

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

THE ARMS TRADE and the BUSINESS OF WAR

Coach John looks at the facts and figures and the language of war.



What is the arms trade?

The arms trade is the trade in **weaponry** and other military and ‘security’ equipment and services. Governments buy arms from their own national industries and/or others, and sometimes one country **gives** arms **away** to another.

It is a **deadly**, corrupt business that fuels conflict and supports human rights-abusing regimes, while wasting valuable resources. It does this with the full support of governments around the world. Most major producers, including the UK, are responsible for **perpetuating** major wars and repression.

Are legal arms sales okay?

Governments like to give the impression that it is the illegal trade that is damaging, while the legal trade is **tightly** controlled and acceptable. In fact, the vast majority of arms sales to human rights-abusing regimes and into conflict areas are not only legal, but actively supported by governments. Many of these “legal” sales violate the selling countries’ own arms export laws.

It is true that there is also a large illegal arms trade, with arms **smuggled** across borders, stolen, or sold from military or police **stocks** without government authorisation. While also causing severe harm, it is much smaller than the legal trade.

Who sells arms?

The United States is by far the largest arms producer and exporter in the world. The UK is also one of the biggest, alongside other western European countries and Russia, China, and Israel. The top 10 exporters together **account for** about 90% of the global arms trade.

Around \$100 billion worth of arms are sold every year, with buyers spread across the world. Some of the largest purchasers are in the Middle East and South and East Asia.

What is being sold?

Arms traded include fighter aircraft, helicopters and warships with **guided** missiles, radar and electronic warfare systems, tanks, armoured vehicles, machine guns and rifles.

The trade also includes the services and support arms companies provided to customers. For instance, over 6,000 BAE Systems employees maintain the Tornado and Typhoon fighter aircraft sold by the UK to Saudi Arabia.

Adapted from [Campaign Against the Arms Trade](#)

by ECP coach



John Hird

Word list

weaponry: arms/weapons or weapon like instruments collectively

give away: to donate or bestow as a gift, prize, etc for free

deadly: causing or tending to cause death; lethal

perpetuate: to make (something) continue indefinitely.

tightly: firmly fixed in place; secure

smuggle: to convey (goods) secretly and illegally into or out of a country

stock: a supply of goods kept on hand by a merchant, etc., for sale to customers

account for: to make or provide a reckoning of (expenditure, payments, etc)

guided: controlled / directed

Let's chat about that!

1. Give a summary of the text on page 1 to your coach and/or classmates.
2. According to the text, what is the arms trade?
3. What is the difference between the 'legal' and 'illegal' arms trade? Which is bigger?
4. Which countries are the biggest arms dealers'? Why do you think they are?
5. Relate some war euphemisms and facts from the text on page 2
6. Who was George Orwell? What point is he making?
7. Is war inevitable? Can it be stopped? What's your solution?

WAR FACTS AND EUPHEMISMS

The world spends about \$2 trillion on its militaries – each year.

\$2 trillion represents about 2% of the world's Gross Domestic Product, or \$242 for every person on earth.

The 5 biggest military spenders are the United States, China, India, Russia and the United Kingdom – accounting for 62% of global expenditure. Military spending by China grew for the 26th consecutive year.

"Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification.

Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population or rectification of frontiers.*"
by GEORGE ORWELL

War and its consequences are so horrific that governments and the media use euphemisms to hide the facts and human suffering. The events in Israel / Palestine are no exception. The HAMAS attack on ISRAEL on October is described as 'terrorism' yet the carpet bombing of Gaza, cutting off of electricity and starvation of the population is characterised as 'Israel's right to defend itself.'

EUPHEMISMS USED IN WAR

armed intervention - *military attack or war*

casualties - *people killed or injured*

collateral damage - *unintentional deaths/damage*

friendly fire - *an attack from your own side*

neutralise - *kill*

peace-keeping forces - *army/soldiers*

extraordinary rendition - *when an army takes someone away without going through any legal system*

"massacre", "slaughter" and "atrocities" - *only to be used to describe Palestinian actions against Israel*

Israeli actions - *bombing of hospitals, cutting off food and electricity, killing thousands of Palestinian adults and children*

According to the BBC - *Israelis are "killed" while Palestinians just "die".*

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