

## United Nations Arms Embargoes: Their Impact on Arms Flows and Target Behaviour Summary

- Arms embargoes have frequently been employed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a form of sanction.
- The embargoes that have been introduced since 1990 have been assessed as having a limited impact on both arms flows to, and the behaviour of, embargoed targets.
- Changes in arms flows and target behaviour were studied in 21 cases when UN arms embargoes were threatened, 27 mandatory UN arms embargoes and 11 post-embargo cases in the 17-year period 1990–2006.
- Target behaviour was assessed using data from annual observations of different sets of indicators for each type of case: political statements and actions for embargoes in the Global Security category; political statements and the level of violence against civilians for Government Authority embargoes; and the implementation of peace agreements and the level of battle-related violence for Conflict Management embargoes.
- Assessment of the effectiveness of threatened UN arms embargoes does not show encouraging results. There appears to be a correlation between the imposition of a UN arms embargo and improved target behaviour in only a quarter of the annual observations made for the 27 mandatory UN arms embargoes studied.
- The available data show that the arms and ammunition supplied to embargoed targets in violation of arms embargoes in the categories Government Authority and Conflict Management were predominantly manufactured in China, Europe, Russia or the Soviet Union, and the USA.
- In most of the publicly reported cases of embargo violations, the arms or ammunition reached the embargoed targets only after travelling circuitous routes from the armouries of states in which they were deemed surplus to requirements after the end of the cold war.
- It is unclear whether the presence of UN peacekeepers promotes improved target behaviour or whether peacekeepers tend to be present in situations in which targets are more willing to comply with UN demands. Therefore, UN peacekeeping is not necessarily a causal factor in helping to explain target behaviour in UN arms embargo cases.
- In summary, assessments of UN arms embargoes have highlighted their failure to halt arms flows or significantly change the behaviour of the targets of embargoes.
- The UN arms embargoes that have been imposed since 1990 have not stopped the flow of arms and ammunition to embargoed targets, the continuation and spread of conflicts, the undermining of government authority by non-governmental armed forces, the attempts of regimes to acquire WMD, or international terrorist acts.
- Based upon this review of historical cases, it appears that re-establishment of community infrastructure, and the perception that law and justice will be applied fairly to all individuals irrespective of social or political positions, play a crucial role in restoring stability and security.

### Reference:

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Special Program on the Implementation of Targeted Sanctions at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University. (2007). United Nations Arms Embargoes: Their Impact on Arms Flows and Target Behaviour. [http://books.sipri.org/product\\_info?c\\_product\\_id=356](http://books.sipri.org/product_info?c_product_id=356)