

Briefing Paper

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THE 2021 SMALL ARMS TRADE TRANSPARENCY BAROMETER

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Overview

The 2021 Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer (the Barometer) identifies the most and least transparent of 50 top and major small arms exporters, based on those states' reporting of their authorized small arms exports undertaken in 2018. In addition to their national reports, the Barometer takes into consideration data provided by states to multiple international reporting instruments, such as the UN Register of Conventional Arms, the UN Small Arms Programme of Action, the UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database, and the Arms Trade Treaty.

This Briefing Paper provides a general overview of states' reporting of their authorized small arms exports in 2018, while also analysing states showing the largest changes from the preceding year's Barometer scores. The overall trend shows an increase in the amount of information provided, yet no state managed to achieve the maximum score of 25, Switzerland being the closest with a score of 21.75.

Key findings

- The 2021 Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer identifies, in descending order, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, Serbia, and the United Kingdom as the most transparent exporters in 2018.
- The least transparent exporters for 2018 are—in ascending order—Iran; North Korea (both with scores of zero); Saudi Arabia; Israel; and Taiwan, China.
- On average, states scored 12.61 out of 25 points in the 2021 Barometer, which is 2.7 per cent more than the 2020 edition where the average score was 12.28. This is mostly driven by the increased scores of the most transparent countries.

Introduction

Institutionalized in 2003, the Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer presents an annual assessment of states' reporting on their exports of small arms, light weapons, and their parts, accessories, and ammunition. The score for each exporter is based on an evaluation of information on arms transfer control systems and small arms exports made publicly available by countries via the following national and multilateral reporting instruments:

- national arms exports reports, including submissions to regional reports such as the EU's annual report on arms exports and the regional report assembled by the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC);
- submissions to the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UN Register), including those shared through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Information Exchange on Conventional Arms Transfers;
- national reports on countries' implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA);
- UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade) submissions;¹ and
- Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) initial and annual reports.

This evaluation refers to exports carried out in a specific year and reported by a specific cut-off date, which is set to allow countries roughly 13 months to submit their data. The countries reviewed by the Barometer are those that qualified as top or major exporters² at least once from 2001 until 2018; the latter is the current year of arms-exporting activities under review.

Thus, the 2021 edition of the Barometer assesses the reporting practices of 50 states that qualified as top or major exporters at least once during the 2001–18 calendar years, based on their reporting of their exports of small arms and light weapons in 2018 and the information they had provided by the 2021 Barometer reporting cut-off date of 31 January 2020.³ Top and major exporters can attain a maximum score of 25 points in the 2021 Barometer, based on the application of standardized scoring guidelines to assess 42 criteria across 7 transparency parameters:

- timeliness;
- access and consistency;

- clarity;
- comprehensiveness;
- deliveries;
- licences granted; and
- licences refused.

The more points a country receives, the higher its ranking in the Barometer. The detailed scoring guidelines can be found in *Small Arms Survey (2020)* or Florquin, Hainard, and Jongleux (2020, pp. 78–84).

Overall trends

On average, the 50 top and major small arms exporters reviewed for the 2021 Barometer scored 12.61 out of a maximum of 25 points. Of these, 27 achieved a score above or equal to this average, 21 scored below it, and 2 exporters scored zero points. Overall, the Barometer recorded a higher average than last year's average of 12.28 points (Florquin, Hainard, and Jongleux, 2020, pp. 11, 34). The average score of the top six most transparent exporters for the 2018 reporting year is 20.17, which is 3 per cent higher than the average score of 19.58 achieved by the top six in the preceding year. Moreover, the top ten countries have all either equalled or increased their score in comparison with the preceding year.

Based on the difference between their 2017 and 2018 reporting, 28 small arms exporters (56 per cent) increased their Barometer scores, while 15 (30 per cent) saw their scores decrease. This is a positive development in comparison with the 2020 Barometer, where 21 exporters (43 per cent) increased their scores and 20 (41 per cent) saw their scores decrease compared to the previous year (Florquin, Hainard, and Jongleux, 2020, p. 36).

Most and least transparent

Switzerland ranked in first place as the most transparent exporter for the fourth consecutive year, scoring 21.75 out of a possible maximum of 25 points in the 2021 Barometer. Switzerland is followed by the Netherlands (21 points), Germany (20.25 points), Serbia (19.75 points), and the United Kingdom (19.5 points).

Germany and the Netherlands were tied in the previous edition, and while both countries' scores increased from the 2020 Barometer, the Netherlands' increase was larger—with Germany improving its score by 0.25 points and the Netherlands by one full point.

A similar dynamic can be observed with Serbia and the United Kingdom. These countries were tied as the fourth most transparent exporters in the 2020 Barom-

eter, and both increased their score in this year's Barometer, but Serbia—with a 0.5-point improvement—overtook the United Kingdom, which had a 0.25-point increase.

The five least transparent major small arms exporters in 2018 were Iran (0 points), North Korea (0 points), Saudi Arabia (0.5 points), Israel (3 points), and Taiwan, China (7 points). Neither Iran nor North Korea reported any information to the national or multilateral instruments used to compile the 2021 edition of the Barometer.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), which had failed to report to UN Comtrade on its 2017 arms-exporting activities, did submit a report for its 2018 activities. This has allowed the UAE to gain 1.5 points and thus achieve a total of 8.75 points, so it is therefore no longer among the least transparent exporters.

Largest decreases and increases in scores from 2020 to 2021

The top and major small arms exporters with the largest point *decreases* in this edition of the Barometer compared to the previous one are, in decreasing order of points *lost*, South Africa; Taiwan, China; Mexico; and Peru.

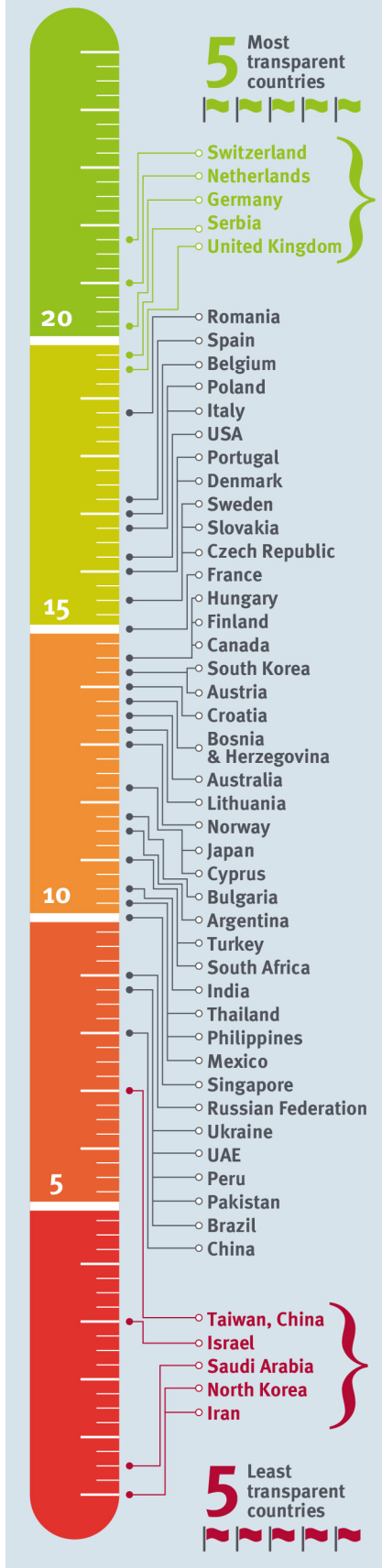
- South Africa (-2.25 points overall): South Africa lost 1.5 points compared to the previous edition of the Barometer because it provided only aggregated information—that is, combined into categories—in its national report on its licences granted, while in the past it had provided a detailed description of the materiel exported.
- Taiwan, China (-2 points overall): Taiwan did not provide information on the quantity of small arms and ammunition that were exported, something that it had done in the previous edition of the Barometer. It also provided information on fewer categories of small arms than it did in the past.
- Mexico (-1.25 points overall): Mexico continues its downward trend after having already lost 2.75 points in the previous edition of the Barometer. In its ATT annual report, Mexico did not provide information on exports of small arms and indicated that sensitive information had been withheld. In its UN Comtrade submission, Mexico provided information on fewer categories of small arms than in the past edition.
- Peru (-1.25 points overall): Peru did report to the UN Register, which is an improvement from the previous

edition. In its UN Comtrade submission, however, Peru provided information on fewer categories of small arms than in the past edition, and it failed to provide disaggregated information on exported quantities.

Four countries warrant mention for their *increased* transparency scores from 2020 to 2021 (listed here in decreasing order of points *gained*): Bosnia and Herzegovina, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand.

- Bosnia and Herzegovina (+3.25 points overall): Bosnia and Herzegovina was already among the countries that had the highest increased scores in the 2020 Barometer, with a 1.5-point increase. It has further increased its score by providing information to UN Comtrade for the first time. This alone accounts for an increase of 2.25 points, and is a good example of the benefits states gain from reporting to different instruments. The other points gained by Bosnia and Herzegovina pertain to the fact that it reported not only on the values, but also on the quantity of small arms and ammunition exported, and to its consistency in its reporting to the SEESAC regional report.
- Singapore (+2.5 points overall): Singapore gained 2 points by providing information for the first time to the UN Register on its exports of small arms and light weapons, and a further 0.5 points by indicating the quantity of small arms and light weapons it exported disaggregated by country of import and type of weapon.
- South Korea (+2.5 points overall): Like Bosnia and Herzegovina, South Korea has built on its positive results in the previous editions of the Barometer. Having recently joined the ATT, it submitted its first ATT annual report on time. This alone accounts for the 2.5 points it gained in this year's Barometer. Indeed, the ATT annual report allows states to report on some information and categories that are not covered by other instruments. For example, the UN Register and UN Comtrade focus on actual deliveries, while the ATT annual report allows states to also report on export licences.
- Thailand (+2.25 points overall): Thailand recovered from its sharp fall in the previous edition of the Barometer, where it lost 2.25 points for its failure to report to UN Comtrade. Because it reported to UN Comtrade on its 2018 exports, Thailand regained these points, demonstrating the utility of states being consistent in their reporting practices from year to year.

The 2021 Transparency Barometer



Report submission trends

As highlighted in previous editions of the Barometer, states could increase their scores by providing more information on licences granted and refused, by reporting to multiple instruments, and by ensuring consistency in their reporting practices.

There has been no improvement in terms of the low reporting rate to the UN Register and the ATT, however. Brazil, for example, which was due to send its initial report to the ATT in November 2019, has failed to do so. Moreover, in 2019 many states failed to report to some of the instruments they had consistently reported to in past years. Serbia, for example, failed to report to both the UN Register and the OSCE on its 2018 arms exports.

A growing number of states parties to the ATT had in previous years requested that their reports not be made publicly available. Some, such as Argentina, have reverted to having their reports posted on the open area of the ATT website, while others, such as Lithuania, have now requested their initial report to be posted on the restricted area of the website.

These trends will need to be monitored in the next editions of the Barometer, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which could have a detrimental effect on the reporting practices of some states.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

ATT Arms Trade Treaty

EU European Union

NISAT Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers

OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PoA Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

SEESAC South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The Barometer Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer

UAE United Arab Emirates

UN United Nations

UN Comtrade United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database

UN Register United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

USD United States dollar

Endnotes

- 1 The Barometer assesses UN Comtrade data as elaborated by the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT); see Marsh (2005).

- 2 The Small Arms Survey identifies top and major exporters by assessing the financial value of their annual documented small arms exports, based on UN Comtrade data as compiled by NISAT (Marsh, 2005). Top exporters are those trading at least USD 100 million worth of small arms and light weapons, including their parts, accessories, and ammunition, in a calendar year. For major exporters the threshold is USD 10 million worth of exports. In the Barometer, top exporters are included in the 'major exporters' category, and the distinction only becomes significant in terms of the wider analysis of the Survey's *Trade Update* series.
- 3 The analysis reflects data for 2018 exports entered in the UN Comtrade database as of 22 January 2021. This is in line with established practice whereby the Survey and NISAT give countries two full calendar years in which to make and revise their respective UN Comtrade submissions.

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Table 1 Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer 2021, covering top and major exporter activities in 2018*

Exporter	Total points, 2021 Barometer	Total points, 2020 Barometer	National report**/ regional report***	UN Contrade**	UN Register**	OSCE**	ATT annual report**	ATT initial report	PoA	Total timeliness (4.50 max.)	Total access and consistency (2.00 max.)	Total clarity (5.00 max.)	Total comprehensiveness (6.50 max.)	Total deliveries (4.00 max.)	Total licences granted (4.00 max.)	Total licences refused (2.00 max.)
Switzerland	21.75	21.75	X	X	X	o	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	5.00	6.25	3.00	3.00	1.50
Netherlands	21.00	20.00	X/EU	X	X	X(17)	X	X	X	1.50	2.00	5.00	6.50	3.00	2.00	1.00
Germany	20.25	20.00	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	2.00	4.50	3.75	3.50	3.50	1.50
Serbia	19.75	19.25	X/SEE	X	X(17)	X(17)	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.75	5.50	3.50	2.50	1.50
United Kingdom	19.50	19.25	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	2.00	4.75	4.50	4.00	2.00	0.75
Romania	18.75	17.25	X/EU	o	X	X(17)	X	X	X	1.50	2.00	3.00	5.50	3.50	3.00	0.25
Spain	17.25	16.75	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	2.00	3.50	3.75	3.00	1.50	2.00
Belgium	17.00	15.50	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	2.00	4.00	2.00	3.00	2.50	2.00
Italy	16.75	16.25	X/EU	X	X	X(17)	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	4.25	4.75	2.50	2.00	0.25
Poland	16.75	16.25	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.50	3.75	3.00	1.50	2.00
United States	16.25	16.50	X ^a	X	X	X	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	2.00	3.50	4.25	3.00	2.00	0.00
Denmark	16.00	14.50	X/EU	X	o	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.25	4.75	3.00	2.00	0.00
Portugal	16.00	15.50	o/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.25	3.75	3.50	2.50	0.00
Czech Republic	15.50	15.25	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.75	4.25	3.00	1.50	0.00
Slovakia	15.50	15.25	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.25	4.75	3.00	1.50	0.00
Sweden	15.50	15.25	X/EU	X	X	X(17)	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.50	4.75	2.50	1.50	0.25
France	15.00	14.75	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.25	3.50	3.00	2.00	0.25
Canada	14.50	15.00	X	X	X	X	n/a ^b	n/a ^b	X	1.50	1.50	3.25	4.25	4.00	0.00	0.00
Finland	14.50	14.25	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.00	3.25	3.00	2.00	0.25
Hungary	14.50	14.75	X/EU	X	X	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.25	3.00	3.50	1.50	0.25
Austria	14.25	13.50	o/EU	X	X	X	X	X	o	1.50	1.50	3.00	3.25	3.00	2.00	0.00
South Korea	14.25	11.75	X	X	X	n/a	X	X	X	1.50	1.00	3.00	3.75	3.00	2.00	0.00
Croatia	14.00	12.75	X/EU	X	o	o	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.00	3.50	3.00	1.50	0.00
Bosnia and Herzegovina	13.75	10.50	o/SEE	X	X	o	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	2.75	3.50	3.00	1.50	0.00
Australia	13.50	14.00	X	X	X	n/a	X	X	X	1.50	2.00	2.75	3.25	3.00	1.00	0.00
Lithuania	13.25	14.00	o/EU	X	X	X	o ^c	X	X	1.50	1.00	2.75	3.50	3.00	1.50	0.00
Norway	13.00	13.25	X	X	o	X	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	3.75	3.25	3.00	0.00	0.00
Cyprus	12.25	11.75	o/EU	X	X	X	o ^d	o ^d	X	1.50	0.50	2.75	3.25	2.50	1.50	0.25
Japan	12.25	12.25	o	X	X	n/a	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	2.50	3.75	3.00	0.00	0.00
Bulgaria	11.75	12.50	X/EU	o	X	o	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	2.75	2.00	2.50	1.50	0.00
Argentina	11.50	10.50	o	X	X	n/a	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	2.50	3.00	3.00	0.00	0.00
South Africa	11.00	13.25	X ^e	o	X	n/a	X	X	o	1.50	1.50	2.25	2.25	2.00	1.50	0.00
Turkey	11.00	11.00	o ^f	X	X	X	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	0.50	2.25	3.75	3.00	0.00	0.00
India	10.50	11.25	o	X	X	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	0.50	2.50	3.00	3.00	0.00	0.00
Mexico	10.25	11.50	o	X	o	n/a	X	X	X	1.50	1.50	2.50	2.25	2.50	0.00	0.00
Philippines	10.25	9.25	o	X	o	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	0.50	2.50	2.75	3.00	0.00	0.00
Thailand	10.25	8.00	o	X	o	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	0.00	2.25	3.50	3.00	0.00	0.00
Singapore	10.00	7.50	o	X	X	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	1.00	2.00	3.00	2.50	0.00	0.00
Russian Federation	9.00	9.50	o	X	X	X	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	0.50	2.25	1.75	3.00	0.00	0.00
Brazil	8.75	9.00	o	X	X	n/a	n/a ^g	n/a ^g	X	1.50	1.00	2.00	1.75	2.50	0.00	0.00
Pakistan	8.75	8.75	o	X	o	n/a	n/a	n/a	o	1.50	0.50	1.50	2.75	2.50	0.00	0.00
Peru	8.75	10.00	o	X	X	n/a	X	X	X	1.50	1.00	1.75	3.00	1.50	0.00	0.00
UAE	8.75	7.25	o	X	o	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	0.00	2.25	2.50	2.50	0.00	0.00
Ukraine	8.75	8.25	X	o	X	X	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	1.50	1.75	2.00	2.00	0.00	0.00
China	8.00	8.75	o	X	X	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	0.50	2.00	1.50	2.50	0.00	0.00
Taiwan, China	7.00	9.00	X ^h	X	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.50	1.50	1.25	1.25	1.50	0.00	0.00
Israel	3.00	1.25	o	o	X	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	1.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00
Saudi Arabia	0.50	0.50	o	o	o	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Iran	0.00	0.00	o	o	o	n/a	n/a	n/a	o	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
North Korea	0.00	0.00	o	o	o	n/a	n/a	n/a	o	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Notes

The online version of the Transparency Barometer incorporates corrections that may affect country scores and rankings. For this reason the online version rather than the printed one should be considered definitive. See Small Arms Survey (n.d.).

Grey shaded cells indicate where countries do not need to report to a particular instrument, given that they were not party to the instrument in question as of 31 December 2018.

- * Top and major exporters are countries that export—or are believed to export—at least USD 10 million worth of small arms, light weapons, their parts, accessories, and ammunition in a given year. The 2021 Barometer includes any country that qualified as a top or major exporter at least once during the 2001–18 calendar years; it assesses arms trade activities for 2018.
- ** X indicates that a report was issued or submitted by the 2021 Barometer’s cut-off date of 31 January 2020—that is, 13 months after the year in which the trade activities took place. X(year) indicates that, because a report was not issued or submitted by the Barometer’s cut-off date, the country was evaluated on the basis of its most recent submission, which covered activities for the year reported in brackets. o indicates that no report was submitted. n/a indicates that no report was submitted, either because the country was not party to that instrument or because the country was not due to report to this instrument in that specific time period.
- *** The Barometer assesses information provided in the following regional reporting instruments: (1) the EU’s ‘Twenty-first Annual Report’ (CoEU, 2019), which reflects exports of military equipment carried out by EU member states in 2018 and appears as ‘EU’ in the Barometer; and (2) the regional report compiled by SEESAC, which covers data on transfers completed in 2018 by exporters from South-eastern and Eastern Europe and appears as ‘SEE’ in the Barometer (SEESAC, 2020).
- ^a For the purposes of the Barometer, the US national report refers to the State Department report issued pursuant to Section 655 of the Foreign Assistance Act on direct commercial sales, as well as the report on foreign military sales prepared by the US Department of Defense. For the fourth time the 2021 Barometer assesses information on foreign trade provided via USA Trade Online (US CB, n.d.).
- ^b Canada became an ATT state party on 17 September 2019 (ATT, 2020). It submitted its ATT initial report in September 2020 and its first annual report was due on 31 May 2021.
- ^c Lithuania has requested that its ATT annual report be posted on the area of the website accessible only to ATT states parties.
- ^d Cyprus has requested that its ATT initial and annual reports be posted on the area of the website accessible only to ATT states parties.
- ^e In the evaluation of South Africa’s national report the term ‘conveyance’ is interpreted to mean transit in accordance with the definition provided in the National Conventional Arms Control Act (South Africa, 2002, art. 1(vii)).
- ^f The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute database on National Reports on Arms Exports indicates that the Turkish Defence Industry Manufacturers Association publishes an annual report on Turkey’s arms exports (SIPRI, n.d.). The Barometer does not consider this report when assessing the country’s transparency because it is not produced by a government agency and thus is not representative of national reporting practices.
- ^g Brazil did not submit its ATT initial report, which was due in November 2019. It has also failed to submit its first annual report, which was due in May 2020.
- ^h Customs data provided by Taiwan, China has been categorized as a national report rather than as a submission to UN Comtrade. The data was retrieved from the Directorate General of its Customs Administration (Taiwan, China, MoF, n.d.).

Scoring system

The scoring system for the 2021 Barometer allows exporters to earn a maximum of 25 points on the basis of 42 criteria in 7 parameters: timeliness; access and consistency; clarity; comprehensiveness; the level of detail provided on actual deliveries; licences granted; and licences refused. For detailed scoring guidelines, see Small Arms Survey (2020) or Florquin, Hainard, and Jongleux (2020, pp. 78–84).

Explanatory notes

The 2021 Barometer assesses national arms export reports that were made publicly available between 1 January 2018 and 31 January 2020. It also reflects information submitted by states to regional reporting instruments that were published after 31 January 2020 and before the Barometer was finalized (1 March 2021), although the submission of this data does not receive points for timeliness.

The 2021 Barometer takes account of national submissions to multilateral instruments concerning their 2018 exports of small arms, light weapons, and their parts, accessories, and ammunition. Together with submissions to UN Comtrade on countries’ 2018 export activities, these include the following reports submitted between 1 January 2018 and 31 January 2020: national submissions to the UN Register; states parties’ initial and annual reports to the ATT; countries’ biennial reports to the PoA; and national submissions to the OSCE.

The fact that the Barometer is based on multiple reporting instruments—international, regional, and national—works to the advantage of exporters that submit data to all of these instruments. While Barometer scores acknowledge the provision of information to any of the reporting instruments, the same information is not credited twice.

About the Small Arms Survey

The Small Arms Survey is a global centre of excellence whose mandate is to generate impartial, evidence-based, and policy-relevant knowledge on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is the principal international source of expertise, information, and analysis on small arms and armed violence issues, and acts as a resource for governments, policymakers, researchers, and civil society. It is located in Geneva, Switzerland, and is an associated programme of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. The Survey has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, sociology, and criminology, and collaborates with a network of researchers, partner institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governments in more than 50 countries.

For more information, please visit: www.smallarmssurvey.org.

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