



## China's Increasing Arms Supply to the Middle East and Beyond: Another Dimension to the New Silk Road?



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China has been expanding its arms export beyond Asia and for the last half a decade, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have become its favourite destinations. From the region's side, China is emerging as the second-best choice for arms imports after the US. Furthermore, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has added a new dimension to the existing global arms industry with an anticipated boost to China's overall arms diplomacy particularly in the Middle East.

Russia's continued military indulgence vis-à-vis Ukraine will have a negative impact on its arms export and there are three underlying reasons for this decline. *One*, Moscow's foreseeable diplomatic isolation will constrain its arms outreach to its trading partners. *Two*, future economic constraints are likely to dent

### Key Points

- China's ascendance to fourth position in global arms exports during 2017-21 indicates that its global outreach in weapon's platform sales has increased significantly and out of the 112 countries, China is already catering to 53.
- Changing international and regional geopolitical dynamics, China's increasing strategic outreach and the US's seemingly decreasing influence in the region has fetched Beijing the second-best position in arms sales for the Middle East.
- Russia's continued military indulgence vis-à-vis Ukraine is likely to provide a further boost to China's value market arms sales in 2022-26.
- China's successful endeavor in building Digital and Health Silk Road and its increasing arms sales to the Middle East and beyond suggests that there is a possibility of China building an Arms Silk Road akin to its previous two ventures.
- Signing of Arms Trade Treaty is unlikely to affect China's increasing global arms sales. On the contrary, Beijing is likely to use the treaty to its advantage.
- China's White Paper on Arms Export Controls released in December 2021 justifies Beijing's role as an equaliser between developed and developing nation's ability to procure technologically advanced weapon systems.



the Russian Military Industrial Complex. Notably, on 07 September 2022, —almost after seven months of the Russia-Ukraine war, Russian President Vladimir Putin himself stated that his country's economy will decline by 2-2.5 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Finally, a possible international arms embargo is likely to affect Moscow's arms supply capability. This will severely dent Russia's image as a major 'value market'<sup>2</sup> player.<sup>3</sup>

In the likelihood of such a scenario, China, another emerging value market player and fourth largest arms exporter (contributing 4.6 per cent of the global share), is likely to serve as the next best option, given that out of the 112 countries adhering to the 'value market' imports, Beijing is already supplying arms to 53 such nations.<sup>4</sup> Price points, industrial capacity along with willingness to expand its consumer base, are the biggest selling points of Chinese weapon's market. The East Asian nation has been exporting weapons to its customers at competitive rates, on both hardware and maintenance costs, with the potential option of upgrading its weapon system, thus, making it a desirable value market arms supplier.

While it is the US and not Russia that stands out to be the largest arms supplier to the Middle East and accounts for 43 per cent of its total arms exports<sup>5</sup>, however, congressional obstacles have limited Washington's ability to export US-made weapons to some countries in the Middle East especially the ones embroiled in civil and proxy wars. At the same time, China has been exporting armed drones to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan since 2020. Surprisingly, despite China joining the UN-led Arms Trade Treaty in July 2020, these armed drones has been found to be allegedly used in Libya and Yemen by the Houthi rebels.<sup>6</sup> As per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), during 2017-21 period, China's exports to Saudi Arabia and the UAE increased by 290 per cent and 77 per cent respectively, as compared to the previous period of 2016-20.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is safe to say that, once again, China rises to the occasion. In short, while Beijing itself aims at arms export supremacy, prospective limitations on Washington and Moscow have further enabled and maximised Chinese arms export capabilities.

China's ascendance to fourth position during 2017-21 time period, from fifth rank in 2016-20, indicates that its global share in arms export have increased significantly over other exporting countries. This change in position is also reflective of the East Asian economy's increasing weapon's platform outreach— from 40 countries to 53, over a span of one decade

from 2010 to 2019.<sup>8</sup> To simplify, in a matter of 10 years, China expanded its weapon's market to cater to an additional list of 13 nations.

Thus, China's increasing defence exports to the Middle East and beyond, its dual usage of maritime and land complements of its New Silk Road, through superimposition of its outreach activities, and its diplomatic & political overtures in playing the role of an equaliser between developed and developing nations, in terms of arms procurement, thereby justifies its increasing mid-end and low-end value market weapon platforms to developing nations.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, it is very much likely that China will eventually utilise multilateral forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and BRICS (acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and various others to enhance its arms sale. The application and prospective inclusion of West Asian, African and certain Latin American countries, to these organisations, hints towards such a possibility.<sup>10</sup> Major Middle Eastern countries' 'Look East' Policy also conforms to their willingness to join the Eastern brigade despite alliance with the US. The *Realpolitik* dictating International Relations, in current times, provide countries with the option of 'strategic hedging' which is useful in applying a balancing act towards enhancing engagements with the East and West.

With regard to West Asia/Middle East, given that China's 'marching westward' policy aligns with its global infrastructure development strategy— the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has been marking its strategic footprint into the West Asian Region and beyond specifically since 2013. While the region is already integrated in China's prospective fourth and fifth island chains, through maritime Silk Road in the Indian Ocean Region, the sea route component of BRI<sup>11</sup>, and the land component is being integrated through digital and health dimensions of Beijing's New Silk Road.<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that, although, overtly, China's global infrastructural development strategy is 'trade and economy related', however covertly it is aimed at global supremacy and is in sync with the Dragon's expansionist and neo-colonial policies.

### **New Silk Road: Maritime and Land Complements**

Maritime Silk Road (MSR), the maritime complement to the Silk Road Economic Belt or the much-known BRI, as a concept was unveiled in 2013 as a 'development strategy' to boost



infrastructural connectivity throughout Southeast Asia, Oceania, the Indian Ocean and East Africa. Through the MSR, China has been investing in port development along the Indian and Pacific Oceans. While the real intention behind these port developments is open to speculations, the intensity and frequency with which China is developing them has compelled some scholars to believe that economic and trade usage notwithstanding, the East Asian dragon will be using some of these ports as its military bases in the near future. The US intelligence, in December 2021, reported that Chinese overtures in building its first military base in Equatorial Guinea on Africa's Atlantic Coast.<sup>13</sup>

It is noteworthy that between 2015 and 2022, China have leased ownership of as many as 10 ports (**see Table 1**). Apart from these ports, China has been building seven more ports which are strategically significant, and serves as economic and political outposts for its expansionist approach. The Karachi Deepwater Port in Pakistan, Sokhna port in Egypt, CICT Terminal in Sri Lanka, Chittagong and Payra Ports in Bangladesh, CSP Terminal, Khalifa Port in the UAE, Sudan Port, Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam Ports in Tanzania, and Lamu & Mombasa ports in Kenya, are some of the other ports developed by Chinese firms. As most of these ports are funded by Chinese state-owned enterprises, economic ambitions notwithstanding, what is China gaining beyond economic dimensions needs to be investigated in further detail. China Communications Construction Company, China Harbour Engineering Company, China State Construction Engineering Corporation, China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), China Overseas Ports Holding Company, China Merchants Port Holding, and China Power, are leading port development enterprises owned by the Chinese State.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 1: Chinese Sea Port Ownership**

Year	Region	Host State	Port	Lease Period (years)
2014	Tasman Sea	Australia	New Castle	98
2015	Indian Ocean	Pakistan	Gwadar	40
2015	Indian Ocean	Myanmar	Kyaukpyu	50
2015	South China Sea	Malaysia	Kuantan	60
2015	Beagle Gulf, Timor Sea	Australia	Darwin	99
2016	Indian Ocean	Djibouti	Obock	10
2016	South China Sea	Malaysia	Malacca Gateway	99
2017	Indian Ocean	Sri Lanka	Hambantota	99
2017	South China Sea	Brunei	Murara	60
2017	Indian Ocean	Maldives	Feydhoo Finolhu	50

*Source: Adapted from SIPRI-Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), 2018.<sup>15</sup>*

As mentioned earlier, Chinese port building measures are in congruence with its ambitious plan to create military bases on the islands to monitor the activities of its competitors and adversaries and to expand its area of influence. However, assessing Chinese style, it is apparent that military bases, built by China, will be used for dual purposes and will not be following the conventional style.

Of the total ports constructed by Chinese enterprises, majority lies in the Western Indian Ocean which encompasses Middle East and Africa. Similarly, of the major strategic chokepoints along the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), namely, Mozambique Channel, the Babel Mandeb, the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, the Malacca Straits, the Sunda Strait, and the Lombok Strait, majority lies in the Western flank of the Ocean. To further elaborate, it is already in the public domain, that to guard these ports and chokepoints, China has been employing its private maritime security companies.<sup>16</sup> Notably, such a practice is in line with China's active defence approach and clearly suggests that in times to come, to safeguard its overseas interests, Chinese flow of arms to these regions will exponentially increase.

While the maritime complement of the New Silk Road provides China the justification to increase its arms sale, the land component has already been explored by Beijing for digital and health outreach. Therefore, the possibility of an Arms Silk Road is only an addition to the existing Chinese Dream— to expand its sphere of influence beyond its borders.

The Digital Silk Road (DSR), launched in 2015, became a massive investment project and in just three years, that is, by 2018, China invested US\$79 billion in overseas digital infrastructure development. To provide impetus to an all-encompassing infrastructural development, Beijing has pledged to invest US\$1.1 trillion.<sup>17</sup> While officially China have signed DSR cooperation agreements with 16 countries, primarily in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), however, the actual number of agreements might be much larger as envisaged by some scholars. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, as many as five countries viz. Angola, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe are direct beneficiaries of US\$8.43 billion DSR investments.<sup>18</sup> It is believed that Beijing's investment in DSR will be extended to include MENA, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin American and Eastern European countries.

The importance of MENA, in China's digital strategy, was starkly noticed during the World Internet Conference held in Wuzhen in December 2017 wherein Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt agreed to cooperate with China by expanding their broadband access.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, some observers believe that China's DSR is 'an ambitious vision to catalyse global digitalization'; while others worry that China will equip the authoritarian regimes with these next-generation surveillance technologies.<sup>20</sup> All said and done, China has made a digital outreach to the MENA through its massive DSR investments.

China's proposal and justification of channelising a Health Silk Road (HSR) initiative is rather interesting. Almost three years before the global pandemic— COVID-19, engulfed the entire world, in August 2017, Beijing's Xi Jinping had proposed for a HSR. On 18 August 2017, World Health Organization's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus presented the case of China in a speech titled "Towards a Health Silk Road" wherein he outlined the need, usage and to 'seize the opportunity' provided by BRI to propagate health initiatives especially in war-torn countries.<sup>21</sup> The WHO signed an MoU with China and cleared latter's proposal on grounds that it fulfilled three important criteria which were actually more of a rhetoric<sup>22</sup>, namely, to thwart outbreaks at their source to prevent them from becoming epidemics; health, being a human right, should be made accessible and cheaper; and that women, children and adolescents must be at the centre of global health and development therefore availability of universal health coverage. According to the WHO Director-General, "this is well represented in your [China's] documents on Belt and Road".<sup>23</sup> The MoU signed



between WHO and China legitimised the HSR and became one of the reasons for Director-General Tedros's getting into the radar for being pro-China once the pandemic broke.

Hence, by legitimising its move through WHO, China has been able to channel an innovative way to leverage on the pandemic adversity and further boosted its pandemic economics. The HSR became a vital component of China's medical diplomacy with the countries under the BRI. Given the extent of health crisis, countries under the BRI seemingly cooperated with the HSR as some Chinese ports and hubs were used to supply medical support and thus facilitated access to critical medical and vaccine supplies to remote areas. Needless to mention, the breaking of the pandemic not only kickstarted the corridor but also enabled China to test its HSR hypothesis and it has been successful in doing so.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, it is notable that China has a history of legitimising its business proposals by involving international organisations and then portraying itself as a 'saviour and messiah' for developing countries. Similarly, the more China's arms sales to the Middle East and beyond increases, the more it will become easy for Beijing to legitimise its move by kindred tactics as mentioned above.

### **Is there a Possibility of An Arms Silk Road?**

While MENA countries, especially the Gulf, are employing strategic manoeuvring amid US-China rivalry and are buying arms and munitions from both in order to reduce their over-dependence on US—China have tremendously increased its weapons outreach in the region. Even though its share of global arms export have decreased by 1.8 per cent— from 6.4 per cent (during 2012-2016) to 4.6 per cent in 2017-21, still Beijing continues to be the fourth largest arms supplier in the world after the US (39 per cent), Russia (19 per cent), and France (11 per cent).<sup>25</sup> With the estimated fall in Russian exports, given the probable arms embargo and Moscow's indulgence with Ukraine, Chinese sales are expected to increase in the next time period of 2022-26.

If that be the case, how is China legitimising its increasing sales given that the world has been wary of its BRI project, and the fact that Beijing did not take due responsibility for COVID-19 outbreak in duly warning the countries about the pandemic, has put a question mark on it being a 'responsible actor'. To address these concerns and to legitimise its sale of

arms, in June 2020, the East Asian economy not only signed the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)<sup>26</sup> and became 107<sup>th</sup> country to do so, but also ratified it. China's commitment to the Treaty was enforced a month after its ratification, that is, in July 2020. By signing the UN-adopted treaty, Beijing conforms and is compliant to the contents advocated by the ATT, most notable being, pledging to not supply weapon systems to non-state actors.<sup>27</sup>

While, on one hand, China ascertains its claim of a 'responsible actor' by signing the ATT, but on the other, it criticised the US for not ratifying the treaty, thereby, continuing to supply weapons to non-state actors in an indirect form<sup>28</sup>— a criticism that the US Administration has already been facing from its Congress. In January 2021, the US' Bureau of Political-Military Affairs working, under the aegis of US Department of State, released a factsheet on "US Arms Sales and Defense Trade", which mentioned of controlling the access of US origin defence technologies by hostile states and non-state actors. It further elaborated that, foreign entities procuring US defence products, will have to seek Washington's permission for any re-transfer, for disposing off or for different usage not specified in the transfer agreement and should maintain the security of items with the same degree of protection provided by the US government.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, while China criticises the US for not conforming to the re-transfer of arms to non-state actors, its own weapon systems especially the assembled products, have allegedly been used by non-state actors. To reiterate, Beijing primarily deals with low-end or mid-end value market products and prefers trade in arm components and parts, rather than selling an entire assembled weapon. This creates certain ambiguity and does not ascertain that the arm component sold by China will not be re-transferred. Advancement and proliferation of dual use technologies have also enabled its easy access and conversion to lethal autonomous weapon systems by non-actors.<sup>30</sup> Given such a scenario, Chinese-made and part assembled arms can be easily converted into lethal weapons, thus acting as a caveat to ATT regulation on direct supply to non-state actors. To substantiate, few weapon systems used by the Houthi rebels in Yemen, such as RPG-7, C-801 and C-802, were allegedly China-made.<sup>31</sup>

While RPG-7, an unguided, shoulder-fired rocket-propelled grenade launcher, was developed by Soviet Union in 1950s, it was also manufactured by Iran, China and Slovakia,



since its inception. Likewise, both C-801 and C-802 anti-ship missiles, were developed by China in 1970s and 1980s and as per SIPRI report, the Yemen Government had bought around 25 C-801 missiles in 1995— much before the ongoing civil war.<sup>32</sup> While there are several speculations on how the Houthis may have acquired this system, the most notable ones are, through indigenous inventories, captured from Yemeni forces or through Iran. Given Iran-China bonhomie, China's indirect supplies to the rebels seem like a possibility.<sup>33</sup> If that is the case, then China signing and ratifying the ATT does not make much of a difference as far as re-transfer of arms trade is concerned. Advertently, it only favours China's claim of no involvement in such activities. Thus, further legitimising Beijing's increased sale of arms and its proliferation in the global market.

While ATT legalises Beijing's increasing sale of arms, in December 2021, the Ministry of Commerce of China (MOFCOM) released its first Export Control White Paper. Simultaneously, it launched a "China Export Control Information" website. Interestingly, the White Paper lays greater emphasis on criticising the abuse of discriminative, unilateral export controls and the "building of export control small circles in the name of multilateralism".<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, it mentions that the country's export control regime is unlikely to become expansive and equivalent to that of United States. To quote, the White Paper mentions that:

...China advocates increased representation for emerging markets and developing countries in international coordination on export controls, to promote equal rights, opportunities and rules for all in international cooperation. This will reflect the wishes and interests of the majority in a more balanced manner, and help to build an international environment of peace and stability, equality and mutual trust, and win-win cooperation.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, by again portraying itself as a protector of the developing countries and a country that believes in balance of power and equality in terms of access of arms, China seemingly plans to equip such countries in the name of safeguarding their sovereign territories, from big power encroachment, by increasing its arms sale in the value market. Therefore, it's signing of ATT in July 2020 and release of its Export Control White Paper in December 2021, seems to add a new dimension to the existing New Silk Route which is already catering towards health and medical supplies, digital networking and maritime connectivity.

To conclude, while Beijing's overall increase in arms trade and its targeted outreach to the Middle East and beyond in terms of arms supplies, provides ample indication that the country is aiming towards raising its status as a leading arms exporter in the future, the changing global geostrategic environment and existing realities point towards China using its New Silk Road as a connectivity line to cater to the increasing demand. The Russia-Ukraine conflict is likely to dent Russian economy and the former's aggression will presumably lead to its diplomatic isolation, both of which are likely to provide a favourable environment to Chinese arms market. Additionally, maritime connectivity and building of Chinese ports in the Western Indian Ocean will further facilitate China's arms sale. Likewise, the fact that China has already tested the land component of its BRI by building Health Silk Road and Digital Silk Road, a possibility of an Arms Silk Road seems impending and in the offing.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Russian economy to decline by 2-2.5 per cent, says Vladimir Putin after 6 months of war in Ukraine", *Livemint*, 07 September 2022. Available at <https://www.livemint.com/news/russian-economy-to-decline-by-2-2-5-per-cent-says-president-vladimir-putin-11662541324566.html>. Accessed on 8 September 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Value Market is the small arms market which consists of low-end or mid-end arms with smaller transactional values of new and refurbished equipment. While the US dominates the high-end arms market, value market is the second emerging market which mainly consists of buyers from developing countries which are looking for better deals for a refurbished product. There are about 112 countries that are dependent on 'value market' to procure their defence products, India being one of them. Of these 112 countries, China caters to 53 of them. Russia is a major player in the 'value market', China is trailing, however, will be the next best option if there are Russian constraints on arms supplies.

<sup>3</sup> "Infographics: which countries buy the most Russian weapons", *Al Jazeera*, 09 March 2022. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/9/infographic-which-countries-buy-the-most-russian-weapons>. Accessed on 30 August 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Maryann Xue, "China's arms trade: which countries does it buy from and sell to?", *South China Morning Post*, 04 July 2021. Available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3139603/how-china-grew-buyer-major-arms-trade-player>. Accessed on 30 August 2022.

<sup>5</sup> "SIPRI Yearbook 2022: Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security", *SIPRI*, 2022, pp. 1-28. Available at [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/yb22\\_summary\\_en\\_v3.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/yb22_summary_en_v3.pdf). Accessed on 30 August 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Seima Oki, "China increasing arms exports to Middle East and Eastern Europe", *Asia News Network*, 05 May 2022. Available at <https://asianews.network/china-increasing-arms-exports-to-middle-east-and-eastern-europe/>. Accessed on 30 August 2022.

<sup>7</sup> N.5.

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<sup>8</sup> N.4.

<sup>9</sup>In its December 2021 released White Paper document on Export Controls, China seemingly argues in favour of developing countries need to procure weapons for self-defence against larger and developed nations. It also sides with the developing nations requirements of such weapons in a bid to be at par or near par with the developed nations.

<sup>10</sup>Manjari Singh, "Iran's Membership in the SCO and what it entails?", *CLAWS Web Article*, 15 September 2022. Available at <https://www.claws.in/irans-membership-to-the-sco-and-what-it-entails/>. Accessed on 16 September 2022.

<sup>11</sup>Srikanth Kondapalli, "China's Evolving Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean Region: An Indian Perspective" in David Brewster (Ed.), *India and China at Sea: Competition for Naval Domination in the Indian Ocean*, (London: Oxford University Press), 2018, pp. 111-124; See also: Michael J Green, "China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region", *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 02 April 2018. Available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-maritime-silk-road>, Accessed on 30 August 2022.

<sup>12</sup>Kirk Lancaster, Michael Rubin and Mira Rap-Hooper, "Mapping China's Health Silk Road", *Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)*, 10 April 2020. Available at <https://www.cfr.org/blog/mapping-chinas-health-silk-road>. Accessed on 30 August 2022; See also: John Calabrese, "China's Health Silk Road and the BRI Agenda in the Middle East", *Middle East Institute*, 11 January 2022. Available at <https://www.mei.edu/publications/chinas-health-silk-road-and-bri-agenda-middle-east>. Accessed on 30 August 2022.

<sup>13</sup>Michael MPhilips, "China Seeks First Military Base on Africa's Atlantic Coast, U.S. Intelligence Finds", *The Wall Street Journal*, 05 December 2021. Available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-seeks-first-military-base-on-africas-atlantic-coast-u-s-intelligence-finds-11638726327>. Accessed on 30 August 2022.

<sup>14</sup>China Government Documents and Websites. Available at <http://www.gov.cn/>. Accessed on 14 September 2022.

<sup>15</sup>Richard Ghiasy, Fei Su and Lora Saalman, "The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road: Security Implications and Way Forward for the European Union", *SIPRI-FES Report*, 2018. Available at <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/the-21st-century-maritime-silk-road.pdf>. Accessed on 14 September 2022.

<sup>16</sup>Veerle Nouwens, "Who Guards the 'Maritime Silk Road'?", *War on the Rocks*, 24 June 2020. Available at <https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/who-guards-the-maritime-silk-road/>. Accessed on 15 September 2022; See also: Alessandro Arduino, "China's Private Army: Protecting the New Silk Road", *The Diplomat*, 20 March 2018. Available at <https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/chinas-private-army-protecting-the-new-silk-road/>. Accessed on 15 September 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Tom Hancock, "How China plans to spend \$1 trn on infrastructure to boost economy", *Business Standard*, 22 August 2022. Available at [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/how-china-plans-to-spend-1-trn-on-infrastructure-to-boost-economy-122082600185\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/how-china-plans-to-spend-1-trn-on-infrastructure-to-boost-economy-122082600185_1.html). Accessed on 17 September 2022.

<sup>18</sup>Steven Feldstein, "China's strategic aims in Africa", *US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC)*, 08 May 2020. Available at <https://www.uscc.gov/hearings/chinas-strategic-aims-africa>. Accessed on 17 September 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Sam Blatteis, “The Middle East’s Role in China’s Digital Silk Road”, *The MENA Catalyst*. Available at <https://themenacatalysts.com/the-middle-east-s-role-in-chinas-digital-silk-road/>. Accessed on 17 September 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, “China’s Digital Silk Road Initiative: A Boon for Developing Countries or a Danger to Freedom”, *The Diplomat*, 17 December 2020. Available at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/chinas-digital-silk-road-initiative-a-boon-for-developing-countries-or-a-danger-to-freedom/>. Accessed on 19 September 2022.

<sup>21</sup> WHO, “Towards a Health Silk Road”, *WHO Director-General’s Speech*, 18 August 2017. Available at <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/towards-a-health-silk-road>. Accessed on 19 September 2022.

<sup>22</sup> These three criterias are important to note as China is giving a similar rhetoric for arms sales by releasing a White Paper on Export Controls and by signing Arms Trade Treaty it is legitimising its sales.

<sup>23</sup> N. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Author’s interview to the Washingtonbased *The Epoch Times* newspaper. For details, see: Venus Upadhyaya, “China’s ‘Silk Road of Health’ Seeks Soft Power in South Asia, Experts Say”, *The Epoch Times*, 10 December 2020. Available at [https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-silk-road-of-health-builds-soft-power-in-south-asia-say-experts\\_3599986.html](https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-silk-road-of-health-builds-soft-power-in-south-asia-say-experts_3599986.html). Accessed on 20 September 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Pieter D Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova and Siemon T Wezeman, “Trends in International Arms Transfer, 2021”, *SIPRI Factsheet*, March 2021. Available at [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/fs\\_2203\\_at\\_2021.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/fs_2203_at_2021.pdf). Accessed on 20 September 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Enforced since 24 December 2014, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is an international treaty that regulates conventional arms international trade. It ensures and seeks to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of arms by establishing international norms, regulations and standards for governing arms transfers. As of now, the treaty has 112 signatories, however, 29 states including the US, have signed but not ratified it.

<sup>27</sup> Tamara Enomoto, “Controlling Arms Transfers to Non-State Actors: From the Emergence of the Sovereign-State System to the Present”, *History of Global Arms Transfer*, Vol. 3, 2017, pp. 3-20. Available at [http://www.isc.meiji.ac.jp/~transfer/paper/pdf/03/1\\_enomoto.pdf](http://www.isc.meiji.ac.jp/~transfer/paper/pdf/03/1_enomoto.pdf). Accessed on 20 September 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Michelle Nichols, “China slams US as it joins global arms trade treaty at UN”, *Reuters*, 07 July 2020. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-arms-idUSKBN24730S>. Accessed on 20 September 2022.

<sup>29</sup> US Department of State, “US Arms Sales and Defense Trade”, *Bureau of Political-Military Affairs*, 20 January 2021. Available at <https://www.state.gov/u-s-arms-sales-and-defense-trade/>. Accessed on 20 September 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Stuart Russell, “Why we need to regulate non-state use of arms”, *World Economic Forum (WEF)*, World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, 18 May 2022. Available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/05/regulate-non-state-use-arms/>. Accessed on 20 September 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Ian Williams and Shaan Shaikh, “Appendix: The Houthi Missile Arsenal”, in Ian Williams and Shaan Shaikh (ed.), *The Missile War in Yemen*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), pp. 34-52, 2020.

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[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep24837.15.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aa8d7ea92dbe8e53ba1dc882b677c9287&ab\\_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep24837.15.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aa8d7ea92dbe8e53ba1dc882b677c9287&ab_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1). Accessed on 20 September 2022.



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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> The State Council, “Full Text: China Export Controls”, *The People’s Republic of China (PRC)*, 29 December 2021. Available at

[https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202112/29/content\\_WS61cc01b8c6d09c94e48a2df0.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202112/29/content_WS61cc01b8c6d09c94e48a2df0.html).

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

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