



# TRANSPARENCY IN ARMS PROCUREMENT: LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASSESSING GLOBAL ARMAMENT DEVELOPMENTS

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## I. Introduction

Global military expenditure reached \$1917 billion in 2019, the highest level since 1988.<sup>1</sup> The volume of international transfers of major arms has also increased: in 2015–19 it was 20 per cent higher than in 2005–2009 and at its highest level since the end of the cold war.<sup>2</sup> Although military expenditure and arms transfers data provide only a partial indication of global armament developments, these upward trends raise salient questions about the risk of destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms or the possibility of arms races at the regional or global level. They highlight the urgent need for increased efforts to pursue conventional arms control and confidence-building measures in the military sphere.

For this purpose, an in-depth, fact-based, understanding of developments in armaments is essential. This has been recognized within the United Nations and in other multilateral organizations, where member states have agreed on the need for international transparency in armaments and have created instruments aimed at increasing such transparency.

The 2018 UN Agenda for Disarmament reminded the world that the international exchange of information on how states translate their stated national security requirements into military postures can create mutual understanding and trust, reduce misperceptions and miscalculations, and help to prevent military confrontation and to support regional and global stability.<sup>3</sup> However, the Agenda concluded that ‘effectively responding to contemporary security challenges requires a shift in approach. In regions of conflict and tension, transparency and confidence-building mechanisms designed to prevent arms competition remain underutilized and underdeveloped...’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tian, N. et al., ‘Trends in world military expenditure, 2019’, SIPRI Fact Sheet, Apr. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Wezeman, P. D. et al., ‘Trends in international arms transfers, 2019’, SIPRI Fact Sheet, Mar. 2020.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* (United Nations: New York, 2018), p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> UNODA (note 3), p. 46.

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## SUMMARY

● With the aim of confidence building, states have agreed to share information on their arms procurement and military expenditure in several multilateral transparency instruments. However, this paper shows that, in recent years, participation in these instruments has declined to a very low level. Furthermore, only a few of the states that continue to participate in the instruments provide comprehensive and detailed information. This means that the information contained in the instruments is insufficient to fully assess global or regional armament developments.

The case studies in this paper show that many states have readily available information on arms procurement and military spending at the national level that could be submitted to the multilateral reporting instruments, which could help to revitalize them. Moreover, the paper concludes that, in combination, the information from national and multilateral reporting could form the foundation for further strengthening alternative non-governmental efforts to monitor arms procurement patterns.



In the light of this assessment, this paper discusses the extent to which multilateral transparency instruments provide meaningful information about regional and global armament developments and how this compares with reporting at the national level. To do so, it looks at reporting on two types of information: (a) transparency in the number and types of major conventional arms that states procure through national production or through imports; and (b) transparency in spending on procurement of arms and military equipment (here referred to as ‘military procurement’).<sup>5</sup> Reporting on the two types of information is divided among separate transparency instruments, although these instruments serve the same overall objectives in terms of confidence building. Therefore, analysing the information they contain in combination may provide a better understanding of armament developments than looking at each one in isolation. For this reason, unlike the more common approach of reviewing the different reporting types and instruments separately, this paper brings them together and discusses the interconnection between them.<sup>6</sup>

Section II discusses transparency in the number and types of arms procured by examining the use and limitations of existing multilateral instruments to which states report on procurement, both through national production and through arms transfers, as part of confidence-building measures. Section III examines transparency in spending on military procurement at the international and national levels. Section IV looks at a selection of states that are involved in military confrontations or are located in regions where tensions are particularly volatile to assess whether their participation in international transparency instruments provides meaningful information and insights about the current dynamics of arms procurement in each case. It provides examples of how national transparency on arms procurement could fill some of the information gaps at the international level. Section V summarizes the key conclusions on the current state of international transparency in arms procurement and sets out some recommendations on how to revitalize such transparency, including the possibility of building an alternative non-governmental tool to monitor trends in arms procurement.

## II. Transparency in the number and types of arms procured

This section examines the three multilateral transparency instruments—two of which are regional—that require or request states to report on procurement of major arms as a confidence-building tool: (a) the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA), (b) information exchanges within the framework of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and (c) the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition (Convención Interamericana sobre Transparencia en las Adquisiciones de Armas Convencionales, CITAAC). In addition, some states make certain information on arms transfers available in other ways. For example, states that are party to the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) publicly share information about arms imports and exports

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, ‘Reporting assistance’, Standardized reporting forms, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., as discussed below, the UN reporting instruments on conventional arms and on military expenditure have been reviewed by completely separate Groups of Governmental Experts.



as part of their efforts to improve the regulation of international arms flows. Furthermore, the European Union (EU) compiles reports on arms exports from its member states into an annual report, and some states publish information on arms exports in national reports.

### **The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms**

UNROCA was established in 1991 by the UN General Assembly. Its main aims are to enhance confidence between states, ‘prevent the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms’, ‘encourage restraint’ in the transfer and production of arms, and ‘contribute to preventive diplomacy’.<sup>7</sup> While UNROCA’s objectives relate to armament developments in general, in terms of reporting, its focus is on arms transfers.

UN member states are ‘requested’ to report annually, on a voluntary basis, information on their exports and imports in the previous year of major arms that are deemed to be ‘the most lethal’ or ‘indispensable for offensive operations’.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, under a lower level of commitment, ‘states in a position to do so’ are ‘invited’ to provide additional background information on their military holdings and arms procurement through national production of major arms. This invitation stands ‘pending further development of the Register’, which appears to indicate that the intention is to develop this element of UNROCA into an item for which information is ‘requested’ rather than ‘invited’.<sup>9</sup>

***The most obvious obstacle faced by UNROCA is the low level of participation by states***

The possibility of elevating the status within UNROCA of reporting on arms procurement through national production has been discussed at various points over the past few years, including by a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) that reviewed the reporting instrument in 2019. Some states consider the current emphasis on arms transfers as inherently discriminatory: it means that there is greater transparency for states that import arms than for those that produce their own arms. This could limit the potential of UNROCA to serve as a confidence-building mechanism.<sup>10</sup> However, the GGE could not agree on recommendations for change in this regard in its 2019 review.

#### *Low level of participation limits the value of UNROCA*

UNROCA suffers from a number of major shortcomings that limit its effectiveness as a tool to enhance transparency in arms procurement. The most obvious obstacle is the low level of participation by states in the reporting instrument as a whole—with participation in reporting on military holdings and arms procurement through national production being

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of the development of UNROCA see UN General Assembly, ‘Report on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development’, A/74/211, 22 July 2019, pp. 9–12; and UNROCA, ‘About’.

<sup>8</sup> These categories are battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers.

<sup>9</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/53, 12 Dec. 2019. Since 2003, states have also had the option of providing background information on transfers of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

<sup>10</sup> UN General Assembly, A/74/211 (note 7), pp. 20, 29–30.



at particularly low levels.<sup>11</sup> Whereas over 100 states reported on their arms imports and exports annually in the early 2000s, only 43 (i.e. less than a quarter) of the 193 UN member states have submitted a report with data for 2018 to UNROCA.<sup>12</sup> Of these 43 reports, only 20 included information on military holdings, arms procurement through national production or both. Of these 20 reports, 7 included information on arms transfers, military holdings and arms procurement through national production, 11 included information on arms transfers and military holdings, and 2 included information on arms transfers and arms procurement through national production.

Of the 23 states that reported only on their arms transfers, the majority do not have an arms industry that is capable of producing most or any of the UNROCA categories of major arms.<sup>13</sup> This implies that, for those states, their reports on arms imports should reveal nearly all of their arms procurement, assuming they are accurate. Nine of the 10 states that SIPRI assesses as accounting for 90 per cent of the volume of international arms exports in 2015–19 submitted reports on their arms exports in 2018 to UNROCA.<sup>14</sup> This suggests that arms procurement by states that are primarily or completely dependent on arms imports can be mapped to a large degree using the UNROCA reporting on arms exports, even if many of the arms-importing states do not report themselves. However, this is assuming a level of accuracy and comprehensiveness that the actual reporting by arms-exporting states does not achieve.

***Investigations into the accuracy of the reporting to UNROCA have led to the conclusion that important information is often omitted from reports***

#### *Narrow definitions and a lack of detail limit the usefulness of UNROCA*

States vary in how and what they report to UNROCA. This makes it difficult to assess submissions and to combine them in meaningful overviews that provide insights into international armament patterns. Despite the fact that UNROCA's limitations in this area were recognized from the start and have been discussed in the eight GGEs that have evaluated the instrument since

<sup>11</sup> Reporting started in 1993 (for information about 1992) and most UNROCA submissions are made publicly available in an online database.

<sup>12</sup> According to the public records available as of 15 Aug. 2020. Due to technical problems not all submissions may have been included in the UNROCA database and the exact number of submissions made for 2018 is uncertain. Authors communication with UNODA, 6 May 2020. At the time of writing, information about submissions for 2019 was particularly uncertain, even though the relevant report had been released. For a more in-depth analysis of participation in the reporting on arms transfers within UNROCA see Bromley, M. and Alvarado Cobar, J. F., *Reporting on Conventional Arms Transfers and Transfer Controls: Improving Coordination and Increasing Engagement* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Aug. 2020); and UN General Assembly, A/74/211 (note 7), pp. 4–9. For preliminary data on reporting for 2019 see UN General Assembly, 'United Nations Register of Conventional Arms', Report of the Secretary-General, A/75/152, 9 July 2020.

<sup>13</sup> An indication of which states have arms industries with a high level of capability can be found in Fleurant, A. et al., 'The SIPRI Top 100 arms-producing and military services companies, 2018', SIPRI Fact Sheet, Dec. 2019. See also SIPRI's Arms Industry Database.

<sup>14</sup> In order of volume of arms exports, these are: the United States, Russia, Germany, China, the United Kingdom, Spain, Israel, Italy and South Korea. France did not report to UNROCA for 2018. For an overview of reporting trends for 1992–2017 on imports and exports of major arms to UNROCA see Wezeman, S. T., 'Reporting to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms for 2017', SIPRI Background Paper, June 2019. For an overview of the largest arms exporters see Wezeman et al. (note 2).



its implementation, it has been amended with only very minor changes in its nearly 30 years of existence.<sup>15</sup>

In many submissions, the information provided by states on their military holdings, the arms transferred or the arms procured through national production is sparse. The minimum information requested is the total number of arms held, delivered or procured, by category of arms.<sup>16</sup> The reporting form gives the option to include more detail on, for example, the specific type of weapon. However, in many cases this option is not used: for instance, out of the 18 states that reported on their military holdings for 2018, only 12 described the arms.<sup>17</sup> Since each of the seven weapon categories of UNROCA covers a broad range of arms, a submission that simply reports the number of items per category is clearly lacking from a transparency perspective.

The specific definitions of and reporting guidelines for UNROCA further limit its use. For example, submissions in general do not indicate whether the arms transferred are new or second-hand, even though this may have a major impact on how they affect the recipient state's military capability. Another limitation is that many types of military system and military support equipment are not included in the UNROCA categories, despite the fact that this equipment can be of great importance for the offensive military capabilities of states and thus contribute to potentially destabilizing accumulations of major arms.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Data omissions and inaccuracies undermine the reliability of UNROCA*

Investigations into the accuracy of the reporting to UNROCA have led to the conclusion that important information is often omitted from reports.<sup>19</sup> This is particularly clear for cases when an exporting state's UNROCA report on its exports does not match the recipient state's corresponding report on its imports. Additionally, SIPRI's continuous monitoring of open sources for information on arms transfers highlights that information on arms transfers is not always included in the applicable UNROCA reports, or may even contradict them.<sup>20</sup> This often includes cases when there are clear inconsistencies between statements and reports published by the government of the exporting or importing state and the reports submitted by either state to UNROCA. These inconsistencies in reporting typically suggest that substantial information has been intentionally or unintentionally omitted from the UNROCA report. However, they can occasionally show cases of

<sup>15</sup> UN Register of Conventional Arms, 'Expert group reports'. See also Wezeman, S. T., *The Future of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms*, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 4 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Aug. 2003).

<sup>16</sup> The 7 categories are listed in note 8 in this paper.

<sup>17</sup> Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Japan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the UK.

<sup>18</sup> UN General Assembly, A/74/211 (note 7), pp. 20, 23–24. Examples of types of military equipment that are not included in UNROCA are air-refuelling aircraft, transport aircraft, air defence systems, and land-based or airborne radars.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Laurance, E. J., Wezeman, S. T. and Wulf, H., *Arms Watch: SIPRI Report on the First Year of the UN Register of Conventional Arms*, SIPRI Research Report no. 6 (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1993), pp. 39–50; Wezeman (note 15); and Wezeman (note 14).

<sup>20</sup> Wezeman (note 14), pp. 9–10.





‘over-reporting’ when UNROCA reports include a higher number of arms delivered in total or over a year than the volume suggested by other sources.<sup>21</sup>

### Limitations of regional transparency in arms procurement

The OSCE and CITAAC transparency instruments, which require information-sharing between states on all or certain elements of arms procurement, are regional in nature. The information exchanges that take place within the framework of the OSCE have a focus on Europe, while CITAAC covers the Americas. Of the two, only the OSCE instrument is currently active, although it is not fully publicly accessible.

The OSCE aims to ‘contribute to reducing the dangers ... of misunderstanding or miscalculation of military activities which could give rise to apprehension’.<sup>22</sup> Its 57 participating states have agreed confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) that include the requirement to annually exchange information on part of their military holdings and procurement of major arms.<sup>23</sup> However, these reports are not made public.

In addition, OSCE participating states have agreed to share information about their arms transfers based on the categories and format of UNROCA. These submissions have been publicly available on the OSCE website since 2017.<sup>24</sup> They complement the information in UNROCA as UNROCA’s public records do not contain the equivalent reports in all cases.<sup>25</sup>

CITAAC, which entered into force in 2002, aims to build confidence among states in the Americas through transparency in arms procurement.<sup>26</sup> The instrument requires its states parties to notify each other about acquisitions of major conventional arms through imports or through national production and submit annual reports on all imports and exports of major conventional arms.<sup>27</sup> In 2020 CITAAC had 17 states parties, out of 35 Organization of American States (OAS) member states.<sup>28</sup> However, although activities related to the instrument were still taking place in 2018, there are no public records to indicate that any state party has submitted a report about acquisitions of major arms since 2015.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Wezeman, P. D. and Wezeman, S. T., ‘The 2015 UN Register on Conventional Arms: Still time to improve’, SIPRI Expert Comment, 18 Sep. 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Final Act, Helsinki 1975, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), ‘Vienna document 2011 on confidence- and security-building measures’, FSC.DOC/1/11, 30 Nov. 2011, p. 6. The types of weapon system included in the reporting are listed on pp. 52–54. See also OSCE, ‘Ensuring military transparency: The Vienna document’, [n.d.].

<sup>24</sup> OSCE, ‘Decision no. 13/97’, FSC document FSC.DEC/13/97, 16 July 1997; OSCE, ‘Decision no. 08/98’, FSC document FSC.DEC/08/98, 4 Nov. 1998; and OSCE, ‘Decision no. 08/98’, FSC document FSC.DEC/08/08, 16 July 2008.

<sup>25</sup> See Bromley and Alvarado Cobar (note 12).

<sup>26</sup> Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, adopted 7 June 1999, entered into force 21 Nov. 2002. For a discussion of the instrument see Bromley, M. and Solmirano, C., *Transparency in Military Spending and Arms Acquisitions in Latin America and the Caribbean*, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 31 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Jan. 2012), pp. 27–32.

<sup>27</sup> Organization of American States (OAS), Permanent Council, Committee on Hemispheric Security, ‘Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapon Acquisition (CITAAC)’.

<sup>28</sup> OAS, ‘Signatories and ratifications’. The USA, with by far the highest military expenditure in the OAS, signed but never ratified the convention.

<sup>29</sup> OAS, Annual Report of the Secretary General, 2018, p. 106.



## Gaps filled by reporting related to the regulation of the arms trade

When reporting on arms procurement or arms imports is too limited to assess armament developments in a country, reporting on arms exports within the framework of international and national arms trade regulations can provide an alternative governmental source of information, especially for countries that do not have a domestic arms industry.

The ATT, which was opened for signature in 2013 and came into force in 2014, aims to improve the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms. Since 2016, states parties to the ATT—110 as of September 2020—have been required to submit an annual report of their imports and exports of conventional arms in the previous year.<sup>30</sup> These reports serve primarily to demonstrate adherence to the treaty obligations regarding arms transfers. However, it has been argued that they may also have a confidence-building effect and may act as an early warning signal of potential conflict risks.<sup>31</sup>

Most reports are published on the website of the ATT, but some remain confidential. While reporting to the ATT is obligatory, on average just under 30 per cent of all states parties did not report for the years 2015–18.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, the reports contribute to international transparency in arms procurement through arms imports, as more states report to the ATT than to UNROCA. For example, 62 reports were submitted to the ATT in 2019 for transfers in 2018, 9 of which are accessible only to ATT states parties—compared with 43 reports for the same year submitted to UNROCA.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, at least 40 states regularly publish information on their arms exports in a national report, in the above-mentioned annual report compiled by the EU (where relevant) or both.<sup>34</sup> However, government reporting on arms exports only partially fills the gap in information about arms procurement through arms imports. The reports are based on national definitions and methodologies and are therefore not always comparable.<sup>35</sup> The type of information covered by the reports varies considerably. Some reports include detailed information about the type of arms or military equipment exported, other reports include only the value of the licences for arms exports by broad categories of military technology. Several of the world's largest arms exporters, such as Russia, Israel and South Korea, publish only the total financial value of their arms exports without

***ATT reports contribute to international transparency in arms procurement, as more states report to the ATT than to UNROCA***

<sup>30</sup> Arms Trade Treaty, Second Conference of States Parties, Working Group on Reporting Templates, Draft Report of the ATT Working Group on Reporting Templates to the Second Conference of States Parties, Rev. 1, 9 July 2016, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Arms Trade Treaty (note 30), p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Arms Trade Treaty, 'Annual reports: Statistics'.

<sup>33</sup> For further discussion on participation in ATT reporting see Bromley and Alvarado Cobar (note 12).

<sup>34</sup> SIPRI collects published national reports on arms transfers in its online National Reports Database. See also Wezeman, P. D. and Bromley, M., 'The financial value of states' arms exports', *SIPRI Yearbook 2020: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2020), pp. 313–16. On the EU report see European Parliament, 'Recommendations for a transparent and detailed reporting system on arms exports within the EU and to third countries', Policy Department for External Relations, Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, May 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Wezeman and Bromley (note 34), p. 313.



breaking it down by recipient. Some arms-exporting countries, most notably China, do not publish national arms export reports at all.

Despite the above-mentioned shortcomings, these various reports on arms transfers, whether published at the national level or through the ATT, do provide information on arms procurement developments that is often a useful supplement to the information available from UNROCA.

### III. Transparency in military procurement spending

States' total military expenditure figures provide an understanding of the amount of resources they dedicate to their military activities and give an indication of their intention to expand or modernize their military capabilities. However, total military expenditure figures have limited utility for assessing the risk of potentially destabilizing accumulations of major arms.

Military expenditure broken down by category—for example, by spending on procurement, personnel, and operations and maintenance—is needed to better understand how resource allocations within the military sector are linked to different aspects of peace and security. Data on military procurement spending is particularly useful as an indicator of whether states are maintaining or increasing their arms inventories in quantity or quality and whether this occurs as part of action–reaction processes between states. In addition, at the national level the reporting of disaggregated military expenditure shows whether budget allocations align with a state's defence policy. A misalignment could indicate resource mismanagement or corruption.<sup>36</sup>

***Only a few of the states that participate in UNMILEX report military spending disaggregated by spending category in detail***

#### **Transparency in military spending at the international level**

As of mid-2020, there are two international transparency instruments on military spending that aim to contribute to building confidence between states: the UN Report on Military Expenditures (UNMILEX), which is discussed in further detail below, and the OSCE CSBMs described in section II.

The OSCE CSBMs include a requirement for participating states to exchange information annually on military expenditure, including on procurement spending. Of the 57 OSCE participating states, 41 reported for 2018, down from 46 for 2017.<sup>37</sup> However, these submissions are not publicly available.

A third instrument, the South American Defense Expenditure Registry (SADER) was established by the Union of South American Nations (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas, UNASUR) in 2011.<sup>38</sup> However, it is no longer

<sup>36</sup> Tian, N., Wezeman, P. D. and Yun, Y., *Military Expenditure Transparency in Sub-Saharan Africa*, SIPRI Policy Paper no. 48 (SIPRI: Stockholm, Nov. 2018), p. 21.

<sup>37</sup> Information received from the OSCE, 11 Feb. 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Vega, J. M. and Comini, N., *Registro Suramericano de Gastos de Defensa: El legado de UNASUR* [South American Defense Expenditure Registry: The legacy of UNASUR], Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos (IEEE) Documento Opinión no. 129/2017 (IEEE: Madrid, 22 Dec. 2017), p. 15.





functional as, by March 2020, 9 of the original 12 member states had left UNASUR.<sup>39</sup>

### *The UN Report on Military Expenditures*

In 1980 the UN General Assembly agreed to establish an annual report in which all UN member states could voluntarily provide data on their military expenditure in the previous year.<sup>40</sup> UNMILEX aims to enhance transparency in military matters, increase predictability of military activities, reduce the risk of military conflict and raise public awareness of disarmament matters.<sup>41</sup> The submissions to the report are publicly available on the UN website.<sup>42</sup>

Based on an agreement about the utility of disaggregated data, a ‘standardized form’ was created for the purpose of the report, which allows states to report military spending by headline for personnel, operations and maintenance, procurement and construction, and research and development (R&D). The ‘procurement and construction’ category includes ‘substantial investments in the procurement of arms and military equipment and construction and substantial modernization of military facilities that increase combat capabilities, improve quality and modify performance’.<sup>43</sup> States can choose to provide data on procurement only, which in turn can be broken down into spending by weapon category.<sup>44</sup> This format provides the possibility to assess in more detail the level to which a state’s procurement spending is prioritized within its military spending. States may also use the ‘simplified form’, and report only spending for the headline categories. Finally, states may report only their total spending or use their own format.<sup>45</sup>

### *Low participation and lack of detail limit the value of UNMILEX*

A relatively low number of states participate in UNMILEX and, of those that do, only a few report military spending disaggregated by spending category in detail. This means that the usefulness of the instrument for gaining insights into armament developments is limited. Participation in the report was at its highest in 2002, when 81 states participated.<sup>46</sup> Only 36 of the

<sup>39</sup> Schamis, H., ‘OAS Secretary-General Luis Almagro has upheld democracy in Latin America’, PanAm Post, 23 Mar. 2020.

<sup>40</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 35/142 B, ‘Reduction of military budgets’, A/RES/35/142, 12 Dec. 1980; and United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Group of Governmental Experts to Review the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures, A/72/293, 4 Aug. 2017, p. 8. For a detailed description of the history of the instrument see UNODA and SIPRI, *Promoting Further Openness and Transparency in Military Matters: An Assessment of the United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures*, UNODA Occasional Papers no. 20 (United Nations: New York, Nov. 2010); and Spies, M., *United Nations Efforts to Reduce Military Expenditures: A Historical Overview*, UNODA Occasional Papers no. 33 (United Nations: New York, Oct. 2019).

<sup>41</sup> United Nations, A/72/293 (note 40), para. 2.

<sup>42</sup> United Nations, ‘Military expenditures’, [n.d.].

<sup>43</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, Group of Governmental Experts on the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, A/66/89, 14 June 2011, p. 51.

<sup>44</sup> The categories are: aircraft and engines; missiles, including conventional warheads; nuclear warheads and bombs; ships and boats; armoured vehicles; artillery; other ordnance and ground force weapons; ammunition; electronics and communication; non-armoured vehicles; other.

<sup>45</sup> The reports are available through an online archive. However, the archive has been inaccessible since early 2020 and the exact number of submissions is therefore unclear.

<sup>46</sup> United Nations, A/66/89 (note 43), p. 26.

193 UN member states submitted information on their military spending for 2017 and this number fell to 30 for 2018.<sup>47</sup> Based on SIPRI data, the 30 states that reported on their military expenditure for 2018 accounted for 19 per cent of total world military spending that year.<sup>48</sup> Of these 30 submissions, 15 used the standardized format. However, no state used all the available fields in its report to break down the information submitted. One state submitted a nil report (i.e. no military expenditure for the year), 11 states submitted a simplified report and 3 states reported only total military expenditure.

#### *Problems with data accessibility and format*

In addition to the low level of participation in the instrument and lack of detail in the reports submitted to it, UNMILEX is hampered by the poor functionality of the online public archive in which the reports are stored. Indeed, this archive was not accessible for the first half of 2020.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, military spending is reported only in local currencies and at current prices. To assess regional or global trends and developments over time, the data needs to be converted to a common currency and constant prices.

The GGEs that reviewed the instrument in 2011 and 2017 noted some of these limitations but the reviews did not lead to any meaningful changes.<sup>50</sup>

### **Transparency in spending on arms procurement at the national level**

Although the level of participation by states in international transparency instruments is low, many states do provide information on their procurement spending at a national level. Of the 169 states for which SIPRI attempted to estimate military expenditure in 2019, government sources that included figures on total military expenditure were found for 147. Of these documents, 138 included figures broken down into categories that could provide an indication of military procurement spending. Notably, the 30 member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) compile their ‘defence expenditure’ data in one annual report, which includes a breakdown by ‘expenditure on major equipment as well as on research and development devoted to major equipment’.<sup>51</sup> The public availability of this information shows that many states have the necessary information ready for reporting to UNMILEX—both for reporting on total military spending and for reporting on spending on military procurement.

However, practices differ in terms of what is included in government reporting on military procurement spending. The UNMILEX category for ‘procurement and construction’ spending differs from NATO’s mentioned above, which focuses on ‘major equipment’ and includes R&D. At the

<sup>47</sup> Tian, N., Lopes da Silva, D. and Wezeman, P. D., ‘Transparency in military expenditure data’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2019: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2019), pp. 214–15; and United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures’, Report of the Secretary-General, A/74/155, 12 July 2019. This report lists 28 submissions. Two more were included in the online database for the submissions when it was still accessible in early 2020.

<sup>48</sup> SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.

<sup>49</sup> United Nations, Database on Military Expenditures.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations, A/66/89 (note 43); and United Nations, A/72/293 (note 40).

<sup>51</sup> NATO, ‘Defence expenditure of NATO countries (2013–2019)’, Press release, 29 Nov. 2019, p. 13.



national level, the differences between the categories used are even more pronounced. Some states apply an explicit definition and provide details of the actual procurement funding by specific project. Other states provide an explanation of what they understand as ‘arms procurement’ costs, but do not go beyond this broad overview. Finally, many states simply use budget line categories such as ‘capital’, ‘development’ or ‘acquisition of goods and services’ in official documents, but do not fully define these categories. While some of the categories used by states appear to be similar in name, they do not always fully overlap, and sometimes include spending that does not directly relate to arms procurement (e.g. for construction). Therefore, it might not be possible to systematically disaggregate these types of expenses, which in turn makes it impossible to determine with certainty how much of the spending is on procurement of arms.

#### IV. Arms procurement transparency: Country case studies

To demonstrate the limitations of international transparency instruments in practice, this section assesses the combined information on arms procurement available from these sources for selected countries. The countries were chosen for the case studies because either they are involved in military confrontations or they are located in regions where accumulations of major arms are particularly likely to contribute to the escalation of tensions and conflict.<sup>52</sup> The case studies are divided into countries that submit detailed reports to international transparency instruments, countries that submit reports that lack detail or are submitted irregularly, countries that submit reports that are severely limited in content and countries that do not submit reports.

***Government transparency at the national level could be used to fill gaps in international reporting***

Furthermore, the cases illustrate how government transparency at the national level can be used to fill gaps in international reporting. This includes not only reporting on exports and military spending as discussed above, but also national reporting that provides overviews of the number and types of arms procured as part of democratic security policymaking processes.<sup>53</sup>

Three countries in Africa, all involved in internal conflicts of different levels of intensity, are discussed: Nigeria as the country with the largest population in the region, Algeria as the region’s largest military spender and considering its long-standing tensions with Morocco, and Sudan, particularly in the context of its tensions with South Sudan.

In Asia, the section looks at China, Japan, India and Pakistan. China is involved in territorial disputes with several states in Asia, including Japan, and tensions with neighbouring India have increased in the past few years.<sup>54</sup> Tensions between India and Pakistan have long driven concerns about arms competition in South Asia.

<sup>52</sup> For an overview of such tensions and conflict see e.g. Davis, I. et al., ‘Armed, conflict and conflict management, 2019’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2020* (note 34), Part I, pp. 25–214.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. Singh, R. P. (ed.), *SIPRI, Arms Procurement Decision Making*, vol. 1, *China, India, Israel, Japan, South Korea and Thailand* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> Developments in arms procurement in South East Asia in the context of the tensions over the South China Sea have been discussed in Wezeman, S. T., *Arms Flows to South East Asia* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Dec. 2019).



The section also discusses the three largest military spenders in Europe in 2019—Russia, France and Germany. Tensions in Europe between Russia and other states have grown in intensity since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. Moreover, all three states, and several others in Europe, have used their militaries in combat or support roles in the conflicts in Libya or Syria.

Three countries with regional power ambitions have been selected from the Middle East: Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This region is marred by interconnected conflicts, and the use of military force is a key tool for the pursuit of geopolitical goals by several states in the

region. This raises major concerns about the risks to stability posed by arms procurement and the prospects for peace in the Middle East. Indeed, it was the uncontrolled accumulation of arms by Iraq in the 1980s and the use of those arms against Kuwait in 1990 that prompted the establishment of UNROCA.<sup>55</sup>

The USA has been selected as a case study from the Americas. The USA is the world's largest military power, with troops deployed globally, and its inclusion takes into consideration its renewed focus on a narrative of great power competition.

***Some countries exclude important details when reporting to UNROCA and UNMILEX, or do not report every year***

### **Detailed international reporting**

#### *Germany and Japan*

Of the 14 selected countries only 2, Germany and Japan, have reported every year to UNROCA on arms transfers, arms procurement through national production and military holdings, and to UNMILEX using the standardized form and including information on total military procurement spending and spending by weapon category. Germany adds descriptions of all weapon types in its reports on arms transfers and procurement, whereas Japan is slightly less transparent as it omits data on missiles for 'reasons of national security'.<sup>56</sup>

### **Lack of detail in international reporting or irregular reporting**

Some countries exclude important details when reporting to UNROCA and UNMILEX, or do not report every year.

#### *The United States*

The USA has reported to UNROCA from the start on exports and imports of major arms, military holdings and procurement of major arms through national production. The submissions on arms transfers include in most cases a description of the weapons and are a valuable source of information on procurement of major arms by the many countries that import arms from the USA. However, US reporting on military holdings and arms procurement through national production includes only the aggregate number of arms per category and serves as a clear illustration of how a lack of detail can limit the value of reporting for understanding armament developments. For example, for 2017 the USA reported procurement of eight warships through national

<sup>55</sup> Laurance, Wezeman and Wulf (note 19), pp. 6–7.

<sup>56</sup> See e.g. UNROCA, 'Japan 2018'.



production; however, as no further information was given about the type or types of warship procured, it is impossible to assess how this procurement may affect military stability in any context. US government sources indicate that these eight ships included ships as varied as a 260-tonne lightly armed vessel for patrolling the US coastal waters and a 100 000-tonne aircraft carrier used in global military operations.<sup>57</sup>

The USA stopped reporting to UNMILEX after its report for 2015. That report included data on procurement spending by category of military equipment.

The limited information on US arms transfers, arms procurement through national production and military holdings available from UNROCA and UNMILEX is in stark contrast to the large volume of information available to the public from US government sources. Some of these sources provide detailed annual spending information, including the exact number of all major arms for which the US Government has requested funding.<sup>58</sup>

Using its in-depth national reporting as a basis, the USA could, with relative ease, expand its reporting to UNROCA and re-establish its former practice of detailed reporting to UNMILEX. In doing so, the USA, as the largest military power in the world, would set a leading example for other states to follow.

#### *France*

France usually reports in detail to UNROCA on its arms transfers, arms procurement through national production and military holdings. However, reports are missing for some years. France did not submit a report to UNROCA for 2018, for example, but did submit reports on arms transfers for that year to the OSCE and to the ATT. In addition, the level of detail in France's UNROCA reports often varies between years. Its UNROCA report for 2017, for example, did not include the designations of arms transferred, but such information was included in the report for 2016. France's submissions on military holdings and arms procurement have generally included details for land systems and aircraft, but not for ships and missiles.

France's submissions to UNMILEX are also irregular. For example, it submitted reports for 2015 and for 2018 (using a selection of the fields in the standardized format) but not for 2016 or for 2017.

Most of the information absent from France's reporting to the UN on its own arms procurement can be found in national government reports, such as the budget documents of the French Senate.<sup>59</sup>

### **Severely limited international reporting**

#### *China*

China reports on arms transfers to UNROCA, but not on its military holdings or arms procurement through national production. However, unlike the examples of France and the USA above, the missing information on

<sup>57</sup> The US Navy lists all its ships and their commissioning dates on its website.

<sup>58</sup> See e.g. the website of the US Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller).

<sup>59</sup> French Senate, Sénat Session ordinaire de 2018–2019, Tome VIII, Défense: Equipement des Forces [Senate Ordinary Session of 2018–19, Volume VIII, Defence: Equipment of the Forces], 22 Nov. 2018, pp. 35–36





arms procurement from domestic production in China's international reporting is not counterbalanced by transparency at the national level in the form of regularly published and comprehensive documents.

China's latest military expenditure report to the UN covered 2017. The report provided a breakdown of Chinese military expenditure by personnel, training and maintenance, and equipment. China published similar information in its latest defence white paper but did not provide any additional detail.<sup>60</sup>

### *India*

India has reported on imports of complete (i.e. fully assembled) weapon systems to UNROCA for most reporting years and has generally also included some detail about the types of weapon involved. However, the reports do not include weapons that are assembled in India from imported kits or produced domestically under licence from foreign companies. Moreover, these transfers are often not included in the supplier or licensor state's reports to UNROCA. This is problematic for understanding armament developments in India as these weapons—as well as those designed and produced entirely in India—account for the majority of Indian arms procurement. For example, India acquired about 252 Su-30MKI combat aircraft from Russia during 2002–18, which became the backbone of the Indian Air Force.<sup>61</sup> However, India has only reported the import of 72 of these aircraft to UNROCA and Russia has only reported the export of 52 to India over this period of time. Most of the 252 aircraft were assembled or partly produced in India, which is probably the reason for the omission in UNROCA. India has never reported to UNROCA on its military holdings or arms procurement through national production. However, the Indian Government does regularly publish fairly detailed information on the procurement of major arms in various documents, although it does not release a standardized annual overview of procurement broken down by the number and types of weapon.<sup>62</sup>

India has not submitted an UNMILEX report for any year since 2014. However, its annual budget documents are fairly detailed and include data on military procurement spending.<sup>63</sup>

### *Russia*

Russia has reported on arms transfers to UNROCA for every year since 1992. However, it has never reported to UNROCA on its military holdings or arms procurement through national production. Russia provides some details on its arms procurement in official documents and statements, and it normally publishes an annual overview of deliveries by category—sometimes broken down by specific weapon system.

Russia's latest UNMILEX report is for 2015. The report provided a breakdown by spending on personnel, operations and maintenance, procurement and construction, and 'others'. While Russia has not reported on its military

<sup>60</sup> Chinese State Council Information Office, *China's National Defense in the New Era* (Foreign Languages Press Co. Ltd: Beijing, July 2019).

<sup>61</sup> SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. Indian Ministry of Defence (MOD), *Annual Report 2018–19* (MOD: New Delhi, 2019).

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. Behera, L. K., 'Interim Defence Budget 2019–20', Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, IDSA Issue Briefs, 4 Feb. 2019.



spending to the UN in recent years, it publishes its annual budget for the Ministry of Defence in national documents. However, the specific purpose of part of the budget is unknown: all that is known is that it is for the military.<sup>64</sup>

### No international reporting

The final category consists of those countries that do not report to international transparency instruments. These can be divided into cases where (a) reporting on arms transfers by supplier states can give useful insights into the recipient state's arms procurement, (b) national reporting on military expenditure reveals significant information about the state's arms procurement, or (c) no or almost no information about the state's arms procurement is available.

#### *Algeria, Nigeria and Sudan*

Few countries from Africa report to UNROCA or UNMILEX. Algeria, Nigeria and Sudan have never reported to either instrument. Nigeria is the only one of these three that is a party to the ATT, but it chose to make its 2018 report on arms transfers available only to ATT states parties. As the arms industries in these three countries have very limited capacities, all three depend on arms imports, which means that UNROCA and ATT reports by the states that supply them with arms reveal some of their arms procurement. However, there are substantial gaps in supplier reporting. For example, Russian exports of two submarines to Algeria in 2018, and Chinese exports of three frigates to Algeria in 2015–16 and six combat aircraft to Sudan in 2017–18 have been confirmed by various open sources, but were not included in the relevant Russian and Chinese submissions to UNROCA.<sup>65</sup> Of the three states, Nigeria could perhaps be considered the most transparent with regard to arms procurement as it provides fairly detailed information on planned arms procurement projects in its annual government budget.<sup>66</sup>

#### ***Few countries from Africa report to UNROCA or UNMILEX***

#### *Pakistan*

Pakistan reported on its arms transfers to UNROCA almost every year until 2015. However, its submissions never included reports on its military holdings or arms procurement through national production. Furthermore, UNROCA reports by arms suppliers have gradually become less informative about Pakistan's arms procurement in recent years because Pakistan has increasingly moved away from importing weapon systems that are fully assembled to producing them under licence. The states that supply the technology and components for this licensed production generally do not report these transfers to UNROCA. Nevertheless, some information on Pakistan's arms procurement is available in the form of reports published

<sup>64</sup> See e.g. Russian Federal Treasury, 'Information on execution of budgets', [n.d.]. See the national defence spending information in related tables. See also Wezeman, S. T., 'Russia's military spending: Frequently asked questions', SIPRI Backgrounder, 27 Apr. 2020.

<sup>65</sup> SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

<sup>66</sup> Nigerian Government, Budget Office, 2019 Appropriation Bill.



by the Pakistani Government that contain details about the production of selected major arms.<sup>67</sup>

Pakistan has never reported to UNMILEX. However, publicly accessible documents on government spending provide the type of information requested for the simplified format submission to UNMILEX.<sup>68</sup>

#### *Iran*

Iran has not reported to UNROCA since its submission for 1998 when it reported on arms imports. UNROCA reports by arms suppliers provide no further information on Iran's arms procurement as the country has been under UN sanctions since 2010, which prohibit it from importing any of the arms that fall within UNROCA.<sup>69</sup> Iran has built up its domestic arms industry in recent years, in particular its capability to produce missiles. However, Iran does not release any detailed information about its military holdings or arms procurement through national production.

Although Iran has never reported to UNMILEX, it does regularly publish budget documents that include spending figures for all its military activities. This information is broken down by broad categories, of which 'capital assets' provides at best a rough indication of Iranian spending on military procurement.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates*

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have never reported to UNROCA or UNMILEX, and do not publish overviews of their arms procurement elsewhere. Saudi Arabia publishes annual figures for total spending on the military sector, and although these are not further broken down, they could be submitted to UNMILEX in the simplified format.<sup>71</sup> The UAE does not publish comprehensive data on its military expenditure.<sup>72</sup>

As both countries are far from self-sufficient in their arms procurement, international reporting on arms exports by supplier states could fill the gap in information. However, UNROCA or ATT reports by the relevant supplier states—mainly the USA and countries in Western Europe—include only part of the major arms acquisitions by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.<sup>73</sup> Saudi Arabia and the UAE invest heavily in their own arms industries and have the capacity to assemble certain major arms with foreign components and technology. For example, six corvettes assembled in the UAE during 2011–17, with components supplied by several European states, cannot be traced back to any submission in UNROCA.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>67</sup> E.g. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Defence Production (MODP), *Yearbook 2017–18* (MODP: Rawalpindi, 2019).

<sup>68</sup> E.g. Government of Pakistan, Finance Division, *Pakistani Annual Budget Statement 2019–20*, 11 June 2019.

<sup>69</sup> For further detail see SIPRI's Arms Embargoes Database.

<sup>70</sup> See e.g. Iranian Plan and Budget Organization, [Budget 1398 (2019–20) (Bill)], 2019 (in Farsi).

<sup>71</sup> See e.g. Saudi Arabian Ministry of Finance, *Budget Statement, Fiscal Year 2020*, p. 21.

<sup>72</sup> Wezeman, P. D. and Kuimova, A., 'Military spending and arms imports by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE', SIPRI Fact Sheet, May 2019, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

<sup>74</sup> SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

***The limitations of UNROCA with regard to weapon categories are well illustrated in the cases of Saudi Arabia and the UAE***



The limitations of UNROCA with regard to the categories of weapon it covers are well illustrated in the cases of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Both countries have, for example, imported advanced air and missile defence systems from the USA over the past decade, which have significantly strengthened their military capabilities, especially in comparison to Iran, their main rival in the region.<sup>75</sup> However, no UNROCA weapon category covers such systems. In this case, the various transfers to Saudi Arabia and the UAE were revealed in the detailed national reporting on arms exports in US government documents.<sup>76</sup>

## V. Conclusions

The preceding analysis leads to conclusions about the need and options for revitalizing multilateral transparency on arms procurement. It also leads to conclusions about the feasibility of using available data from multilateral and national reporting on arms procurement as the foundation for a tool, operated by an independent institution, to monitor global trends in arms procurement.

### **Revitalizing multilateral transparency**

With the aim of confidence building, several regional and global instruments have been created since the early 1980s in which states share information on their arms procurement and military expenditure. However, as of 2020, the instruments that can be assessed in more detail—because they publish the submitted information—have severe limitations. The publicly accessible multilateral transparency instruments do not provide comprehensive information on global or regional armament developments by themselves or in combination with each other. There are two key reasons for this.

First, by 2019, participation in UNROCA and UNMILEX (for data for 2018) had in each case declined to less than one quarter of all 193 UN member states. Moreover, as of 2020, the two relevant instruments in the Americas (CITAAC and SADER) seem no longer to be active. Only the information-sharing mechanism within the OSCE framework continues to have a high level of participation, but only some of the content of the reporting is made public. A number of causes for the low participation by states in multilateral transparency instruments have been suggested, including a lack of understanding as to the purpose and relevance of the reporting, a lack of capacity, a lack of confidence in the reporting, a lack of political will, reporting fatigue, security concerns and changes in the UN agenda as a whole.<sup>77</sup>

Second, only some of the states that do participate in UNROCA and UNMILEX provide data that is comprehensive and detailed enough to use

<sup>75</sup> See e.g. Erästö, T., ‘Time for Europe to put Iran’s missile programme in context’, SIPRI Topical Backgrounder, 30 Oct. 2017.

<sup>76</sup> E.g. the USA publishes such data on the website of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) and in notifications on contracts by the US Department of Defense (DOD) on the DOD’s website.

<sup>77</sup> UN General Assembly, A/74/211 (note 7), para. 94; and United Nations, A/72/293 (note 40), para. 23.



as an indicator of key trends in arms procurement in those countries or, in the case that the information is about arms exports, in other countries. The case studies in section IV show that multilateral reporting on military holdings, arms transfers and arms procurement through national production is far from sufficient to give an understanding of armament dynamics in regions of tension or countries involved in armed conflict. The relatively few countries that still participate in the instruments make very different choices about what to include; very few engage in detailed and consistent reporting, and in most cases the reporting is rudimentary, irregular or both.

However, the shortcomings of the existing instruments should not be reason for discontinuing them, as happened with the regional instruments in the Americas. Due to their ease of accessibility, their official nature and their reporting structures, UNROCA, UNMILEX and the OSCE reporting on arms transfers continue to provide a useful contribution to efforts to map and assess global armament dynamics. In particular, each year the UNROCA and OSCE reports include information on arms transfers that is not—or not easily—available from other open sources.<sup>78</sup>

The absence of information in the multilateral reporting instruments contrasts with the often large volumes of information, much of it highly detailed, published by states in national reports about their own military expenditure and arms procurement or about their arms exports—which can be used to map arms procurement by arms-importing states. Thus many states have readily available information that could be submitted to multilateral reporting instruments, meaning that such reporting is clearly feasible. This, in turn, provides sufficient basis to pursue efforts to revitalize existing international transparency instruments as confidence-building measures.

In the case of UNROCA, one approach could be to place more of an emphasis on improving the reporting of arms procurement through national production. This could contribute to mitigating one of the possible reasons for the decrease in participation in UNROCA—namely the perception, among some states, that the instrument is inherently discriminatory because the current emphasis on reporting on arms transfers means that there is greater transparency for states dependent on arms imports than for those that can produce arms themselves.<sup>79</sup>

### **Non-governmental approach to monitoring global arms procurement**

The limitations of the multilateral reporting instruments are not new and efforts to improve them have made little progress over the years. While participation in UNROCA and UNMILEX should be promoted as part of building confidence between states, there are significant obstacles to achieving high levels of participation and improving the quality of reporting. Based on the history of the instruments, there appears to be little likelihood that UNROCA and UNMILEX will become truly comprehensive

<sup>78</sup> E.g. UNROCA is an important source for the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database for details on the numbers of weapons transferred and delivery years.

<sup>79</sup> UN General Assembly, A/74/211 (note 7), para. 67.

***The many publicly available government reports could form the foundation for efforts by an independent institution to monitor global arms procurement***





instruments capable of providing overarching insight into global arms competition between states.

However, such insight is all the more necessary at a time of increasing distrust between major powers, worrying armament developments globally and in many regions and subregions, and the gradual dismantling of multilateral arms control mechanisms. Therefore, the wealth of information available from public government reporting at the multilateral and national levels could form the foundation for an alternative effort by an independent institution to monitor global arms procurement patterns and dynamics. Such an effort would involve the collection of public government information and other verifiable open-source information, which would then be made available in a standardized, publicly accessible and user-friendly format—for example, by building on the structures and methodologies used for the existing SIPRI arms transfers and military expenditure databases.

By making its findings and data freely and easily available to the global community of stakeholders, such an effort would contribute to an inclusive, critical and multifaceted dialogue about armament developments that are potential risks to peace and security. In this way, it would inform complementary efforts by states, at the global and regional levels, and by civil society aimed at arms control and peaceful resolution of conflict.

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# TRANSPARENCY IN ARMS PROCUREMENT: LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASSESSING GLOBAL ARMAMENT DEVELOPMENTS

PIETER D. WEZEMAN, LUCIE BÉRAUD-SUDREAU AND  
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