Russian arms export to the developing world

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English summary

This report discusses Russian arms sales to the developing world against the background of often repeated allegations that Russia by its arms sales policy is behaving irresponsibly in terms of international peace and security. The report does not systematically compare Russia with other countries in this respect. The aim is only to analyze to what extent the Western allegations are supported by evidence.

The report starts with an analysis of the development in the period from 1991 to 2011 of the organizational and political framework of the Russian arms export. The conclusion here is that the organizational framework, while initially chaotic, were largely streamlined by the early 2000s. Thus, the criticism against Russian arms sales since has largely been directed at the political framework.

In terms of volume, the report finds, based on a combination of SIPRI figures and three different international indices for respectively authoritarianism, instability and war-proneness, that Russia clearly is the dominant provider of arms to the developing world's most authoritarian regimes. When it comes to instable and war-prone developing countries, however, no such clear conclusion can be made. These quantitative findings are further elaborated through the study of a number of case studies.

Finally, the report additionally examines the question of what consequences the Russian arms sales might have for future international military interventions in the developing world. The conclusion here is that these consequences might be substantial, especially in terms of increasing developing world anti-access capabilities.

The report is based exclusively on open sources.

Sammendrag

Denne rapporten analyserer russiske våpensalg til utviklingslandene. Bakgrunnen er gjentatte beskyldninger om at Russland gjennom sine våpensalg er uansvarlig i forhold til internasjonal fred og sikkerhet. Rapporten vurderer ikke systematisk om Russland er "bedre" eller "verre" enn andre land når det gjelder sin praksis for våpensalg, bare om foreliggende empiri støtter eller ikke støtter de gjentatte beskyldningene.

Rapporten starter med en diskusjon av utviklingen i perioden fra 1991 til 2011 når det gjelder de organisatoriske og politiske rammene for den russiske våpeneksporten. Konklusjonen i denne delen av rapporten er at når det gjelder kontrollaspektene ved våpeneksporten ble disse, til tross for betydelig kaos i de første årene etter Sovjetunionens fall, stort sett velfungerende fra tidlig på 2000-tallet. Siden den tid har derfor kritikken stort sett rettet seg mot de politiske heller enn de organisatoriske rammene for eksporten.

Når det gjelder volum, konkluderer rapporten med at Russland klart er den dominerende eksportøren av våpen til autoritære regimer. Når det gjelder salg til ustabile regimer og til regimer som står i fare for å havne i væpnet konflikt med ett eller flere andre regimer, er det derimot vanskelig å finne noen slik klar trend. Disse kvantitative beregningene er basert både på tall fra SIPRI sine databaser og på tre forskjellige internasjonale indekser for henholdsvis autoritært styre, ustabilitet og grad av spenning i relasjonene med ett eller flere andre land. De kvantitative beregningene blir deretter utdypet gjennom en analyse av fem case-studier.

Til slutt diskuteres det i hvor stor grad de russiske våpensalgene til utviklingsland kan skape problemer for eventuelle vestlige militære intervensjoner i noen av disse landene i framtida. Slike effekter kan man blant annet få ved at våpensalgene kan øke mange utviklingslands nektelses-kapasiteter.

Rapporten er basert bare på åpne kilder.

Contents

Preface

Research for this report was made possible by a generous grant from the Norwegian Ministry of Defence. FFI and the author of the report wish to express their gratitude to the Ministry for providing the means to undertake the project.

1 Introduction

In the late 1990s and after the year 2000 Russia retook the position the Soviet Union once had as one of the major providers of arms to the developing countries. This development sometimes led to severe criticism, in particular from Western governments and international NGOs. The critics claimed that significant amounts of the expansion in arms sales could be explained by Russia adopting an irresponsible arms sales policy. They maintained that Russia repeatedly showed a particular willingness to sell arms to oppressive, unstable and war-prone regimes. Thus, Russia increased the chances both for violent political oppression within third world countries and for third world interstate conflict. *This report aims to investigate, based on open source material, whether, and to what extent these allegations are supported by evidence.*

The report compares Russia with other countries only in terms of the volumes of arms export. The purpose is not to investigate whether Russia is "better" or "worse" compared to other countries in terms of selling to oppressive, unstable and war-prone regimes.

Additionally, the report also looks into the question of to what extent Russian arms sales to the developing world are likely to make possible future international military involvement in the developing world more difficult.

Chapter two discusses the organizational and political frameworks of the arms sales policy. Chapter three presents quantitative estimates of the development of Russian arms sales to the developing world in general volumes, and it takes a first quantitative look at the main research question raised above. Chapter four expands on the research question with the help of a number of case studies. Chapter five analyses possible consequences for future international military interventions in the developing world from the Russian arms sales. The report's main findings are summarised in a final conclusion.

2 The political and organizational frameworks of the arms sales policy

It is analytically fruitful to differentiate in this discussion between political and organizational frameworks. By *political framework* we mean which types of arms the political leadership is willing to sell to whom. By *organizational framework* we mean to what extent the domestic system of arms export control is able to ensure that the actual sales correspond with the political framework. The underlying assumption here is that actual sales sometimes may conflict with the stated arms sales policy. This could be the case, either because the political leadership does something different from what it says, or because sub-state actors within the arms sales system for various reasons allow sales that are incompatible with stated policy.

External criticism of Russian arms sales has changed fundamentally from the early 1990s until today. In the early 1990s the organizational framework was the main target of criticism, and Russian authorities have themselves later partly acknowledged that some of this criticism was justified. However, the rise in arms export from the late 1990s was accompanied by a thorough streamlining and centralization of the Russian export control system. This has also been recognized beyond Russia's borders. Since approximately the year 2000, the main criticism has been directed at the political framework instead of the organizational one. For example, US State Secretary, Condoleezza Rice, during a state visit to Moscow in 2007, criticized the Russian leadership for disregarding the political consequences of its arms sales policy. To the Russian counterclaim, that all arms sales now are perfectly legal, she responded that "not everything that is legal in the narrowest sense is good for the international system".[1] In the *Wikileaks* documents the US Ambassador to Moscow, William Burns, was even more blunt: "Russia attaches importance to the volume of the arms export trade, to the diplomatic doors that weapon sales open, to the ill-gotten gains that these sales reap for corrupt senior officials, and to the lever it provides the Russian government in stymieing American interests".[2]

In this first sub-chapter there will be a brief description of how Russian export control for conventional weapons developed after 2000 (i.e. the organizational framework), and a discussion of the main principles that now seem to guide the export policy (i.e. the political framework).

2.1 The system of export control

In the early 1990s the Russian export control system was in total disarray. There were about 20 major independent companies with the right to sell arms. These included both specialized arms export companies such as *Oboroneksport*, *Spetsvneshtekhnika* and *Voentech*, but also arms producers themselves and even local regional authorities. For example, the partly autonomous district of Udmurtia was in 1992 granted a special privilege by the president to international arms export in an effort to increase local revenue. The licensing authority at this time was the Ministry of foreign trade, an institution that had very limited expertise in arms trade.

It was, however, relatively soon realized that this chaotic state of affairs had to end. The major event in this regard was the establishment of *Rosvooruzhenie* in November 1994. The idea was that *Rosvooruzhenie* should enjoy a monopoly on both arms export and (to the extent that this took place) import. Politically, *Rosvooruzhenie* was to be controlled by the president's new Committee for Military-Technological policy. However, in the mid-1990s the Russian central government was still too weak to establish such a monopoly in an area where there was potentially a lot of money to be made, and therefore many heavily vested interests. The government was simply not able to successfully maintain the principle of one exporter in the face of strong pressure from numerous lobby groups. Thus, in the years from 1994 to 2001, the export control system changed repeatedly. Sometimes it was close to a monopoly system, sometimes it was more pluralistic. The monopoly model invariably means that substantial parts of the revenue will stay with the monopoly trader instead of being returned to the producer. The producers therefore have a strong incentive to battle the monopoly model.

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[1] Jonathan Karl, "Rice: Russia's Military Moves a Problem", *ABC News*, 14 October 2007, http://www.abcnews.go.com/WN/story?id=3728855, accessed 18 October 2007.
[2] "US embassy cables: Russia's growing clout in the global arms trade", published in *The Guardian*, 1 December 2010.

It can, however, be argued that the shifting organizational framework of the arms sales system in this period had little negative effect on the attainment of the goals of the political framework. The struggle was not about what to sell to whom, but about the division of revenue from the sales that took place. It is therefore possible to conclude that it was mostly in the years 1992–1994 that the political framework was not supported by the organizational framework.

The political control was further strengthened in December 1997 when the system of List One and List Two was established. List One contains all the types of military materiel that are sanctioned for export, while List Two contains all countries to which Russia is willing to export. However, few, if any, countries in List Two are allowed up front to purchase any types of equipment in List One. All decisions on how to combine the two lists are made by the president. He also undertakes the yearly revisions of the lists.

In 2000, *Rosoboroneksport* replaced *Rosvooruzhenie* as the main arms exporter. There were still a number of producers who had their own export licenses, but under Putin's rule *Rosoboroneksport* gradually strengthened its monopoly. Presidential decrees forced some exporters to hand over their rights to export to *Rosoboroneksport* , whereas other exporters more or less willingly did the same. In the companies that had been well established as exporters, *Rosoboroneksport* was seen as little more than an unnecessary middleman that significantly reduced their profits. However, in the companies that had not acquired an equal international standing, *Rosoboroneksport* was seen as a welcome and necessary vehicle to get their own exports going.

In December 2006, the monopoly model was more or less finalized, when President Putin gave *Rosoboroneksport* total monopoly on export of all finished products. The 17 remaining independent exporters would hereafter only be allowed to engage in the spare part and maintenance market.[3]

Rosoboroneksport's role is to export military goods. To control that the activity of *Rosoboroneksport* is in correspondence with the president's export policy, a new Committee for Military-Technical Cooperation was established in December 2000. Among other things, the export and import licenses are now issued by this committee.

A third public organ currently responsible for arms export policy is the Commission for Military-Technological cooperation. While the Committee controls policy through its licensing and other forms of supervision over *Rosoboroneksport,* the Commission is also tasked with preparing new policies. It is supposed to coordinate the interests of all state structures that have an interest in the arms sales policy, and to makes proposals for new policy to the president based on suggestions from these structures.
Against the background of these developments, one study concluded that Russia has ”reduced to a minimum the risk of any possible unauthorized arms trade, prevent the spread of sensitive

[3] Aleksei Nikolskii, “Vietnam pomog rekordu”, *Vedomosti,* 29 January 2007.

technologies, and observe its international non-proliferation commitments".[4] Nevertheless, the same study also points out that the centralization and increasing degree of control has not sufficiently been accompanied by the establishment on transparency mechanisms. Thus, if the president or influential people within his administration should wish to promote export orders that are "border line" in relation to the officially stated policy, there is still room to do that.

Nonetheless, there are some other mechanisms in place for securing transparency. Since 2001 the president has given an annual account of the data for the arms export.[5] In addition, Russia reports on its arms sales to the UN, and it reports on its sales of small arms to the OSCE. Still, there seems to be little doubt that especially the reports to the UN register are far from complete. For example, Russian expert Vadim Koziulin has pointed out that bureaucrats involved with the arms trade throughout a year regularly mention sales to up to 60 different countries. Despite that, the yearly Russian reports to the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms (UNROCA) tend to mention only 12–14.[6] This discrepancy might, however, at least partly be explained by the fact that Russia, as well as the USA, China and many others, do not report their sales of small arms and light weapons (SALW) to UNROCA. The UNROCA system originally did not cover SALW sales, but in 2003 the UN General Assembly invited member states to report also on these sales.[7] On the other hand, Russia is reporting on its SALW sales to the OSCE in accordance with OSCE resolution 556. This resolution was accepted by Russia in 2001, and was at the time an example of increased willingness by the country for transparency in its arms sales. Maxim Pyadushkin claims Russian acceptance of resolution 556 was a very significant event. According to him "members of the Russian elite regard legally binding international commitments and complete transparency on matters of proliferation of small arms as an attempt by the West to establish control over the production and use of these arms in Russia".[8]

In April 2007, a little noticed legal act was pushed through the Duma, which gave *Rosoboron-export* the right to use the bank accounts of Russian diplomatic missions. Hitherto most *Rosobornexport* transactions had gone through The Bank of New York. According to journalists at *Nezavsimaia Gazeta*, this bank connection had on many occasions led to details of Russian arms transactions leaking to the US political leadership.[9] Thus, using the diplomatic accounts would be important for making the arms sales less transparent, at least to US authorities.

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[4] Maxim Pyadushkin, Marta Haug and Anna Matveeva, *Beyond the Kalashnikov: Small Arms Production, Exports, and Stockpiles in the Russian Federation*, Small Arms Survey, Occasional Paper No.10, 2002, p. 22, at http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/B-Occasional-papers/SAS-OP10-Russia.pdf, accessed 6 October 2011.

[5] Ibid., p. 27.

[6] Natalia Kalinina and Vadim Koziulin, "Dogovor o torgovle oruzhiem: zastavit pushki zamolchat", *Index Besopasnosti*, no.3, autumn 2010, p. 86, at http://pircenter.org/data/publications/SIrus10-3/81-98_kozyulin.pdf, accessed 6 October 2011.

[7] Mark Bromley, Paul Holtom, Sam Perlo-Freeman and Pieter D. Wezeman, *Recent Trends in the Arms Trade*, SIPRI Background paper, p.10, at http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRIBP0904a.pdf, accessed 6 October 2011.

[8] Maxim Pyadushkin, Marta Haug and Anna Matveeva, *Beyond the Kalashnikov...*, op.cit, p. 28.

[9] Ivan Rodin and Viktor Litovkin, "Dengi na oryzheinye kontrakty", *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 20 April 2007.

In general it can be said that Russian policy with regard to transparency reveals the same ambiguity as we see in the arms sales policy in general. Russia is not opposed to transparency as a principle, but often tries to limit its “intrusiveness”.

It also needs to be pointed out that the current monopoly system by no means has been accepted by all the producers of military equipment. The system is not the result of any kind of consensus among producers, politicians and *Rosoboroneksport*. Instead, the system has been set up against the wishes of many, maybe even most, producers. It came about because of the increased strength of the central government under Putin, and because of the lobbying power of *Rosoboroneksport* itself. The system is still regularly challenged. One of the latest attempts was United Shipbuilding Company’s (controls the majority of military and civilian shipbuilding plants in Russia) petition in November 2010 for the status of independent export agency. If the government had accepted this petition, *Rosoboroneksport* could have lost about 25 % of its exports.[10]

Thus, if a situation where the political leadership felt less in control than it does today should occur, and where it felt more in need of trading privileges for political loyalty than it does today, the system could again easily become decentralized. In that case, the substantial degree of control that has been a result of the monopolization could again become undone.

2.2 The political framework

There are several reasons why Russia wants to export arms, none of them particular only to Russia.

First, there is the obvious commercial motive. In the 1990s large parts of the Russian arms industry survived only thanks to export orders. Russia’s own armed forces did not seriously start to order new equipment form the industry until the mid-2000s.

Second, there is the idea that arms sales are likely to increase Russian political influence in key regions of the world. Whether the sales actually yield such influence is debatable, but the subjective existence of the motive is not necessarily dependent on an objective account of the impact. In any way, measuring such impact is never easy. According to one analyst of the Russian arms trade, Ruslan Pukhov, there has been a significant strengthening of the *political influence* motive at the expense of the *commercial motive* since the mid-2000s.[11]

Third, a “we do it because everybody else is doing it”-attitude is also strong. This is probably more a justification than a motive, but it is the standard Russian response to most Western accusations against the Russian arms export. There is a strong impression of Western double standards. Sergei Ladygin, responsible for Latin America at *Rosoboroneksport*, complained in an

[10] Elena Kiselieva, “Flotouvodets”, Kommersant-Daily, 19 November 2010.
[11] Ruslan Pukhov, “Russkii eksport oruzhia: ot kommertsii k politike”, *Profil*, 21 January 2008.

interview in 2008 that “what amazes me most is that those that are accusing us of it, have been shipping loads of weapons to bad guys for decades, just because they were their own bad guys”.[12]

Thus, Russia is no campaigner for increased transparency and more legal constraints on international arms sales. At the same time, however, neither is the country completely against such restrictions. There is a strong wish to sell and there is a suspicion that new initiatives in terms of increased transparency and more restrictions are in fact disguised attempts by Western powers to squeeze Russia out of the market. But, there is also at the same time a desire to be seen as a responsible member of the international community. The ambiguity that this creates is seen very clearly in the discussion about a new comprehensive international treaty on conventional arms sales at the UN, the so called ATT process (Arms Trade Treaty).

In December 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for “an Arms Trade Treaty establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms”.[13] The resolution was proposed by Great Britain and supported by a total of 153 member states. Russia and China abstained, the USA voted against. The Russian abstention signaled discomfort but not outright opposition to the idea. However, since the US stance was known prior to the vote, it could also be that Russia chose only abstention in order to score political points since it knew that the US opposition would prevent the adoption of the resolution anyway. The resolution called for a four week international conference in 2012 to work out the details of a treaty. In the run up to the 2006 vote, Russia suggested that the UN initially should focus on analyzing why existing agreements are unsatisfactory before starting the work on new international treaties.[14]

In October 2009, however, events took a radically positive turn for the future of the treaty when the USA changed its position. The country now declared its willingness to contribute to the development of an agreement provided the treaty would operate on the basis of a consensus. After the American U-turn, Russia together with China are now the main skeptics of the treaty. This is clearly an image that Russia is uncomfortable with. Thus, in a statement to the first session of the preparatory committee for the 2012 conference, Russia initially praised the work being done so far towards a new treaty, and warned against identifying ATT supporters and ATT skeptics. The statement continues by suggesting that the main focus of a potential future document should be to combat the illicit arms trade. In particular, Russia would like the “manufacturing without licenses, unauthorized re-export, lack of end-user controls and controls of brokering activities, transfers to non-state actors etc” to be a priority. This means that even if the views on how the final treaty should look like are still very different among the negotiating parties, at least the initial Russian discomfort might be changing.

[12] Sergei Balashov, “A Controversial Trade”, *Russia Profile,* 1 July 2008.
[13] For the full text of the UN resolution, see http://www.ony.unu.edu/Resolution_61_89.pdf, accessed 21 October 2011.
[14] Natalia Kalinina and Vadim Koziulin, “Dogovor o torgovle oruzhiem: zastavit pushki zamolchat”, *Indeks Bezopasnosti*, No.3, Vol. 16, p. 83.

3 Volume and characteristics of the export

This chapter gives a quantitative assessment of the structure of the Russian arms export from 1992 until today. It serves as a background for the more qualitative conclusions that will be drawn based on the case studies in the next chapter. All the figures on arms sales that have been used to calculate the charts in this chapter come from SIPRI's Arms Transfers Database.[15] This database uses SIPRI's own Trend Indicator Value (TIV) as the unit of calculation. TIV is an indicator developed by SIPRI and in order to represent the volume rather than the financial value of arms sales. The TIV is expressed in USD. Thus, if other statistics on arms export with other units of calculation had been used, the resulting charts would have looked noticeably different. The choice to use SIPRI figures is the result both of the fact that SIPRI has by far the most easily accessible database, and of the analytical decision that for the purpose of this study the volume of the arms trade is more important than its financial value.

3.1 Overall volumes

We start by taking a look at the overall volume of the Russian arms export to the developing world since 1992, and also how it varies across regions. For this purpose four developing world regions have been defined: Asia, Middle East, Africa and Latin America.[16] In addition, in each chart Russian sales are measured against the sales from the USA and the UK as single countries, and all other countries as a joint category. The USA is singled out for comparison because it in overall terms is the largest arms exporter in the world, and the UK is singled out as a representative of the smaller but still significant exporters. France, Germany and/or several others could equally have been chosen for this role.

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, there was a very substantial increase in the Russian share of arms exports to developing world countries from 1998 until 2002–2003. In the early 2000s, Russia accounted for around 50 % of all transfers to the developing world. It should be kept in mind here, however, that these were also the peak years for Russian arms sales to China. Thus, if China had been removed from the list of developing countries, the Russian share in these years would have been significantly smaller. Nevertheless, Russia also increased its sales to many other developing countries in the same period. The Chinese sales started to fall off around 2004-2005, but as demonstrated in Figure 3.1, Russia was able to maintain a very significant share of the total also after that time.

[15] The database can be found at http://www/sipri.org/databases/armstransfers.

[16] A list of the countries that are counted as belonging to the different regions is provided in Appendix A. Four analytical choices have been made in the construction of this list. First, a number of very small states have been excluded because of no data in the SIPRI data base. Second, the three Caucasian republics have been considered as belonging to Europe, and are therefore not part of any list. Third, a number of developed and partly developed countries have been included because they are important elements of the strategic context of the different regions. These include in particular China, India, Japan, South Korea and Singapore in Asia, Israel in the Middle East, and South Africa in Africa. Fourth, the countries of Northern Africa are counted under the Middle East rather than Africa.

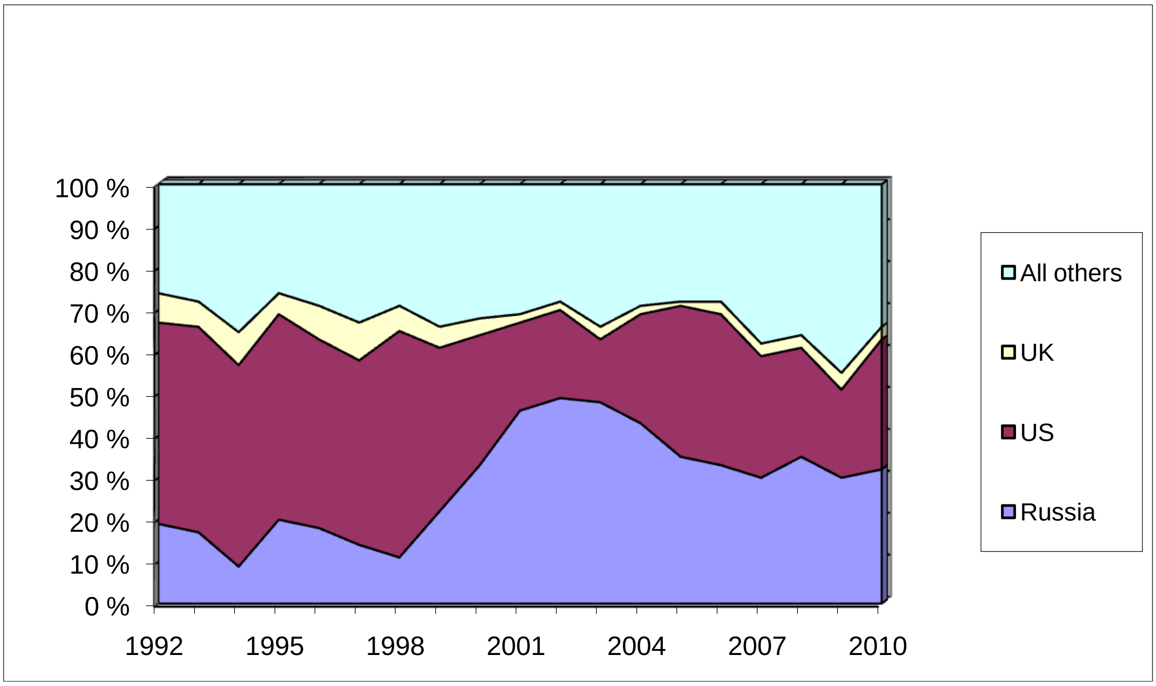

Figure 3.1 Calculation of Russia's share of total arms transfers to the developing world in the period 1992–2010 based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation.

If we move to the regional break-down of the numbers, and start with the Asian arms market, we see in Figure 3.2 the trend from the previous figure largely repeated.

This is probably because many of the customers that came to fill the vacuum after the fall off of sales to China were Asian countries, first of all India and several of the South-East Asian countries. However, in Figure 3.3 a somewhat similar trend can also be seen in the development of Russian arms sales to the Middle East.

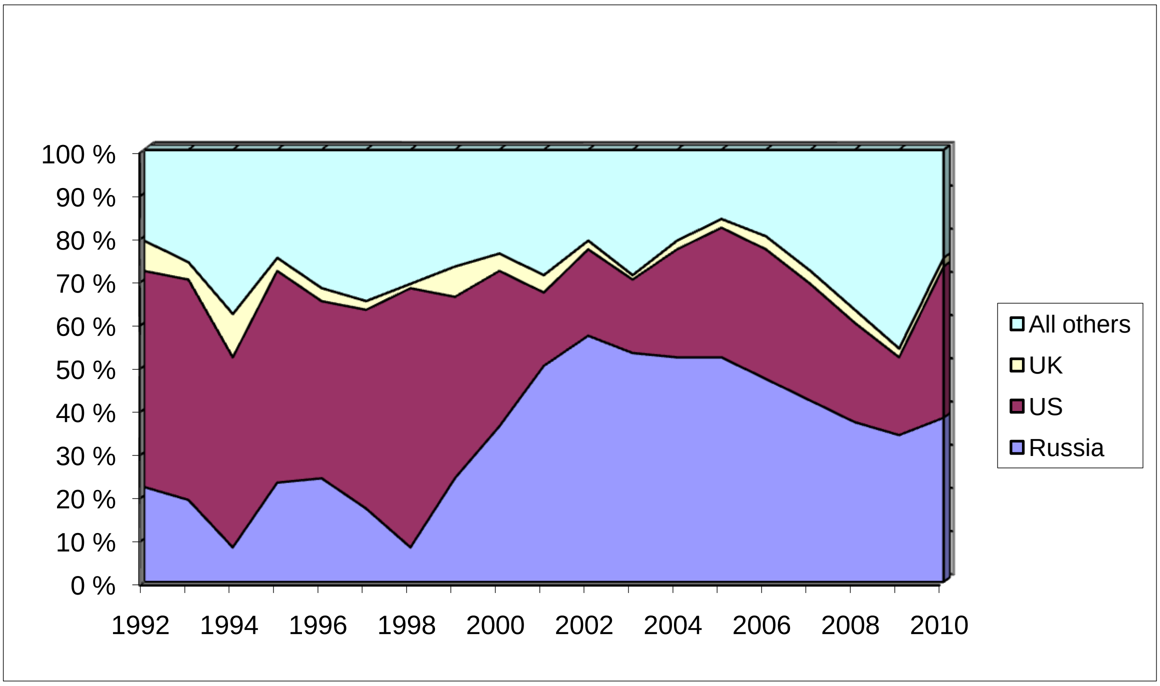

Figure 3.2 Calculation of Russia's share of the Asian arms market in the period 1992–2010 based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation.

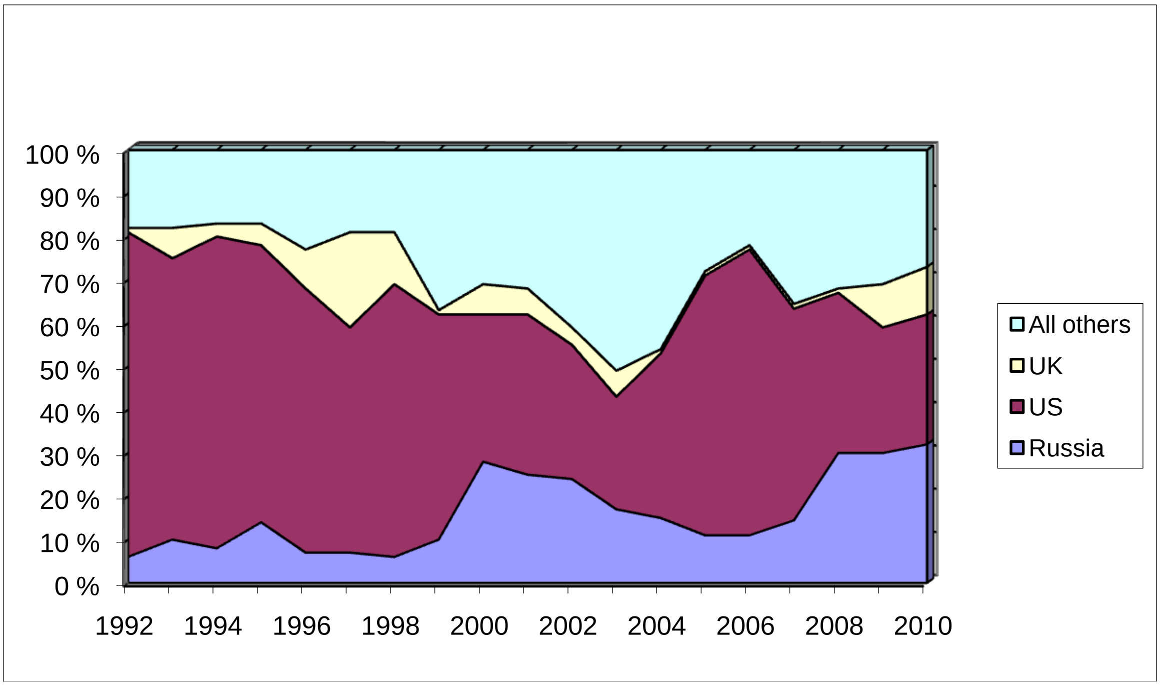

Figure 3.3 Calculation of Russia's share of the Middle East arms market in the period 1992–2010 based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation.

In the case of the Middle East, however, the trend is less clear than in the case of Asia. This is most likely due to the fact that for the Middle Eastern market Russia is more dependent on a few individual countries (first of all Iran, Syria and Algeria) than in the Asian market. The same is also very much the case for the remaining two markets.

In fact, in Figure 3.4 it is difficult to identify any stable long term trends in Russian arms sales to the African market. The two peaks around 1998–2000 and 2003–2004 can both be attributed to periods of heavy conflict and war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. As will be demonstrated in Figure 3.6, in terms of the whole developing world, the African arms market is relatively insignificant.

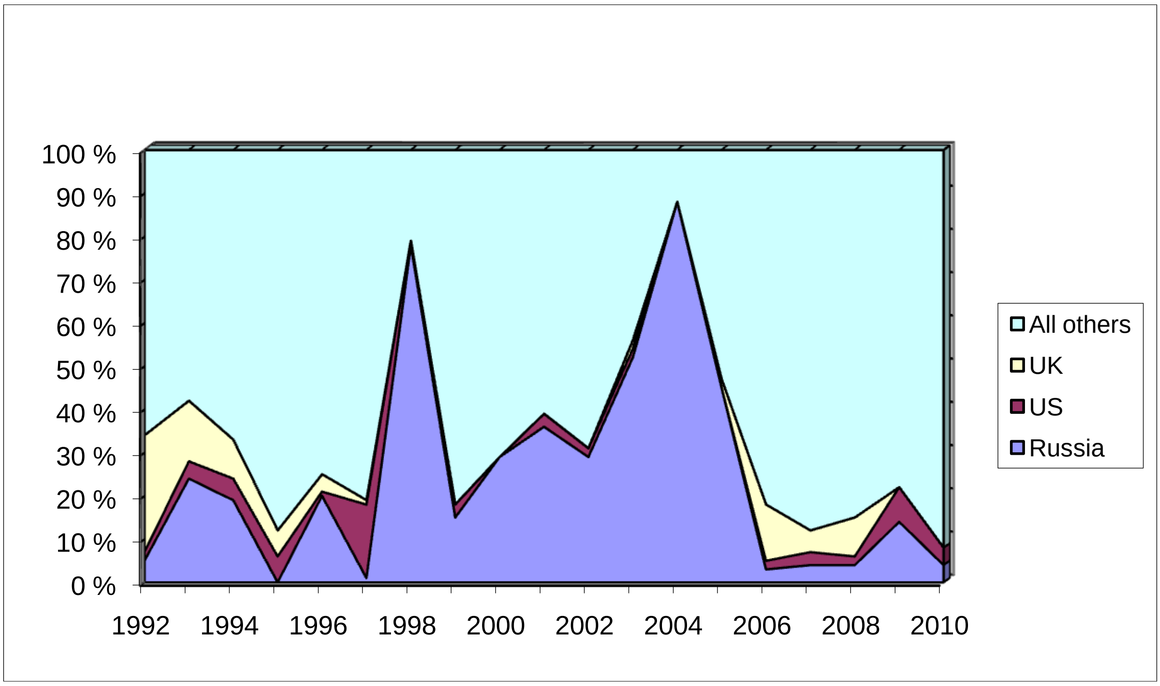

Figure 3.4 Calculation of Russia's share of the African arms market in the period 1992–2010 based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation.

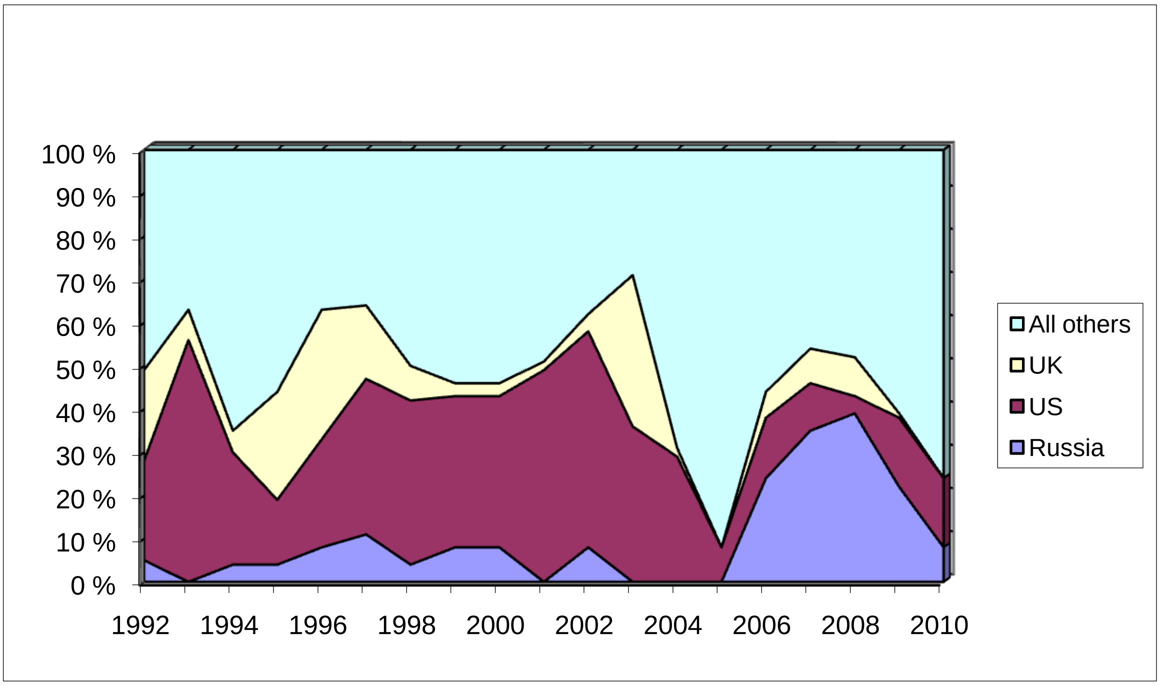

Figure 3.5 Calculation of Russia's share of the Latin American arms market in the period 1992–2010 based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation.

The Latin American market has traditionally been the weakest for Russia. As seen from Figure 3.5, Russia's share in this market was almost negligible until 2005—2006. The significant sales since then have mostly been to Venezuela, but over the last couple of years Russia has also begun to sign contracts with other Latin American states. Thus, the downward trend seen in the chart since 2008 is probably not representative. The SIPRI figures depict only concluded sales, and new contracts with Venezuela have already been signed.[17] In addition, Russian arms exporters are also signing new contracts with other Latin American countries.[18]

[17] Author unknown, "Itogi voenno-tekhnicheskogo sotrudnichestvo Rossii s inostrannymi gosudarstvami v 2011 godu", *Eksport Vooruzhenii*, November-December 2011, p. 3.
[18] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

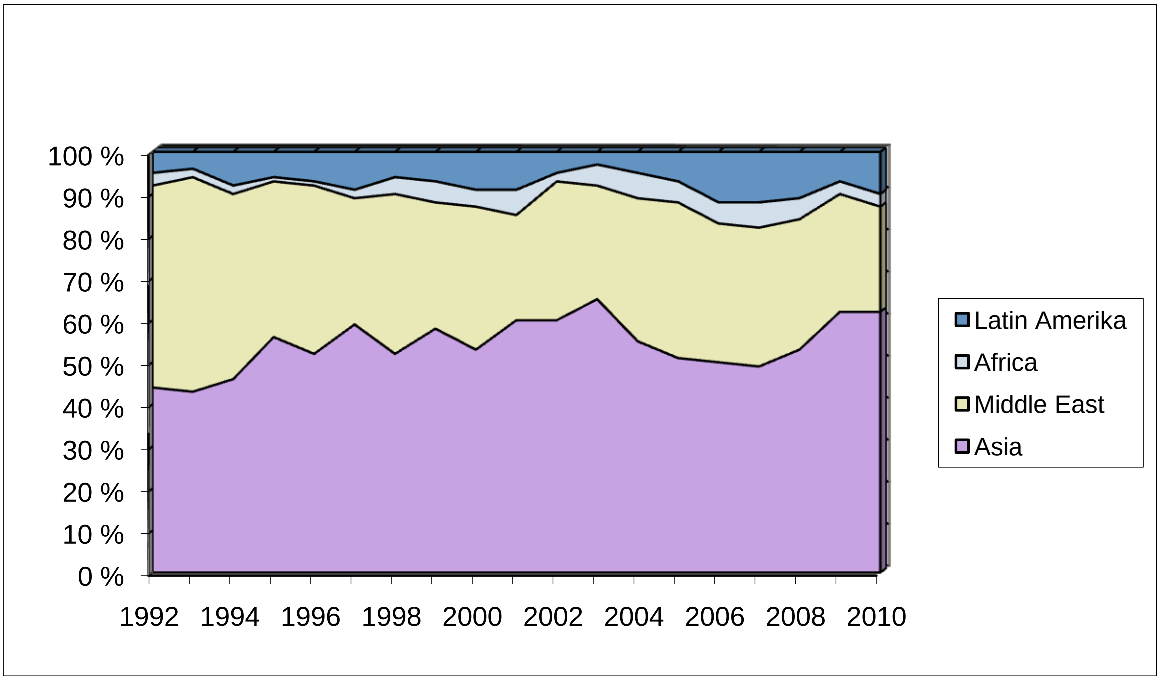

Figure 3.6 The different regional developing world arms market's share of total sales to the developing world in the period 1992–2010, based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation.

Figure 3.6 leaves little doubt that Asia and the Middle East are the dominant arms markets in the developing world. For Asia this is a rising trend, but for the Middle East it is slightly falling. For Russia this means that the increasingly affluent Asian states will continue to be the most important markets in the years to come. The Middle Eastern market continues to be second in importance, but here, as in the Latin American market, sales are very dependent upon the political and economic developments in a few individual countries. That is also the case in the African market, but as demonstrated by this chart, the African market is not very significant in terms of volume. Generally, African states are today too poor to purchase significant volumes of larger platforms such as naval vessels and military aircraft. A recent exception here is the 2010 purchase of four Su-30 fighters by Uganda. So far, however, there are few indications that Uganda is initiating a new trend in African arms purchases in favor of larger and more expensive platforms and equipment.

3.2 Russian sales to oppressive, unstable and war-prone regimes

In this section we examine the Western accusations of political irresponsibility in Russian arms sales by combining figures from the SIPRI database with different international indexes of oppressiveness, instability and war-proneness. The three indexes used are: the Freedom House's index on political freedom; the magazine Foreign Policy's index for failed states; and the Heidelberg Conflict barometer.[19]

[19] These can be found at *http://www.freedomhouse.org/images/File/fiw/FIW_2011_Booklet.pdf*, *http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/17/2011_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings*, and *http://hiik.de/en/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2010.pdf*.

In terms of political freedom, we have calculated the Russian, US, UK and others share of arms sales from 2000 to 2010 to the 23 most authoritarian states in the developing world in 2011.[20] The aim was to get a quantitative answer to the question of whether and to what extent the accusations against Russia for being the main provider of arms to authoritarian regimes were true. There is a significant methodological problem here in the sense that the 23 most authoritarian states in 2011 were not necessarily the same ones throughout the 2000 to 2010 period. However, a quick glance at the same index for the years 2000 to 2010 suggest that few of these states were very democratic during any part of this period, even if they were not always among the top 23 most authoritarian. At least they did not change more than that the proposed calculation gives a roughly valid answer to the question posed. The same methodological problem is also present in the combination of figures from the SIPRI data bases with the Foreign Policy index of failed states and the Heidelberg conflict barometer. However, the same justification for doing the analysis despite the methodological problem applies here too. Although the memberships in the clubs of 20 most fragile states, and 33 states with the most strained relations with another state, varied over the ten year period, most of the countries that were in the top category in 2011 were also fragile or had strained relations with another state during most of the period. The results are shown in figures 3.7—3.9.

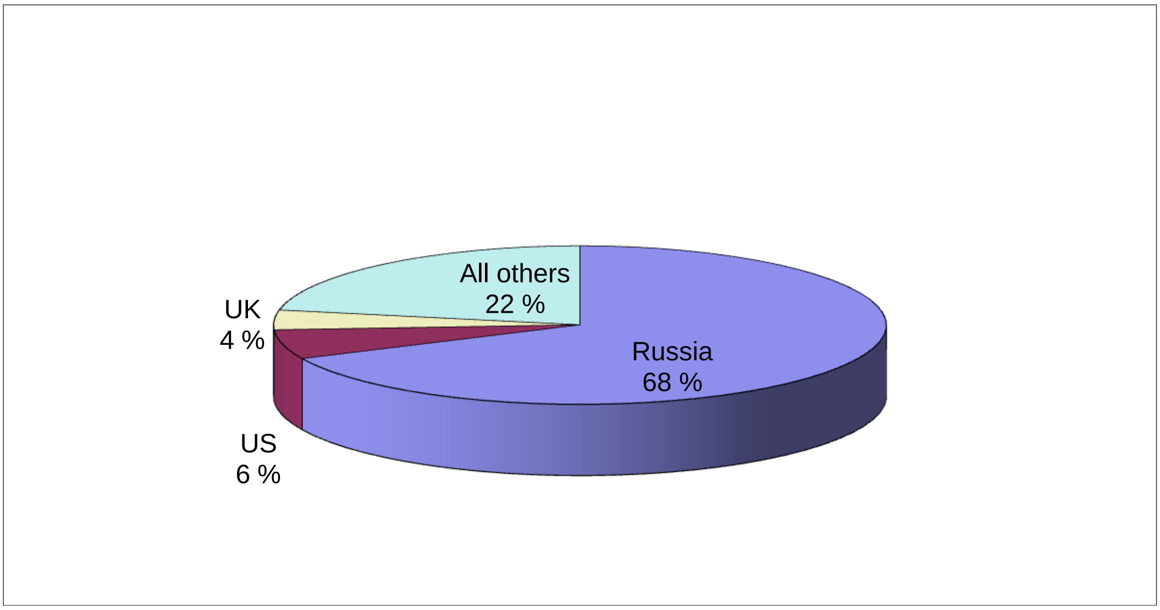

Figure 3.7 Different countries' shares of the total sales in the period from 2000 to 2010 to the 26 most authoritarian countries in 2011, based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation and on Freedom house's index of political freedom.

[20] These were the countries that in 2011 scored 6 or higher on the Freedom house's index: Afghanistan, Cameroon, Congo (Kinshasa), Ethiopia, Iran, Swaziland, Tunisia, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. The following scored 6.5: Belarus, Chad, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Laos and Saudi Arabia. The following scored 7: Burma, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Going by the figures of Freedom house and SIPRI, Figure 3.7 quite conclusively supports the claim that Russia is a main provider of arms to authoritarian states. A large part of the Russian share obviously comes from the sales to authoritarian China, but the dominance is still quite clear.

The second point of investigation was whether Russia is also a dominant provider of arms to the regimes of the world's most fragile states. This calculation was made by combining SIPRI data with the Index of failed states list produced by the Foreign Policy magazine. More specifically, the share of arms sales in the period from 2000 to 2010 to the 20 most fragile states in the world in 2011 was calculated as shown in Figure 3.8.

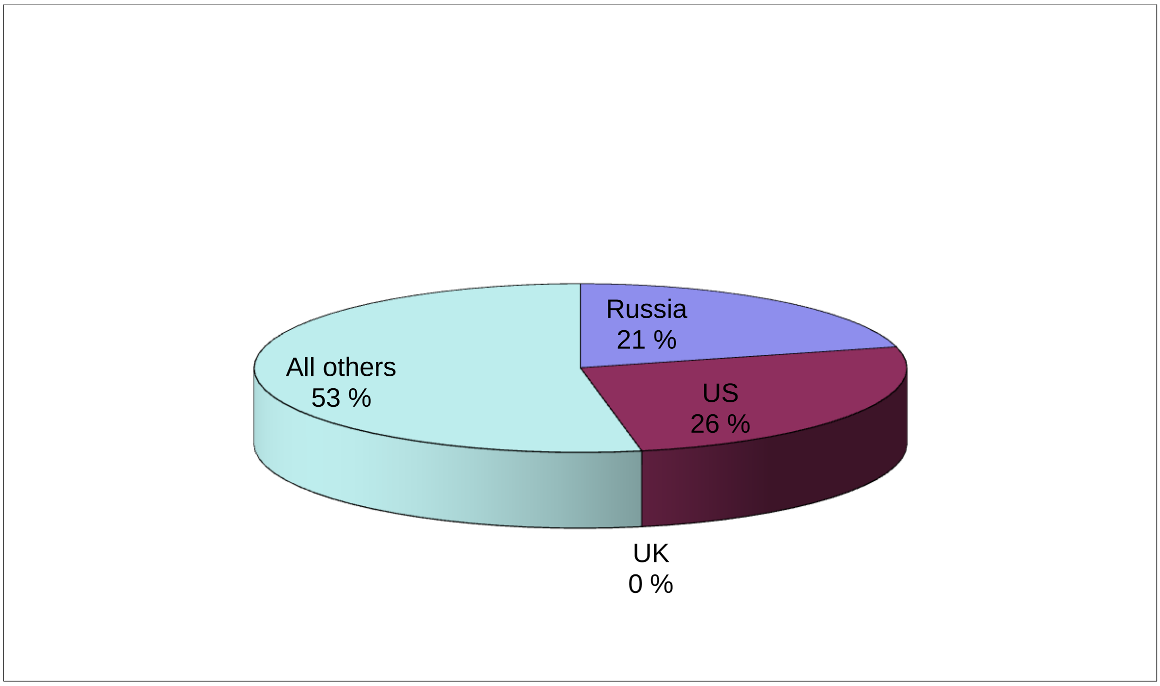

Figure 3.8 Different countries' shares of the total sales in the period from 2000 to 2010 to the 20 most fragile states in 2011, based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation and on the Failed state index 2011 from the magazine Foreign Policy.

As seen in the chart, while Russia is a very significant exporter of arms also to the world's most fragile states, the country is not at all in any dominating position. In fact, in the period from 2000 to 2010 the US sold more to these countries than Russia. One argument concerning these regimes would be that arms transfers could contribute to the instability by making it more likely that the regimes in these states would opt for the use of violence rather than negotiations in their dealings with domestic opposition.

The third question is whether Russia is a main provider of arms to developing countries that are in very strained relations with one or more other developing countries. This can be studied by combining figures from the SIPRI database with figures from the Heidelberg Conflict Barometer. The latter rates conflicts throughout the developing world, both internal and external, according to the scale: latent conflict, manifest conflict, crisis, severe crisis, and war.[21] In the Barometer for 2010, there were a total of 20 state to state relationships that were labeled as manifest conflict or higher. These conflicts involved a total of 33 developing countries.[22] The share of Russian vs. other countries arms sales to these states from 2000 to 2010 period is shown in Figure 3.9.

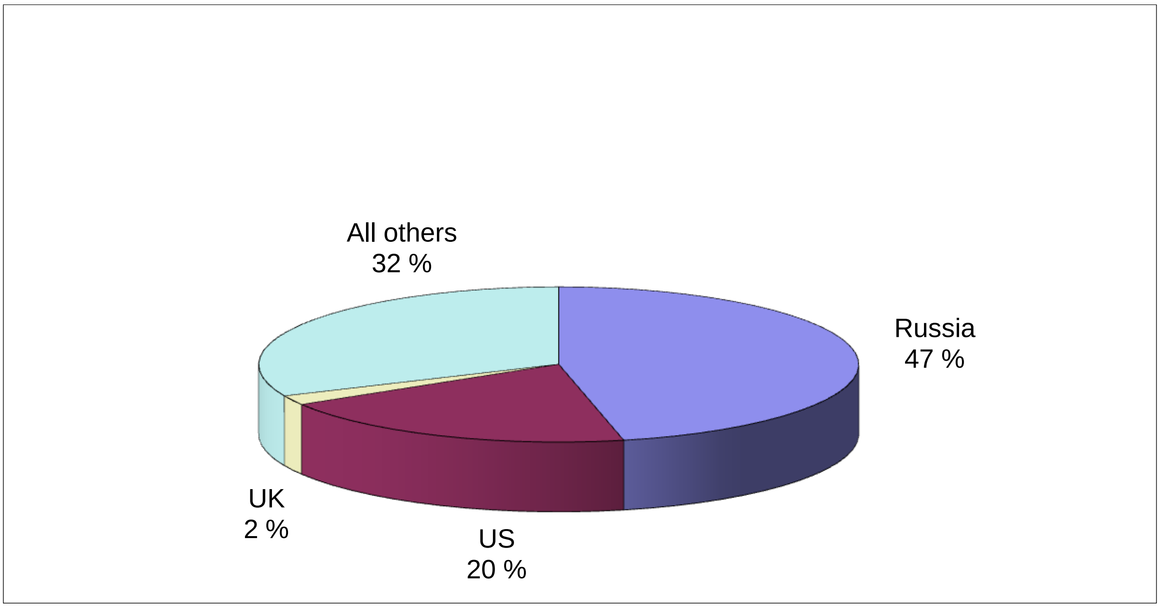

Figure 3.9 Different countries' shares of the total sales in the period from 2000 to 2010 to the 32 developing world states that in 2011 had the most strained relations with another state, based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation and on the Heidelberg conflict barometer 2010.

Again we see a very clear Russian dominance. Here, however, it needs to be pointed out that of the value of the $49.5 billion TIV that Russia sold to these countries over this ten year period, $23 billion TIV went to China and another $16.9 billion TIV went to India. If these two countries, although belonging to the group of 33 countries that in 2010 had these very strained relations with at least one neighbor, were excluded from the calculation, the figures would be very different. In that case the Russian share would sink to 19 %, the US share would rise to 35 %, the UK share would stay the same at 2 %, and others would count for 44 %.

[21] The values are defined as follows: *manifest conflict* = "the use of measures that are located in the stage preliminary to violent force. This includes for example verbal pressure, threatening explicitly with violence, or the imposition of economic sanctions"; *crisis* = "a tense situation in which at least one of the parties uses violent force in sporadic incidents"; *severe crisis* = "violent force is used repeatedly in an organized way"; and *war* = "violent force is used with a certain continuity in an organized and systematic way. The conflict parties exercise extensive measures, depending on the situation. The extent of destruction is massive and of long duration".

[22] Angola, Bhutan, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, DR. Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, North Korea, Pakistan, Peru, South Korea, Sudan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uganda, Venezuela and Vietnam.

In summary, there is little doubt that Russia is the dominant provider of arms to the developing world's authoritarian regimes. Russia is also the dominant exporter of arms to developing countries that are in particular strained relations with at least one of their neighbors, although here the dominance is significantly less pronounced that in the case of the authoritarian regimes, and it is heavily dependent of the sales to China and India. Finally, Russia is also a major exporter to the world's most fragile states, but here the dominant position was in 2011 held by the USA. Again, however, it is pertinent to point out that these figures, because of the methodological validity problem mentioned at the beginning of this section, should be considered with care. They are best seen only as rough indicators.

4 Case studies

4.1 Introduction

Russia officially claims (1) that the country is 100 percent loyal to all UN arms embargos, and (2) that it abides by the advice and guidelines for arms exports adopted by the treaties the country has signed such as the Wassenaar agreement, the OSCE agreement on arms sales etc. Said Sergei Ladykin of *Rosoboroneksport,* responsible for Latin America:

> "We have always been following all of the international rules in military cooperation, including the export control regime and the sanctions and bans passed by the UN", and "we never ship weapons to conflict zones. The purpose of our trading is bolstering the defensive capabilities of the buying countries, and sustaining stability and safety in different regions of the world. Unlike other leading exporters, Russia doesn't associate international military cooperation with political expediency, and doesn't put forward any political demands."[23]

This study, based on the empirical findings of the case studies presented below, argues that the first claim of loyalty to UN arms embargos seems justified, but that the second claim about following more general guidelines from international treaties is not. For more clarity, three questions can be directed to the second Russian claim:

a) Have Russian arms sales contributed to increased instability among developing countries?
b) Have Russian arms sales contributed to increased use of violence within developing countries?
c) Have Russian arms sales led to the spread of arms to third parties?

These three questions will be discussed in the five case studies below.

[23] Sergei Balashov, "A Controversial Trade", op.cit.

4.2 The Ethiopia-Eritrea war from May 1998 to June 2000

Fighting broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea in May 1998. The conflict was ostensibly over a border dispute. In addition, trade disputes between the two countries and domestic politics, particularly on the Ethiopian side, also seem to have played an important role. The situation in spring 1998 escalated into mutual bombings of each other's airfields. In June the same year, both sides agreed to a US-brokered airstrike moratorium. After the implementation of the moratorium, fighting was reduced to occasional exchanges of artillery and small weapons fire. This state of affairs lasted until February 1999, when the conflict escalated to full scale warfare. From February 1999, there were repeated clashes and battles until Ethiopia emerged partly victorious in May 2000. As many as 100 000 people in total may have died on both sides as a direct result of the fighting.[24]

During the lull in fighting from June 1998 to February 1999, the two belligerents went on an arms shopping spree. It is this period that is of particular interest for this study. What was the Russian policy with regard to arms sales in this period, and to what extent did these sales have an impact on the decision-making of the adversaries?

By the time the war started the Russian arms trader *Roszvooruzhenye* was already well established in Addis Abeba. The exact amount and types of Russian arms sold to Ethiopia during the conflict is not known, but they included at least 8 Su-27 fighters, a number of Mi-24 and Ka-50 helicopter gunships, and some Mi-8 transport helicopters. A Russian source suggests that in addition many contracts were never made public.[25]

As well as the arms themselves, Russia also supplied trained pilots, instructors and other specialized personnel. According to one source, there were about 300 Russian military personnel of different kinds in Ethiopia at the time of the war, and the Ethiopian air force itself was in practice led by the retired Russian air force Colonel Yanakov.[26]

Russia initially also supplied Eritrea with weapons. In the summer of 1998, eight MiG-29s and two MiG-29UBs were exported to Eritrea. However, also Ukraine started to sell arms, including fighter planes, to Eritrea. This led to quarrels between Russian and Ukrainian exporters. In addition, Russia gradually became so involved on the Ethiopian side that this country could persuade Russia to stop the sales to the enemy. Thus, soon there developed a division of labor where Russia supplied Ethiopia and Ukraine supplied Eritrea.[27]

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[24] Patric Gilkes and Martin Plaut, "The War Between Ethiopia and Eritrea", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, no. 25, August 2000, p. 1.

[25] Leonid Gankin, "Pobdea rossiiskogo oruzhiya na efiopsko-eritreiiskom fronte", *Kommersant-Daily*, 19 May 2000.

[26] Tom Cooper and Jonathan Kyzer, "II Ethiopian Eritrean war", 10 February 2008, at http://s188567700.online.de/CMS/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=138&Itemid=47, accessed 6 April 2011.

[27] Tom Cooper, "Eritrean independence", at http://www.acig.org/artman/publish/printer_189.shtml, accessed 20 February 2008.

Other countries also supplied arms to Ethiopia during this period: ten refurbished MiG-23BN came from Romania, four refurbished C-130B from the USA, and four Mi-8T from Hungary. In addition, also China, Bulgaria, Israel and several other countries sold arms. The US stopped all arms sales to the two parties in the wake of the air strikes moratorium in July 1998, but other countries, with Russia in the lead, continued to supply arms to the belligerent parties up until a unanimous Security Council resolution installed a UN arms embargo on 17 May 2000.

There is no reason to assume that the arms sales were the main cause of the conflict. In fact, at the outset of conflict in May 1998, both countries had substantially cut their military expenditures. However, it is also clear that a significant number of countries – Russia among them – took full opportunity of the commercial possibilities that opened during the lull in fighting from June 1998 to February 1999.

Relatively soon after the events of May 1998, international efforts to arbitrate a peaceful solution to the conflict was initiated, first of all by the Clinton administration in the US. There is no way to establish for certain to what degree the continued arms sales jeopardized the arbitration efforts. However, several observers concluded at the time that the conflict was "fueled by an intense arms race"[28], and that "both sides began re-arming in earnest and their intransigent positions became more deeply embedded in their respective psyches",[29] and that the arms sales "made a mockery of the whole peace process".[30]

When fighting again increased substantially in the spring of 2000, the USA put pressure on the UN Security Council to declare an arms embargo. Russia first flatly rejected the idea, but then changed its mind and declared its willingness to accept an embargo under certain conditions. The reason for this change of mind is not clear, but one Russian observer suggested at the time that the political leadership's fear of being seen as hypocritical might have become too strong.[31] The officially stated reason for the initial Russian rejection of the embargo was that experience showed such embargoes never work, however, it was also common knowledge that Russia was making significant money on its arms exports to Ethiopia. Russia then accepted that an arms embargo should be put into place, but at the same time the country together with France rejected the US proposal for an open ended embargo.[32] Thus, a compromise of a one year embargo was reached. Towards the end of 2000 the head of the Department for security and arms control in the Russian foreign ministry, Iurii Kapralov, boldly stated that Russia from "the very start had argued for an exclusively political settlement of the conflict", and had therefore voted in favor of the embargo resolution.[33]

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[28] Kevin Hamilton, "Beyond the Border War: The Ethio-Eritrean Conflict and International Mediation Efforts", *Journal of Public and International Affairs,* Vol.11, Spring 2000, p. 114.
[29] Ibid. p. 130.
[30] Patric Smith of Africa Confidential quoted in Raymond Bonner, "Despite Cutoff by U.S., Ethiopia and Eritrea Easily Buy Weapons", *The New York Times,* 23 July 1998.
[31] Leonid Gankin, "Pobdea rossiiskogo…", op.cit.
[32] Barbara Crosette, "Arms Embargo ordered for Eritrean and Ethiopia", *The New York Times,* 19 May 2000.
[33] Interview with Iurii Kapralov in *Eksport Vooruzhenii,* no. 12, 2000.

Russia resumed deliveries of arms to Eritrea in 2001 (two fighter planes), and Ethiopia in 2002 (heavy artillery and fighter planes). While these sales clearly broke no international obligations, a 2007 SIPRI study of all UN arms embargoes and their effects on the behavior of target countries singles out Eritrea and Ethiopia as two of the countries to which it is most politically risky to sell arms. According to this study “the ending of the embargo on these two targets was premature, as target behavior is still a concern”.[34]

In summary, the Russian arms sales policy during the 1998 to 2000 Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict suggest little hesitation on the side of Russia to exploit a simmering international conflict for commercial gain, even if its arms sales could hamper mediation and arbitration efforts. This was an attitude that Russia shared with a significant number of other countries, including Ukraine, China, Israel, France and others. However, in this case Russia also gave in to international – first of all US – pressure for the imposition of an arms embargo. It is possible that the political leadership considered the potential damage to the country’s international reputation as more threatening than the potential economic losses from a termination of Ethiopian and Eritrean export orders.

4.3 Venezuela

Since 2001 Venezuela has become an increasingly important arms customer for Russia. The country is currently the third most important customer after China and India. The exports to Venezuela have come under increased criticism, mostly from the USA, which itself imposed a unilateral arms embargo on Venezuela in 2005. Two aspects of the Russian arms sales to Hugo Chavez are of concern to the USA: (1) the sales could lead to regional instability as a result of an arms race; and (2) Venezuela could pass arms on to the FARC guerilla fighting the US friendly government in Colombia.

On the first concern, it is of course always a danger that important armament efforts by one country result in worries and potential countermeasures by other countries. Still, experts on the region tend to downplay the danger of a serious regional arms race in this case. First of all, because both Brazil and Colombia are already superior to Venezuela militarily.[35] However, relations have for a long time been and continue to be tense between Venezuela and Colombia. Venezuelan helicopters entered Colombian airspace and bombarded an area in the jungle in 2000, and Chavez ordered ten National Guard battalions to the border with Colombia in 2008, after Colombian troops had pursued FARC rebels into Ecuador.

The second concern, about Venezuela passing arms on to third parties, became more urgent when Colombia in May 2009 provided what they claimed to be evidence acquired from FARC computers acquired in a raid on rebel bases in the jungle. One e-mail between rebel commanders

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[34] Damien Fruchart, Paul Holtom and Simeon T. Wezeman, *United Nations Arms Embargos – Their Impact on Arms Flows and Target Behaviour,* SIPRI, Stockholm, 2007, p. xi.

[35] See for example statements by US Airforce commander for Central and South America, Norman Seip to *Jane’s Defence Weekly,* 9 October 2008, and Michael Day, “Loaded guns: The build up of armaments in Latin America”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review,* 22 October 2008.

stated that military officials from Venezuela and FARC commanders had had a meeting to discuss “taking advantage of the Venezuelan arms purchases from Russia to include some containers” for the rebels.[36] Still, even representatives of the Bush administration warned after the revelation of the computer files that the US should be “cautious about drawing conclusions from the documents and prudent about the adoption of policy initiatives.[37] Russia responded to the claim that arms sold to Venezuela were passed on to the FARC by stating that “concerns that specifically Russian weapons could end up in terrorists’ hands look unfounded and, one might say biased”.[38]

Thus, in contrast to the Ethiopia-Eritrea case, there are no international obligations forcing Russia not to sell arms, and the political risks pointed out by some American sources are at least debatable. To what extent calculations about the risks of a regional arms race and the possibility of transfer of weapons to third parties have been present in Russian decision making in this matter is, based on available data, difficult to establish. Commercial gains, increased presence on the Latin American arms market, and to make a political statement to the US seems to have been the main motives. Moscow’s envoy to La Paz in Bolivia said in 2008 that “We want to show the United States that Latin America is not their backyard”, and President Medvedev said during a 2010 visit to Argentina that if anybody had a problem with Russia regaining its former influence in South America he could not care less.[39]

4.4 Sudan

Since 1999, Sudan has again become an important market for Russian arms (it had also been so from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s). In particular, Sudan bought fighter planes (MiG-29), helicopter gunships (Mi-24) and armored personnel carriers (BTR-80A).

In July 2004, as a response to the deteriorating situation in Darfur, the UN Security Council established an arms embargo on all non-governmental forces in Darfur. In March 2005, this embargo was expanded to also include Sudanese government forces in Darfur. That is, continued arms sales to Sudan were allowed, but Sudan was not allowed to use these arms in Darfur. Finally, in October 2010 the embargo was further strengthened by making the *arms providers* responsible for ensuring that the arms they exported to Sudan were not used in Darfur.

Russia together with China, Pakistan and Algeria, seem initially to have worked against adopting the first arms embargo, but in the end neither China nor Russia vetoed the embargo in the Security Council.[40] During 2007 to 2010, several Western countries tried to get a more general arms embargo adopted through the UN Security Council, but Russia and China prevented this.

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[36] Juan O. Tamayo, ”Missile buildup in Venezuela has U.S on edge”, *The Miami Herald,* 30 May 2009.
[37] Juan Forero, ”Venezuela Offered Aid to Colombian Rebels”, *Washington Post,* 15 May 2008.
[38] Gregory Wilpert, ”Russia Dismisses US Concerns about Weapons Sales to Venezuela”, *Venezuelanalysis.com,* 11 February 2005, at http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news.php?newsno=1501, accessed 7 April 2011.
[39] Editorial, ”Tango snova v mode”, *Vedomosti,* 16 April 2010.
[40] “Moscow Defends Sudan Sales, Nixes Sanctions”, *The St. Petersburg Times,* 27 July 2004.

UK foreign secretary David Milliband said in November 2008 that "the UK continues to request that the UN extend its arms embargo on Darfur to all of Sudan, but not all Security Council members agree".[41] The Russian position on an arms embargo in this case, as in the Ethiopia-Eritrea case, suggests a general antipathy towards the whole idea, combined with a desire not to be seen internationally as an aide to brutal governments.

Mi-24 helicopter gunships in particular, seem to have been purchased in part for action in Darfur. According to Christian Dietrich, a former UN consultant on Darfur, “the importance of Mi-24 gunships in the Darfur conflict cannot be overstated. These helicopters are an integral part of the government of Sudan’s offensive military capabilities and are used as the predominant air assault tool in Darfur. Besides their use in offensive military overflights associated with ceasefire violations, Mi-24s have been widely cited in attacks on civilian targets”.[42]

Amnesty international and others accused Russia of breaching the UN arms embargos the country itself has voted for. Based on available open sources it is difficult to find conclusive evidence for this. There is little doubt that Khartoum used newly acquired Russian arms, first of all the Mi-24s, in Darfur, but until the October 2010 resolution arms providers could not legally be blamed for this. It seems obvious that Russia sold these arms with full knowledge that they could and would be used in Darfur, but until 2010 it was the sole responsibility of the Sudanese government not to do this. One must assume Russian knowledge of the expected use of the helicopters, among other reasons, because the Sudanese leadership itself publicly had stated that it intended to ignore the prohibition.[43] In addition, Russian technical maintenance crews seem to have been on the ground in Sudan ensuring the continued operation of the gunships also after October 2010.[44] While this might not be a direct breach of the Darfur embargo, it does seem to be a borderline case.

4.5 Zimbabwe

On 10 July 2008 Russia and China vetoed a resolution proposed to the UN Security Council by the USA and the UK seeking sanctions, including an arms embargo, against Zimbabwe. The veto was somewhat surprising, as Western leaders thought they had secured Russian backing at the G8 meeting in Tokyo earlier the same month. Not only did that turn out not to be true, according to the UK ambassador to the UN, John Sawers, the Russians had convinced the Chinese in this case.[45]

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[41] Andrew McGregor, ”Russia’s Arms Sales to Sudan a First Step in Return to Africa”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 12 February 2009.
[42] Huma Rights First, ”A Three-Step Guide to Strengthening the Darfur Arms Embargo”, at http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/cah-081010-strength-embargo.pdf, accessed 8 April 2011.
[43] Human Rights First, “Arms Transfers to Sudan, 2004-2006”, at http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/CAH-081001-arms-table.pdf, accessed 8 April 2011.
[44] Huma Rights First, ”A Three-Step Guide to Strengthening the Darfur Arms Embargo”, op.cit.
[45] Daniel Nasaw and Mark Rice-Oxley, ”China and Russia veto Zimbabwe sanctions”, *The Guardian*, 11 July 2008.

The Russo-Chinese veto was justified by claims that the situation in Zimbabwe did not entail any risk for international or regional peace and stability; that sanctions could make the talks initiated by the South African President Thabo Mbeki more difficult; and the fact that regional actors such as the African Union and South African Development Community had not called for sanctions.[46]

Other potential motives, however, were also possible. A March 2011 SIPRI report suggests that commercial motives were important.[47] However, China has come to dominate the Zimbabwean market, and with the precarious financial situation in the country it is doubtful that Russia saw Zimbabwe as a very promising market. There are, however, also other possible explanations. According to one Russian source, if the Zimbabwe sanctions were adopted, that would set a precedent for the US and others to bring before the Security Council any country in which the US did not like the result of elections. Russia could not risk a precedent for numerous "Orange revolutions" in the Security Council.[48] Others have suggested it was a case of simple revenge. Russia was at the time angry because of US plans for placing anti-missile systems in Eastern Europe, and because of the British accusations in connection with the killing of Russian defector Litvinenko in London. Moscow was therefore thinking in "tit-for-tat" terms.[49]

4.6 Syria

Syria was one of the main arms customers of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, however, Syria disappeared from the Russian market because of insufficient funds and because of a conflict with Russia over the repayment of debts from the Soviet period. Arms sales were renewed after 1998, but did not gain very significant proportions. Syria still had insufficient funds, and in addition, Israel in 2005 was able to convince Russia not to sell the tactical missile complex *Iskander,* the *Igla* MANPAD-system and the S-300 (NATO reporting names SA-10/Sa-12/SA-20 depending on modifications) long range air defence system to Syria. Mainly, these concessions to Israel seem to have been motivated by a Russian hope of purchasing advanced military technology itself from Israel, and by Israeli promises not to sell more arms to Georgia. Russia has since the war with Georgia in 2008 purchased a significant number of Israeli UAVs. Still, Israel was not able to prevent the Russian sale of the land-based anti-ship missile *Yakhont* to Syria in 2010.[50]

In later years, Syria seems to have increased in importance as a customer of arms. By 2011, arms contracts worth 4 billion USD had been signed, comprising about 10 % of total Russian arms exports and making Syria in 2011 Russia's fourth largest customer.[51] This figure, Russia's long

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[46] Lukas Jeuck, *Arms transfers to Zimbabwe: Implications for an arms trade treaty,* SIPRI Background Paper, March 2011.
[47] Ibid. p. 8.
[48] Anonymous Russian expert on UN affairs quoted in Dmitrii Gornostaev and Sergei Strokan, "Rossia sygrala v diktaturu", *Kommersant-Daily,* 14 July 2008.
[49] Pavel Voshchanov, "Silnaia Rissia – Edinaia Zimbabve!", *Novaia Gazeta,* 21 July 2008.
[50] Nikolai Filchenko and Lev Kagan, "Anatolii Serdiukov prosit otdeliat mukh ot raket", *Kommersant-Daily* 18 September 2010.
[51] Polina Khimshiashvili and Aleksei Nikolskii, "Siriiskoe bessilie", *Vedomosti,* 2 August 2011, and Aleksandr Gabuev and Sergei Strokan, "Rossiiskomu oruzhiu groziat poterii v Sirii", *Kommersant-Daily,*

standing political ties with Damascus, and the fact that Russia recently had agreed to limited sanctions on arms sales to Iran and a full embargo against Gaddafi's Libya, made Russia refuse sanctions against Syria when the question was raised in the summer and autumn of 2011.

Initially, president Medvedev seemed to hold the door at least partially open for sanctions. In the beginning of August 2011 he stated that if the violence in Syria did not decrease "even we might have to consider tougher reactions".[52] Such signals, however, led to serious pressure from Russian military industrial circles, and in early October 2011 Russia together with China even vetoed a Security Council resolution which did nothing more than condemn the use of violence by the regime in Syria. According to UN sources, Chinese diplomats had said they had been under pressure by their Russian colleagues to vote against the resolution rather than to just abstain.[53] At the same time, according to *The New York Times*, Russia's ambassador to the UN, Vitalii Churkin, "seemed to go out of his way after the vote to distance Russia from the bloodshed fomented by the Syrian government".[54] In the discussions leading up to the veto, US Permanent Representative to the Security Council, Susan Rice, accused Russia of putting its commercial interests related to arms sales before human rights, and Ambassador Churkin retorted that such accusations from a country that floods the region with arms worth hundreds of billions of dollars could not be taken seriously.[55]

The controversy over arms sales to Syria, however, is far older that the current crisis. Syria has by the West been seen as a particular risk when it comes to illegal retransfer of arms to sub-state groups. Arms exporters that want to avoid this problem make a prohibition on resale part of the negotiations for the contract. Most countries, including Russia, often have provisions against retransfers in their export control systems. Still, Western countries have been worried about the effects of Russian arms sales in this regard because of the, in Western eyes, dubious character of many of the regimes Russia sells to. In the last decade there are in particular two cases in which Russia has been accused of not securing its sales against retransfers to third parties. These are (1) the sale of the *Kornet* ATGM (Anti-Tank Guided Missile) to Syria which Israeli and Western sources claim were given or sold to Hezbollah for use in the 2006 war with Israel, and (2) the possibility that the Russian MANPAD system *Igla* had been purchased by Venezuela and then retransferred to the FARC guerilla in neighboring Columbia, discussed above (4.3).

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13 August 2011, and "Itogi voenno-tekhnicheskogo sotrudnichestvo Rossii s inostrannymi gosudarstvami v 2011 godu", *Eksport Vooruzhenii,* November-December 2011, p. 4.
[52] Gabuev and Strokan, ibid.
[53] Neil MacFarquhar, "With Rare Double U.N. Veto on Syria, Russia and China Try to Shield Friend", *New York Times,* 5 October 2011.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Kirill Belianinov and Maksin Iusin, "Siriiskie bezporiadki perekinulis na OON", *Kommersant-Daily,* 6 October 2011.

Also before the 2006 war, Russia had been reproached in the *Kornet* case for not making sure that systems sold to Syria were not retransferred to third parties. The USA, for example, claimed in 2003 that Syria had retransferred *Kornets* to Saddam Hussein.[56]

When the first reports of *Kornets* in the hands of Hezbollah in the 2006 Lebanon war became public, Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov dismissed them as “complete nonsense”.[57] Later, however, after videos of the casings of the *Kornets* in Lebanon had been placed on You Tube, and after a high level Israeli delegation had come to Moscow to present evidence, Russia started to take the reports more seriously. According to one account, the Israeli evidence was indeed accepted in Moscow. This led Russia to take action against Syria to avoid repetition, but the country did not admit to the accusations in public.[58] During a celebration of 20 years of diplomatic relations between Russia and Israel in Moscow in April 2011, one of the official Russian representatives acknowledged that there had been “unfortunate incidents” in connection with the arms export to Syria. He added that measures now had been taken to prevent this in the future.[59] That such a strengthening of the export procedures for smaller weapons had been implemented as a result of the *Kornet* incident in particular has also been confirmed from other independent sources.[60]

Despite this, Western intelligence sources told the German newspaper *Die Welt* in early 2007 that retransfers of weapons from Syria to Hezbollah continued also after the 2006 war.[61] According to these reports, a Russian transport plane landed in Syria on 31 January 2007 with 600 cases containing Russian anti-tank weapons. A representative of Hezbollah and a representative of the Iranian revolutionary guard were present at the airport, and the whole operation was overseen by a Syrian officer. The intelligence sources emphasize, however, that the Russian providers were not aware who the real recipient of the cargo was. This incident is particularly troubling since Russia supported the post 2006 war Security Council resolution 1701 prohibiting arms transfers to the militias in Southern Lebanon.

The Syrian case demonstrates that there is a danger of Russian arms being retransferred to non-state actors, but is also demonstrates that when retransfers were documented, Russia showed initiative to try to prevent future incidents.

[56] Anastasia Matveeva, Sergei Iakovlev and Andrei Litvinov, ”Tulskii kornet ispugal amerikantsev”, *Gazeta*, 17 September 2003.
[57] Sergei Maslov, ”Konflikty. Pokazhite mne kornet, ia proshy”, *Tribuna,* 8 September 2006.
[58] Olga Berezintseva, ”Rakety popali v internet”, *Kommersant-Daily*, 28 September 2006.
[59] Aleksandr Shumlin, ”Kornet streliaiet v spinu”, *Novaia Gazeta,* 20 April 2011.
[60] Aleksei Nikolskii, ”Sirii pomozhem, no ne silno”, *Vedomosti,* 21 August 2008.
[61] Jacques Schuster, ”Geheimdienst: Syrien liefert Waffen an Hisbollah”, *Die Welt,* 7 February 2007.

5 Consequences for international interventions

Developing countries procure arms, including Russian arms, for many different purposes. One purpose might be to deter and withstand future military pressure from international coalitions that for different reasons might contemplate military action against these countries. This is of course especially the case for countries that have particularly strained political relations with one or more of the leading Western nations.

One prominent recent example is the 2011 military campaign against Libya. The weakness of the Libyan air defence greatly helped the air campaign in this case. US fighter bombers had bombed facilities in Libya also in 1986, and had had no particular problems with the outdated Soviet-built Libyan air defence systems. Due among other things to the 1992 to 2003 arms embargo against Libya, these air defences had neither been replaced nor modernized or properly maintained. However, Moammar Gaddafi had since the end of the embargo repeatedly visited Moscow, and was considered one of the most likely customers for the most modern version of the S-300 long range air defence system. There were also plans to modernize the S-125 to the *Pechora-2* short range air defence system and possibly even to become the first foreign customer for the most advanced of all Russian air defence systems, the long range *S-400 Favorit* (NATO reporting name SA-21). In addition, Libya could also have become the first foreign customer for the Su-35, currently the most modern Russian fighter.[62] No conclusive contracts had been signed between Libya and Russia at the time of the new 2011 arms embargo, but most observers were sure they would have been in the not too distant future. If the Arab revolutions had happened five to ten years later, and Libya by that time had been armed with these new technologies, that would have been a very serious concern among those planning for military action against the country.[63]

International willingness to engage militarily against countries in the developing world has to some extent rested on an assurance of technological superiority. However, there is now a growing realization that this superiority might significantly decrease in the future. This does not mean that developing nations will be able to or allowed to purchase the same weapons as many Western nations. Rather, it means that they might be able to purchase anti-access capabilities that are both affordable and reasonably efficient against threats from international coalitions. Russia is in this case a significant provider of such capabilities. For example, a recently released UK Ministry of Defence document stated that “In the past, the Western way of warfare put a high premium on technology to deliver the edge. From 2020 this can no longer be assumed; indeed, some of the technology on which we base our way of warfare to project and employ power is already vulnerable”.[64]

There are many examples of already exported Russian systems and platforms that may make international military interventions in developing countries more difficult in the future. One of the

[62] Aleksei Nikolskii, “Kadaffi ne podvel”, *Vedomosti*, 26 January 2010 and Ivan Safronov, ”Boevoi prochet – Komu teper Rossiia budet prodavat tanki I samolety”, *Dengi*, 14 March 2011.
[63] For the danger that these systems might be to Western military aircraft, see study by Carlo Kopp at http://www.ausairpower.net/APA-Grumble-Gargoyle.html, last updated May 2011, accessed 19 May 2011.
[64] Quoted in Andrew Chuter, “Emerging Powers’ May Seize Tech Lead”, *Defense News*, 8 February 2010.

most discussed is the Russian export of cruise missiles. A 2004 RAND study concluded that the spread of cruise missiles and advanced surface to air missiles (SAMs) would be one of the most worrisome trends seen from the perspective of US access to key strategic regions. The study concluded that spread of these technologies could take on significant importance “beyond the 2012 horizon”.[65]

In spring 2010, potential sales of the Russian *Club-K* cruise missile system hit international headlines. The British *Daily Telegraph* reported that “it is feared that the covert *Club-K* missile attack system could prove "game-changing" in fighting wars with small countries, which would gain a remote capacity to mount multiple missiles on boats, trucks or railways”, and that “some experts believe that if Iraq had the *Club-K* system in 2003 it would have made it impossible for America to enter with any container ship in the Gulf.[66] Robert Hewson of *Jane's Air-Launced Weapons* wrote that the *Club-K* could be effective against aircraft carriers as far away as 200 miles. In fact, he had seen the system specifically marketed at an international defence event as “very squarely at anyone under threat of action from the US”.[67] According to another *Jane's* specialist, the proliferation of advanced Russian anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) is now considered one of the top concerns in the US Office of Naval Intelligence.[68]

The other main worry in the 2004 RAND report was Russian SAMs. Russia is the world’s major exporter of air defence systems. As demonstrated in Figure 5.1, Russia accounted for almost 50% of the air defence systems sold to developing world countries in the period 1991 to 2008. Here it is important to keep in mind that whereas a large part of the export of air defence systems from the Western powers most likely has gone to other Western powers, practically all of the Russian export has gone to developing countries (here including India, China, and the former Soviet republics).

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[65] Eric V. Larson, Derek Eaton, Paul Elrick, Theodore Karasik, Robert Klein, Sherrill Lingel, Brian Nichiporuk, Robert Uy and John Zavadil, *Assuring Access in Key Strategic Regions,* RAND Arroyo Centre, 2004, p. 17, at http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND_MG112.pdf

[66] Thomas Harding, ”A cruise missile in a shipping box on sale to rogue bidders”, *Daily Telegraph,* 25 April 2010.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Richard Scott, ”Russia’s anti-ship arsenal targets export markets”, *Jane's Navy International* , 1 October 2003.

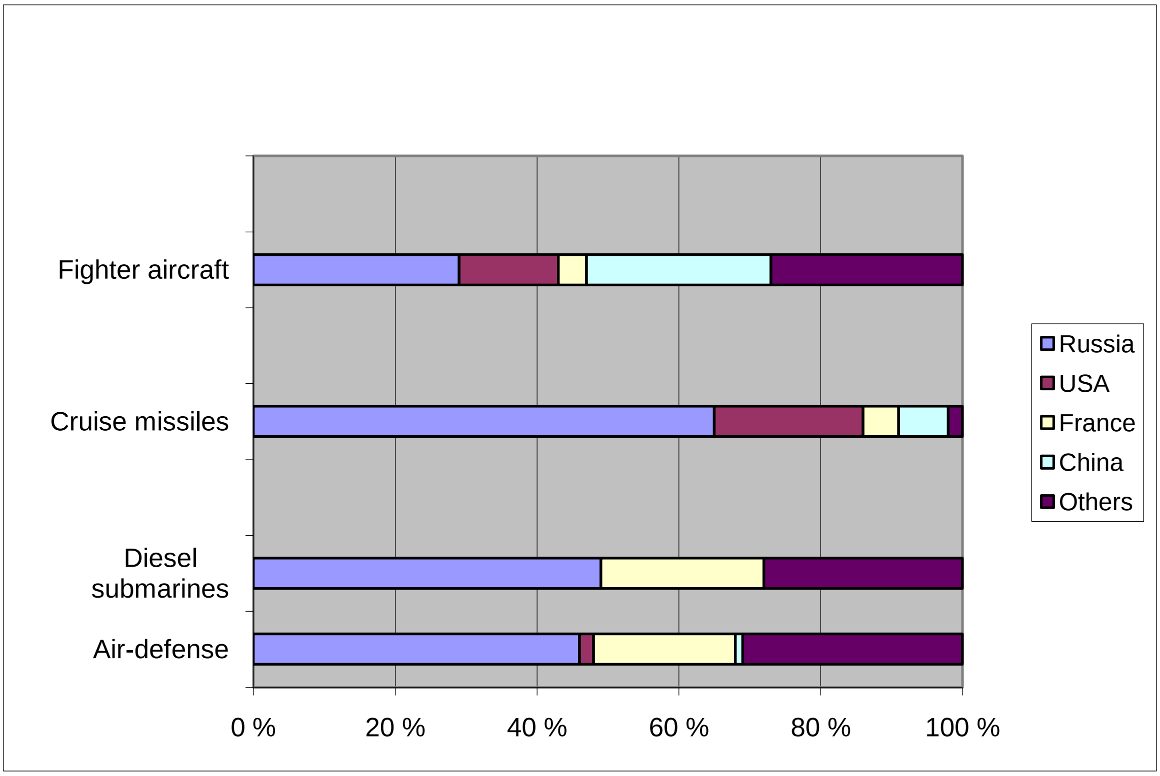

Figure 5.1 Different countries' share in the delivery of a number of anti-access capabilities to Asian developing countries in the period 1991–2008, calculations based on SIPRI figures and with SIPRI Trend Indicator Value as the unit of calculation.

Although Western powers might have ways of dealing with even very sophisticated air defence systems, their suppression, for example in the Kosovo campaign, turned out to be one of the most challenging aspects of the campaign.[69] One alarmist voice claims that if the trend continues, most Western combat aircraft could become "largely impotent" in confrontation with Russian and possibly also Chinese developed SAMs.[70] For example, the spread of the Russian S-300, and the potential future spread of the S-400, have explicitly been used as an argument for the production of more F-22s in the US.[71] The S-300 is among developing countries confirmed sold to China, Algeria and Vietnam, and Venezuela is currently in negotiations to purchase the system.

Syria has also for a long time tried to purchase the S-300 system, but Russia has so far, despite significant domestic criticism, declined these sales due to heavy pressure from Israel. If Syria had been allowed to purchase S-300 from Russia, and if an international military operation against Syria similar to the one against Libya had been planned, those systems would have been a very serious component in the military considerations of coalition partners.

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[69] Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Kosovo and the Continuing SEAD Challenge", *Aerospace Power Journal,* Summer 2002.
[70] Carlo Kopp, "Surviving the Modern Integrated Air Defence System", *Air Power Australia,* 3 February 2009, at http://www.ausairpower.net/APA-2009-02.html, accessed 11 October 2011.
[71] Aleksei Nikolski, "Lobbisty spasaiut istrebitel", *Vedomosti*, 23 January 2009.

Iran was for a long time considered to be a main customer for the system, and an agreement between Russia and Iran for five divisions was signed in the mid-2000s. However, after UN Security Council resolution 1929 of 9 June 2010 on the prohibition of the sale of heavy military equipment to Iran, Russia declined to send the divisions to Iran even though they were partly paid for. This decision was criticized inside Russia, both because the UN resolution did not prohibit the sales of air defence systems, and because of the damage to Russia's reputation as an arms provider.[72] Other potential customers with strained relations to Western countries might think twice when seeing that Russia gives in to Western political pressure in such affairs.

The relatively limited sales so far of the S-300 is, in addition to the cases of Russian political hesitation mentioned above, due to the price. One battalion (eight launchers with a total of 32 missiles and a mobile command post) generally costs around $125 million.[73] This is too high a price for many developing countries. If for example Uganda, which is emerging as one of the more important customers for Russian arms in Africa, was to purchase just one battalion of the S-300, that would have a cost of about 43 % of its 2009 defence budget of $293 million.

A less noticed threat to international forces in future developing world engagements could be the considerable export of Russian military helicopters. Detailed figures for the Russian share of the world market in military helicopters are hard to find, but it is likely to be substantial. Especially the Russian helicopter gunship Mi-24 is operated by a very large number of countries. But also the Mi-8, Mi-17 and Mi-26 military transport helicopters are in demand. US military analysts Lester Grau and James H. Adams claimed in a 2003 article that "in a major regional conflict, armed helicopters might pose a threat that neither the U.S. Air Force nor U.S. Army is prepared to counter".[74] That is, among other reasons, because army helicopters are often not well equipped for helicopter to helicopter aerial combat, and because the crews are often inadequately trained for these kinds of missions.[75]

Finally, the extensive Russian sales of combat aircraft might change the strategic setting for considerations about international military engagements in several developing countries. Russia is together with the USA the main suppliers of combat aircraft to the world market. The two different countries' ranking, however, varies over time. In the period 2000–2004, Russia supplied 35 % of the global total and the USA 30 %. In the period 2005–2009, Russia fell to 22 % whereas the US share rose to 34 %.[76] However, Russia has since then signed several new deals and the share is therefore likely to rise again.

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[72] See for example comments by Konstantin Makienko in Andrei Rezchikov, "Fors-mazhornaia nota", *Izvestia,* 27 September 2010.
[73] This price has been repeatedly reported in the Russian journal *Eksport Vooruzhenii* for several S-300 sales. See *Export Vooruzhenii* for the years 2003–2011.
[74] Lester W. Grau and James H. Adams, "Air Defence with an Attitude: Helicopter v. Helicopter", *Military Review*, January–February 2003, p. 22.
[75] Ibid. p. 23.
[76] Siemon T. Wezeman, "International transfers of combat aircraft, 2005–2009", *SIPIR Fact Sheet,* November 2010, p. 3, at http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1011.pdf

Assessments of the strategic significance of the Russian fighter sales for future international military operations in developing countries vary. The Australian expert Karlo Copp is confident that the sales already have and will continue to change the strategic balances around the world. Based on a comprehensive comparison of technological detail, he claims that Russian fighter technology today is on par with the West in almost all respects. Thus, in the future Western powers are unlikely to enjoy the degree of air superiority they do today if getting engaged in military operations against many developing countries.[77] Copp talks in this regard both about the export of the most advanced current Russian models, such as the Su-30, the Su-35 and the MiG-35, and about the potential future export of the first Russian fifth generation fighter called PAK-FA or T-50.

Regarding the PAK-FA for example, the US Air Force took a very different position from Dr. Kopp after the first flight of the T-50 in January 2010, casting doubt on whether the T-50 actually could be called a fifth generation fighter.[78] Former editor of *Jane's*, and current editor of *Aviation Group*, Bill Sweetman, author of over 50 books on military aircraft, took a middle position by cautioning against early conclusions until more is known. However, he also pointed out that "had you started thinking about this kind of design in the late 1990s, and if "eating F-35s for breakfast" was on the requirements list, you'd end up with something like T-50".[79] The T-50, however, is likely to be too expensive for many countries that otherwise would have been interested. One independent conservative Russian export estimate, based on the premise that it will be largely countries that already have demonstrated willingness and financial ability to purchase Russian combat aircraft, only expects sales outside Russia and India at about 170—200 aircraft.[80]

Russia has been clear all along that the T-50 also will be for export in addition to the planes developed for the Russian and Indian air forces. However, it is not likely to be ready for export until at the earliest 2018–2020.[81]

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[77] Carlo Kopp, "Assesing Russian Fighter Technology", *Air Power Australia*, http://www.ausairpower.net/APA-2008-04.html, accessed 20 February 2012.

[78] Bruce Rolfsen, "Leaders not impressed by new Russian fighter", *Air Force Times*, 22 March 2010, at http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2010/03/airforce_russian_fighter_032210w/ , accessed 20 February 2012.

[79] Bill Sweetman, "What, Me Worry? – USAF on PAK_FA", *Aviation Week* home page 24 March 2010, at http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/blogs/defense/index.jsp?plckController=Blog&plckScript=blogScript&plckElementId=blogDest&plckBlogPage=BlogViewPost&plckPostId=Blog%3A27ec4a53-dcc8-42d0-bd3a-01329aef79a7Post%3Adbd52f86-c8bd-4c9d-8378-cfd4224d634e, accessed 20 February 2012.

[80] Konstantin Makienko, "Rynok istrebitelei piatogio pokolenia", *Aviaindustria*, 18 May 2011.

[81] *RIA-Novosti*, 11 January 2011.

6 Conclusion

Russia is, and is likely to remain for a considerable period of time, a main provider of arms to the developing world. The figures presented in this report leave little doubt about the significant and sometimes dominating position of Russian arms in developing world markets. Russia has dominated the Asian market since the early 2000s, it has in the latter years held a position almost equal to the USA in the Middle Eastern market, and it is slowly increasing its share of the Latin American market. In the African market, trends are harder to identify, but this market is also so far in terms of volume relatively insignificant compared to the other developing world markets.

In the early 1990s, the Russian export system was in chaos. The Russian government had little control over what was sold to whom. By the end of that decade, however, control had increased substantially, and today Russian arms export is relatively well controlled. This is especially so because all export, except in the market for spare parts and maintenance, is controlled by the state company *Rosoboronexport.*

Still, the cleaning up of the export control system has not stopped Western criticism of Russian arms exports. This criticism, however, now concerns the political rather than the organizational framework of the export. Basically, Russia is accused of selling arms to rulers and regimes that it is politically unwise to sell to. Based on the findings in this report, it seems reasonable to claim that Russia is *the* major provider of arms to the most authoritarian regimes in the world. However, there is little evidence of a Russian dominance in the sales to the most fragile states of the world, and if China and India are removed from the list of customers there is also little evidence of Russian dominance in the sales to the developing countries that have the most strained relations with other states (i.e. most likely to enter a state-on-state war).

The case studies demonstrate that Russia is balancing between two conflicting considerations, on the one hand to sell in pursuit of financial and political gains, and on the other hand to be seen as a responsible contributor to international peace. This is a dilemma that many of the world's arms exporters might recognise.

Russia strongly claims that it adheres to all international arms embargos, but it is still from time to time accused of the opposite. Contrary to these accusations, we have not in this study been able to find evidence in support of the claim that Russia is clearly in breach of international arms embargos. There are borderline cases, such as the maintenance and training of helicopters and helicopter crews that Russia had to know were going to Darfur, but no evidence of direct breaches. On the other hand, there is a clear discrepancy between what is sometimes claimed from Russian sources about the arms trade policy and what is actually taking place. For example, claims such as "we never ship weapons to conflict zones" (p. 24) are very difficult to square with the sales to both Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998 or the sales to Sudan after 2003.

Finally, there is little doubt that Russian arms sales to the developing world will make international military interventions in that part of the world more difficult in the years to come. This is not meant as a value judgment, but as a statement of fact due to the Russian sale of anti-access platforms and technologies to many parts of the developing world. If Libya had happened five or ten years down the road, and the country by then had purchased advanced Russian anti aircraft systems and fighter jets, the conduct of the Western operations could have been very different.

The export of arms as such is neither illegal nor illegitimate. However, there will probably continue to be situations in which Russian sales raise concern in the West. Improved Russian-Western relations might prevent some of those cases, but as long as Russia sees the Western policy in this area as hypocritical (the West criticizing Russian for its customers but selling to equally oppressive and/or unstable regimes themselves), Russia will not be easily convinced by Western arguments. Currently, the best hope for fewer arms to authoritarian, unstable and war-prone regimes is that progress is made on the UN sponsored Arms Trade Treaty.

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Appendix A

Asia	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam
Africa	Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cap Verde, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Middle East	Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen
Latin America	Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela