

Research Report

Assembly: Junior General Assembly 1

Topic: The question of regulating trade arms and light weapons

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Introduction

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) poses a threat to the security of people all around the world. Gun violence is now a normalized occurrence that continues to terrorize all parts of the world. The lack of regulation disrupts development in countries by bringing high levels of conflict and violence. SALWs can prolong current conflicts and support the emergence of violent groups. Without proper regulations, many of these weapons can end up in the wrong hands. SALWs, in particular, are more attractive for criminal activities because of their portability, cheapness, and devastating ability to cause heavy casualties. Having access to SALWs contributes to cases of organized crime, human trafficking, and more illegal activites. Many countries lack the proper management to store weapons and ammunition. This makes it easier for weapons to be illegally distributed. The question of regulating SALWs is not just a problem that each country should work by themselves but an international problem that needs the cooperation of all the countries around the world.

Definition of Key Terms

Arms trade: a global industry that manufactures and distributes weapons and military technology

Light weapons: any type of portable weapons which includes weapons such as guns, knives, and clubs

Background information

Weapons have always been manufactured by most civilizations. At first they were just simple weapons, overtime they became more and more deadly. Around the end of the Cold War, the devastation brought by SALWs was evident through the numerous conflicts that occurred in the last decade. SALWs are the favored weapon because of their low cost, availability, lethality, simplicity, durability, and portability. In particular, SALWs can end up in the hands of the civilians more easily compared to major conventional weapons held by national military forces. In certain countries, civilians hold the right to own firearms, which can range from pistols to fully automatic rifles.

Around 50 nations now manufacture SALWs. There are large numbers of production sites that can contribute to the spread of weapons. Besides the legal channels that weapons are often given, there are more covert routes that weapons have been traded on. These “grey-market” channels are often operated with government support despite contradicting of official government policy. Examples of this would be how governments supply rebel groups with arms.

The black market trade also has played a key role in facilitating the spread of weapons. The existence of surplus SALWs, especially in the states of the former Soviet Union members, gave black market dealers access to weapons. Often many cases of theft happens from the officers themselves. These routes are complicated and safe guarded often with the support of corrupt government officials. These thefts are a major problem as many of these weapons would end up in the hands of insurgents, criminals, and civilians. Many are often smuggled to nearby countries where they contribute to the violence that destabilizes nations.

Comparatively, the arms trade is smaller compared to other trafficked items online. However, the impact SALWs have upon international security is significant. Especially the rise of the internet has made it so much easier to gain access to weapons from the dark web. The dark web enables for more illegal circulation of weapons. The weapons are often better performing and more recent models of firearms that would be available on the black market yet for the same or a lower price. The dark web would not be the source where large conflicts would choose to obtain their weapons, however, the dark web provides a platform for individuals or

small groups to gain weapons anonymously.

Major Parties Involved

United States of America

The citizens of the US account for 46% of all firearms held by citizens. The United States manufactures a lot of SALWs. Many of the SALWs that were found in other countries were of US origin. The US gun market is a major source for black market guns.

Mexico

Mexico is often on the receiving end of many of the guns stolen from the US. Mexico received around half of guns that were illegally acquired. The Mexican government has stated that many of the criminal activities committed were often with SALWs from US origins.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

The goal of UNODA is to promote nuclear disarmament and regulate the proliferation of weapons. The UNODA helps coordinate work on SALWs for the UN Security Council.

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

UNIDIR was formed by the UN General Assembly to assist disarmament efforts as well as facilitate progress towards international security. UNIDIR conducts research regarding arms control and ways to regulate SALWs.

Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of the Event

December 1991	The question of effect of SALWs was first considered in the UN Resolution A/RES/46/36.
July 9-20, 2001	The UN Small Arms Conference was held in New York to consolidate and coordinate negotiations regarding small arms initiatives and to develop a plan to help regulate SALWs.
April 2, 2013	The UN General Assembly voted to adopt the Arms Trade Treaty to help govern international arms trade.
September 26, 2013	The UN Security Council passed a resolution to urge nations to commit to the control of SALWs.
December 24, 2014	The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) went into effect to help regulate international trade in firearms and conventional weapons to address the poor regulation of the international arms trade.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

[UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons](#)

[UN Resolution A/RES/46/36](#)

[Arms Trade Treaty](#)

Previous Attempts

There have been various resolutions passed such as the ones above to help reduce the number of illicit smuggling of SALWs. There has also been the creation of many organizations to help prevent the smuggling of SALWs, however, there are still problems especially with corruption and the use of the internet to smuggle weapons.

Possible Solutions

A total ban of SALWs would be inconceivable. A solution would be to renegotiate another resolution in order to account for new ways that weapons are able to be secured. A greater exchange of information between states and regions would enable countries to better their own policies regarding the regulation of SALWs as many countries are still keeping the specifics of the arms trade secret. In order to combat the smuggling of weapons from military sources, there should be more transparency regarding arms trade. There should also be more emphasis on the SALWs smuggled online as they are starting to pose a bigger threat everyday.

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