

Firearms **3**

THE LEGAL MARKET
IN FIREARMS

EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE
UNIVERSITY MODULE SERIES

Firearms

Module 3

**THE LEGAL MARKET
IN FIREARMS**



This Module is a resource for lecturers.

Developed under the Education for Justice (E4J) initiative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), a component of the Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration, this Module forms part of the E4J University Module Series on Organized Crime and is accompanied by a Teaching Guide. The full range of E4J materials includes university modules on integrity and ethics, crime prevention and criminal justice, anti-corruption, organized crime, trafficking in persons / smuggling of migrants, cybercrime, wildlife, forest and fisheries crime, counter-terrorism as well as firearms.

All the modules in the E4J University Module Series provide suggestions for in-class exercises, student assessments, slides and other teaching tools that lecturers can adapt to their contexts, and integrate into existing university courses and programmes. The Module provides an outline for a three-hour class, but can be used for shorter or longer sessions.

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Introduction

This Module addresses the legal market in firearms and refers to the overall arms trade, including conventional weapons. Although the rest of the modules in this E4J university module series focus predominantly on the illicit market, it should be borne in mind that firearms are, with a very few exceptions, *de facto* legal. The exceptions are those weapons diverted from the legal to the illegal market or manufactured illegally (see Module 4). Since illicitly manufactured firearms represent a small part of the illegal market, in practice this means that the majority of illicitly trafficked firearms were produced legitimately. This “*legal to lethal*” or “*legitimate to illegitimate*” shift (Frorquin and King 2018) happens in a number of ways, some of which (for example, theft from stockpiles; reactivation of deactivated weapons; diversion from original destination) will be dealt with in Module 4 and Module 8.

This Module provides a brief history of the International Arms Trade, and its regulation, and an outline of the current status of the trade. Understanding the size, nature and development of the legitimate market will prepare your students for their study of the illegitimate market.

Learning outcomes

- Understand the background to and history of the legitimate arms market
- Understand how the legitimate arms market functions
- Identify the key actors in the legitimate market in terms of production, import and export
- Understand the importance of a legally binding international regulatory framework

Key issues

The history of the legitimate arms market

Pre-Cold War

European traders laid down the foundation of the international arms trade in the 16th and 17th Centuries when they started shipping arms to African, American, and to a lesser extent, Asian markets (Grant, 2012: 1). This trade formed one arm of the “*triangular trade*” where Britain shipped goods such as firearms, cloth and beer to Africa, slaves and other goods were shipped to the Americas, and other goods then shipped back to Britain. The map below represents the trade from Britain, but most European nations with overseas territories operated similar patterns of trade.

- Austria-Hungary: Mannlicher Model 1895, made by Steyr Mannlicher (private);
- Britain: Lee-Enfield .303 made by Royal Small Arms Factory / Birmingham Small Arms Company (private);
- France: Lebel Fusil Modele 1886, made by state owned factories;
- Germany: Maschinengewehr 08, made by Deutsche Waffen- und Munitionsfabriken Aktiengesellschaft (private) and Spandau Arsenal (State Owned);
- Italy: Carcano Modello 1891, made by a state owned factory in Turin;
- Russia: Mosin-Nagant M1891, and Pulemyot Maxim, both made by the Tule Arsenal.

Whilst the inter-war years saw a drop in the number of large-scale conflicts, several regional conflicts still used firearms. The Spanish Civil War, for example, saw firearms exported by a Greek arms manufacturer with ties to the German hierarchy, notably Hermann Göring. The Greek Powder and Cartridge Company (GPCC), under Prodromos Bodosakis-Athanasidis, exported to Spain with the best and most up-to-date weapons going to Franco, while the oldest and least serviceable arms went to the Republicans (Grant, 2012). Göring meanwhile supplied “19,000 rifles, 101 machine guns and 28 million cartridges” in a secret arm deal to the Republicans from GPCC’s partner company in Germany, and the Greek Government provided fictitious end-user certificates stating that the arms were for the Greek army (Grant, 2012: 2). This ostensibly legitimate transfer provided a cover for a large-scale illegitimate transfer.

It would be easy to assume that the Second World War saw those countries directly involved in trading forming two distinct groupings – the allied forces (United Kingdom, United States, France and their allies), and the Axis forces (Germany, Italy, Japan and their allies). However, there were also several countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Sweden and Switzerland) which remained politically neutral during the war and did not play an active role in the conflict, and neutrality was not always absolute; for example, Swiss arms manufacturers sold weapons to both sides of the conflict – about CHF600m to Germany and Italy, and CHF300m to the Allies (Cowell, 1997).

Cold-War Period

During Cold-War period, the United States and the Soviet Union became the main exporters of arms (see Table 3.1 below). Given that these two States were the major players during the Cold War, both were exporting arms to their respective allies in several proxy conflicts, from Vietnam to Afghanistan. Meanwhile, top importers of arms were more changeable over the period: China, the United States, former West Germany, Egypt, Iran, Libya, Iraq and India all occupied the top two positions in different decades. The reasons for these changes in imports vary but could point to enhanced security concerns (for example, Egypt in the 1960s), or conflict (for example, Iran and Iraq in the 1970s and 1980s).

It is important to note that the data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) presented in the Table 3.1 covers all major conventional arms (battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers), as well as small arms and light weapons. Thus, within these figures firearms (small arms) will account for a proportion of the total figure, but not the whole. The Small Arms Survey Trade Updates, released in 2016 and 2017, provide specific data on imports and exports of small arms, so Section 3 below will use those figures.

Decade	Importers		Exporters	
	Country	Value \$bn	Country	Value \$bn
1950s	China	27.7	United States	68.7
	United States	12.3	Soviet Union	67.1
	France	10.6	United Kingdom	41.8
	Poland	9.4	Czechoslovakia	6.6
	Canada	8.5	France	4.2
	Germany (FRG)	7.9	Canada	2.0
	Czechoslovakia	6.8	Italy	1.2
	Soviet Union	6.4	Sweden	0.9
	Netherlands	5.9	China	0.8
	Belgium	5.5	Netherlands	0.7
1960s	Germany (FRG)	23.6	Soviet Union	88.6
	Egypt	10.4	United States	86.5
	India	10.0	United Kingdom	15.3
	Poland	9.6	France	12.7
	East Germany (GDR)	8.6	Germany (FRG)	4.0
	United Kingdom	7.0	Czechoslovakia	3.7
	Czechoslovakia	6.7	Switzerland	3.4
	Japan	6.6	China	3.2
	Canada	6.5	Italy	2.4
	Italy	5.4	Poland	1.8
1970s	Iran	28.7	Soviet Union	136.5
	Libya	18.0	United States	125.9
	Syria	15.3	France	24.7
	India	14.9	United Kingdom	20.9
	Germany (FRG)	13.4	Germany (FRG)	13.6
	Israel	13.4	China	7.2
	Egypt	12.7	Czechoslovakia	6.9
	Iraq	10.7	Italy	5.2
	Japan	10.1	Poland	2.8
	Poland	9.8	Canada	2.0
1980s	Iraq	30.1	Soviet Union	146.9
	India	29.9	United States	122.1
	Japan	17.7	France	30.9
	Saudi Arabia	16.1	United Kingdom	25.3
	Syria	15.4	Germany (FRG)	16.5
	Egypt	12.6	China	14.9
	Libya	12.5	Czechoslovakia	10.7
	Soviet Union	10.6	Italy	9.5
	South Korea	8.9	Netherlands	5.2
	Netherlands	8.6	Switzerland	3.9

Table 3.1 Top 10 Cold War arms importers and exporters by decade, from SIPRI data

Several authors go on to make the interesting point that small arms manufacturing became much more of a global business venture in the Cold War period, noting that “By the mid-1980s, inter-industry agreements were replacing inter-governmental agreements on arms production collaboration. The transfer of technology, technical data, and industrial know-how became the new form of exchange between states and defence companies, thus transforming arms production into a more transnational endeavour” (Kurç and Neuman, 2017: 219). Despite the figures being produced on a per-country basis,

this meant that the same firearm could be made under licence by different producers in different countries with the same type of firearm being exported by different countries to the same destination.

Possibly the most ubiquitous firearm of recent years is the AK-47. It was assessed in 2007 that of the “estimated 500 million firearms worldwide, approximately 100 million belong to the Kalashnikov family, three-quarters of which are AK-47, which puts the number of AK-47 in circulation at around 75 million” (Killicoat, 2007: 3).

What Table 3.1 also illustrates is the growth in exports and imports of arms. Figure 3.2 below graphically represents the totals for the top ten exporting and importing countries for each decade, and Figure 3.3 shows the percentage of the total recorded imports and exports that is attributable to these countries in these decades.

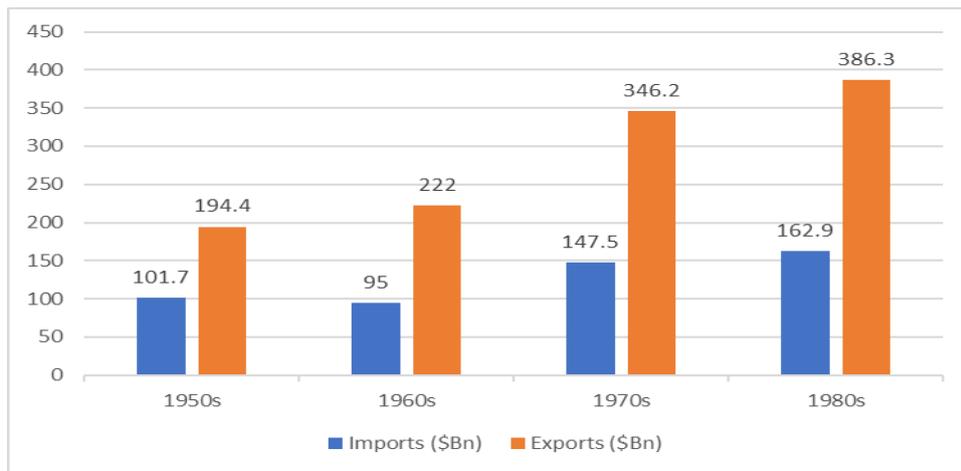


Figure 3.2: The total of the top ten arms importing and exporting countries by decade, \$Bn. Data from SIPRI

Figure 3.2 shows that the financial value of exports by the top ten exporting states rose sharply during the Cold War period, and this economic benefit will be explored in the next section of the Module.

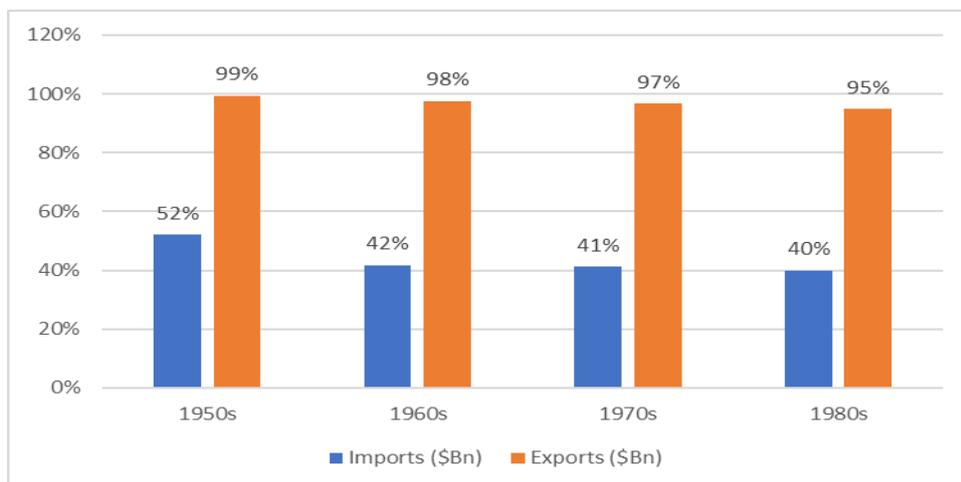


Figure 3.3: The percentage of total arms imports and exports by decade attributable to the top ten countries, \$Bn. Data from SIPRI

What Figure 3.3 illustrates clearly is that the domination of the Cold War arms trade by a small number of producers and exporters is not reflected in the importing countries, which are much more widely spread.

The need for a legitimate market

There are several arguments put forward by manufacturers and distributors of firearms as to why the industry is important at both a national and international level. This section of the Module will outline some of those key arguments, as well as the opposing points of view, without making value judgements of the legitimacy to any of them.

Among the incentives to export arms are the following: the need to enhance the security of the allies or partners; the desire to constrain the behaviour of adversaries; the prospect of arms transfers influencing governments' internal or external behaviour; and the creation of economies of scale necessary to support a domestic arms industry (Thomas, 2017).

The demand for small arms and light weapons (SALW) stems from three main sources: state security sectors, organized non-state groups, and micro-level demand from individuals (Attwood *et al.*, 2006: 32). This section of the Module will deal with the first of these demands, while Module 5 (The Illicit Market) of this E4J university module series deals with other aspects.

Competing legal frameworks in different States further complicate the legitimacy of the legal market. A transaction may be legitimate in the State that dispatches the weapons but illicit in the State that receives them. Module 6 (National Regulations) discusses this grey area (not to be confused with the grey market).

The trade in small arms is undeniably large. Based on recent studies, the international small arms trade was worth at least USD 6 billion in 2014 (Holtom and Pavesi, 2017: 13). Trade in ammunition also played an important role and accounted for 38 per cent of global transfers. The value of military firearm shipments increased by 49 per cent between 2013 and 2014, from USD 475 million to USD 708 million. In contrast, the value of transferred pistols and revolvers declined by 16 per cent, from USD 1 billion to USD 845 million (Holtom and Pavesi, 2017: 13). It is important to note that the cost of firearms has another dimension relating to the impact caused from gun violence, which in the United States alone resulted in US\$8.2bn of direct costs (Follman *et al.*, 2015).

The role of the arms trade in advancement of technology

The arms trade has been a key driver of technological development since its very early days. The steam engine, the assembly line, and Global Positioning Satellites are three good examples of the civilian use of techniques and processes developed for the arms trade.

The Steam Engine

The static atmospheric steam engine, which was designed and developed by Thomas Newcomen in the mid-18th Century, was very inefficient, as it converted only about 1 per cent of the thermal energy in the steam to mechanical energy (Wailes *et al.*, 2018). In the late 18th Century, James Watt and Matthew Boulton improved the efficiency and design of the steam engine and this gave birth to an invention that kick-started the Industrial Revolution and changed the world (McKie, 2015). However, Boulton and Watt's engine would not have been nearly so effective, or important, had they not been able to use a new system for boring cast iron developed by John Wilkinson in 1775 and used to manufacture cannons. The accuracy and reliability of Wilkinson's system led him to become the main

supplier of cylinders for Boulton and Watt (Grace's Guide to British Industrial History, 2018). The impact of the Industrial Revolution, both economically and latterly in terms of climate change, has been enormous, and without technology designed to produce firearms it would not have happened as it did.

The Assembly Line

Although manufacturing had used versions of the assembly line for some time, the combined work of axe-maker Elisha Root and pistol maker Samuel Colt furthered its success. Root was an engineer and designed a new type of metal stamp for Colt, and a new milling machine. He also produced machines that bore gun barrels, gauges, fixtures and many other industrial devices – pioneering work that standardized Colt's production and made its parts interchangeable; a huge leap forward in the Industrial Revolution resulting in the transition from handcrafted goods to machine production (Hoffman, 2014). Due to the gains from Root's inventions, Colt was able to transform his factory into the largest armoury in the world (Simpson, 2018).

Global Positioning System (GPS)

The GPS has its origins in a United States Department of Defense project called Navstar, which relied on 24 satellites orbiting the Earth (Howell, 2018). Initially, the signal from these satellites was intentionally degraded for civilian use in a process called Selective Availability, but was discontinued in 2000 under orders from President Bill Clinton (Howell, 2018). According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), there are two parallel GPS systems: Standard Positioning Service, which is available *"on a continuous, worldwide basis, free of any direct user charges"* and the more accurate Precise Positioning System, which *"is restricted to US Armed Forces, US Federal agencies, and selected allied armed forces and governments"* (NASA, 2012: 1).

As the last example above demonstrates, firearms research can sometimes bring benefits to the civil world, especially in situations where funding is limited for civilian research but more available for military purposes. Nevertheless, this could not be a justification to encourage military research in detriment of civilian research, but rather as a base to initiate a better crossing and sharing of benefits between military and civilian research. According to the Campaign Against Arms Trade, in 2017 alone the United Kingdom exported military goods (including, but not limited to SALW) worth £6.6bn, which equates to the whole of local government capital expenditure on transport in 2016/17 (HM Treasury, 2017). The arms trade is clearly important for economic development and economic income of states, but in order for regional and global stability to be maintained, it is important that the trade is balanced. The next section of the module deals with the regional balance of power and relationship with sovereignty within the firearms context.

The role of the arms trade in sovereignty and regional balances of power

Writing in 1970s, Hamer (1976) pointed out that the driver of the international arms trade was the use of force by States, and the world trade in arms would probably cease when force was no longer necessary. However, this argument neglects the fact that States also require arms to protect their sovereignty from other States as well as non-State actors; and, as Arendshorst (2005:1) acknowledged, the “[s]mall arms trade plays a prominent role in the economies of nations at war, and particularly in intrastate conflicts. The availability of small arms makes war possible, and their continuing availability fuels the protraction of war.”

Writing before the signing of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), Bromund (2012) expressed concerns that the Treaty would be a risk to United States sovereignty as it would impose constraints on the United States rather than affect the dictatorial regimes at which the treaty is aimed. In fact, as Lynch (2013) pointed out, United States Secretary of State John Kerry praised the ATT for allowing States to conduct legitimate arms trade as a sovereign right. There is also a link here to Weber’s (1919: 1) ideas about the State’s monopoly on the use of violence since the State is simply a “*human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.*”

This argument is the crux of the debate about possession of small arms, and the argument is the same at the levels of individual, criminal gang and national. In essence, it boils down to three key elements:

- I am/we are honourable/law-abiding/peaceful/trustworthy;
- “They” are not, and they have firearms;
- I need firearms to protect my property/defend my turf/maintain my sovereignty.

Yablon (2017) contended that a study by Donohue *et al.* (2017) seemed to have debunked the argument in relation to individuals, showing that States within the United States, which made it easier for individuals to carry a firearm, had higher non-fatal violent crime than those states that did not. The United States State Department joins the debate by arguing that the right to monopolize the legitimate exercise of force is, by definition, part of State sovereignty. Article 51 of the United Nations Charter allows States the right to use force in self-defence, or in defence of their sovereignty. Small arms and light weapons used to maintain domestic order and to defend a nation's borders represent the most visible and enduring manifestation of these basic rights, and thus will always remain closely identified with issues of independence and sovereignty. A logical extension of these rights is the right for States to legally manufacture or otherwise acquire weapons necessary for self-defence (United States State Department, 2001). Legally and factually, this is entirely correct: generally, the issue of a sovereign right for a state to manufacture firearms is not debated, other than by those who are ideologically committed to the eradication of all weapons, legal or illegal.

Regional balance of power links to that of sovereignty. The Balance of Power Theory comes from International Relations and would be more accurately referred to in the plural since, as Wohlforth *et al.* (2007: 157) point out, “[t]here are so many versions of balance-of-power theory that we cannot even list them all.” Essentially, as Schweller (2016) puts it: “A “balance of power” system is one in which the power held and exercised by states within the system is checked and balanced by the power of others. Thus, as a nation’s power grows to the point that it menaces other powerful states, a counter-balancing coalition emerges to restrain the rising power, such that any bid for world hegemony will be self-defeating.” In terms of firearms, this means that if one state in a region starts to amass high levels of weapons, whether through importation or production, it has the potential to

pose a risk to the regional balance of power. Export controls are one way of controlling this, but of course do not cover domestic arms production.

The role of export controls

The Arms Trade Treaty maintained the sovereign right of States to manufacture firearms, and there is a strong economic incentive for those firearms to be exported. According to Bromley and Griffiths (2010: 1), “[o]ne of the most effective means of preventing small arms and light weapons (SALW) from reaching conflict zones or embargoed destinations is through the denial of export licences in situations where it is likely that the goods will be diverted within the buyer country or re-exported under undesirable conditions and thus enter the illicit market.” Module 5 (International Legal Framework) and Module 6 (National Regulations on Firearms) deal with export controls in more detail. Export controls are standards followed by States in relation to arms exports. They apply whether the arms are privately manufactured, or produced in state-owned factories, and whether the putative export is to an individual or a State body.

EU Member States, for example, should follow the EU Common Position on Arms Export Controls (2008), in which Article 2 identifies eight criteria against which States must judge applications for export on a case-by-case basis. These are summarized as:

- Respect for the international obligations and commitments of Member States;
- Respect for human rights in the country of final destination as well as respect by that country of international humanitarian law;
- Internal situation in the country of final destination, as a function of the existence of tensions or armed conflicts;
- Preservation of regional peace, security and stability;
- National security of the Member States and of territories whose external relations are the responsibility of a Member State, as well as that of friendly and allied countries;
- Behaviour of the buyer country regarding the international community, as regards in particular its attitude to terrorism, the nature of its alliances and respect for international law;
- Existence of a risk that the military technology or equipment will be diverted within the buyer country or re-exported under undesirable conditions; and
- Compatibility of the exports of the military technology or equipment with the technical and economic capacity of the recipient country.

The Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies (Wassenaar Arrangement) is, amongst other things, directed at the export of firearms. In line with the European Union Common Position, the Wassenaar Arrangement makes it clear that “*The decision to transfer or deny transfer of any item will be the sole responsibility of each Participating State*” (Article 3), but sets out in Article 7 a list of best practice documents which States can use when exercising their discretion.

Both the European Union Common Position and Wassenaar Arrangement are limited in their jurisdictional scope. For a wider view, we must look at Article 6 of the Arms Trade Treaty, which forbids the export of conventional arms by States in violation of United Nations Security Council embargoes, or international agreements. This particularly refers to those “*relating to the transfer of, or illicit*

trafficking in, conventional arms”, or if the use of the arms in violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention or for crimes against humanity is known. These transfers are prohibited *ab initio*, and Article 7 gives a similar list to the European Union Common Position of criteria, which must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Article 7 requires States to:

- “Assess the potential that the conventional arms or items:
- would contribute to or undermine peace and security;
- could be used to
- commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law;
- commit or facilitate a serious violation of international human rights law;
- commit or facilitate an act constituting an offence under international conventions or protocols relating to terrorism to which the exporting State is a Party; or
- commit or facilitate an act constituting an offence under international conventions or protocols relating to transnational organized crime to which the exporting State is a Party.”

The key actors in the legitimate market

The Small Arms Survey Trade Update 2017 uses as its base United Nations Comtrade data from the years up to 2014. As the update clarifies, States voluntarily supply data to Comtrade, and thus “*While UN Comtrade captures much international commercial activity, it does not capture all small arms transfers as many states do not report them to United Nations Comtrade, or do so only partially*” (Holtom and Pavesi, 2017: 14). Other data used in this section comes from SIPRI, which has an international focus, as well as from the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), which has a United Kingdom/European Union focus.

The major producers of firearms

The Small Arms Survey has produced a useful list of some of the largest companies producing SALW and a non-exhaustive list of their SALW products, and this has been incorporated into Table 3.2, along with the country in which the company is primarily located, which did not feature in the original list. Some of the companies (e.g. Anschütz and Heckler & Koch) focus primarily on firearms and firearms related accessories, while others (e.g. NORINCO and Saab) have sections of the company that focus on firearms but have considerable business in other fields. The table below sets out information about some of the companies engaged in this industry. The Small Arms Survey’s study provides additional details.

Company	Country	Products
Anschütz	Germany	Hunting and sporting rifles
Arsenal Inc.	USA	Pistols, submachine guns, assault rifles, grenade launchers and mortars, cartridge-based ammunition and rifle grenades
Beretta	Italy	Hunting and sporting rifles, defence pistols, shotguns and carbines
CZ (Česká Zbrojovka)	Czech Republic	Hunting rifles, pistols, submachine guns and carbines

Chemring Group	UK	Pyrotechnics, medium and large calibre ammunition, 40mm grenades
Dynamit Nobel	Germany	Recoilless shoulder-fired anti-armour weapons
FN Herstal	Belgium	Handguns, rifles, shotguns, machine guns, ammunition and less-lethal launchers
General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems	USA	Small and medium calibre ammunition, mortars
Glock	Austria	Handguns
Heckler & Koch	Germany	Handguns, rifles, submachine guns, machine guns, and grenade launchers
Indian Ordnance Factories Service	India	Handguns, rifles, submachine guns, machine guns, mortars, medium calibre firearms and recoilless guns
IMBEL (Indústria de Material Bélico do Brasil)	Brazil	Pistols, rifles, light weapon ammunition and mortar shells
IWI (Israel Weapon Industries)	Israel	Pistols, submachine guns, carbines, rifles, and machine guns
NAMMO (Nordic Ammunition Group)	Norway	Small calibre ammunition, fuses and pyrotechnics, shoulder-launched anti-armour and bunker-defeat systems
Nexter	France	Medium calibre ammunition, pyrotechnics
NORINCO (China North Industries Corporation)	China	Pistols, assault rifles, small arms ammunition
POF (Pakistan Ordnance Factories)	Pakistan	Infantry rifles and machine guns, small arms ammunition, mortar bombs and pyrotechnics
Remington	USA	Shotguns, handguns, rifles, small arms ammunition
Saab Bofors Dynamics	Sweden	MANPADS, shoulder-fired anti-armour weapons
Smith & Wesson	USA	Handguns, shotguns, rifles
ST Kinetics (Singapore Technologies Kinetics)	Singapore	Assault rifles, machine guns, 40 mm grenade launchers and ammunition, small arms ammunition
Zastava	Serbia	Hunting and sporting rifles, assault rifles, machine guns and grenade launchers

Table 3.2 Major producers of small arms and light weapons, based on Small Arms Survey data (Jenzen-Jones 2014).

In addition to these major producers, there are countless smaller producers, distributed across the world.

The Small Arms Survey also outlines the major manufacturing States for firearms, saying that the “[m]ain producing countries include all the top exporters (USD 100 million or more in a single calendar year) as well as several countries with significant industrial capacities that meet the needs of the domestic market” (Jenzen-Jones, 2014: 3). The value of the domestic market has yet to be estimated.

The major state exporters of firearms

The Small Arms Survey Trade Update 2017, published in 2018, gives a good indication of the major exporting states for SALW, and when combined with data from SIPRI gives a good overall picture of which States are the source of the majority of weapons.

Earlier in the Module, Figure 3.2 showed that the top ten exporting states were responsible for almost all of the global exports of arms during the Cold War era. Although the players may have changed slightly since the Cold War, the SIPRI data for 2017 still shows that the top ten exporters continue to be responsible for 92 per cent of global arms exports (SIPRI, 2017). Holtom and Pavesi (2017) narrow the trade down from all arms to just small arms and light weapons, and their data is reproduced in Figure 3.4 below. The data they use is slightly older than that used by SIPRI but, nonetheless, show interestingly that the key exporting States change, and the dominance of the arms trade in general is not wholly reflected in the SALW trade.

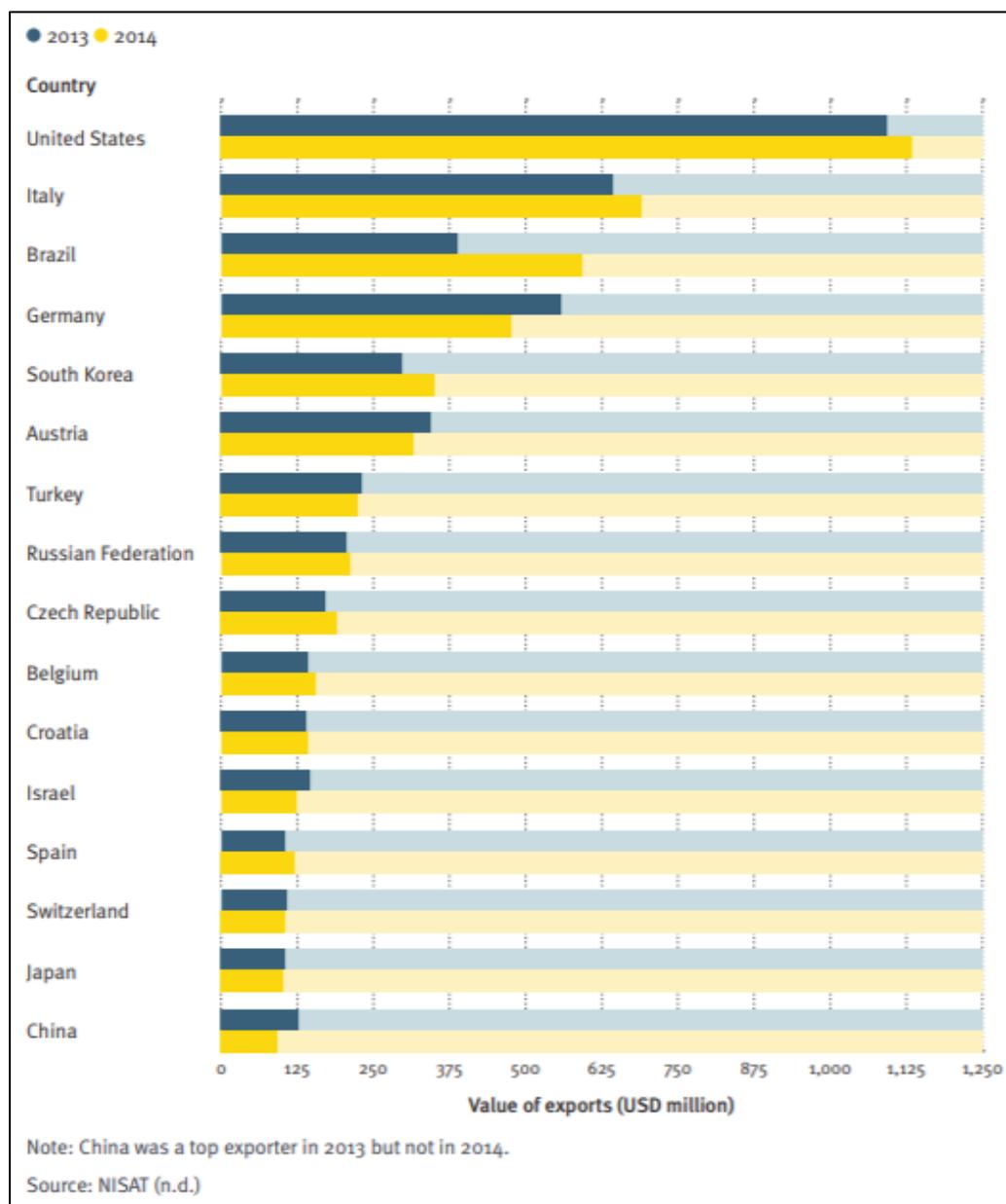


Figure 3.4 Top 16 exporters of Small Arms and Light Weapons, from Holtom and Pavesi (2017: 18)

The United States tops both the SIPRI list for total arms exports and Holtom and Pavesi's list for SALW exports in 2017. Russia, however, slips from second place in terms of total arms exports to eighth for SALW, while Brazil climbs from 24th place in total arms exports to third for SALW in 2017. A further interesting point is the presence of Croatia on the SALW list, in eleventh place. It does not appear at all on the SIPRI list, but neighbouring Serbia, Hungary, and Bosnia-Herzegovina do all appear (in 37th,

44th and 45th places respectively). Module 8 (Firearms, Terrorism and Organized Crime) gives examples of weapons exported from this region which were used by criminal groups.

The major state importers of arms

After the presentation of the main sources of the world's firearms, it is imperative to consider the destination of those weapons. This section of the Module will not focus on the illicit movement of weapons, but will look instead at their stated intended, legal destination.

One way for the exporting State to try and ensure that the transfer of firearms is legitimate is through End-Use Certificates (EUCs). The EUC is a document supplied to the exporting country from an institution of the importing country, which describes who is the recipient of the goods and sometimes can identify for what purpose they will be used. However, any certification scheme is potentially open to misuse and there are various examples where the lack of stringent pre- and post-licence controls has resulted in diversion of firearms into the illicit market (Greene and Kirkham, 2007). It is clear, therefore, that when exercising their export controls, States should not simply rely on EUCs but establish a comprehensive system of post-licence and post-shipment verification.

Greene and Kirkham (2007: 5) suggest a series of minimum standards, which they argue all States should put in place to stop the diversion of legitimate weapons to illegitimate users. Their proposals include:

- *The systematic employment of EUCs carrying details as specified, for example, by the EU or Wassenaar Arrangement;*
- *The inclusion of commitments to ensure no diversion and no unauthorised re-export clauses in the EUC;*
- *The receipt prior to shipment of approval from the importing and transit states that they authorise the transfer of SALW into/through their territory*
- *The routine authentication of the details provided on an EUC using open source information;*
- *Where possible, the checking of information provided by the end-user by foreign embassy staff or through direct contact between government departments in the exporting and recipient state;*
- *The requirement that verification of delivery is provided along with confirmation of transit routes*
- *Reserving the right to carry out on-site inspections should concerns arise post-export;*
- *Clear and proportionate sanctions in the event that breaches of end-user undertakings are discovered.*

Holtom and Pavesi list the top twelve importers of only SALW for 2014 reproduced below as Figure 3.5. Again, the difference between this list and the SIPRI list for all arms imports is stark. The United States and Canada, which top the SALW import list, move down to 16th and 21st place respectively in relation to arms in general. By contrast, of the top twelve states for overall arms imports, only four appear on the top list of SALW importers (Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Australia and the United Arab Emirates).

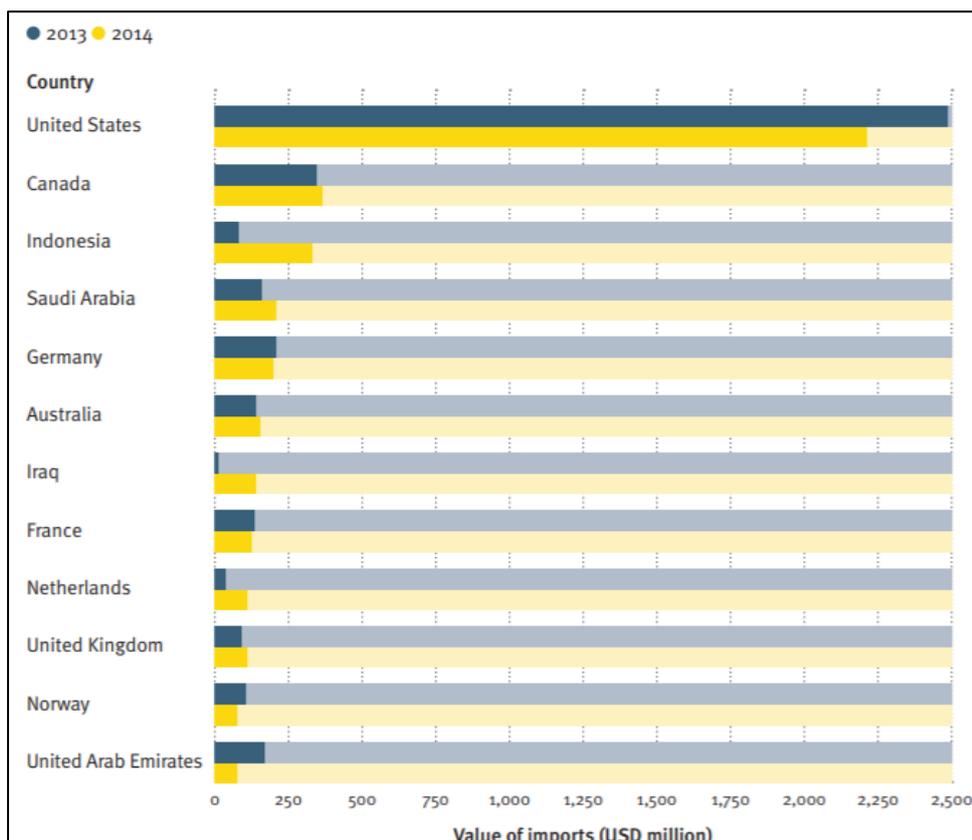


Figure 3.5. Top twelve importers of SALW, from Holtom and Pavesi, p. 22

The United States is clearly the largest importer of SALW by a considerable margin (roughly seven times greater value than Canada), and this is unsurprising when two separate estimates are combined. In his research, Karp (2007: 39) establishes that the civilian ownership worldwide is approximately 650 million, which represents 75 per cent of the known total, and his additional research published in the Small Arms Survey reveals that circa 270 million of these firearms are in the United States (Karp, 2011). Module 6 (National Regulations on Firearms) and Module 7 (Firearms, Terrorism and International Organized Crime) deal with the perceived need for civilian gun ownership (which includes individuals, criminals and organisations).

Given the focus of concern on export controls, and of the potential misuse of EUCs, it is worth considering briefly the issue of corruption in States with large SALW imports. For more information on the impact of corruption, please refer to the E4J University Module Series on Anti-Corruption.

The Small Arms Survey has a [Transparency Barometer](#), which attempts to provide an assessment of how much information is shared publicly by major exporters. Comparing this list to Holtom and Pavesi, Saudi Arabia and Israel, for example, score respectively 0.5 and 0.75 out of twenty-five (and are thus not at all transparent), while Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have the highest transparency scores (20.25, 19.5 and 19.25 out of 25). [The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms](#) (UNROCA) emphasizes that transparency in armaments is a key confidence-building measure, which may encourage restraint in the transfer or production of arms and can contribute to preventative diplomacy. While the comparison of importing states and transparency is no more than one indicator of potential for misuse, it is interesting to see the correlation, and makes clear the need for a regulatory framework for the legitimate arms trade.

The developing need for an international regulatory framework

One of the important aspects in making sure that legitimately produced firearms and SALW remain in the hands of those who are entitled to possess them is knowledge of who is in control of a weapon at any time. As long ago as 1969, albeit in a national rather than international context, it was suggested that *“the danger of transfer of firearms from legitimate to illegitimate users might be somewhat abated by a registration or transfer notice system”* (Newton and Zimring, 1968: 127).

A well-regulated international arms trade has the potential to reduce the quantity of firearms that are diverted into illicit hands, and thus to assist in the efforts to achieve [Sustainable Development Goal 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”](#). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) lists small arms and light weapons as areas of concern under [Rule of law, justice, security and human rights](#), and also covers conflict prevention as another area in which it can assist States. At the international level, the 1924 [Covenant of the League of Nations](#) was already concerned with reducing levels of State arsenals. Its [Article 8](#) includes two parts, which are of immediate relevance to this Module:

Paragraph 1: *“The Members of the League recognise that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations”* and

Paragraph 4: *“The Members of the League agree that the manufacture by private enterprise of munitions and implements of war is open to grave objections...”*

Paragraph 1 has clear links to the discussions in Section 2 about the balance that States seek to strike between security and the ability to carry out their obligations. There is also a link between Paragraph 4 and the discussion in Section 1 about the private manufacture of weapons during the First World War. In the United Kingdom, the Royal Commission on the Private Manufacture of and Trading in Arms reported in 1936 on the practicability and desirability *“of a prohibition of private manufacture of and trade in arms and munitions of war, and the institution of a State monopoly of such manufacture and trade”* (National Archives, 1936).

The United Nations replaced the League of Nations, but Articles 1(1) and 2(3) of the [Charter of the United Nations](#) reflect Article 8:

“To take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace” (Article 1(1)), and

“All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered” (Article 2(3)).

After the end of the Second World War, the international community formed several inter-governmental organizations in addition to the United Nations, designed to bring order to the international economic system. The so-called Bretton Woods agreements resulted in the establishment of the [International Monetary Fund](#) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), now known as the [World Bank](#). A need arose for an organization, which could streamline international trade by reducing or eliminating trade barriers, e.g. quotas and tariffs. The first stage of this was the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), signed in 1947, and lasted for close to 50 years until the establishment of the [World Trade Organization \(WTO\)](#) in 1993.

[Article XXI](#) of GATT, *“Security Exceptions”*, stated that: *“Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed*

- to require any contracting party to furnish any information the disclosure of which it considers contrary to its essential security interests; or
- to prevent any contracting party from taking any action which it considers necessary for the protection of its essential security interests
- relating to fissionable materials or the materials from which they are derived;
- **relating to the traffic in arms, ammunition and implements of war and to such traffic in other goods and materials as is carried on directly or indirectly for the purpose of supplying a military establishment;**
- taken in time of war or other emergency in international relations; or
- to prevent any contracting party from taking any action in pursuance of its obligations under the United Nations Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security.”
- (Emphasis added)

There was some clarification as to what amounted to a State’s “essential security interests”, triggered by an unsuccessful complaint by Czechoslovakia in 1949. The discussion around that complaint clarified that “every country must be the judge in the last resort on questions relating to its own security. On the other hand, the contracting parties should be cautious not to take any step which might have the effect of undermining the General Agreement” (Summary Record of the Twenty-Second Session, 1949: 3). When the WTO replaced GATT, Annex 1A of the [Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization](#) incorporated the 1994 text.

The provisions of Article XXI mean that States can make a judgement call about what they disclose in terms of their arms deals with other States, which allows considerable scope for secrecy in arms deals. [SIPRI](#), [CAAT](#), the [Small Arms Survey](#), and other organizations maintain registers of international arms transfers, but they all rely on public domain data, which means there are inevitable transfers unrecorded.

In addition to general trade agreements, there were some specific limitations placed on the arms trade, albeit with limited geographical scope. The Coordinating Committee on Export Controls (CoCOM) was set up in the aftermath of the Second World War by the Allies as a way of stopping the arms trade with countries in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) bloc (originally the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania, and later Cuba, East Germany, Mongolia and Vietnam). As Lipson (1993: 33) points out, “it did not last long after the end of the Cold War” and was phased out in 1993, being replaced in 1996 with the [Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual Use Goods and Technologies](#).

The Wassenaar Arrangement is described as “the first post-Cold War export control regime” (Lipson, 1999: 33) but its reach has always been limited by its admission criteria in Appendix 4:

“When deciding on the eligibility of a state for participation, the following factors, inter alia, will be taken into consideration as an index of its ability to contribute to the purposes of the new Arrangement:

Whether it is a producer/exporter of arms or industrial equipment respectively;

Whether it has taken the WA Control lists as a reference in its national export controls;

Its non-proliferation policies and appropriate national policies [a non-exhaustive list is given];

Its adherence to fully effective export controls.”

Small arms, light weapons and MANPADS are included in [Appendix 3](#) and all are broadly categorized rather than tightly defined. Unlike CoCOM, which was focused on restricting arms transfers to the Soviet Union and its allies, Kimball (2017: 1) points out that the Wassenaar Arrangement is “*not targeted at any region or group of states, but rather at “states of concern” to members. Wassenaar members also lack veto authority over other member’s proposed exports, a power that COCOM members exercised.*”

Section 1 of the [Initial Elements](#) of the Wassenaar Arrangement shows that the purpose of the group was “*to contribute to regional and international security and stability, by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilising accumulations.*” The links between this purpose and SDG 16, as discussed earlier in this Module, are evident. All these measures are supra-national, but none has global application. Wollcott (2014: 1) identifies the 1991 [United Nations Register of Conventional Arms \(UNROCA\)](#) as being “*the key international mechanism to promote predictability and transparency in the conventional arms trade.*”

In 2001, the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects led to the adoption of the [Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, in All Its Aspects](#). Generally referred to as the PoA, this had the advantage over the UNROCA insofar as it specifically focused on SALW, and is a crucial element of international regulation, but is only indicative of State intentions and not binding.

Woolcott (2014: 2) argued that many States became concerned that “*...the international trade in bananas was more tightly regulated under international law than conventional arms.*” Thus, in December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly passed [Resolution 61/89](#) asking the Secretary General to seek the views of Member States on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. Module 5 (International Legal Frameworks) deals with the specific details of the Arms Trade Treaty in more depth, and Module 6 (National Regulations on Firearms) covers some examples of national implementation of the provisions of the Treaty, but Woolcott (2014: 3-5) provides a useful two-page step-by-step run through the stages in the development of the ATT.

Conclusion

This Module outlined the development of the international arms trade from its early days to modern times. The arms trade has developed significantly. It started as an unregulated trade between colonisers and colonies (as part of the triangular trade from Britain, for example). During the first half of the 20th Century, two global conflicts drove partnerships and the demand for arms, and there were suggestions that private companies’ involvement in their supply should not be permitted. In the Cold War era, which was also essentially colonial in nature, some regulations between blocks of allies started to emerge, but the main elements of regulation took place in the post-Cold War era.

The economic and political need for a legitimate arms trade has been explored, as well as the key players identified, in terms of manufacturers and state importers/exporters. The Module also demonstrated the importance of international legal frameworks, which help to ensure that legitimately traded firearms are not diverted to illegitimate users.

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Exercises

Exercise 1

In groups, ask your students to identify the key stages in the development of the legal arms trade, and consider: Why were these stages key and what was their impact?

Exercise 2

In groups, students should consider whether private companies should be allowed to manufacture weapons of war (Article 8, Paragraph 4 of the League of Nations Covenant and the Royal Commission on the Private Manufacture of and Trading in Arms, 1935-1936)

Exercise 3

Students should think about the impact on regional stability of a State developing a large capacity to produce firearms/SALW. Should States which previously have not had such a capability be allowed to develop one?

Exercise 4

Ask your students to think about the regulation of the legitimate arms trade, particularly the Arms Trade Treaty and Firearms Protocol. Have them write a list of five reasons why regulation is a promising idea and five reasons why it is a bad idea.

In the class, let them get together in a group and share their findings. Ask them to put the common reasons into a shared document and discuss.

Recommended class structure

Pre-class

Ask your students to consider the links between the legitimate trade in firearms/SALW and the illicit trafficking and have them identify key points in the process of manufacturing, storage, export and import where diversion may occur.

First session

Lecture: Give a brief outline of the key stages in the development of the international trade in small arms.

Students to complete Exercise 1

Second session

Lecture: Discuss the need for a legal arms trade, and the impact it has on States and regions.

Students to complete Exercise 2

Third session

Lecture: Discuss the key players in manufacture, export and import of firearms, and the importance of effective regulation of this trade.

Students to complete Exercises 3 & 4

Core reading

Bromund, Theodore (2012). [*The Risks the Arms Trade Treaty Poses to the Sovereignty of the United States*](#). Washington: The Heritage Foundation.

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Advanced reading

- Arming All Sides (nd). [*Arming All Sides Project: The Arms Trade Before, During and After the First World War*](#). On The Record/Campaign Against the Arms Trade.
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Student assessment

2,500-word report

In undertaking the assessment, students should demonstrate their understanding of the module learning outcomes:

Students should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the operation and development of the legitimate arms market;
- describe the key actors in the legitimate arms market, and the impact this may have on regional stability;

- critically assess* the political, social and economic factors which influence import and export of firearms to states;
- critically discuss* the importance of unified, international criteria for the import and export of firearms between States.

(*The extent of critical evaluation and synthesis will be dependent on the student's level of study).

You are taking on the role of advisor to the government of your country, Erehwon.

Background

The Government of Erehwon wishes to export a sizable number of firearms to its regional ally, Ecalpemos, which is engaged in an armed conflict with separatists who wish to replace the Government.

Both sides of the conflict in Ecalpemos (government and separatists) have been accused by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Amnesty International of committing acts which may amount to Crimes Against Humanity.

Your Government fears that without the additional firearms, the Government of Ecalpemos will fall, which would lead to regional instability.

Both Erehwon and Ecalpemos are United Nations Member States and have signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty.

Task

Write a report outlining the steps that your Government will need to take to ensure that the export of firearms follows the requirements set out in the Arms Trade Treaty. You should also address whether your Government can balance its obligations under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter (individual or collective self-defence) with its Arms Trade Treaty obligations.

Additional teaching tools

Videos

- [The Real Harm of the Global Arms Trade, Samantha Nutt](#), TED Talks, 13 mins 35s.
- [Who controls the Arms Trade?](#), Al Jazeera, 24 mins 55s.
- [The Global Arms Trade is Booming](#), The Economist, 2 mins 28s.
- [The Arms Trade Treaty: Keeping the Promise](#), International Committee of the Red Cross, 11 mins 31s.
- [Debate: Should we arm the Syrian opposition?](#), BBC Newsnight, 50 mins 07s.
- [Small arms - a \\$6 billion global business](#), Paul Holtom, The Graduate Institute Geneva, 4 mins 33s.



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, 1400 Vienna, Austria
Tel.: (+43-1) 26060-0, Fax: (+43-1) 26060-3389, www.unodc.org

