

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Topic A: Security implications of organised crime and illicit trade  
Topic B: Addressing the global arms race and its effects on international peace



# Chair Introduction

Distinguished delegates,

My name is Csilla Horváth, I am currently a DP2 student and will be one of your chairs, in the General Assembly for the KC Soto MUN conference this year; directing Topic A: Security Implications of Organised Crime and Illicit Trade. I believe I speak for both my co-chair, Luis Arroyo, and myself when I say we are beyond excited to be guiding you through this MUN Conference on topics which are both so pivotal in current international affairs and so can lead to a few days of very productive debate.

In terms of my experience, I partook in last year's KC Soto Conference, however my practice of MUN has been a continuous element of my secondary life with multifaceted participation both as delegate, chair and secretariat. Therefore, my hope is to support you in making your conference as meaningful as mine have been. As someone who wants to pursue a career in diplomacy, pushing other students to consider a similar path and grow their awareness of public affairs through debate is my constant goal as your chair. Beyond this, I hope you will enjoy our committee gossip, formal and informal awards and punishments (to any who dare be late to our sessions).

Thank you in advance for your time and dedication. I hope you find the courage to be an active part in debate, regardless of your experience or confidence in your points; as there is no such thing as a bad argument if you communicate it well.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me through my school email: [csilla.hor@kcpupils.org](mailto:csilla.hor@kcpupils.org)

See you soon :)

Csilla Horváth

# Chair Introduction

My name is Luis Arroyo Wang, I am currently in DP1, and I will be one of the chairs of the General Assembly in the KC SOTO MUN III. My co-chair, Csilla Horvath, and I, are beyond excited to chair this committee. Regarding my experience in debating, I have participated in a handful of MUN's, both as a delegate and as a chair, and have participated in CICAIE twice. Throughout the duration of the event, I will aim to help you understand and debate to your highest potential. I encourage you to enter this committee with a desire to grow, learn, and enjoy yourself.

Reflecting on my first MUN experience, I had the opportunity to engage with dedicated and skilled students who had much more experience than me in negotiation, problem-solving, and tackling complex global issues. While speaking in front of everyone may seem daunting at first, MUN is more than just a learning experience, it's a very interesting extracurricular where you can challenge yourself, develop skills that will serve you forever, and take steps toward becoming a global leader.

I hope this study guide serves you to conduct your research for this topic. However, while this study guide may help you grasp an understanding of this topic, I would advise you to conduct further individual research and to not limit your research to the contents of this study guide. Any doubts, please email me or my co-chair at [luis.arr.wan@kcpupils.org](mailto:luis.arr.wan@kcpupils.org) or [csilla.hor@gmail.com](mailto:csilla.hor@gmail.com)

# Introduction to the Committee

The General Assembly of the United Nations is perhaps the most crucial decision-making institution within the organisation dedicated to tackling a broad spectrum of international issues covered by the UN Charter rather than being targeted towards certain topics like the other five main bodies. Open to all UN Member States (unlike any other council), it provides a space where delegates represent their assigned countries on an equal footing. Unlike smaller, more specialised committees, the GA's broad scope gives it a unique stance: discussions can range from peace and security to sustainable development, humanitarian aid, or global governance. This diversity demands that delegates think broadly, balancing national interests with the need to find workable, collective solutions in a committee that (realistically) can range up to 193 representatives (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025)

The Assembly holds regular sessions from September to December every year, otherwise special sessions - arranged by the Secretary General or a majority of members - or even emergency special sessions - arranged in a situation of international vulnerability when the Security Council has failed to exercise its responsibility of maintaining international peace - shall be called upon (UN General Assembly, Res. 377A(V), 1950). The documentation of these meetings are recorded in detail and made publicly accessible to ensure transparency within the institution, a key goal of the UN as a whole (United Nations, 2020). Within these sessions the progress of debate depends on patience and compromise. Delegates must work within blocs, navigate competing priorities with other nations, and draft proposals that can attract broad support. (The Global Citizen Academy, n.d.)

It may be seen that the GA is the heart of the MUN experience: it mirrors the complexity of international politics while remaining accessible to all delegates. It is not about individual victories but about shaping outcomes through cooperation. Those who excel in the GA are those who can listen actively, are able to set hostility aside (be it personal or national), and translate debate into meaningful, actionable resolutions.

# Topic A: Introduction

The relationship between organised crime and security is a simple one - as criminal networks expand and illicit trade flourishes, the stability of societies, institutions, and economies is directly threatened, making organised crime not merely a law enforcement issue but a fundamental challenge to national and international security. It is however, important to distinguish between the two terms, centred around this topic: organised crime refers to structured groups that engage in systematic illegal activity, often using violence, corruption, and influence to maintain power and gain profit - ensure that you also do not confuse the idea with terrorism which, though can share characteristics differs in its politically motivated nature. Illicit trade, on the other hand, concerns the movement and exchange of prohibited or smuggled goods, such as narcotics, arms, counterfeit products, or people. While illicit trade provides the economic foundation that sustains organised crime, organised groups in turn protect, expand, and control these black markets. Together, they represent a dual threat: the weakening of state institutions and the destabilisation of societies through the erosion of governance, the rule of law, and economic security (UNODC, 2010).

From the earliest trade networks, systems of smuggling and unlawful exchange emerged in parallel with legitimate commerce. Early patterns in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean established a precedent for the link between organised criminal activity and security concerns. However, the modern understanding of organised crime began to take shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly during periods of economic instability and social unrest. In the United States during Prohibition (1920–1933), organised crime syndicates expanded rapidly by dominating the illicit alcohol trade. Groups such as those led by Al Capone used profits to bribe officials, fuel violence, and build networks that outlived Prohibition itself, showing how illicit trade can empower lasting criminal organisations (Block, 1991). Similarly, in Italy, the Sicilian Mafia built influence not only through extortion but also by controlling cigarette smuggling in the mid-20th century, embedding itself into political and judicial structures (Lupo, 2009).

In Japan, the Yakuza thrived in postwar black markets, diversifying into drug trafficking, gambling, and construction, while maintaining visibility in legitimate business to uphold status on all grounds (Kaplan and Dubro, 2003). By the 1970s and 1980s, illicit narcotics trade became a central driver of insecurity worldwide. Colombia's Medellín and Cali cartels exported cocaine on an

# Topic A: Introduction

unprecedented scale, undermining governance and fueling violence (Bagley, 1988). When enforcement intensified in South America, Mexican cartels gained dominance in the 1990s and 2000s by controlling trafficking routes into North America, increasing violence and weakening state control (Shirk, 2011).

Illicit trade also pushed instability in other regions. In post-Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe, arms trafficking proliferated in the 1990s, supplying conflict zones in Africa and the Balkans (Volkov, 2002). In West Africa, fragile states became major transit hubs for cocaine from Latin America to Europe in the early 2000s (UNODC, 2010), while in Southeast Asia, the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand) remained a global hub for heroin and methamphetamine production, sustaining conflict economies and corruption (UNODC, 2022).

By the late 20th century, it became clear that organised crime and illicit trade are mutually reinforcing global phenomena. Criminal groups depend on illicit markets for profit, while illicit trade relies on organised structures for protection and expansion. Their convergence elevates them from isolated law enforcement concerns to systemic threats to international peace and security (UNODC, 2004).

As delegates approach this topic, it is important to understand that today's manifestations of organised crime are the product of long-standing historical dynamics. Examining how illicit trade and criminal networks have evolved over time will help frame the security implications that persist in the present and guide discussions on effective international responses.

# Topic A: Key Terms

## **Organised Crime:**

Structured coordination of individuals or groups engaging in illegal activities, often using violence, corruption, or political influence to maintain control and gain profit: frequently transnational, exploiting weak governance and globalised trade.

## **Illicit Trade:**

The unlawful production, transport, or exchange of goods and services, including narcotics, arms, counterfeit products, wildlife, and human trafficking. Provides financial support for organised criminal networks and contributes to instability by funding corruption and conflict.

## **Transnational Organised Crime (TOC):**

Organised crime operating across borders, exploiting international trade, communication networks, and weak state institutions.

## **Palermo Convention (UNTOC, 2000):**

A UN treaty establishing a framework for international cooperation against transnational organised crime. Promotes harmonised legal measures, extradition, mutual legal assistance, and seizure of criminal assets.

## **INTERPOL:**

The International Criminal Police Organisation which facilitates cross-border cooperation, sharing intelligence, and tracking criminals involved in organised crime and illicit trade.

## **Financial Action Task Force (FATF):**

An intergovernmental body that develops standards to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, which often fund organised crime and illicit trade networks.

## **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):**

A UN agency that assists member states in combating illicit drugs, transnational organised crime, and terrorism through research, policy guidance, and operational support.

## **Smuggling Networks:**

Organised operations that move goods or people illegally across borders, undermining national security, law enforcement, and economic stability.

## **Narcotics:**

Illegal or controlled drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines. Trafficking generates massive illicit profits, fuels corruption, violence, and destabilises states.

# Topic A: Key Terms

**Arms Race:**

Competitive accumulation of weapons and military capabilities between countries or groups, which may be facilitated or intensified by criminal arms trafficking.

**Terrorism:**

The unlawful use of violence to achieve political, ideological, or religious objectives. Often intersects with organised crime through financing, smuggling, or provision of arms.

**Human Trafficking:**

The illegal trade of people for forced labor, sexual exploitation, or other purposes. A major component of illicit trade and organised crime that undermines human security and state capacity.

**Corruption:**

The abuse of power for personal gain, often linked to organised crime and illicit trade. Weakens institutions, facilitates criminal activity, and threatens political stability.

**Money Laundering:**

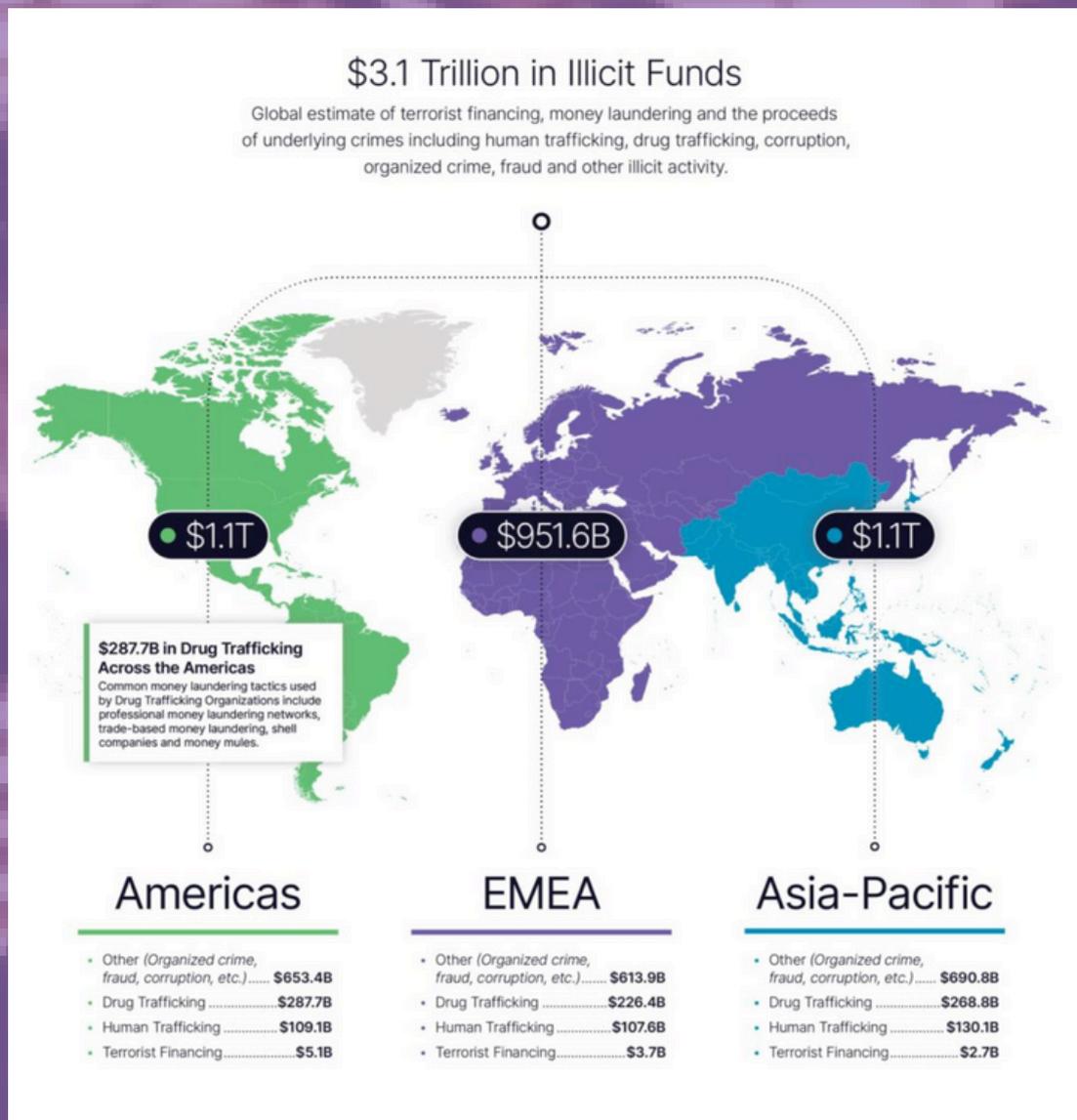
The process of concealing the origins of illicitly gained money, often from narcotics or arms trafficking, to integrate it into the legitimate economy. Fuels organised crime and undermines financial systems.

**Counterfeit Products:**

Illegally produced or copied goods that imitate legitimate products, generating profits for criminal networks while undermining businesses and posing safety risks.

# Topic A: Context and Current Solutions

Efforts to address the security threats posed by organised crime and illicit trade have evolved significantly over the 20th and 21st centuries, yet remain fully functional. Historically, national governments initially focused on domestic law enforcement measures, targeting specific criminal groups and illicit markets. For example, during the Prohibition era in the United States (1920–1933), law enforcement efforts sought to dismantle alcohol smuggling networks and the organised crime syndicates that profited from them. Similarly, post-World War II Italy intensified efforts against the Sicilian Mafia, combining policing with legal reforms to weaken organised criminal structures (Paoli, 2003).



# Topic A: Context and Current Solutions

The late 20th century saw an increasing recognition that organised crime and illicit trade could not be addressed solely at the national level. International frameworks began to emerge, aiming to harmonise legal definitions, promote cross-border cooperation, and facilitate intelligence sharing. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC, 2000), also known as the Palermo Convention, provided a comprehensive framework for member states to criminalise participation in organised criminal groups, implement anti-money laundering measures, and enhance extradition and mutual legal assistance mechanisms. The 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances similarly strengthened global cooperation to combat drug trafficking.

In parallel, intergovernmental organisations such as INTERPOL and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) have played a crucial role in operational coordination, intelligence-sharing, and setting global standards to combat money laundering, terrorism financing, and transnational criminal networks. Regional efforts, such as the European Union's Europol initiatives and West African joint operations against arms and drug smuggling, demonstrate the need for coordinated action across borders.

Despite these advances, organised crime and illicit trade continue to adapt to new opportunities. The rise of cybercrime, online marketplaces, and cryptocurrency-based money laundering presents emerging challenges. Human trafficking, illegal wildlife trade, and counterfeit pharmaceuticals remain persistent threats, particularly in regions with weak governance or conflict. Additionally, transnational drug cartels continue to destabilise Central and Latin America, while arms smuggling in the Sahel fuels regional insecurity.

Current strategies increasingly use integrated approaches to combat this issue. Law enforcement collaborations, such as INTERPOL's Operation Lionfish, target transnational trafficking networks in Africa. Financial regulations, including the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations, aim to detect and prevent money laundering through banks and cryptocurrency platforms. Public-private cooperation is exemplified by Project Stop, a global initiative where private companies share data to combat the trade in illegal wildlife products. Development-focused initiatives, such as the UNODC's Global Programme for Combating Trafficking in Persons in the Sahel, work to strengthen governance, provide alternative livelihoods, and reduce vulnerabilities exploited by criminal networks. By combining these measures, international organisations aim to tackle both the immediate criminal activity and the underlying conditions that allow it to be pursued.

# Topic A: Major Parties

## United States

The United States plays a central role in global organised crime dynamics due to its position as a major consumer market for illicit drugs, a key destination for human trafficking, and a hub for financial and arms-related criminal activity. Its extensive borders and advanced transportation networks make it both a target and transit point for transnational criminal organisations, including drug cartels from Latin America and human trafficking rings from Asia and Eastern Europe. A notable case is Operation Xcellerator, a 21-month investigation initiated in 2007 and concluded in February 2009, targeting the Sinaloa Cartel. This operation led to the arrest of 755 individuals across California, Minnesota, and Maryland, and resulted in the seizure of over \$59 million in cash, 12,000 kg of cocaine, 8 kg of heroin, 1.3 million ecstasy pills, 149 vehicles, 3 aircraft, 3 maritime vessels, and 169 weapons. The operation also uncovered large-scale methamphetamine and ecstasy laboratories capable of producing 12,000 pills per hour (Leonhart, 2009). In 2019, a car accident in Rockwood, Tennessee, uncovered methamphetamine linked to the United Cartels, a powerful meth-producing cartel based in Michoacán, Mexico. This discovery led to a federal investigation, wiretaps, a violent police shootout, and large drug seizures in Georgia. The U.S. Justice Department announced indictments and sanctions against five alleged leaders of United Cartels on August 14, 2025.

As of now, domestically, US agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) coordinate to investigate trafficking routes and seize contraband. Internationally, the U.S. partners with allies through frameworks like the Mérida Initiative (2008) with Mexico and Plan Colombia (2000), both of which directed billions of dollars toward strengthening regional security forces, intelligence-sharing, and judicial reforms. Additionally, the U.S. leverages financial tools, including the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (1999), to freeze assets and cut off illicit actors from the global financial system. This layered strategy reflects an overarching approach: reduce demand domestically while simultaneously targeting supply chains abroad, thereby addressing organised crime and illicit trade as both a domestic security threat and a transnational challenge.

## Mexico

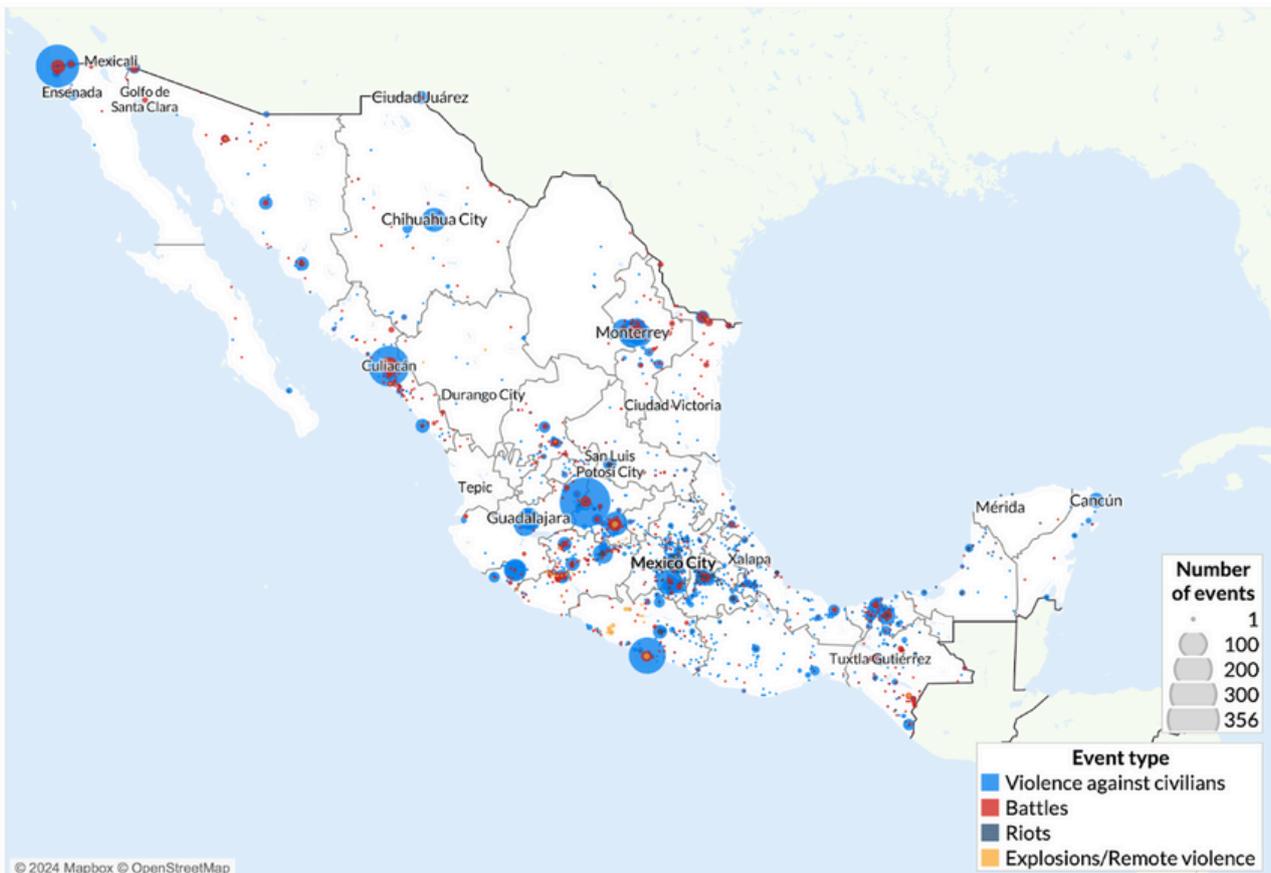
Mexico is a major producer and transit country for illicit drugs, particularly methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl, which are trafficked primarily to the United States and increasingly to Europe and Asia. Drug cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco

# Topic A: Major Parties

New Generation Cartel (CJNG) dominate the global narcotics trade, while the United Cartels, based in Michoacán, remain a significant regional force. These groups are not only involved in drug production and trafficking but also engage in extortion, fuel theft (known as *huachicol*), and human trafficking, extending their influence across multiple sectors of Mexican society. The violence linked to cartel rivalries has been devastating: in 2011, for example, the discovery of mass graves in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, revealed the killing of over 190 migrants, a case that highlighted the brutal intersection of human trafficking and organised crime. More recently, in August 2025, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum oversaw the transfer of 26 alleged cartel members to the United States, including Rafael Caro Quintero, the infamous drug lord linked to the 1985 murder of DEA agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena, marking one of the most significant extradition operations in recent history.

## Political violence in Mexico

1 January - 29 November 2024



# Topic A: Major Parties

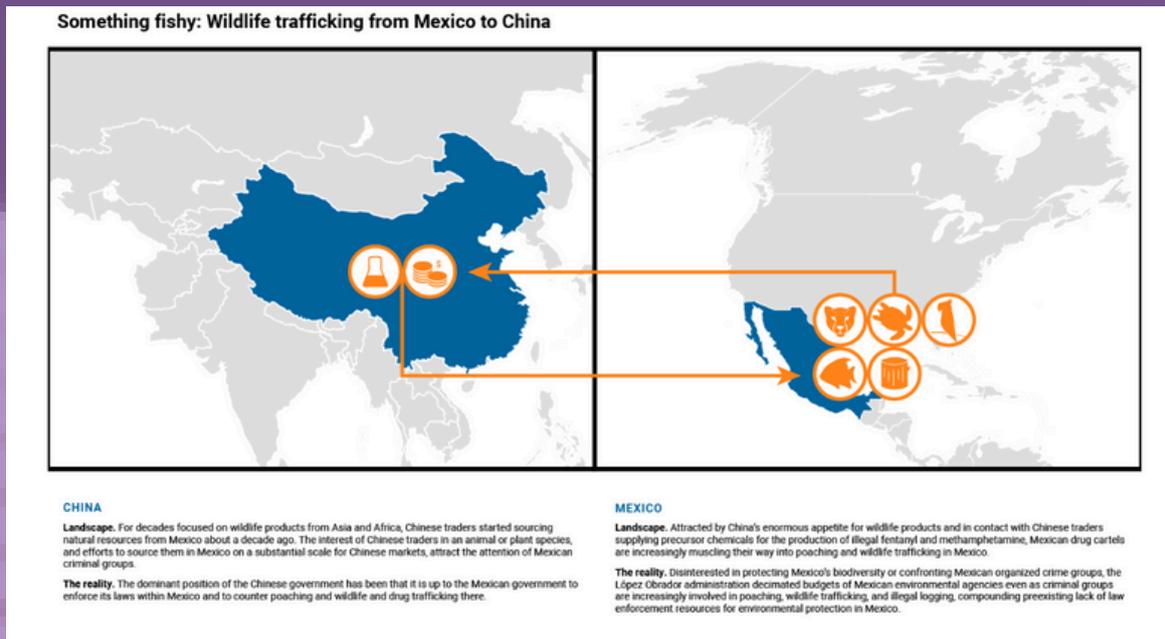
To counteract these threats, Mexico has partnered with the United States through the Mérida Initiative, launched in 2008, which aimed to strengthen law enforcement capacity, provide advanced technology, and improve judicial institutions. By 2017, the U.S. had delivered \$1.6 billion in assistance, including 22 aircraft and extensive training for Mexican security forces. Despite these investments, cartel violence escalated, with 2019 marking one of the bloodiest years in Mexican history with over 34,500 homicides, many linked to organised crime. Recognising the limitations of a purely militarised approach, Mexico has in recent years shifted toward strengthening intelligence operations, anti-money laundering mechanisms, and community-based prevention strategies. However, the persistence of powerful cartels, their deep infiltration of local governments, and their control over key drug trafficking corridors continue to pose serious security implications for Mexico and the broader international community.

## **China**

China is a major hub for organised crime, serving as both a source and transit country for illicit trade. Sex trafficking is widespread, with women and girls from rural China, as well as foreign victims from Vietnam, Myanmar, and North Korea, forced into prostitution or marriages. In 2014, authorities in Yunnan dismantled a network that smuggled over 100 Vietnamese women, and in 2020 a joint China–Vietnam operation rescued 60 trafficking victims. Despite campaigns like the National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking (2013–2020), corruption and weak victim protections limit effectiveness.

China is also central to the drug trade, particularly as a supplier of precursor chemicals for methamphetamine and fentanyl, fueling international drug markets despite a 2019 ban on fentanyl-class substances. Wildlife trafficking remains another major issue, with the 2015 seizure of over 800 kg of ivory and other contraband in Beijing exemplifying China's role as a key demand market. In addition, Chinese crime groups are deeply involved in cyber-enabled crimes, including online gambling and money laundering, with one 2021 case uncovering a network that processed \$30 billion illegally. Together, these activities show how China's organised crime networks threaten both domestic stability and international security.

# Topic A: Major Parties



## France

France plays a significant role in the global arms trade, ranking consistently among the top five arms exporters in the world. Between 2001 and 2010, its arms exports rose by nearly 10 percent, with notable transfers to South Africa, Malaysia, South Korea, and Turkey. While much of this trade is legal and conducted under international oversight, France has also faced criticism for arms sales that indirectly fuel conflict and empower criminal or insurgent groups. For example, French-made weapons have appeared in Libya and the Sahel region, where porous borders and weak institutions have allowed arms to fall into the hands of militias, traffickers, and terrorist organisations.

Concerns about illicit arms trafficking led to heightened scrutiny in the European Union. In November 2012, the European Commission called for stronger measures against the diversion of firearms and ammunition, warning that French- and European-supplied weapons were increasingly being trafficked into conflict zones and organised crime networks. France has since supported regional and global frameworks such as the Arms Trade Treaty (2013) and the EU Firearms Directive, which aim to regulate the cross-border movement of small arms and improve tracing mechanisms.

Domestically, France has also faced challenges with organised crime groups in Marseille, Corsica, and Paris, where illegal firearms trafficking is linked to drug trafficking and gang violence. In 2015, the Paris terrorist attacks underscored the security threat posed by trafficked weapons within Europe. In response, French authorities intensified cooperation with Europol and Interpol, strengthening border inspections and launching operations to intercept illicit arms shipments moving through the Balkans into Western Europe.

# Topic A: Major Parties

## Colombia

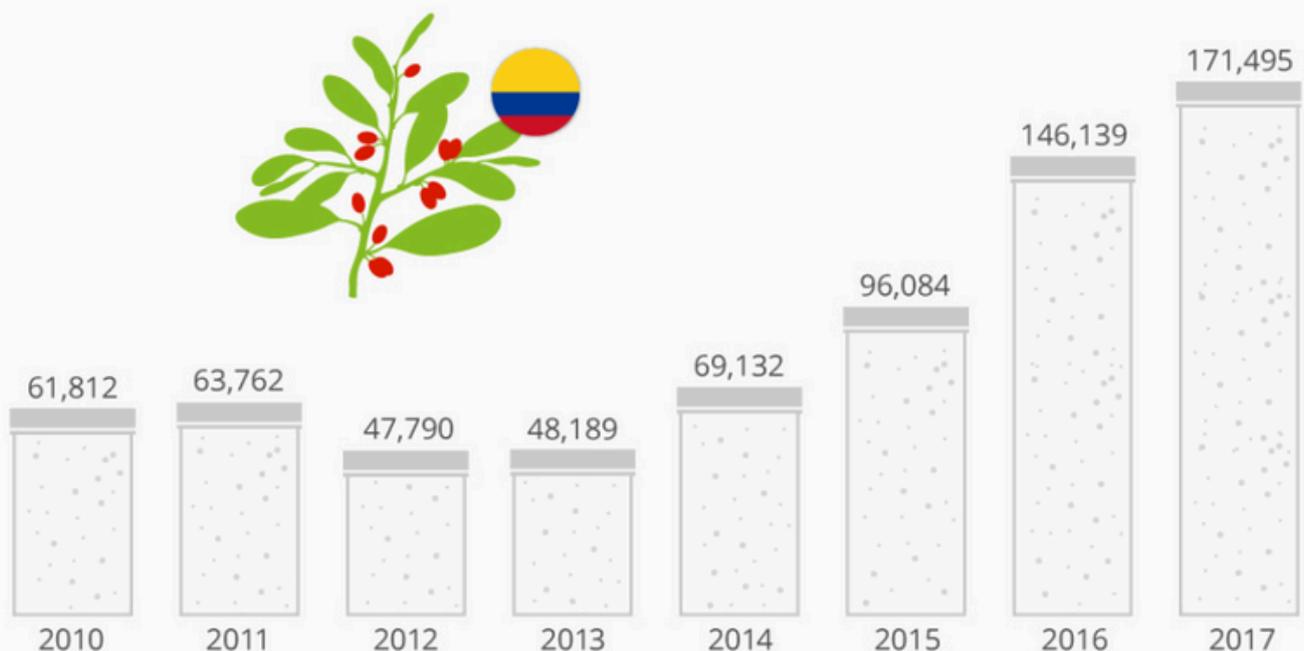
Colombia has long been a major source of global cocaine, producing around 60% of it in 2009, mainly in Nariño, Putumayo, and Norte de Santander. Powerful cartels like Medellín, Cali, and later Norte del Valle dominated trafficking in the 1980s–1990s, later fragmenting into smaller violent networks linked to paramilitary and guerrilla groups.

The FARC financed its insurgency through drug trafficking, controlling coca regions and taxing farmers. Plan Colombia (2000) reduced cultivation in some areas but displaced production and drew human rights criticism. Even after the 2016 peace accord, dissident FARC factions and the ELN continued trafficking, with coca cultivation reaching 171,000 hectares in 2017.

Colombia has partnered internationally on anti-narcotics efforts, including U.S. programs and joint operations with the DEA and European agencies, achieving major seizures like the 2019 12-ton cocaine bust in Belgium. Despite these efforts, traffickers continue to innovate, using narco-submarines and encrypted communications, making Colombia a key example of how drug-fueled crime affects domestic and global security.

## Colombian Coca Cultivation Hits Record Level

Net coca cultivation area in Colombia (hectares)



@StatistaCharts

Source: UNODC

# Topic A: Major Parties

## Iraq

Iraq has faced significant security challenges due to organised crime and illicit trade, particularly during the ISIS occupation from 2014 to 2017. These activities have had severe implications for national stability, economic security, and cultural heritage as ISIS systematically looted and destroyed Iraq's historical sites to fund its operations.

In 2015, militants filmed themselves smashing artifacts at the Mosul Museum, including statues dating back over 2,000 years, while simultaneously looting sites such as Nimrud and Hatra and selling stolen items on the black market. The United Nations reported that these activities generated significant revenue for ISIS, fueling further violence and destabilisation. Weapons trafficking has also been a major challenge, with small arms and light weapons smuggled into Iraq exacerbating armed violence and undermining state authority. In May 2015, Iraq's representative to the United Nations highlighted the illegal trade of weapons as a significant threat to national security.

In response, the Iraqi government, with international support, has strengthened border controls, improved customs inspections, and enhanced intelligence-sharing with neighboring countries to prevent the smuggling of illicit goods. International organisations have also provided technical assistance and training to help authorities track and recover stolen cultural property. Despite such measures, organised crime and illicit trade remain persistent threats, complicating Iraq's broader security and governance efforts.

# Topic A: Key Points to Debate

Here are some ideas which may be raised by delegates within their speeches or as topics discussed under a moderated caucus:

1. How can states balance national security measures with the protection of human rights when addressing organised crime and illicit trade?
2. Cooperation between neighboring countries is essential to disrupt cross-border trafficking of arms, drugs, and human beings.
3. Economic incentives for criminal networks, such as profits from smuggling, must be addressed through both legal enforcement and socio-economic development programs.
4. What strategies can be implemented to prevent extremist groups from using illicit trade as a source of funding?
5. Addressing the security implications of illicit trade requires a holistic approach that combines law enforcement, economic development, and cultural protection initiatives.
6. How can customs and border agencies worldwide use digital technologies to detect illicit trade while minimising disruption to legitimate commerce?
7. How can international cooperation ensure that anti-trafficking operations do not disproportionately harm vulnerable populations in developing countries?
8. How can financial institutions be regulated to prevent transnational organised crime from laundering across borders?
9. What measures can be taken to prevent organised crime from undermining state institutions, governance, and public trust worldwide?

# Topic A: Future Possible Solutions

Efforts to address organised crime and illicit trade have historically centred on international cooperation. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention, 2000) and its protocols provided a legal framework for states to criminalise participation in organised groups, enhance extradition agreements, and strengthen judicial cooperation (UNODC, 2000). Similarly, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has led efforts to combat money laundering and terrorism financing through binding recommendations, while INTERPOL-led operations such as Operation Lionfish have demonstrated the potential of coordinated enforcement against trafficking networks. Moving forward, delegates may consider expanding these past actions by strengthening cybercrime-specific agreements, given the increasing use of cryptocurrencies for money laundering. Proposals and resolutions could also include the creation of a global tracking system for illicit supply chains, leveraging blockchain technology to detect counterfeit products and illegal shipments. On a regional level, greater support could be given to capacity-building initiatives in fragile states, particularly in the Sahel and Central America, where weak institutions leave space for criminal groups to flourish.

Finally, innovative approaches such as public-private partnerships with logistics and tech companies could close gaps in monitoring online trade and shipping routes. Combining these preventive strategies with stronger enforcement and development-focused measures offers the best chance of mitigating the long-term security risks posed by organised crime and illicit trade.

Nevertheless, delegates are reminded that the proposals brought up and perspectives held throughout the debate sessions must align with those of their respective countries. Hence, they must attempt to eliminate all personal input when making decisions within this General Assembly, MUN committee.

# Topic A: Bibliography

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# Topic B: Introduction to the Topic

Historically, the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union has been the greatest military build-up until now, leading to an arms race between both sides. Whilst the Cold War ended in the early 1990s, the effects of the relations caused by it can still be seen around the world. For example, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 resembled Cold War style across the globe, especially in NATO, where NATO countries, especially Baltic countries, the UK, Germany and France, are focusing on ramping defence spending up to 5%.

In Asia, the delicate relations between India and Pakistan have recently been a cause of concern, especially as both countries have access to nuclear weapons (India with an access of 180 nuclear warheads, and Pakistan 170). Recently (in early May of 2025), India and Pakistan have had a four day military conflict, resulting in the death of around 26 lives. This has further raised tension in the area. Similarly, ongoing tensions can be seen in the Korean Peninsula, where North Korea has fired short-range ballistic missiles near South Korean waters. Furthermore, similar ongoing tensions between China and Taiwan are present, with China also firing missiles into international waters near Taiwan's waters, and Taiwan's sovereign airspace.

In the Middle East, most recently, tensions keep on rising, and new events happen every day, which further grow the instability. Iran's nuclear programme, viewed with suspicion by western powers and regional powers like Israel, have made many countries suspicious, and even worried, with Israel taking military action in Iran's sovereign territory. Moreover, the Israel-Palestine conflict (even if it isn't a conventional arms race), still includes the heavy use of military hardware being traded around the world, primarily given by the United States.

Unlike during the Cold War, modern arms races don't always include traditional global superpowers; Countries like North Korea, Iran, or Israel are the center of this new modern military build up, yet not being considered superpowers.

We are living in a time where global arms races are present all around the world, not only from global superpowers, such as NATO, but also from other countries like North Korea. The General Assembly calls upon international collaboration to address such a relevant issue across the world. We urge all delegations present to collaborate. We hope major parties are able to lead the assembly and lead delegations to find a common ground. These include: The United States, Russia, China, Iran, Israel, France. (More on these further down)

With the number of challenges across the planet, from Israel's attacks on Iran's nuclear developing bases, to rising spending costs in NATO, to conflicts between two countries that have nuclear warheads (India and Pakistan), this General Assembly urges all to agree on a resolution to solve the threat of the global arms race and its effect on international peace.

# Topic B: Key Terms

## **Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD):**

A doctrine where two nuclear-armed states deter each other from attacking by ensuring total annihilation of both.

## **Arms race:**

A pattern of competitive acquisition of military capability between two or more countries.

## **Proxy Wars:**

A war instigated by a third party which does not get involved itself in it.

## **Extended deterrence:**

When a nuclear state promises to defend an ally with nuclear weapons if said country feels threatened. (i.e the US with Japan or South Korea).

## **Deterrence theory:**

The theory that by having nuclear weapons they are able to discourage other countries to attack them in fear of retaliation.

## **Cold War:**

A state of political hostility between countries characterized by threats, propaganda, and other measures short of open warfare, often leading to arms races (the most recent and significant one being between the USSR and the USA between 1947 and 1991).

## **The security dilemma:**

Is when a state's efforts at increasing its own military security may inadvertently lead other countries to feel threatened and insecure, leading to them also increasing their military spending, which eventually may lead to an arms race.

## **The Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM):**

A 1972 agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union aimed at limiting the development and deployment of missile defense systems capable of intercepting strategic ballistic missiles.

# Topic B: Context and Current issues

Historically, the most relevant arms race that still continues to be relevant today, and continues to shape today's relations has been the Cold War between the United States and the USSR (now dissolved.)

During the Cold War, the arms race between the two superpowers raised a lot of safety concerns, especially as both superpowers had hold of nuclear weapons (the US acquired them in 1945, and the USSR in 1949). During this period, the superpowers had many instances where they were extremely close to engaging in a nuclear war; the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, considered as the closest they have ever been to a nuclear war.

This led to both superpowers taking on treaties to avoid any possible future confrontations, especially under nuclear weapon's threats. Some of these include: the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks I (SALT I) of 1972, SALT II of 1979, The Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) of 1972, and more.

However, whilst the Cold War ended in 1991, the arms race it created never really disappeared completely, rather, it evolved. Many of the same dynamics experienced during the Cold War can still be seen around the globe today.

In the middle east, Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons triggered a reaction in the west. Israel also saw Iran's possible possession of nuclear warheads as a direct threat to its security (The security dilemma). Iran still claims this programme was only to guarantee safety for itself (The deterrence theory). Ironically, Israel itself is believed to also be in possession of nuclear warheads, with more being developed. This arms race between both countries has created a tense atmosphere in the middle east, where Israel has taken actions into bombing these Iranian facilities, in an attempt to slow down Iran's progress

This strategy on Israel's behalf, (to be superior in terms of military strength to any other country in the region) is the same as Cold War logic, where each of the superpowers tried to sabotage each other to be the strongest country,

Outside the middle east, in Europe, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has alerted NATO-member countries. Under the US's pressure, during the NATO Summit in the Hague, all countries (except Spain) have agreed to spending a total of 5% of their GDP on military spending. This drastic increase in spending further proves how the military buildup across the globe is being reignited.

In Asia, China's aggressive military expansion and controversial territorial claims in Taiwan and the South China sea have further escalated tensions in the region. This tension has further raised concerns for a possible arms race in the Indo-Pacific, as China prepares for military action, and other countries in the Indo-Pacific, like Taiwan, prepare for it.

Lastly, also in Asia, another clear example of a modern arms race is in the Korean peninsula. North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests, developed ICBMs and hypersonic missiles, and in 2025 alone launched over 30 missiles, while simulating a nuclear strike on Seoul in military drills. In response, South Korea has increased its defence spending to over \$52 billion, developed the Korean Three-Axis system (including missile interception and pre-emptive strike capabilities), and expanded its cooperation with the U.S. and Japan.

The General Assembly urges all delegations to find a solution to the threatening issue of arms races on international peace.

# Topic B: Timeline

## Timeline

1945:

The US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It also became the first nuclear power.

1949:

The USSR tests its first nuclear bomb leading to the start of the nuclear arms race.

1962:

The Cuban Missile Crisis brings the US and USSR to the brink of nuclear war.

1972:

SALT I & ABM Treaty signed between US and USSR to limit nuclear arms and missile defence systems.

1979:

SALT II was signed

1991:

The USSR is dissolved. START I signed, marking the first actual reduction of US and Russian nuclear arsenals.

2002:

The US withdraws from the ABM Treaty, serving as a shift in Russian defence strategy.

2019:

Intermediate Range nuclear forces Treaty (INF) collapses after the US accuses Russia of violating it; both sides withdraw.

2022:

Russia invades Ukraine which triggers rapid military build-up across NATO and Eastern Europe.

2023–2025:

North Korea increases missile testing, simulates nuclear strikes against South Korea, and supplies arms to Russia for the war in Ukraine

2025:

All NATO members (except Spain) agree to spend 5% of GDP on defence by 2035 in the recent NATO summit in the Hague, setting a new era of global military expansion.

# Topic B: Key Points to Debate

Due to the controversial situations regarding arms races and military buildup across the world, several issues are likely to arise during the debate. This section is to address the key points to debate in order to find a common ground regarding international peace:

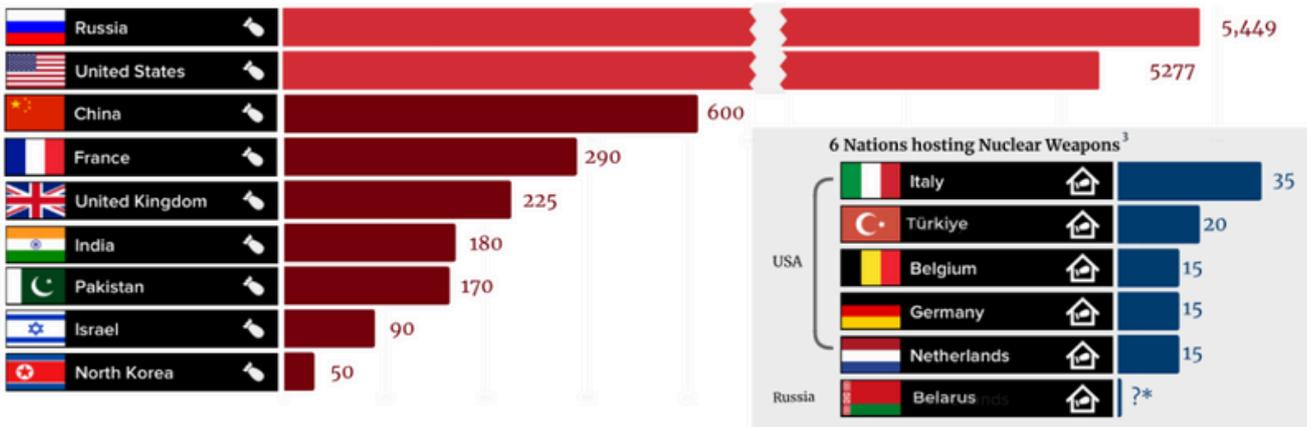
- Should nations be punished for trying to build their own military for their own defence?
- Should other nations be allowed to intervene in other country's military progress if they feel threatened by them?
- Should NATO's 5% GDP spending be implemented all around the world?
- Is an increase in military spending justified for defence to security threats or just an escalation risk?
- Should the international community intervene in regional arms races?
- Should nuclear-armed countries be held to stricter international regulations agreed upon by the General Assembly?
- Are treaties preventing escalation in arms races (i.e during the Cold War) viable today?
- Was Israel in the right to bomb Iranian nuclear weapon development facilities?
- Has the US contributed more to global stability through deterrence, or has its arms industry worsened the arms race?
- Should the US be held accountable for exporting weapons to other conflict zones fueling instability (i.e Palestine - Israel conflict)
- Has Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to more global instability by fueling an arms race?
- Should Russia be sanctioned further with arms restrictions for threatening to use nuclear weapons and arms transfers with North Korea?
- Is China's rapid military expansions in the South China Sea a necessity or just a source of instability in the region?
- Is Iran really developing nuclear weapons for its own defence or to have greater power in the region and have more power in deciding the outcome of the Israel - Palestine conflict?
- Is North Korea's arms support in Russia a tactic to be more international or a violation of international law?
- Is the foreign militarisation of Africa (e.g. US, China, Russia, Turkey, France establishing bases or arms deals) a form of neo-colonialism?
- Are the arms races happening among the African states (i.e. between Morocco and Algeria) being ignored by the international community because they don't involve nuclear weapons?
- Should arms exports to authoritarian regimes be banned?

# Topic B: Major Parties

## The United States

The United States, being THE largest military spender in the world, with a budget of around 886\$ billion (according to SIPRI), cannot be missing in this list. They are the second country with the most nuclear warheads (with 5277 according to ICAN), and lead global arms exports in the world, accounting for around 40% of all international arms transfers (SIPRI). The US has withdrawn from treaties such as the ABM and the INF treaty. Moreover, the US has an extremely important country in NATO, with them (under president Trump) being the largest advocate for a 5% GDP military spending within NATO.

### 12,331 warheads in the world<sup>1</sup>



### 1 nuclear weapon detonated over NYC would cause 583160 estimated fatalities<sup>2</sup>

1. Federation of American Scientists, 2025    2. NUKEMAP    3. Federation of American Scientists, 2022    \*unknown amount as of June 2023

## China

China has recently expanded their military capabilities extremely quickly, with its defense budget reaching around 296\$ billion in 2024 (SIPRI). This therefore makes them the second largest country in military spending.

### The Countries With the Highest Military Expenditure

Total military expenditure by country in 2021



# Topic B: Major Parties

Moreover, they possess around 600 nuclear warheads, with projections of reaching 1000 by 2030 (according to a Pentagon report in 2030). China is also advancing in hypersonic weapons, anti-satellite missiles, and AI-enabled warfare, and its activities in the South China Sea and military modernisation have increased regional tensions, particularly with the US, India, and Taiwan.

## Russia

Russia is the largest nuclear power in the world, with 5449 nuclear warheads as of 2024 according to ICAN. Since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, they have increasingly relied on the nuclear weapons rhetoric, which involves threatening the use of them. Furthermore, their full scale invasion of Ukraine has sparked other countries to start increasing their defence budget, most noticeably in NATO, where nearly all countries agreed on a 5% GDP military defense spending due to the increased threat Russia poses. Its withdrawal from New START inspections in 2023 and increased military ties with North Korea and Iran (UN Panel of Experts, 2024) have raised fears of another arms race. Russia is also a major arms exporter, especially to authoritarian states, and its use of hypersonic missiles and drones in Ukraine proves its recent technological development in war.

## Israel

Despite never having really confirmed if they have nuclear weapons, intelligence systems around the world have deduced that they are in possession of around 80 - 90 nuclear warheads. It is the strongest country in the region in Cyberware, missile defense, and air superiority. Moreover, due to the security dilemma, they routinely strike Iran's territory. It is argued that Israel's conflict with Palestine has sped up an arms race in the middle east, with many countries such as Iran, developing more weapons in order to "defend themselves".

## Iran

Even though Iran isn't a nuclear power, the reason it is a major party is because it's extremely relevant to the arms race, and its recent ballistic missile programme bombed by Israel is proof of how an arms race destabilises a region. Furthermore, Iran supports military groups in the region (i.e. Hezbollah, Houthis), by supplying weapons and military aid. Additionally, they have supplied weapons to Russia to use in the war against Ukraine, another example of proxy wars (according to the US's Department of Defense). They are considered as a major party as they are direct proof of the instability caused by military buildup, and a perfect example of the security dilemma.

## France

Due to Brexit, France remains the only country in the European Union to have nuclear weapons in their possession. This makes France one of the most important countries in the EU. They currently have around 290 nuclear warheads in their possession, making them the fourth largest in the world. France is currently the largest voice in the EU regarding the arms race, even offering to lend their nuclear weapons to other countries in Europe. Furthermore, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a key NATO member, France serves as an extremely important and influential country. Moreover, it plays a role in arms exports to countries in Africa, especially northern Africa, which is also fueling the often ignored arms race there.

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