
DISARMAMENT & INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE



STUDY GUIDE



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Addressing the Impact of the Military Contractors's Lobby on the National Security

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Introduction

The influence of military contractors on national security policy has become a topical issue in modern governance. Being among the most powerful players in the defense industry, major defense contractors have a significant influence over policymakers through lobbying, defense budget, procurement, and strategic directions.

Even as national security is premised on a strong and heavily armed military, the excessive influence of private interests can lead to the secondary agenda of profits from business trumping national security. The ascendancy can risk over-inflating defense expenditures, restricting reasonable competition in military equipment procurement, and even diluting national defense capabilities. There is a need to examine the role of defense lobbying to ensure security policies are not skewed in the direction of private economic interests rather than national interests.

Key Terms

Military-Industrial Complex (MIC)

A term describing the close relationship between a nation's military, government, and defense industry, along with their defense contractors, determining national security policy for profit.

Defense Lobbying

The work of defense contractors and industry representatives influencing policymakers and lawmakers so that they get favourable policies, contracts, and appropriations for the military.

National Security Policy

A state's strategy to protect its sovereignty, citizens, and interests from external and internal threats, largely determined by defense spending and military might.

Defense Procurement

The process through which governments acquire military equipment, technology, and services, typically determined by defense contractors' lobbying.

Public vs. Private Interests

The conflict between national security interests that serve the greater public and corporate interests focused on profit maximization in the defense industry.

Government Contracting

Arrangements among government agencies and private defense companies to provide military equipment and services, typically acquired through lobbying.

Revolving Door

The flow of staff between defense industry and government employment, with potential conflict of interest and more corporate control of military policies.

Defense Budget Allocation

The distribution of government funds to defense expenditure, which can be manipulated by lobbying to benefit private defense contractors.

Monopoly in Defense Industry

The dominance of the defense industry by a limited number of giant corporations, limiting competition, driving up costs, and centralizing power in military procurement.

General overview

The defense industry is responsible for maintaining national security, equipping the military with technology, weapons, and infrastructure to defend a nation's interests. However, increasing influence of defense contractors through lobbying raises questions about the relationship between private interest and public security. Lobbying within the defense sector is widespread whereby large defense contractors use their political influence and financial superiority to persuade policymakers to continue and enhance defense spending.

While there must be some cooperation between the private defense companies and the government for the national interest, excessive lobbying can have undesirable side effects.

One of the central concerns is that the function of huge military contractors distorts the nation's policy on defense into private interests. Defense corporations sell policies that expand the military budget, even when they do not necessarily align with the nation's real security needs. This oftentimes translates to excessive government spending on unnecessary or overvalued defense programs, which might be diverted from other vital areas such as healthcare, education, or infrastructure. It also means excessive procurement policies in which the contracts are awarded for political reasons rather than merit or worth.

Additionally, the concentration of power in the hands of a few large defense contractors has reduced competition in the defense industry. With little public tender and bias towards established firms, small businesses and innovative start-ups are unable to secure contracts. Not only does this absence of competition increase prices, but it also limits technological innovation that can be utilized to increase national security. Also, the monopolization of the sector would leave the government relying on a handful of private companies, reducing its room for maneuver when procuring.

Another extremely critical concern is the so-called "revolving door" procedure, whereby individuals shift from government positions to defense industry employment. Ex-policymakers and defense officials often find themselves in senior positions at private defense firms, using insider knowledge and government contacts to secure profitable contracts.

Defense contractor executives, on the other hand, become prominent government appointees, where they shape military policies to the benefit of their current or future employers. This intimate relationship between the defense industry and the government raises ethical concerns about conflict of interest and transparency in decision-making.

Moreover, excessive lobbying can determine foreign policy and military interventions. Countries with powerful defense contractors are interested in sustaining or escalating armed conflicts to advance greater defense spending. This process can result in prolonged military conflicts, arms competitions, and prioritizing militaristic solutions over diplomatic ones.

To address these risks, governments must establish more stringent regulations of defense lobbying, make militaries' procurements transparent, and guarantee level playing fields for business. By eliminating excessive military contractor influence, national security policy is then informed by genuine security needs and not corporate ends, towards a more balanced and effective defence budget and strategy.

Timeline of key events

1961: Eisenhower's Warning on the Military-Industrial Complex

U.S. Dwight D. Eisenhower warned of the increasing dominance of defense contractors over the policies pertaining to security which also pointed out the danger of giving too much weight to business over people.

1991: Establishment of the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA)

As per Resolution 46/36L of the UN General Assembly, the United Nations formulated a global register of arms to increase awareness about the expenditures of arms and to control the influence of the arms industry on politics.

1996: Wassenaar Arrangement on Arms Export Controls

In order to curb the result of the uncontrolled expansion of private defense companies, an agreement with multilateral participation of 42 countries was created to manage the international movement of customary weapons and dual-use items.

2003: UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)

This treaty was adopted by the General Assembly through the resolution 58/4 and aims to curb corruption especially in the areas of unethical lobbying and defense contracting.

2013: Adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

Every country in the world is concerned with international peace, acceptance of resolution 67/234B of General Assembly seeks to regulate the export of arms and restrict the activities of defense contractors who take advantage to those activities that jeopardize international security.

2022: UN Resolution on Military Spending Transparency

UN General Assembly Resolution 77/70 urges nations to disclose military expenditures and decrease the influence of corporate lobbying in defense policy decisions.

Key Questions a Resolution should address

- *How can governments increase transparency in defense procurement to prevent excessive influence from military contractors?*
- *What measures should be implemented to regulate lobbying activities by defense companies to ensure national security decisions prioritize public interest?*
- *How can international organizations, strengthen enforcement mechanisms for existing arms trade and anti-corruption treaties?*
- *What policies can be introduced to prevent conflicts of interest, such as the “revolving door” between government positions and private defense firms?*
- *How can fair competition be encouraged in the defense industry to prevent monopolization by a few large military contractors?*
- *What role should national and international watchdogs play in overseeing military expenditures and lobbying practices?*

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Strengthening Accountability for Arms Embargo Violations

Written by: Daniel Ďuračka

Introduction

Over the past decade, the United Nations (UN) has imposed 13 arms embargoes to curb the flow of weapons into conflict zones. However, these embargoes have been violated, with limited consequences for the perpetrators. One of the main reasons for this failure is the UN's reliance on member states to monitor and enforce sanctions, many of whom have vested interests in the conflicts.

This lack of accountability calls for a more systematic and legally binding approach, potentially involving a more decisive role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Key Terms

Arms Embargo

A restriction or ban on selling and transferring weapons to specific states, groups, or individuals.

Sanctions Committee

A body within the UN responsible for monitoring compliance with sanctions, including arms embargoes.

International Court of Justice (ICJ)

The principal judicial organ of the UN that settles legal disputes between states.

Security Council (UNSC)

The UN body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, including imposing and enforcing sanctions.

Prosecution Mechanism

The legal framework used to hold violators accountable, including trials at the ICJ or other international courts.

Current overview

Despite the frequent imposition of arms embargoes, their enforcement remains weak. Violations typically occur through covert arms transfers, third-party involvement, and state complicity. Some key challenges include:

- Lack of enforcement mechanisms: The UN depends on individual member states to report violations, but many have political or economic incentives to ignore breaches.
- Insufficient prosecution efforts: Only a handful of violators face the consequences due to legal loopholes and weak judicial enforcement.
- Private arms trade and illicit networks: Non-state actors, private military companies, and black-market arms dealers contribute to violations.
- Political complexities: Powerful states often shield allies from accountability, preventing meaningful action at the Security Council.

Event Timeline

1990s-2000s

The UN increasingly uses arms embargoes in conflicts, including in the Balkans, Liberia, and Sudan.

2011

Arms embargo imposed on Libya following the fall of Gaddafi, later violated by multiple states and groups.

2014

Arms embargo on South Sudan due to the ongoing civil war, but weapons continued to flow into the country.

2017-2018

UN investigators reveal large-scale violations of embargoes in Yemen and the Central African Republic.

2020

A UN report highlights systematic violations of the Libya embargo, implicating several international actors.

2023

Growing calls for more decisive legal action, including a more direct role for the ICJ and enhanced monitoring mechanisms.

Key Questions a Resolution should address

- *How can the UN enhance the enforcement of arms embargoes to ensure compliance?*
- *Should the ICJ or another legal body be given greater authority to prosecute violators?*
- *What mechanisms can be introduced to prevent member states from aiding or ignoring violations?*
- *How can transparency and reporting of embargo breaches be improved?*
- *What role should international organizations, such as Interpol or regional bodies, play in monitoring compliance?*
- *Should stricter financial and diplomatic penalties be imposed on violators, including state actors?*

Conclusion

The repeated failure of arms embargoes shows the urgent need for more vigorous enforcement and accountability mechanisms. The UN must move beyond relying on member states and establish independent monitoring and prosecution systems. This could include giving the ICJ greater jurisdiction over embargo violations, and imposing stricter consequences for non-compliance. Accountability is crucial to preventing further destabilization in conflict zones and upholding international peace and security.

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