

E.MA in Human Rights and Democratisation

**Questioning the effectiveness of the EU Arms Export
Control Regime in curbing irresponsible arms exports:
A greater role for the European Parliament?**

by

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Abstract

The EU is largely seen as playing a unique role in the international arena due to its commitment to normative values such as peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, which are enshrined in the EU's founding treaties. However, the EU's member states are also among the largest arms exporters in the world, and these weapons have the power to exacerbate conflict and aid in the abuse of human rights. This thesis examines this relationship between the EU member states economic interests in the field of arms trade and the normative values they are obliged to uphold. It questions the effectiveness of the EU's arms export control regime by examining the EU Code of Conduct and recent Common Position. The result is a mixed picture but when coupled with examples of how EU member states have undermined these norms in their actions in the field of arms exports, we can conclude that both the Code of Conduct and Common Position have not been effective. The study then considers ways to improve the situation by looking at a greater role for the European Parliament in this area, given the increasing competences of the EU in security and defence policy. Finally, it takes a brief look at the future of the arms industry and arms control and the need to find more innovative solutions to control irresponsible arms exports.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
COARM	Council Working Group on Conventional Arms Exports
CFSP	Common Foreign Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (part of OECD)
G8	Group of 8
EC	European Community
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EPC	European Political Community
ESDA	European Security and Defence Assembly
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MEP	Member of European Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCCAR	Joint Armaments Co-operation Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OP	Operational Provision
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SEDE	Sub-Committee on Security and Defence (European Parliament)
TEC	Treaty on the European Community
TEU	Treaty on the European Union
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

UN United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
WEU Western European Union

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	p.1
<u>Chapter 1 – The EU and Arms Export Control</u>	p.6
1.1 The EU as a ‘Normative Power’	p.6
1.2 The History of EU Arms Export Control.....	p.8
1.3 The EU Code of Conduct on Arms Export Control.....	p.13
1.4 Developments in EU Arms Export Policy after the Adoption of the Code.....	p.16
1.4.A Publication of the EU Annual Report.....	p.16
1.4.B Approval of an EU Common List of Military Equipment.....	p.18
1.4.C Military Technology and Licensed Production Overseas.....	p.19
1.4.D Denial Notifications.....	p.20
1.4.E Arms Brokering.....	p.21
1.4.F The User’s Guide.....	p.21
1.4.G End-Use Certificates.....	p.22
1.4.H The Common Position: A legally binding instrument.....	p.23
<u>Chapter 2 – EU Member State Action in the Field of Arms Exports</u>	p.25
2.1 The ‘Socialisation’ of EU Member States?.....	p.25
2.2 Member State Interest and the Adoption of the Common Position.....	p.26
2.2.A The EU Arms Embargo on China.....	p.26
2.2.B A Common European Defence Market: Loosening Restrictions on Intra-Community Transfers.....	p.29
2.3 Arms Exports to Israel.....	p.31
2.3.A The EU’s Relationship with Israel.....	p.31
2.3.B EU Arms Exports during the Israel-Lebanon conflict in 2006.....	p.33
2.3.C UK Arms Exports during ‘Operation Cast Lead’ in Gaza.....	p.35
2.4 EU Arms Exports and Sustainable Development.....	p.36
2.4.A UK Arms Exports to Tanzania.....	p.37
2.4.B Lack of Clarity with regard to Sustainable Development.....	p.38
2.5 Material Interest vs. Normative Values.....	p.39
2.5.A EU Member States as Rational Actors.....	p.40
2.5.B Belgium and the Nepal Arms Deal.....	p.42
2.5.C Both Material Interests and Normative Concerns at play.....	p.43
<u>Chapter 3 – The Way Forward</u>	p.46
3.1 A Greater Role of the European Parliament?.....	p.47
3.1.A Security and Defence Policy and National Parliaments.....	p.47

3.1.B	The Increasing Role of the EU in Security and Defence Policy.....	p.48
3.1.C	Different Forms of Democratic Legitimacy.....	p.49
3.1.D	Improving the Role of the European Parliament in Arms Export Control.....	p.50
3.1.E	Multi-Level Parliamentary Cooperation.....	p.52
3.2	Globalisation of the Arms Industry.....	p.54
3.2.A	EU Arms Export Controls and Globalisation.....	p.54
3.2.B	Arms Export Control at the International Level.....	p.56
<u>Conclusion</u>		p.59
<u>Bibliography</u>		p.63