

Contribution: To better control arms sales

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The conflicts of the 21st century offer the world tragedies in which the elementary rules of international humanitarian law are flouted with impunity. Through its values and its history, France has a particular responsibility to contribute to the reaffirmation of the law. We call for the introduction of greater transparency through better control of the traceability of arms sold by France. This includes the creation of a parliamentary delegation dedicated to the control and evaluation of arms exports.

According to the March 2020 report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), France ranks third in the ranking of arms exporting countries behind the United States and Russia. At the same time, French weapons sold to Saudi Arabia were used in bombings in Yemen, a country that is subject to an arms embargo. Such a situation does not respect human rights and is contrary to international treaties to which France is a signatory.

Today, the control of arms exports is the sole responsibility of the government. In the name of the balance of power in France, of the many experiences in Europe and of the globalized transformation of information methods, we believe it is useful to strengthen confidence in government policy by promoting its transparency. This ambition is also in line with that of a more modern parliamentarianism that is more concerned with the evaluation of public policies than with legislative inflation.

Our objective is to create a parliamentary delegation for arms export control. The parliamentarians - deputies and senators - who would be members of this delegation would be subject to the secrecy of national defense. However, they would publish an annual report with recommendations for the government. The evolution of the parliamentary intelligence delegation today illustrates the effectiveness of such a tool in preserving the security of the population and respect for the freedoms and transparency that are characteristic of any state governed by the rule of law. With such a delegation, it is not a question of questioning the relevance of the State's strategic choices, nor of devaluing the economic importance of the arms industries in many territories. It is a question of ensuring that France is not and will not be implicated in war crimes because of the uncontrolled use of the weapons it has produced and sold.

For several years now, Parliament has demonstrated its willingness and effectiveness in scrutinizing government actions and providing a thorough assessment of public policy in the area of intelligence. The various parliamentary commissions of inquiry, such as the one on the Benalla affair or the current one on the management of the epidemic, are there to prove it. On this subject, France is lagging behind some of its European counterparts such as the German Bundestag, the English House of Commons or the Swedish Parliament.

Stricter control can also help ensure our security by increasing our involvement in the fight against proliferation, as in the case of the conflict in Yemen, or by adapting our industrial strategy to the changing geopolitical context, as in the case of our policy towards Russia after the annexation of the Crimea. It is also a national effort for the growing pacification of a world plagued by conflicts whose consequences tirelessly weigh on our compatriots (terrorism, refugee crisis, etc.).

This contribution also aims to put back at the heart of the socialist debate our foreign policy practices, which are often overlooked or dismissed under the pretext of a famous reserved domain. The speed of information dissemination, *fake news*, and the generalized mistrust of the public word are today structuring elements of the public debate. The State must take this into account. In this world subject to the flow and confusion of information, the transparency of public policies must be applied more than ever. This applies in particular to those related to defense, intelligence, and, as we are proposing today, to French arms exports.

We know that transparency is not a threat, but the guarantee of a solid democracy that assumes the sovereign choices of the Nation.