

ENKA INTERNATIONAL  
MODEL UNITED  
NATIONS 2017  
“Transcending Borders”



**The Question of Establishing  
Universal Transparency in  
Military Matters**

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**Forum:** Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)  
**Issue:** The Question of Establishing Universal Transparency in Military Matters  
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## **Introduction**

The military is the armed force of a country that is generally constituted by army, navy and air forces. The military is permitted to use weapons and lethal force to defend the integrity of their country and its citizens. Applying transparency in military matters is the publishing of information by each sovereign state, which contains the planning of their military operations, military capability, and capacity. These items include the defense intelligence or quantity of soldiers, tanks, weapons, ships or planes they have, their military expenditures, etc. In order to enforce state-to-state relations, avoid misinterpretations, misunderstandings of military acts, achieve confidence-building measures (CBMs) between states, boost mutual trust, accountability and international peace and security, military transparency is crucial.

Moreover, some countries believe that full-transparency is against their culture and it decreases their ability to defend themselves from their opponents. Nevertheless, they try to compromise and be as transparent as they can and to adapt themselves to reality, and to not endanger their relations with other countries. However, most governments still prefer to be as opaque as possible with their military expenditures and arm holdings. They believe that the more information their opponent has, the more they are likely to lose in conflict because of their exposed strategies. This is another point of view of this issue.

There are many ongoing conflicts currently and a single mistake or misunderstanding of a military action can lead into a war. Therefore, establishing military transparency is the key to prevent unpredictably grand crimes of aggression. By establishing transparency, we can establish peace and unity among nations, regardless of their borders.

## **General Overview**

First of all, openness and transparency in the means of armament definitely lead to a decrease in tensions between states. Transparency in military expenditures is also another significant part of this issue. It is the aim of many countries to reduce their military expenditures for their budgets. The issue had been discussed in the League of Nations and after that in the UN.

The most effective solution that states have come up with was the UN Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures (1991) which is now named the United

Nations Report on Military Expenditures (MILEX). This report aims to ensure that each state (regardless of their economy) reports their military outgoings every year.

Then, the UN gathers a meeting where MILEX will be discussed with representatives from each nation. United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) is focused on this report and makes effort for it to be published and accumulated regularly. Although many countries have signed several General Assembly resolutions related to the topic, there has not been as many regularly published reports as expected. Moreover, the reports, which were published, were never fully transparent.

Another noteworthy point is the arms trade between countries. Over the last few decades, arms trade has increased uncontrollably. In the past, it was a government's job to arrange and regulate the arms trade. However now, private sectors and individuals have also involved themselves in the arms trade. Since then, governments are faced with difficulties concerning the transparency of arms trade. The five permanent members of United Nations Security Council have an immense contribution to the worldwide export of arms. It is estimated that approximately %60 of the worldwide export of arms comes from them.

The International Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) has been an effective solution to bring the issue of increasing arms trade under control but it still lacks many points that need to be addressed. Additionally, the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) is a mechanism that every country reports their imports and exports of arms to annually. It has seven categories; which consist of the five categories of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (armored combat vehicles, attack helicopters, large-caliber artillery systems, battle tanks, and combat aircraft) and warships and missile launchers, plus small arms and light weapons.

Each country can also report their background on the issue and “available background information regarding their military holdings, procurement through national production, and relevant policies.”

Furthermore, nuclear weapons have become one of the most significant issues that are under discussion currently. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty aims to stop and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons among nations. The countries, which have signed this treaty, must be transparent so that they can be categorized as Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) or Nuclear Weapon States (NWS). This treaty possesses one of the widest and “fullest possible exchange” of information regarding military transparency between states and it ensures the strict and effective controlling of countries that have signed the treaty.

In addition, there are military alliances such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) involved. NATO is one of the most well known intergovernmental military alliances in the world. The members of NATO gather and provide the defense if and when an external state attacks one of them. All members ensure the openness and transparency of their arms between themselves and they also request transparency from other non-member states in order to achieve their ultimate goal.

There is also a relation between the democracy level of a country and its transparency in military matters. As the level of democracy in a country increases, so do the

transparency and the level of accountability. A country needs to be open and accountable to its own people first. Then it should be transparent with the international community.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*LEDC*: LEDC stands for Less Economically Developed Countries.

*MEDC*: MEDC stands for More Economically Developed Countries.

*Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)*: Confidence Building Measures is the name given to all types of actions taken in order to reveal and clarify the intentions of the military acts of each party during a conflict. Transparency is key to this process, which has three stages: Physical Measures, Communication Measures and Relationship Measures. CBMs promote mutual and international trust with the aims of providing transparency on the military equipment, systems and budgets of nations. They also aim to boost relationships between embassies of all parties by avoiding misunderstandings.

*Military expenditure*: The military expenditure is the budget allocated for military purposes or the outgoings of military matters of a country. Military expenditures include the expenditures on peace-keeping forces and armed forces, ministries of defense or other bodies of the government related to the issue, military and civil personnel and their families, military research and development, nuclear weapons and any other type of weapons, war spending, etc.

*Crime of Aggression*: A Crime of Aggression is the annexation, military occupation or invasion of a country by the use of military force. Crimes of Aggression are directed at taking control over a state's politics or military. This type of crime is against the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of countries.

*League of Nations*: League of Nations is the organization that had been established after the Paris Peace Conference on January 10th, 1920. It was the first association and collaboration that possessed the main goal of international peace. It had dissolved on April 10th, 1946.

### **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

**United States of America**: United States of America is the largest and widest exporter of arms in the world. It has an immense military budget. USA fully supports United Nations Transparency in Armaments and is submitting all the demanded information. Also, they favoured the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

**Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)**: DPRK is the most enclosed country in the world. They do not recognize military transparency or any other type of transparency. They neither signed any treaties regarding transparency in armaments nor ratified one. They also quitted the Six-Party Talks and the NPT, which were likely to be the most peaceful ways to ensure disarmament talks between countries and reach consensus. DPRK ranks last on the Transparency Barometer, which controls the reports published about arms trade.

**Russian Federation:** NATO is currently urging Russia to be more transparent about the Ukraine issue since NATO believes that even though Russia publishes their holdings and information on the issue that they are either understated or not true. Russia has abstained from voting on the ATT and has one of the lowest ranks in the Transparency Barometer.

### **Timeline of Events**

<b>Date of Event</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
<b>January 10<sup>th</sup> 1920 - April 20<sup>th</sup> 1946</b>	League of Nations after the Paris Peace Conference.
<b>April 4<sup>th</sup> 1949</b>	Formation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
<b>1980</b>	Establishment of UN Military Budget Transparency Mechanism.
<b>December 9<sup>th</sup> 1991</b>	A/RES/46/36 General Assembly Resolution Transparency in Armaments (TIA).
<b>1991</b>	Establishment of UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA).
<b>June 1999</b>	Inter-American Convention on Transparency (which USA did not ratify).
<b>2003</b>	Small arms are added to the UN Register of Conventional Arms.
<b>2013</b>	The UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was established after failing in the past.

### **Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

There have been many attempts to establish universal transparency in military matters. All aforementioned treaties and many UN resolutions in this report, especially the A/RES/4636 Resolution: Transparency in Armaments (TIA), have been big steps towards this goal. However, many states still do not provide the necessary information even if they sign a treaty or a resolution. No state wants their data to be out in the open. Therefore, secrecy always remains.

The major factor which the solutions for this issue lack is not taking strict measures against secrecy. Misinterpretations prevent the processes necessary for peaceful treaties and attempts of solving this issue.

### **Possible Solutions**

Today, the world is based on transnational governance so secrecy is not something that is acceptable since almost every nation is related to each other. To ensure universal transparency the solutions that fit with the policies of each country must be determined. It is hard to please every nation regarding this issue so the solutions could be long-term ones.

The strict control of annual and comprehensive reporting by all Member States to the UN Register of Conventional Arms is one of the best solutions to the issue. However, there needs to be measures taken such as sanctions if a state does not fulfill its duties regarding transparency and all states must agree to enforce these measures.

Conferences and peace talks are a significant part of this issue. By talking and discussing, each Member State will be able to compromise and express their point of view.

The detection of unauthorized organizations and individuals that are involved in arms trade must be made. It is important to remember that there are many treaties, which already exist. Rather than creating new ones and convincing every state to sign them, it is better and will take less time to ameliorate the ones that have already been established.

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