Global Arms Trade and its Impact on Conflicts

At the end of this session, you should be able to understand

- Terminology and definitions: arms trade and proliferation
- The different types of weapons and types of trades & arms proliferation
- History of weapons proliferation & global arms trade and its “Blowback”
- Facts about wars and armed conflicts and its causes
- The free trade in arms and its “players” (buyers and sellers)
- Who suffers and who benefits/profits from arms trade and proliferation?

Terms and Definitions

- **Arms Trade**: The buying and selling of weapons and dual-use items.
  - $22-27 billion annually in conventional weapons over past three years.
- **Proliferation**: The spread of weapons and technologies that have negative consequences for regional and global security interests & global control of the reigning powers=U.S. and its allies.

Types of Weapons

- **Conventional**
  - make up vast majority of military arsenals
  - little moral opposition to their use
  - few international agreements
- **Weapons of mass destruction-WMD**
  - devastating effect when used in small numbers
  - nuclear, chemical, biological

Types of Weapons Trade

- **State-to-state**: Acquiring arms for national defense or police forces. Can involve intermediaries.
- **Gray Market**: Use of intermediaries to obscure ultimate buyer or seller.
- **Black Market**: Involves smuggling of stolen weapons, uses criminal networks, usually small scale.

Types of legal trade

- Sale of military hard- and software
- Sale of components and licenses
- Training of personnel on hard-and software, components, and licenses

Examples:

Belgium company FN Herstal produces arms under licence in 20 countries, including Kenya, Nigeria

Heckler and Koch, a German/UK/USA company, licensed production in 18 countries including Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and sold up to 10 million small arms in recent years
Licensed intermediaries often export to third countries such as Burundi, Sudan, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe which are on proliferation lists of the country who provided the license. From the latter countries arms then may be sold on the “Black market”

Illegal Arms Trading
- Defined as exports that violate national or international laws
- Achieved by organised criminal gangs as with drugs: smuggling, bribery, money laundering, false aircraft registration, “emergency” landings etc.
- Most traders known to their national governments and the UN

History of Weapons Proliferation & Global Arms Trade and its “Blowback”
- Global arms trade emerged by the 1860s
  - through privately run big business
  - was not any more controlled by states
  - commercial logic to make profits regardless of ethics, morals & interests feeds the global diffusion of arms of all sorts with “Blowback” effects. Examples:
    - Ford Company subsidiary in Cologne supplies Germany in WWII
    - Krupp cannons ton UK before WWI
    - Osama bin Laden & CIA in Afghanistan 1980s
    - Collaboration of Saddam Hussein & Reagan/Rumsfeld. December 20, 1983, President Reagan sent an envoy to Baghdad. He met Saddam Hussein. American companies sold Saddam chemical and biological weapons, including anthrax and bubonic plague. The envoy was Donald Rumsfeld, at that time an executive in the pharmaceutical industry. Today he is the U.S. Defense Secretary who waged war on Iraq because Saddam had chemical and biological weapons and was a threat to the U.S. & the world. At that time Iran was the enemy of the US. and Iraq involved in a bloody war against Iran. Because he was anti-Iran, the U.S. considered him an “ally.” His domestic HR record was of NO concern. A month before Rumsfeld’s visit, U.S. had intelligence that Iraq was using chemical weapons against Iran. And U.S. military help continued to Saddam even after he used nerve gas against Kurdish villages in Iraq.

Types of War
- Civil war within a state is based on conflicts over unequally distributed resources/rights/goals/power.. (differences b/w classes, ethnocultures, regions, groups)
- Interstate war can be based on:
  - miscalculation about assessment of strength
  - intentions of opponent
  - territory/borders
  - political/economic/ideological/moral elite interests & objectives
  - resources (oil, water, wealth…)
  - outside threat
  - resource competition
  - power struggle for regional/world hegemony/geopolitics
  - to distract population from domestic conflicts, social problems…
  - perceived threats
  - cultural and religious differences
• social problems
• absence of perceived alternatives

War Statistics
13 major conflicts in 20th century and hundreds of small ones

1950: 12
1955: 14
1960: 10
1965: 27
1970: 30
1975: 34
1980: 36
1985: 40
1990: 48
1995: 36
2000: 31
2002: 37

Example: 37 Conflicts worldwide in 2002
Europe (4) ➔ Russia (Chechnia)=Secession/violent conflict; Yugoslavia (Presevo-Valley)=Secession;
Macedonia (UCK)=Autonomy; Spain (Basque)=Secession
Africa (15) ➔ Angola (UNITA)=Internal power struggle;
Burundi (Hutu)=Internal power struggle; Guinea (UDFG)=Internal power struggle; Congo
(RCD)=Internal power struggle; Liberia (LURD)=Internal power struggle; Sudan
(SPLA)=Secession; Nigeria=Autonomy; Rwanda (Hutu)=Autonomy; Senegal
(Casamance)=Autonomy; Sierra Leone (RUF)=Internal power struggle; Somalia
(SRRC)=Internal power struggle; Chad (MDJT)=Internal power struggle; Uganda
(LRA)=Internal power struggle; Central African Republic=Internal power struggle
America (2) ➔ Colombia (FARC & ELN)=System struggle; Algeria (GIA) – System struggle
Asia (16) ➔ India (Kashmir)=Secession; Sri Lanka=Secession; Bangladesh
(Opposition)=Internal power struggle; Bangladesh vs. India=Border conflict; India
(Assam)=Autonomy; Indonesia (Aceh)=Secession; Indonesia (Calimantan)=Other; Indonesia
(Molucces)=Other; Nepal (Maoist Rebels)=System; Philippines (Abu Sayyaf)=Secession;
Philippines (MNLF)=Autonomy; Afghanistan (Al-Qaeda, Taliban) vs. U.S./UK; Autonomy,
Internal power struggle; Iraq vs. U.S./UK=occupation; Israel vs
Palestinians= Territory/occupation; Israel vs. Lebanon=Other; Turkey (PKK)=Secession
(Source: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (http://www.hiik.de)

Facts about Small Arms Trade & Use
• Small Arms are defined as guns, pistols, machine guns, mortars, tear gas, stun guns, land mines…
• It is estimated that about 550 million firearms are circulating globally- one gun per every 11 of the world’s people
• Between 1990 and 2000 about 3 million people died from small arms, mainly women and children
- About 90% of all war casualties die from small arms
- More than 50% of the small arms trade of annually 5 billion $ is illegal
- Big business: in the mid-1990s about 300 companies in 52 countries were involved in the production of small arms

Why is Proliferation a Global Problem?
- It is trans-boundary and hegemonic states are unable to protect from, control or monitor trade adequately
- Arms trade thrives through the global economy & easy global communication and transportation networks (another “Blowback” effect)

Why are Countries interested in Proliferation?
- Seeking self-sufficiency/independence/deterrence from hegemonic states via denial and deception programs

Why are non-state actors interested in proliferation?
- Terrorists & criminal organizations are seeking weapons to counter threat by “policing” states

Conventional Weapons under potential Proliferation
- Small arms and land mines (sometimes for specified countries)
- “Regular” military equipment, i.e. tanks, airplanes, artillery systems, trucks… (sometimes for specified countries)
- Weapons that can neutralize expensive and technologically advanced weapons used by the “hegemonic” powers (almost always)
  - Man Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS)
  - Electronic warfare equipment (e.g., GPS jammers)
  - Night vision equipment
  - Spare parts for major systems, such as air-defense, airplanes, artillery systems, etc

Major Suppliers of Conventional Weapons
- Major suppliers - US, UK, France, Russia, China, Germany, Israel…
- After the end of the Cold War the arms industry in the West was consolidated and developed co-production and co-development
- Now we see new suppliers, new recipients, new motives, higher volume of transfers, more sophisticated technology for sale, relatively easy access to dual-use technologies

Countries of Concern re: Arms Proliferation
- Countries sanctioned by hegemonic states ("rogue countries")
  - International arms embargoes by UN (Iraq 1991-2003
  - Countries under U.S. sanctions (Cuba, N.Korea…)
- Countries in Conflict
  - Concern that influx of weapons could precipitate or extend hostilities
  - Acquisition of carriers for WMD=ballistic and cruise missiles
- Common transit countries
- BUT interestingly no concern about the arms proliferation activities of hegemonic states ➔ hypocrisy pointed out by “have-nots”