

Forum: General Assembly 1 (Disarmament I)

Issue: Measures to Restrict the Use of Conventional Weapons

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Introduction

On September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon suffered through an attack from the terrorist group Al Qaeda. This well-known event in history illustrates the mass destruction and devastation that conventional weapons can cause. Conventional weapons have proven to be equally harmful and damaging as mass weapons of destruction. The damage that light weapons cause are not “light” whatsoever, instead, small arms and light weapons are one of the main roots of violence and instability in countries. Even though these weapons are deemed “conventional”, they have proven to bring suffering to millions of people and devastating effects. Progress has been made where people are starting to recognize how injurious and detrimental conventional weapons actually are. The international community is working towards mitigating the destructive power of conventional weapons through methods such as developing more rigid regulations and prohibitions on conventional weapons, hence the development of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). Many other treaties and conventions serve the same purpose and tackle the different aspects of the harm that these weapons bring. Yet, not all the blind spots have been covered, and more restrictions must be made.

The proliferation of conventional weapons has yet to present many problems and issues across the international community. Conventional weapons have proven to have greater killing capacity and efficacy over a greater area. Now, in the modern era, conventional weapons are viewed as an acceptable alternative to weapons of mass destruction, despite the major consequences and backlash that they leave. Even during modern warfare, the number of civilians killed has been increasingly growing and with constant improvement and sophistication of technologies used in the production of these weapons, aircrafts and missiles have been developed to be more viable to attack larger targets and infrastructures.

Definition of Key Terms

Conventional Weapons

A term used to describe arms that are not deemed to have the 'mass destructive' capabilities ascribed to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. According to the UNODA, conventional weapons encompass armoured combat vehicles, combat helicopters, combat aircraft, warships, small arms and light weapons, landmines, cluster munitions, ammunition and artillery.

Arms Trade

This term can be defined as the global markets for any product of the arms industry. Arms trade includes small arms trade and arms trafficking.

Cluster Munitions

This term is defined by ICRC as "weapons consisting of a container that opens in the air and scatters large numbers of explosive submunitions or 'bomblets' over a wide area that can be delivered by aircraft, artillery, and missiles". They are airdropped or ground launched explosive weapons that eject smaller submunitions mainly used for destroying vehicles.

Incendiary Weapons

This term is defined by Weapons Law Encyclopedia as a weapon that "sets fire to objects through heat or flame produced by the use of an incendiary substance". They are weapons that are designed to destroy and start fires.

Background Information

Major Issues

Military spendings for states have increasingly grown as each state feels the need to build up their defense as a way to establish themselves as a formidable international influence. Conventional weapons have also proven to be a form of economic gain and in higher global demand in comparison to weapons deemed as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). States without these weapons are drawn to procure them and have started a cycle of weaponry gain in which mass arms exporters would sell these weapons to less developed countries in need of these defense mechanisms which leads to more internal conflict.

While it is legal for states, weapon manufacturers, and corporations to sell weapons to another country for own personal gain or military aid, this arises the problem of an illicit black-trade market supplying non-state actors or non-governmental organizations with these weapons. Human rights are being violated, natural resources are being exploited, and issues such as child soldiers, piracy, terrorism and trans-border organized crimes are surfacing with the usage of conventional weapon and its

unregulated transfers. The lack of transparency in arms trade shows to be another issue as countries are importing and exporting large amounts of arms and illicit conventional weapons trade are still progressing.

Incendiary Weapons

Certain conventional weapons have endangered innocent civilians and are arguably unsafe for regular usage. Incendiary weapons, labelled under the category of conventional weapons, has caused immense damage which has been raised to many's attention recently. The establishment of Protocol III of the CCW, which is the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons, has noticeably left out certain aspects of this growing issue despite its original intention to resolve this issue. The protocol allows for dual-use weapons and sets weaker regulations for ground-launched incendiary weapons compared to air-dropped ones. Due to this, extreme danger still remains from using these weapons and they inflict serious physical injuries, such as fourth and fifth-degree burns which can lead to infections, organ failure, lifelong disability, as well as poisoning and respiratory damage. History has witnessed the damage caused by incendiary weapons in countries such as Syria, where their government used it against their own citizens, as well as Israel against Gaza in 2009, and the United States in Iraq in 2004. Incendiary weapons further causes socio economic harm and displacement as they destroy homes, schools, farmland, and other further civilian infrastructures. These munitions pose a threat to society and solutions have been made directed towards the eradication and restriction of the usage of it.

Explosive Remnants

In 2016, at least 8,605 people in the world were killed or injured by explosive remnants of war (ERW) such as land mines, cluster munitions, and others. Explosive remnants of war are explosive materials or weapons that have been left in an area after the usage of weapons. Conventional weapons usually leave behind unused mines or shells, which can explode later on any time. Due to the casualties made by ERWs, Protocol V was added to the CCW on explosive remnants of war in 2003, focusing on

the danger of explosive remnants after conventional arms are used in wars.



Explosive Remnants of War in Post Revolution Libya

Cluster Munitions

Cluster munitions are a common example of explosive remnants that cause humanitarian problems. Cluster munitions serve the purpose of destroying multiple military targets dispersed over wide areas and are generally not precision-guided. They are mostly free-fall and not directly guided towards targets which could cause major disasters. Similar to landmines, the main problem created with cluster munitions is that large numbers of these submunitions fail to explode on impact as intended and leave remnants that are harmful. When used large-scale during wars, this leaves many countries and regions infested with thousands or millions of highly unstable and unexploded submunitions. Regions and countries heavily affected by the issue of cluster munitions are usually poor and generally agriculture-based communities. In countries such as Chad, the rural areas where farmers and shepherds there are heavily impacted. The effect that these submunitions have on civilians is detrimental, often many suffer from serious blast or fragment injuries that have to be put through long term treatment and rehabilitation. The issue of psycho-social support and socio-economic reintegration also arises as the survivors and victims of these weapons are more likely subjected to discrimination and ostracism. Cluster munitions also pose an immense threat post-war. Returnees make up a large majority of victims from submunitions. According to Handicap International 2007, in Vietnam, 52.4% of all cluster munition victims occurred during the first five years after the war. In 2006, when the people of Southern Lebanon returned to their homeland due to fleeing from conflict, 33.8% of deaths and injuries were caused by cluster munitions.

Landmines

Landmines explode and injure people indiscriminately making an impact that could equate to what weapons of mass destruction have on our society. Similar to cluster munitions, landmines brings harm to people not just during war, but also post-war and even hundreds and thousands of years to come. A planted landmine could still be active after many years, presenting issues such as slowing down the process of recovery for post-conflict states that endured a period of destruction as well as maiming thousands of civilians each year. In countries such as Vietnam, even after four decades from the Vietnam War, landmines and such remnants of war continue to kill innocent civilians.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) is an office of the United Nations Secretariat that aims to promote disarmament efforts in the area of conventional weapons and strengthen disarmament regimes. The work accomplished by the UNODA has been crucial in restricting the use of conventional weapons such as the publication of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency. The convention requires member states to annually report on their imports and exports of conventional weapons and notify other countries on their status of conventional weapons. The UNODA has also dedicated a branch specifically to conventional arms, which is referred to as the Conventional Arms Branch (CMB). This allows them to focus their efforts on all weapons that are not considered WMD, which includes small arms and light weapons (SALW). The UNODA is also credited for the development of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms as well as supporting the Arms Trade Treaty process, in which all target to restrict mass use of conventional weapons.



The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Logo

United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA)

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) is a register that was created under the UNODA with a clear vision: promoting transparency in arms trade. The register receives reports from states on arms trade in hopes of building confidence between countries and determining whether excessive or destabilizing accumulations of arms take place. The purpose of documenting these

arms trade is to contribute towards preventive diplomacy. By keeping the transfer of arms transparent, it prevents one state from gaining an alarming sum of arms and ensures that the amount of trade is reasonable. The UNROCA establishes seven categories under which nations must report on yearly and further encourages reporting on the import and export of small arms and light weapons as well.

United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD)

The UNRCPD is a IGO that plays a major role in restricting the usage of conventional weapons as it has established and adopted a Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2001. The establishment of this programme serves to aim towards the reduction of negative consequences caused especially by small arms and light weapons.

United States of America

On a global scale, the United States is the leading exporter for developing nations, which receive sixty percent of the total conventional arms market. The United States also has a history of using conventional weapons on other countries, dating back to around 1964-1973, when they dropped more than 2 million bombs on Laos including the injurious cluster munitions. Thus causing many deaths and injuries, as well as a significant impediment to their economic development. However, USA's efforts in trying to reduce the harmful worldwide effects of at-risk, illicitly proliferated, and indiscriminately used conventional weapons of war must be recognized through their mass contributions and donations.

Russia

The Russian Federation plays a prominent role in this debate as they are a heavy supplier of conventional arms to many nations, having been recorded to have around 15% of worldwide arm exports. The Russian Federation asserts their dominance as a global power and achieves national security objectives by becoming a major conventional arms exporter. Russia has directed its supply towards many African nations including Egypt, Algeria, and Angola, as well as other countries like Iran, Vietnam, and China. Recently in October 2018, Russia has been supplying light arms to the Central African Republic's military which has sparked an arm race, with rebels turning towards traffickers for gun shipments. Russia's heavy presence in many of Africa's arm imports has resulted in the fueling of internal conflict and tension between nations. Since 1992, Russia has also been supply Iran with numerous weapon systems, mostly missiles, combat aircraft, and other conventional arms. The mass import of conventional arms from Russia has led to the United States shifting their focus towards Iran's growing supply of conventional military supply as they voice their concern of the lack of regulations and legal prohibitions on selling conventional arms. Iran and Egypt are examples of countries where after the supply of conventional weapons, the rate of wars increased.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
October 10, 1980	Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) concluded in Geneva.
December 1983	CCW entered into force
November 19, 1990	Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was opened for signatures
December 6, 1991	UN register of Conventional Arms is established
June 7, 1999	Inter-American Convention on Transparency is opened for signature.
November 12, 2006	Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is entered into force
April 2013	The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Arms Trade Treaty
December 10, 2013	A/RES/68/43 is passed, reaffirming the UN register of Conventional Arms and making clear that the transparency in arms trade must be guaranteed
December 4, 2014	Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is entered into force

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- Arms Trade Treaty, 24 December 2014 (**A/RES/68/31**)
- United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, 1987 (**A/RES/72/64**)
- Transparency in Armaments, 10 December 2013 (**A/RES/68/43**)
- Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (with Protocols I, II and III), 21 December 2001
- Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), 30 May 2008
- The Ottawa Treaty or Mine Ban Treaty, 18 September 1997

- The Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions (IACTCW)

Possible Solutions

Strict regulations of arms trade and military spendings are a way to start solving the issue at hand at the long term. Having more watchdogs over the process of which countries sell and buy military materials including conventional weapons can enhance the transparency in military spendings. With increased transparency, the governments of each country and the United Nations are able to be aware of what weapons each countries are keeping, so that innocent civilian lives are not in jeopardy because of a government misusing their authority and taking advantage of the weapons they have. In order for these strict regulations to occur, the government must be willing to share a large majority of their country's status on military weapons, so that the United Nations and other member nations are able to share their information. However, there are high possibilities that individual countries will find loopholes to hide some of their information. If this happens, then strict regulations may also open loopholes for countries to go through and then these strict regulations wouldn't function properly. Furthermore, strict regulations and increasing transparency are very indirect ways in restricting the use of weapons, because this is not physically restricting the country's ability to use weapons. Rather, regulations exist so that other countries can be aware of each other's status in weapons. States should address channels of manufacture and adopt appropriate measures in order to control the amount of small arms production.

Reducing the motivation for acquiring accessible conventional weapons such as guns by enhancing security as a whole. "Governments are central providers of security" as stated by the UNODA. It is their responsibility and right to protect the citizens, yet still many citizens acquire guns and small arms for personal security. A vast majority of the civilians being killed by conventional weapons in countries like the United States of America goes into the issue of lack of gun control. However, if the government is able to enhance and the civilians' security, then they would have no reason to acquire weapons like pistols. This would allow the citizens to evoke a sense of security within their country. However, in order for this solution to be successful, the government must earn the citizen's full respect in order to persuade the citizens in believing this. In most countries, this is not the case. Incentives must be provided in order to ensure the trust of civilians.

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