



MARYKNOLL WORLD PRODUCTIONS  
Discussion and Study Guide

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# ARMS for the POOR

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### Introduction:

*This video takes viewers to the tumultuous world of international arms trade.*

*Today, commercial interests have strongly impacted the formation of foreign policy and the outcome of world events. American weapons are exported to almost any nation in the world—regardless of the international implications of the sale, with little consideration to the human rights record or the financial status of the country. American arms sales remain at the same level they were at the height of the Cold War. The unsettling consequence is that, year after year, more and more civilians are killed with American-made weapons.*

When the Cold War came to a symbolic end in 1989 with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the United States' security needs were sharply reduced. It was hoped that our domestic social programs would receive greater support from monies diverted from our military budget. The so-called "peace dividend" would re-build our cities, revitalize our schools and house our poor. However, these promises have never materialized. By the early 1990's, major weapons producers had rejected our government's bid to help them convert to peacetime manufacturing. Profiting from war was seen as more lucrative than investing in peace.

Poverty in the United States has increased in the 1990s. The growing gap between rich and poor has further stratified our nation. Today, one in every five American children lives in poverty, a startling increase from thirty years ago, when our nation declared "war" on poverty. Commentators in this video ask why Americans have grown poorer. One pointedly entreats, "Where is God in your country?"

The "peace dividend" also remains an illusion for the poor in other parts of world. Arms manufacturers have strengthened their sales by increasing overseas trade. The defense industry has lobbied Congress to commercialize its international role and to subsidize its enterprises. The United States now exports weapons to 140 countries in the world, accounting for 67% of the military sales to the developing world. The majority of the world's armed conflict has been equipped (often both sides) by American-made weapons. Future sales are assured, as growing arsenals fuel unrest and strife in the world's developing nations.

Many countries, caught in the spiral of the arms race, have been unable to provide for basic needs of their people. For example, the United Nations Development Program recently reported that sub-Saharan Africa has spent \$8 billion in defense, which, coincidentally, is the total estimated cost of providing safe water and sanitation for the entire population of that multi-nation region. This pattern has been, unfortunately, repeated throughout the world; urged on by the marketing strategies of weapons manufacturers—and our own government.

A new twist in the post-Cold War world is that marketing efforts are now a job of the agencies of the U.S. government. Thousands of employees in the Pentagon, the State Department and the Commerce Department work directly in marketing military wares. The fuzzy boundaries between manufacturing and diplomacy is disconcerting. Indeed, arms dealers have been able to influence foreign policy, especially when their clients ask for manufacturing and production rights to the weapons they, and their neighbors, will eventually purchase.

Arms manufacturers are a major recipient of "corporate welfare." Since 1993, the U.S. government spent \$9 billion dollars bailing out arms dealer's poorly-written loans. Additionally, the U.S. government now has assumed all cost of research and development by no longer charging "royalties" to defense manufacturers who produced and re-sell U.S. military-designed equipment. Recent legislation to repeal the sales tax on exported weapons has eased pressure on the international market, but has created a \$500 million loss in federal revenue. All these private-sector benefits have been a direct result of the lobbying efforts of the arms industry.

For 1998, the Clinton Administration plans to spend \$270 billion on the military. Clinton continues to approve tens of billions in foreign arms sales, through the Pentagon's Foreign Military Sales Program, and through direct commercial programs managed by the State Department. Additionally, the U.S. gives away millions of dollars worth of old weapons and provides unpaid-for training to foreign armies. These weapons and expertise are too often used for undemocratic ends.

In **Arms for the Poor**, Nobel Laureates, politicians, theologians and journalists, critical of the arms race, now implore Americans to take a deeper look at the misery this industry has inflicted on the poor of our country and the world. They demand an end the cycle of war which they believe "serves only to perpetuate poverty."

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### Questions Before Viewing Videos:

1. Should the free-market concept apply to weapons sales? What are the factors the U.S. should consider before weapons are sold?
2. Is it imprudent for a nation without basic health and educational services to spend resources on tanks and aircraft equipment? What limits would you place on security costs?

3. How do arms sales bring suffering to the people of the countries who purchase them? What responsibilities do the suppliers of weapon have before and after a sale?

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### Questions After Viewing Video:

1. State your reaction to the statement of Thomas J. Gumbleton, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, that the American "lifestyle is really the cause of other people in other parts the world starving to death." Can you think of ways that our consumerism creates an abuse of resources? How do you feel when you see something useful being wasted? How can we begin to live a simpler life style?
2. "The Boomerang Effect" is a phrase coined by Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-GA) to describe instances when U.S. weapons were used on U.S. civilian and military personnel. Ken Rutherford, who lost his legs while on business in Somalia, is an example of this phenomena. Can you recall recent events that fit the description of the "boomerang effect?"
3. It is estimated that \$7-\$12 billion dollars of taxpayers' money is spent each year to subsidize arms exporters. In 1997, \$27 billion dollars in federal money was spend on education, \$17 billion in housing assistance and \$15 billion in social services. What values underlie this allocation of resources?

4. Arms lobbyist have argued that a robust defense business means more jobs for Americans. Yet, in the past ten years, 2.2 million American defense workers have lost their jobs. The largest aircraft plant is not in Seattle, or Long Island, but in Ankara, Turkey. Discuss how the effects of globalization impact on the arms trade.
5. In January 1997, the Leahy-Evans legislation, which grants a one-year moratorium on the use of landmines by U.S. forces in 1998, was passed. This bill failed to outlaw the manufacture and sale of landmines. What advice would you give Congress on the re-deployment of anti-personnel landmines when this legislation is renewed in the years to come?
6. The U.S. has ended the ban on sales of advanced weapons to Latin America reversing a 20-year policy. Proponents of the plan cite the return of democracy in the region reason enough for the U.S. to enable Latin America to rejuvenate their aging arsenals. Critics state that it was by virtue of the arms embargo that these nations were forced to find more peaceful ways to solve problems. Discuss this dilemma.
7. The Arms Trade Code of Conduct (H.R. 772) was written as a bipartisan effort of Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-GA) and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA). After a two year effort, H.R. 772 attained unanimous passage in the 105th Congress of 1997. This legislation bars U.S. weapons transfer to nations which are undemocratic, engage in armed aggression, or do not comply with the United Nation's Register of Conventional Arms. How do you think the corresponding

legislation S. 326 will fare? Do you anticipate a presidential veto on this bill? Why or why not?

8. Chung Hyun-Kyung, a theologian, states in this video, "Your economy is based on inflicting pain in other person's lives. So, I ask where is God in your country?" What was your immediate reaction to this statement. Upon reflection, discuss the validity of this assertion.

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## RESOURCES:

### **Suggested Bibliography:**

McCuen, Gary E., **The Global Arms Trade**,  
GEM Publications (Hudson), 1992.

A collection of previously published articles analyzes divergent views of the arms trade, with special emphasis on the U.S. role in the arms trade.

**SIPRI Yearbook**, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.  
Oxford University Press.

Annual editions combine staff research with the work of independent scholars to produce a detailed reference on the world's production and use of military weapons.

## Periodicals and Pamphlets:

Rossiter, Caleb, *Hostile Takeover: How the Aerospace Industries Association Gained Control of American Foreign Policy* Washington DC: Demilitarization of Democracy Publication, 1995. \$7.50

*Peaceworks: Global Thought and Local Action for Non-Violent Social Change*. American Friends Service Committee, 2161 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140, 617-354-2832, \$15/11 issues.

In publication since 1972, *Peaceworks* is a magazine intended to serve the movement for non-violent social change and to address human rights issues. Many topics discussed in this video are featured in this magazine.

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## Organizations:

### Arms Transfer Working Group (ATWP)

webpage: <http://www.fas.org/pub/gen/atwg>

Founded in 1991, this group has over 45 organizational affiliates. Its goals are: the passage of the Code of Conduct Bill, a global ban on land mines, an end of arms sales to Indonesia, and a reform in World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The clearinghouse for many justice and peace group, this site is linked to all major international organizations.

### **Center for Defense Information**

1500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202-862-0700 fax: 202-862-0708

*Director:* Admiral Jack Shanahan  
email: info@cdi.org  
www: cdi.org/products/almanac

The Center for Defense Information believes that strong social, economic, political and military components and a healthy environment contribute to our national security. CDI opposes excessive expenditures for weapons and policies that increase the danger of war. CDI is a non-profit organization, which produces a monthly newsletter called *The Defense Monitor*, as well as a TV program by the same name.

### **Demilitarization for Democracy**

1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Suite 600  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
tel: 202-319-7191, fax: 202-319-7194

*Director:* Caleb Rossiter  
website: <http://www.fas.org/pub/gen/pdd>  
email: pdd@igc.apc.org

This group's aim is to prevent "future Somalias," by promoting the concept of "the boomerang effect." Also publishes books and pamphlets on related arms issues.

**East Timor Action Network**

P.O. Box 1182

White Plains, NY 10602

tel: 914-428-7299, fax: 914-478-7383

*Director:* Charles Schneider

website: <http://www.uc.pt/timor/etan.htm>

A coalition of activists whose goal is to keep the human rights issues of East Timor and the politics of Indonesia in the international spotlight.

**Economist Allied for Arms Reduction (ECAAR)**

25 W. 45th St.

New York, NY 10036

tel: 212-768-2080, fax: 212-768-2167

website: <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/economics/ecaar/html>

A statistical source for information on the effects of the arms trade, especially in terms of the human and environmental impact.

**Federation of American Scientists**

**Arms Sales Monitoring Project**

307 Massachusetts Avenue, NE

Washington, D.C. 20002

tel: (202) 675-1018, fax: (202) 675-1010

*Director:* Lora Lumpe

email: [llumpe@fas.org](mailto:llumpe@fas.org)

web page: <http://www.fas.org>

Founded fifty years ago at Los Alamos by a group of Manhattan Project scientists, this group is dedicated to the abolition of nuclear weapons. FAS promotes the responsible use of science.

### **U.S. Campaign to Ban Land Mines**

2001 S Street

Washington, D.C. 20009

tel:(202) 483-9222

email: [bannminesusa@ui.org](mailto:bannminesusa@ui.org)

website: <http://www.vvaf.org/landmine/uscbl.htm>

Led by the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, this organization has 250 affiliates who call for a ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines. The group is associated with the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines.

## **Maryknoll World Productions**

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