoes:** Official ban on trade or commercial activity with a particular country. They can target a range of goods, services, or economic sectors, often in response to political situations, human rights violations, or military aggression.

**Conventional Arms:** Weapons and military equipment used in regular armed conflicts, including firearms, tanks, and artillery, but excluding weapons of mass destruction like nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

**International Humanitarian Law:** A set of rules that seek to limit the effect of armed conflicts.

**Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW):** lightweight, portable firearms and equipment that individuals or small groups can easily carry and use.

**Proliferation:** The rapid increase in the amount or number of something.

**Conflict zones:**

area where armed fighting occurs, typically between military forces, insurgents, or other groups. These regions often experience instability, insecurity, political unrest, or territorial disputes.

**End-User Certificates:** Document that certifies the final recipient of goods, ensuring they are used as intended and not illegally transferred to others.

# Major Parties Involved and Their Views

## Switzerland

Switzerland is known for maintaining a neutral stance in most global conflicts. However, it still has a small but significant arms industry. The country exports military equipment, including firearms, vehicles, and ammunition, to a variety of countries. Swiss arms exports are subject to strict regulations, and the government is required to ensure that sales do not contribute to conflicts or human rights abuses. It is a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and has stopped arms exports to countries involved in conflict or where human rights abuses are prevalent.

## United States

The U.S. is a large-scale global arms supplier, responsible for over 40% of total international arms trade. It sells advanced weapons systems, aircraft, missiles, and military technology to many of its allies, primarily NATO countries. Their sales are often motivated by economic interest, as well as strategic relationships with the country, such as defense treaties. U.S. arms exports often come under scrutiny, particularly when they are sold to countries involved in conflicts or to regimes with poor human rights records. The U.S. has some regulatory programs, such as the Foreign Military Sales program, but their effectiveness is doubted by many.

## Russia

Russia is a major player in the global arms market, supplying weapons to countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Russia's arms exports include tanks, aircraft, missile systems, and small arms. Like the U.S., Russia uses arms sales to maintain influence and strategic alliances, particularly in regions like the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, Russian arms sales have drawn international criticism, particularly for supplying weapons to conflict zones, such as Syria and Libya. They are also known for supporting nations with aligning viewpoints or policies, even though the nations in question are known for oppressing people or abusing human rights.

## Libya

Since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, Libya has been embroiled in a civil conflict, leading to a fragmented state and the proliferation of armed groups. During Gaddafi's rule, Libya imported arms from various suppliers, including Russia and Europe. After Gaddafi's collapse,

the country became a hub of illegal arms trafficking, with weapons from the Libyan conflict spreading to neighboring regions, causing more chaos in Africa and the Middle East.

## **Israel**

Israel has a highly advanced defense industry and is a major exporter of military technology, including drones, missile defense systems, and surveillance equipment. It also imports advanced military equipment from the U.S. to maintain its technological edge in the region. Israel uses arms exports to strengthen their national security and maintain authority over their constantly disputed territory.

## **Norway**

Norway, while being a smaller arms exporter compared to the U.S. or Russia, has a developed defense industry, particularly known for producing missiles, naval equipment, and ammunition. Norway emphasizes responsible arms exports and has strict regulations in place, prohibiting sales to countries involved in war or human rights abuses. However, Norway also exports arms to NATO allies and other countries, which separates them from Switzerland despite having similarly strict regulations. Despite trading with NATO, Norway is generally seen as a responsible arms trader.

## **North Korea**

North Korea is under heavy international sanctions, including strict arms embargoes due to its nuclear weapons program and violations of international law. Despite these sanctions, North Korea is involved in the illegal arms trade, supplying weapons, missile technology, and other military equipment to rogue states, insurgent groups, and militias around the world. This includes countries in the Middle East and Africa, as well as other authoritarian governments. North Korea's arms trade is mostly illegal, and the country has been accused of violating United Nations sanctions by exporting weapons to sanctioned nations (such as Iran) multiple times. Its arms dealings are often hidden and conducted through clandestine networks, making it even more challenging for international communities to deter its activities.

## Time Line of Events

**World War I (1914-1918)** Heavily controlled by industrial powers such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States, the conflict led to unprecedented levels of arms production and transfers due to large demand for machine guns, tanks, aircraft, and other weapons.

**Geneva Protocol (1925):** Prohibited the use of chemical and biological weapons in war. The protocol entered into force in 1928.

**World War II (1939-1945):** Nations involved in the war relied on extensive international arms production and trade networks to sustain military operations. The United States was the biggest exporter during the period.

**Cold War (1947-1989):** The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union fueled arms transfers to newly independent and allied nations.

**U.S. Arms Export Control Act (1976):** legislation governing the export of defense, services, and technology from the United States. The act is meant to make sure the U.S. only sells weapons to countries that share its values and are considered safe allies.

**Post-Cold War (1990s):** The collapse of the Soviet Union left huge stockpiles of arms, which were sold to developing nations, by former soviet bloc countries. Fueling conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and other regions.

**2000s–2010s:** The War on Terror and conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria spurred major arms exports from the U.S., Russia, and European countries.

**Arms Trade Treaty (2014):** The Treaty entered into force on December 24 2014 following its ratification, acceptance, or approval by 50 states.

**2020s:** Arms trade continues its dominance by major exporters such as the United States, Russia, and China involving deals with large importers such as Saudi Arabia and India.



## **Previous Solutions**

### **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)**

On April 2, 2013, The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to regulate the international trade of arms and reduce the humanitarian impact of global arms transfers. The ATT aims to regulate the international trade of conventional arms, including small arms, light weapons, battle tanks, combat aircraft, and naval vessels, to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion. It requires states to assess arms exports against specific criteria, including the potential for human rights violations, regional stability, and the recipient's behavior regarding international law. The Treaty entered into force on December 24 2014 following its ratification, acceptance, or approval by 50 states. As of right now, the ATT holds 122 signatures. However, 27 signatories including major arms-exporting nations such as the United States and Russia, have yet to ratify the treaty and 53 states have yet to join the treaty. Thus raising concerns about the treaty's effectiveness in regulating trade and preventing humanitarian violations.

### **The African Union's Framework for Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)**

The African Union's Framework for Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), adopted in 2013, serves as a vital policy document that provides comprehensive strategies for member states to combat the proliferation and misuse of SALW on the continent. Addressing the

root causes of armed conflict in Africa by promoting legislation, regional cooperation, and community engagement to effectively reduce violence and instability linked to the global arms trade.

### **United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA)**

The United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) in 1991 to enhance transparency and accountability in arms transfers. Member states are encouraged to report annually on their international transfers of seven categories of major conventional and light arms, along with information on national production and military holdings. However, as participation is non-binding, many countries submit incomplete data, with fewer than 40 reporting in some years. Although over 120 countries initially participated, only 72 reported in 2023, up from 62 in 2022.

### **Global Convention Prohibiting the International Transfer of Military Small Arms and Light Weapons to Non-State Actors (Canada's proposal).**

The Canadian government introduced the 'Global Convention Prohibiting the International Transfer of Military Small Arms and Light Weapons to Non-State Actors' in July 1998 during a meeting in Oslo with 21 countries. The proposal aimed to enhance control over military SALW transfers to prevent them from reaching the wrong hands through diversion or direct delivery. It defined "state actors" as police, government-controlled military, and authorized organizations, proposing a ban on arms transfers to non-state actors. However, many states and NGOs opposed

this, arguing it would hinder support for armed opposition against illegitimate or repressive governments.

### **UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA)**

The UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA), adopted in 2001, is a global framework aimed at restraining illicit trade, proliferation, and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW). It encourages countries to adopt legislation, improve stockpile management, enhance border controls, and foster international cooperation to combat the spread of SALW. While the PoA has prompted countries to improve national regulations and promote regional cooperation, its effectiveness has been limited due to inconsistent implementation, lack of binding measures, and inadequate funding.

### **The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)**

The international law instrument was adopted on October 10th, 1980, and entered into force in 1983. The purpose of the CCW is to ban or restrict types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to soldiers or to affect civilians indiscriminately. State parties are prohibited from using weapons that cause undetectable injuries. Additionally, they must regulate the transfer of such weapons, prohibit laser weapons designed to cause permanent blindness and take measures to mitigate the dangers posed by explosive remnants of war. As of October 2024, the CCW has 124 parties. Several countries have yet to ratify or approve the convention.

## **NATO's Arms Export Control Policy**

Aims to promote responsible arms transfers among member states while enhancing international security. The policy emphasizes adherence to strict national and international regulations to prevent arms from falling into the wrong hands, especially in conflict regions. NATO encourages transparency in arms exports and advocates for implementing effective export control measures that align with international commitments such as the Arms Trade Treaty.

# Relevant United Nations Documents and Resources

## [Arms Trade – UNODA](#)

- Article on arms trade/ATT, United Nations Office of Disarmament

## [Arms Trade Treaty](#)

- History and various information on ATT

## [Arms exports to Israel must stop immediately: UN experts | OHCHR](#)

- Press Release, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

## [States and companies must end arms transfers to Israel immediately or risk responsibility for human rights violations: UN experts | OHCHR](#)

- Press release, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

## [Strengthening international cooperation against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition](#)

- Resolution 10/2, United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes

## [Addressing the situation in the Libyan Abu Jamahiriya](#)

- Resolution 1970, United Nations Security Council.

## [Resolution from France on Non-state Actors in the Central African Republic](#)

- Draft Resolution, United Nations Security Council.

## Questions to Consider

1. What are the possible effects of non-state actors holding arms?
2. How do non-state actors end up with arms?
3. What are the risks of sending military equipment to politically unstable countries?
4. How can the transfer of arms lead to humanitarian violations?
5. What determines the risk that arms will be used to violate human rights?
6. How do countries benefit from not signing/ratifying the ATT?
7. Realistically, will we ever prohibit the transfer of military aid to countries in war?
8. How do major exporting countries dictate the regulation and transfer of arms?
9. Are there certain types of arms we should approve/prohibit?
10. What role do legal arms sales play in conflicts compared to illicit arms flows?
11. What reforms or new policies could improve oversight and accountability in arms transfers?
12. Why are SALW particularly difficult to control, and how can international cooperation address their widespread proliferation?
13. Are existing arms embargoes effective in reducing the flow of weapons to conflict zones, or do they lead to an increase in illegal arms trade?
14. How can the international community ensure compliance with embargoes, particularly in regions with weak governance?

15. How do arms-exporting nations justify their sales, and what ethical dilemmas arise from these transactions?
16. What role can the United Nations and other international organizations play in helping countries improve their legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms for arms control?

## Possible Solutions

- Strengthening existing international arms control agreements, treaties, and laws, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, could help prevent illegal arms trade and decrease the negative impact of global arms trade. Stricter enforcement and sanctions are also likely to deter the involved parties from trading large arms and make the sellers more reluctant to continue providing arms.
- Resolving conflicts and peaceful initiatives may reduce demand for arms, thereby shrinking the global market for arms as a whole. Diplomatic efforts, humanitarian assistance, frequent treaties, and support for democratic institutions and governments may also create a world less reliant on weapons and wars.
- Certain incentives may be given to countries that prioritize ethical arms trading, and those that prioritize humanitarian law compared to the profit, in means such as trade benefits or financial assistance. These incentives may help countries focus more on responsible arms trading, and consider the consequences of their actions.
- In the long term, agreeing to reduce spending on military spending can greatly reduce the global arms market as it will surely decrease the demand. Shifting budgets toward infrastructure, education or other social programs can not only improve the well-being of the citizens but also create a more peaceful world.



## Conclusion

The global arms trade impacts not only nations engaged in armed conflict but also those caught in the crossfire. This trade contributes to increased instability, the flow of refugees, and humanitarian crises in regions affected by violence. Furthermore, even countries that are not directly involved in conflicts can face security risks, economic challenges, and the spread of violence as a consequence of arms proliferation. As highlighted in this report, global cooperation is essential to prevent the adverse effects associated with the arms trade. Nations must think beyond their countries' interests to maintain peace and international diplomacy.

Blerim Mustafa, Communications officer at the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue once said “ "International arms trade is 'big business' and a vector for economic growth in some countries... The greed involved in the arms trade must be kept in check,". When it comes to arms trade, countries must carefully consider their attitudes and actions. Nations must recognize the potential consequences of their decisions. While solutions have been enforced to combat the issue, challenges persist. If not addressed, these issues may escalate to have even more significant impacts, making our actions irreversible.

# Bibliography

“Financial Value of the Global Arms Trade.” *SIPRI*,

[www.sipri.org/databases/financial-value-global-arms-trade](http://www.sipri.org/databases/financial-value-global-arms-trade). Accessed 21 Oct. 2024.

“Prohibiting Arms Transfers to Non-State Actors and the Arms Trade Treaty.” *UNIDIR*,

[unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/background-paper-prohibiting-arms-transfers-to-non-state-actors-and-the-arms-trade-treaty-paul-holtom-eng-0-259-2\\_0.pdf](http://unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/background-paper-prohibiting-arms-transfers-to-non-state-actors-and-the-arms-trade-treaty-paul-holtom-eng-0-259-2_0.pdf). Accessed 21 Oct. 2024.

Anthony, Ian. “2. Trends in Post-Cold War International Arms Transfers.” *SIPRI*,

[www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/books/SIPRI98An/SIPRI98An02.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/books/SIPRI98An/SIPRI98An02.pdf). Accessed 21 Oct.

2024.

“Arms Transfers to Parties to Armed Conflict: What the Law Says.” *International Committee of the Red Cross*, 13 June 2024,

[www.icrc.org/en/document/arms-transfers-parties-armed-conflict-what-law-says](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/arms-transfers-parties-armed-conflict-what-law-says). Accessed 21

Oct. 2024.

Twelve billion bullets are produced every year. *Amnesty International*, November 3 2023,

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/>. Accessed 21 Oct. 2024.

“Arms exports to Israel must stop immediately: UN experts.” *ohchr*, 23 February 2024,

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/arms-exports-israel-must-stop-immediately-un-experts>. Accessed 22 October 2024.

“Arms Trade – UNODA.” *UNODA*, <https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/att/>. Accessed 22 October 2024.

“States and companies must end arms transfers to Israel immediately or risk responsibility for human rights violations: UN experts.” *ohchr*, 20 June 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/06/states-and-companies-must-end-arms-transfers-israel-immediately-or-risk>. Accessed 22 October 2024.

“Strengthening international cooperation against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.” *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/COP/SESSION\\_10/Resolutions/Resolution\\_10\\_2\\_-\\_English.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/COP/SESSION_10/Resolutions/Resolution_10_2_-_English.pdf). Accessed 22 October 2024.

Woolcott, Peter. “Arms Trade Treaty.” *United Nations - Office of Legal Affairs*, <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/att/att.html>. Accessed 22 October 2024.