



PAMUN XVI RESEARCH REPORT—The question of limiting access to arms by terrorist organizations

Introduction of Topic

Thousands of people lose their lives every year because of brutal terrorist attacks. There is no doubt that terrorism is the biggest challenge the world faces in the 21st century. The illicit trafficking facilitates the violent crimes terrorist groups commit and they function as tools to give power. In order to commit such acts, terrorist groups require the means to obtain ammunition, and pay their fighters. The money to buy arms is raised through donations from wealthy supporters of organizations by criminal activities such as stealing and kidnapping, and selling or smuggling oil from captured oil rigs. Such activities have led to many armed conflicts around the world, and to the death of thousands of innocent lives.

The Syrian Civil War, a seemingly never-ending conflict, is one with many involved countries and terrorist groups. The Iraqi War started in 2003 due to US invasion, and was initially against the Baathist government of Saddam Hussein, and now against Islamic State of Iraq and Levant and al-Qaeda associates. Most recently, the Civil war in Yemen has led to the death of over 10,000 people (according to the UN) with three belligerents, including al-Qaeda, the Revolutionary committee and the Hadi government, supported by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Saudi Arabia. The death toll of these destructive conflicts could have been much less if the access to guns was limited.

Definition of Key Terms

Arms

Devices designed to damage or kill live beings, and infrastructure. There are many classification of arms including:

- Small arms: revolvers, pistols, rifles, carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, machine guns
- Light weapons: grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons, rocket systems, mortars
- Ammunition/ explosives: cartridges, shells, missiles, mines, hand grenades

Terrorism

Defining terrorism is a very complex task, and there is a large variety of different definitions. The United Nations, itself, has been unable to reach a final consensus on a definition. As a more general concept, terrorism can be defined as the use of violence, often towards civilians, in the pursuit of accomplishing political, economic or social goals.

Background Information

Terrorism is one of the most pressing issues in today's world; even more so at this time with Islamic State of Iraq and Levant and other terrorist groups throughout the globe posing a great threat. In many countries buying arms is illegal, whether that be guns, explosives, or military-grade equipment such as missiles, tanks, and airplanes. Terrorist groups manage to obtain such weapons through the black market. When the Soviet Union fell, military equipment was stolen from warehouses all around the country, and then was sold on the black market. Military equipment was also stolen from warehouses when the fall of Albania took place. Even today, post-war zones are sites where one can find weapons left by the army. Consequently, terrorist organizations have managed to seize military bases acquiring such equipment. Smaller terrorist groups can get guns and ammunition at low prices in Serbia, Afghanistan, Libya or Syria, where war has left thousands of guns in the hands of citizens. Arms traders can ship them, and bribe port customs officials to get them into other countries.

Another major method where gun traders can acquire weapons (other than stealing stockpiles) is from governments. In some cases, officials will buy weapons from arms manufacturers pretending to want them for the police or for military forces. The arms are then donated to rebels in another country, as there may be some political advantages if the rebels win the conflict. In the Syrian Civil war, countries gave weapons to the rebels and later, those weapons fell into the hands of terrorist groups. It is also common practice for corrupt officials to sell weapons to terrorist organizations with the intent of making profit. They are open to bribery and are willing to cooperate. According to Transparency International, corruption in arms trade makes up about 40% of corruption worldwide.

Since the Arab Spring, main exporters of weapons have not altered their policies so as to avoid their exports being used for illicit purposes. In April 2013, the General Assembly voted to adopt the arms trade treaty. It aims to monitor arms exports, and ensure that arms are not sold in countries under embargoes or end up being used for terrorism and human-rights violations. However, between the largest guns manufacturing countries in the world: USA, Russia, UK, France, Germany, and China, the US has signed but not ratified this, and both Russia and China have not signed, and are both abstaining in voting procedure.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America

The US is the biggest arms producer in the world, and government bureaus such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) have been known to arm groups in war-zones. For example, during the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s, the United States armed the mujahedeen soldiers to oppose the soviet invasion. But once the war ended, those same soldiers joined the Taliban. Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and China have also followed similar policies of arming militants, both during the Cold War, and today.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

UNODC is a United Nations organisation created to fight against illicit drugs and international crime. It operates in all regions of the world throughout an extensive network of field offices. The mandate of the UNODC includes providing technical and legal expertise to countries struggling to tackle their illicit drug, crime, and terrorism problems. Its operation is based upon three pillars: field-based technical cooperation projects, research to expand knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues, making such information readily available. Lastly, it assists member states in ratifying and implementing international law and treaties, and developing legislation on drugs, crime, and terrorism.

Terrorist groups

Please note that the following list is taken by the U.S. Department of State, and that such lists will vary in the perception of different member states. The list mainly includes:

- Basque Fatherland and Liberty: armed aiming to create an independent Basque region of southern France and northern Spain.
- HAMAS (the biggest one of the many groups in Palestine fighting for its independence. It is the governing authority of the Gaza Strip. A couple of major countries such as Iran, Russia, Turkey, China, and Brazil do not classify it as a terrorist group)
- Hizballah (an armed Islamic movement in Lebanon aiming to liberate the land Israel got after the war against Lebanon in 1982)
- Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) (is a militant leftist group based in Turkey and Kurdistan Iraq fighting for political and cultural rights and self-determination for Kurdistan)
- National Liberation Army (a Marxist guerrilla army opposing the Colombian government)
- FARC or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (a revolutionary movement fighting in the Colombian armed conflict since 1964)

- Al-Qaeda (a Sunni Islamist militant group operating in many countries and founded by Osama Bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam after the soviet invasion in Afghanistan. They operate as a network, and are responsible for numerous attacks and suicide bombings throughout the world.)
- Irish Revolutionary Army and its many constituents including the Irish Republican Army, the Real IRA, and Continuity IRA. (they are groups dedicated to the belief that all of Ireland should be an independent republic)
- Boko Haram (an extremist group operating in Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon which wants to establish a sharia law Islamic state in the region)
- Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (a Salafist jihadist militant group aiming to create an Islamic caliphate, with affiliates operating in Africa, and Asia)

Russia

Russia is the second biggest gun exporter after the United States, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. They are the producers of the AK-47, which is a gun used in many conflicts around the world. In its history it has armed groups in Kosovo, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Viet Nam.

China

China is the third biggest gun exporter in the world, and its factories mainly sell small arms and light weapons in the black market. Due to their low production costs, they have been able to produce weapons similar to American and Russian designs to sell. They also sell many weapons to Asian militaries. Oddly enough, China is also the world's third biggest gun importer, as they buy many weapon systems such as missiles and aircraft, in sectors where the Americans, French, and Russian have the technical know-how.

India

India is the world's biggest gun importer according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. And has been developing its military arsenal of weapons for the past decade. It has been arming the Kashmir conflict for many years, as well as The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam group in Sri Lanka.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is the second biggest gun importer buying weapons from the US, and other NATO countries. It is the country in the middle east with the most imports, and has been arming Sunni terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
July 20, 2001	Adoption of the Programme of Action (provides the framework for activities to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Including: the control of small arms transfers, regulating small arms brokering, managing stockpiles, marking and tracing small arms)
March 28, 2013	Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is created (A/CONF.217/2013/L.3)
22 August 2013	Report of the Secretary General on Small Arms (S/2013/503)
22 May 2015	Security Council Resolution on small arms that contained new provisions aiming to strengthen UN coordination and action on small arms, promote effective implementation of UN arms embargoes and support the Arms Trade Treaty (SC/RES/2220)

Main Issue

Big steps have been taken with the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2013, the treaty aims to establish and maintain a national control system, and designate competent national authorities in order to have an effective and transparent national control system regulating the transfer of conventional arms. It also prohibits transfers that do not follow the requirements in the treaty. Despite these measures terrorism has managed to expand since 2013, this rise did not happen because of the ATT, but the treaty was not designed to cover such types of terrorism. The Islamic State managed to rise in the chaos of the Syrian Civil War, and today controls a large geographical area. The ATT was created in a world still healing from the events of September 11th 2001, and aimed to limit the actions of groups functioning like Al-Qaeda or Hezbollah.

In addition, gun production has dramatically increased in the past years. According to the Washington Post, gun makers in the US, the country with the largest gun production numbers, have doubled their output since 2009. Unfortunately, those guns have ended up fuelling conflicts around the middle east, and even regions such as Europe where gunned attacks were rare, are becoming more and more common. In the Middle East, the death counts and frequency of attacks has increased. Lastly, the Arms Trade has a very limited transparency, and the information and statistics regarding the trade and production of guns are difficult to access. Something should be done to tackle these problems.

Possible Solutions

Fighting corruption

All over the world, arms traffickers are able to bypass state security and regulation by bribing officials. Governments with such problems should establish stronger anti-corruption laws to tackle this problem. For example, at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) anti-bribery convention, countries decided upon some measures to tackle bribery including prohibiting the bribery of foreign officials, obligating governments to prosecute companies suspected of bribing public officials in their or foreign countries, encouraging cooperation between countries, establishing an international review system, and effective whistle-blower mechanisms. Whistle-blowers are people inside an organization with inner knowledge regarding illegal activities, including corruption.

Another way corruption could be fought is through the use of sanctions. Either economic sanctions are set, or sanctions restricting arms trade to take place within the country the sanction is set upon.

Expanding the capabilities of the ATT

Many major gun exporters have not signed or have not ratified the illegal arms trade. This leaves many gun producers able to disregard the regulation established by the treaty. The ATT has been in action for the past 3 years, but was created at a time before the rise of the Islamic State and the rise of terrorism all over the world. Therefore, it would be useful to review the actions of the ATT, and potentially expand it.

Limiting the money and equipment terrorist possess

In the example of Al-Qaeda, the Saudi Arabian king donated money to their cause of expanding Sunni Islam in the middle-east, the Islamic State has been smuggling oil to sell into Turkey, and the CIA has managed to arm rebels while hiding it as humanitarian aid. These are only some examples of countries that have fuelled conflict in one case or another. The UN should take measures to control such actions. The ATT for example, sets up regulation that gun producers are to be held accountable for the actions their customers commit using their weapons, and should be collecting intelligence regarding who they are selling to before completing the transaction. In examples of terrorist operated regions that the Taliban, ISIL, Boko Haram, and other organizations have, they have created mafia-like protection systems where they force people and shop owners in those areas to pay them money for tax, protection, and to save their lives. Such systems are extremely difficult to control, but delegates should be aware of such schemes.

Managing military equipment

There have been reported cases of military equipment being stolen or simply left behind in warehouses. This happened with the fall of the Soviet Union, when traffickers were able to break in and steal weapons and ammunition. In more recent cases, after the Libyan civil war, there are thousands of guns which civilians have picked up, and lastly, the Iraqi army fled army camps when ISIL approached them leaving everything behind. Measures should be taken so that such equipment is better guarded, and so that countries make it one of their priorities to destroy or take with them all military equipment when they flee a country. This could be achieved with better training and planning expertise.

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