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THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF LIGHT WEAPONS AVAILABILITY AND PROLIFERATION

by Christopher Louise

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March 1995

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◆ Preface

As part of its activities for the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, UNRISD commissioned a number of papers on problems of social integration. As countries confront the seemingly intractable problems of social conflicts, institutional breakdown and mass alienation, the topic of social integration has assumed increasing importance in public debate. This paper, by Christopher Louise, examines the social effects of the proliferation of light weapons on societies around the world. It identifies the factors and circumstances that are fuelling the growing trade and widespread use of small arms and explores the social consequences of the increasing availability of such weapons.

The number of countries experiencing major armed conflicts has escalated sharply in recent years. A distinctive feature of contemporary warfare is the extent to which the parties involved rely on light as opposed to heavy weaponry. The majority of conflicts in the world today are conflicts within states, involving "irregular" as well as "regular" armed forces, and in these types of conflicts major weapons systems are of less significance than light weapons. Yet the international community has remained relatively indifferent to the control of small arms and light weapons, concentrating instead on restraining the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

A particularly disturbing aspect of today's wars is the extent to which civilians are involved — both as victims and combatants. The reasons for this are varied and complex but, as this paper reveals, the situation has been fuelled by the rapid proliferation of increasingly deadly light weapons and the extreme ease with which people around the world can acquire them. In several developing countries, an AK-47 can be purchased for just a few dollars. In the United States, spare parts shops and mail-order magazines sell the components necessary to convert semi-automatic weapons into military-style fully automatic weapons.

The changed nature of contemporary warfare has contributed to a rethinking of traditional concepts of security. Ever since the collapse of communism, analysts, strategists and academics working in the field of international relations have been engaged in an intense dialogue concerning the shape and nature of the post-Cold War world. Within this dialogue the arms trade and its consequences are crucial for understanding the formation of environments that determine levels of security. More than ever before, the trade and use of light weapons have become associated with rising levels of violence and disintegrative trends, often involving ethnic conflict and crime, which threaten the fabrics of societies worldwide. In areas where violence is pervasive, the proliferation of light weapons and small arms accelerates societal dysfunction, political anarchy and the undermining of state authority.

Christopher Louise is a researcher at International Alert. The production of this paper was co-ordinated by Peter Utting. UNRISD research on conflict-related issues continues under the research programme **The Challenge of Rebuilding War-torn Societies**.

March 1995

Dharam Ghai
Director

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PART I:
INTRODUCTION

◆ Defining the Problem

The linkages between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, globalization and social disintegration have been greatly under-researched. The dearth of serious enquiry into these relationships is all the more significant because small arms and light weapons continue to be commonly used in many of the violent civil and ethnic conflicts of the post-Cold War era. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) documented 34 major armed conflicts (with casualties exceeding 1,000 persons) in 1993, all of which were being conducted mainly with light weapons and small arms. A number of these conflicts were also using major weapons systems.[1] While it is obvious that there is a correlation between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, societal violence and a general weakening of the social fabric, identifying the exact nature of this relationship in any one situation or universally is more problematic. In addition, too little is known about the international trade in these weapons and the true extent of societal militarization around the world.

Light weapon has been used as a generic term to describe all conventional munitions that can be carried by an individual combatant or by a light vehicle.[2] This includes small arms (defined below), bazookas, rocket propelled grenades, light anti-tank missiles, light mortars, shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles and hand placed landmines.[3] **Small arms** is a sub-category, consisting of automatic weapons up to 20 mm, including sub-machine guns, rifles, carbines and handguns.[4]

Most light weapons do not require complex training or expertise to operate — making them suitable for insurgents and irregular forces, which lack the formal infrastructure of a professional army. Furthermore, the specification of small arms is important in terms of military and non-military demand and usage of light weaponry. While organized groups, normally described in terms of their military activity, will use the whole range of light weapons, criminal and other non-military requirements have traditionally only involved small arms. But there is an increasing overlap between the two categories as both military and non-military materiel become more available. As this paper attempts to illustrate, the social impacts of light weapons proliferation are increasing and becoming more diverse.

The international community's relative indifference to the control of such weapons has been due, in part, to the concern generated by the continuing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems as well as major conventional weapons systems and technologies. By comparison, the worldwide transfer and sale of light weapons seems to be seen as peripheral to a stable international system. This is illustrated by the United Nations Arms Register, for example, which lists certain types of major

weapons systems under its transparency régime. In as much as weapons control régimes are aimed at mitigating tensions that could lead to conflict, there are a number of inconsistencies inherent in the current system. The international state system is increasingly being dominated by conflicts **within** sovereign territories, involving irregular as well as regular forces. In these types of conflicts, major weapons systems are of less significance than cheaper, more easily available and more numerous light weapons and small arms. Insurgent groups and paramilitary organizations have been able to utilize available light weaponry, much of which is based on technologies dating back to the Second World War, with devastating effect. Civilians have been the principal victims of these weapons.

This paper explores the systemic processes that have facilitated proliferation of light weapons and describes some of the impacts of this proliferation on particular societies. The available empirical and anecdotal evidence gives rise to two sets of observations. First, the proliferation and use of light weapons and small arms in societies around the world can be seen as symptomatic of deeper problems in the fabric of these societies. Therefore, the effects of this proliferation must also be sought in broader political, social and economic contexts. Second, it is apparent that the availability and use of these weapons affect the pace and direction of societal violence. In areas where structural violence is already severe, the proliferation of light weapons and small arms accelerates societal dysfunction, political anarchy and the undermining of state authority. It is also apparent that even where the overall framework of state authority is not challenged, the proliferation of arms exacerbates deep social problems and widens domestic fissures.

PART II: GLOBALIZATION AND MILITARIZATION

◆ The Changing Roots of Conflict: Globalization and Localized Violence[5]

The past fifty years have been marked by contradictory social and political trends at the global level. On the one hand, the world has become increasingly unified through globalization and modernization. These processes have promoted a sense of global integration and induced the spread of a universal culture. On the other hand, the state system has experienced the growth of particularism and localized violence, accompanied by the empowerment of groups seeking socio-political fragmentation. Although there is a tenable correlation between these two phenomena, there is no simple relationship of cause and effect that links the multi-faceted nature of globalization and the complex issues associated with the rise of particularism and the spread of localized violence. Nevertheless, the hypothesis of a link must be considered since these contrasting images appear to be two sides of the same geopolitical coin, the currency of which is shaping the dimensions of the post-Cold War world.

This, then, is one of the profound contradictions in the international system: while in the developed world warfare has altered the character of both international and domestic politics — making war a less rational means for states to achieve their political objectives — the developing world continues to be prone to more frequent incidents of conflict. In some countries, Clausewitz's maxim that war should be regarded as "nothing but the continuation of politics by other means" is a stark reality. In many of these areas "government has become the management of conflict, opposition has meant insurgency and guerrilla activities have become a life-style".[6] Unravelling the problem requires analysis of globalization and localized violence, first in isolation, and then in contrast to each other.

"Globalization" is used to describe the process by which the world is being transformed into a single arena. At the heart of this is the contention that the concept of globalization *per se* should be applied to a particular series of developments concerning the "concrete structuration of the world as a whole".[7] The constituent features of this process have developed along a number of historical trajectories: most notably, the universal adoption of the state system; the development of globally interdependent political, economic, and financial institutions; rapid advances in technology, transport and communication; the increasing global demand for commodities and creation of transnational agencies; the development of a fluid global market and the subsequent perforation of state boundaries.

The traditional concept of state integrity, as the central feature of the global polity, is today being questioned more vigorously than ever before: worldwide, the exclusive right to sovereignty and the functional legitimacy of state institutions have been severely challenged by the twin features of globalization and localization. While such supra-national institutions as the United Nations Security Council, the European Community, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have removed elements of absolute sovereignty, many governments also face violent challenges to their authority from within their own borders.

"Localization" can be defined as "the rise of ethnic identities and communalism and nationalism";[8] this discussion of localized violence thus emphasizes the state as the central point of reference. While globalization may erode, in a more abstract fashion and from above, some tenets of state sovereignty, localization and localized violence impinge upon the state from below and perhaps in a more direct fashion. Part of the process of state organization is to maintain the monopoly on the legitimate exercise of violence as a way of structuring internal order. However, it is important to recognize that the rise of particularism/localization is not necessarily a pre-requisite for the eruption of localized violence, nor does the development of particularist trends make the emergence of such violence inevitable. In this context, localized violence refers to the use of weapons outside of state control and to the various challenges that this poses to state-orientated precepts of domestic power. The question, then, is how and when do the state's monopoly on the use of violence collapse.

Part of the answer requires acceptance of the assumption that the state is also an idea.[9] Consequently, the organizing principle of the state (and its institutions) concerns its legitimacy in the minds of those over whom it rules. The state's monopoly on power may be challenged, for example, because portions of the population within its judicial borders may no longer accept the *status quo.* Alternatively, state institutions may be so weak that the state is no longer able to exercise its authority universally.

It is clear that state sovereignty is being challenged at the popular level in many parts of the world. Why should this be so? In its broader sense, sovereignty represents a two-way street between central authority and citizenry, relating not just to the government's monopoly of power within its territorial boundaries but also to the functional legitimacy of its conduct and its ability to provide for the basic human needs of all the people under its jurisdiction. Basic needs, if defined as security, identity and recognition, are non-negotiable.[10] Consequently, where the state fails to furnish the needs of human security,[11] political security and economic security, and where there exists a vacuum of state authority characterized by the failure of institutional authority to reach all parts of the sovereign territory, together with an absence of the idea of the state, a crisis of sovereignty occurs.

The next question is how has globalization affected this process. Globalization and modernity have influenced localized violence in a rather indirect manner. That is to say, globalization has contributed to creating the framework and conditions in which localized conflict has emerged; increasing levels of violence have been sustained through the proliferation of light weapons.

For example, in recent years the rise of ethnic identity has been emphasized as a crucial tenet in understanding the emergence of so many civil conflicts worldwide. On one level globalization and modernity have been identified as stimulating the formation of ethnicities: it would seem that groups become more sensitive to their uniqueness when they are thrust or incorporated into larger entities. However, several case studies reveal that "ethnic consciousness itself should not be seen as a permanent problem in multi-cultural societies. Rather ethnicities are 'constructed', 'invented', and 'imagined' under particular circumstances and for specific reasons and objectives".[12] Moreover, evidence suggests that many ethnic conflicts have their roots in the history of state formation, in which relationships between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups are structured, and in processes of economic change, in which populations are categorized into social classes along ethnic lines.[13]

On a second level, globalization has contributed to stimulating mounting popular expectations and perceptions of relative deprivation. And certainly, analysis of the effects of a world culture, the development of the media and the pervasiveness of modernization would go some way to explaining the emergence of conflicts centred on unfulfilled aspirations. It is out of these conditions that so called "inversionary movements" may emerge. The driving principle of these movements is the belief that only through violent revolution can society be sufficiently changed to accommodate the interests of the disadvantaged.[14] In such cases religious, cultural, ethnic and/or ideological factors have acted as focal points and encouraged popular mobilizations for

the use of organized violence and the use of arms as methods of empowering disenfranchised groups.

However, these developments should be put into a broader context. There are, for example, many multi-ethnic states that have successfully managed the unrelenting forces of globalization and whose integrity has been maintained, while there are incidents of localized violence in which the ethnic or ideological element plays no part. As Dharam Ghai and Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara suggest:

> The combination of institutions, laws, procedures and norms, which allows people to express their concerns and fight for their interests within a predictable and relatively equitable context, forms the basis of good governance. Efficient administration of public resources is an additional element in this definition. And the entire edifice of good governance ultimately rests upon a legitimate use of power: public authority must be sanctioned by the consent of the governed.[15]

Consequently, citizens and groups who either no longer feel part of the state (due to a lack of political participation and/or marginalization from society's legitimate economic activities), or who perceive the state as being unable to provide them with personal protection, will continue to seek alternative security guarantees. An ethnic or political allegiance that supports an armed struggle against central authority may represent such a guarantee. In other circumstances this guarantee may be represented by an illicit activity, often centred on drugs and associated with increasing levels of criminal violence. The overlap between these two areas of activity is becoming increasingly evident as the line distinguishing the military and non-military demand and use of weapons blurs and the distinctions between criminal violence and war are no longer clear-cut. Finally, the possession of firearms by private citizens can be a response to these developments in an environment where state institutions are perceived as being inadequate providers of protection.

Where states are unable to provide a secure environment for their citizens or meet basic human needs, the proliferation of weaponry is both a principal consequence of, and a key contributor to, weak and ineffective governance. As noted above, aspects of globalization have been important in determining the nature of the framework in which forms of localized violence take place. Crucially, this includes increased opportunities for the procurement of weapons. In addition, technological advances in weaponry since 1945 have combined firepower and convenience, while advances in communications and transportation have facilitated the speed with which, and made more efficient the means by which weapons are transferred. The emergence of transnational financial and commercial institutions has been exploited and used to create a sophisticated black market in illegal goods, making the concealment of illicit exchanges of goods and money an easier task for governments and non-governmental groups. Together, these developments have lowered the price of light weapons and made them more easily available to more people.

◆ Trends in Light Weapons Proliferation

Light weapons are characterized by their durability, cost effectiveness, accessibility and utility. In terms of military and non-military demand, such criteria perfectly match the needs of those who require weapons in the violent political, ethnic and criminal disputes of the post-Cold War era and those who desire weapons for personal protection. At present, the supply of weapons is vast and the demand strong. The social effects of these trends in supply and demand can best be illustrated in terms of military and non-military developments in weapons proliferation.

Military trends

A number of factors emanating from the end of the Cold War have helped shape contemporary trends in the supply of and demand for light weapons. On the supply side, many of the stockpiles and weapons flows initiated by the superpowers have been released from controls that had prevented unrestrained proliferation. The evidence from a number of case studies illustrates the difficulty of controlling the transfer and spread of light weapons and small arms once they have entered the free-flowing, transient supply and demand markets of the international arms trade (This includes both the overt and covert trade in weapons.) For instance, the single most important factor in the militarization of Afghanistan, Pakistan and northern India was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the US pipeline of arms established in the mid-1980s to assist the Afghan Mujahidin insurgency campaign. Weapons have since accumulated in the arms bazaars in and around the North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan, and reached at least as far as Bombay and the state of Bihar in India. In addition, many of the weapons that were siphoned off by the Pakistan Inter-Service Intelligence organization at the time have been used to support Kashmiri militants, fuelling ethnic conflict in that region.[16]

It is clear that the South Asian pattern and experience of arms proliferation has been replicated elsewhere, demonstrating the durability of light weapons and small arms. The durability factor and easy transportation are crucial to the proliferation of weaponry. Light weapons, and especially small arms, have few moving parts and there is little need for spares.[17] Many weapons now in use have been in circulation for some time: one of the more persistent legacies of the Cold War. Colombian guerrilla groups have used arms originally pumped into Central America under the auspices of the Reagan Doctrine, which have now become part of a vast black market in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Panama. (US military aid to the Nicaraguan Contras during the 1980s totalled $70 million annually.[18]) Somalia's civil war was exacerbated by the millions of dollars worth of arms supplied to the previous régime by the United States and the former Soviet Union. Conflict in the former Yugoslavia has certainly profited from Cold War-era weapons stockpiles. While the Croats have been able to replenish their armament needs from stocks belonging to the former East German army, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has benefited from supplies of light weapons left over from Lebanon's civil war, paid for by Iran and other Muslim governments in the Middle East. Chinese weapons have been traced moving via Bolivia into Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. It

was estimated that during 1993, $2 billion worth of weapons were delivered to the former Yugoslavia in spite of the United Nations arms embargo.[19]

The availability of weapons has also been shaped by factors arising from the transformation of the international order and influenced by globalization. In the first place, the end of the Cold War created a glut in the arms industries of Europe and North America, resulting in a surplus of used but modern materiel for the world market. The pressure to sell and reduce this surplus, and the expansion of black market opportunities have ensured high levels of light weapons deliveries around the world. With a drop in domestic military spending, privatized Russian firms, for example, have been under mounting pressure to increase their export sales. This has led to dubious or illegal transactions.[20] In Western Europe, too, traditional exporters such as the United Kingdom and Belgium continue to sanction the export of light weapons as part of government efforts to boost defence sales.[21]

The sharp decline in official military aid to the developing world between 1987 and 1993 has affected only the sale of major weapons systems. Contraction in the transfer of expensive high technology equipment has been offset by the continued purchase of less sophisticated but still extremely lethal light weapons and small arms. This change in the pattern of arms transfers reflects not only the general reduction in purchasing power of developing countries, but also the changing nature of conflicts: the growing incidence of insurgency and "low intensity warfare", which impinge upon the functional capability of their régimes. It also provides outlets for the conventional weapons manufactured by the leading military powers. Moreover, the number of potential suppliers has increased over the years and so-called "second tier" arms producing nations have been able to capture a sizeable share of the global market. In addition to the major arms suppliers (the five permanent members of the Security Council) India, Israel, South Africa, Brazil, Taiwan Province of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Argentina, the Republic of Korea and Egypt also have a broad-based defence industry. During the 1980s, a further 45 states were identified as possessing a domestic arms production capacity. The 1993/94 edition of **Jane's Infantry Weapons** recorded no fewer than 1,700 different weapons from 252 manufacturers in 69 countries.[22]

On the demand side, light weapons are required to sustain the growing number of ethno-political conflicts and insurgency campaigns. The **Human Development Report 1994** identified 52 armed conflicts in 42 countries during 1993, and another 37 countries that had political violence. Of these 79 countries, 65 were in the developing world.[23] In 1988, Nielsson and Jones identified 575 ethnic groups as actual or potential states.[24] A more recent survey conducted by Gurr estimates that 233 minority groups are at risk from political and/or economic discrimination.[25]

In the modern era, these patterns of increased supply and increased demand have converged. Legal government-to-government sales, as well as commercial sales, have been supplemented by conditions that offer greater opportunity for covert transactions of weapons. But the extent of the light weapons trade is extremely difficult to determine, because illicit or clandestine exchanges account for a very large proportion of transfers, and data relating to

official transfers are often speculative as no governmental or non-governmental agency compiles such information on a yearly basis. It is known, however, that the covert trade in weapons involves three main transfer systems: the black market; secret government-to-government deals; and sponsorship of sub-state groups. This last category implies sympathetic support from a foreign government for the most part, although private assistance from arms dealers or altruistic interest groups is not uncommon. Estimates of the annual value of the covert trade in light weapons range from $2 billion to $10 billion.[26] For example, Klare has calculated that total world exports of light weapons come to about $5 billion per year.[27] This figure accounts for known exports and includes officially sanctioned government exports, unofficially sanctioned government sales and non-government transfers identified by the intelligence community. Whether light weapons worth $10 billion are actually sold in one year is debatable; the range of the various estimates indicates the problematic nature of monitoring the global trade. What is clear, however, is that the principal factor determining the nature of this cycle is, of course, the number of ongoing conflicts and unstable political situations worldwide. The fluidity of the international market, the increased number of potential suppliers and weakening controls on armament flows have assisted this process. As a result, with the greater potential to manipulate the market, opportunities are opening up for groups and actors previously denied access to advanced technologies.[28]

Non-military trends

Non-military demand for weapons has traditionally come from criminal elements and private citizens; the types of weapons acquired have normally been small arms with limited levels of firepower. The effects of globalization, technological advances and the end of the Cold War have all played a role in placing more advanced technologies in the hands of a wider variety of users. While both military and non-military demands for weapons have been influenced by these factors, non-military acquisition especially has benefited from declining prices. Consequently, the civil and financial restraints that hitherto deterred the proliferation of more sophisticated weapons are being eroded as non-military demands for weapons begin to overlap with military trends and sources of proliferation.

The activities of various sub-state groups illustrate this convergence. For example, the campaign of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) against British rule in Northern Ireland at times fell into a grey area between militant insurgency and criminality.[29] The organization acquired a range of non-military small arms and military light weapons, the most spectacular example of which was its acquisition of SAM-7 ground-to-air missiles during the 1980s. SAMs gave the IRA an increased number of tactical options, offering them the means to destroy the British helicopters frequently used to locate IRA activities and to transport troops.[30] In the southern hemisphere, ordinary criminals in Zimbabwe and South Africa are exploiting the easy access to relatively sophisticated military weapons. Many of these are being smuggled into these countries from Mozambique, pushed onto the market by troops belonging to the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo).[31] In Colombia, drug cartels *(narcos)* are able to utilize a whole range of advanced weaponry as their tentacles extend in search of new markets for illegal drugs.

The last decade has also seen the emergence of right-wing paramilitaries *(paras)*, financed by the drug gangs and dedicated to fighting Colombia's left-wing guerrillas as well as murdering their civilian sympathizers. Colombian police have seized several German-made MP5 sub-machine guns and technologically sophisticated Swiss-made night-vision devices from *narco* properties.[32] The convergence of drug related criminality and politically motivated terrorism has both encouraged and benefited from changes in weapons supply patterns.

Colombia's experience is indicative of the effect of the convergence between the military trends in supply and the non-military trends in weapons acquisition. So long as powerful light weapons are easily obtainable on the black market and commonly used by *narcos*, *paras* and guerrillas, they also become accessible to common criminals and ordinary citizens who feel threatened surrounded by so many arms.[33] As a consequence, easy availability, vast supplies and increasing levels of firepower have helped create conditions where ownership of a weapon becomes a cultural norm. This has been further encouraged by low prices. Lomashasha, Swaziland is another example, where an AK-47 can be procured for as little as $6.[34] The convergence problem and gun culture syndrome are particularly acute in the United States. The non-military (or civilian) version of the M-16 — a semi-automatic weapon such as the AR-15, which releases one bullet with one pull of the trigger — can be converted into a military-style fully automatic weapon with the installation of a military component (the military automatic sphere) that is widely and easily available in the United States from spare parts shops and specialist mail-order magazines. It is thus increasingly possible to circumvent restrictions that exist to regulate the private civilian ownership of fully automatic or military-style weapons.

PART III: THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPACTS OF MILITARIZATION

◆ Light Weapons Technology and the Changing Face of Conflict

The extent to which small arms and light weapons have proliferated throughout societies has been consistent with and reflected changes in the nature of conflict, as well as the security priorities that determine modern trends in human development. The scope for killing is not subject to the calibre of weapon possessed, of course, nor is the inclination to kill predetermined by the possession of such weapons. This point was highlighted in 1989 by Deng Xiaoping when he stated, in a discussion with George Bush, that "civil war doesn't necessarily require guns and artillery; fists and wood bats can also be wielded ferociously".[35] In other words, if people are determined to kill each other they will use whatever means are to hand. One of

the bloodiest of all conflicts in the period since the Second World War was between Hindus and Muslims at the time of India's partition. Millions were slaughtered with no more than pitchforks, knives and bare hands. However, the erosion of traditional structures of human security and the development and spread of military technology have created greater opportunities for the use of lethal violence.

The nature of modern warfare and the weaponry used have had an increasingly detrimental effect on civilians. Since the Second World War, over 23 million people have been killed in the developing world as a result of war,[36] 90 per cent of them civilians.[37] During the First World War, 90 per cent of those killed were soldiers. The easy availability of modern weapons and the changed nature of the use of violence have polarized ethnic, religious, economic and political differences in regions of spiralling structural collapse, and blurred the distinction between civilian and combatant. Conflict is no longer the struggle between states or ideologies — it has become the struggle between peoples and cultural identities. With some weaknesses in most societies, the degree to which human security has been eroded has become linked to the propensity for violence. This has meant that relations between different social groups have, to varying degrees, become a series of "zero-sum" interactions. Where this has been most acute, in such places as Somalia or Rwanda, society has imploded. Where it is emerging as a growing menace, but has been contained by stronger state structures — such as in the deprived inner-city areas of the United States — society has been burdened by increasing levels of violent crime.

Modern weapons have made the ability to kill, more than ever before, a utilitarian act, restrained neither by age nor gender; it was estimated that in 1988 there were at least 200,000 child soldiers under the age of 15 years fully participating in conflicts around the world.[38] The introduction of small calibre weapons has, according to military historian John Keegan, changed modern warfare. One of the most widely available weapons, the AK-47, which has sold an estimated 55 million copies since its introduction into the Soviet army in 1947, can be stripped and reassembled by a child of 10 years, while a semi-automatic hand-gun, such as the Cobray M11/9, weighs no more than a newborn baby. The marriage of technology, firepower and convenience has facilitated the non-discriminatory use of immensely powerful weapons and has put military hardware into the hands of civilian constituencies.

Such advances in light weapons technology have obviously led to increased lethality and destructiveness. Modern assault rifles, for instance, can fire a burst of 30-35 rounds with one pull of the trigger (rather than one round, as with older bolt action rifles).[39] In addition to making the ability to kill far easier, the technology now being employed in light weapons, and particularly small arms, possesses a greater capacity for destroying social cohesion. The rapidity of firepower and the ability to expend more ammunition in a shorter space of time offer a new set of tactical options as killing capabilities become more efficient, resulting in a greater sense of civilian terror. This effect was utilized during the 1980s by the Sikh Kalistani movement in the (Indian) Punjab. In a region where the ethnic balance between Sikhs and Hindus had traditionally been even, a strategy based on a campaign of terror and murder was aimed at tilting the balance in favour of the Sikhs. This was made possible

after 1984, when Sikh militants were better equipped with more sophisticated armaments.[40] In civil conflicts worldwide, the availability and use of sophisticated light weapons have had similar results — in terrorizing civilian populations and depopulating areas either by killing civilians or creating such an atmosphere of terror that civilian populations flee in the face of approaching armed forces. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of the "ethnic cleansing" campaigns were carried out with light weapons, while one of the worst refugee crises in modern times occurred when over one million, mainly Hutu, civilians fled from the advancing Rwandan Popular Front (RPF) in July 1994. Terrorized by government radio warnings that the predominantly Tutsi RPF, which was armed with small arms and light weapons, would slaughter all Hutus, a large proportion of the population fled to neighbouring countries.

◆ The Breakdown of Law and Order

As indicated earlier, the availability and use of more sophisticated weapons have contributed to the erosion of state authority. This has become particularly evident in the escalation of crime. It is widely held that guns are not the cause of crime, but rather that crime is rooted in inept structural forms that create or sustain human insecurity in its broad sense. It is clear that the proliferation of arms is, in part, a response to demand for personal security when normative social relations collapse or are seen to be on the brink of collapse. It is also evident that the widespread availability of arms accelerates and aggravates dysfunctional trends.

For example, the upsurge of law and order problems in the Sindh Province of Pakistan have been exacerbated by a number of interrelated factors arising from the decline of central government control. In the political vacuum created, industrial and economic conflicts in Karachi, and feudal conflicts in rural areas, were allowed to fester. Powerful political forces emerged from competing ethnic groups and, in the absence of a strong central authority, utilized the easily accessible pool of modern weapons in the neighbouring North Western Frontier Province.[41] In parts of West Africa, too, the absence of effective government has led to the spread of lawlessness and criminal violence. Some observers see such situations as indicative of a growing international trend of failing states and rising criminal anarchy. According to Martin van Creveld, "Once the legal monopoly of armed force, long claimed by the state, is wrestled out of its hands, existing distinctions between war and crime will break down much as is already the case today in...Lebanon, Sri Lanka, El Salvador, Peru or Colombia". This points to situations where, as "small-scale violence multiplies at home and abroad, state armies will continue to shrink, being gradually replaced by a booming private security business, and by urban mafias, especially in the former communist world, who may be better equipped than municipal police forces to grant physical protection to local inhabitants".[42]

Law and order problems have been increasingly linked to the proliferation of drugs and the empowerment of drug gangs. The United Kingdom, for example, experienced a 42 per cent upsurge in (reported) firearms offences between 1987 and 1992, while the seizure of drugs rose by 182 per cent over the same period.[43] Drug related violence takes three forms: the violence of criminal gangs determined to protect their interests (territoriality); violence

against people and property by drug users to pay for their habit; and the violence perpetrated by individuals under the influence of drugs. The gun culture that has developed around drug traffickers is the result of the need for arms to protect the vast profits to be made from trade in narcotics.

Perceptions of gun-related criminal violence in the United States, together with lax gun controls, have facilitated the circulation of 212 million firearms in private hands. "More than even in the days of the frontier, Americans believe they need firearms and are not safe without them...they know that guns make it easier for criminals to kill; but guns also allow peaceful citizens to defend themselves".[44] Gun-related violent crime in the United States rose by 55 per cent between 1978 and 1992,[45] and criminologists have attributed dramatic increases in violent crime committed by juveniles to the widespread shift from the use of knives to firearms — killings by teenagers under the age of 18 rose by 124 per cent between 1986 and 1991, and arrests of people under 18 for violent crime rose by 47 per cent between 1988 and 1992.[46] Despite these high figures, total felonies involving firearms account for less than 15 per cent of all violent crime nationwide, while the number of assaults committed without a weapon doubled between 1982 and 1992. The decision by the US House of Representatives at the beginning of May 1994 to pass a bill banning 19 types of assault weapons reflected concerns that criminals in the United States were becoming better equipped and armed than the state. Figures show that although 38,000 Americans die each year from gunshot wounds, over half of those are accidents or suicides.[47] This high incidence of self-inflicted death and injury has been attributed to the fact that guns are so easily available.[48]

Increases in violence and perceptions of deteriorating security are leading to the bifurcation of societies. For example, security problems in Karachi have become so acute that individuals' freedom of movement has become restricted. However, for wealthy residents this "presented only nonessential problems — large houses became fortresses and private security firms became widely employed in both a private and a commercial capacity".[49] One private security firm employs over 6,000 guards, many of them retired from the armed forces. Growing social anarchy has made the line between rich and poor even more pronounced. Wealth has become the distinguishing feature, dividing those who are able to meet their personal security requirements and those who are subject to rising levels of arbitrary violence. The American middle class is increasingly moving out of high crime urban areas. The fact that there are three times more security guards in the United States than there are police officers is indicative of governments' inability to control and reverse the increasing incidence of violent crime. The result has been the creation of fortress-type, self-enclosed communities, protected by high-tech security devices and guards, emphasizing the growing gulf between the "haves" and "have nots" in American society.

◆ The Empowerment of Sub-State Groups

The supply of weapons to insurgent groups and other non-state actors has concerned many governments since the Second World War. The most successful of these groups have controlled territory and had a major supply of arms to empower their activities. The Palestine Liberation Organisation's

control of territory within Lebanon before the Israeli invasion in 1982 is a good example of the supplanting of state authority. Especially important for weapons acquisition, according to Aaron Karp, is the control of territory, which "provides a reliable source of income through taxation or extortion of local civilians. It makes large transfers of arms physically manageable".[50] Subsequently, the direction of an insurgency campaign can be determined by such factors. The Philippine New People's Army (PNPA) has faded as a challenge to the Manila government, partly because of a lack of armaments and territorial control. Conversely, the United Liberation Front for Assam (ULFA) perfected the art of extortion during the 1970s and, bolstered by the acquisition of arms initially left over from the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, moved from political agitation to insurgency. Similarly, in Jammu and Kashmir, the drive towards full-scale guerrilla warfare has been achieved because of the qualitative and quantitative increase in weapons in recent years. Chris Smith asserts:

> Certainly, if the arms pipelines into Kashmir were to be cut or run dry, the militants would be quickly deprived of the resources they require to take on the Indian Union. New Delhi has now stationed over 400,000 troops in the area, making the valley of Kashmir the most militarised area in the world.[51]

The control of territory is also important for the immensely powerful drug cartels and criminal organizations that have emerged over the past two decades. The expansion of an international criminal class has been supported by the profits made from drugs and protected by force of arms. The need to operate within territory normally controlled by states has required the arming of criminal organizations and the establishment of private armies to defend the criminal interior from other sub-state groups and the state itself. The most common method of obtaining weapons seems to be through a drugs-for-guns barter system, established by the most successful drug cartels. Drugs and guns are transported using the same clandestine routes.[52] Just as the laundering of drug money is central to the narcotics trade, so the "cleaning" of illegal arms has become a prominent concern of the cartels. In 1993, guns legally purchased in the United States were seized from Colombian drug lord Ivan Urdinola. Despite their use in a series of murders, almost all of the 200 weapons seized had been legally imported and registered by INDUMIL, the state-owned Colombian arms industry.[53]

Some estimates indicate that the drug trafficking industry's annual turnover is worth $500 billion — larger than the global trade in oil. The potential benefits to be gained from the drug industry have released a myriad of vested interests. The effect of this has been to place organized crime onto the national security agenda, since, according to a former director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), James Woolsey, syndicates have gained the power to undermine governments and create economic and political chaos.[54]

Over the past 10 years, different states have increased their efforts to reassert their control over the socializing processes inherent in the drug trade and drug culture. On the one hand, domestic law enforcement agencies battle to contain the drug culture and the law and order problems related to it. On the other, national and international security forces battle to prevent the spread of the

international drug trafficking industry. The United States has spent $10 billion annually on drug enforcement programmes since 1988 — promoting a new kind of "Reagan Doctrine" in which the US government has supplied weapons and assistance to Latin American countries to enable them to attempt to combat the illicit drug industry at its source. However, rooting out the problem has proved extremely difficult, partly because of the economic benefits derived from the drug industry. Cocaine production represents an estimated 3-5 per cent of Colombia's gross national product, for example, and through the multiplier effect, about 15 per cent of aggregate demand in the economy.[55]

◆ The Militarization of Daily Life

Many societies are becoming increasingly militarized. Militarization includes the presence of heavily armed policemen or soldiers patrolling streets, military personnel occupying high government posts, military censorship, armed guards in schools and public buildings, armed checkpoints along roads and curfews. The most overt consequence of societal militarization has been the creation of a culture of militarism and the horizontal diffusion of weapons throughout communities.

Widespread proliferation of light weapons and small arms has often led to the acceptance of weapons as a normal part of life and of violent conflict as an everyday occurrence. These developments have created numerous anxieties, induced by perceived threats to personal security and consequent domestic arms races. The formation of paramilitary, civilian defence and armed vigilante groups can be seen as both symptoms and causal factors in processes of societal militarization and weapons proliferation. In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have used television to broadcast programmes showing combat training and actual combat. The Tamil separatist group's militarization of children's education in northern Sri Lanka has included lectures on the need for soldiers, and military parades and drills on school grounds, while in at least one school in an LTTE-controlled zone toy guns have been mounted on see-saws.[56] The Peruvian guerrilla group, Sendero Luminoso, which exerts varying degrees of control over educational practices in areas where it is active, has altered school curricula to include military-style callisthenics and labour education. The emergence of "refugee generations" has similarly facilitated highly militarized environments, where refugee camps have become the breeding grounds for cultural militarism. In 1988, the United States Committee for Refugees reported that in many parts of the world guns were being delivered to refugees "under the umbrella of humanitarian aid" and that children were being trained to use them.[57]

In Peru and Guatemala, the forced recruitment of peasants into civil defence patrols (PACs) has not only influenced population movements but has also replaced traditional leadership structures and eroded traditional values. Organized by the military, the PAC system is designed to supplement government counter-insurgency strategies. Mayan villagers in Guatemala, and Peruvian peasants, lose income by participating in the patrols. None of those who contribute to the PACs in Peru get paid and there are no provisions for injury while on patrol. Villages with patrols (almost all of which have been created through pressure from the armed forces) become favoured targets of

the Sendero Luminoso.[58] The Colombian government has actively encouraged the arming of private citizens, openly exhorting the population during the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s to arm itself against the country's left-wing guerrillas. In rural areas, self-defence groups known as *autodefensas* were organized under the supervision of the army. As a result, there are an estimated 1 million legal arms in the hands of private citizens and an estimated 5 million illegal arms.[59]

The horrific consequences of another government-sponsored scheme designed to create armed civilian self-defence groups are evident in Rwanda. Bolstered by arms supplied in the early 1990s, principally from South Africa, Egypt and France, the Rwandan government began distributing hundreds of Kalashnikovs and automatic weapons to groups loyal to the Habyarimana régime. At least 500 Kalashnikovs were distributed to local civilian authorities and civilians participating in the programme were trained by the army. These forces initially served as border patrols, but by February 1993 the programme had been extended from border areas to interior communes. There was also an increasing overlap between these groups and government militia forces. Created in 1992, these militias, the *interahamwe* ("those who attack together") and the *impuzamugambi* ("those with a single purpose") were reportedly trained by the army in methods of how to kill most efficiently, and planned well in advance the massacres that followed the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana. Already volatile inter-communal tensions were exacerbated by the widespread availability of weapons in the hands of an undisciplined body of civilians. Weapons distribution by Rwandan authorities to the militia and supporters of the Habyarimana régime continued in early 1994, and was extended on 15 April as hostilities were renewed.[60] Two months after Habyarimana's death, estimates of the number of victims of the ensuing massacres of Tutsi and Hutu civilians varied from 200,000 to 500,000.[61]

Militarization and arms proliferation amid conditions of weakening social cohesion have led to domestic "arms races". As in state-to-state arms races, the driving logic is the perceived threat posed by an armed neighbour. However, in a domestic arms race personal security becomes the dominant requirement, if the state cannot guarantee social order. The inadequate state presence in Colombia has led to the private use of weapons for personal protection, from the traditional machete in the countryside to the powerful handguns used by many of the 100,000 private security officers who guard wealthy Colombians and their properties. Colombia also exemplifies the internal proliferation dynamic that is indicative of societies engaged in domestic arms races.[62] In the first instance, it becomes difficult to control the diffusion of small arms and, like the ruptured US pipeline to the Mujahidin, arms distributed for one purpose inevitably fall into "the wrong hands". Second, a qualitative arms race can emerge with outlawed groups and state forces vying for parity in sophistication and firepower. However, in at least one instance, that of criminal groups in Bihar, it appears that a conscious decision has been made to curb the proliferation and use of sophisticated weapons in order to avoid prompting more forceful intervention from the Indian government.[63]

◆ The Socio-Psychological Consequences of Militarization

Salvadorian psychologist Ignacio Martin-Baro suggests that the excessive militarization of a society leads to a "mental militarization", in which violent responses to social problems become the norm.[64] The highly militarized nature of communities can profoundly colour individuals' perceptions of reality. The dual sense of fear and empowerment that the widespread use of armaments brings to groups and individuals can disrupt rational decision-making processes and destroy perceptions of non-violent options for conflict resolution. The result is societal brutalization and the collapse of traditional value systems.

The gravest direct consequences of this are the human rights violations committed in regions of extreme structural violence, particularly where state forces are waging counter-insurgency campaigns. The spread of small arms and light weapons not only makes governance more difficult, but also polarizes communal groups and leads to the erosion of respect for human rights. The nature of guerrilla warfare and the perceived widespread proliferation of weapons in areas known to be havens for insurgents obscure any distinctions that could be made by government forces between armed terrorists and innocent civilians. Training manuals used by the Colombian army, for example, clearly indicate that it is still standard procedure to treat the civilian population in guerrilla controlled zones as the "enemy".[65] The greater militancy of Kashmiri insurgents as a result of better supplies of arms has prompted security forces to use harsher methods in maintaining control. The increased level of violence has led to the "erosion of respect for those caught in the cross-fire by the security forces and militants alike".[66] Militarization — both actual and perceived — has meant both sides in Kashmir have become progressively brutalized, contributing to the increased incidence of rape, torture and murder.

The trauma experienced by societies in which violence is rife is a consequence of the deep fears that become entrenched in the communal psyche[67] as a result of militarization and the unchecked use of weapons. The undermining of traditional communal values in Latin America, Asia and Africa has partly been a result of the empowerment of individuals and groups through weapons diffusion, as well as the dynamics of local conflict. It can be argued that widespread social trauma is, therefore, a result of weapons proliferation in an unstable environment. One of the more destructive effects of this trauma is the communal division that results — particularly in agrarian societies whose viability depends on unity. Fear and attempts at self-preservation have split many such communities around the world. In Cambodia, for example, the sense of mistrust that accompanied the war was extremely divisive; collaboration with the enemy and the reporting of neighbours contributed to the destruction of co-operative structures in many communities.[68]

Social disintegration linked to gun culture is most clearly reflected in areas severely affected by militarization. It is poignantly illustrated in the behaviour and response of children. The militarization of generations that have known little other than processes of brutalization and conflict makes the rejuvenation

of societies a daunting task to achieve. In Uganda, for example, "some children [have] spent the whole of their formative years carrying a gun. When the war ends, they've never been to school. All they know is how to shoot. You can't just expect them to put down the guns and start being kids again".[69] Problems faced by United Nations peace-keeping forces in demobilization campaigns around the world have reflected these dilemmas. The re-eruption in November 1992 of Angola's civil war, after United Nations sponsored peace efforts and elections, was in part a result of the failure to complete the demobilization process.

◆ The Legacy of Landmines

Landmines have been described as the weapons that never miss. They are indiscriminate killers, and go on killing long after hostilities have ended. They have been characterized as "the greatest violators of international law, practising blind terrorism".[70] Originally designed as a defensive weapon of static warfare, mines have become offensive weapons in the guerrilla warfare tactics of modern intra-state conflicts. The random use of mines has been intended to deny the enemy access to resources. This has meant alienating land, food, transportation routes and basic infrastructural necessities, deliberately striking at unarmed civilians and the land itself. Rather than the tactical weapon of yesteryear, mines have become strategic; they have led to refugee flows and, in places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, have been used as the instruments of "ethnic cleansing". According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), there are 150 identified types of mine, produced by 60 manufacturers in more than 37 countries. In 1993, at least 23 countries exported landmines.[71]

Mines are intrinsically different from other weapons because of their **persistent** and **uncontrolled** nature.[72] Handicap International estimates that there have been over one million mine-related casualties during the past 15 years.[73] In Cambodia alone, which is contaminated with at least four million mines, 60 people are killed or injured every month as a result of stepping on an undetected device. There are an estimated 100 million landmines, many of them unmapped, scattered over 62 countries. Mine clearance is a dangerous and laborious occupation. Military techniques for mine clearance are generally intended only to clear a path through a minefield, while "humanitarian demining" requires at least 99 per cent clearance. The safest and most effective way to achieve this is for a deminer to lie on his or her stomach and prod the ground ahead with a metal rod. This technique usually allows clearance of between 20 and 50 square metres per day.[74] In Afghanistan, for example, it would take the 27 mine clearing teams currently at work 4,300 years to clear one fifth of the country.

Apart from their indiscriminate nature, killing soldier and civilian alike, the main effects of mines are long term and strike at the heart of a country's socio-economic infrastructure. The consequences are threefold: personal, social and economic. Landmine victims suffer horrendous injuries. Those who survive usually require significant medical attention and resources, most often surgical amputation. Angola has an estimated 20,000 mine-related amputees, mostly women and children. In Cambodia, one out of every 236 people is an amputee due to a mine explosion.[75] However, since most of the world's mines are

deployed in developing countries, where transportation is all too frequently inadequate, civilian mine victims are not likely to receive the kind of urgent medical attention they require. Hospital treatment, when it is administered, is often rudimentary. Medical facilities, which can barely meet the survival needs of the patient, cannot begin to address the longer term psychological and rehabilitative requirements of the amputee returning to a society unable to care for the disabled.[76] Furthermore, many mine victims are no longer able to work. The labour-intensive nature of agricultural and pastoral communities requires the full participation of every man, woman and child in the productive life of the family, community and society as a whole. Amputees who are unable to fulfil this role are often viewed as a liability to the communal structure. These depredations are further compounded since a high proportion of mine victims are women who traditionally play a central role in agrarian societies. Indeed, a female amputee may be undesirable as a wife, since she will not be able to work in the fields. Many amputee war veterans have been left without any support. Angry and resentful that the society for which they sacrificed themselves has abandoned them, they may resort to crime, begging, drug abuse and alcoholism.

In cultures underpinned by strong family ties, the stresses caused by war and famine, together with the social consequences of mine injuries, have contributed to the erosion of family life. The danger posed by mines may mean that families are unable to return to their homes, leading to severe stress and depression for those affected. In addition, where adults are killed by mines, their children are often left destitute. The spouses of amputees may eventually abandon their husbands or wives to seek more productive, able-bodied partners. Unable to care for their amputee relatives, peasant families have been known to commit the cultural sacrilege of abandonment.

A 1993 report on landmines by the US Department of State concluded that the economic impact of uncleared mines on a developing country was also "tremendous". During conflict, the mining of key strategic installations is a war objective. In civil wars, these are normally economic targets aimed at disrupting civilian facilities such as electricity and water treatment plants, key road networks, major market centres and harbour installations — precisely the installations required to support economic reconstruction and development. The report observed that:

> When the economic infrastructure has been isolated by landmines, it cannot sustain economic development. As a result, economic reconstruction is delayed until the roads, the electric power system and the water system can be cleared of mines.[77]

The inability to engage in post-war reconstruction often inhibits the process of peace-building and national reconciliation:

> The disruption of the transportation system produced by even a few mines results in local scarcities in products, lessened exports and balances of hard currency. They bring inflation, and sometimes famine.[78]

Such consequences invariably mean that refugees are unable to return to their villages, while economic rebuilding, which in subsistence farming communities is dependent on sustainable land use, is nearly impossible to achieve. In Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Mozambique, for example, large swathes of valuable agricultural land have been made inaccessible because of landmine contamination. In Battambang Province in Cambodia, up to one third of the territory can no longer be used for farming. Afghanistan's self-sufficient food production and distribution systems have been virtually destroyed by mine deployment. The irrigation and livestock transfer systems that had been developed in the country over centuries have been targets of mining strategies since 1979. Irrigation ditches were targeted because they were thought to be possible trenches and grazing land was made unusable by random mine laying. The nomadic tribes that operated the livestock transfer system left their usual grounds to find new grazing land.[79]

PART IV: CONCLUSION

◆ Assessing the Social Impacts of Light Weapons Proliferation

The **Human Development Report 1994** asserts that global human security is indivisible. Threats to human security in one part of the world are not containable: conflict and its effects, the spread of AIDS, the reach of drug traffickers, environmental degradation and global economic recession are all transnational. In the last half-century, just as the worldwide diffusion of wealth has increased global prosperity, so the consequences of poverty have travelled across state boundaries. Global interdependence has created inextricable linkages, placing the requirements of individual human security at the heart of the international peace and security agenda. Universal militarization has been part of the globalizing process. The diffusion of weapons has been facilitated by technological advances, the emergence of global networks, communication, transportation and rapid advances in trade practices. This contraction of the world into a single arena has created a market-place for all commodities, and the development of a sophisticated global black market has facilitated the delivery of illegal goods anywhere in the world.

The absence of the strong bipolar structure that characterized the Cold War period has exacerbated the inherent weaknesses of governments and the dysfunctional tendencies of underdeveloped societies. Loose or non-existent control of Cold War military hardware, supplementary sources of weapons and increased socio-political instabilities have fuelled the global supply and demand for weapons. The emergence of highly militarized and increasingly brutalized societies has perpetuated unchecked weapons proliferation within those societies which, for a multiplicity of reasons, are victims of protracted social conflict.

Within this "crisis of sovereignty", civilians have been placed at the heart of modern conflict, the nature of which has been profoundly influenced by the development and diffusion of modern light weapons. "Low intensity" warfare is highly destructive and corrosive, and strikes at core elements of many societies. The loss of life and burden of casualties add further stress to weak healthcare systems, requiring rehabilitative structures that many developing countries cannot furnish. Protracted social conflict undermines traditional family and communal cohesion, and the consequences of direct violence and the effects of widespread landmine contamination have destroyed the economic bases underpinning the viability of many peasant communities. The severe physical and psychological effects on women and children, particularly where they are principal or supplementary breadwinners, portend long-term damage to social stability. Families have been torn from their homes and torn apart by refugee migrations resulting from conflict. Often, returning refugees have no home or agricultural livelihood to go back to once the violence has ended, since land is made unusable because of the presence of mines. Family heads and community leaders are lost in conflict, while invaluable assistance and development programmes are destroyed or retarded.

Protracted social conflict and violent crime, resulting from failed or failing social structures, erode personal security by posing a constant threat to the integrity of life. The fear of violence becomes pervasive, altering communal psyches and changing the behavioural patterns of individuals. To varying degrees, freedom of movement is restricted in most societies that experience daily violence. The threat of violence widens the gulf between rich and poor, with the rich using their wealth to build defences against perceived growing levels of anarchy. Such a culture of violence erodes respect for human rights. Militarization and brutalization destroy levels of tolerance and normative perceptions of human dignity, inviting increasingly widespread acts of rape, torture and other forms of repression. Political tolerance and democratic participation in the political process are circumscribed in areas where violence is the determining factor of social or national development.

◆ Thoughts on a Control Régime for Light Weapons

There are two ways of approaching the question of stemming the proliferation of light weapons and small arms. The first of these involves policy directives, aimed at establishing legislation that would stop or deter the supply of weapons — in other words, tackling weapons circulation. The second approach focuses upon the causes of weapons proliferation and, consequently, on the demand side of the light weapons equation — what Chris Smith refers to as thinking about "big" solutions and the interlocking aspects of security.[80] Both approaches demand political will at the highest level for there to be any effective change.

There are a number of inherent problems that a light weapons control régime would have to overcome. In this context, control mechanisms used to address the proliferation of strategic weapons are not particularly helpful as a blueprint. Light weapons do not possess the constraining qualities of major weapons systems. In many cases strategic arms control rests on consensus between governments, such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT)

and the United Nations Arms Register. Moreover, such systems can be controlled by prohibiting states from acquiring select technologies or keeping a leash on spare parts supply (i.e., those parts that have a limited life span, as identified by the supplier). But in many cases, light weapons transfers are not part of official government policy and the life-span of most weapons is not dependent on renewable spare parts; these constraints are thus not highly relevant.

Thus new thinking is required at a "conceptual level which reaches beyond traditional arms control paradigms".[81] Buy-back schemes and amnesties may be one policy in this direction. A World Bank study of seven such schemes in Angola, Chad, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Panama, Uganda and Zimbabwe suggests that prices offered for guns (and bullets) should be just above the black market rate, buy-back schemes should be well publicized and complete amnesty should exist for those who return their weapons.[82] The experience of such schemes demonstrates the extent to which they can only be successful within the context of a broader settlement. If people feel insecure, they will either hold on to weapons or use the money to buy new and better weapons. A comprehensive settlement that includes rehabilitation programmes is necessary if ex-fighters are not to return to force of arms.

Another possibility is to exploit the only aspect of light weapons that does not have an indefinite lifespan: ammunition. The continued effectiveness of light weapons is dependent on a plentiful supply of ammunition. This is particularly the case for those weapons that are characterized by rapid rates of fire. Many countries produce ammunition under licence and many of the same countries are major economic aid recipients. This invites the issue of aid conditionality and the use of aid as a lever to restrain laissez-faire approaches to ammunition exports.[83] Indeed, such a policy could extend to the importation of light weapons themselves. The most effective aspect of such a policy would be in stemming the tide of official North-South weapons transfers, although the overall effect may prove to be limited. If demand exists, there are enough conduits in the transient free flowing market, particularly within the covert one, to satisfy it. To what extent can any gun control régime be effective unless the political will exists to enforce it? And to what extent can governments, which lack the institutional capacity to promote national cohesion, be expected to enforce any such régime? In this context, much more information is required concerning the trends in supply and demand and the conduits through which light weapons and small arms are transferred. This endeavour will have to be a prerequisite of any effective control régime.[84]

In recent years, pressure has mounted for a ban on the production and exportation of landmines. A test of whether the world wishes to embark upon this path will come when the international community reviews the inhumane weapons convention (properly known as the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects) in 1995. This convention, which places restrictions on landmines, is viewed by many non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups as being flawed — as insufficient to ensure civilians protection from landmine contamination. When the review conference takes place there will be pressure from humanitarian groups to ban the production and transfer of landmine devices,

while military and commercial interests will claim that they are a legitimate form of self-defence. Considering that they have been described as the "greatest violators of international law", the only control régime that could satisfy both legal and humanitarian norms would be the unconditional withdrawal of landmines from the theatre of conflict. The more immediate problem concerns the misery caused by already-deployed landmines. The only answer to this is extensive mine clearance, which will require a long-term financial commitment from the international community. The United Nations has highlighted the size of this task, estimating the average cost of removing a single landmine at between $300 and $1,000.[85] (This is compared to the $3 that it costs to procure a single anti-personnel mine such as the Chinese Type-72A.)[86]

However, it is not as though the money for mine clearance does not exist. Rae McGrath, Director of the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) in Cumbria, United Kingdom, stresses the need for sustainable, low-cost technology, and the establishment of indigenous mine clearance capability. This would deal with the problem of uncleared mines at a local level and enable the rehabilitation of local economies. But in order to be effective and comprehensive, it must be backed by the international community. Certainly the re-direction of funds, for example, presently allocated to continuing research and development in landmine technology (which amounts to millions of dollars each year) — would not only signal the international community's commitment to the problem of uncleared landmines, but would also have a more beneficial long-term impact on the economic welfare of communities following conflicts.[87] It is a question of augmenting and making more efficient present mine clearance techniques, rather than spending millions of dollars on trying to develop new high-tech methods, which swallow up funds and which often develop unsuitable or only partially effective solutions.[88]

The evidence presented in this paper suggests that light weapons proliferation accelerates disintegrative trends such as weak governance, religious, ethnic and racial tensions, social fissures, criminal violence and civil conflict. In general terms, it is evident that national stability, the strength of democratic institutions and levels of human development are key determinants of levels of societal violence and trends in the demand in weaponry. These considerations beg for a policy that addresses the root causes of the conflicts in which the proliferation of light weapons is a determining feature of national life.

"Big" solutions require the major powers to look at the international system in a way that departs from traditional concepts of foreign policy and national interest. This is based on the premise that globalization has made human security a truly collective concern. As the **Human Development Report 1994** indicates, the effects of crises of sovereignty and underdevelopment in one part of the world have impacts beyond the immediate points of crisis. As a result, one of the main issues is eliciting sufficient political will to address these structural problems.

Thus, the "big" solutions are ultimately concerned with addressing the factors that cause crises of sovereignty in the international system, i.e., developing strategies that will prevent the types of conflicts in which light weapons proliferation becomes endemic and, consequently, deterring the corrosive

societal effects that are associated with their use. The world community must therefore make preventive diplomacy[89] and preventive development[90] twin agents in a holistic approach to establishing a more stable international environment. Although a discussion of this strategy is beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear that the major actors in the international community have a duty, borne of a humanitarian obligation and, ultimately, an awareness of their own self-interest, to put such a strategy in place.

◆ Endnotes

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