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**Research Guide Series**

**The Arms Trade**

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## The Arms Trade

The Arms Trade is defined as the sale or exchange of ‘conventional’ weapons. The transfer of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons is forbidden by international settlements such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Other international agreements forbid the transfer of conventional weapons to unstable countries such as Iraq and Libya. Formal arms transfers are conducted legally between governments, and arms manufacturers. Informal arms transfers are generally illegal, and rely heavily on the black market. Most authors highlight how it is often difficult to estimate the size of the international arms market, mainly because of confidentiality issues and the illegality of many transfers. However, most agencies who provide statistics on the size of the arms market argue that the market has decreased since the end of the Cold War and the subsequent decrease in military spending. As a result many arms manufacturers have expanded their international market, and are working in co-operative ventures to obtain economies of scale and gain access to foreign markets. With the increasing internationalisation of the arms trade market, the design and manufacturing technology is transferred to importers so that they can in future become exporters; these factors, coupled with the lack of Cold War restraints, mean that increasingly importers of arms see the possession and ability to manufacture arms as an essential characteristic of a modern nation. The current arms market is therefore increasingly becoming an importer-dominated market. In recent years the greatest importers of arms have been Asian countries, such as China and India.

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This bibliography has been designed to provide a guide as to where to find information on the arms trade. Please note that the list of references below is a selection of the more relevant titles and information on the subject. The list is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive but is an introductory guide to some of the resources available.

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<http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>

United Nations Department For Disarmament Affairs  
<http://www.un.org/disarmament/>

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