

Report on the International Arms Transfers

Published in March 2023, the factsheet prepared by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) compares the trends in international arms transfers in two periods, 2013-2017 and 2018-2022. It indicates the increase and the decrease of international arms transfers by importers and exporters.

Therefore, taking into account the overall report, the main relevant aspects are as follows:

- The volume of international transfers of major arms in 2018–22 was 5.1 per cent lower than in 2013–17 and 4.8 per cent higher than in 2008–12.
- On one hand, the five largest arms exporters in 2018–22 were the United States, Russia, France, China and Germany. Together, they supplied 76 per cent of the world's arms exports in 2018–22.
- US arms exports accounted for 40 per cent of the global total in 2018–22 and were 14 per cent higher than in 2013–17.
- French arms exports increased by 44 per cent between 2013–17 and 2018–22, while Russian (–31 per cent), Chinese (–23 per cent) and German (–35 per cent) arms exports decreased.
- On the other hand, the five largest arms importers in 2018–22, India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Australia and China, together received 36 per cent of the world's arms imports.
- The main recipient region in 2018–22 was Asia and Oceania (accounting for 41 per cent of global arms imports), followed by the Middle East (31 per cent), Europe (16 per cent), the Americas (5.8 per cent) and Africa (5.0 per cent).
- Arms imports by European states were 47 per cent higher in 2018–22 than in 2013–17. Those by European NATO states were 65 per cent higher.
- Ukraine became a major importer of arms in 2018–22. It was the 14th largest arms importer globally in the period and the 3rd largest in 2022.

Table 1. The 25 largest exporters of major arms and their main recipients, 2018–22

Percentages below 10 are rounded to 1 decimal place; percentages over 10 are rounded to whole numbers.

Exporter	Share of global arms exports (%)		Per cent change from 2013–17 to 2018–22 ^a	Main recipients and their share of exporter's total exports (%), 2018–22					
	2018–22	2013–17		1st		2nd		3rd	
1 United States	40	33	14	Saudi Arabia	19	Japan	8.6	Australia	8.4
2 Russia	16	22	–31	India	31	China	23	Egypt	9.3
3 France	11	7.1	44	India	30	Qatar	17	Egypt	8.0
4 China	5.2	6.3	–23	Pakistan	54	Bangladesh	12	Serbia	4.5
5 Germany	4.2	6.1	–35	Egypt	18	South Korea	17	Israel	9.5
6 Italy	3.8	2.5	45	Qatar	24	Egypt	23	Türkiye	12
7 United Kingdom	3.2	4.7	–35	USA	20	Qatar	16	Saudi Arabia	7.7
8 Spain	2.6	2.5	–4.4	Australia	35	Saudi Arabia	19	Belgium	12
9 South Korea	2.4	1.3	74	Philippines	16	India	13	Thailand	13
10 Israel	2.3	2.6	–15	India	37	Azerbaijan	9.1	Philippines	8.5
11 Netherlands	1.4	2.1	–39	USA	27	Mexico	11	Tunisia	7.4
12 Türkiye	1.1	0.6	69	Qatar	20	UAE	17	Oman	13
13 Sweden	0.8	0.9	–16	USA	25	Pakistan	24	Brazil	15
14 Switzerland	0.7	1.0	–34	Australia	21	Denmark	14	Spain	13
15 Australia	0.6	0.3	64	Canada	35	Chile	31	USA	13
16 Canada	0.5	0.6	–9.4	Saudi Arabia	49	UAE	22	USA	4.9
17 Ukraine	0.5	1.7	–70	China	48	Saudi Arabia	13	Thailand	7.5
18 UAE	0.4	0.4	–5.8	Egypt	28	Jordan	27	Algeria	15
19 Poland	0.4	0.1	168	Ukraine	95	Nepal	1.2	Ecuador	0.6
20 Belarus	0.3	0.5	–37	Serbia	33	Viet Nam	25	Uganda	14
21 South Africa	0.3	0.3	6.7	UAE	27	USA	21	India	15
22 Norway	0.3	0.6	–55	USA	27	Ukraine	15	Lithuania	14
23 Brazil	0.3	0.2	35	France	25	Nigeria	15	Chile	12
24 Belgium	0.2	0.1	212	Saudi Arabia	35	Canada	28	Pakistan	21
25 Jordan	0.2	0.2	14	USA	61	Egypt	26	Armenia	7.0

UAE = United Arab Emirates.

^a Figures show the change in volume of the total arms exports per exporter between the two periods.

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2023.

1. The Exporters

Figure 2 and table 1 show that the five biggest exporters together made 76 percent of the overall arms exports in the world in 2018–22. However, figure 3 shows that both U.S. and French increased the arm exports in both periods, 2013–17 and 2018–22. Meanwhile, Russia, China, and Germany decreased their exports.

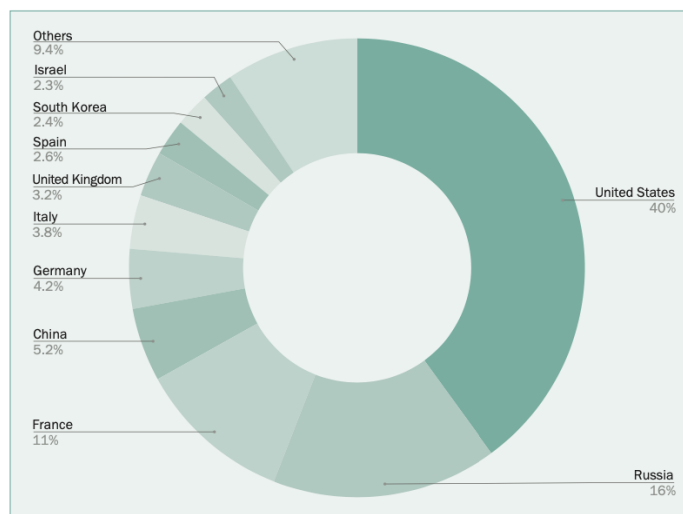


Figure 2. Global share of exports of major arms by the 10 largest exporters, 2018–22

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2023.

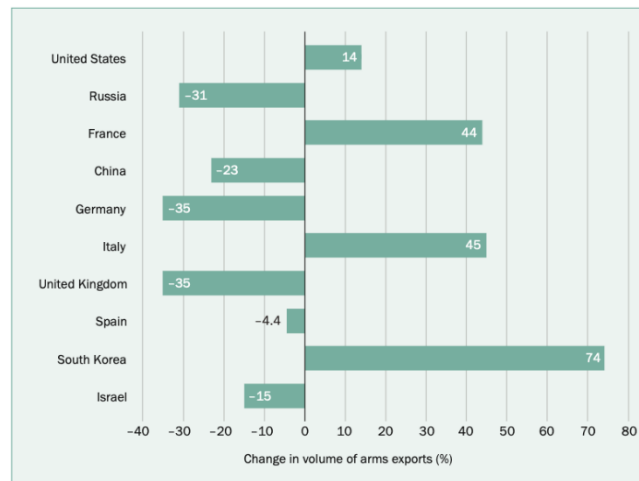


Figure 3. Changes in volume of exports of major arms since 2013–17 by the 10 largest exporters in 2018–22

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2023.

a. The United States

During both periods, the export of the U.S. marked a 14 percent increase that soared its share in global arms exports from 33 to 40 percent. In 2018-22, 103 states imported arms from the U.S., of which, 41 percent exported to the Middle East. Likewise, the report indicates that Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates to be the four biggest states that imported 19, 6.7, 4.8, and 4.4 percent, respectively.

The U.S. also exported 33 percent of arms in 2013-2017 and 32 percent in 2018-22 to states located in Asia and Oceania. In these regions, the biggest importers were Japan 8.6, Australia 8.4 percent, and South Korea 6.5 percent. In addition, Taiwan stood as the fourth importer in 2013-18, but nineteenth in 2018-22 although it imported 66 aircraft fighters.

Additionally, the U.S. exports benefited European states, where it raised from 11 percent in 2013-17 to 23 percent in 2018-22. The U.K. with 4.6 percent, the Netherlands with 4.4 percent, and Norway with 4.2 percent are the biggest names among the 10 biggest importers with NATO membership.

In 2022, even though the U.S. increased its exports to Ukraine, it was still lower than its exports to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Japan. The reason is attributed to these countries importing modern weapons such as air defense systems. Unfolding tension between NATO members led to higher import of weapons from U.S. during both periods. However, compared to 2013-17, the U.S. reduced its exports to Türkiye because of deteriorating relationship.

b. Russia

After the U.S., Russia was the second biggest exporter in the world with 16 percent contribution to overall global arms exports and covering 47 states in 2018-22. Asia and Oceania states accounted for the 65 percent of Russia's arms. Similarly, states in the Middle East imported 17 percent, and those in Africa imported 12 percent.

Other states such as China, India, and Egypt were also among the recipients with 23, 31, and 9.4 percent, respectively. Unlike 2013-17, India decreased its import by 37 percent, while China and Egypt increased by more than 39 and 44 percent, respectively, at the same period. However, in 2022, China due to domestic production and Egypt because of the U.S. pressure, significantly decreased imports from Russia. As a result, it is expected that, in the forthcoming years, the export of Russia to fall.

Combat aircraft and combat helicopters have made the main export of Russia since 1992, with 328 items in 2018-22.

The Russian war in Ukraine has brought a major shift in Russia's priority. In other words, Russia is more in dire need of producing weapons for itself than exporting. Apart from that, the imposed sanctions by the U.S. and its allies on Russia's trade and commercial relationships created a challenge for the exports of Russia.

c. France

In 2018-22, France secured 11 percent of share in global arms transfers, which was a 44 percent increase compared to 2013-17. France exported 34 percent to the Middle East and 44 percent to Asia and Oceania in 2018-22. At the same time, states such as India, Qatar, and Egypt collectively accounted for 55 percent of France's arms exports. Moreover, India built up the 30 percent of France's exports.

d. Other Major Exporters

China with having a share of 5.2 percent in global arms exports stood in the fourth place following the U.S., Russia, and France in 2018-22. At the same period, it exported arms to 46 states, but 80 percent of its exports reached to Asia and Oceania. Pakistan by the far most appeared as the biggest importer of arms with 54 percent from China.

Germany was also another name among the biggest exporters. Its share was 4.2 percent in 2018-22. Also, it exported 36 percent of its overall exports to the Middle East, 32 percent to Asia and Oceania, and 20 percent to Europe.

Italy represented 3.8 percent in the global share. It exported 67 percent of its arms to the Middle East.

The other states such as the U.K., Spain, South Korea, and Israel were also among the top 10 exporters in the world.

2. The Importers

Figure 4 and Table 2 show that 167 states were the biggest importers in 2018-22, of which India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Australia, and China accounted for the 36 percent of global arms imports.

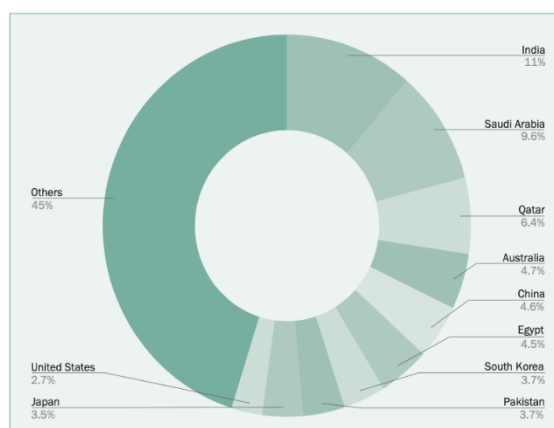


Figure 4. Global share of imports of major arms by the 10 largest importers, 2018-22

Table 2. The 40 largest importers of major arms and their main suppliers, 2018-22

Percentages below 10 are rounded to 1 decimal place, percentages over 10 are rounded to whole numbers.

Rank	Importer	Share of global arms imports (%)		Per cent change from 2013-17 to 2018-22 ^a	Main suppliers and their share of importer's total imports (%), 2018-22					
		2018-22	2013-17		1st	2nd	3rd			
1	India	11	12	-11	Russia	45	France	29	USA	11
2	Saudi Arabia	9.6	10	-8.7	USA	78	France	6.4	Spain	4.9
3	Qatar	6.4	1.5	311	USA	42	France	29	Italy	14
4	Australia	4.7	3.6	23	USA	73	Spain	19	Switzerland	3.0
5	China	4.6	4.2	4.1	Russia	83	France	8.1	Ukraine	5.6
6	Egypt	4.5	4.5	-5.3	Russia	34	Italy	19	France	19
7	South Korea	3.7	2.2	61	USA	71	Germany	19	France	7.9
8	Pakistan	3.7	3.0	14	China	77	Sweden	5.1	Russia	3.6
9	Japan	3.5	1.2	171	USA	97	UK	1.9	Sweden	0.3
10	United States	2.7	2.0	31	UK	24	Netherlands	13	France	11
11	UAE	2.7	4.1	-38	USA	66	Türkiye	7.4	Russia	5.4
12	Kuwait	2.4	0.9	146	USA	78	Italy	10	France	9.0
13	United Kingdom	2.3	1.7	31	USA	81	South Korea	13	Israel	2.8
14	Ukraine	2.0	<0.05	8 631	USA	34	Poland	17	Germany	11
15	Norway	2.0	0.5	285	USA	86	South Korea	8.2	Italy	3.5
16	Israel	1.9	1.8	2.9	USA	79	Germany	20	Italy	0.2
17	Netherlands	1.9	0.4	307	USA	95	Germany	3.9	Finland	0.6
18	Algeria	1.8	4.1	-58	Russia	73	Germany	10	France	5.2
19	Türkiye	1.3	2.4	-49	Italy	35	Spain	20	Russia	19
20	Singapore	1.3	1.4	-14	France	52	USA	26	UK	7.6
21	Thailand	1.0	0.9	-1.1	South Korea	33	China	14	USA	10
22	Brazil	0.9	0.6	48	France	39	UK	14	Sweden	13
23	Philippines	0.9	0.5	64	South Korea	42	Israel	22	USA	15
24	Indonesia	0.9	2.7	-69	South Korea	32	USA	26	France	12
25	Bangladesh	0.9	1.6	-48	China	74	UK	5.8	Türkiye	4.5
26	Poland	0.9	0.5	64	USA	56	South Korea	17	Germany	6.5
27	Viet Nam	0.8	2.8	-72	Russia	55	Israel	16	Belarus	10
28	Italy	0.8	1.3	-41	USA	92	Israel	4.4	France	2.0
29	Morocco	0.8	1.1	-30	USA	76	France	15	China	6.8
30	Myanmar	0.8	0.8	-3.0	Russia	42	China	29	India	14
31	NATO ^b	0.7	<0.05	2 700	France	66	USA	18	UK	15
32	Afghanistan	0.7	0.8	-11	USA	96	Brazil	2.6	Belarus	1.4
33	Canada	0.7	1.1	-36	USA	32	Australia	27	Spain	15
34	Greece	0.7	0.9	-26	France	48	USA	29	UK	12
35	Kazakhstan	0.6	0.8	-22	Russia	94	China	2.6	South Africa	1.8
36	Belarus	0.6	0.3	55	Russia	100	China	0.1	..	..
37	Serbia	0.5	0.1	743	China	43	Russia	31	Belarus	20
38	Chile	0.5	0.3	56	UK	38	Australia	36	USA	10
39	Jordan	0.5	0.8	-39	USA	40	UAE	20	Russia	17
40	Bahrain	0.5	0.1	380	USA	83	UK	7.0	Italy	4.1

.. = data not available or not applicable; NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization; UAE = United Arab Emirates.

^a Figures show the change in volume of the total arms imports per importer between the two periods.

^b The data is for imports by the organization itself, not the total imports by NATO member states.

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2023.

Similarly, figure 5 shows that States located in Asia and Oceania, Middle East, Europe, America, and Africa had a share of 41, 31, 16, 5.8, and 5 percent in global imports, respectively.

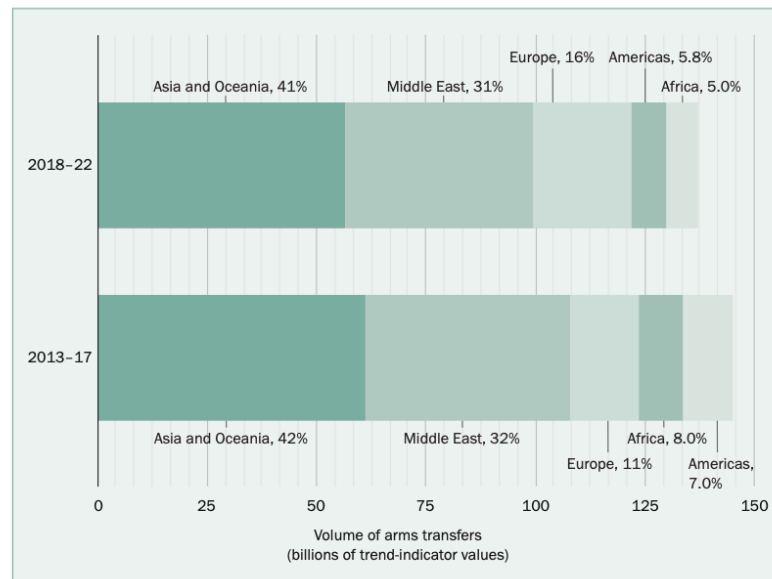


Figure 5. The importers of major arms, by region, 2018-22 and 2013-17, per cent of global share

Note: The SIPRI trend-indicator value (TIV) is a measure of the volume of international transfers of major arms. The method used for the SIPRI TIV is described on the Arms Transfers Database web page.

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2023.

a. Africa

The decrease in imports of major arms by Algeria to -58 percent and Morocco to -30 percent led to the overall decrease of imports in Africa by 40 percent in 2013-17 and 2018-22. At the same time, the prime exporters were Russia with 40 percent, the U.S. with 16 percent, China with 9.8 percent, and France with 7.6 percent.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan States had a share of 2 percent import in 2018-22 though it was a 23 percent decrease in comparison to 2013-17. The top three importers were Angola, Nigeria, and Mali.

b. The Americas

The Americas marked a 21 percent decline in imports in 2013-17 and 2018-22. Nevertheless, the U.S. accounted for 47 percent of imports and Brazil for 16 percent standing as the biggest importers in the continent.

South American states also recorded 34 percent decrease in arms imports. However, Brazil and Chile increased their imports. For instance, the former soared its imports by 48 percent. The latter increased its imports by 56 percent in both periods, which accounted for 24 percent of the overall import of South American states.

c. Asia and Oceania

The import of arms fell by 7.5 percent in both periods. However, of the biggest 10 importers, 6 were from Asia and Oceania namely India, Australia, China, South Korea, Pakistan, and Japan.

India and Pakistan

India has been the top importer of major arms in the world since 1993. Its share in global arms imports was 11 percent in 2018-22. On the other hand, Pakistan raised its imports by 14 percent in 2013-17 and had a 3.7 percent of share in global arms imports in 2018-22.

East Asia, Oceania, and Southeast Asia

Both East Asia and Oceania recorded a 21+ and 25+ percent increase respectively during both periods, whereas Southeast Asia witnessed a decrease of – 42.

In 2018-22, China increased its imports by 4.1 percent and had a share of 4.6 percent in global imports. On the other hand, Japan raised its imports by more than 171 percent and South Korea by more than 61 percent.

Australia, during both periods, soared its imports by 23 percent and its share of global imports was 4.7 percent that made it the fourth biggest importer in the world.

d. Europe

European states increased their imports by 47 percent compared to 2013-17. The UK was the top importer in 2018-22 in Europe and 13th in the world. Other biggest importers were Ukraine and Norway.

European NATO states

In the face of security challenges in the region, European NATO members raised their imports by 65 percent and will continue to increase in the forthcoming years.

e. The Middle East

Unlike 2013-17, the arms imports by the Middle East states decreased by 8.8 percent in 2018-22.

The Gulf Region

The countries of the Gulf region were also among the biggest importers in 2018-22. For instance, Saudia Arabia with a 9.6 percent share in Global imports, was the second biggest importer. Also, Qatar, the third biggest importer, increased its imports by 311 percent in both periods.

The United Arab Emirates decreased its imports by 38 in 2018-22 compared to 2013-17.

Kuwait also marked 146 percent of increase in imports during both periods.

Iran has appeared to have the least import since 1993. In 2018-22, it had almost zero imports. However, in 2022, it bought and imported 24 combat aircraft from Russia.

Eastern Mediterranean

States situated in the Eastern Mediterranean are reported to have increased their naval capabilities. Egypt imported 4 submarines and one of the four frigates from Germany, two of its three frigates from France, and two frigates from Italy.

Israel imported two of its four frigates from Germany and expects to import one submarine as well in 2023.

Greece has been expected to import 3 frigates from France in 2022.

Türkiye also placed the order for the import of 6 submarines from Germany and is expected to be delivered between 2023-27. Also, it has ordered an assault ship to be imported from Spain.

Conclusion

Given the current conflictual context, with Ukraine taking center stage in the international discussions, it is important to note that the Ukrainian crisis had only a limited impact on the total volume of arms transfers in the 2018-2022 timeframe, but the country did increase the imports in 2022. Still, it is

foreseen that the war will have significant ramifications for future supplier-recipient arms trade globally.