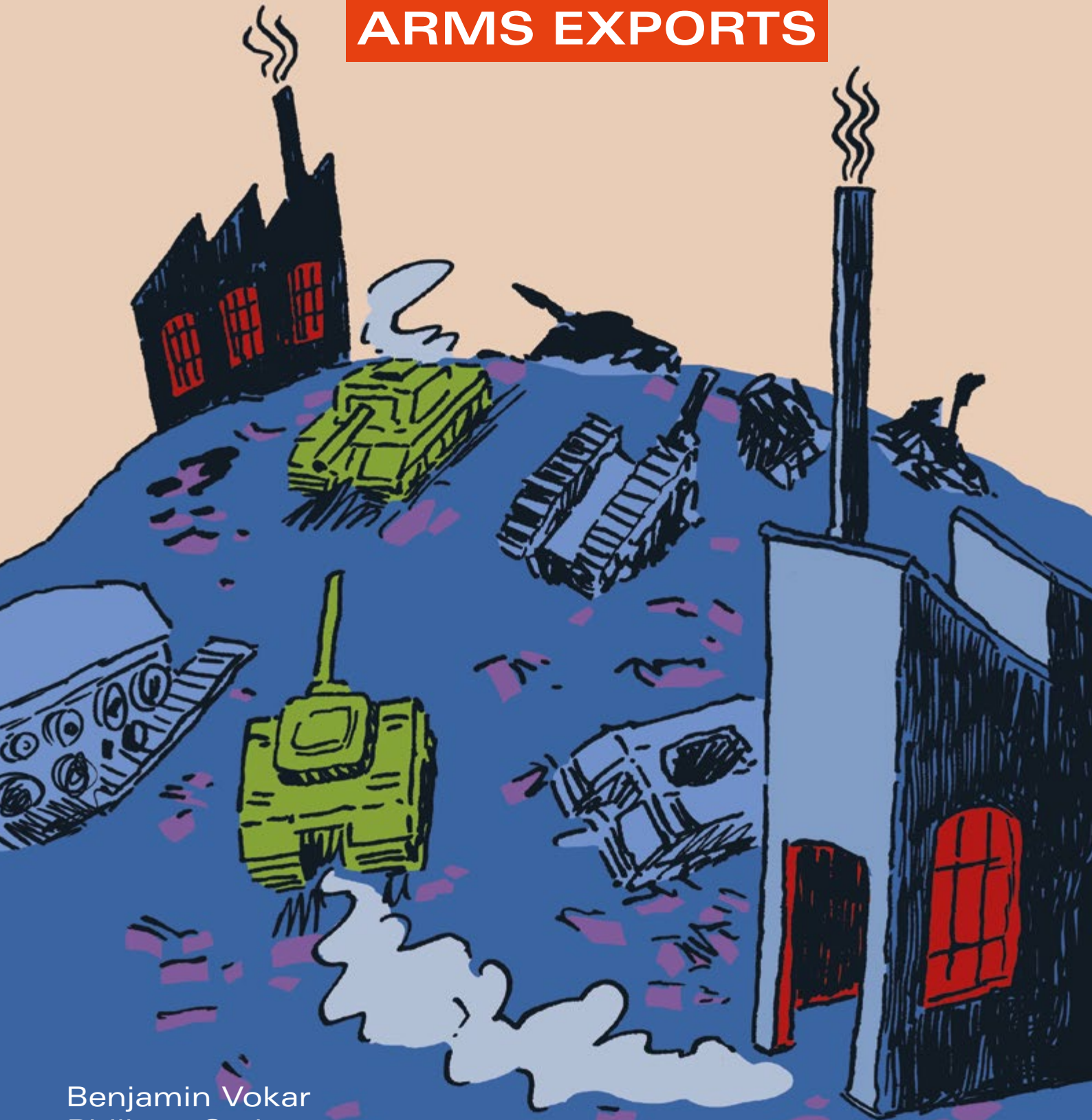


# EUROPE'S DEADLY TRADE: ARMS EXPORTS



Benjamin Vokar  
Philippe Sadzot  
Tomasz



The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is an internationally operating, left-wing non-profit organisation providing civic education. It is affiliated with Germany's «Die Linke» (Left Party). Active since 1990, the foundation has been committed to the analysis of social and political processes and developments worldwide.

The Stiftung works in the context of the growing multiple crises facing our current political and economic system. In cooperation with other progressive organisations around the globe, the Stiftung focuses on democratic and social participation, the empowerment of disadvantaged groups, and alternative economic and social development.

The Stiftung's international activities aim to provide civic education by means of academic analyses, public programmes, and projects conducted together with partner institutions. The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung works towards a more just world and a system based on international solidarity.

[www.rosalux.eu](http://www.rosalux.eu)



The Group for Research and Information on Peace and Security (GRIP) was established in 1979 out of a desire to provide objective and impartial information on issues such as the Cold War, East-West power relations and the balance of terror (missile crisis). In the 1980s, GRIP became particularly well known for its analyses and reports on the arms race.

From the 1990s onwards, following the end of the Cold War, GRIP focused its work on broader security issues, acquiring recognised expertise on questions of armament and disarmament (production, transfer control and regulations, non-proliferation), conflict prevention and management (particularly in Africa), and European integration in the field of defence and security.

GRIP is an independent research centre, recognised as a continuing education organisation by Belgium's French Community. The team is made up of around 20 permanent employees, including researchers, publications and communications officers, and administrative and secretarial staff. Its research activities are also supported by a number of associate researchers, both in Belgium and abroad. GRIP is an active member of many international research networks.

[www.grip.org](http://www.grip.org)

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Text

Benjamin Vokar, a journalist by training, joined the GRIP team in 2013, where he is responsible for communications and publications.

A fan of comics, he came up with the idea for this book and wrote the script with the help of GRIP researchers with expertise in arms transfers, trafficking and trading.



Illustrations

Philippe Sadzot, aka Fifi, is an author, cartoonist and press illustrator who publishes fanzines in Liège (Belgium). A visual arts graduate, he studied at the art college ESA Saint-Luc Liège, where he now teaches drawing and cartoon illustration.

Fifi has experience in all areas of comic-book production and has been involved in the world of independent comics for over 15 years. He also set up the publishing house *poil dans la main*, for which he regularly produces personal fanzines as well as silkscreen posters and postcards.

You can view his work on his blog [fifisadzot.tumblr.com](http://fifisadzot.tumblr.com), which he updates regularly.



Colour

After training as a cartoonist at ESA Saint-Luc Liège, where he met Fifi, Tomasz plunged headlong into the rough-and-tumble world of the comic strip. He contributed to a number of fanzines before becoming an editor at the comic-book collective Atelier 24, which publishes a high-quality magazine with an emphasis on inclusivity.

Now a teacher and a colleague of Fifi, Tomasz expresses himself creatively as a cartoonist, engraver and colourist.

You can discover his latest creations on his Instagram account [@scraboudjas](https://www.instagram.com/scraboudjas).

Thanks also go to Quentin Carez, who worked on the final pages of the comic during his time as an intern. His work can be found on his Instagram account [@goot\\_of\\_the\\_rain](https://www.instagram.com/goot_of_the_rain).

In the language of the arms industry, weapons do not exist. We speak of «defence products or technologies», whose purpose is not to kill but to «protect». We do not talk about deaths either, but about «increased lethality», «impressive qualitative contribution» or «innovation representing great export opportunities».

But beyond these marketing notions, the reality is far less rosy. The weapons we produce here in Europe cause death on the other side of the world. And yes, when we export weapons to a «sensitive country» when all indications are that we should not, we are partly responsible when they «fall into the wrong hands» and cause misery and destruction.

The arms trade is opaque, vast and complex. Colossal sums of money are involved, there is a certain cult of secrecy and it is not always clear what is legal and what is not. A world that is not well known, that we invite you to discover... Follow the guide!

This is not a weapon.



(but a defence technology with  
high export potential)

WEAPONS ARE AS OLD AS HUMANITY ITSELF. ORIGINALLY THEY WERE USED FOR HUNTING AND TO WARD OFF PREDATORS.



BUT THEY SOON CAME TO SERVE OTHER PURPOSES: BRANDISHING POWER OVER FELLOW HUMANS AND GRADUALLY DOMINATING THE WORLD...

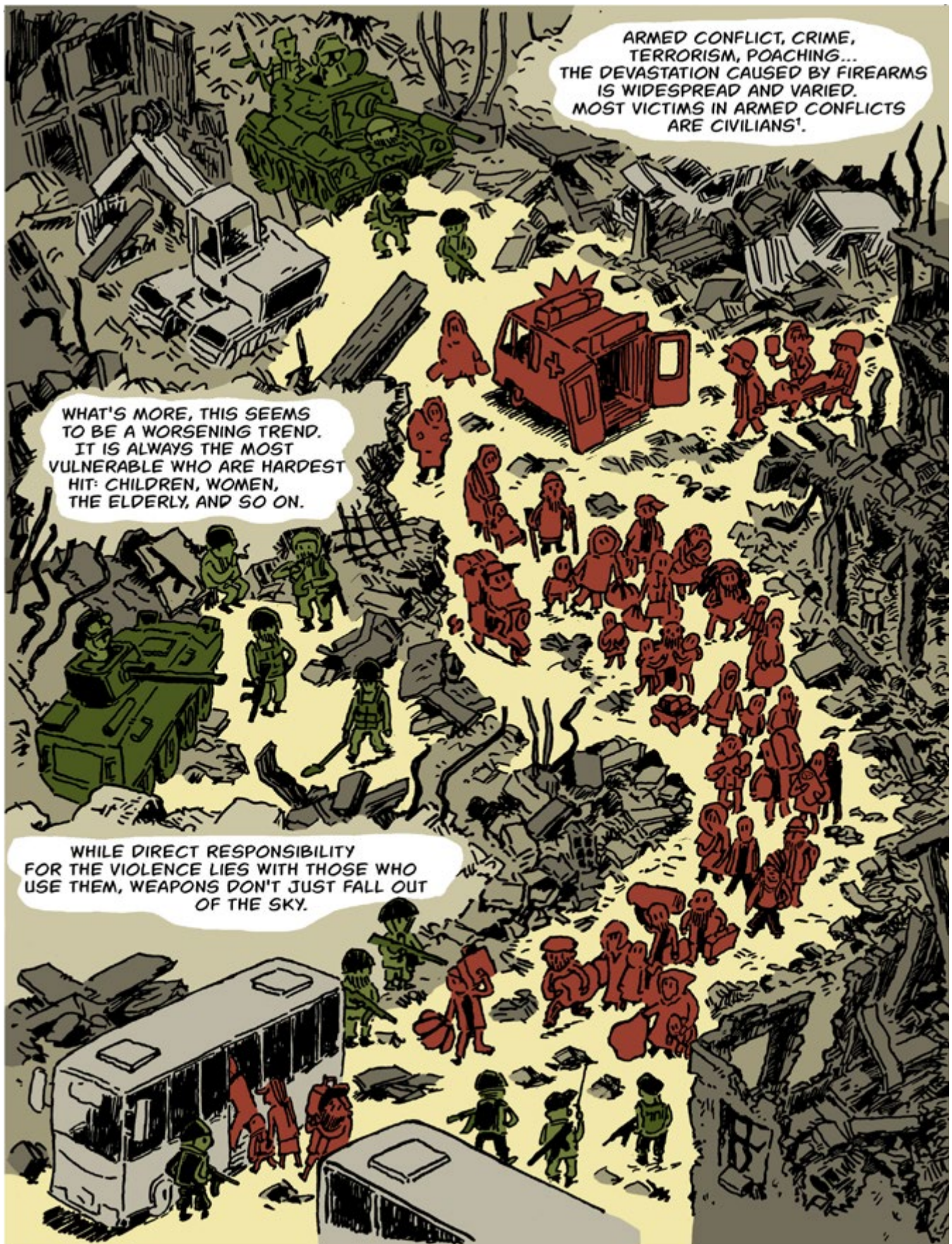


AS CIVILISATION DEVELOPED, WEAPONS BECAME EVER MORE SOPHISTICATED AND INCREASINGLY DESTRUCTIVE

THE PROLIFERATION OF FIREARMS IS NOW A GLOBAL SCOURGE: THERE ARE BELIEVED TO BE OVER A BILLION OF THEM IN EXISTENCE, WITH MORE BEING MANUFACTURED EVERYDAY...



THE WORLD HAS NEVER BEEN AS HEAVILY ARMED AS IT IS TODAY AND, AS WE SHALL SEE, SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BEAR A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS. A CHANGE OF COURSE IS LONG OVERDUE!



ARMED CONFLICT, CRIME, TERRORISM, POACHING... THE DEVASTATION CAUSED BY FIREARMS IS WIDESPREAD AND VARIED. MOST VICTIMS IN ARMED CONFLICTS ARE CIVILIANS<sup>1</sup>.

WHAT'S MORE, THIS SEEMS TO BE A WORSENING TREND. IT IS ALWAYS THE MOST VULNERABLE WHO ARE HARDEST HIT: CHILDREN, WOMEN, THE ELDERLY, AND SO ON.

WHILE DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE VIOLENCE LIES WITH THOSE WHO USE THEM, WEAPONS DON'T JUST FALL OUT OF THE SKY.

THAT'S WHY IT IS WORTH TURNING OUR ATTENTION TO THOSE WHO MAKE AND SELL ARMS, FUELLING CONFLICT AND MAKING HUGE PROFITS IN THE PROCESS. IF WEAPONS ARE THE FUEL OF CONFLICT, THOSE WHO TRADE IN THEM UNDOUBTEDLY SHARE SOME OF THE RESPONSIBILITY...

1. In 2020, almost 90 percent of the victims of explosive weapons used in populated areas were civilians. Protection of civilians in armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 3 May 2021.



ON THE ONE HAND WE HAVE "CONVENTIONAL" WEAPONS, SO CALLED BECAUSE THEY ARE REGULATED BY INTERNATIONAL TREATIES GOVERNING WAR (GENEVA PROTOCOL, HAGUE CONVENTION, ETC.).



ESSENTIALLY, THESE ARE WEAPONS THAT FIGHTERS USE IN CONFLICT, BUT ONLY UNDER VERY SPECIFIC CONDITIONS. TRADE IN THESE WEAPONS IS PERMISSIBLE BUT HEAVILY REGULATED. WELL, IN THEORY AT LEAST. IN REALITY, THIS IS FAR FROM ALWAYS BEING THE CASE, AS WE WILL SEE...





CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS INCLUDE EVERYTHING FROM TANKS AND FIGHTER AIRCRAFT TO MISSILES, ROCKET LAUNCHERS AND FIREARMS OF ALL CALIBRES...

AMONG THE "NON-CONVENTIONAL" WEAPONS WE FIND NUCLEAR, BIOLOGICAL OR CHEMICAL WEAPONS, WHICH ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "MASS DESTRUCTION". FORTUNATELY, TRADE IN THESE IS TOTALLY PROHIBITED!



OVER TIME, OTHER NON-CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS SUCH AS BLINDING LASERS, INCENDIARY WEAPONS, ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND CLUSTER MUNITIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN BANNED UNDER VARIOUS TREATIES... AT LEAST IN THE MAJORITY OF COUNTRIES THAT HAVE RATIFIED THESE TREATIES.



THE TERM "ARMS TRADE" THEREFORE APPLIES ONLY TO CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS. BUT BE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS: CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS MAY NOT BE CLASSIFIED AS WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, BUT THEY ARE NOW THE ONES THAT DO THE MOST DAMAGE, PRETTY MUCH EVERYWHERE ON THE PLANET...



WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE ARMS TRADE, WE OFTEN THINK OF SHADY CHARACTERS DOING DEALS IN CAR PARKS UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, WITH BRIEFCASES BEING MOVED FROM ONE SAFE TO ANOTHER AND WADS OF CASH CHANGING HANDS.



THAT SORT OF THING DOES GO ON, OF COURSE, BUT IT'S LIMITED. IN FACT, MOST OF THE ARMS TRADING IS PERFECTLY LEGAL. BUT JUST BECAUSE A TRADE IS LEGAL DOESN'T MAKE IT ETHICAL. FAR FROM IT...



THE ARMS INDUSTRY IS HIGHLY OPAQUE, AND ARMS TRANSFERS ARE GENERALLY DISCREET (OR EVEN CLANDESTINE), SO DISTINGUISHING WHAT'S LEGAL FROM WHAT ISN'T CAN BE FAR FROM EASY...



ESSENTIALLY, ARMS TRANSFERS ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE CATEGORIES. ON THE ONE HAND, THERE IS THE ILLEGAL SPHERE, KNOWN AS THE BLACK MARKET, IN WHICH WEAPONS ARE TRAFFICKED WITHOUT ANY LICENCES AND IN CONTRAVENTION OF THE LAW...



AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM WE HAVE THE LEGAL SPHERE, I.E. ARMS EXPORTS FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER, WHICH - IN THEORY, AT LEAST - ADHERE SCRUPULOUSLY TO THE TERMS OF ARMS TREATIES.



WE SAY "IN THEORY" BECAUSE THE FACT IS THAT THE TREATIES ARE OPEN TO INTERPRETATION. ULTIMATELY, THERE ARE NEVER ANY GUARANTEES AND WHAT SEEMS LIKE AN INNOCUOUS EXPORT TODAY COULD WELL PROVE PROBLEMATIC IN THE FUTURE.



BETWEEN THESE TWO CATEGORIES, THERE IS THE HUGE GREY AREA OF "IRRESPONSIBLE TRANSFERS" - TECHNICALLY LEGAL BUT HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE FROM AN ETHICAL POINT OF VIEW...

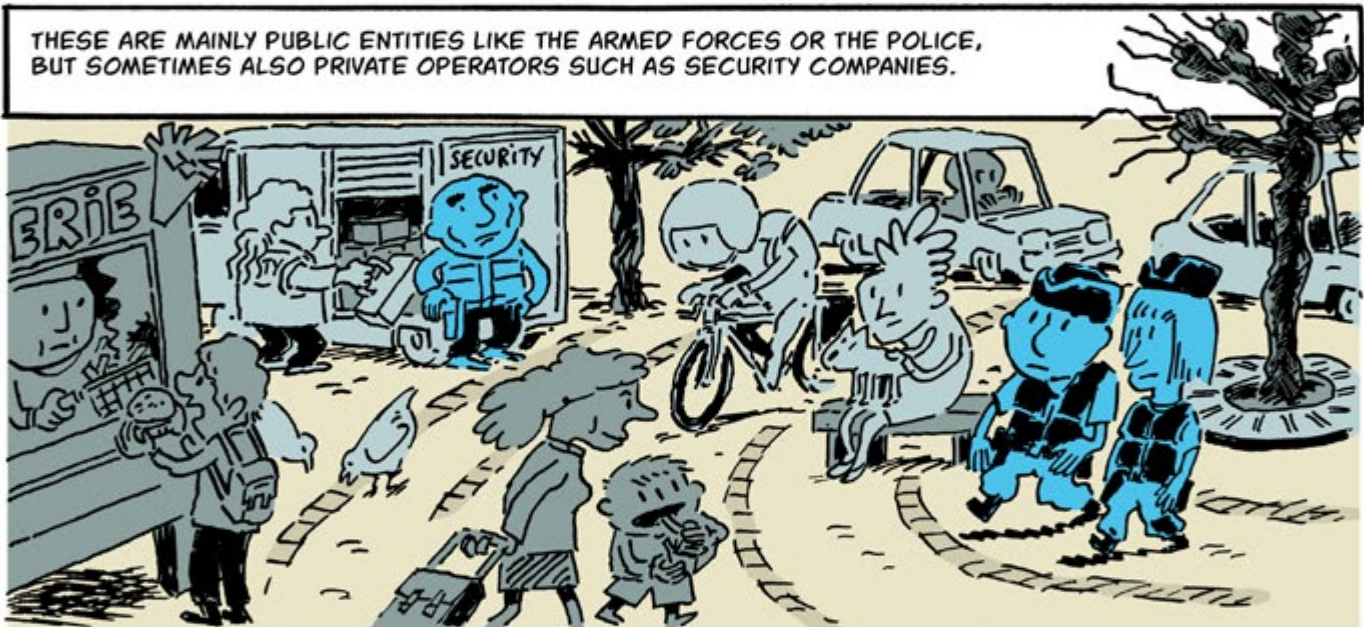
THOUGH EXTREMELY OPAQUE, THE ARMS TRADE IS GOVERNED BY A WHOLE SERIES OF LAWS - AT LEAST ON PAPER.



RULE NUMBER ONE: ARMS CAN ONLY LEGALLY BE EXPORTED TO ACTORS WHO HAVE THE RIGHT TO POSSESS WEAPONS IN THE DESTINATION COUNTRY.



THESE ARE MAINLY PUBLIC ENTITIES LIKE THE ARMED FORCES OR THE POLICE, BUT SOMETIMES ALSO PRIVATE OPERATORS SUCH AS SECURITY COMPANIES.



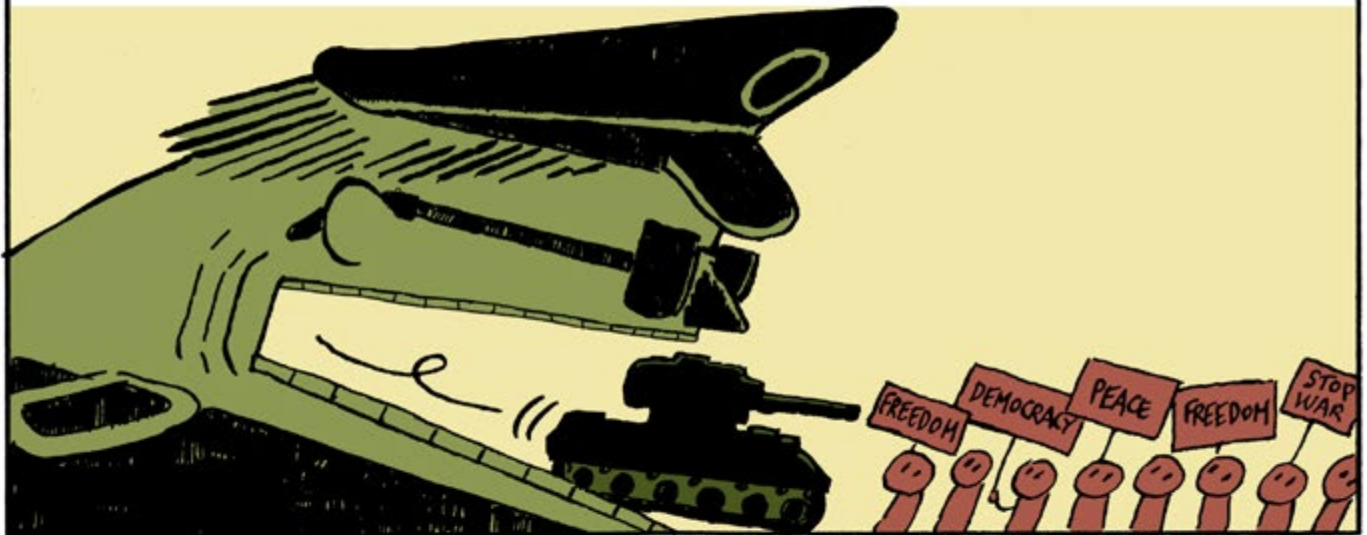
CONVERSELY, TRANSFERS TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ARMED GROUPS ARE BANNED (BY MOST COUNTRIES), UNLESS THESE GROUPS OPERATE UNDER THE CONTROL OF "LEGAL AND LEGITIMATE AUTHORITIES".



THE SECOND RULE IS THAT THE FINAL DECISION ALWAYS RESTS WITH THE EXPORTING COUNTRY: IT ASSESSES THE RISK POSED BY AN ARMS TRANSFER BASED ON THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT OF "END USER" OR "END USE". BASICALLY, IT MUST ESTABLISH WHO THE WEAPONS ARE FOR AND WHAT THEY WILL BE USED FOR.



ARMS EXPORTS ARE ALWAYS A SENSITIVE MATTER, BUT CLEARLY SOME DESTINATIONS ARE MORE PROBLEMATIC THAN OTHERS.



CAN WE GUARANTEE THAT ARMS EXPORTED TO, SAY, THE POLICE FORCE OF A PEACEFUL COUNTRY WON'T ONE DAY BE USED TO COMMIT ACTS OF VIOLENCE?

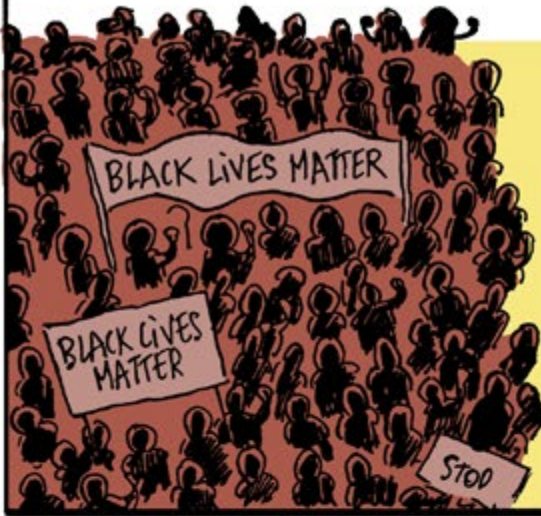


THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE: NO, WE CAN'T! ONCE THE WEAPONS LEAVE OUR COUNTRY, THERE ARE NO MORE GUARANTEES...



EVEN EXPORTS TO OUR ALLIES CAN BE PROBLEMATIC, AS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE SYSTEMIC POLICE VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES...

IN GEOPOLITICS, NO ONE CAN PREDICT THE FUTURE, AND REGIME CHANGES CAN BE SWIFT AND SUDDEN. WHO FORESAW THE COLLAPSE OF THE USSR, THE COLOUR REVOLUTIONS, OR THE ARAB SPRING?



LET ALONE ARMED PROTESTERS STORMING THE US CAPITOL!



LIBYA IS OFTEN CITED AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW QUICKLY THINGS CAN DEGENERATE IN TERMS OF THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS.



THE GADDAFI REGIME RULED THE COUNTRY WITH AN IRON FIST FOR FOUR DECADES, ONLY TO FALTER IN THE SPACE OF A FEW MONTHS. POPULAR PROTEST SOON TURNED INTO ARMED INSURRECTION AND THEN INTO CIVIL WAR...



ONE SIDE EFFECT OF THE FALL OF THE LIBYAN REGIME WAS THAT THE VAST STOCKS OF WEAPONS AMASSED BY THIS VERY GOOD CUSTOMER OF EUROPEAN ARMS DEALERS WERE LOOTED BY THE INSURGENTS. THESE WEAPONS HAVE SINCE BEEN USED IN SEVERAL CONFLICTS IN THE REGION.

BY EXPORTING ARMS TO UNSTABLE PARTS OF THE WORLD, OUR GOVERNMENTS PROLONG THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AND SOW THE SEEDS OF FUTURE CONFLICTS...



TAKE THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, FOR EXAMPLE. BETWEEN 1979 AND 1989, THE UNITED STATES PROVIDED EXTENSIVE SUPPORT TO THE MUJAHIDEEN THROUGH NUMEROUS (SECRET) ARMS SHIPMENTS<sup>1</sup>, WITH THE AIM OF WEAKENING THE USSR.



THE RED ARMY EVENTUALLY WITHDREW, BUT 12 YEARS LATER IT WAS THE TURN OF WESTERN TROOPS, LED BY THE UNITED STATES, TO GET BOGGED DOWN IN THE AFGHAN QUAGMIRE, FIGHTING THE VERY SAME MUJAHIDEEN THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY BACKED TO THE HILT. A FAILED MILITARY INTERVENTION THAT LASTED TWO DECADES AND LEFT THE AFGHAN PEOPLE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE TALIBAN AND AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE.

TO GIVE ANOTHER, MORE RECENT EXAMPLE: THE CIA, WITH FINANCIAL BACKING FROM SAUDI ARABIA, ORGANISED THE TRANSFER OF SEVERAL ARMS SHIPMENTS FROM THE BALKANS TO ARMED GROUPS IN SYRIA. THESE WEAPONS SOON WENT ASTRAY AND SOME ENDED UP BEING USED BY THE ISLAMIC STATE GROUP, MAINLY AGAINST US TROOPS<sup>2</sup>...



SADLY, THESE ARE JUST TWO EXAMPLES AMONG MANY, MANY MORE. WHEN IT COMES TO ARMS EXPORTS, THE BOOMERANG EFFECT IS ALL TOO COMMON.

1. The US and Pakistani secret services collaborated to secretly arm the Afghan mujahideen. These were Soviet weapons, so that there would be no evidence of US involvement.
2. The Pentagon's \$2.2 Billion Soviet Arms Pipeline Flooding Syria, Investigation by the *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network* (BIRN) posted on its website *Balkan Insight*, Ivan Angelovski and Lawrence Marzouk, 12 September 2017.

THIS IS ALL RATHER WORRYING! HOW CAN WE ENSURE THAT THE ARMS EXPORTED BY COUNTRIES HERE IN EUROPE REMAIN IN THE RIGHT HANDS?

THERE ARE VARIOUS TOOLS AND PRACTICES DESIGNED TO LIMIT THE RISKS OF "MISUSE".



TECHNIQUES FOR MARKING AND TRACING WEAPONS, CERTIFICATION PROCESSES FOR ARMS SALES, INFORMATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN COUNTRIES, POST-EXPORT CONTROLS, AND SO ON. WE'LL RUN THROUGH ALL OF THESE LATER.



BUT LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS: EVEN WITH THE MOST SOPHISTICATED CONTROLS, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY FOR CERTAIN THAT AN ARMS EXPORT WILL NOT POSE PROBLEMS LATER. A WEAPON WILL ALWAYS REMAIN A WEAPON, AND THE ONLY WAY TO BE SURE THAT IT WON'T DO ANY MORE DAMAGE IS TO DESTROY IT.



WHEN A STATE ASSESSES THE RISK OF AN ARMS EXPORT, THE IDENTITY OF THE DESTINATION COUNTRY IS A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN ITS DECISION-MAKING. IN THE CASE OF A PARTNER COUNTRY WITH WHICH THE EXPORTING STATE HAS LONG-STANDING TIES, THE DECISION IS USUALLY TAKEN VERY QUICKLY. FOR EXAMPLE, ARMS TRANSFERS WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION ARE GIVEN VERY SWIFT APPROVAL.



IN THE CASE OF MORE "SENSITIVE" RECIPIENTS, I.E. NATIONS EXPERIENCING INTERNAL TENSIONS, EMBROILED IN CONFLICT OR ADJOINING CONFLICT COUNTRIES, THE RISK OF ILLEGAL TRANSFER, MISUSE OR DIVERSION IS OBVIOUSLY MUCH GREATER!



WE'D JUST LIKE TO CHECK THAT YOU ARE RESPECTING THE TERMS OF USE OF THE TANKS WE SOLD YOU FOR SELF-DEFENCE PURPOSES...



THAT'S WHY WE MUST START QUESTIONING THE CURRENT ARMS EXPORT PRACTICES OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. BECAUSE ONCE WEAPONS LEAVE THE EXPORTING COUNTRY, CONTROLLING THEIR "PROPER USE" IS OFTEN AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK...

IN THE END, IT IS ALWAYS THE EXPORTING COUNTRY THAT DECIDES WHETHER TO SELL ARMS. THIS IS A POLITICAL DECISION, INFORMED BY THE DIPLOMATIC CONTEXT AND INEVITABLY SUBJECT TO HEAVY PRESSURE FROM ECONOMIC INTERESTS.



IF ONE COUNTRY REFUSES AN ARMS EXPORT ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS TOO RISKY, ANOTHER MAY PROVE LESS SCRUPULOUS, WELCOMING THE BOOST TO ITS ECONOMY. THIS IS AN ARGUMENT YOU HEAR ALL THE TIME: "IF WE DON'T DO IT, SOMEONE ELSE WILL..."



THE SAME LINE IS TROTTED OUT ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE WHEN NATIONS HOLD BACK ON CUTTING THEIR CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS. SOME COUNTRIES NEED TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THE REST TO FOLLOW...



WITH SOME COUNTRIES, WHAT THEY SAY AND WHAT THEY DO ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT THINGS.



THEY MAKE NOBLE-SOUNDING DECLARATIONS ABOUT RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND WORLD PEACE WHILE CONTINUING WITH IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS SALES THAT PROLONG CONFLICTS...



LEAVING ASIDE THE LEGALITY OR OTHERWISE OF ARMS EXPORTS, THIS IS ABOVE ALL AN ETHICAL ISSUE. SHOULD THE GOVERNMENTS OF DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY CONTINUE TO EXPORT ARMS TO FRAGILE PARTS OF THE WORLD WHEN THEY KNOW FULL WELL THAT THIS WILL ONLY EXACERBATE THE PROBLEMS IN THESE REGIONS?



BUT LET'S REMAIN OPTIMISTIC! COUNTRIES CAN ALSO CHOOSE TO PURSUE A DIFFERENT POLICY BY INITIATING ACTION TO CHANGE THINGS FOR THE BETTER. IN TERMS OF DISARMAMENT, THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION SHOWS WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED WHEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND A FEW COMMITTED STATES JOIN FORCES - SOMETHING ONCE THOUGHT IMPOSSIBLE BECOMES A REALITY!



IN THE 1990S, THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO BAN LANDMINES BROUGHT TOGETHER A WHOLE NETWORK OF NGOS. BY MEANS OF DEMONSTRATIONS AND POLITICAL LOBBYING, THEY EVENTUALLY PERSUADED A FEW NATIONS TO PUSH FOR CHANGES TO THE RULES...



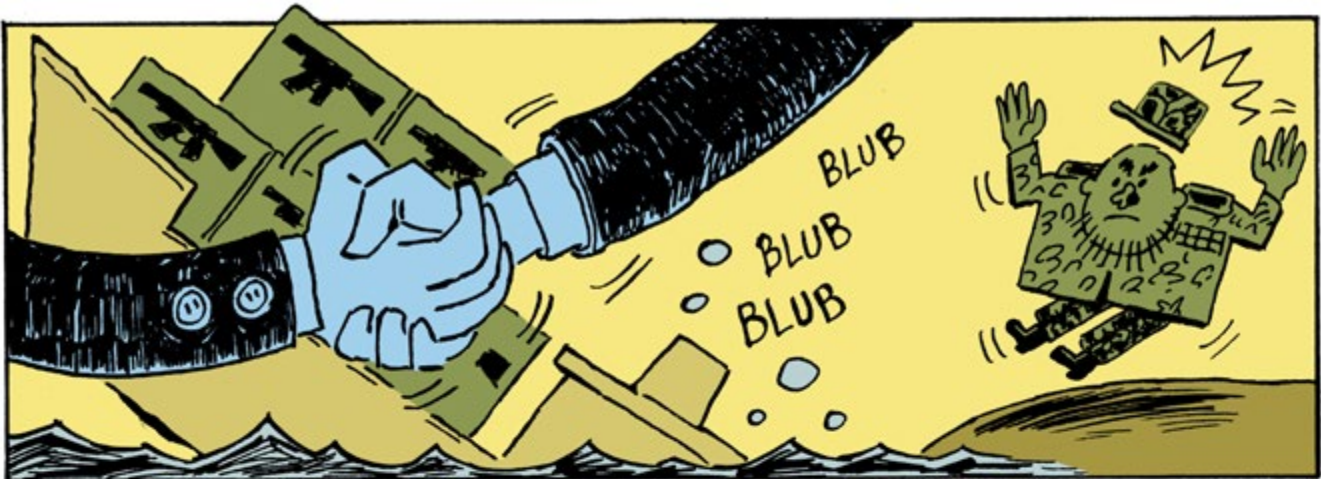
AFTER LENGTHY NEGOTIATIONS IN THE UN, THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION FINALLY CAME INTO FORCE IN 1999. IT NOW HAS 164 STATE PARTIES! INEVITABLY, THERE ARE STILL A FEW COUNTRIES HOLDING OUT (CHINA, INDIA, NORTH KOREA, PAKISTAN, THE UNITED STATES, ETC.), BUT FOR THE VAST MAJORITY THE RULES HAVE CHANGED!



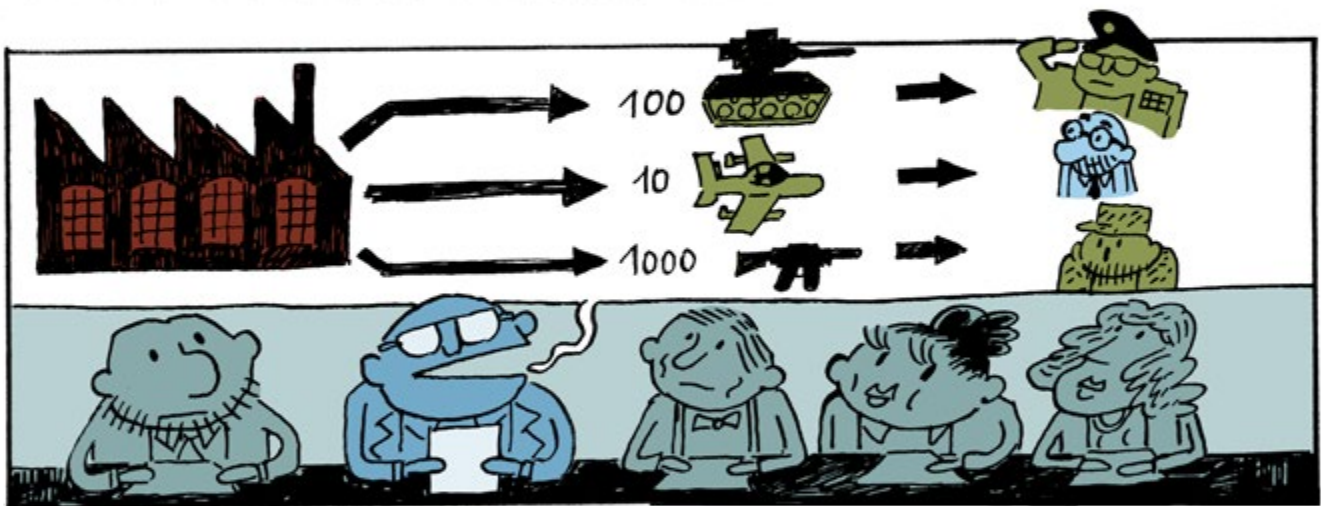
WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS TO TAKE THEIR SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND CHANGE LAWS, CIVIL SOCIETY HAS A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY!



A LOT HAS CHANGED IN TERMS OF ARMS TRADE CONTROL IN RECENT YEARS. AN ARRAY OF RULES AND TREATIES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED, AIMED AT BETTER CONTROLLING THE LEGAL ARMS TRADE AND COMBATING ILLICIT TRAFFICKING.



MOST COUNTRIES NOW HAVE DOMESTIC RULES GOVERNING THEIR ARMS EXPORTS. GOVERNMENTS ARE ACCOUNTABLE<sup>1</sup> TO THEIR PARLIAMENTS AND MUST JUSTIFY THE DECISIONS THEY MAKE.



HERE TOO, CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IS CRUCIAL! WHEN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS UNCOVER VIOLATIONS OR WHEN CITIZENS' MOVEMENTS CHALLENGE ELECTED POLITICIANS, THEY HOLD THEM PUBLICLY ACCOUNTABLE... PUTTING PRESSURE ON POLITICIANS IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE!

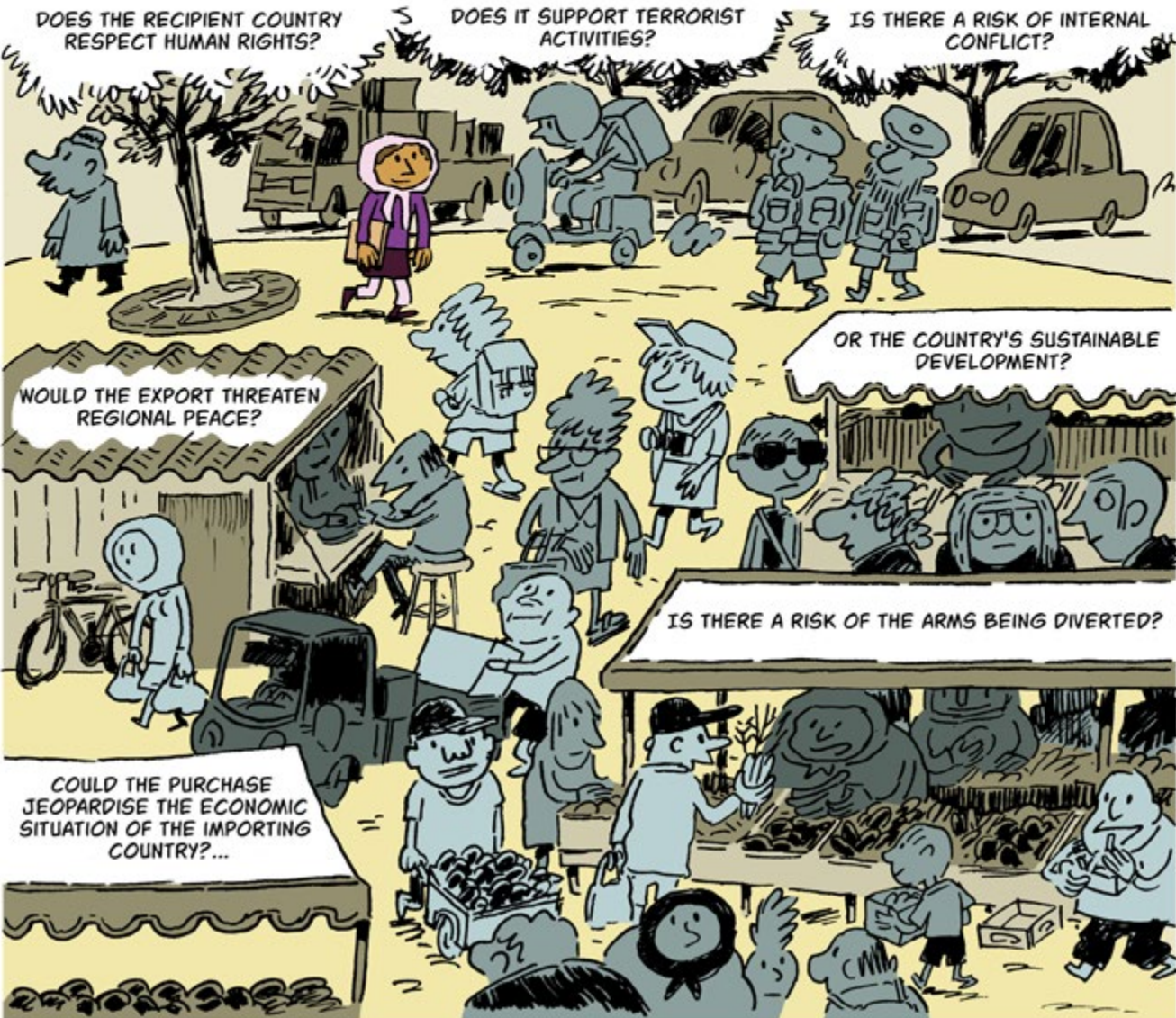


1. Reporting requirements vary in frequency and level of detail from country to country. Trade update 2019. Transfers, Transparency, and South-east Asia Spotlight, Small Arms Survey report, Michael Picard, Paul Holtom and Fiona Mangan, December 2019.

IN ADDITION TO NATIONAL AND REGIONAL RULES, THERE ARE TWO MAJOR TREATIES GOVERNING THE ARMS TRADE.



AT EU LEVEL, THE COMMON POSITION<sup>1</sup>, ADOPTED IN 2008, SETS OUT EIGHT SPECIFIC CRITERIA WHICH MEMBER STATES MUST CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO AUTHORISE AN ARMS SALE.



ON PAPER, THIS IS A STEP FORWARD. UNFORTUNATELY, CONFLICTS LIKE THE WAR IN YEMEN HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE LIMITATIONS OF THE COMMON POSITION. IN REALITY, IT FAILS TO PREVENT EUROPEAN ARMS EXPORTS THAT FUEL CONFLICT...

1. Full text: Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment.

THE OBJECTIVE REMAINS A COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED EU APPROACH. BUT AS LONG AS THE RULES REMAIN UNCLEAR, SOME MEMBER STATES WILL CONTINUE TO INTERPRET THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN INTERESTS.



THE SECOND MAJOR TREATY IS A GLOBAL ONE: THE ARMS TRADE TREATY<sup>1</sup>. THE RESULT OF CAMPAIGNING BY NUMEROUS NGOS AND PEACE MOVEMENTS, THE TREATY WAS ADOPTED IN 2013 AND HAS ALREADY BEEN RATIFIED BY MORE THAN 100 STATES!



AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT PROHIBITS THE SALE OF ARMS TO COUNTRIES THAT COMMIT SERIOUS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS OR THE LAW OF WAR, SUCH AS THE TARGETING OF CIVILIANS. IT ALSO PROHIBITS THEIR SALE TO COUNTRIES THAT TRANSFER WEAPONS TO NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS (EXCEPT WITH THE SPECIFIC PERMISSION OF THE SELLING COUNTRY).



1. The Arms Trade Treaty was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 2 April 2013. Following its signature by 130 states, it entered into force on 24 December 2014.

THIS TREATY IS NOW CONSIDERED A LANDMARK TEXT IN ARMS TRADE CONTROL, ALTHOUGH IT REMAINS LIMITED IN ITS APPLICATION. MAJOR ARMS EXPORTERS SUCH AS THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA NEED TO FINALLY DECIDE TO RATIFY IT...



ANOTHER IMPORTANT DECISION THAT AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION SUCH AS THE UN, EU OR AU (AFRICAN UNION) CAN TAKE IS TO DECLARE AN EMBARGO<sup>1</sup> ON ARMS BOUND FOR A COUNTRY OR REGION, SO AS NOT TO ESCALATE A CONFLICT. THIS IS A BOLD STEP AND PROOF THAT MULTILATERALISM CAN, IN SOME CASES, WORK TO END HOSTILITIES.



SO THERE'S STILL A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE! AND NOW I'LL HAND OVER TO A MEMBER OF THE CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS, AN INITIATIVE THAT'S STILL IN ITS EARLY DAYS...



INDEED, THERE ARE STILL MANY PROBLEMS THAT WE NEED TO ADDRESS!



1. This international sanction involves a partial or total restriction of arms transfers to one or more recipients. It aims to encourage the combatants to negotiate an end to hostilities. For more details, check out the GRIP database of arms embargoes.



THE CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS IS A COALITION OF NGOs SEEKING TO RAISE AWARENESS AMONG THE PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENTS ABOUT THE DANGERS POSED BY DEVELOPMENTS IN WEAPONS TECHNOLOGY...



ROBOTISATION IS GAINING GROUND IN ALL SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY AND THE DEFENCE INDUSTRY IS NO EXCEPTION. IN FACT, ROBOTS MAKE PERFECT SOLDIERS: THEY DON'T NEED TO SLEEP OR EAT, THEY ALWAYS FOLLOW ORDERS, THEY CAN'T BE BRIBED...



BUT WITH THE EXPONENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, WEAPONS SYSTEMS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY AUTONOMOUS IN THE "CRITICAL FUNCTIONS" OF TARGET SELECTION AND ATTACK... THEREFORE, THERE IS A REAL RISK THAT, AT SOME POINT, THEY WILL NO LONGER NEED HUMAN AUTHORISATION WHEN MAKING THE DECISION TO KILL.



IF AN ARMED SYSTEM IS PROGRAMMED TO MONITOR A BORDER AND SHOOT ANYONE WHO TRIES TO CROSS IT, WILL IT BE ABLE TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ARMED ASSAILANT, A REPORTER WITH A CAMERA, OR A MOTHER FLEEING WAR WITH HER BABY IN HER ARMS?

AND IF SOMETHING DOES GO WRONG, WHO WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE? WHOEVER PROGRAMMED THE SYSTEM? THE MANUFACTURER? THE PURCHASER? THE PERSON WHO INSTALLED IT? THERE ARE SO MANY QUESTIONS...



THESE CONCERNS AREN'T JUST BEING RAISED BY PEACE ACTIVISTS; MANY PEOPLE ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE LACK OF A LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN THIS AREA.

NOT LEAST ROBOTICS EXPERTS, AND EVEN THE CURRENT SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UN, ANTONIO GUTERRES, WHO SAID IN LATE 2018:

*"IMAGINE THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN AUTONOMOUS SYSTEM THAT COULD, BY ITSELF, TARGET AND ATTACK HUMAN BEINGS. I CALL UPON STATES TO BAN THESE WEAPONS, WHICH ARE POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE AND MORALLY REPUGNANT."*

A CONSENSUS SEEMS TO BE FORMING TODAY ON THE NEED TO MAINTAIN SOME FORM OF HUMAN CONTROL IN THE USE OF FORCE. BUT AS ALWAYS, NEGOTIATING A LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT WILL TAKE TIME...

IN SHORT, WE NEED SUPPORT, MOTIVATED ACTIVISTS, AND STATES THAT ASSUME THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES!



THERE IS STILL A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE WITHIN PARLIAMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS TO BETTER CONTROL OR EVEN BAN ARMS EXPORTS. AT THE SAME TIME, WE ALSO NEED TO STRENGTHEN A NUMBER OF TOOLS ENABLING US TO DETECT ABUSES AND SOUND THE ALARM IN TIME!



THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ESSENTIAL TOOLS TO LIMIT ARMS TRAFFICKING AND THE RISK OF DIVERSION...

LET'S START WITH THE MARKING AND TRACING OF WEAPONS.

MARKING IS LIKE AN ID CARD FOR A WEAPON; IT CAN TELL US A LOT ABOUT IT:



THE SERIAL NUMBER

THE MANUFACTURER'S NAME

THE YEAR OF MANUFACTURE

THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

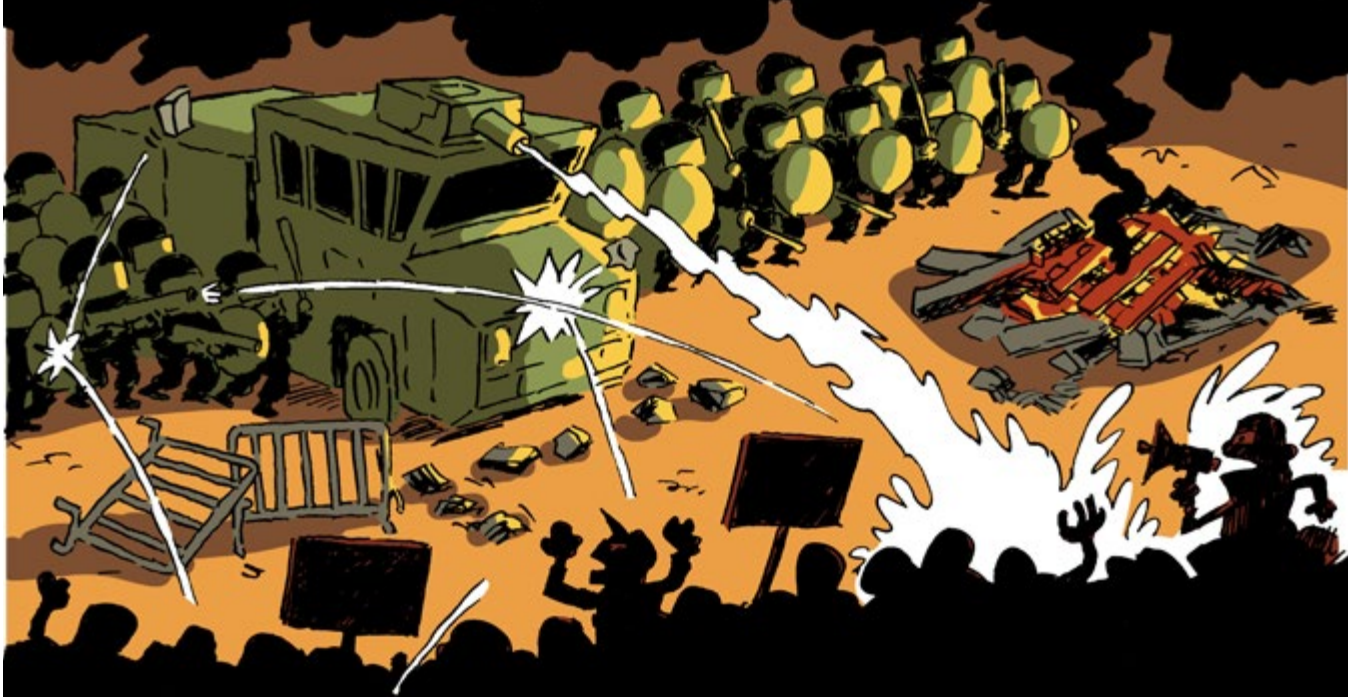
THIS INFORMATION MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO TRACK THE WEAPON'S JOURNEY FROM MANUFACTURE TO DELIVERY.

POSSIBLY EVEN THE BATTALION FOR WHICH IT IS INTENDED...



1. Such as Conflict Armament Research, a British organisation that carries out investigations in conflict zones to find the origin of weapons and ammunition.
2. The iTrace tool, for example, funded by the European Union and Germany, provides a clearer overview of the provenance of weapons and ammunition recovered in war zones.

THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS IS ANOTHER VITAL TOOL FOR CURBING ABUSES. THE IMPORTING STATE ISSUES A CERTIFICATE OF USE TO THE EXPORTER, IDENTIFYING THE RECIPIENT OF THE WEAPONS AND SPECIFYING HOW THEY WILL BE USED. BASED ON THIS, THE EXPORTING STATE CAN THEN IMPOSE CONDITIONS ON THE SALE...



FOR EXAMPLE, IT MAY REQUIRE THAT WEAPONS INTENDED FOR GOVERNMENT FORCES IN A COUNTRY BE USED "FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES ONLY AND REMAIN ON NATIONAL TERRITORY"

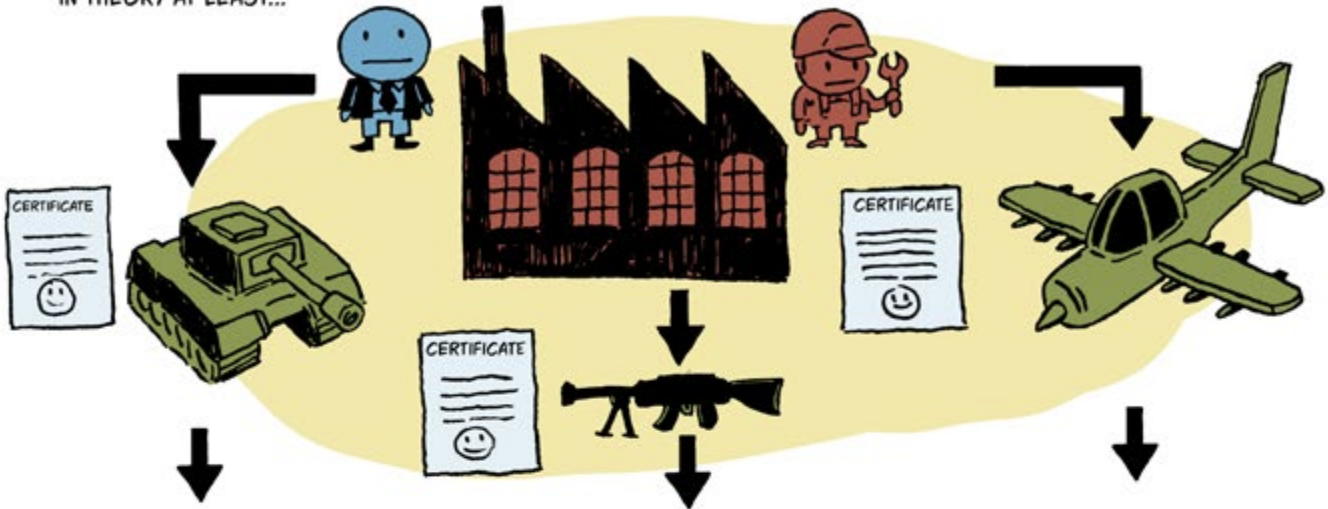


THESE CERTIFICATES ENABLE BETTER CONTROL OF ARMS EXPORTS BY FACILITATING THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN THE EXPORTING STATE AND THE RECEIVING STATE, PROVIDED THAT BOTH ARE ACTING IN GOOD FAITH<sup>1</sup>. PROMISES ONLY BIND THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THEM...

1. There have been several instances where receiving states have ordered weapons for their government forces, only to then illegally transfer them to armed groups serving their geostrategic interests. In early 2020, for example, the United Arab Emirates flew more than 150 cargoes of weapons to Libya to support Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar's forces. Report of the (UN) Panel of Experts on Libya, 8 March 2021.

THESE CERTIFICATES ARE PARTICULARLY USEFUL IF THEY ARE COMBINED WITH INFORMATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN EXPORTING STATES AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE BLACKLISTING OF HIGH-RISK COUNTRIES AND COMPANIES.

POST-EXPORT CONTROLS ARE ANOTHER TOOL TO BETTER ENSURE THE PROPER USE OF EXPORTED WEAPONS, IN THEORY AT LEAST...



EXPERTS ARE SENT TO THE RECIPIENT COUNTRY TO CHECK THAT THE WEAPONS ARE STILL WHERE THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE AND SO HAVEN'T BEEN TRANSFERRED ELSEWHERE. UNFORTUNATELY, THESE CHECKS ARE EXPENSIVE AND ALWAYS DEPEND ON THE GOODWILL OF THE RECIPIENT COUNTRY. IF THE RECEIVING COUNTRY REFUSES TO ALLOW THE INSPECTION, THERE ISN'T A LOT THAT THE EXPORTING STATE CAN DO, OTHER THAN DECIDE NOT TO EXPORT ANY MORE WEAPONS TO THAT COUNTRY IN THE FUTURE AND REPORT THE MATTER TO OTHER STATES...



THESE TOOLS EACH CONTRIBUTE IN THEIR OWN WAY TO MORE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF ARMS EXPORTS.



THAT SAID, THEY ALL HAVE THEIR SHORTCOMINGS, AND UNFORTUNATELY THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF EXAMPLES TO BACK THIS UP.



IT WOULD BE WRONG TO THINK THAT BETTER CONTROLS ALONE WILL MAKE THE PROBLEMS GO AWAY.

AS LONG AS MASSIVE QUANTITIES OF ARMS CONTINUE TO BE EXPORTED TO SENSITIVE REGIONS AND TOTALITARIAN REGIMES, THERE ARE GOING TO BE ABUSES...



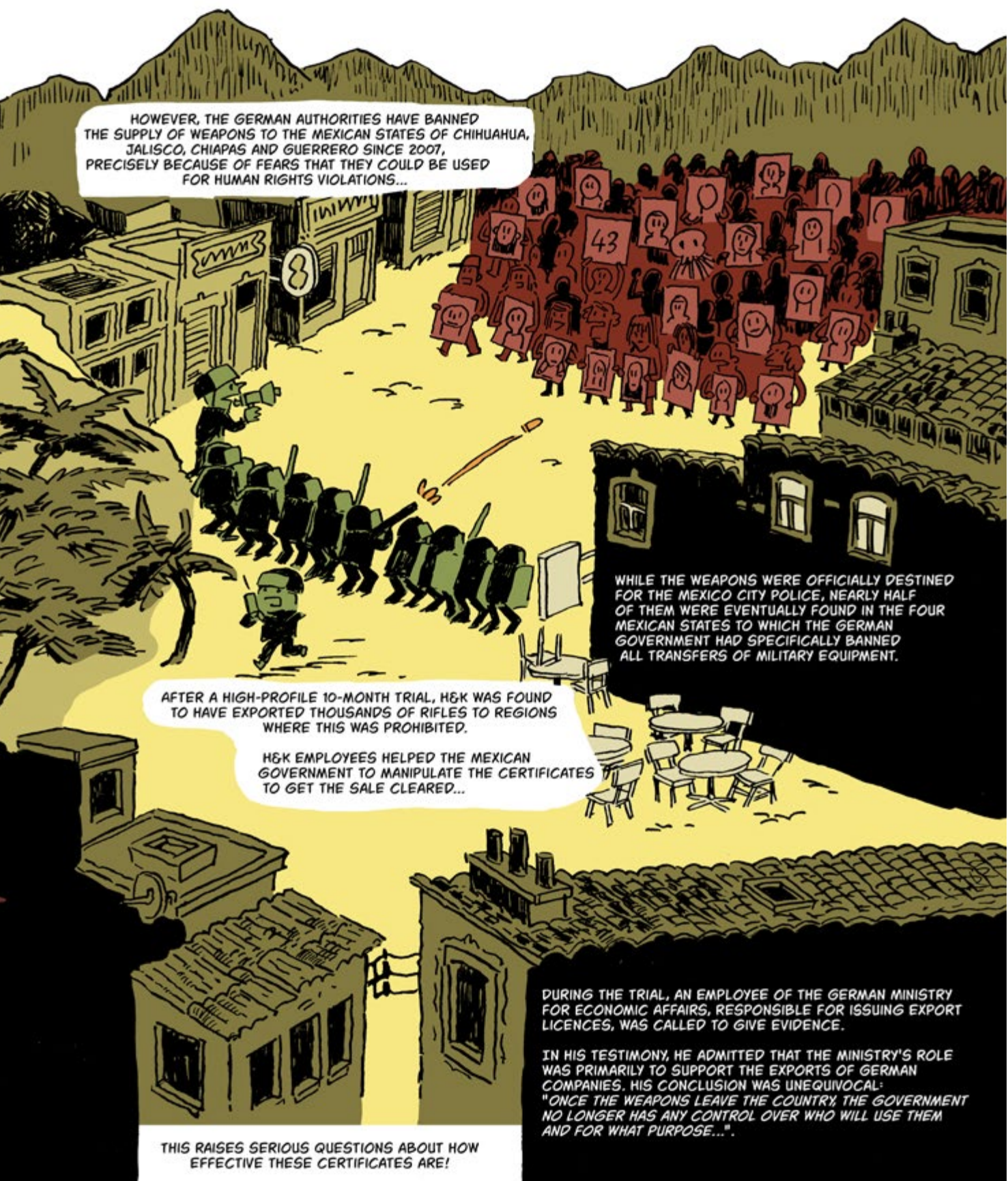
HERE ARE TWO VERY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES, FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND MEXICO, TO ILLUSTRATE THE LIMITS OF THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS.

LET'S START WITH SAUDI ARABIA, WHERE NEXTER, A COMPANY ENTIRELY OWNED BY THE FRENCH STATE, SOLD OVER 100 CAESAR SELF-PROPELLED HOWITZERS TO THE SAUDI ARMED FORCES...



1. Yemen Papers, investigation by investigative journalism NGO Disclose in partnership with Mediapart, Konbini, Radio France, Arte and The Intercept, April 2019.

NOW LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION TO MEXICO, WHERE ANOTHER TRAGEDY UNFOLDED...  
IN 2014, POLICE IN THE MEXICAN STATE OF GUERRERO WERE PHOTOGRAPHED OPENING FIRE ON A STUDENT PROTEST.  
THE WEAPONS USED IN THIS BLOODBATH WERE FOUND TO BE G36 ASSAULT RIFLES MADE BY THE GERMAN COMPANY  
HECKLER & KOCH.



HOWEVER, THE GERMAN AUTHORITIES HAVE BANNED  
THE SUPPLY OF WEAPONS TO THE MEXICAN STATES OF CHIHUAHUA,  
JALISCO, CHIAPAS AND GUERRERO SINCE 2007,  
PRECISELY BECAUSE OF FEARS THAT THEY COULD BE USED  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS...

WHILE THE WEAPONS WERE OFFICIALLY DESTINED  
FOR THE MEXICO CITY POLICE, NEARLY HALF  
OF THEM WERE EVENTUALLY FOUND IN THE FOUR  
MEXICAN STATES TO WHICH THE GERMAN  
GOVERNMENT HAD SPECIFICALLY BANNED  
ALL TRANSFERS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

AFTER A HIGH-PROFILE 10-MONTH TRIAL, H&K WAS FOUND  
TO HAVE EXPORTED THOUSANDS OF RIFLES TO REGIONS  
WHERE THIS WAS PROHIBITED.

H&K EMPLOYEES HELPED THE MEXICAN  
GOVERNMENT TO MANIPULATE THE CERTIFICATES  
TO GET THE SALE CLEARED...

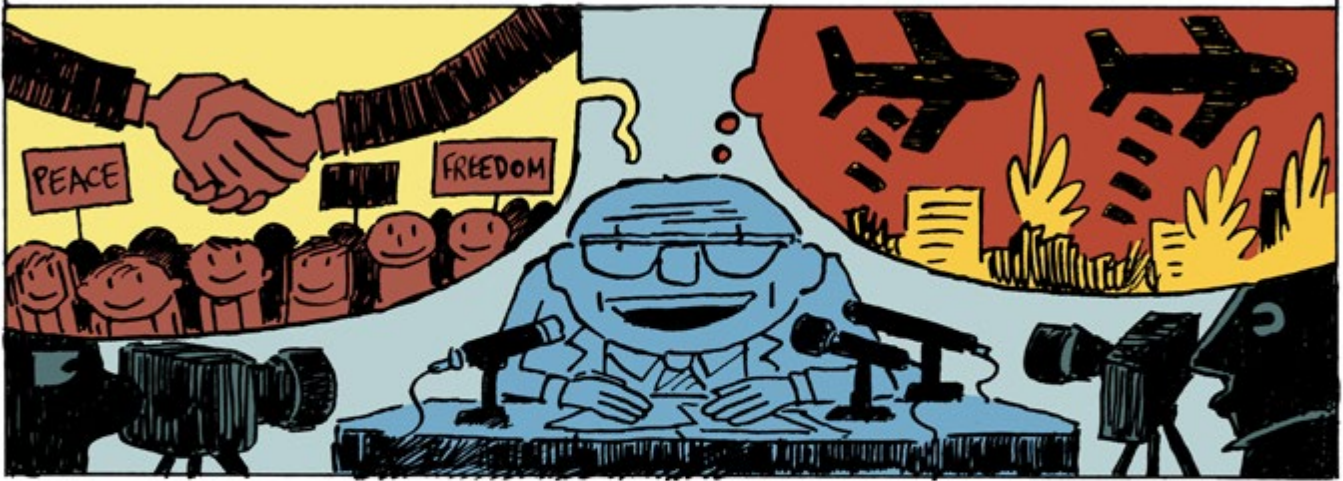
DURING THE TRIAL, AN EMPLOYEE OF THE GERMAN MINISTRY  
FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, RESPONSIBLE FOR ISSUING EXPORT  
LICENCES, WAS CALLED TO GIVE EVIDENCE.

IN HIS TESTIMONY, HE ADMITTED THAT THE MINISTRY'S ROLE  
WAS PRIMARILY TO SUPPORT THE EXPORTS OF GERMAN  
COMPANIES. HIS CONCLUSION WAS UNEQUIVOCAL:  
"ONCE THE WEAPONS LEAVE THE COUNTRY, THE GOVERNMENT  
NO LONGER HAS ANY CONTROL OVER WHO WILL USE THEM  
AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE..."

THIS RAISES SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW  
EFFECTIVE THESE CERTIFICATES ARE!



IN OFFICIAL SPEECHES, EVERYONE AGREES THAT A LESS ARMED WORLD IS DESIRABLE AND THAT THE ARMS TRADE NEEDS TO BE BETTER CONTROLLED. BUT IN REALITY, IT IS PRIMARILY STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS THAT DICTATE THE WAY FORWARD...



WHEN WE LOOK AT WHO THE BIGGEST ARMS EXPORTERS ARE<sup>1</sup>, THEY TURN OUT TO BE THE MAJOR WORLD POWERS. LEADING THE WAY (BY SOME MARGIN) IS THE UNITED STATES, FOLLOWED BY RUSSIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, CHINA, AND THE UNITED KINGDOM. TOGETHER, THESE SIX GIANTS ACCOUNT FOR AROUND 80 PERCENT OF GLOBAL ARMS EXPORTS!

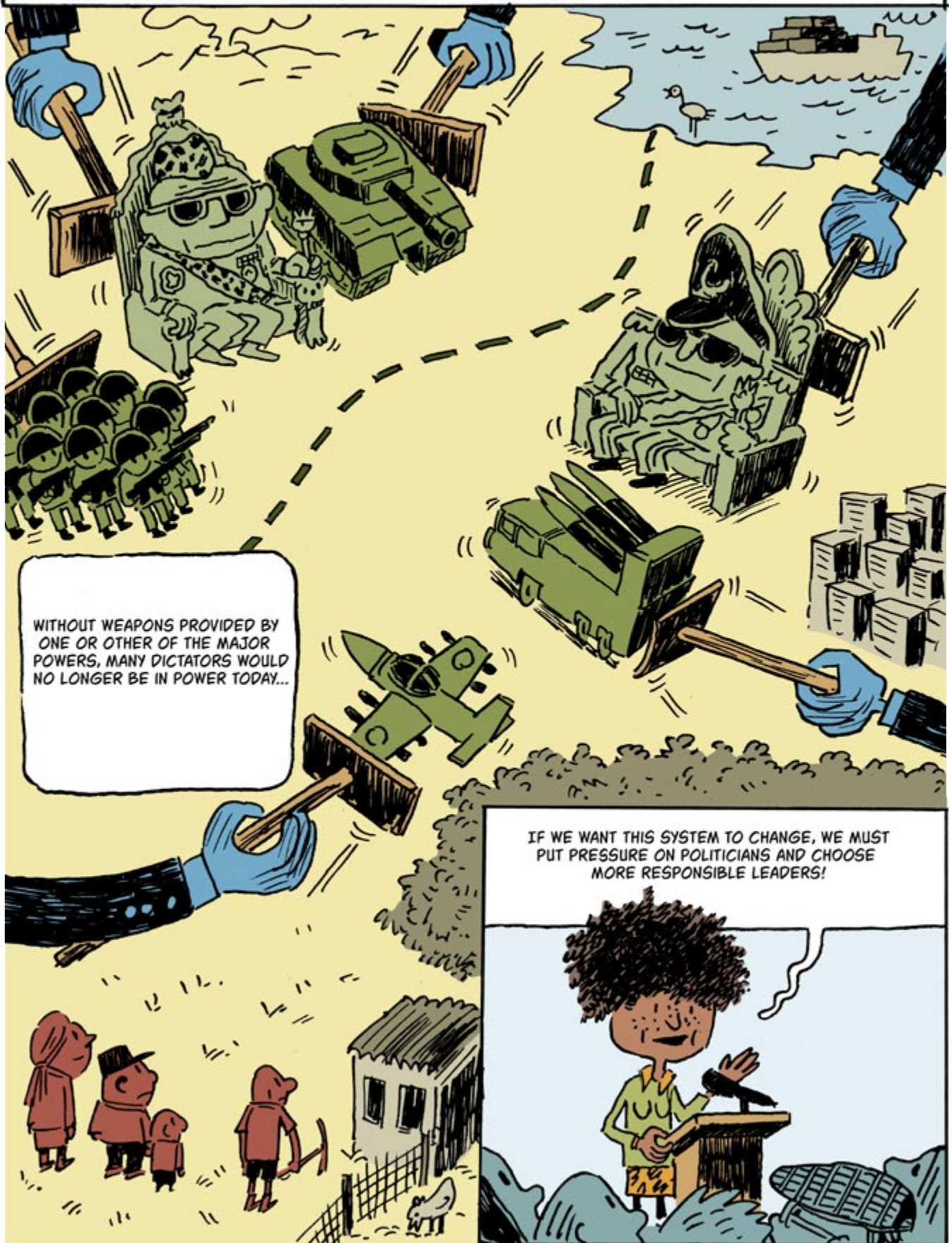


APART FROM GERMANY, THE ARMS INDUSTRY HEAVYWEIGHTS ARE ALSO ALL PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, SUPPOSEDLY THE GUARANTOR OF WORLD PEACE... IS THIS JUST A COINCIDENCE?



1. World's largest arms exporters in 2015–19, SIPRI database, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

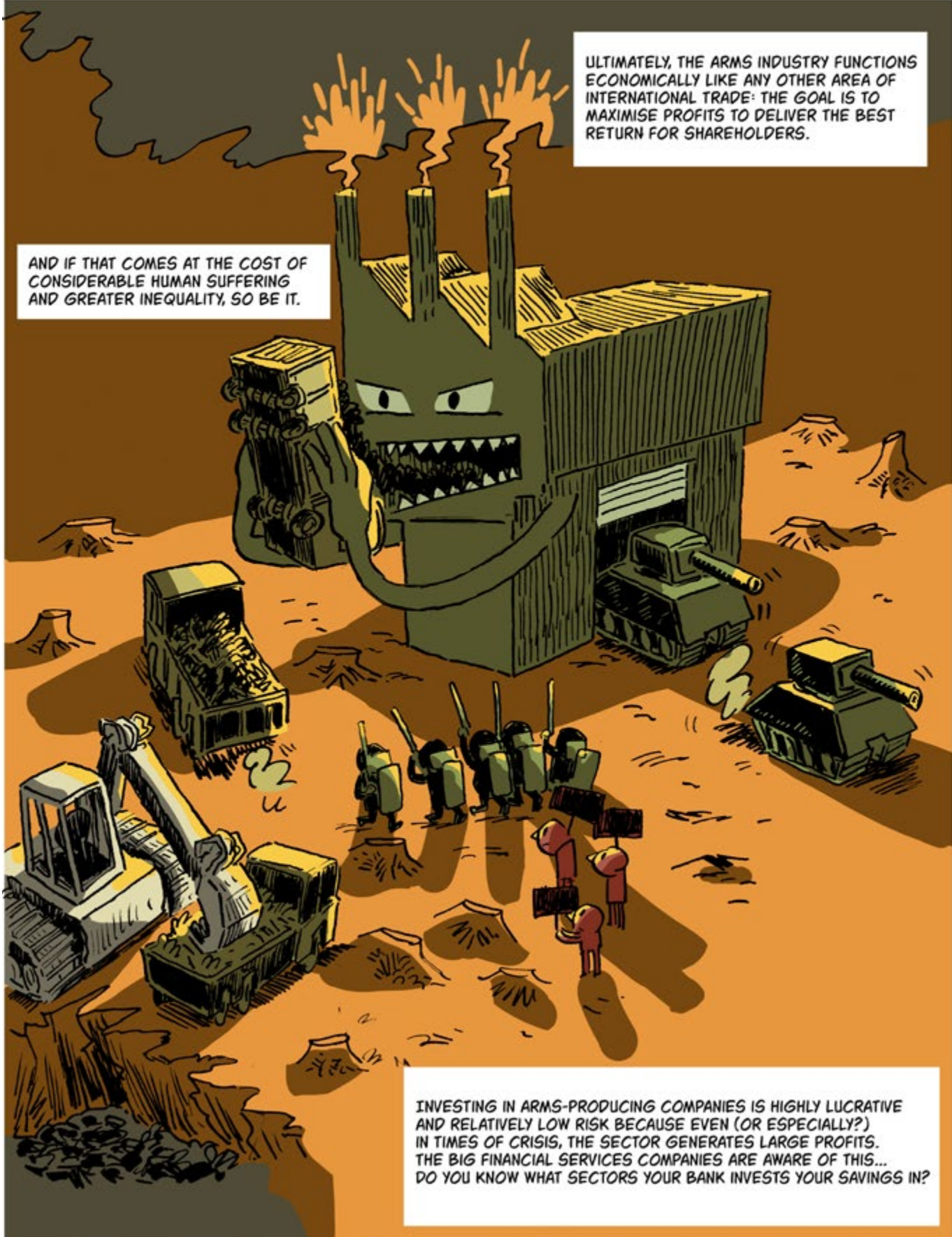
STATES, ESPECIALLY THE MOST POWERFUL ONES, ALWAYS TRY TO MAINTAIN THEIR LEVEL OF INFLUENCE OVER THE WORLD. ETHICS ASIDE, ARMS EXPORTS (WHETHER LEGAL OR SECRET) REMAIN A KEY STRATEGIC LEVER FOR SUPPORTING AN ALLY OR WEAKENING A RIVAL AND REDRAWING THE WORLD MAP TO ONE'S OWN ADVANTAGE.



ANOTHER KEY FACTOR HAMPERING MOVES TOWARDS A LESS ARMED WORLD IS THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM. CAPITALISM IS A PRODUCTION SYSTEM UNDERPINNED ESSENTIALLY BY PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND FREEDOM OF THE MARKET, WHICH MEANS THAT IT IS GEARED TOWARDS CONSTANT EXPANSION AND HATES CONSTRAINTS. ANY REGULATION AIMED AT BETTER CONTROLLING THE ARMS TRADE CAN THEREFORE ALSO BE SEEN AS AN OBSTACLE TO THE FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS AND A BRAKE ON EXPORTS...

ULTIMATELY, THE ARMS INDUSTRY FUNCTIONS ECONOMICALLY LIKE ANY OTHER AREA OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE: THE GOAL IS TO MAXIMISE PROFITS TO DELIVER THE BEST RETURN FOR SHAREHOLDERS.

AND IF THAT COMES AT THE COST OF CONSIDERABLE HUMAN SUFFERING AND GREATER INEQUALITY, SO BE IT.



INVESTING IN ARMS-PRODUCING COMPANIES IS HIGHLY LUCRATIVE AND RELATIVELY LOW RISK BECAUSE EVEN (OR ESPECIALLY?) IN TIMES OF CRISIS, THE SECTOR GENERATES LARGE PROFITS. THE BIG FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPANIES ARE AWARE OF THIS... DO YOU KNOW WHAT SECTORS YOUR BANK INVESTS YOUR SAVINGS IN?

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE 100 LARGEST ARMS-PRODUCING FIRMS<sup>1</sup> WE FIND THAT 43 OF THEM ARE AMERICAN, INCLUDING THE TOP FIVE!

GOD BLESS AMERICA!



BUT IT WOULD BE WRONG TO POINT THE FINGER ONLY AT THE AMERICANS. FOR ALL ITS RHETORIC ON HUMAN RIGHTS, EUROPE, THE HISTORICAL CRADLE OF ARMS MANUFACTURING, ISN'T FAR BEHIND...



BETWEEN 2015 AND 2019, EU MEMBER STATES ACCOUNTED FOR A QUARTER OF ALL THE WORLD'S ARMS EXPORTS. AND THIS SHARE HAS ONLY INCREASED IN RECENT YEARS...

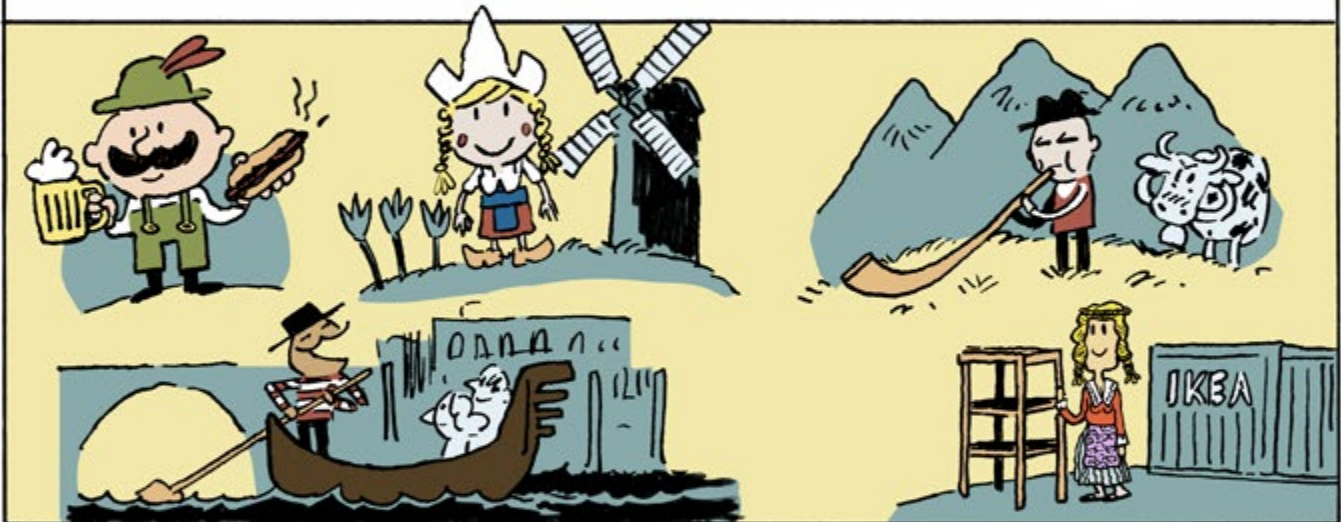


1. Top 100 arms industry companies, SIPRI database, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

FRANCE CURRENTLY TOPS THE LEADER BOARD. FOR EXAMPLE, IT SUPPLIED MAJOR WEAPONS TO 75 COUNTRIES OVER THE PERIOD 2015-19, THE THREE MAIN RECIPIENTS BEING EGYPT, QATAR AND INDIA. QUITE A RECORD FOR THE BIRTHPLACE OF HUMAN RIGHTS!



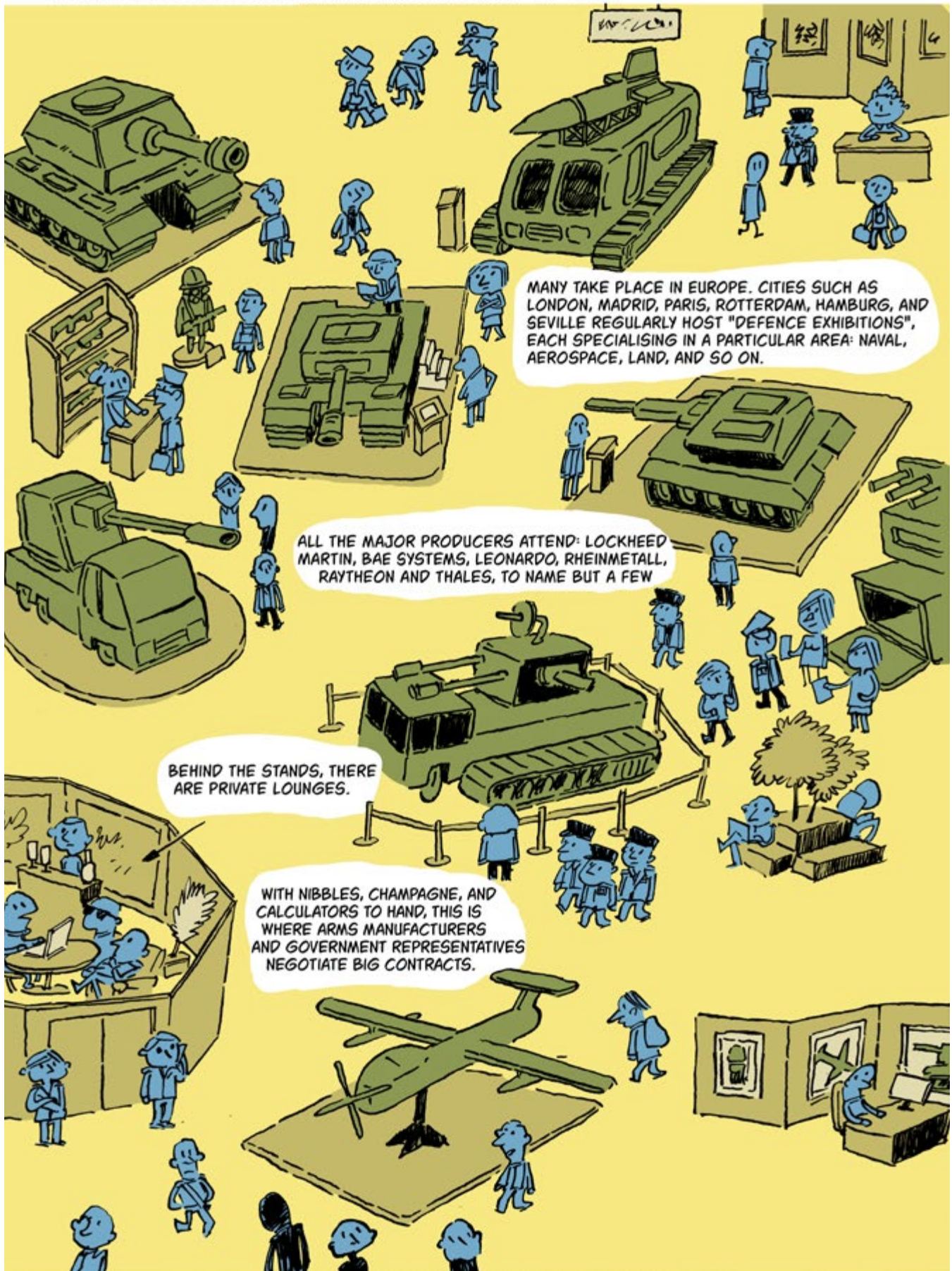
FRANCE IS CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY OTHER MAJOR EUROPEAN EXPORTERS - GERMANY, THE UK, SPAIN, ITALY, THE NETHERLANDS, SWITZERLAND, AND SWEDEN, ALL OF WHICH ARE AMONG THE WORLD'S TOP 15 ARMS EXPORTERS.



THE LIST OF THE MAIN RECIPIENT COUNTRIES (OUTSIDE EUROPE) OF WEAPONS PRODUCED WITHIN THE EU IS NOT EXACTLY EDIFYING: SAUDI ARABIA, THE US, EGYPT, INDIA, BRAZIL, QATAR, AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. ALL EXEMPLARY DEMOCRACIES...

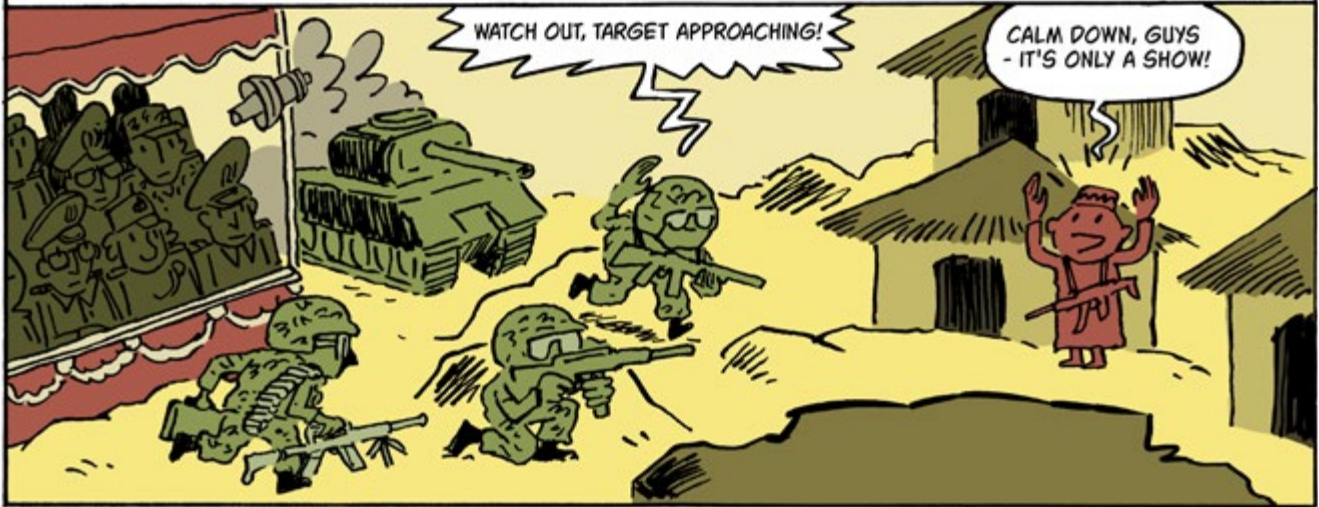


THE LEGAL ARMS TRADE GENERATED SALES OF AT LEAST \$420 BILLION IN 2018<sup>1</sup>. THIS IS A COLOSSAL MARKET, WHICH MANUFACTURERS ARE KEEN TO CASH IN ON. TO SHOWCASE THEIR "PRODUCTS" TO POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS, COMPANIES IN THE SECTOR ATTEND MANY ARMS FAIRS AROUND THE WORLD.



1. Low estimate by SIPRI, The SIPRI Top 100 Arms-producing and Military Services Companies, 2018. December 2019.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THESE EVENTS ARE THE "DYNAMIC DEMONSTRATIONS", HOLLYWOOD-STYLE SHOWS WHERE THE PUBLIC GET TO WATCH SIMULATIONS RANGING FROM A HOSTAGE RELEASE OPERATION IN A SAHELIAN VILLAGE TO THE QUELLING OF A RIOT IN A FAVELA.



OVER A MICROPHONE, THE PRESENTER TROTS OUT THE SUPERLATIVES, BIGGING UP THE VARIOUS DRONES, VEHICLES AND TANKS TAKING THEIR TURNS ON THE TRACK.



IN ANY CASE, THE "PRODUCTS" DON'T KILL. THE PREFERRED TERMINOLOGY IS REMINISCENT OF A MARKETING TEXTBOOK: "LETHALITY", "ENHANCED EFFICIENCY", "QUALITATIVE EDGE", "RETURN ON INVESTMENT", AND SO ON.



1. Israeli company Elbit Systems, for instance, boasts that its drones have been combat proven in Gaza... (Corporate Watch and Elbit Systems website).

SIMILARLY, THERE IS NEVER ANY TALK OF BRIBES IN THE ARMS INDUSTRY, BUT RATHER OF "EXCEPTIONAL COMMERCIAL EXPENSES" (SIC).



UNTIL THE OECD ANTI-BRIBERY CONVENTION CAME INTO FORCE IN 1999, COMPANIES COULD LEGALLY DEDUCT THESE EXPENSES FOR TAX PURPOSES. THE AMOUNTS INVOLVED WERE SOMETIMES ASTRONOMICAL.



ONLY RECENTLY, AN INVESTIGATION<sup>1</sup> EXPOSED THE BRIBERY BEHIND THE SALE OF FRENCH LECLERC TANKS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. THESE ARMOURED VEHICLES WERE SOLD IN THE EARLY 1990S BY GIAT (NOW NEXTER). DESPITE BEING WHOLLY OWNED BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, GIAT PAID \$200 MILLION IN KICKBACKS TO ACCOUNTS LOCATED IN TAX HAVENS.



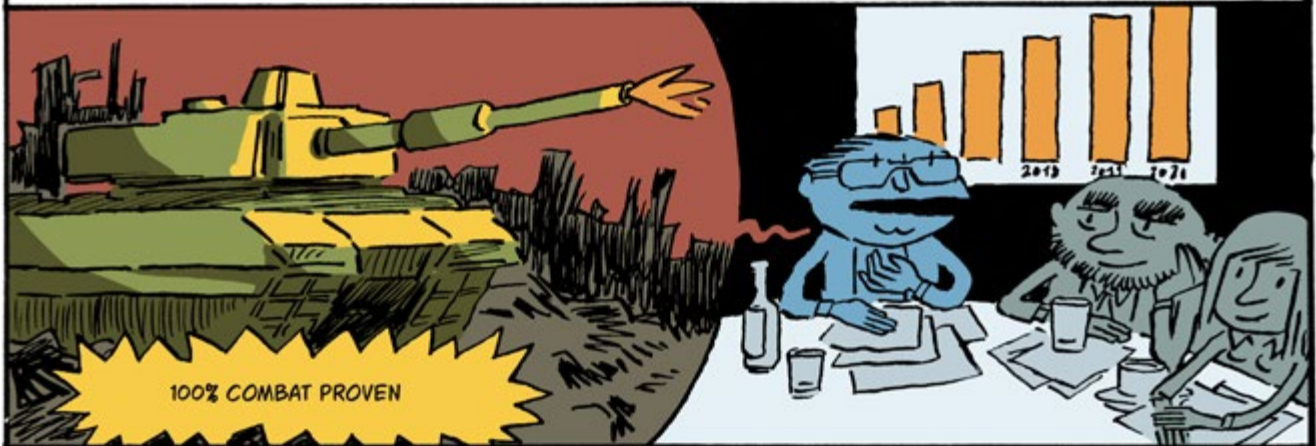
THESE PAYMENTS SHOULD HAVE REMAINED SECRET BUT FOLLOWING A DISPUTE WITH ONE OF THE BENEFICIARIES, WHO CLAIMED HE'D BEEN UNDERPAID, IN 2008 THE CASE WAS FINALLY BROUGHT BEFORE THE PARIS ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL - EFFECTIVELY A PRIVATE COURT BYPASSING THE ORDINARY JUSTICE SYSTEM. IN THE END, THE FRENCH COMPANY WAS FORCED TO DISCLOSE THE NATURE OF THESE PAYMENTS, WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE OUTRIGHT BRIBES.



1. The investigation was conducted in 2018 by Mediapart, Der Spiegel and La Repubblica, based on WikiLeaks documents. See in particular: Fabrice Arfi, «De la corruption à la guerre au Yémen, l'histoire secrète des chars français», Mediapart, 28 September 2018.



THE LECLERC TANKS SOLD TO THE UAE ARE NOW BEING USED IN THE WAR IN YEMEN, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT THE UN CALLS "THE WORLD'S WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS". NOT THAT THIS STOPPED NEXTER'S CEO FROM BRAGGING ABOUT THE GREAT PUBLICITY IT WOULD GENERATE FOR HIS TANKS'. NEW CONTRACTS IN THE REGION SOON?



THIS MALPRACTICE WAS FAR FROM AN ISOLATED CASE. THE KARACHI AFFAIR, THE AGUSTA-DASSAULT CASE, THE TAIWAN FRIGATES, ANGOLAGATE... THE LIST GOES ON AND ON! GIVEN THE SECRECY SURROUNDING IT AND THE SUMS AT STAKE, THE ARMS INDUSTRY REMAINS FERTILE GROUND FOR BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION, BACKHANDERS, UNDERCOVER PAYMENTS TO POLITICAL PARTIES, AND SO ON.



A STUDY HAS ESTIMATED THAT AT LEAST 40 PERCENT OF CORRUPTION IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE IS LINKED TO THE ARMS BUSINESS<sup>2</sup>. PRETTY IMPRESSIVE, ISN'T IT?

1. «As for the Leclerc tanks, I can assure you that their deployment in Yemen has made a big impression on military personnel in the region.» Nexter CEO Stéphane Mayer during a hearing at the French National Assembly (in French), 2 March 2016.
2. Jean Guisnel, *Armes de corruption massive: secrets et combines des marchands de canons*, La Découverte, 2011; *Compendium of Arms Trade Corruption*, World Peace Foundation.

IN CONVENTIONAL TRADE, COMPANIES ARE LARGELY INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENT. THEY CAN EXPORT PRETTY MUCH WHATEVER THEY LIKE, WITHOUT HAVING TO APPLY FOR AN EXPORT LICENCE FIRST. THE ARMS TRADE IS DIFFERENT. HERE, GOVERNMENT HAS A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY, AS IT DECIDES WHETHER TO ISSUE AN EXPORT PERMIT.



SO IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT ARMS INDUSTRY LOBBIES COURT THOSE IN POWER TO INFLUENCE THEIR DECISIONS. THIS COSY RELATIONSHIP IS BOLSTERED BY THE "REVOLVING DOOR EFFECT", WHERE PRIVATE-SECTOR ACTORS MOVE INTO THE POLITICAL SPHERE AND VICE VERSA.



TAKE DIRK NIEBEL, FOR EXAMPLE. HE BUILT HIS POLITICAL CAREER AS A MEMBER OF GERMANY'S LIBERAL FREE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (FDP).

IN EARLY 2015, HE SWITCHED CAREER TO BECOME A LOBBYIST FOR THE RHEINMETALL GROUP, ONE OF EUROPE'S LEADING ARMS PRODUCERS.

...BUILT UP OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS, WITH A CLEAR FOCUS ON AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST.

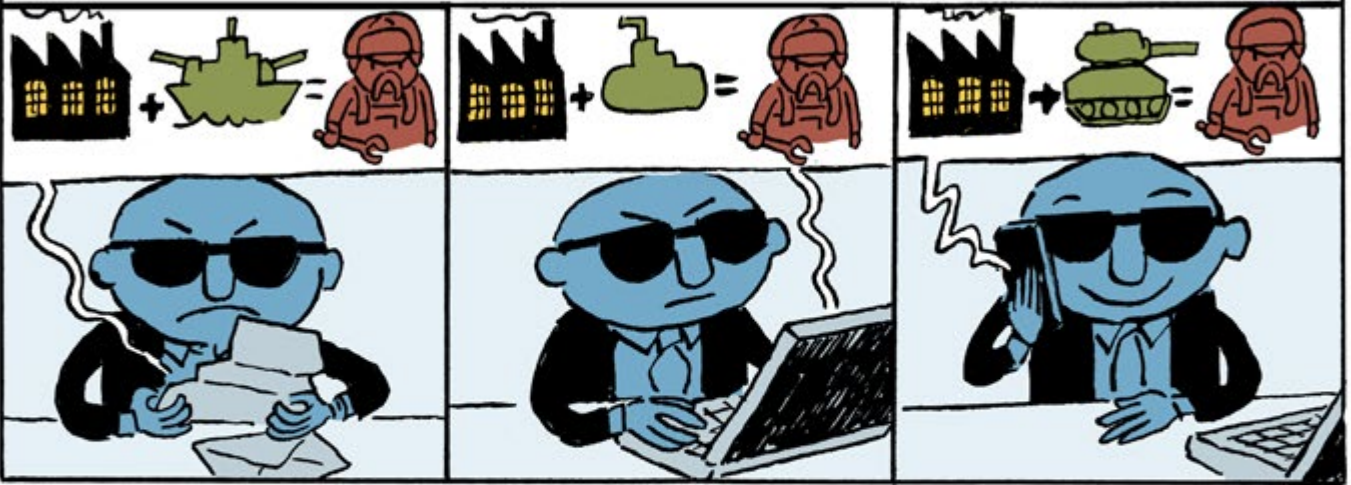


HE EVEN SERVED AS FEDERAL MINISTER OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT FROM 2009 TO 2013.

ON THE WEBSITE OF HIS CONSULTING FIRM, HE IS NOW ABLE TO VAUNT HIS "GLOBAL NETWORK"...

THESE CONTACTS ARE SURE TO COME IN HANDY FOR BUSINESS...

TO ENCOURAGE POLITICAL DECISION-MAKERS TO AUTHORISE ARMS EXPORTS, LOBBYISTS INvariably HIGHLIGHT THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND LOCAL JOBS THEY COULD GENERATE. A MAJOR CONTRACT, SUCH AS THE MULTI-YEAR CONSTRUCTION OF SUBMARINES, FRIGATES, OR AIRCRAFT, CAN OFTEN LEAD TO THE CREATION OF THOUSANDS OF (MOSTLY SKILLED) JOBS.



NOR IS IT UNCOMMON FOR ARMS COMPANIES TO DELIBERATELY INVEST IN REGIONS WHERE UNEMPLOYMENT IS HIGH, TO FURTHER BOLSTER THEIR BARGAINING POWER. AT A TIME OF ECONOMIC CRISIS, THE AUTHORITIES FIND IT HARD TO TURN DOWN A CONTRACT THAT WILL RESULT IN JOBS BEING CREATED. GOVERNMENTS THEREFORE SOMETIMES TEND TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY, EVEN IF THE BUYER IS NOT EXACTLY A PARAGON OF VIRTUE - WITH ALL THE CONSEQUENCES THIS ENTAILS...



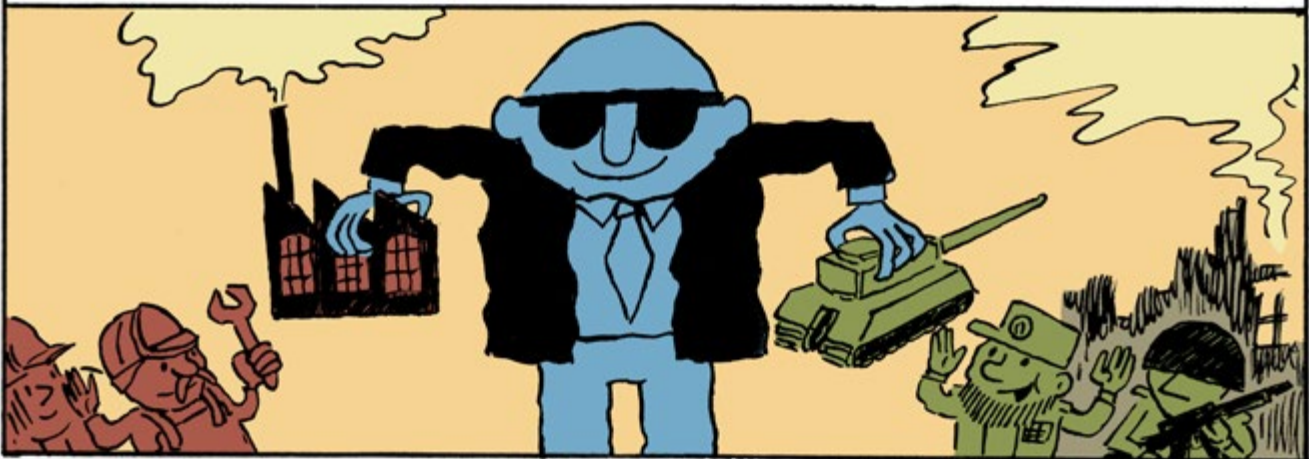
AS BIG DEALS ARE ALWAYS DONE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, DIPLOMATIC TRIPS TURN INTO BUSINESS TRIPS, WITH HEADS OF STATE ACTING AS AMBASSADORS FOR THEIR DEFENCE INDUSTRY. DIPLOMACY AND ARMS SALES OFTEN GO HAND IN HAND, WITH EVERY BIG CONTRACT THAT IS SIGNED FURTHER CEMENTING LINKS BETWEEN THE SELLER AND BUYER COUNTRIES...



WHO CAN FORGET DONALD TRUMP IN 2018, GLEEFULLY HOLDING UP A GIANT CHEQUE IN FRONT OF MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN, SAUDI ARABIA'S CROWN PRINCE AND MINISTER OF DEFENCE, WHO HAD JUST ORDERED \$110 BILLION OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES... THIS WAS A CHANCE FOR THE US PRESIDENT TO BURNISH HIS "DEALMAKER" IMAGE, WHILE THE SAUDIS SECURED LONG-TERM PROTECTION FROM THE WORLD'S LEADING MILITARY POWER. AND YES, THERE ARE PLENTY OF SIMILAR EXAMPLES INVOLVING EUROPEAN HEADS OF STATE...



IT SEEMS TO BE A WIN-WIN GAME FOR EVERYONE! ARMS COMPANIES FILL THEIR ORDER BOOKS AND HIRE STAFF, POLITICIANS KEEP THEIR JOBS, AND IMPORTING COUNTRIES CONSOLIDATE THEIR MILITARY MIGHT WHILE SECURING DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FROM THE SELLING COUNTRY!...



IN REALITY, THOUGH, THERE ARE ALWAYS TWO GROUPS WHO LOSE OUT: ORDINARY PEOPLE IN THE PURCHASING COUNTRIES, WHO WILL INDIRECTLY BEAR THE COST OF ALL THE SPENDING ON ARMS IN THE FORM OF REDUCED SOCIAL BUDGETS. EVERY WEAPON IMPORTED REPRESENTS MONEY THAT COULD HAVE BEEN SPENT ON HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, HOUSING, TRANSPORT, AND SO ON.



1. Another benefit for exporting states is that it makes importing countries dependent on their suppliers, especially for high-tech armaments, meaning guaranteed maintenance contracts for decades to come...

<p>IN 2021, ARMED CONFLICTS' CONTINUE TO RAGE AROUND THE WORLD, WITH HOTSPOTS INCLUDING AFGHANISTAN, YEMEN, LIBYA, SYRIA, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, SOUTH SUDAN, MEXICO, IRAQ, NIGERIA, AND UKRAINE...</p>	<p>THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES FORCED FROM THEIR HOMES DUE TO PERSECUTION, CONFLICT AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CONTINUES TO GROW.</p>

A SAD RECORD WAS BROKEN IN 2020 AS THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS WORLDWIDE PASSED THE 80 MILLION MARK<sup>2</sup>. THAT'S EQUIVALENT TO THE POPULATION OF GERMANY... SOMETHING TO BEAR IN MIND WHEN LISTENING TO SOME OF THE MORE SIMPLISTIC RHETORIC...

<p>THE "MIGRATION CRISIS" ITSELF IS LUCRATIVE FOR SECURITY FIRMS, WHICH OFFER THEIR SERVICES TO HELP "SECURE EUROPE'S BORDERS"...</p>	<p>WEAPONS ARE THE FUEL OF CONFLICT, AND EVEN ONCE HOSTILITIES ARE OVER, THEIR PRESENCE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO TRIGGER A FRESH OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE AT ANY TIME.</p>
<p>WHY DON'T YOU JUST STAY IN YOUR VILLAGE?</p> <p>MY VILLAGE NO LONGER EXISTS. IT WAS DESTROYED BY BOMBS MADE IN YOUR COUNTRY...</p>	

1. There are various tools tracking current conflicts.
2. Forced displacement passes 80 million by mid-2020, UNHCR, 9 December 2020.

ONCE A PERSON HAS GOT USED TO USING A WEAPON, THEY MAY BE TEMPTED TO DO SO AGAIN - ESPECIALLY IF THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN A DESPERATE PLIGHT...



IT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER THAT WE FIND WAYS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF WEAPONS IN CIRCULATION WORLDWIDE, TO STEM THIS SPIRAL OF VIOLENCE.



SEVERAL SOLUTIONS EXIST ON THE GROUND, SUCH AS DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION, AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES FOR EX-COMBATANTS.



COMBATANTS HAND OVER THEIR WEAPONS TO THE AUTHORITIES AND RENOUNCE VIOLENCE IN EXCHANGE FOR MONEY OR LAND THAT THEY CAN CULTIVATE.



ANOTHER APPROACH IS TO WORK WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO MAKE WEAPON STORAGE LOCATIONS MORE SECURE.

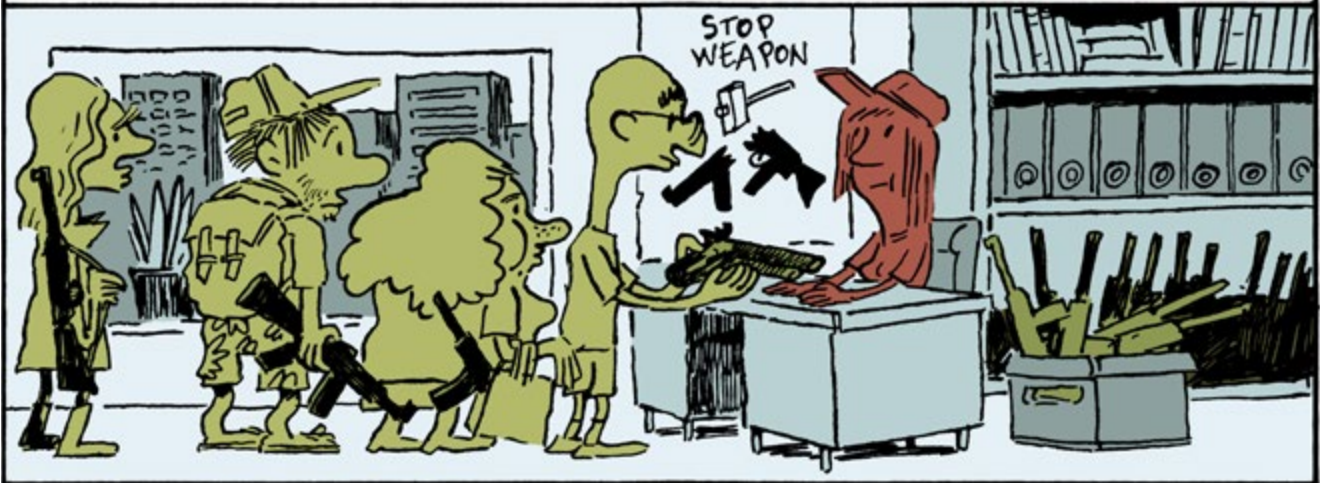


THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE ILLICIT ARMS TRADE OFTEN THRIVES ON WEAPONS STOLEN FROM THE ARMED FORCES OR POLICE<sup>1</sup>.

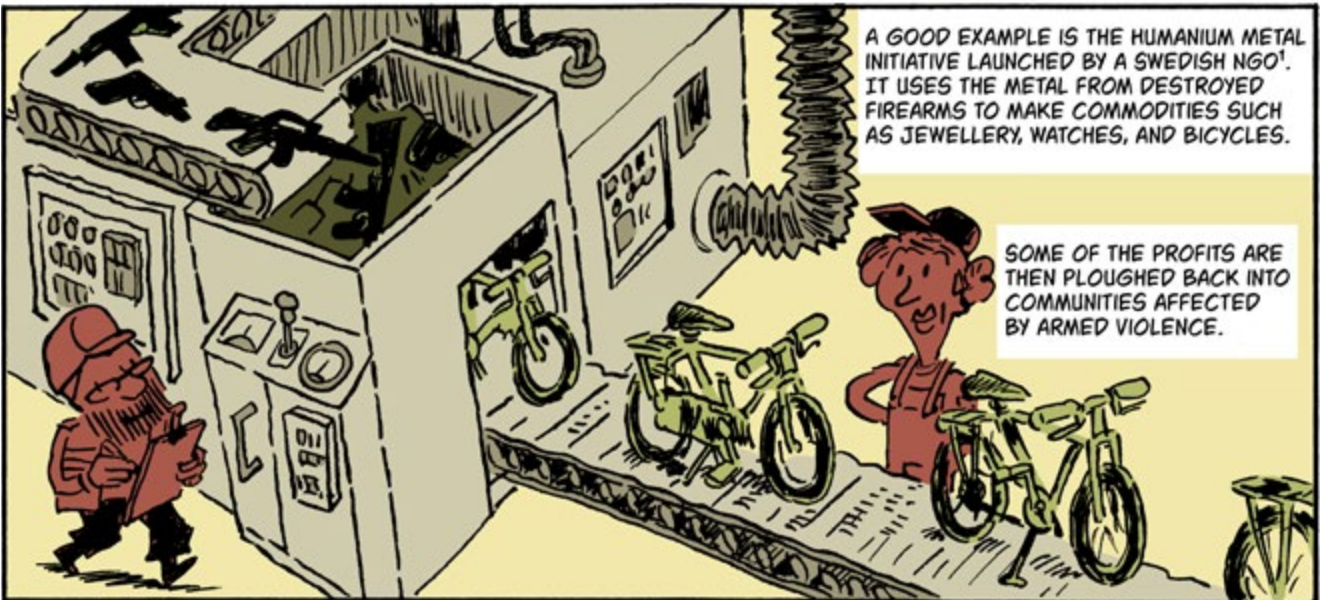


1. In 2007, the United States Government Accountability Office found that 110,000 of the 185,000 AK-47 rifles supplied to the Iraqi security forces were no longer in the official arsenals in Baghdad. This is a very compelling example of what can go wrong. DOD Cannot Ensure That U.S.-Funded Equipment Has Reached Iraqi Security Forces, Report to Congressional Committees, July 2007.

CAMPAIGNS TO COLLECT AND DESTROY WEAPONS ARE ALSO AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO ENSURE THAT THESE ARMS ARE NEVER USED AGAIN.



A GOOD EXAMPLE IS THE HUMANIUM METAL INITIATIVE LAUNCHED BY A SWEDISH NGO<sup>1</sup>. IT USES THE METAL FROM DESTROYED FIREARMS TO MAKE COMMODITIES SUCH AS JEWELLERY, WATCHES, AND BICYCLES.



SOME OF THE PROFITS ARE THEN PLOUGHED BACK INTO COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY ARMED VIOLENCE.

BUT ACTION CAN ALSO BE TAKEN CLOSER TO HOME - ACTION THAT REALLY MAKES A DIFFERENCE! IN SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, ORGANISATIONS HAVE TAKEN THEIR GOVERNMENTS TO COURT FOR BEING TOO LAX ON ARMS EXPORTS... DOCKERS AT SEVERAL PORTS HAVE REFUSED TO LOAD CONTAINERS FULL OF WEAPONS, FORCING THE CARGO SHIPS TO TURN BACK...



1. For more information about this initiative, see [humanium-metal.com](http://humanium-metal.com).

MORE AND MORE CITIZENS ARE DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY FROM THEIR BANKS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES, TAKING PART IN DEMONSTRATIONS, JOINING ASSOCIATIONS OR POLITICAL PARTIES, ENGAGING IN ACTS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE...



THE PROLIFERATION OF FIREARMS IS A GLOBAL SCOURGE, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION IS NEEDED MORE URGENTLY THAN EVER!



THE NUMBER OF FIREARMS CURRENTLY IN CIRCULATION WORLDWIDE IS EYE-WATERING. THE ESTIMATED TOTAL IS OVER ONE BILLION! AND MORE ARE BEING PRODUCED EVERY DAY...



WEAPONS TRULY ARE THE FUEL OF CONFLICT. HOW ARE WE TO EXTINGUISH FIRES IF WE KEEP ADDING FUEL TO THEM?



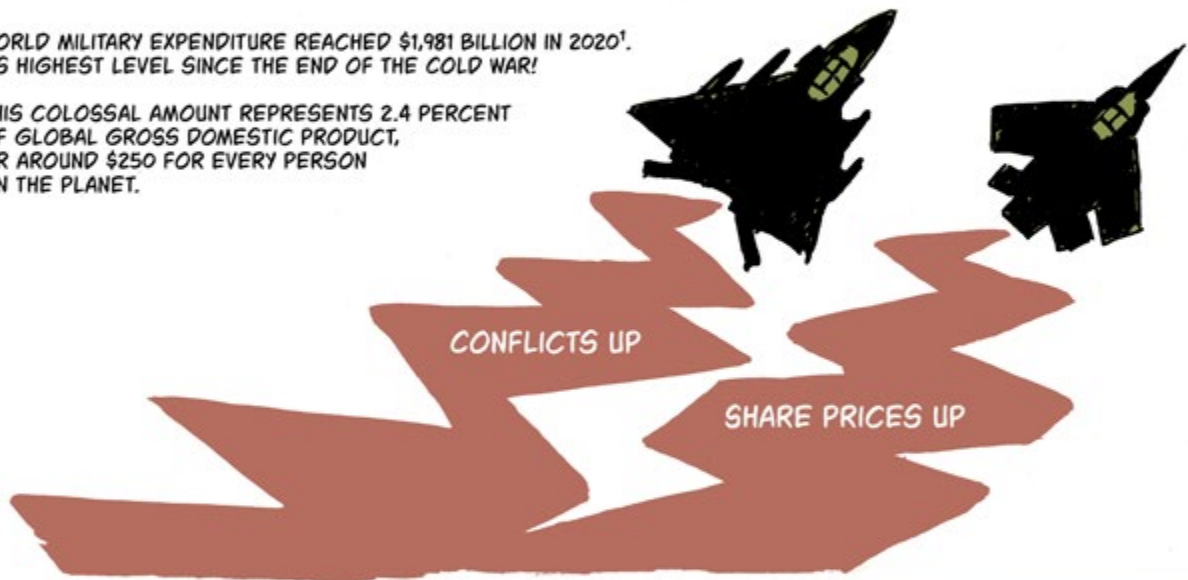
1. Small Arms Survey database – Global Firearms Holdings.





WORLD MILITARY EXPENDITURE REACHED \$1,981 BILLION IN 2020<sup>1</sup>. ITS HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR!

THIS COLOSSAL AMOUNT REPRESENTS 2.4 PERCENT OF GLOBAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT, OR AROUND \$250 FOR EVERY PERSON ON THE PLANET.



BY WAY OF COMPARISON, THE UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION ESTIMATES THAT \$267 BILLION PER YEAR (I.E. ONE SEVENTH OF GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING) WOULD BE ENOUGH TO COMPLETELY ERADICATE HUNGER AROUND THE WORLD<sup>2</sup>!

IT'S A MATTER OF POLITICAL PRIORITIES...



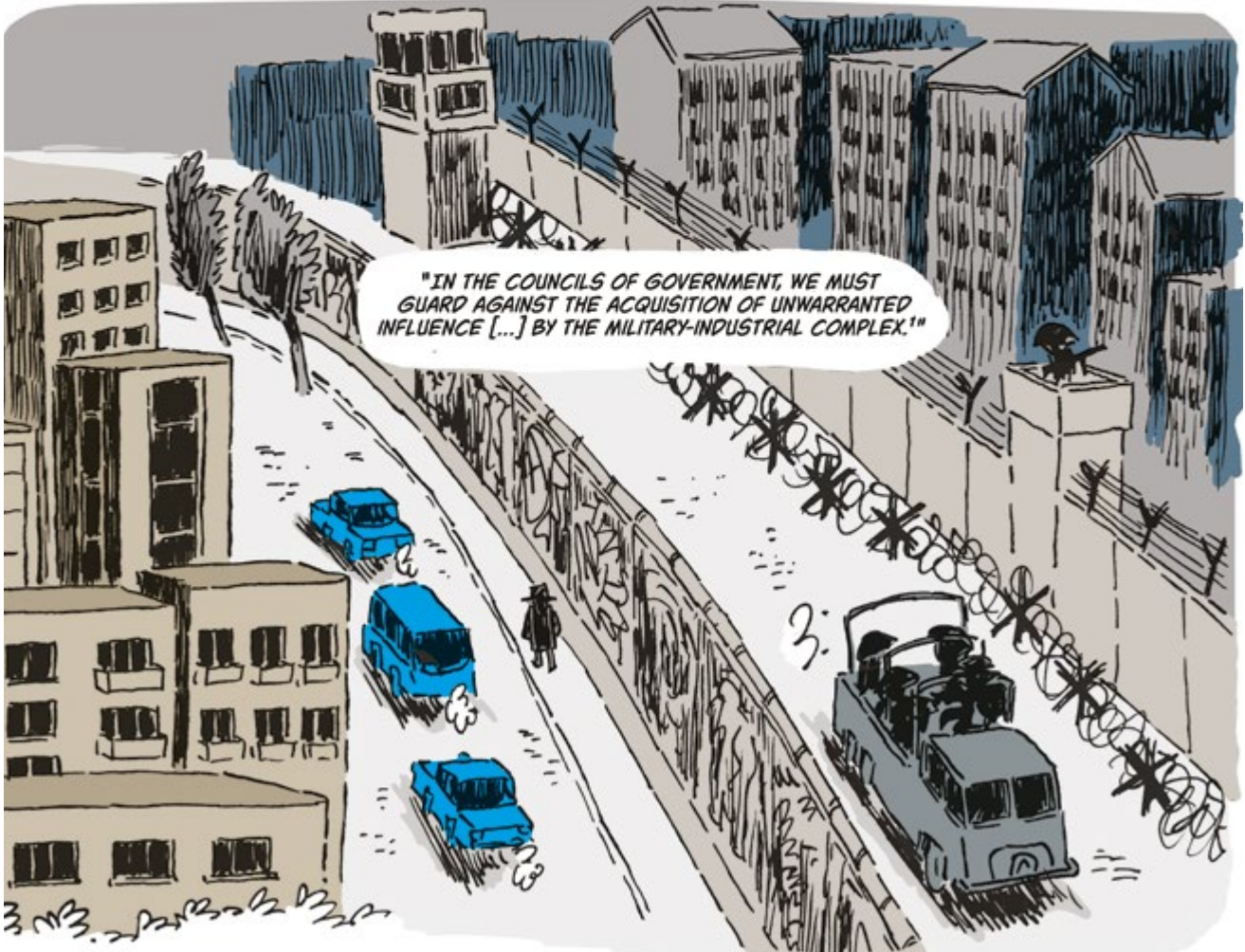
1. Figures taken from SIPRI Yearbook 2021, published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

2. Achieving Zero Hunger: The critical role of investments in social protection and agriculture, Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, July 2015.

THE QUASI-PERMANENT STATE OF WAR IN WHICH THE WORLD FINDS ITSELF, IN PLACES SUCH AS AFGHANISTAN (SINCE 1979), IRAQ (SINCE 2003), SYRIA (SINCE 2011) AND YEMEN (SINCE 2014), CONTINUES TO LINE THE POCKETS OF MAJOR SHAREHOLDERS IN "SECURITY" COMPANIES.



SIXTY YEARS AGO, US PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER WAS ALREADY WARNING ABOUT THE RISE OF THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX FORMED BY THE ARMS INDUSTRY, ARMED FORCES, AND POLITICIANS.



"IN THE COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENT, WE MUST GUARD AGAINST THE ACQUISITION OF UNWARRANTED INFLUENCE [...] BY THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX!"

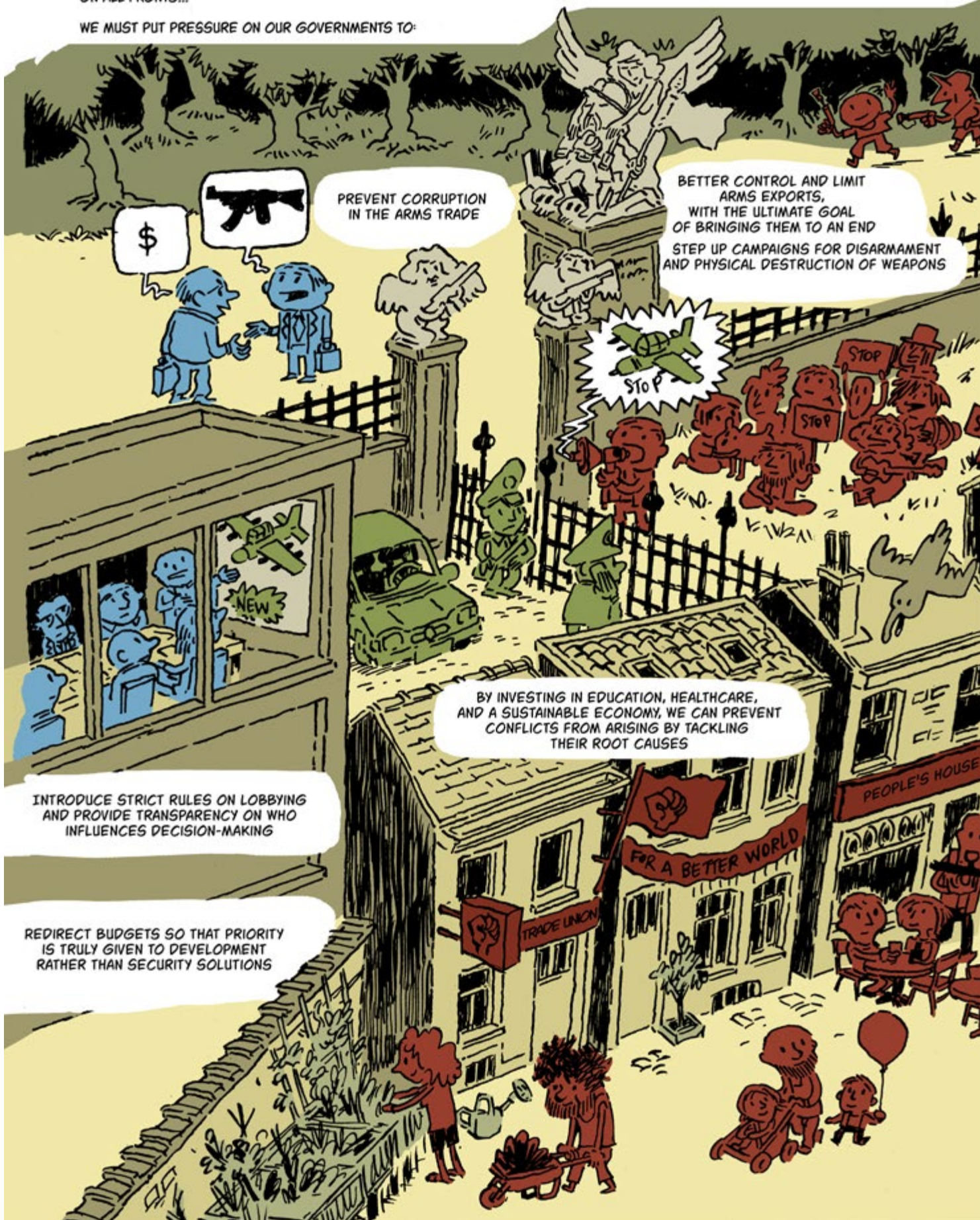
CONSIDERING THE CLOSE LINKS BETWEEN SOME HIGH-RANKING POLITICIANS AND BIG ARMS COMPANIES TODAY, IT'S HARD NOT TO CONCLUDE THAT THE FORMER US PRESIDENT WAS RIGHT.

BUT THIS SITUATION IS NOT INEVITABLE! THE BALANCE OF POWER CAN SHIFT: IT'S FIRST AND FOREMOST A QUESTION OF POLITICAL CHOICES...

1. «The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes...», Extract from President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Farewell Address, delivered on 17 January 1961.

AS WE HAVE SEEN, EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE HEAVILY IMPLICATED IN THE FACT THAT THE PLANET IS OVERRUN WITH WEAPONS AND EMBROILED IN ENDLESS CONFLICTS. THIS ALSO MEANS THAT EUROPE'S CITIZENS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. BY ACTING TOGETHER, WE CAN REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE. IF WE WANT A LESS ARMED WORLD, WE NEED TO ACT ON ALL FRONTS...

WE MUST PUT PRESSURE ON OUR GOVERNMENTS TO:



PREVENT CORRUPTION IN THE ARMS TRADE

BETTER CONTROL AND LIMIT ARMS EXPORTS, WITH THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF BRINGING THEM TO AN END  
STEP UP CAMPAIGNS FOR DISARMAMENT AND PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION OF WEAPONS

INTRODUCE STRICT RULES ON LOBBYING AND PROVIDE TRANSPARENCY ON WHO INFLUENCES DECISION-MAKING

BY INVESTING IN EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, AND A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY, WE CAN PREVENT CONFLICTS FROM ARISING BY TACKLING THEIR ROOT CAUSES

REDIRECT BUDGETS SO THAT PRIORITY IS TRULY GIVEN TO DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN SECURITY SOLUTIONS



EUROPEAN COUNTRIES CAN PLAY THEIR PART BY CHANGING THE RULES OF THE ARMS TRADE. IF EUROPE BECOMES MORE RESPONSIBLE AND MUCH MORE RESTRICTIVE IN ITS ARMS EXPORTS, IT WILL FORCE OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE TO THEIR OWN CITIZENS. NO LONGER WILL THEY BE ABLE TO HIDE BEHIND THE ARGUMENT THAT "EVERYONE DOES IT"...

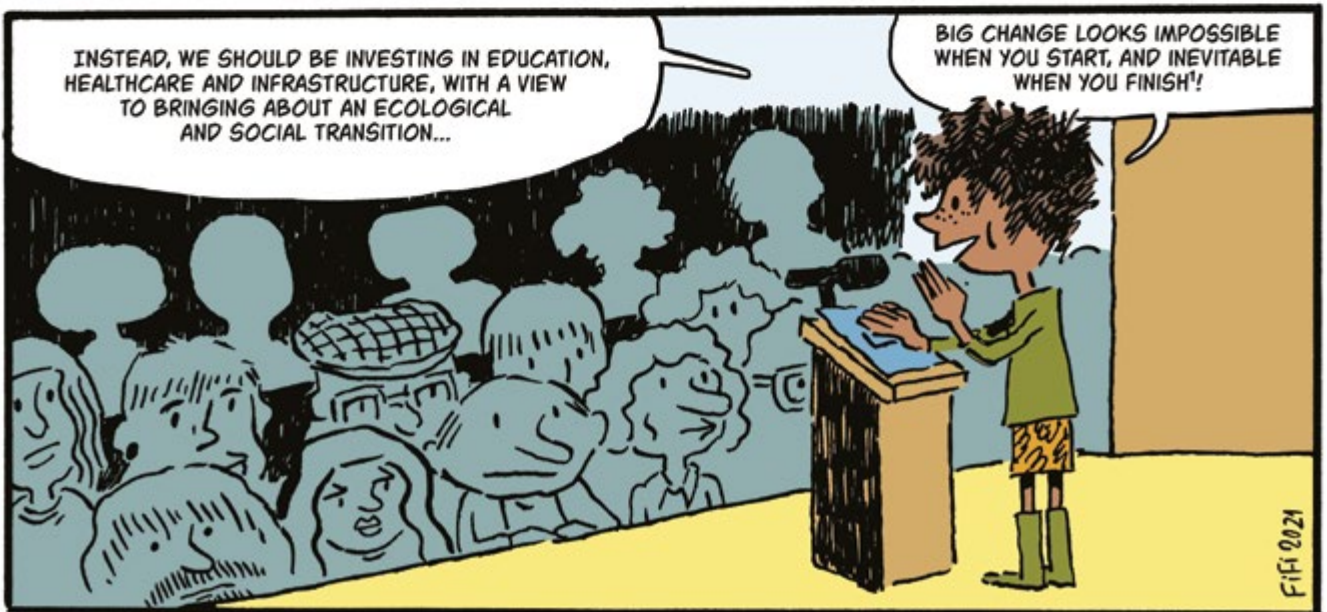


WEAPONS WON'T HELP US DEAL WITH THE TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND FUTURE PANDEMICS, OR ERADICATE INEQUALITIES.



INSTEAD, WE SHOULD BE INVESTING IN EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE AND INFRASTRUCTURE, WITH A VIEW TO BRINGING ABOUT AN ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL TRANSITION...

BIG CHANGE LOOKS IMPOSSIBLE WHEN YOU START, AND INEVITABLE WHEN YOU FINISH!



Fifi 2021

1. Quote from Bob Hunter, one of the founding members of Greenpeace.

ENAAT

ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG  
BRUSSELS OFFICE

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# A MILITARISED UNION

UNDERSTANDING AND  
CONFRONTING THE MILITARISATION  
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



EN

Illustrations © Frédéric Thiry

## FURTHER READING

- European Network Against Arms Trade and Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Brussels Office (2021):  
*A militarised Union*  
*Understanding and confronting the militarisation of the European Union*  
[rosalux.eu/a-militarised-union](https://rosalux.eu/a-militarised-union)
- Transnational Institute (2021):  
*Smoking guns*  
*How European arms exports are forcing millions from their homes*  
[tni.org/en/publication/smoking-guns](https://tni.org/en/publication/smoking-guns)
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (2021):  
*SIPRI Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*  
[sipri.org/yearbook](https://sipri.org/yearbook)
- Campaign Against Arms Trade (2021):  
*EU Export Data Browser*  
[caat.org.uk/data/exports-eu](https://caat.org.uk/data/exports-eu)
- Centre Delàs, ECP and IDHC (2020):  
*Arms trade, conflicts and human rights.*  
*Analysis of European arms exports to countries in armed conflict and human rights violations*  
[centredelas.org/publicacions](https://centredelas.org/publicacions)

# IMPRINT

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It is impossible to determine the number of firearms in circulation in the world, but one thing is certain: there have never been so many! According to recent estimates, there are now more than one billion firearms in existence. And if you consider the number of guns leaving the arsenals each day, this flow is not about to decrease.

European states bear a great share of responsibility for this situation. Weapons made in Europe are used to kill, harm and displace people around the globe. While people lose their lives, their health, their relatives and their homes in armed conflicts, arms-producing companies generate profits. The European arms industry is an opaque sector that violates laws, exerts influence on decision-makers and shirks responsibility.

However, there is insufficient control of the arms trade in Europe, and once a weapon has been exported nobody can guarantee anything. Between the preservation of economic interests and respect for human rights, between commitments made at the international level and the reality in practice, there are gaps and contradictions.

Faced with this complexity, GRIP and the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Brussels Office felt it was important for citizens to discover some of the inner workings of the system, to enable them to better understand and perhaps influence the decisions that the authorities make in this area. This comic book explains the international arms trade, shows what's wrong with it and offers insights into how we can address this problem. We invite you to immerse yourself in this little-known world of the arms trade...

Follow the guide!

