

Intra-state Conflict, Political Violence and Small Arms Proliferation in Africa

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War and the demise of superpower rivalry in many parts of the Third World, followed by the ending of apartheid in South Africa, have resulted in the peaceful resolution of many of Africa's historical conflicts, for example, in Namibia, Mozambique and Ethiopia. At the same time, many states in Africa have experienced an upsurge in various forms of intra-state conflict which has been accompanied by high levels of political violence and instability. The increasing incidence of intra-state conflict has also prompted an increase in the demand for weapons which can be used for internal purposes (e.g. counter-insurgency operations) rather than for defence against external threats. In many countries non-state actors, including insurgent groups, separatist forces, local warlords and criminal syndicates have emerged as the major consumers of arms. These various developments have combined to produce a dramatic increase in the demand for small arms in many countries in Africa. Fragile state structures, porous borders, and the absence of effective enforcement agencies (police and customs) have in turn contributed to the proliferation of small arms throughout the continent.¹ This chapter examines the relationship between political violence, instability and small arms proliferation in Africa with reference to three case studies.

The first section describes the different types of intra-state conflict that are present in Africa and analyses the relationship between intra-state conflict, political violence and instability and the proliferation of small arms. It also describes how the demand for small arms (by state and non-state actors) has contributed to the proliferation of small arms in many parts of Africa. The second section examines the issues of intra-state conflict, political violence, instability and the proliferation of small arms with reference to South Africa, Angola and Rwanda. The third section highlights a number of common issues raised by the case studies. It identifies those factors which are perpetuating the various forms of intra-state conflict and thereby sustaining the demand for small arms. It also examines those factors (e.g.,

absence of effective enforcement agencies) which are contributing to the proliferation of small arms in many countries in Africa. The final section contains some conclusions and recommendations.

Intra-state Conflict and Political Violence in Africa

Despite the resolution of many of Africa's historical conflicts, particularly those fuelled by the ideological imperatives of the Cold War (e.g., Ethiopia and Mozambique), certain countries on the continent are still experiencing some form of intra-state conflict. This conflict can take a number of different forms:²

- conflicts associated with termination of war and post-war reconciliation (e.g., Ethiopia, Liberia, Rwanda, Angola and Mozambique).
- conflicts over distribution of resources — these include countries which are pursuing structural adjustment programmes with distributional consequences that create conflict (e.g., Mozambique); and conflicts over distribution that are tied to conflicts over reconciliation (e.g., South Africa).
- conflicts over political participation — in which groups and individuals are demanding political rights, the institutionalisation of multi-party democracy and an end to one-party states, military dictatorships, anachronistic forms of government and more accountability from leaders (e.g., Zimbabwe and the former Zaire).
- conflicts over political identity — in which these clash with ethnic, tribal, religious, linguistic and other sub-national loyalties (e.g., the former Zaire, Angola, Rwanda, Sudan and South Africa). In these conflicts ethnic, racial, religious and/or sub-national groups have mobilised to fight for or demand political change.

In reality these various forms of intra-state conflict are not distinct, but interconnected. Thus conflicts over participation have implications for distribution, while conflicts over political identity are often linked to those over participation and distribution. These various types of intra-state conflict are often accompanied by high levels of political violence and instability.

The presence of various forms of intra-state conflict, together with high levels of political violence and instability in many countries in Africa, has created a demand for small arms — i.e., weapons which are light, easily transportable, and which require little logistical support, training or maintenance.³ The demand for small arms derives from both state and non-state actors, and is particularly noticeable in countries where groups have mobilised to fight for or demand political change (including a transfer of political power) (e.g., the former Zaire and Rwanda).

The increased demand for small arms by state and non-state actors has been influenced by a number of supply-side developments in the post-Cold War era. As discussed in Chapter 2, the end of the Cold War has been accompanied by a surplus of weapons in the international arms market. This has resulted in increased competition between producers and suppliers (including independent brokers and black market dealers) and lower prices for a wide range of weapons. In addition, the increased demand for small arms from non-state actors has led producers and suppliers to transfer arms through a wide variety of covert, illegal and indirect channels.⁴

Analysts of global politics and international relations have noted that in the post-Cold War era the power and authority of the state is being eroded both by global economic forces and the growing assertiveness of individuals and non-state actors and groups, who are usually organised along ethnic, religious, tribal, caste, linguistic and/or sub-national lines. These developments have been described by various analysts in terms of a 'relocation of authority' or a 'diffusion of authority', in which a growing number of non-state actors are playing an increasingly significant role in the fate of peoples and states.⁵ In this context, the diffusion of the state's authority has produced a high degree of incoherence, disorder and instability, which in turn has forced citizens to seek protection through non-state and/or sub-national groupings.

In many parts of Africa the state is weak and lacks legitimacy. Consequently, it is often unable to manage or contain the various forms of intra-state conflict which may exist. The state and its enforcement agencies, such as the police and customs, may also lack the capacity and ability to deal effectively with problems such as political violence, armed banditry and the proliferation of small arms, which are linked to the various forms of intra-state conflict.⁶

Intra-state Conflict, Political Violence and the Proliferation of Small Arms: South Africa, Angola and Rwanda

This section describes the relationship between intra-state conflict, political violence and the proliferation of small arms with reference to three case studies from Africa: South Africa, Angola and Rwanda. Each case study examines the following issues:

- the origins and causes of intra-state conflict and political violence;
- the nature of the intra-state conflict and political violence;
- the relationship between intra-state conflict, political violence and the demand for small arms;
- the supply of small arms into the particular country under discussion from internal and external sources; and
- the relationship between the demand for small arms and small arms proliferation in neighbouring countries.

South Africa (KwaZulu-Natal)

During the apartheid era, intra-state conflict and political violence in South Africa focused largely on conflict over political participation, as Black South Africans fought for political rights and the abolition of apartheid policies. Intra-state conflicts over political participation have all but disappeared since the ending of apartheid and the holding of the country's first democratic elections in April 1994. However, other forms of intra-state conflict and political violence still exist, largely rooted in conflicts over political identity which have ethnic, tribal and other sub-national overtones.

Although political violence has declined to negligible levels in most parts of South Africa since April 1994, it remains endemic in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The high levels of political violence and instability in KwaZulu-Natal constitute the most serious threat to the integrity and stability of the post-apartheid settlement in South Africa.⁷

In recent history, the political violence in KwaZulu-Natal can be largely explained in terms of the history of political rivalry between Inkatha, a Zulu cultural liberation movement which was founded in 1975, and the United Democratic Front (UDF), a broad anti-apartheid movement which was founded in 1983 and which acted as the internal voice of the African National Congress (ANC) before it was unbanned in 1990.

In the early 1980s an escalating cycle of violence, sparked by increasing population pressures, scarce resources (as a result of apartheid policies), poverty and a lack of effective political representation, started in many townships and certain rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. What began as faction fighting between members of Inkatha and the UDF developed into a 'low-intensity civil war', which has continued to the present day. The political rivalry between Inkatha (relaunched as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in 1990) and the unbanned ANC intensified after 1990 as each party began to mobilise support in preparation for the country's first democratic elections.

The conflict in KwaZulu-Natal has three main dimensions: 1) a struggle to control territory; 2) a struggle for the possession of the 'Zulu tradition'; and 3) profound constitutional disagreement.⁸ It can be characterised primarily as a conflict over political identity, in which a conflict based on political rivalry between the IFP and the ANC has become conflated with ethnic, tribal and other sub-national (regional) interests.

The links between political conflict and violent death are varied and highly visible in this province. Armed groups from both Inkatha and the ANC prevent the holding of public meetings by the other party. Individuals and groups travelling to and from such meetings are attacked by residents (supporters of the opposing party) of areas they have to pass through. The establishment of party branches in 'new' areas is resisted with assault rifles. Prominent party officials and activists are assassinated by hit squads and private political armies are set up for defence of specific areas. Forced evictions, sometimes accompanied by assault or murder, take place in order to 'purify' territory in terms of political allegiance and affiliation. Forced recruitment drives often end in executions, as does resistance to them.⁹

Since April 1994 the nature of the conflict in KwaZulu-Natal has shifted from a contest for control of territory and denial of political space to opponents to a war of propaganda and bureaucratic manoeuvre for control of security in the province.¹⁰

The political violence that has accompanied the conflict in KwaZulu-Natal has claimed the lives of more than 12 000 people since the mid-1980s. During 1994 and 1995 the number of murders per capita in KwaZulu-Natal was more than double the average for the whole country, and nearly two-

and-a-half times higher than in any other province.¹¹ The critical link between political violence, instability and the proliferation of light weapons in the province can be clearly established if one considers the statistics on murder in KwaZulu-Natal, and the weapons that were used in the process. During the period 1993 to June 1995 just over 3 000 people were killed. The majority of these deaths (50 per cent-60 per cent) involved the use of light weapons (AK-47s, pistols, or home-made guns). The 'political killings' associated with the conflict in KwaZulu-Natal have in turn created a substantial demand for weapons, particularly small arms. Unlike many other countries in Africa, South Africa has its own well-established domestic defence industry, and thus the demand for small arms as a result of the conflict in KwaZulu-Natal has been partly met from official and partly unofficial, domestic sources.

In terms of internal sources of supply during the 1980s, the relationship between Inkatha and the National Party (NP) government has become more defined. As a result of the adoption of the policy of 'total strategy' and the establishment of the National Security Management System, direct links were created between the government's security forces and the local government structures of KwaZulu-Natal which were controlled by Inkatha.¹² Inkatha was rewarded for its loyalty to the South African government with financial and material assistance. This included both overt and covert supplies of arms and ammunition to the KwaZulu-Natal Police Force and self-protection units, specialised military training to certain Inkatha supporters, and even the involvement of security force members in secret 'dirty tricks' campaigns against ANC aligned communities and individuals.¹³ After 1990, and in the period prior to the elections in April 1994, it was alleged that the KwaZulu-Natal police supplied pistols and rifles to Inkatha members.¹⁴

In addition to the overt and covert supply of weapons from these two sources, theft of weapons from the security forces (defence force, police, correctional services) and theft, robbery or loss of weapons in legal possession (licensed private owners) also constitute important internal sources of supply. Between April 1990 and September 1995 the South African Police Service suffered the loss of 7 261 small arms, while the South African National Defence Force suffered the loss of 1 325 small arms during the same period. During 1995 more than 16 000 small arms were

reported stolen, while nearly 1 500 were reported lost. During 1995 KwaZulu-Natal had the highest number of reported cases of illegal possession of firearms (37 per cent of total in South Africa). During the same year more than 40 per cent of the 16 291 illegal weapons seized in South Africa were in KwaZulu-Natal.

Home-made weapons are also an important internal source of supply of small arms for both Inkatha and ANC supporters.¹⁵ During 1994 over 20 per cent of the total number of illegal weapons seized by the police were home-made firearms. During 1995 the number of such firearms seized by the police declined, both in absolute terms and as a share of the total number of illegal firearms. The vast majority of home-made firearms seized by police were in KwaZulu-Natal.

In terms of external sources of supply, the failure to implement effective disarmament during UN peacekeeping operations in countries such as Angola and Mozambique has contributed to the supply and proliferation of foreign-manufactured small arms (e.g., AK-47s) in South Africa, particularly KwaZulu-Natal.¹⁶ A large percentage (more than 10 per cent) of the illegal small arms seized by the police in KwaZulu-Natal is not locally manufactured, but from foreign producers and suppliers.¹⁷

There are several established smuggling routes into KwaZulu-Natal, such as from Mozambique, via Swaziland to northern KwaZulu-Natal, or alternatively through the two temporary border posts near the Ndumo Game Reserve and Kosi Bay.¹⁸ Routes via the former Transkei and Ciskei are also in existence. Weapons are also smuggled into South Africa from Angola via Namibia (Caprivi Strip, Ariamsvlei/Nakop) and Botswana. Private commercial air cargo companies are also utilised in the illegal arms trade.¹⁹ There is no doubt that the easy availability of illegal small arms, both from internal and external sources, has fuelled the political violence in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as contributing to the ongoing high levels of violent crime in other parts of South Africa (e.g., Gauteng).²⁰

Angola

Angola, the second country under discussion, has experienced more than three decades of intra-state conflict. This conflict, which has been accompanied by appalling levels of death and destruction, has taken a

number of different forms, such as conflict over political participation, conflict over political identity and conflict associated with termination of war and post-war reconciliation.

During the 1960s and early 1970s three liberation movements (*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA), the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) and the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA)) waged an anti-colonial struggle against the Portuguese colonial regime in an attempt to gain independence.²¹ This intra-state conflict was largely a conflict over political participation in which the various liberation movements demanded political rights and an end to Portuguese colonial rule. As a result of the military coup in Portugal in 1974, Angola was granted independence in 1975 and the MPLA came to power.

After independence a civil war between the MPLA and UNITA began, with varying degrees of overt and covert support from South Africa, Zaire, Cuba, the United States and the Soviet Union. Essentially this was a conflict over political participation and political identity, in which each side attempted to gain political control of the Angolan state, with the support of one or other of the superpowers and their respective allies. This intra-state conflict was also associated with ethnic, tribal and other sub-national loyalties, in which certain ethnic or tribal groups were mobilised on the side of the MPLA or UNITA. In 1988 a tripartite peace agreement between Cuba, South Africa and Angola ended the war between South Africa and Angola, allowed for the complete withdrawal of Cuban and South African troops from Angola under a UN Monitoring Force (UNAVEM I) and paved the way for Namibian independence.²²

However, despite the resolution of the international component of the conflict, the civil war continued in Angola with a renewed attempt by the MPLA to eliminate UNITA. During this period the conflict over political identity became linked to a conflict associated with the termination of war. Following a number of failed peace negotiations, the Portuguese government, with the involvement of the United States and the Soviet Union (these three countries were subsequently called the 'Observing Troika'), was able to convince the warring parties to negotiate an end to the war. After much negotiation UNITA and the MPLA eventually signed an

agreement in Bicesse, Portugal on 31 May 1991, thus ending the seventeen-year old Angolan civil war.²³ The Bicesse Accords made provision for democratic elections in September 1992, with a winner-take-all presidential system and a legislature based on proportional representation. The MPLA was recognised as the legitimate and internationally-recognised government and was granted the task of governing the country during the sixteen month transitional period. A UN monitoring force (UNAVEM II) was tasked with monitoring and verifying the implementation of the various components of the Bicesse Accords, which included the cantonment, disarmament and demobilisation of combatants, the formation of a new armed force, and the holding of democratic elections.²⁴

The Bicesse Accords made provision for the formation of a new Angolan Armed Force (*Forces Armadas Angolans* (FAA)) and the simultaneous demobilisation of over 100 000 combatants.²⁵ As the United Nations devoted very limited resources (financial and human) to the demilitarisation process, UNITA and MPLA were largely responsible for implementing the provisions of the peace agreement. However, due to the lack of international supervision of the process, and a lack of trust between the warring parties, the two armies failed to demobilise. By the time of the elections only 40 per cent of combatants had been demobilised. Both sides delayed demobilising troops, and cached large contingents of men and arms in order to be prepared to resume fighting should the peace process falter.²⁶ It was estimated that UNITA kept a 10 000 to 20 000 strong army close to the Namibian border and at other locations and 3 000-5 000 elite troops in Zaire.²⁷ The MPLA reportedly shifted 10 000 to 20 000 troops into a paramilitary police force, the Ninjas, thereby excluding them from the demobilisation process. This state of affairs, combined with UNITA's outright rejection of the election results in October 1992 (Savimbi claimed that the MPLA had committed electoral fraud), returned Angola to a state of civil war.²⁸ The fact that large amounts of troops and arms were kept out of the disarmament and demobilisation process, facilitated the rearming of both sides and the ease with which both returned to war.

Angola's 'Third War', which was a continuation of the conflict over political identity and conflict associated with termination of war and subsequent reconciliation, began in earnest in late 1992. By late 1994 more than 100 000 people had died as a result of the war, starvation and disease.

During 1993 and 1994 the military balance between UNITA and the government continued to shift back and forth, but by the middle of 1994 the government had gained the upper hand. Finally, in November 1994, the civil war was brought to an end with the signing of the Lusaka Protocol. The UN deployed a new peacekeeping operation (UNAVEM III) in Angola to monitor the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. Despite the Protocol, localised fighting continues and relations between MPLA and UNITA remain strained. By mid-1997 it was still unclear whether the fragile peace would hold, or the country would return to war.

The nearly thirty years of intra-state conflict in Angola has led to a sustained demand for arms from both the MPLA government and UNITA. Many countries and private arms dealers have been only too happy to supply arms to either the MPLA or UNITA. The May 1991 Bicesse Accords, in what came to be known as the 'Triple Zero' clause, prohibited both the government and UNITA from acquiring new weaponry. In addition the UN Security Council imposed an international arms embargo on UNITA in September 1993 after the resumption of the civil war. Despite the presence of the Triple Zero Clause and the UN arms embargo, with the return to civil war in 1992 both the MPLA and UNITA began to procure large amounts of arms and foreign expertise. The government used its oil reserves to buy large amounts of weapons, while UNITA made use of its access to diamond producing areas to fund its weapons purchases.

According to the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), Angola imported \$4,6 billion in arms prior to the signing of the Bicesse Accords (1987-1991), the majority of which (approximately 90 per cent) came from the former Soviet Union. The remaining arms supplies were procured from Latin America, West European nations and former Warsaw Pact countries.²⁹ The bulk of this equipment included tanks, armoured personnel carriers, multiple rocket launchers, surface-to-surface missiles and large quantities of small arms.

UNITA had three major suppliers of arms prior to the Bicesse agreement: those captured from the MPLA government, and those supplied by the United States and South Africa. United States covert aid to UNITA totalled about \$250 million between 1986 and 1991.³⁰ While UNITA had some tanks and armoured vehicles, most of its weapons were small arms,

including mortars, shoulder-fired surface-to-air weapons, rifles and rocket launchers.

With the resumption of civil war in Angola, the MPLA government embarked on a process of procuring vast amounts of weaponry to replace what was outdated, and to gain the upper hand over UNITA. On 23 April 1993, the government announced that the Triple Zero clause in the Bicesse Accords was obsolete and that it would no longer abide by the arms embargo. It called on "*all countries with which the Angolan government has diplomatic relations of co-operation to help it equip its forces with material and logistical means*".³¹ Consequently, all of the members of the observing Troika (US, Russia and Portugal), as well as other nations such as the United Kingdom, announced a lifting of their national bans on military supply to the Angolan government.

Although comprehensive information on arms flows to Angola since 1993 has been virtually impossible to obtain (most of the deals have been shrouded in secrecy), some sources estimate that the MPLA government spent between US\$2,5-3,5 billion on weapons purchases between 1993 and 1994, making Angola the largest arms importer in sub-Saharan Africa during this period.³² Between five and seven years' production of oil was mortgaged to finance these purchases.³³

It is evident that the government acquired a full range of weaponry, from small arms and ammunition to tanks and aircraft from numerous sources, including governments in Europe (Spain, Portugal, Poland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Switzerland), Africa (South Africa, Nigeria and Zimbabwe), Asia (Uzbekistan and North Korea), Israel, Russia, Ukraine and Latin America (Brazil). Private international arms dealers were also a significant source of weapons. Though unconfirmed, the majority of small arms purchased by the MPLA government appear to be of Russian (AKM 7,62mm assault rifles and PM Makarov 9mm), South Africa (R-5 5,56mm rifles) and Israeli (Galil rifles) origin.

In addition to the Bicesse Accords which forbade the purchase of arms by both sides in Angola, on 15 September 1993 the Security Council adopted Resolution 864 which prohibited the sale and supply of any military or petroleum products to UNITA. Despite these international embargoes,

UNITA continued to import arms illegally, mostly through Zaire, South Africa and arrangement with private dealers. It is very difficult to determine in any conclusive detail recent arms acquisitions by UNITA. However, it is apparent that UNITA was able to acquire a large amount of light weapons (AKMs and RPG-7s) through the capture of government arms caches. After 1993 UNITA lost the unconditional support of its two major arms suppliers, the United States and South Africa, but it continued to receive support from private sources in South Africa. Moreover, it has found a number of other governments willing to provide arms, and/or facilitate UNITA's arms purchases through private sources, Zaire being the most notable case. Other nations apparently involved, directly or indirectly, in illegal arms supplies to UNITA include Congo, Namibia (mainly petroleum), Russia and China.³⁴

Another critical dimension of the Angolan conflict was that of foreign armed personnel or mercenaries. Following the withdrawal of South African and Cuban troops from Angola in 1988, Executive Outcomes (EO), a South African 'security consultant' firm, began to provide military assistance to UNITA. However, by mid-1993 EO had reportedly severed its links with UNITA after securing a contract with the Angolan government.³⁵ Training is EO's major activity and includes basic fighting techniques, weapons maintenance, signals, engineering and specialised skills such as sabotage. EO also maintains two 'Special Units' which have been active in the frontline against UNITA since February 1994. It has been reported, further, that EO has assisted the Angolan government in the procurement of weapons.³⁶

Both the Angolan government and UNITA continued to acquire weapons after the signing of the Lusaka Protocol. The MPLA government received weapons from countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Brazil and Portugal during 1995 and 1996.³⁷ However, most of these weapons deliveries were part of contracts signed prior to the Lusaka Protocol. UNITA, on the other hand, continued to obtain much of its weaponry from private sources rather than from foreign governments. The former Zaire has remained the most important source of support for UNITA which continues to use it as a transit area and conduit for weapons transfers.³⁸

The proliferation of small arms in Angola is thus largely a result of two factors: lack of effective disarmament and demobilisation during

UNAVEM II; and the presence of the ongoing 'Third War' since 1992, which has resulted in large inflows of small arms into Angola from foreign and neighbouring suppliers. Thus, large amounts of weapons, particularly small arms, are in circulation in Angola. As a result of the proliferation of small arms, the country has emerged as one of the major sources of illegal small arms for other countries in the region, such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa. Two of the major smuggling routes into South Africa from Angola are via Namibia (Ariamsvlei/Nakop) to Gauteng and the Western Cape; and via the Caprivi Strip in Namibia through Botswana to Gauteng. Thus the demand for small arms in Angola has contributed to the proliferation of small arms in the region. This has in turn contributed to intra-state conflict and rising crime rates in many countries such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa.³⁹

Rwanda

Rwanda, the third country under discussion was formerly a Belgian colony. It gained its independence via the UN trusteeship system in 1962. It has a population of about 8,5 million, of which the vast majority are Hutu (90 per cent), with Tutsis making up some 9 per cent of the population.

Rwanda has experienced protracted periods of intra-state conflict and political violence since its independence in the early 1960s, including conflicts over political participation and political identity. These two types of conflict have been interlinked, and are rooted in the conflicts between Rwanda's different ethnic and social groups.⁴⁰

Between April and July 1994 hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were murdered during a violent genocide campaign led by the Rwandan government, the armed forces and Hutu militias. The victims were mostly Tutsi, and 'moderate' Hutus (those advocating a democratic government that respected the rights of all Rwandans). The genocide was supposedly sparked off by the assassination of Rwandan President Habyarimana, whose plane was shot down as it approached Kigali airport. However, it is evident that the campaign to eliminate the Tutsi had been planned months before, as a means of derailing the peace agreement (Arusha Accords) which would dilute the power of the ruling regime. The genocide was eventually terminated in mid-July 1994 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the Tutsi-led rebel movement, succeeded in defeating the government forces and put an end to control by the state.

The defeated government and the army, fearing retribution for their involvement in the genocide, led a mass exodus of the Hutu population into neighbouring countries (e.g., the former Zaire), causing a refugee crisis on a vast scale. This resulted in more deaths, as many refugees succumbed to disease and starvation. The authorities responsible for the genocide quickly re-established their rule over the refugees, however, using control over the humanitarian supplies of food, water and medicine to force compliance with their orders. By the end of the year, the ex-Hutu government in Zaire was proclaiming its intention of returning to Rwanda ‘to finish the work’ of killing the Tutsis.⁴¹

The genocide in Rwanda had its roots in the wave of violence that had seized the region between 1959 and 1966, when Hutus overthrew the Tutsi monarchy and elite Tutsi class, which had maintained a fairly well organised and stratified state for several hundred years.⁴² Some 10 000 to 20 000 Tutsi were slaughtered in the process, and this led to about 150 000 Tutsi, known as the Banyarwanda, fleeing to Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania and the former Zaire. Colonialism also aggravated the Rwandan condition: Belgium governed Rwanda as a protectorate from 1919 to 1962 and during this time manipulated ethnic divisions by switching its support between the Hutus and Tutsis.⁴³

In October 1990, Tutsi guerrillas of the RPF invaded Rwanda from Uganda, with significant military and financial support from the Ugandan military, including an assortment of small arms and weapons systems (mainly of Soviet origin). Fighting in north-eastern Rwanda was fairly intense for several weeks, but by November 1990 the Hutu government had successfully repelled the RPF invasion force. The RPF retreated to Uganda, where its forces regrouped, retrained and rearmed with new weaponry from the Ugandan National Resistance Army. Using Uganda as a base, these forces launched a series of small excursions into northern Rwanda throughout 1991 and 1992.⁴⁴

After several failed diplomatic attempts and cease-fire agreements, the two warring parties finally signed a peace agreement in Arusha, Tanzania in August 1993, formally ending the war and establishing steps for reconciliation. The peace agreement called for power-sharing through the establishment of a “*new Broad-Based Transitional Government; the*

*integration of both sides’ armies into a single National Army; the integration of both sides’ armies into a new National Gendarmerie; and guarantee of the inalienable right of all Rwandan refugees, including those from past decades, to repatriate”.*⁴⁵

More than thirty years of inter-state conflict and political violence in Rwanda since the early 1960s has created a sustained demand for weaponry, particularly small arms in Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region. During its years in exile in Uganda, the RPF was equipped with mainly Soviet and East European arms. It claims to have ‘stolen’ arms from the Ugandan military, captured additional arms from the Rwandan army and bought others on the open market.⁴⁶

The Hutu government in Rwanda purchased most of its defence equipment from Belgium and France prior to 1990. However, the RPF invasion in 1990 prompted a regional arms race, which in turn had the effect of fuelling the conflict in Rwanda. Both sides expanded their armed forces which led to an increased demand for weapons, particularly small arms. Most of the weapons were bought on the open market from private sources. Former Warsaw Pact countries (Russia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) appear to have supplied both sides. This is evident in that the Kalashnikov AKM automatic rifles, many of them manufactured in Romania, were the most common weapons carried by RPF rebels and government forces. The key suppliers to the Rwandan government between 1990 and 1994 were France, Egypt and South Africa.⁴⁷ During the latter part of 1993 the Rwandan government decided to standardise its infantry forces with South African weapons.⁴⁸

United States intelligence experts estimate that more than a million people were killed in the genocidal carnage that began in April 1994. Much of the killing was carried out with machetes, but automatic rifles and hand grenades were also commonly used. Their wide availability helped Hutu extremists carry out their slaughter on a horrendous scale. As a result of the genocide, the UN imposed an international arms embargo on Rwanda in May 1994.

The UN arms embargo against Rwanda was not strictly enforced and, as a result, the exiled Rwandan government in what was then Zaire was able to

gain access to large amounts of arms, particularly small arms. Weapons flows have been facilitated by the former Zaire's friendly relationship with the exiled Rwandan government. A UN report released towards the end of 1996 implicated eighteen countries, including France, Belgium, Britain, Italy, Spain and South Africa, for supplying arms to the ousted Rwandan government in Zaire in violation of the UN embargo.⁴⁹ In many instances the sales to the exiled government in Zaire were not official government sales, but rather sales by individuals or private firms in France and South Africa. The government of Zaire, according to the UN report, played a 'central role' in the arms transfers and permitted its territory and facilities to be used as a conduit for weapons supplies to the exiles. Private cargo companies based in Zaire acting under contracts with Zairean officials were allegedly involved in transporting a large quantity of these weapons.⁵⁰ In 1996 the UN embargo against Rwanda was revoked, and the RPF government attempted to purchase arms from South Africa in order to defend itself against attacks from the former Hutu government militias in Zaire. The South African government approved the sale in September 1996 of approximately US\$ 20 million worth of small arms and armoured personnel carriers, but then suspended the sale after international criticism and on account of the refugee crisis in Zaire.⁵¹

As a result of the intra-state conflict in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994, and the presence of the ousted Rwandan government in Zaire, large quantities of small arms have flowed into Rwanda and the former Zaire in the last few years from foreign and neighbouring sources. However, both Rwanda and the former Zaire have been implicated in supplying weapons to other states in the region (e.g., Angola, Uganda and Burundi). Thus the demand for small arms in Rwanda has contributed to the proliferation of small arms in the Great Lakes Region.

Intra-state Conflict, Political Violence and the Proliferation of Small Arms in Africa: Common Issues

Certain issues common to the countries of South Africa, Angola and Rwanda have emerged in the course of this study. These are discussed here in terms of the demand for small arms, the supply of small arms, and small arms proliferation.

The Demand for Small Arms

The increasing incidence of intra-state conflict and political violence in many parts of Africa has created high levels of demand for small arms from both state and non-state actors. In each of the three case studies surveyed, various forms of intra-state conflict, together with high levels of political violence, have been present for a number of years. Conflicts over political participation and/or conflicts over political identity were the most common forms of intra-state conflict in South Africa, Angola and Rwanda. All three countries have also experienced intra-state conflicts associated with termination of war and post-war reconciliation.

The causes or origins of these various forms of intra-state conflict are complex and in many cases interrelated. Most of the intra-state conflicts over political participation and/or political identity are rooted in the colonial and post-colonial history of each country, in which indigenous people demanded political rights from colonial powers (e.g., Angola) and/or undemocratic and authoritarian post-colonial regimes (e.g., South Africa). In each of the cases under study, conflicts over political participation and political rights have become conflated with tribal, ethnic and other sub-national interests, which have been mobilised for political or ideological purposes. The causes or origins of the conflicts associated with termination of war and post-war reconciliation are often rooted in a lack of consensus with regard to the details and modalities of the settlement agreements which led originally to the termination of conflicts of long duration (e.g., civil wars). These details included technicalities, such as cease-fires, peace accords, constitutional arrangements and reconciliation measures.

The demand for small arms in countries such as South Africa has also been influenced by the high levels of crime and violence, which in turn are supported by the easy availability of small arms from both internal and external sources.

The Supply of Small Arms

A flood of small arms has poured into the continent of Africa as a result of the increasing demand from both state and non-state actors in many African countries. While it is extremely difficult to estimate the extent of the supply, it has become highly lucrative for arms suppliers and dealers. Transport companies, especially air cargo and shipping companies, have also

benefited enormously in many parts of Africa. The highly competitive nature of the international arms market, as a result of the surplus, together with the large black market for small arms, has kept prices at very low levels. This has allowed (relatively) poor African governments and non-state actors to purchase large quantities of small arms from official and unofficial external sources.

In the three cases under survey here, the demand for small arms from both state and non-state actors was met by a number of different sources: internal and external; official and unofficial. State actors tend to buy arms from official internal or external sources. Internal sources include procurement from domestic defence industries (e.g., South Africa), while external sources include foreign governments and private arms dealers. Non-state actors tend to acquire their arms from unofficial internal and external sources. Internal sources include private arms dealers, robbery and theft from security forces, robbery and theft of arms in legal possession, and home-made weapons. External include smuggling from other countries and purchase from black market private arms dealers.

In South Africa the supply of small arms is significantly different from that in Rwanda and Angola, given the fact that South Africa has its own domestic defence industry and does not need to import small arms. South Africa is a major producer of small arms, and has emerged as a major supplier (both in terms of official and unofficial sales) to countries in Africa, including Rwanda and Angola. In South Africa, government security forces are supplied with small arms from the country's domestic defence industry. In terms of unofficial sources, Mozambique and Angola are the two most important external sources of small arms. The major unofficial internal sources of arms are theft and robbery from security forces, theft and robbery of arms in legal possession and home-made weapons.

Since Angola does not have its own domestic defence industry, both the MPLA and UNITA acquired their weapons from external sources. The main sources of supply for the MPLA are the governments of Russia, Brazil and Portugal and various East European countries (Bulgaria, Poland, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and the Czech Republic), as well as private international arms dealers. For UNITA, the main sources are private international arms dealers

and, up until Mobutu was deposed, Zaire. Most of UNITA's arms were acquired from unofficial external sources via Zaire. UNITA has also managed to acquire small arms from internal sources through theft and robbery from the MPLA's security forces.

Rwanda, also without an arms industry of its own, acquires its small arms from external sources. Prior to the genocide in 1994, the major official external suppliers of the Rwandan government were France, Egypt and South Africa. Before 1994 the RPF obtained most of its small arms from external sources (Uganda) or from internal ones, through theft and robbery from the Rwandan security forces. Companies and individuals from countries such as France, Belgium, Britain, Italy, Spain and South Africa have also been implicated in supplying small arms to the ousted Rwandan government in Zaire, in contravention of the UN arms embargo. Since the lifting of the embargo against Rwanda in 1996, South Africa has emerged as one of the major official external suppliers of small arms to the RPF government in Rwanda.

In examining the supply of small arms to countries such as South Africa, Angola and Rwanda, it is evident that the major external suppliers have acted irresponsibly in supplying weapons to countries such as the latter two which are experiencing various forms of intra-state conflict and therefore bear some of the responsibility for the continuing intra-state conflicts in many parts of Africa. The supply of large quantities of small arms from both official and unofficial external sources, particularly neighbouring states, has exacerbated the presence of intra-state conflict and political violence in countries such as South Africa, Angola and Rwanda, and hampered the resolution of these intra-state conflicts through non-violent means. Furthermore, the easy availability of small arms has contributed to the pervasiveness of violence, lawlessness and criminality in these countries.

Small Arms Proliferation

Small arms proliferation has become a major political and security issue at local, national, regional and international levels throughout Africa. It is the outcome of the following factors: the long history of protracted intra and inter-state conflict in many African countries; the role of both superpowers and regional powers in supplying their 'proxy armies' in Africa with vast amounts of arms and military equipment; inadequate arms control and

disarmament measures during UN peacekeeping operations in Africa; porous borders; weak state institutions and ineffective enforcement agencies (police and customs).⁵²

In the three cases under survey there is a direct relationship between the demand for small arms, the supply of small arms, and the proliferation of small arms. The demand is created by the presence of intra-state conflict and political violence, various forms of which are being experienced by each of the countries concerned. South Africa, Angola and Rwanda are all manifesting an increasing demand for small arms from state and non-state actors. Supply to countries such as these, from internal and external sources, is in direct response to the demand. In many instances the external sources of small arms are neighbouring states or private arms dealers. Many of the transfers of small arms occur through the black market or unofficial channels.

Small arms proliferation is, moreover, a consequence of ineffective control over existing stocks of arms and over arms transfers (imports and exports). In countries such as Angola, ineffective arms control and disarmament measures during UN peacekeeping operations have contributed to the problem of small arms proliferation. In all three countries theft and robbery of small arms from government forces and arsenals, as well as the smuggling of arms from external sources, have also contributed. In South Africa, the phenomenon of home-made weapons adds a further dimension to this problem.

The issue of small arms proliferation in Africa, as in other parts of the Third World, is inextricably linked to that of state capacity. Most states in Africa are weak, lacking the political will or the ability to deal with the problems associated with small arms proliferation. Many countries also lack effective enforcement agencies (police and customs) and are therefore unable to deal with these problems. At regional level, multinational organisations (e.g., SADC) manifest the same lack of political will to deal with issues such as small arms proliferation, which have transnational dimensions. Furthermore, existing national, regional and continental measures for controlling small arms proliferation have proved wholly inadequate, while the presence of mercenaries in countries such as Angola has also contributed to the problem of small arms proliferation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

South Africa, Angola and Rwanda are currently experiencing intra-state conflicts. These conflicts take many different forms, including conflicts associated with termination of war and post-war reconciliation; conflicts associated with the distribution of resources; conflicts over political participation; and conflicts over political identity. All of these different forms of intra-state conflict are accompanied by varying degrees of political violence and instability.

Intra-state conflict in these countries, in whatever form, has created a demand for weapons from both state and non-state actors. The nature of these intra-state conflicts has led to a demand for weapons that are light and require little logistical support and maintenance, rather than for large, sophisticated, conventional weapons (e.g., tanks). The demand for small arms in these countries has been met by a variety of internal and external sources of supply. In terms of external sources, most of the major weapons producers, including Russia, France and many Eastern European countries (e.g., Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine and Poland) have supplied arms to Angola and Rwanda. South Africa has emerged as a major supplier of small arms to many countries in Africa, including Angola and Rwanda. Many of the transfers of small arms to countries such as South Africa, Angola and Rwanda have been illegal and have occurred through the black market or unofficial channels. Private international arms dealers have therefore played a major role in supplying small arms to state and non-state actors in all three countries.

The supply of small arms, from both internal and external sources, to the conflicts in South Africa, Angola and Rwanda has contributed to the proliferation of small arms in these countries and their respective regions. Other factors, such as porous borders, a lack of political will on the part of governments to deal with the problem, and a lack of effective enforcement agencies (police and customs) have also contributed to the problem.

The evidence from the three case studies suggests that there are a number of policy and practical measures which could be implemented at local, national, regional and international levels to deal with the problem of small arms proliferation in Africa. These measures could include the following:

Increased Transparency in Arms Transfers

There is a severe lack of transparency with regard to arms transfers into and out of African states, including transfers of small arms. Most countries in Africa do not provide details of their arms purchases. South Africa, Rwanda and Angola have not furnished any public information about their arms purchases, including purchases of small arms, for the last few years. Neither Rwanda nor Angola have made submissions to the UN Register of Conventional Arms since its inception in 1991, while South Africa provided no information for 1992 and 1993 and a nil return for imports for 1994.⁵³

On the supply side most of the major suppliers of arms to Angola, Rwanda and South Africa have not provided any details of their arms transfers to these respective countries. Countries such as Russia, Bulgaria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Brazil, South Africa and Portugal have not provided sufficient information on their arms transfers to Angola; while countries such as France and Egypt have omitted to do so on their arms transfers to Rwanda. South Africa, as a major supplier of arms to African countries, including Angola and Rwanda, has also failed to provide details of its transfers to these countries.

There is an urgent need for greater transparency in arms transfers, particularly so that the international community can sanction those supplier countries who are feeding the demand for small arms in countries that are experiencing some form of intra-state conflict, and thereby contributing to the problem of small arms proliferation. According to Human Rights Watch, “*if a country believes that it is in its national interest to make a particular arms sale, it should be willing to divulge details of the sale and provide its justification (for the sale)*”.⁵⁴ This is particularly necessary in the case of arms transfers to human rights violators, when the possibility of misuse of weaponry is high.

Higher levels of transparency in terms of recipient countries could allow citizens in these countries to protest against the arms purchases, prompting the search for non-violent solutions to intra-state conflict.

Related to the issue of greater transparency in arms transfers, there is also an urgent need to expand the UN Register of Conventional Arms to include light weapons and small arms. The demand for these weapons is particularly high in countries experiencing intra-state conflict. Moreover, these

weapons contribute to regional and internal instability and are often the cause of the greatest devastation amongst combatants and civilians. The UN Register should also include details of weapons stockpiles and arms procured from domestic defence industries.

Various problems associated with the UN Register have led to calls for the establishment of a regional arms register which would act as a confidence-building measure amongst neighbouring countries.⁵⁵ A regional arms register for Southern Africa and Central Africa, including light weapons and small arms, would contribute to higher levels of transparency and an increase in confidence-building in these regions.

Supplier Restraint

There is an urgent need for co-ordinated measures by the UN and other multilateral organisations to encourage restraint on the part of the major suppliers of weapons, including small arms, to countries which are experiencing various forms of intra-state conflict. Countries such as Russia, Bulgaria, Brazil, Britain, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and South Africa, which are the major suppliers of weapons to countries in Africa, such as Angola and Rwanda, need to be sanctioned by the international community for their roles in supplying arms to countries that are experiencing intra-state conflicts. The supply of arms to these countries not only exacerbates the conflict, thereby leading to an increased demand for arms, but also contributes to the problem of arms proliferation in surrounding countries. The need for supplier restraint has become increasingly important, given the recent announcements by major suppliers, such as Russia and France, of their intention to increase their arms exports.

Enhanced Import and Export Controls

One of the most significant factors contributing to the problem of small arms proliferation is the lack, or absence, of effective arms import and export controls. Here legislative measures, as well as the capacity of enforcement agencies (police and customs), are included.

Many countries in Africa, including Rwanda and Angola, have neither policy nor legislative measures to control the import and export of weapons. South Africa, after a number of arms export scandals, has recently introduced much improved arms export control mechanisms. Export controls from supplier nations (e.g., Russia, France, Brazil, Poland and

Portugal) must also be strengthened to limit the transfer of small arms to countries in Africa experiencing intra-state conflict.

Most countries in Africa, including South Africa, Angola and Rwanda, lack the political will and/or the capacity to establish effective enforcement agencies which could be tasked with controlling the import and export of arms. The lack of an effective capacity to 'police' arms transfers is one of the most important contributing factors to small arms proliferation in Africa. In order to deal with the problem of small arms proliferation, significant amounts of resources, including training, need to be devoted to enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of enforcement agencies, such as the police and customs. The international donor community could certainly play a role in providing these resources to African countries, such as Rwanda and Angola. Greater use of legal instruments, such as import and export permits, and end-user certificates, could also play an important role in helping African countries to control illegal arms transfers and the proliferation of small arms.

These measures, by themselves, will not reduce the demand for small arms or eliminate the problem of small arms proliferation in Africa. As part of a long term programme of political reform and socio-economic development, however, they could greatly reduce the demand for small arms, and thus the supply of small arms to state and non-state actors. Moreover, these measures should be accompanied by a more general process of disarmament and demilitarisation, at both the level of the state and civil society. Such a process should de-emphasise military solutions to conflict, violent ones included, and should emphasise human rights, democracy and the establishment of non-violent mechanisms for resolving, managing and preventing intra-state conflict. The use of non-violent mechanisms to deal with intra-state conflicts will not only help to reduce the demand for small arms, it will also assist in curtailing their proliferation and thereby help to promote sustainable peace, security and development in Africa.

Endnotes

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