Introduction

The 1990s have witnessed the transformation of the world system and with it a shift in the dominant mode of war. The first post-Cold War decade has been marked by a restructuring of the world system, the end of forty-five years of bi-polar domination and the end of the Soviet Union’s unitary control over significant geographic areas in Central Europe and Central Asia. The net impact of this transformation has been a levelling of the former world system which was grounded in the existence and functioning of strong states, among which the United States and the Soviet Union held a disproportionate amount of power and, consequently, influence in world affairs. Now the balance of power is more evenly distributed among states; the United States retains a dominant role but is far from being the predominant power. In addition, transnational forms of organisation have assumed greater roles than during the Cold War. While much of the latter change is due to the end of a bi-polar world order; some of it is the result of revolutions in communications and other social and technological changes that have decreased dependency on state-based modes of organisation.

Concurrently, the concern for the nuclear threats that dominated the international agenda from Hiroshima to the fall of the Soviet Union has been replaced by a preoccupation with a series of wars of a highly lethal nature that are fought primarily with small arms and light weapons, and that rage beyond the control of any national or multinational apparatus. During the late 1990s such conflicts represent a transitional phase in the state of war, in which combatants are armed and trained by means of a combination of state-based structures that have existed for decades and reflect the growing significance of private actors in the global trade in light weapons. This chapter identifies key groups of suppliers and the changing motivations for participation in the light weapons trade. It also examines such related issues as the changing roles of states, the diffusion of light weapons production, and the strengthened world role of transnational
actors, an issue that requires consideration if the trade in light weapons is to be successfully addressed in the years to come.

**Cold War Certainty to Pre-millenial Chaos: the Arms Trade in Transition**

Cold War rivalry between the superpowers created over four decades relative stability, or what one author has termed ‘Cold War certainty’, in the world weapons trade. During that period, states transferred the full range of military technology to other states and to substate actors. To the extent that conventional weaponry was reported, documented or studied, analyses tended to focus on major weapons systems while relegating small arms or light weapons to a minor mention, if they were considered at all. The lack of documentation of the light weapons trade stemmed in part from a philosophy that has viewed weapons of mass destruction, and to a lesser extent major conventional systems, as greater threats to security and hence more in need of control. This outlook has been mirrored by the legal structures affecting sales or other transfers of military technology, which have until the most recent decade focused on state monopolies over such weapons and, by extension, the violence that they are capable of generating.

The absence of sustained documentation and research belies the potential size of this almost-invisible sector of the conventional arms trade, however. In recent years, the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) has estimated that the trade in small arms and ammunition accounts for 13 per cent of the world arms trade. The significance of this assessment is greater than may be apparent on the surface. The ACDA analyses are based on estimated expenditures measured in US dollars rather than on the number of units shipped. As such, the portion of the arms trade comprised of light weapons must be assessed in terms of the volume of such weapons necessary to reach 13 per cent of a net worth that includes aircraft, tanks and other major conventional weaponry.

In contrast, small arms, such as handguns, rifles and semi-automatic rifles, have not been viewed as equally destabilising or lethal at domestic, regional, or global levels, despite the evidence for their negative impact. Aaron Karp noted as early as 1995, that “While the major weapons of established states are not always benign, the greater danger to international peace and security today comes from the small arms and light weapons used in ethnic and internal conflicts. Indeed, over 75 per cent of all warfare since 1945 has been internal, not between existing states, but over the emergence of new states. ... As a result, it is the weapons suitable for internal warfare that are most likely to be used. They also are far more deadly when used...”

Despite their role in conflicts and wars, small arms and light weapons have been the least subject to restriction and indeed enjoy the widest range of concessions for legal trade. While it is hard to imagine a significant number of private citizens owning or trading tanks, armoured personnel carriers, or fighter planes, almost all countries permit private ownership of a range of small arms, including semi-automatic weapons. Similarly, the manufacture of major conventional weapons has been largely under the control of government industries or private manufacturers who produce under government contract. Small arms production also includes private firms manufacturing weapons for commercial markets. Accordingly, the structures for production, sale and acquisition have long been quite different for these subsets of the conventional weapons trade. Such structural differences have endured and indeed shaped the course of the light weapons trade throughout the past decade.

The world trade in major conventional weapons declined an estimated 72 per cent for developed countries and 80 per cent for developing countries between 1984 and 1994. Concurrent with this decline was a shift from the Soviet Union/Russia to the United States as the dominant supplier of conventional military technology. In the midst of these changes, however, two aspects of the major conventional trade have remained relatively stable. First, it still is essentially the province of state to state transactions, despite shifts in emphasis from political to economic motivations for such transfers. Moreover, while fifty-three countries exported weapons to ninety-nine recipient countries, supply remained overwhelmingly concentrated in the hands of a few suppliers. The top ten exporting countries supplied 93 per cent of the world trade as recently as 1994; the top five exporters supplied 84 per cent of the trade that year. Similar data is not available for the trade in light weapons therefore it is impossible to know exactly how many such weapons are transferred during a given year and whether that figure has changed over time. Without arguing for or against the existence of an
increase in the light weapons trade since the end of the Cold War, it is reasonable to maintain that demand for light weapons has remained robust while demand for major conventional weapons has declined significantly. Key structural differences between the light weapons and major weapons markets are reflected in the different course taken by the light weapons trade after the Cold War.

During the Cold War, supplier and recipient structures, and the nature of their relationships were masked by the dominant paradigm of the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. The largest volume of Cold War transfers took place between the superpowers and their respective allies and were connected with active or potential conflicts around the globe. They were significant as the expression of direct or indirect competition between the superpowers, and were most apparent in transfers made to states through overt military sales and assistance programmes. The superpowers and their allies also transferred weapons to substate groups, primarily through covert operations in support of one side or another in low intensity conflicts.

Regional powers continued to exercise autonomous, or relatively autonomous, interests during the Cold War, although these too were often masked by the dominant presence and agendas of the superpowers. Within the Cold War context, the notion that there were agendas other than the battle between the superpowers simply was not plausible for many observers and policy-makers outside of the regions. When the roles of other states were acknowledged, they were assessed always against the backdrop of the United States and the Soviet Union, whose agenda was supported by their actions. The perceived threat of regional wars escalating to superpower nuclear confrontation also helped to push both regional agendas and the flow of light weapons into the background. None the less, these autonomous regional agendas are identifiable during and after the Cold War, regardless of a particular state’s alignment with either of these countries.

There were moments of accord between states on regional goals and objectives, such as the alliances between China, the United States and Thailand to arm Cambodian resistance groups during the 1980s. However, this commonality of interest should not be mistaken for complete agreement on those objectives, nor should it be interpreted as precluding autonomous strategic or political interests on the part of China and Thailand, respectively. Those states supplied the Khmer Rouge and lesser Cambodian organisations in order to unseat Vietnam’s occupational government so that a buffer state might be created between their countries and Vietnam. To this Thailand added its general strategy of bringing about instability within the bordering states of Cambodia and Burma by providing arms and other support for insurgent groups that had mobilised against the governments of those states.

In a similar way South Africa supported conflicts in its neighbouring states, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe under a strategic doctrine of total onslaught in order to protect itself against the ANC and Soviet incursions in the region. At the same time, South Africa sought to replicate, in Southern Africa, the United States’ low-intensity-conflict role. Finally, though ideological, religious and national or ethnic affinities may have been less visible forces, none the less, they motivated state decisions to supply combatants during the Cold War. Moreover, they were the primary motivating factors in transfers between substate groups during the same period. Examples of substate to substate transfers include aid to the IRA, Cuban-American aid to the contras, American Indian Movement aid to Miskito Indians in Nicaragua, Tajik aid to Masoud and other Tajik mujahideen groups. At the state level, there are numerous examples of aid to both states and substate groups by the superpowers, where the supplier relationship is not clearly out of strategic need and is indeed more plausibly explained by the ideological imperative to aid groups with shared ideologies.

The Arms Trade After the Cold War

The international traffic in light weapons has continued and perhaps accelerated since the end of the Cold War. While states and state structures are changing, as are their roles in the light weapons trade, yet they remain important actors at all levels: trade, acquisition and control. And although the impetus for traffic in light weapons has shifted increasingly toward economic concerns, this does not mean that the significance of political or strategic ones may be overlooked. Rather, it means that care must be taken
to understand which states are involved and the reasons for their involvement.

The Role of External Security Agendas

A further process of transformation and repositioning that has taken place since the fall of the Berlin Wall is in the role of external security agendas. These changes go far beyond the ascendancy of the United States as a solitary dominant world power and the disintegration and subsequent disempowerment of the Soviet Union. Security agendas have been reshaped as militaries have redefined their roles and missions to include the war on drugs, international and regional peace-keeping, and protection of endangered species and natural resources. At the same time, pre-existing regional agendas have been strengthened and come to the fore, while the United States has attempted to shape its security interests as the predominant world power. As a result of all of these factors, states continue to arm other states and substate groups and are likely to continue to do so for some time.

The United States, for example, continues to provide light weapons as part of its standard military assistance programmes. The $100 million of military equipment delivered to Jordan in December 1996 as part of a defence security aid package included machine guns, helicopters, tanks and trucks. Light weapons also are included in allocations made to address newly-defined security threats since the fall of communism.

Redefined American national interests have established anti-narcotics programmes, a key feature of security assistance programming with $213 million in such assistance requested in the Congressional Presentation Document for the fiscal year 1996. Of this, the primary allocations are targeted toward neighbouring Latin American and Central American countries, despite the thriving drug traffic in South and South East Asia. Of a total of $183.5 million in ‘country programmes’, $150 million is devoted to Latin America ($137 million of this is dedicated to programmes in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru). In addition to vaguely referenced ‘equipment’ supplied through official channels, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru have been slated to receive Excess Defense Articles under Section 517 of the Foreign Assistance Act, which authorises transfers to Latin America and the Caribbean for use in counter-narcotics efforts. While

Excess Defense Articles transfers include patrol boats and aircraft, they also include such items as the 50 000 M-1 carbines allocated to Mexico.

The United States has been accused of continuing to engage in covert weapons supply operations since the end of the Cold War, the most recent of these charges being that it carried out covert operations to provide arms or, at the least, agreed to look the other way, as Iran, Croatia and other countries violated the arms embargo against Bosnia. Russia has carried out covert arms transfers as well, as is evidenced in the Defence Ministry’s confirmation of illegal shipments of major conventional weapons to Armenia. Regional actors also continue to use a variety of official, commercial and gray and black market structures to supply weapons to other states and substate groups. They do so to destabilise neighbouring states, as well as for a number of political and strategic reasons within their respective regional contexts.

Pakistan has been implicated in arms shipments to insurgencies in India in line with its tense security relationship with that country. At the same time, its intelligence units have played a significant role, along with Saudi Arabia, in arming the Taliban movement’s military campaign in Afghanistan. It has been accused of using the Taliban to create a stable corridor in western Afghanistan for the purpose of facilitating its own trade links with Central Asia, including an oil and gas pipeline. In addition, support for the Taliban has had domestic benefits for Pakistani leaders from the ethnic Pashtun population. Afghanistan’s post-Soviet leaders, on the other hand, have been getting support from Iran. Somewhat ironically, the troops of Masoud — the most successful resistance leader during the Soviet occupation — are receiving aid from Russia as well as Tajikistan.

Central Africa’s Great Lakes Region has become a similar locus of overlapping, and at times contradictory, security agendas and actions. Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and the government of Angola have armed Zairean rebels, partly as retaliation for Zairean interference in their respective internal affairs from the 1970s throughout the 1990s. Zaire’s aid to Rwandan groups — some now inside Zairean territory — continued into 1997, in part to try to counter the advances of the Zairean rebel troops armed by Rwanda. And, as rebel troops advanced toward Zaire’s capital, close relatives and aides of Zairean President, Mobutu Sese Seko,
alleged to have smuggled hundreds of tons of weapons to UNITA in a private profit-making venture. This activity helped to re-arm UNITA during a time of supposed peace-making and demobilisation in Angola. It also contributed to instability within Zaire, as army officers and troops were protesting their own weapons shortages at the very time they were being called upon to protect the Mobutu regime in Eastern Zaire.18

There is no lack of examples of similar state transfers in support of groups in neighbouring countries. Thailand has been accused of using weapons from the demobilisation of Cambodian combatants to arm destabilising insurgencies across its borders in Burma.19 Similarly, Slovenian officials were charged with sending large shipments of arms to Bosnian Muslims after a seizure of 11 000 assault rifles and 750 000 rounds of ammunition near the Maribor airport in July 1993. The shipments, part of an estimated 1 200 tons of arms shipped by late 1993, were sent to Muslim forces for profit according to one theory, according to another, as a result of the Slovenian government’s conflict with Croats.20 Even the small government of the Solomon Islands was accused of sending arms, via Australia, in support of the Bougainville rebel group.21

The Role of Domestic Agendas in Weapons Acquisition and Trade

States also have important domestic motivations for production and transfers of light weapons. Of these, the need to arm repressive apparatuses and to generate income from external sources are arguably the most significant factors. Whereas states most commonly acquire weapons to address external security threats, a significant number define the greatest threats to their security as coming from internal sources, be they political parties, labour organisations, or large populations of heterogeneous ethnic groups. Consequently, they acquire weapons to counter those threats. In some cases the threat is very real, as in post-war societies with fragile peace agreements or where fighting has resumed.

The government of Rwanda, for example, purchased $6 million in arms from Egypt in 1992 and made large purchases or transfers from France and South Africa within two years of the Egyptian deal. These arms, primarily light weapons, were used in the Rwandan government’s expansion of its military from a force of 5 000 to a force of 30 000 men following the Rwandan Patriotic Front’s cross-border invasion in October 1990.22 The government of Angola similarly purchased between $2,5 and $3,5 billion worth of weapons in 1993 and 1994 alone, in response to the resurgence of civil war after the 1992 elections.23

The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces has undertaken a comparable modernisation and acquisition programme over more than three years. Despite the peace processes, 1993 elections and UN peacekeeping mission, the government’s future is far from certain. In response to on-going attacks by the Khmer Rouge, the government of Cambodia has acquired tanks from the Czech Republic and Poland. It has also entered into several agreements to acquire small arms and ammunition from South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia and North Korea. The North Korean deal had the added distinction of assistance in the construction and operation of Cambodia’s first defence factory that will manufacture small arms and ammunition.24 Between failures to disarm, production of additional weapons, and the introduction of weapons smuggled across the Thai and other borders, the number of weapons among the Cambodian population in 1997 is now believed to surpass that in circulation when United Nations troops withdrew in 1993.25

In some instances, internal threats are defined in ways that coincide with the articulated security agendas of supplier countries, as is the case with some of the United States’ anti-narcotics initiatives. While some transfers arguably have contributed to the war on drugs, there is ample evidence that “[it] ... was the occasion to overlook abuses by police and military partners and to introduce military and police assistance without human rights conditions ...”.26

In more extreme settings, such as Colombia and Bolivia, this aid is directly used in counter-insurgency operations carried out in the name of combating drug-traffickers.27 This can best be seen at work in Colombia where, under what can be called the ‘narco-guerrilla theory’, the administration’s military strategy targets new ‘enemies’ — drug trafficking organisations — but explicitly includes old — leftist insurgent groups alleged to have inextricable links to the organisations. The narco-guerrilla theory provides the rationale for the United States to furnish Andean forces with equipment, training and intelligence to augment their counter-insurgency campaigns, still their top priority.28
As economic and social conditions have become increasingly unstable in the developing world, state definitions of internal threats have expanded beyond the traditional list of insurgencies, labour unions and social justice organisations, to include supposed threats posed by ‘socially undesirable’ elements of the population. Most visible in Latin America, such definitions have translated into patterns of ‘social cleansing’ carried out by private individuals, paramilitary forces and state police. Like political repression, such practices rely on the small arms common to low-intensity-conflict strategies. Unlike repression of political organisations, the targets of ‘social cleansing’ are not activists or ideas but are rather the poor, members of racial or ethnic minority groups, prostitutes, alcoholics and the homeless.29

Production and Profits: The Economics of the Light Weapons Industry

The diffusion of small arms and light weapons that occurred, as a result of the wide distribution of weapons during the Cold War, was compounded by the relative decentralisation and lack of control over production of such arms. The type of concentration of production and export that existed for major conventional systems did not exist for light weapons; the small arms sector of the light weapons trade has enjoyed significant private commercial production and access to diverse markets that have been prohibited for other types of weaponry. Whereas production of commodities, such as advanced aircraft, has been the province of a relatively small number of countries, the opposite has been true of light weapons both during and after the Cold War.

While states have long exported weapons for political, strategic and economic reasons, the last factor has assumed increasing significance since the end of the Cold War. The commercialisation of governmental trade in light weapons has become an increasingly important financial resource for cash-strapped economies. It also underwrites military research and development in many supplier countries and, for some developing countries, has become a first line of industrial development in the transition to an industrial economy.

In addition to producers in the United States and Europe, thirty-six non-communist Third World countries had industries that manufactured conventional weapons by 1988. Only three producers, Brazil, Israel and India, manufactured the entire range of ground, air and naval weaponry; thirty-three produced small arms. The Soviet Union and China dominated light weapons production and supply, small arms included, among communist countries, but were joined by seven other countries.30

Most countries had more than one factory capable of producing light weapons. This was particularly true of small arms manufacture, where numerous private firms competed in the production of rifles and handguns destined primarily for the civilian market. The latter class of weapons manufacturers intersect with the state to the extent that they produce arms for military and security forces and that their product is subject to state control. Outside of these two areas, such weapons production often exists as an autonomous economic enterprise.

Developing countries have built indigenous arms production facilities for several well-known and compelling reasons. Among these, the desire to become self-sufficient and end vulnerability to embargoes or pressure from suppliers has been a key motivating factor in development of production capabilities across all classes of weaponry. Other factors have included the use of arms production as a source of export revenue, and the perception of autonomous weapons manufacture as a symbol of a country’s industrial progress and status as a modern nation. In addition to these factors, light weapons manufacture has held specific advantages.

Unlike other conventional weapons systems, light weapons are most likely to be produced internally because of their use by state police and security apparatuses. Second, the relatively low levels of technology required to produce light weapons have reduced barriers of access to the technology and resources necessary to enter into production. Finally, light weapons produced by Third World manufacturers have tended to be simple in design and operation and thus more easily exported to other developing countries because they are relatively inexpensive to purchase and do not require extensive training or on-going support to operate.31

Manufacture and distribution of light weapons, then, was highly decentralised before the end of the Cold War. While analysts were pondering the diffusion of co-production and licensing agreements, reverse engineering and the advent of the ‘global tank’ in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the structures for decentralised production of light weapons had long
been in place. The question was not whether there would be a diffusion of production, but rather how much diffusion would take place and at what levels of technology along the spectrum from handguns to shoulder-fired missiles.

The answer to the latter question has been shaped by changes in the nature and identities of producers and distributors, and in shifts in the motivations for transfers following the end of the highly-politicised Cold War rivalry between the superpowers. The world trade in light weapons has incorporated a range of structures throughout its history. On the supply side, structures have included states, quasi-private state-owned industries, private commercial producers and the gray and black markets. Recipient structures have been equally diverse, and have spanned a range of actors such as states, international peacekeeping forces, insurgencies, ethnic and religious movements, traffickers in narcotics and other contraband, citizen militias and private security forces.

The first signs of the shifting role of light weapons in the 1990s appeared early on with the revenue-generating haemorrhage of weapons pouring out of the Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc allies. Concealed within the consternation-permeated analyses of these trends was a harsh economic reality: the individuals, government structures, and countries exporting these weapons were frequently the products of cash-starved economies in which weapons were one of the few commodities that were plentiful, valued and tradeable in the external market. The early move to convert weapons to cash has since paved the way for development of commercialised production capable of sustaining at least part of the defence industrial bases in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union.

The United States has had its own version of a post-Cold War ‘fire sale’. For similar, albeit less desperate, reasons, the government has pursued a vigorous arms export promotion. The most visible elements of the United States military export promotion policy, though not the only weapons transferred through such mechanisms, have been F-16 aircraft and other major conventional weapons systems. Light weapons are transferred from official government sources in somewhat different ways in the post-Cold War divestiture of American military stocks. Using an argument that it is less expensive to divest than it is to store weapons accumulated during the Cold War, American security assistance packages have included transfers of light weapons and small arms, notably under the aegis of anti-narcotic initiatives in Latin America (discussed above).

The rationale for these exports may be economic in part, but the benefit is primarily one of savings rather than income generation, as is the case with Russia. Russia was not the first, nor has it been the only country to use exports of light weapons as a means of generating revenue for its domestic economy. Nor is it the only country to use arms exports to develop a resource base for supporting development and operation of national military industries or reducing costs of supplying internal military requirements. China has long had such a national economic development policy across a range of weapons from light weapons to ballistic missiles. Brazil attempted such a policy during the 1980s but was somewhat less successful after it lost its largest buyers at the end of the Iran-Iraq War.

Of the situation in South Africa, it is stated: “[T]he supplies of light weaponry are deeply embedded in the South African social and economic order.” ARMSCOR, the state production and procurement agency, was formed to fulfil South Africa’s arms requirements and to manage its arms research and development, acquisitions and exports. By the mid-1980s it was one of South Africa’s largest industrial organisations, while, as an export commodity, arms ranked only behind gold and coal. Since the end of the apartheid government, ARMSCOR has announced an export expansion initiative to increase its arms exports by 300 per cent over five years and South African arms from 0.4 per cent to 2 per cent of the global market. If successful, this drive would raise South Africa’s arms export earnings from $244 million to $800 million annually.

Today many states have developed or are developing indigenous light weapons industries for a number of economic and security reasons. Setting aside the fact that these are lethal commodities, the strong governmental and private demand for handguns, automatic weapons and related types of arms, makes this a relatively safe type of commodity production. Many of these states are engaged in internal conflicts, in which small arms and light weapons are more extensively used than are major conventional systems. Moreover, fragile states with strong internal and/or external security concerns often enter into weapons production in order to become self-
sufficient in meeting national defence needs. Most recently Cambodia and Croatia have joined the list of arms-producing countries listed below.39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Producers</th>
<th>Domestic Military</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Export</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Identified as ‘state factories’ in original table.


Beyond the State: the Growing Importance of Transnational and Substate Groups

States may have been the dominant suppliers of light weapons during the Cold War, but the black and gray markets constituted additional, albeit comparatively small, sectors of the world trade in light weapons. These sectors often operated concurrently with or in lieu of open military assistance programmes. In many instances, the illicit trade and its support structures were organised by current or former military or intelligence officers who acted out of ideological and/or profit motives.40 Traditionally there has been a very fine line separating state-sponsored, presumably legal, transfers and the illicit trade in light weapons. In addition, transnational affinity groups organised around national, ethnic, religious, or other political identity have played a role in weapons transfers or in remittances to purchase weapons. Since the end of the Cold War, a growing array of transnational actors – organised crime, drug cartels, ethnic insurgencies, political-religious organisations – have strengthened their positions as structures and forces at work outside of the traditional political-strategic context.

The longest-standing example of such practice can be seen in the international networks that have supported the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Dating back to the nineteenth-century Fenian movement, ties between the United States and today’s Provisional IRA accounted for a major portion of weapons and ammunition smuggled to the latter group. That linkage was made particularly visible following the 1985 seizure off the coast of Ireland of a trawler carrying seven tons of rifles, ammunition and other military equipment believed to have originated in Boston, USA.41 Emigre groups have also participated in support for weapons purchasing programmes for Croatia.42 Since the beginning of the decade, significant attention has been given to transnational Islamic fundamentalist groups, particularly since the disintegration of the former Soviet Union strengthened the autonomous political aspirations of large Islamic populations in Central Asia. In addition to arms shipped from Iran to Hezbollah in Lebanon and to groups in Afghanistan, members of Algerian Islamic organisations have helped to arm militants in Algeria, Egypt and other parts of Northern Africa and Central Asia, while in 1992 Jordanian groups were charged with stockpiling weapons for a campaign to undermine a PLO peace agreement.43
A new hybrid organisation has emerged since 1996 which has added greatly to the complexity of the range of transnational actors engaged in the light weapons trade. The cases mentioned above involve transnational groups that smuggle weapons for the purpose of destabilising or overthrowing governments. During the past two years, organised mercenary organisations, such as the highly-visible Executive Outcomes, have emerged as privatised militaries supporting shaky regimes in Sierra Leone and other parts of Africa as well as Papua New Guinea. These are transnational businesses, built up through recruitment of highly skilled officers who were cashiered under demobilisation plans. For a fee that often includes part-interest in mining operations, such businesses will arm and train security troops to defend key mineral and other economic resources and to protect weak regimes. They are brought in when governments no longer trust their own militaries to defend the regime in power. Their purpose is to produce stability, which creates a pattern of dependence as governmental ability to enforce its own national security interests is ceded to the business concern. The final result is a three-way highly-intertwined governance structure that combines private businesses, the regime and the privatised military. Because such firms often become partners in lucrative mining enterprises, they have access to significant economic resources with which to engage in acquiring and transferring weapons, either as agents of the government they are protecting or as independent actors. And, because their function is to serve as hired protection for a specific government, they are able to operate from within that country’s borders without much restriction or interference.47

The black market used to facilitate transfers by substate and transnational groups might be considered the ‘informal’ sector of a larger trade that in the main is carried out within formal, legal channels. Such activity has been part of the weapons trade for centuries, and often is intertwined with the legal trade, serving as a mechanism through which actions can be carried out without discovery or accountability.

The existence of the black market poses particular challenges to proposals for controlling the weapons trade. Because its participants operate outside of the boundaries of states and the rule of law they are difficult to identify much less have sanctions or other controls imposed upon them. Moreover, states are unlikely to impose controls or intercept shipments under circumstances where the traffic or its organisers are key to state agendas. In some cases, attempts to control the trade in light weapons become hostage to other issues, such as efforts to control the trade in drugs.45 Finally, control is likely to become more difficult in the future due to the fragility — in some cases dissolution — of a number of states, concurrent with the strengthening of groups engaged in transnational black markets and the infrastructures that support them.46

The supply side is carried out by a range of actors that include members of police or security units, traffickers in drugs and other commodities, criminal organisations, and populations where smuggling and black market trading are considered legitimate components of traditional lifestyles. Recipients include members of political and ethnic insurgencies, drug traffickers, criminal organisations, members of the intelligence community, and middlemen engaged in barter and sale of contraband.47 The difficulty in distinguishing between licit and illicit trade is compounded by the vast differences within and between states concerning regulations governing the trade of weapons. Porous borders between states, the low priority accorded regulation of the weapons trade and weak states and enforcement mechanisms further obscure the lines between legal and black market sales and transfers.48

The magnitude of such traffic is reflected in the $900 million worth of illegal arms, originating in Guatemala and believed to be destined for Colombian guerrillas, that were seized in Panama in February 1997.49 This seizure is only one of many known shipments intercepted by Panamanian authorities in recent years as that country, and Latin America in general, has become an important locus of the traffic in light weapons from the United States and, increasingly, to and from other countries.

These trends represent a series of shifts that extend beyond the rise of Latin America as a centre for the illicit weapons trade. They also symbolise a transition from the Cold War model in which the United States military and other official agencies played a significant role in both legal and illegal arms shipments to the region. The current structure is more akin to pre-Cold War patterns in that regional states and substate groups have much bigger roles in the weapons trade, while the United States has scaled back (though not ended) its transfers of light weapons to the region since the end of the Cold War.
In some cases, the shipments are relatively localised and intended for specific sets of recipients, as is the case with illicit arms shipments to insurgents in Mexico, Colombia, or other parts of the region. Other recent seizures reveal a much more complex set of structures in which Latin American countries serve as transhipment points for global weapons smuggling operations. In 1992, for example, several Latin American countries were drawn into illegal arms trade schemes by arms merchants who filed false orders for weapons. By misrepresenting purchasers and recipients of the weapons in this manner, the merchants were able to arrange a series of complex transactions, many of which were used to arm groups in the former Yugoslav republics. Under these schemes, Chile’s state arms company, Famae, was accused of trying to send eleven tons of small arms to Croatia. The shipment in question was worth a relatively minuscule $200 000; planned shipments, however, totalled more than $6 million. Other countries drawn into such schemes included Panama, which was misrepresented as the final destination for $21 million worth of machine guns, pistols and ammunition; originating countries included Czechoslovakia and Austria. Similarly, Bolivia was involved in $300 million in transactions involving falsified end-user documents.

Complex trade and transportation patterns are evident elsewhere, as seen in the March 1997 seizure of two crates of weapons in San Diego, California. The crates represented two of the three shipped from Vietnam nine months earlier by the Chinese Hanjin Shipping Company. Each measured twenty feet long, eight feet wide and eight high, and was marked as containing strap hangers and hand tools. Instead, they were filled with thousands of grenade launchers, disassembled parts of automatic rifles, and other material. Since leaving Vietnam, the shipment had been routed on and off ships through Singapore, Germany, Panama, and then San Diego. Two of the crates remained in San Diego, where they were seized while awaiting shipment to Mexico; it is yet unknown whether Mexico was to have been the final destination or who the ultimate recipients were to have been. The third container was stopped at Long Beach, California, from where it was returned to Ho Chi Minh City. It was then re-shipped to Thailand and back to Long Beach, where it re-entered the United States and was shipped to New York. The disposition of this crate since its arrival in New York is unknown.

Smuggling and black market operations involving light weapons are a global phenomenon which shows no signs of weakening as we approach the twenty-first century. There is virtually no limit to the number of possible combinations of weapons manufacturers, participants in the traffic, routes along which weapons are transported, or channels through which the financial structure operates. Boundaries are determined by where there is profit to be made, or where there are insurgencies to be supported. Within this context, guns may be the only commodity or one of several traded — sometimes literally bartered — on the black market. Although black market trade in light weapons has been linked to illegal trade in lumber, precious stones, minerals and exotic animals, it is most visibly linked to the illegal drug trade in virtually every world region. The latter linkage occurs most commonly as drugs are cultivated, manufactured and sold to raise funds for weapons, but drugs are also used as a form of direct exchange for black market arms.

The black market trade is enhanced by Cold War transfers and acquisition of light weapons that have helped to build sizable weapons stockpiles among police and military organisations throughout the world. These stockpiles have proved incredibly difficult to defend, monitor, or control and thus have become an important factor in the circulation of light weapons in the contemporary era. This became apparent soon after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, when efforts to enforce the UN arms embargo against the former Yugoslavia collapsed, due to a combination of black market trading — notably 14,000 tons of weapons purchased from Christian militias in Beirut — and the stockpiled, now surplus, weapons of the former Yugoslavia and East Germany.

The exact number and locations of stockpiled or cached weapons in 1997 is unknown. However, during the first four months of 1997, weapons caches were discovered in Haiti, India, Liberia, Cambodia, Uganda, the Thai/Myanmar border (Karen National Union), Nicaragua (from the Salvadoran civil war), Colombia, Guatemala, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The range and number of weapons discovered in these various varis greatly and often reflect the sources, availability and utility of different types of weapons. The discovery by the Economic Community of West African States’ Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) of a weapons cache in Bong Mines, Liberia, yielded AK-47 assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades,
pistols, grenades and bombs. The caches found on a farm near Cali, Colombia, yielded submachine guns, shotguns and rifles. The Aceh rebel caches in Indonesia included forty-one AK-47s, three M-16s, four Colt-38s, as well as one hand grenade, an assortment of other firearms, and approximately 10,000 bullets and a number of blank cartridges.

At times the Cold War legacy has created not only large caches of weapons but organised and trained military personnel ready to fight or train other fighters for monetary or ideological reasons. Until very recently Afghanistan, for example, was home to a thriving industry in military training for Islamic militants. As of March 1994, an estimated twenty training camps were operating in eastern Afghanistan between Kabul and the Khyber Pass. These centres were, for the most part, under the control of former United States client, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Using American-supplied weapons, the training campus served Palestinians, Egyptians, Moroccans, Algerians, Sudanese and, at times, Americans. The trainers were in high demand among Islamic extremists because, “Their jihad credentials, religious and political, are impeccable. They beat one of the world’s two superpowers and now they [were] working on a second.”

In addition to weapons cached by substate groups of various types, those stockpiled in police and military arsenals are increasingly important sources of light weapons entering regional or global markets. The ultimate distribution of such weapons is beyond the control of most state or international groups, whether those weapons are seized forcibly by civilians, sold on the black market by members of the military, or simply turned over by soldiers.

The revolt in Albania and the numerous weapons seizures since it began have amply illustrated the vulnerability of weapons stores to domestic uprisings. Numerous press reports outline the waves of weapons seizures sweeping across Albania during March and April 1997. Some of those weapons were ultimately returned to authorities; others were integrated into the munitions of rebel groups. Still other weapons seized from military garrisons, police warehouses and other military storage areas are being sold by impoverished Albanians as a means of survival. Of particular concern is the likely spread of looted weapons to neighbouring Macedonia and the Kosovo Province of Yugoslavia, where governance and the rule of law are increasingly under threat.

While Albania has provided the only case of countrywide seizures, such actions have been underway elsewhere, albeit to a lesser degree. Within the first four months of 1997 alone, armed insurgencies, bands of citizens and paramilitary groups have forcibly seized or attempted to seize weapons from arsenals in the Sudan, Zaire, Paraguay, Zambia, South Africa and Cambodia.

Weapons can be wrested from government control with little effort in many cases. Accountability and monitoring of weapons and ammunition have always been difficult, and certainly are not new to the post-Cold War era. The South African police and military forces, for example, have had ongoing difficulty maintaining control over state armories. A 1992 report estimated a 10-14 per cent increase in the number of firearms stolen from the national security armory. More recently, South Africa’s Safety and Security Minister reported that almost 2,000 police weapons — including 9 mm pistols, automatic R-4 rifles and shotguns — were unaccounted for in 1996.

In addition, troops disillusioned with a regime in power or who sympathize with the opposition’s cause have voluntarily surrendered their weapons to their adversaries, as happened most recently in the former Zaire. Members of the military establishment, in profit-making arrangements with insurgencies, criminal gangs and police groups, have also sold weapons or been complicit in their theft.

Finally, the popularisation of weapons ownership by private citizens adds to the complexity of coming to terms with arms production, sales and control. The arming of combatants during civil wars and incomplete efforts to demobilise them during peace processes has produced societies in which possession of weapons is the norm. Disarmament, consequently, has become impossible in many countries. The arming of citizens for civil wars has been complemented by a legal commercial trade that thrives on private demand for a range of small arms from handguns to semiautomatic rifles, particularly during times of social unrest. The spread of handguns among United States citizens rose dramatically during the 1960s, for example. A summary of the situation claims “...from 1967 to 1968 (alone) the number of handguns annually made available for sale to civilians in the U.S. rose by 50 per cent — by some 802,000 pistols and revolvers — to 2,4 million,
the greatest single annual leap in American history. In 1960, there were 16 million handguns in America; ten years later, the total had risen to more than 27 million. As of 1989, ... there were 66,7 million handguns and 200 million firearms of all kinds in circulation in the United States.”

The increasing prevalence of weapons in civil society, both during and since the Cold War has resulted in the escalation of robbery, the rise of murder and injury rates and in other forms of gun-related violence. Efforts set up by fragile states, in which social and personal insecurity is endemic, to control weapons, are particularly challenged, a situation heightened by the emergence of strong cultural attachments to, and identity with, gun ownership, as is the case in the United States. The extent to which the possession of weapons has become the norm is outlined in the following survey:

- An estimated ten million weapons exist in Mozambique (a country of 15 million people).
- The government of Sri Lanka was recently forced to propose strict laws governing possession of firearms in response to politicians’ unwillingness to surrender the 15 000 rifles and revolvers distributed to them during the leftist uprising of 1988-1990.
- An estimated two million assault rifles exist in Switzerland (population 7.3 million).
- Chinese manufacturers produce 200 000 guns for civilian use each year; of these 160 000 are sold illegally. Additional weapons are smuggled into the country from the former Soviet Union, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- There are an estimated 18.5 million guns in Brazil, only six million of which are registered (population 158 million).
- A recent report indicated that 12 470 South Africans own ten or more licensed firearms; 19 600 people with criminal records are licensed gun owners.
- The retirement of arms is being outpaced by new acquisitions in El Salvador. Since 1994, 103 000 arms — imported from Brazil, France, Italy and the United States — have been registered. Thousands of additional non-registered weapons are also in circulation.
- The United Nations has estimated that over 700 000 weapons of assorted calibre were still in Luanda, Angola alone as of early 1997.65

The Light Arms Trade at the End of the Century

The approach of the twenty-first century carries with it numerous challenges to peace and security at the local as well as the global level. The 1990s began with high hopes that many post-communist and post-colonial states would undergo a ‘transition to democracy’. Those hopes have been dashed by seven tumultuous and bloody years; the idealistic wish for democracy has been replaced by a somewhat less ambitious desire for peace and stability. The same optimism led to predictions of a ‘New World Order’, representing a new age of international co-operation and prosperity led by the United Nations. Here, too, the reality has fallen short of the ideal.

The United Nations has been overwhelmed with fresh demands for responses to global crises at the same time that it is struggling with financial shortfalls and the need for radical restructuring. The United States, now the dominant world power, has striven to define its world role. Whether it or another national or multinational governmental structure will be able to assert successful world leadership remains to be seen, particularly when that leadership involves an issue as complex and contentious as the trade in light weapons. And last, but not least, a range of transnational organisations has emerged in a new and much-strengthened form, challenging any effort at global governance and making it difficult for many states to continue as viable entities. Both as commodities and as instruments of the modes of violence that are central to the new era of insecurity, in the transnational, global and local contexts, light weapons play critical roles.

The proliferation of producers, the spread of weapons within civil society and the fragile condition of many states has meant that states have lost significant measures of control over the means of violence. At the same time, there are increasing incentives for them to resist efforts to bring light weapons under control, either at national or international levels. States that have turned to weapons production as a form of economic development are unlikely to accept restrictions that would harm their markets. Regimes that are weak and require repressive police and military structures are faced with important security tradeoffs between the steps necessary to restrict civilian access to weapons and the potential for these very steps to challenge police and security access to the weapons. Finally, the ability of transnational organised crime to infiltrate, corrupt or intimidate governments further
undermines the willingness of affected states to agree to, much less enforce, restrictions on the arms trade. Under such conditions, it is hard to find reasons for optimism that the trade in light weapons will be diminished — much less controlled — in the near future.

Endnotes

1 Although the term ‘Cold War certainties’ was used to refer to the general stability of the Cold War era, it is reasonable to argue that the trade in military technology was in fact an area where relatively stable conditions prevailed during that period. See: Introduction, in Crocker, Hampson and Aal (eds), Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Response to International Conflict, US Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, 1996, p. xv.

2 Analysts of the arms trade have yet to arrive at a commonly agreed upon definition of light weapons, in part due to the range of weapons and the number of ways in which they can be categorised. This discussion works from a definition originally articulated by Michael Klare in 1995: “In general, such arms can be defined as those conventional munitions that can be carried by an individual combatant or by a light vehicle operating on back-country roads. This category includes small arms (handguns, carbines, assault rifles, and submachine guns), and light weapons such as machine guns, bazookas, rocket-propelled grenades, light anti-tank missiles, light mortars, shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, and hand-placed land mines. Excluded is anything heavier: tanks, heavy artillery pieces, planes, ships, and so on, along with weapons of mass destruction.” M T Klare, The Global Trade in Light Weapons and the International System in the Post-Cold War Era, in Klare, Boutwell and Reed, (eds), Lethal Commerce: The Global Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge, MA, 1995 (hereafter Lethal Commerce), p. 33. Another thoughtful discussion of the limitations of definition can be found in A Karp Small Arms — The New Major Weapons, in Lethal Commerce, pp. 23-25.


4 Karp, op. cit., p. 22.


6 The five top exporting countries were: United States, United Kingdom, Russia, China and France, ibid., p. 16

7 Cambodia at War, Human Rights Watch, Washington, DC, April 1996.


12 Although authorising legislation for such transfers originally included a certification requirement that such articles be used only for counter-narcotics purposes, the language was changed to 'primarily' because, when they precluded use for counter-insurgency operations, the certification requirements could not be met. See P Pineo and L Lumpe Recycled Weapons: American Exports of Surplus Arms, 1990-1995, Federation of American Scientists, Washington DC, May 1996, p. 11.

13 For a discussion of what may or may not have happened, as well as an accounting of the allegations against the United States, see Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence, United States Senate, together with Additional Views, November 1996, 104th Congress, U.S. Actions Regarding Iranian and Other Arms Transfers to the Bosnian Army, 1994-1995. See also 104th Congress, House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, Findings of the Select Subcommittee on the United States Role in Iranian Arms Transfers to Croatia and Bosnia, October 1996.


15 Pakistan’s intelligence services were implicated in a weapons drop north of Calcutta on 17 December 1997 which was carried out by five Latvian nationals, a former British military officer and a New Zealander using a plane leased from Latvian Airlines. The arms were purchased in Bulgaria; half of the cargo was delivered in India and the balance went to Pakistan. See Hardware from Heaven, TIME International, 8 January 1996, 147 (2), Internet Edition; in January 1997, Indian Border Security Forces operating in the Gujarat coastal area intercepted two boats from Pakistan that were carrying a cache of Chinese-made small arms and explosives. See India: Illegal Arms Coming from Pakistan Seized in Gujarat, Delhi All India Radio Network, FBIS Daily Report, FBIS- NES-97-013, 18 January 1997.


22 Human Rights Watch Arms Project, Arming Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War, 6 (1) January 1994, pp.14-17. In contrast to Egypt, South Africa and France, the United States, which supplied a minimum of weapons aid and international military education and training, was a relatively small supplier.

23 Russia was the primary supplier of a range of weapons that included tanks and heavy artillery as well as light weapons. Additional weapons were purchased from Brazil, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, North Korea, Portugal and Spain. Human Rights Watch Arms Project/ Human Rights Watch Africa, Angola: Between War and Peace, Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses Since the Lusaka Protocol, 8(1), February 1996, pp. 13-15.


29 Garcia-Pena-Jaramillo, op. cit.; Human Rights Watch/Americas Final Justice: Police and Death Squad Homicides of Adolescents in Brazil, February 1994. Abductions, forced conscription and enslavement of adolescents in the Sudan by armed military and police personnel, while not resulting in homicides, reflect a similar intent to eliminate or remove populations deemed to be ‘undesirable.’ For discussion of this practice, see Human Rights Watch/ Africa, Human Rights Watch Children’s Rights Project, Children of Sudan: Slaves, Street Children and Child Soldiers, September 1995.

30 Non-communist countries engaged in the manufacture of light weapons included: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Libya, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, the United States and West Germany. Communist countries engaged in the manufacture of light weapons included: Bulgaria, People’s Republic of China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, North Korea, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Yugoslavia. See V Ezell, Small Arms Today, 2nd ed., Harrisburg, PA, Stackpole Books, 1987 (hereafter Small Arms Today).

31 Information on the production capabilities and/or sources of weapons for each country can be found throughout the volume and a table comparing light weapons manufacture to the range of conventional weapons manufacture appears on pp. 25-26.


35 P Pineo and L Lumpe, op. cit.


39 Garcia-Peña-Jaramillo, pp.12, 131-135.

40 Non-communist countries engaged in the manufacture of light weapons included: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Libya, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, the United States and West Germany. Communist countries engaged in the manufacture of light weapons included: Bulgaria, People’s Republic of China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, North Korea, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Yugoslavia. See V Ezell, Small Arms Today, 2nd ed., Harrisburg, PA, Stackpole Books, 1987 (hereafter Small Arms Today).

41 Information on the production capabilities and/or sources of weapons for each country can be found throughout the volume and a table comparing light weapons manufacture to the range of conventional weapons manufacture appears on pp. 25-26.


44 P Pineo and L Lumpe, op. cit.


48 Ibid., pp. 87, 107-108.


50 There is often a symbiotic relationship between the intelligence and criminal communities. Quoting the report, Crime and the Contras, a Summary Report, author Alan Block notes: “Criminal ‘opportunities’ arise from the clandestine nature of

Within a period of a few months press accounts reported the United States role to be 50 per cent or 80 per cent, respectively, underscoring the lack of ‘hard’ data on illegal shipment and support networks. See How the IRA ships arms into Ulster Christian Science Monitor, 15 January 1985; Ireland Deals Blow to US-IRA-Connection, Christian Science Monitor, 4 October 1984.


For discussions of the black market in light weapons, see T Naylor The Structure and Operation of the Modern Arms Black Market, in Lethal Commerce, op. cit.; and also A Scourge of Guns, op. cit., pp. 57-72.

Nations Around World, op. cit.

In 1997, the LTTE began its move towards the arms trade to supply its fighters in much the same manner as other insurgent groups in the region. In an interview with the author, 14 October 1997, the LTTE confirmed that it had purchased weapons from China and that it had also been purchasing others from the United States and Europe. In 1997, the LTTE informed the author that it had purchased some of its weapons in the United States, which it later sold to the Sri Lankan government.

In February 1997 Guatemalan rebels were arrested transporting AK-47s near the Mexican border. That same month, Salvadoran President, Calderon Sol, called for an end to arms smuggling from El Salvador and Nicaragua as supply operations for the Zapatista National Liberation Army in Mexico. See Associated Press, 22 February 1997; El Salvador: Calderon Sol Voices ‘Concern’ over Arms Shipments in Region, Panama City ACAN, FBIS, Daily Report, FBIS-LAT-97-033, 17 February 1997.


Many Guns, Few Solutions in Albania: Looting of Armories Litters Chaotic Country
Intra-state Conflict, Political Violence and Small Arms Proliferation in Africa

Peter Batchelor

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. 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.,