

A DEMAND-SIDE APPROACH TO FIGHTING SMALL ARMS PROLIFERATION

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Small arms and light weapons (SALW) can be used and re-used as long as demand for them exists. They often outlast fragile peace agreements and fuel post-conflict crime. Local-level approaches to fighting SALW proliferation focus on reducing the demand for guns and promoting alternative methods of conflict resolution. Policy-makers, whose aim should be to address the structure within which SALW circulate, have failed to adequately address the demand side of the market. Governments, aid organisations, and regional and international bodies have concentrated their efforts to stem SALW proliferation in the realm of manufacturers and suppliers on one hand and responses to violent conflict on the other, thus failing to articulate and use the wide range of possible interventions.

Introduction

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) surfaced on the global policy-making radar as recently as 2001.¹ As the nature of conflict has changed in the post-Cold War world, the term ‘weapons of mass destruction’ has taken on a new, broader meaning. It goes beyond superpowers’ use of conventional weapons to include guns that are easily held and operated by even the smallest child soldier (the AKM automatic rifle weighs about 4.5kg and has only nine moving parts). Some estimates place the number of small arms in circulation at more than 600 million, enough for one in every ten people on earth.² The number of deaths worldwide from the

intentional use of SALW is alarmingly high. According to the Small Arms Survey 2002, recent studies of battlefield statistics indicate that people wounded in combat by small-calibre ammunition frequently rises above 70 percent.³

In this paper, the framework for looking at the impact of violence on civilians includes lower-level intra-state conflict from cattle rustling in the Horn of Africa to urban gang violence in Rio de Janeiro to violent crime in the United States. The distinction between types of violence is blurring; the provision of security, once exclusively reserved for the state apparatus, has become a commercially tradable commodity. ‘Civilians’, those not tied

to one particular armed group, often become both the primary victims and perpetrators of conflict. The easy availability of small arms and a lack of state-based control fuel violence even after official war has ended: ironically, devastated post-war societies 'recovering' from periods of armed conflict often have the highest levels of violence. The economy of guns has a hand in this perpetuation, as both war and post-war economies use guns as a reliable currency. While the estimated value of the legal market is between US\$4-6 billion, illicit trade is sometimes estimated at between 10 and 20 percent of the total.⁴

Availability and control

The mere presence of guns undermines alternative conflict resolution strategies. The availability of small arms plays a role in perpetuating violence and making it more lethal at every level, from criminal activity to full-fledged war, in both developed and developing countries. The United States and Canada, neighbouring countries with similar sociological and economic situations, have vastly different rates of firearm-related death. 1998 statistics comparing gun availability and firearm death in the United States and Canada show that the US, with 63.3 times more handguns and 30 times more firearms overall than Canada, also had 2.7 times the death rate by firearms and 3.8 times the murder rate.⁵ In the case of South Africa, which has a vastly different history and economic outlook, the same trend holds true: "a major contributory factor to the increase in gun-related crimes is the wide availability of firearms with which these crimes can be committed".⁶ In poor countries, however, high rates of gun death have farther-reaching consequences for development. Of the 30 to 50 armed conflicts occurring between 1989 and 1995, more than 95 percent took place in developing countries and were fought primarily with small arms. Of the 34 lowest ranking countries on the UNDP's *Human Development Index* in 2000, more than 20 were severely affected by conflict.

Despite the growing availability of statistics that illuminate the correlation between avail-

ability and increased violence,⁷ and despite the fact that the victims of SALW outnumber the victims of landmines by a factor of 20,⁸ an anti-personnel landmines-type ban appears impossible.⁹ The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) has argued (with some success) that anti-personnel mines have very limited use, and that mines are not crucial to any army or individual in waging war or protecting peace. The campaign addressed counter-arguments by providing evidence that even where mines are useful, their utility is outweighed by their negative humanitarian consequences.¹⁰

While a similar argument about humanitarian impact could be made with regard to guns, there is a significant cultural acceptance of firearms and, unlike landmines, they are widely available to civilians. Their traditional and legally accepted uses are many: armed forces and police use them in their duties and civilian gun ownership rights remain one of the most hotly contested debates in the world. Sports-shooters, hunters, and those who own a gun for perceived security reasons protest against even the mildest control measures by governments. For these reasons, the mainstream small arms control agenda is focused on successful regulation, not abolition. At present, there are no consistent universal standards of firearm control, whether the gun is in the hands of a soldier or a civilian.

Within the control framework, policy-makers have addressed the need to curb the availability and use of small arms from the perspective of regulating manufacture and controlling supply. However, small arms and light weapons can be used and re-used as long as demand for them exists. AK-47s and M-16s used by combatants in the Vietnam War have resurfaced as far afield as Nicaragua and El Salvador more than 30 years later.¹¹ Guns outlast peace agreements. The ICBL, while vastly different from the gun control movement in many ways, offers one important example: it targets both the demand and supply side of landmine use; military 'customers' as well as producers and manufacturers. This article attempts to formulate guidelines to address the demand side of SALW proliferation.

Supply and demand

One of the reasons these convenient weapons circulate so widely and so easily is that there is a demand for them. In both developed and developing countries, people and armies provide a thriving market for both legal and illegal suppliers. Where there is a lack of human security, real or perceived, there is inevitably a surplus of guns in the hands of people who feel safer armed with the ability to protect themselves (whether they can successfully do so or not). Suppliers are eager to make a profit, and as long as there is a market they will do good business, no matter how regulated or monitored that market is. The development community is beginning to engage small arms issues from this new perspective: in the recent UNDP publication *Development Held Hostage: Assessing the Effects of Small Arms on Human Development*, Peter Batchelor and Robert Muggah state:

Narrow supply-side approaches that focus on the weapons and on ex-combatants are only part of the solution. Nor can the broad range of socio-economic impacts of small arms be dealt with in a framework that focuses exclusively on weapons reduction. Because small arms play a key role in undermining development gains in conflict-affected, post-conflict, and stable societies alike, they should be of concern to the development community rather than the exclusive preserve of the security and disarmament community.¹²

Batchelor and Muggah go on to specify the need for a 'preventive framework', stating that "the development community has demonstrated the capacity to design and implement comprehensive, transparent, participatory and locally-appropriate responses to the small arms issue."¹³ Governments, regional bodies, and international policy-making organisations should also begin thinking preventatively.

At a local grassroots level, many community-based organisations (CBOs) are working to reduce demand for small arms (specifically in East Africa, in areas where cattle rustling and clan warfare has fuelled proliferation). Organisations such as the Pastoralist Peace

and Development Initiative in the North East province of Kenya have stepped in where they feel higher-level attempts to curb the violence is failing. The challenge is to frame the issue of demand in a way that is as relevant to policy making as it is to community workers who engage in conflict resolution at a local and even family level. Many local approaches to firearms-fuelled violence are demand- and conflict-prevention based while the international and national response tends to be emergency-triggered. This needs to change.

Changing priorities

From a demand perspective, weapons (and the crises they contribute to) cease to be the focus of intervention. Instead, the focus turns to gun-users and seeks to influence the buyers in the market, in addition to regulating suppliers and enforcing relevant laws. By bringing demand-reduction measures to the fore, the problem of small arms proliferation can be debated in new fora. This brings gun-fuelled, conflict-related problems out of traditional defence and foreign affairs areas and brings them under the lens of traditionally 'humanitarian' policies. It also lifts the burden of crime and violence prevention off the back of policing and brings it to broader, more powerful levels of government control.

Recent studies have proposed that police, especially in developing and transitional countries, do not have the capacity to both enforce the law and lead crime prevention efforts.¹⁴ Many governments prioritise crime prevention as a key function of policing, often to the exclusion of participation by other relevant departments dealing with social services, health, and education. This runs parallel to the isolation of arms proliferation problems in the defence sector to the exclusion of the 'softer' concerns. Sibusiso Masuku, in his paper "Prevention is Better than Cure: Addressing Violent Crime in South Africa", puts it this way:

the control and management of crime and violent crime in particular cannot be the responsibility of the criminal justice system alone. The strategies required to deal with these crimes should involve

those responsible for welfare and social development and environmental modification. This implies a crucial role for other government departments, in particular, the departments of social development, education, and local government.¹⁵

Replace 'crime' with 'guns' and 'criminal justice system' with 'defence sector' and the statement remains true. It is the responsibility neither of the police nor the military nor the defence sector to change environments in which violence thrives and guns seem necessary. Yet doing so is a large part of demand-side intervention. Social deterrents to gun-use (and violent crime in general) include measures that address education and childhood development, promote social cohesion, support high-risk groups, break cycles of violence, and implement socio-economic interventions.

In addition to crime, governments need to see larger-scale conflicts in their purview as an opportunity to shift from short-term emergency response to longer-term addressing of small arms issues. Efforts to identify problem areas and stem demand should be included in all areas of concern: public health, education, the economy, and the environment. By isolating attempts to address the proliferation of SALW in the realm of manufacturers and suppliers on the one hand and violent conflict response on the other, we fail to see all of the possible interventions in between.

Existing small arms instruments

The 1997 Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms provided the first definitive framework for addressing small arms and light weapons proliferation.¹⁶ In the section entitled "Nature and Causes of Excessive and Destabilizing Accumulations of Small Arms and Light Weapons," the report laid the groundwork for what could have become a balanced supply-and-demand approach to fighting proliferation:

The variety of different causes [of proliferation] is usefully categorized by demand and supply factors... Accumulations are always a combination of both factors but the predominance of either

demand or supply varies by subregion and State, as well as by time period.¹⁷

Despite the clause about sub-region and state, the report found that all regions shared certain common problems, including insecurity, weapons culture, and youth recruitment into violent activities.¹⁸

The report goes on to define the concepts of insecurity, weapons culture, and cultures of violence, specifically focusing on the way these factors drive demand. State-level failure to provide security is cited as a major cause of demand-based proliferation:

When the State loses control over its security functions and fails to maintain the security of its citizens, the subsequent growth of armed violence, banditry and organised crime increases the demand for weapons by citizens seeking to protect themselves and their property.¹⁹

This kind of demand comes from people who are not necessarily interested in using guns to further criminal activity or violence as a tool for personal gain. They simply see no other option where governments fail to provide functional alternatives. Culturally, the report acknowledges that "possession of military-style weapons is a status symbol, a source of personal security, a means of subsistence, a sign of manliness and, in some cases, a symbol of ethnic and cultural identity."²⁰ This weapons culture results in an increase in demand mostly "when a State cannot guarantee security to its citizens or control the illicit activities in which these weapons are utilised".²¹

Despite these strong and persuasive arguments for the importance of demand as a cause of SALW proliferation, the report's recommendations both to reduce the destabilising effect where there was already an excess of weapons and to prevent such accumulation were supply-side measures. These include increased guidelines for arms transfers, adapting national laws and regulations, imposing licensing requirements, marking and safeguarding weapons, and restricting manufacture.²² In its failure to carry demand factors over from the section on causes to the list of recommendations, the Experts' Report set an example for the supply-side focus that has characterised every instrument since.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) met in Bamako, Mali in 2000 to develop an African Common Position on SALW, in anticipation of the 2001 UN Conference.²³ Using the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium and the 2000 Nairobi Declaration, among other African regional initiatives, as a starting point, the Bamako Declaration put demand reduction strategies on the policy map. While carefully reaffirming the values of sovereignty, non-interference, and the right to individual and collective self-defence, the signatories emphasised that “the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons... sustains conflicts...promotes a culture of violence...has adverse effects on security and development...and is both one of supply and demand.” It goes a step further in suggesting that the problem should be dealt with not only by controlling suppliers, but also through:

the promotion of measures aimed at restoring peace, security and confidence among and between Member States, the promotion of structures and processes to strengthen democracy, the observance of human rights, and economic recovery and growth, the promotion of conflict prevention measures, and the promotion of solutions that include both... supply and demand aspects.²⁴

In August of 2001, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Related Materials in the SADC Region. Like the Bamako Declaration, the SADC Protocol focuses mostly on supply-side interventions, but also acknowledges the key relationship between limiting the availability of weapons and maintaining stable peace processes and post-conflict situations. Article 13 specifically mentions public education and awareness programmes to “encourage responsible ownership and management of firearms, ammunition, and other related materials.”²⁵

The July 2001 UN conference on small arms and its adopted Programme of Action provided the first forum in which internationally recognised political declarations were discussed and accepted. The focus is on suppliers; the goals are centred on putting into place

“adequate laws, regulations, and administrative procedures to ensure the effective control over the export and transit of small arms and light weapons.”²⁶ The Programme of Action does refer to five general areas of demand reduction effort: promoting dialogue and a culture of peace, public awareness and confidence-building programmes, humanitarian and health development, security sector reform, and conflict prevention and resolution. However, discussion of these areas is extremely vague compared to that of supply-side measures, indicating a lack of impetus behind implementing them.

Factors influencing demand

State-level security failure

Increasing globalisation has opened markets and borders to a different kind of conflict. State power and sovereignty has been steadily eroding in the face of social, economic, and cultural changes that transcend national boundaries and make ‘human security’, rather than traditional state security, the most commonly accepted approach to peacemaking. Threats to a state’s territorial integrity coming from outside the borders are no longer as prevalent as domestic social, political, and economic unrest (in the case of terrorism, even external threats become internal problems). A majority of the world’s current conflicts can be categorised as intrastate war.

Brian Job argues that weak states are confronted with an ‘insecurity dilemma’ within their borders:

What results in such a contentious environment is better characterized as an insecurity dilemma i.e., the consequence of the competition of the various forces in society being (1) less effective security for all of certain sectors of the population, (2) less effective capacity of centralized state institutions to provide services and order, and (3) increased vulnerability of the state and its people to influence, intervention, and control by outside actors, be they other states, communal groups, or multinational corporations.²⁷

Where states are incapable of managing internal socio-political change, the line between

war and criminal activity can become blurred. A cycle of violence is perpetuated by the easy availability of small arms. Civilians, including (and especially) children and youth become both perpetrators and victims, but almost never power brokers. Those whose interests lie in perpetuating conflict do so at the expense of future generations' education and care. It is the state's responsibility to provide and maintain conditions for legitimate economic growth and social welfare. When the state fails, either by weakness, neglect, or active fomenting of existing tensions to consolidate political power, insecurity drives competing groups' demands to acquire and use weapons.

Somalia is an example of total state failure: after 30 years of Somali state rule, from independence in 1960 to the final breakdown of national institutions in 1991, there is still no internationally recognised, centralised state structure (although there are locally functioning governing bodies). In 1992, a year after the complete breakdown of state order, widespread famine caught the media's attention and the UN got involved. An arms embargo had little effect on the humanitarian crisis as warring factions continued to manipulate aid and perpetrate killings:

These conflicts between political factions brought death, suffering and food insecurity for the civilian populations who became caught up in the fighting and who were plundered of their few belongings and food stores. Crime and the kidnapping of international and national aid agency staff formed another part of the picture of constant insecurity.²⁸

In the absence of a governing body and the rule of law that protects citizens from the tyranny of a powerful few and the manipulation of scarce resources for political gain, the concept of development deteriorates into mere survival. Survival becomes the domain of those with access to guns, which in turn buy access to food.

Availability

Availability drives demand. Because they are sturdy, durable, and reusable, small arms are extremely difficult to get rid of. Once present

in a country they tend to stay there, either fuelling crime or flowing over national boundaries to serve the needs of neighbouring conflicts. One of the purposes of demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) programmes is to confiscate and take small arms out of circulation following a conflict period, but arms caches are rarely effectively destroyed in the wake of fragile peace agreements. In unstable regions with bleak economic forecasts, former combatants have little hope of finding a job in civilian life. The option of keeping a gun and seeking mercenary work is more enticing than turning over their only chance at earning a livelihood. This has proven to be true in West Africa, where youth from Sierra Leone, where there was an extensive DDR process, are rumoured to have gone on to fight in Liberia or Cote d'Ivoire.²⁹ The mere presence of weapons in situations where the balance of power is already delicate frequently plunges post-conflict states back into complex emergencies before significant development and reconstruction gains can be made.

Poverty, unequal access to resources, large youth populations with no access to education or jobs, and other socio-political factors contribute to instability, but it is the presence of guns that enables conflict to escalate into the type of violence that is beyond state control or mediation. Guns create another self-perpetuating cycle: an internal arms race. The more people accept that weapons are necessary for survival and economic advancement, the more insecurity spreads and drives further demand. Small arms proliferation hinders development and conflict resolution efforts, creates space for war economies to grow and become entrenched, and contributes to a growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons.

In a study of attitudes towards firearms in Kwa Mashu, Tsolo-Qumbo and Lekoa-Vaal in South Africa, 45 percent of both rural and urban respondents who said there had been an increase in the number of guns in their community said that it was due to a high level of accessibility.³⁰ Most of those who said they were willing to own a firearm gave self-defence as the reason (77 percent). Perceptions of rising

crime and violence play a role, but the combination of insecurity and accessibility are what drive firearm penetration. One male school-going pupil described the ease of getting a gun as “easy as peanuts. Even from the police or military force members it is just a minor task.”³¹

Mobilisation based on age, status or ethnicity

A majority of Africa’s population can be classified as children or youth. The percentage of African countries’ population under 14 years old ranges from 35 to 49 percent.³² The success or failure of child and youth development can destabilise nations and entire regions. States have a responsibility to provide their underage citizens with education, health care, and safe shelter, rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. When they fail to prioritise youth involvement in positive activities that promote peace building and conflict resolution, the lack of safe space leaves the most vulnerable—and in many cases the largest—section of the population open to recruitment as soldiers, gang members, and labourers in war economies.

In peacetime, citizenship is defined according to a narrow set of criteria; historically, this has included only men, or men of a certain age who were property owners, or men of a certain race or economic background. Citizenship in most modern states, while often more inclusive, still defines youth and women as special ‘sub-categories’. Youth and Women’s Leagues of political parties keep these groups out of the mainstream with a focus on fringe rights. In times of conflict, however, both gender and age prerequisites are often re-formulated to fit conscription needs.

Easy-to-use weapons allow power brokers to assemble and train these easily influenced troops from a seemingly never-ending pool of poor, disenfranchised, and uneducated young people, including refugees, orphans, and internally displaced people. As a group like any other element of society, children and youth develop strategies for survival and find

resources wherever they can. When conflict takes out schools, health care systems, and other support networks for children, the only options left involve violence. In transitional countries like South Africa, youth with extensive gun training but no education or skills worth selling in a newly thriving capitalist state turn to crime. One participant at the “Shrinking Small Arms” seminar said, “Our children look at guns as power. It is difficult to focus on guns, because in the minds of youth, the gun is the way to instant money, an opportunity for them where there is no other opportunity.”³³

In Sierra Leone, the use of child soldiers in the civil conflict drew the world’s attention to youth involvement in armed conflict. While many child rights activists promoted a dichotomous view of children as victims of their adult oppressors, Angela McIntyre and Kwesi Aning argue for a broader interpretation of youth political involvement:

The scale of youth violence seen in Sierra Leone was ultimately due to the absence of social and economic buffers. To challenge authority and seek independence is part of a natural development process, which, if not contained at socially acceptable levels within an orderly society, can be instrumentalised for any number of ends.³⁴

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) offered social and economic incentives to youth to gain their loyalty, especially in the early stages of the conflict. For children who had never been given the opportunity to learn and show their skills, receiving training in bush warfare and being schooled at RUF camps was a positive experience. For those who had never owned nice clothes, the offer of new shoes and shirts was too good to be true.

In the case of Sierra Leonian youth, adult reactions to youth involvement in civil war can also be framed in terms of the urban elite versus. the rural poor:

Many underage recruits are from remote rural regions. Poorly educated, they are readily despised by urbanised elites. Elites always fear ‘unwashed’ youth. Africa is no exception. Sometimes, as in Liberia and Sierra Leone, colonially

rooted attitudes to interior peoples reinforce the stigmatisation of young rural combatants as 'barbarians'...³⁵

Social status and ethnicity are also used (similarly to youth) to promote involvement in conflict. 'Ethnic clashing' is a term associated with large-scale violence, but it is not innate divisions between groups that push them to take up arms. Ethnicity is just another dividing line used by those in power to perpetuate conflicts for political or economic gain. Kenya's former President Daniel arap Moi was well known for his skillful use of long-held ethnic differences to sow division among his opposition and consolidate his authoritarian rule. The rise of civil tension usually stems from economic, social, and political grievances with no other outlet. Extreme poverty, competition for resources, political power brokering, and other factors make disenfranchised groups (whether ethnicity-based, age-based, or other) easy prey for those seeking to build their own militias or crime syndicates.

Civil conflict

When states fail to maintain human security, the ensuing vacuum feeds tensions that often lead to civil conflict and unrest. Without discarding the notion of national responsibility, it is important to note that the breakdown of state structures in maintaining internal peace is often taken out of its larger geo-political context. In the developing world, applying standards of control based on wealthy nations misses the deeper roots of the problem. Richard Cornwell introduces structural violence as one contributing factor to the prevalence of civil conflict in Africa:

Many of the normative models we apply in these discussions are drawn from the historical experience of a handful of strong, capable and effective nation states, occupying a dominant position in the global economy. To what extent is this model applicable to what we see in Africa today, especially given the continent's tenuous position on the global margins? ... structural violence consists in the deliberate maintenance of a global system based on fundamental and self-reinforcing inequity.³⁶

Of course, victims' experience of this inequality and insecurity is far removed from the global perspective. Rampant criminal activity, competitive access to scarce resources, and the absence of authoritative public institutions such as police and the judiciary leaves groups that are economically, socially, politically, and geographically vulnerable to violence to fend for themselves. In the ideal society functioning under the rule of law, the armed forces and police carry guns so that the rest of the population doesn't have to. The opposite case is one in which no enforcement of the rule of the law leads to vigilantism and high levels of firearm violence and death.

In between the two extremes of an unarmed civilian population and a Hobbesian world where there is no enforcement of a social contract, there is the reality of security sector abuses and sporadic, unpredictable state involvement in local conflicts. Pastoralist groups in the Horn of Africa, specifically in Northwest Kenya and along the undemarcated border with Somalia, have long operated outside of state control. With scarce water resources and grazing land, cattle rustling and conflict between groups has been present for a long time. With the introduction of firearms into the region, however, traditional cattle raiding activity in which young men were initiated into manhood but few people died has turned into a bloody and protracted civil conflict that has claimed many lives. In some cases, governments have armed groups living within their borders against competing 'threats' from other areas; an arms race to control water and resources inevitably ensues, with insecurity breeding more insecurity. Peaceful settlements of disputes in this area now rely heavily on local disarmament initiatives.

In the case of Marsabit, Kenya, it is estimated that there are at least 12,000 illegally held small arms. The presence of small arms in the region increased drastically to feed conflicts in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan, and the lack of resources for law enforcement and border control has made proliferation difficult to control. Members of the Marsabit community acquired these guns "for their own protection" against attacks from neigh-

bouring communities with no helpful intervention from government or police:

Communities are not recognised in the local government setup in Kenya, neither are their internal organisations like the new Peace Committees... Parts of the security forces have traditionally been acting on their own, not subject to any effective control from their own organisation and not at all from the communities within which they are operating. Consequently, there is a lot of distrust on both sides, which does not help efforts to improve the security situation.³⁷

Cut off from government structures and support and faced with a competitive situation with regard to natural resources, the proliferation of small arms seems the only option for isolated communities like those in Marsabit. Where there is security sector involvement, it often involves corruption and arms trading that perpetuates the conflict rather than dampening it.

Systemic violence and the culture of guns

The term 'culture of violence' is often used to describe situations in which the values nurtured in a conflict situation become normalised and communities are unable to return to or create new values centred on peace and security. This term is vague because it doesn't allow much room for evolution; once a 'culture of violence' has taken root, it appears irreversible, even innate. In a study of gender-based violence in Uganda, a conclusion about the spread of violence stated that:

The population in war affected areas, especially children, have developed a culture of violence and lack the values that would help them peacefully co-exist. This culture has spread to all parts of Uganda, where people have become increasingly aggressive and impatient, and have retained little or no respect for cultural values that in the past supported harmony.³⁸

'Systemic violence' carries similar implications with regard to the effects of long-term conflict but clarifies that violence can exist alongside or outside core cultural norms that

do value peace. In this slightly different interpretation, it is the conditions that a population is subjected to and the systems of power in which they are forced to cope that create aggression, impatience, and heightened levels of gun use. If and when those conditions and power systems change, cultural adaptation will follow.

Systemic violence is set in motion by power brokers, warlords, gangs, and militia leaders, usually to mobilise conscripts and fuel conflict. This kind of violence becomes cyclical. In post-conflict situations and communities exposed to long-term, low-level violence, the values promoted by those in power replicate and insecurity perpetuates itself. Violent societies arise from long-term oppression of any group, such as the treatment of black people during the apartheid era in South Africa. Societal and group values and norms define the success or failure of peaceful conflict resolution methods. In areas where small arms have become the currency of power, belief in and commitment to other forms of justice and compensation are undermined. However, culture is ever changing and highly adaptive. Far from being permanently embedded, the cycle of systemic violence can be broken by providing alternative power structures and conflict resolution methods (for youth, this can be as simple as after-school programmes that pre-empt gang activity).

Systemic violence is created and reinforced by perceptions of insecurity, gun ownership, power, and strength. Shifting gender roles and definitions of citizenship are used to raise armies and win battles. In the gender arena, traditional definitions of masculinity nurture a culture in which the strongest, most powerful members of society carry a gun and are able to defend themselves, their possessions, and their families by force if necessary. Overwhelmingly more men than women own and use firearms all over the world, indicating that notions of masculine strength are tied in with gun ownership across cultures and continents. Men of fighting age are mobilised by the idea that they must protect the women and children in their society.

It is not only men who are targeted by gender-role manipulation, however. Women are

mobilised as fighters or workers using the rhetoric of emancipation. The large presence of women who fought in the Tigrean People's Liberation Front during the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the employment of women in 'untraditional jobs' in the United States during World War II are examples. Vanessa Farr writes: "In a world where poverty and dispossession are on the rise, armed violence is increasingly the result of contestations of identity."³⁹ Peace-building efforts need to examine the use of social roles in conflict and post-conflict situations to rebuild a stable society effectively.

Jacklyn Cock defines the symbolism of guns in the context of contested social meanings and identities. In the South African context, she describes the cultural importance of the Kalashnikov as "not just a gun", but a "mythic icon" and a "marker of group identity, serving as a kind of code to assert one's political allegiance".⁴⁰ The social anxiety that accompanies the breakdown of familiar structures in the post-apartheid culture has caused people to use scapegoats to effectively 'condense' disturbing experiences. According to Cock, the South African categories of scapegoat are "the ex-combatant and the illegal immigrant". Policy-makers unable to deconstruct the reasons behind public perceptions of violence and crime are likely to pursue failing plans:

The policy which has been proposed to address these anxieties—tightening up border security to block illegal immigration and to prevent the smuggling of guns by Mozambican ex-combatants—is inadequate. Effective police solutions have to reflect guns' powerful social meaning and linkage with contested social identities.⁴¹

Conclusion

The reduction of demand for weapons has been a difficult area to prioritise at the national, regional, and international level precisely because it is so far-reaching. The introduction to the report on the conference "Shrinking Small Arms: A Seminar on Lessening the Demand for Weapons" clarifies the disconnect

between traditional security priorities and the reality of local practitioners:

The issue of the demand for weapons must be addressed, but as diplomats often note, this opens a whole new area of issues in conflict resolution, community development, justice reform, youth programming, postwar peace building and attitude change that is far beyond the experience of the ministries of defence and foreign affairs which normally deal with weapons control... Much [NGO-based] demand-side activity is not focused intentionally on weapons control, but is conducted to end wars, control violence, increase development or empower marginalised populations.⁴²

Building bridges between local realities and policy-level measures to curb SALW proliferation is the only way to ensure that both the supply and demand side of the problem are being dealt with. On a practical level, governments can start by using statistics about the presence and use of guns in all areas. The presence of guns can be used as an indicator not only in security, but also in development, public health, and other assessments. Poverty-alleviation measures must take into account the economy of guns in any given area and incorporate targeted ways to provide alternative incomes and currencies. Awareness of structural inequality by policy-makers could lead them to address some of the factors encouraging people to acquire weapons, and may empower governments and communities to build development partnerships based on strengthening structural equality instead of fostering dependence. Education initiatives could incorporate peaceful conflict resolution methods into curricula.

Governments and regional bodies must identify specific areas and reasons why the availability of SALW is fuelling demand and spreading systemic violence, and develop policy initiatives aimed at those areas and reasons. For example, sending more security forces to an area like Marsabit in an effort to enforce laws and curb gun proliferation would be ineffective. If the problem there were a lack of policing (in essence, a supply-side issue), this would make sense. However, the presence

of unsupervised and unmonitored security forces has actually caused increased insecurity and demand. A more informed policy would be aimed at security sector reform, natural resource management in that region of Kenya, and the promotion of peaceful conflict resolution. 'Easy' solutions for policy-makers are ones that address tighter controls in areas traditionally within regulation (such as licensing, lawmaking, and policing). But these are not always the decisions that will make a difference for constituents.

Building trust and information exchange between local communities and national structures is a necessary step, one that can begin with further research into the area of local responses to realities on the ground. There is a need for more substantial inquiry on a regional basis into:

- strategies employed by local groups to reduce gun use in communities
- community perceptions of the impact of guns on education, development, social welfare, health, and the economy
- local knowledge and perceptions of national, regional, and international efforts to curb SALW proliferation
- the relevance of and possible links between local and policy-level priorities in reducing gun acquisition and use.

Where states are weakened to the point where they cannot process this kind of information efficiently, let alone implement relevant policy based on it, understanding local strategies as a potentially effective decentralised way of fighting proliferation becomes even more important.

Supply-side initiatives are crucial to controlling manufacturers, brokers, and exports. Capacity building for police and customs officials, support for weapons collection and destruction programmes, and legal reform are integral to interrupting cycles of violence. However, these types of measures alone are not enough. They stem the flow of arms on one end but leave a hungry market on the other. Between manufacture and humanitarian crisis, policy makers can use development, economic growth, education, public health, and security sector reform to address the demand for small arms, creating a network of constant interven-

tions that work to avoid the need for crisis-response tactics.

Notes

1. Although a UN Governmental Experts' Panel was initiated in 1995, the first UN Conference on the illicit trade in small arms was not held until 2001.
2. Graduate Institute of International Studies, *Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the human cost*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2002, Foreword by Kofi Annan.
3. *Ibid*, p 157.
4. Graduate Institute of International Studies, *Small Arms Survey 2001: Profiling the problem*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001.
5. W Cukier, Small arms and light weapons: A public health approach, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 9(1), 2002, p 3.
6. C Hansmann and E Hennop, Illegal firearms in South Africa: Proliferation and problems of control, in *Society Under Siege: Managing Arms in South Africa*, Vol. III, Institute for Security Studies, 2000, p 61.
7. W Cukier, op cit. Source: Centre for Justice Statistics, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Data
8. Most estimates of landmine deaths are around 25,000 per year, or about 500 per week, compared with an estimated 10,000 deaths per week due to small arms.
9. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and On Their Destruction (also known as the "Mine Ban Treaty", "Ottawa Convention", and "Ottawa Treaty") was opened for signature on 3 December 1997 and entered into force on 1 March 1999.
10. International Committee of the Red Cross, *Anti-Personnel Landmines: Friend or Foe?*, Geneva, 1996.
11. P Batchelor and R Muggah, *Development Held Hostage: Assessing the Effects of Small Arms on Human Development*. UNDP 2002, p 9.
12. *Ibid*.
13. *Ibid*.
14. T Leggett, *What do the police do? Performance measurement and the SAPS*, Institute for Security Studies, Paper 66, February 2003. S Masuku, Prevention is better than cure: addressing violent crime in South Africa, *South Africa Crime Quarterly*, 1(2), Nov. 2002.
15. Masuku, op cit, p 11.
16. United Nations Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, A/52/298, August 27, 1997, p12. The report defines small arms and light weapons according to their actual use in conflicts being dealt with by the United Nations: specifically, those being manufactured to military specification for use as lethal instruments of war (i.e., clubs, knives, and machetes were not included). Based on these criteria, the weapons addressed in the report were categorised. Small arms comprise

- revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns. Light weapons comprise heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of calibres less than 100mm. Ammunition and explosives comprise cartridges for small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines, and explosives. Citing the "other forums" in which the international community was dealing with landmines, the panel chose not to include them so as to avoid the duplication of efforts.
17. Ibid, p 15.
 18. Ibid, p 20–21.
 19. Ibid.
 20. Ibid, p 16.
 21. Ibid.
 22. Ibid, p 21–23.
 23. Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, 1 December 2000.
 24. Ibid, Paragraph 2
 25. Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Related Materials in the SADC Region, Blantyre, 14 August 2001.
 26. Report of the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, Programme of Action, New York, 9–20 July 2001 (A/Conf.192/15).
 27. B Job, The insecurity dilemma: National, regime and state securities in the Third World, in B Job (ed), *The Insecurity Dilemma. National Security of Third World States*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder, p 11–36.
 28. M Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty and the State: Somalia*. International Books, Utrecht, 2001, p 220.
 29. K Aning of African Security, Dialogue and Research, presentation at the Institute for Security Studies seminar on "Youth and human security: Perspectives on African conflict", 28 February 2003.
 30. C Jefferson, *Attitudes to Firearms: the Case of Kwa Mashu, Tsolo-Qumbo and Lekoa-Vaal*, Institute for Security Studies, 2001, p 40.
 31. Ibid, p 50
 32. CIA Factbook, <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>> (28 March 2003).
 33. Conference report: Shrinking small arms: A seminar on lessening the demand for weapons. Sponsored by the Quaker United Nations Office. Durban, South Africa, November 19–24, 1999, p 8.
 34. A McIntyre and K Aning, Politics, war, and youth culture in Sierra Leone, *African Security Review*, 11(3), 2002, p 14.
 35. K Peters and P Richards, "Why we fight: Voices of youth combatants in Sierra Leone," *Africa*, 68(2), 1998. As quoted in McIntyre and Aning, 2002.
 36. R Cornwell, Where to from here?, in J Lind and K Sturman, (eds), *Scarcity and Surfeit*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, 2002.
 37. F Goericke and MJ Kimani, *Crisis prevention and conflict management in district development programmes: the case of MDP, Marsabit District Kenya*, GTZ, July 2002.
 38. R Ochieng, A gendered reading of the problems and dynamics of SALW in Uganda, in *Brief 24: Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons*, Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002.
 39. V Farr, A gendered analysis of international agreements on small arms and light weapons, *Brief 24: Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons*, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, July 2002.
 40. J Cock, A sociological perspective on small arms proliferation in South Africa, in J. Dhanapala, M. Donowaki, S. Rana, & L. Lumpe (eds), *Small Arms Control: Old Weapons, New Issues*, UNIDIR/Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999, p 157.
 41. Ibid, p 159.
 42. Conference report: Shrinking small arms, op cit.