



Disarmament and Security Council



Committee Summary

The First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.

It considers all disarmament and international security matters within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any other organ of the United Nations; the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments; promotion of cooperative arrangements and measures aimed at strengthening stability through lower levels of armaments.

Topic I: Small Arms Trade in the Middle East

A Brief History

Small Arms are distinguished from the conventional weapons by portability. From the Cold War era to the present day underground economy, the small arms trade is a lucrative industry that exploits regional conflicts for economic gain. Of the 875 million small arms estimated to be in global circulation, approximately 2/3 are in the hands of non-governmental private bodies. A major area where this is a problem is in the Middle East. Apart from civilian casualties, the global proliferation of small arms contributes to terrorism, the use of child soldiers in violent conflicts, regional instability, and the



weakening of national governments when non-state actors monopolize military resources. The destabilizing effects of small arms persist across generations because the weapons are portable, durable and low-maintenance, undermining long-term stability. The issue of cross-border proliferation of small arms has surfaced at the United Nations in recent years with international recognition of the disproportionately large destructive capacity and potential of small arms. Some of the largest exporters of small arms (which include the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council) face responsibility for supplying arms, directly or indirectly, to conflict zones. A lack of transparency by weapons exporters such as the Russian Federation, China, Pakistan, Belarus, Iran and South Africa make it difficult to assess the extent to which terrorist organizations and other non-state actors are receiving state support. Once small arms fall into the hands of non-state actors that are unaccountable to international or domestic laws, regulating their distribution is an even larger challenge.

Current Situation

Middle East countries have nearly doubled their imports of guns and ammunition within a year, raising questions over how many weapons are fueling conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. The latest bulletin of the Small Arms Survey, sponsored by Western governments, shows that there has been a dramatic increase on the imports of handguns, light weapons, and ammunition in the Arab states. Small arms deliveries to the big importers in the Middle East surged from \$342 million in 2012 to \$630 a year later (a value increase of 84%). In that period, Saudi Arabia nearly tripled its imports of small arms, from \$54 million to \$161 million and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) more than doubled



its imports from \$71 million to \$168 million. Deliveries of small arms to Qatar grew from \$2 million to \$16 million. However, most of these countries are unclear about their arms dealing; the UAE came last in a list of 50 countries in a recent transparency survey run by the Small Arms Survey, while Saudi Arabia came 49th. Weak authorities in unstable states cannot control the flow of small arms into Middle East countries which allows terrorist organizations to flourish. Highly polarized conflict zones in the Middle East are being actively armed by neighbouring states and international agents which is causing more quarrel. Furthermore, large amounts of small arms are accessible to domestic and international bodies because stockpiles in the Middle East from the Cold War are liquidated. Once they are in the hands of domestic criminal organizations, small arms quickly reach the international black market and can help fuel conflicts in the Middle East such as the recent conflict in Libya. There is also lack of policies related to exports and enforcement of export restrictions. This allows manufacturers to export to conflict zones and organizations known to commit human rights abuses without fear of punishment. The US, for one, retained its long-held position as both the top exporter and importer. It sold a record \$1.1 billion of small arms in 2013, followed, in terms of exports, by Italy (\$644m) and Germany (\$557m). Together they make up 42% of all imports to the Middle East. The trade of small arms in both the neighboring countries of the Middle East and internationally are factors of fueling flashpoints and disputes in the Middle East.

Role of the UN

There has been little action by the UN to prevent small arms trade in the Middle East and around the world. The 2001 UN Conference on the Illicit Trade



in Small Arms and Light Weapons, reconvened in 2006 and developed a Programme of Action that focused on regulating individual aspects of arms exports and trafficking. Among the proposed initiatives are measures to regulate brokering, stockpile management, weapons disposal, small arms transfers, and record keeping in addition to commitments made by the international community to offer assistance in achieving these objectives. Ensuing initiatives include the 2005 International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons that committed signatories to marking weapons and maintaining records and the 2005 Group of Governmental Experts convened that strengthened brokering legislation, international cooperation and information sharing. The most important attempt is the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on March 28, 2013. It is signed by 130 out of 193 member states, and is ratified by 79 countries. The treaty is a legally binding agreement that regulates the arms trade and that establishes standards for the international trade. Its aim is to require countries to regulate the flow of weapons across their border, establish and maintain a national control system including a national control list, 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.

Conclusion

As the conflict within the Middle East continues to escalate as a result of the increasing small arms trade deals, the people within these areas are starting to look to the UN for any support or regulation. As of right now, not much has



been done by the international community to combat the issue of increased small arms trade, and the consequences are showing.

Questions to Consider

1. What role has the supply of small arms had in the escalation and extension of conflicts?
2. What actions can be taken to regulate the global arms trade and make it more transparent?
3. Do states rigorously assess the potential for diversion, destabilization, or human rights violations before exporting arms?
4. How can civilian casualties and the use of child soldiers in violent conflicts be prevented or minimized through action on regulating small arms trade in the Middle East?

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Topic II: Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

A Brief History

Despite the fact that only two nuclear weapons were ever used in combat, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is one of the highest priorities on the international disarmament agenda. This being said, while trying to prevent terrorists from obtaining nuclear weapons has been an easy goal for the world to get behind, persuading nuclear states to give them up has been virtually impossible. Other sides to the issue include the efforts of non-nuclear weapon states to acquire them, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Thus, while nuclear is still the greatest immediate threat to mankind's existence, many argue that it plays an important role in keeping global peace, security, and prosperity. After all, nuclear states are unlikely to engage in a full scale war when they are aware that the other side has the capability to annihilate them within minutes. When dealing with the issue, there are three different approaches that work together: **nuclear disarmament**, which is the elimination of existing nuclear warheads; **arms control**, which is the regulation of weapon commerce and the reduction of existing stockpiles; and **nuclear non-proliferation**, which aims to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons to new nuclear powers or non-state actors.

Although proliferation has greatly decreased since the end of the Cold War, there remain over 15,000 warheads, mostly in the possession of the United States and Russia, but also France, the United Kingdom, China, India, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Israel, and Pakistan.



Furthermore, the US and Russia keep about 2,000 warheads each on high alert, ready to be deployed immediately.

Current Situation

International attempts at regulation date back to the first use of nuclear weapons technology, and have evolved in several steps until today. As a follow-up to the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to be ratified by the eight specific states required to bring it into effect. The Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), which was proposed at the 1995 Conference on Disarmament, has yet to be formulated. These treaties focus on measures to prevent potential terrorists from acquiring nuclear technology and material as well as to reduce overall proliferation.

The key document concerning nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which entered into force in 1970. With 190 states parties, the NPT has near universal membership and is the most-ratified arms control treaty. Its central objective is prohibiting non-nuclear weapons states from acquiring nuclear weapons technology while at the same time honoring their right to peaceful use of atomic energy. These objectives are often referred to as the three pillars of the NPT: non-proliferation, disarmament, and the right to the peaceful use of nuclear technology. States recognized by the treaty as nuclear weapons states are the United Kingdom, France, Russia, the United States, and the People's Republic of China. The NPT is also applied to states who are not nuclear weapons states but have nuclear potential presenting a threat to disarmament and non-proliferation. These states include Argentina, Brazil, Sweden, South Africa, Iran, Libya, Taiwan, Japan, Australia,



Spain, Italy, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has withdrawn from the NPT in 2003, while India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan have never signed the treaty.

The NPT prohibits all but the five recognized nuclear weapon states (NWS) from acquiring nuclear weapons technology and asks all signatories to work towards universal disarmament, while assuring the right to peaceful use, research and development of nuclear technology. Therefore, it also promotes the establishment of nuclear weapon- free zones (NWFZs). All non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) have agreed to apply International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards to their nuclear facilities which are subject to regular inspections by the IAEA.

The implementation and the work under the treaty is reviewed every five years during the NPT Review Conferences, which also serve as a stage for bi- and multilateral negotiations and general discussions related to nuclear weapons and technology. The conference requires consensus to take action. Seven Review Conferences have been held so far. Most review conferences have concentrated on halting the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. More recently, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its withdrawal from the treaty have come into focus while Pakistan, India, and Israel as non-recognized NWS remain an important focus of debates.

Role of the UN

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is not only important to the United Nations Security Council, but also to the General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security, especially in regards to



Act.11 of the United Nations Charter. This article allows it to discuss all topics within the limitations of the Charter that are also discussed in other UN bodies and to make recommendations to the Security Council. It also works closely together with the United Nations Disarmament commission under the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs, and the Geneva- based Conference on Disarmament. In fact, the very first General Assembly resolution, entitled “Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy”, dealt with the problem at hand. However, seeing the non-binding character of GA resolutions, its recent work on the topic has focused on emphasizing and evaluating existing agreements such as the 2010 NPT Review Conference Outcome Document with regards to the NWFZ in the Middle East, the CTBT, and the NPT itself. Central to its mission also is achieving a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons, drafted with the help of the Conference on Disarmament.

Conclusion

Especially after the end of the Cold War and with the increasing threat of terrorist attacks, the challenges the international community faces in regard to nuclear weapons have changed. The NPT and the IAEA remain key to ensuring nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, aided by the United Nations system, as the recent success in negotiating with the Iran has shown. The General Assembly can provide key incentives and establish norms to deal with the topic at hand, however, it has also been criticized for being stuck in repetitive arguments and reiterating the same resolutions year after year.



Questions to Consider

1. Does nuclear non-proliferation benefit or negatively impact your state?
2. If you believe in treaties such as NPT, how will you incentivize non-members to join?
3. What other ways can DISEC work towards complete nuclear disarmament?
4. How can the international community prevent nuclear warfare?
5. How can DISEC balance the need for peaceful nuclear technology against the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament?

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