

The International Arms Trade

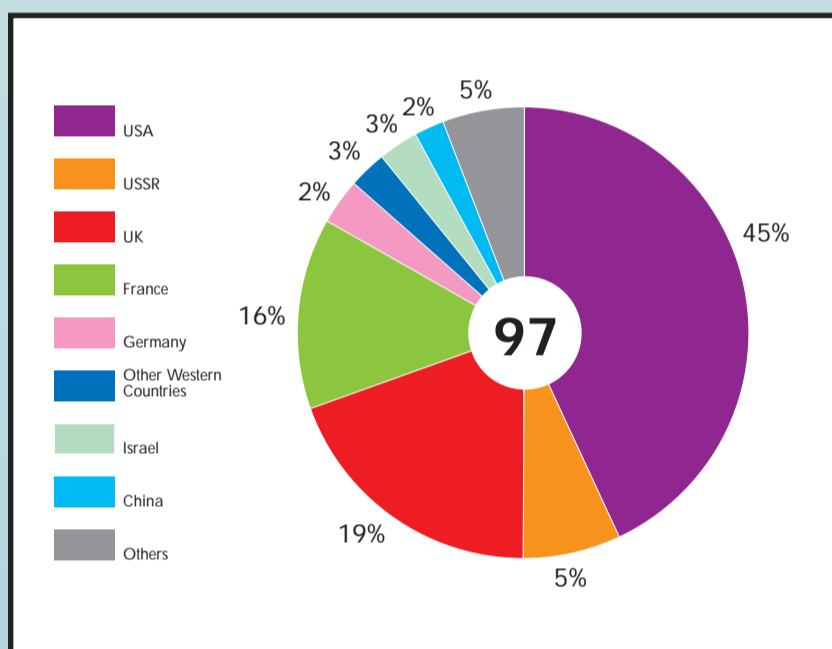
Arms have always been traded between countries, but today's market is massive and complex. It is promoted heavily by governments of several countries that have large defence industries and a military-industrial economy. The global market is worth around £30 billion each year.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council (U.S., U.K., France, Russia and China) are the biggest arms exporters, although Russia's contribution has declined since the late 1980s.

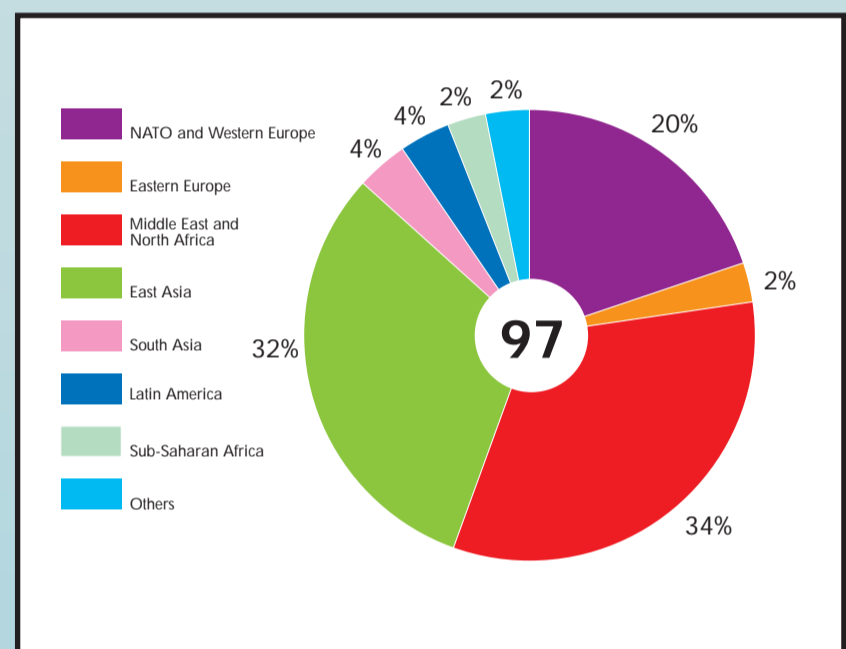


Although global sales fell after the cold war, an increasing proportion is sold to developing countries. Most of these countries have repressive or non-democratic governments. Many are also located in regions of tension. For example, sales to East Asia have been growing fast, and the Middle East and Northern Africa account for a third of all purchases. The arms sales increase instability and make war more likely.

These pie charts show total arms exports and imports for 1997:



Value of global arms exports (% of total value)



Value of global arms imports (% of total value)

