Globalisation and Insecurity

The Direct and Indirect Effects of Small Arms Availability

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> Small arms have damaged development prospects and imperilled human security in every way. Indeed, there is probably no single tool of conflict so widespread, so easily available and so difficult to restrict, as small arms. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1999)

The unregulated availability of small arms and light weapons made possible by globalisation undermines livelihood strategies and imperils development opportunities. The widespread diffusion of such weapons feeds cycles of insecurity that have broad-reaching consequences on individuals and the functioning of societies. This article seeks to outline the broad social and economic consequences of unregulated small arms availability and use in the North and South. In distilling the broad 'social' effects of small arms availability on societies, the article departs from a traditional supply-side 'demilitarisation' approach to the study of small arms, opting instead for a more expansive appraisal of the varied dimensions of insecurity.

The article highlights the common and distinctive impacts of small arms, not only between regions and countries but also within individual states and demographic constituencies. The first section examines the relationship between globalisation, small arms proliferation and conflict. Importantly, the nature of armed violence tends to vary according to situational variables such as normative and behavioural culture, gender and demographics. Armed conflict constitutes a particularly powerful variable in explaining mortality and morbidity. The next section assesses the 'indirect effects' of widespread small arms availability and is segmented into four subcategories: public and population health, criminality, humanitarian action and development. The secondary effects, frequently neglected in the 'arms control' literature, offer a powerful insight into the complexities of arms-related insecurity.

1 Globalisation and Small Arms

Globalisation is variously defined as a process of increasing economic, political and social interdependence and global integration where capital, traded goods, persons, concepts, images,

ideas and values diffuse across state boundaries. A growing consensus is that, partly as a result of globalisation, the state as an institution is rapidly losing its salience – yielding a considerable part of its autonomy to multilateral lending institutions and finding its role diminished as other social actors take over. Though benefiting many, globalisation is reinforcing inequality among the majority (Cornia 2000; Cukier and Chaptelaine 2000; Gissinger and Gleditsch 2000; Kofman and Young 1996). According to Lock (1999: 31) 'the present course of development is marked by the continued polarisation of income both between nations (internationally) as well as within nations (intra-societal). Spatial segregation coupled with the general trend toward curtailing state functions has encouraged privatisation, widespread unemployment among youth and "intergenerational apartheid".'

Discussion of the 'small arms crisis' and the role played by globalisation on the diffusion of weapons often begins with deliberate focus on measures to 'improve' state regulatory functions (Klare 1999; Willett, forthcoming). But, similar to other sectors, the state is weakening in relation to the supply and demand of small arms. In other words, weak states are increasingly incapable of restraining sales and leakage of firearm surplus and receiving states are less capable of controlling their effects. Countries with inadequate protection and surveillance over their inventories – such as the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – are easily plundered. As a result, the state is losing its monopoly over the *de facto* 'tools' of violence. But it should be recalled that forty years of Cold War encouraged the diffusion of small arms through virtually all layers of society. What is different today are the multiplicity of actors who have access to such arms – at a time when both government and guerrilla armies are splintering, warlords rising to prominence and the forms of violence (e.g. political, communal, religious or criminal) are blurring. This is happening, paradoxically, at a time when the means of security, and particularly the protection from violence, are becoming traded commodities.

Globalisation has contributed to a reduction of restrictions on the international movement of virtually all goods and services – including stockpiled and newly produced small arms. The global expansion of markets and trade has taken place in parallel with a reduction in state capacities to maintain regulatory and oversight functions over their borders. In other words, reductions of trade barriers and the massive increase in 'freely' traded goods has facilitated smuggling and illicit arms trafficking and overwhelmed state capacities to police their physical and electronic frontiers. Arms dealers and brokers, unmoved by international norms or conventions, are the new venture capitalists. They are reaping the benefits of globalisation.

This is because globalisation has directly contributed to the emergence of new financial channels and spawned a new breed of broker-agents that complement the traditional brokers who formerly worked in conjunction with the state apparatus. These new intermediaries are able to conduct transactions in diverse and dynamic business environments, circumvent national regulations and arrange for rapid financial transfers and shipment of goods literally anywhere in the world. Furthermore, they are capable of carrying out flexible production orders in close proximity (temporally and spatially) with both their suppliers and clients. Arms dealers are able to exploit existing over-capacity of arms production in producer states and large surpluses as a result of downsizing and deliberate stockpiling in weaker states. At the same time, the increased access of non-state actors to financial resources via diaspora communities, who actively fundraise and produce hard currency through the illegal trade of primary commodities, has been a boon to arms brokers.

Further, there is growing evidence that predatory legal and illegal commercial activity frequently catalyses and sustains armed conflict. Empirical research shows that conflicts are more often motivated by 'greed', rather than 'grievance', about the control over natural resources and the opportunities arising from the criminalisation of economies (Berdal and Malone 2000). As a result, belligerents often perpetuate a conflict as a deliberate means of securing economic profit and accumulating political status. The common denominator of resources that sustain war economies is that they are tied to the global economy. Where some see economies weakened by

armed conflict, criminal actors see a territory ripe for the trafficking of arms, money laundering, abundant and cheap labour and endless possibilities for exploitation (Le Billon 2000; Reno 1998).

2 Quantifying the Unquantifiable

There have been many qualitative and quantitative studies on the 'costs of armed violence' in both human and economic terms. Surprisingly, very few assessments have provided reliable and consistent data on the impact of small arms in real economic terms. There are direct effects (e.g. mortality and morbidity) resulting from armed violence that have short- and long-term economic costs on societies. But there are also ripple and negative multiplier effects resulting from the high availability and use of small arms that affect household decision-making in both the short and long term. Here, we are talking about externalities – a collection of secondary social and economic consequences resulting from high levels of small arms availability and use. Calculating the costs of small arms and light weapons is an imprecise science, largely as a result of unreliable or non-existent data and arguments over the counterfactual. Nevertheless, a growing range of economic approaches to the study of effects has been applied (e.g. transaction cost theory, quality of life assessments, opportunity costs, etc.).

In providing rigorous appraisals of the effects of small arms availability and use, it is useful to recall that many of the associated costs are incalculable. The destruction of physical (e.g. infrastructure), human (e.g. losses in productivity), environmental (e.g. depletion of resources) and social (e.g. rising transaction costs) capital are potentially measurable. But providing a quantitative estimate on the costs attributed to the death of a loved family member or friend – the psychosocial and emotional trauma associated with loss – is unlikely. While recognising that some effects cannot be calculated, there is an urgent need for the development of textured and multidisciplinary analysis. This requires bringing to bear a full range of instruments available to social scientists, stretching our assessment beyond traditional econometric analysis and cost benefit appraisals.

3 Direct Effects: Mortality and Morbidity

On average, 300,000 intentional firearm deaths occur each year as a direct result of armed conflict. An additional 200,000 intentional firearm deaths also occur in countries ordinarily classified as 'peaceful'. Firearms are also the most lethal instruments of suicide: 93 per cent of attempts are completed successfully as compared with 30 per cent using other means (Zimring and Hawkins 1997).

The incidence of collective armed violence disproportionately affects the poorer countries of the South – though it occurs regularly at the doorstep of Western Europe. Observers have typically focused on a combination of factors: social and economic exclusion (Cornia 2000; Stewart 1998); competition over economic resources, rent-seeking and grievances (Keen 1998; Duffield 1998); the erosion or absence of democracy and the institutions of governance (Klare 1999); the lack of respect for national and international norms (ICRC 1999; UNHCR 2000); and ethnic or religious hatreds or 'ideologies of exclusion' flaring in a post-Cold War world. On the other hand, observers have emphasised the socialisation of violence among males and the culture of violence nurtured by patriarchal societies (Cukier and Chaptelaine 2000; Cock 1997); high levels of impunity and perceived injustice (ISS 2000); and high levels of unemployment and the presence of exportable primary commodities (Collier 1998).

While there has not necessarily been a proliferation of conflicts in the last decade, there has been a proportional rise in regionalised internal conflict. Light weapons have been the only weapon used in approximately 95 per cent of the 49 regional conflicts started since 1990 (Klare 1999). Not surprisingly, civilian deaths have risen as a proportion of all deaths, including soldiers and insurgents, experienced during armed conflict. What is more, the proportion of people being killed in armed confrontations in violation of international humanitarian law is also increasing, though not necessarily in real terms. But while the post-Cold War period may not be a more brutal place, there is a 'new and wider awareness of the extent of prevailing brutality and of the difficulties in gainsaying the forces of inhumanity' (Frohardt *et al.*

1999: 13). Civilian deaths are known to stay steady and even rise in post-conflict situations, largely because the boundaries between war and peace, as between war and crime, tend to be blurred.

4 Indirect Effects: A Health Hazard

Death and injury resulting from firearms have been classified simultaneously as a 'scourge' (Boutwell and Klare 1997), an 'epidemic' (Muggah 2001; Krug 2000b; ICRC 1999), a 'disease' (Coletta and Kostner 2000) and a preventable global health problem (CDC 1999). In recognising that weapons are designed explicitly to impact on the health and well-being of individuals, the distinctly humanitarian concerns with regards to small arms have been enthusiastically embraced by the medical profession. A public and population health perspective is considered to represent a 'neutral bridge' that might reconcile politicised discussions on firearms and traditional supply-side or militarist theorising on arms control. The medical community's efforts to recast the problem as a 'measurable' public health issue amenable to medical intervention, as well as identifying new and emergent threats, has greatly contributed to sensitising the international community.

When assessing the effects of small arms on the health of individuals, it is important to stress that the mortality and morbidity associated with any given weapon varies according to design and the context in which it is used. The design of weapons determines their lethality or 'stopping' power: a function of ammunition type and twist, propulsion and the amount of kinetic energy distributed throughout the body. While international humanitarian law has been advanced to safeguard the welfare of non-combatants and the wounded, and humanitarian norms have evolved to limit the 'excessive' impacts of certain weaponry,[1] these are inadequately applied or monitored. As a result, many of those concerned with the health effects of small arms have focused on the importance of universal criteria and appraisal of the military utility of various arms, and the need for achieving proportionality between military necessity and human cost.

The implications of firearm injury at the local and individual level are profound. The costs extend to treatment, medication, physiotherapy and counselling; loans and informal credit; the closure of businesses and repossession of assets; and long-term, even permanent, psychosocial trauma and marginalisation (ISS 2000). The indirect effects of small arms on health, while not captured in the statistics, relate to the diminishment of the quality of life of individuals and communities. There are increased perceptions of threat to personal safety and dignity and the associated trauma of victimisation among vulnerable sectors of society. A household's fear of firearm injury affects the normal functions of work routines, its ability to seek education and its daily interactions.

5 Crime and Punishment

Controlling arms-related violence through appropriate legislation and action is part of a state's inherent obligation to ensure and protect the human rights of its citizens. In the context of globalisation, structural adjustment and the advent of privatisation, governments the world over have been forced to make difficult decisions regarding public spending priorities. As defence and policing expenditures decline and funding for welfare and safety nets are diverted to servicing debts, societies have become more prone to criminality. This is largely a result of growing levels social exclusion, inequality and the demobilisation of millions of former combatants, with few opportunities for sustainable alternatives (Lock 1999; World Bank 1998).

With the declining control over stockpiles and inventories and the desire to generate much-needed foreign exchange, the preferred tools of 'criminals' are more readily available than ever before. In response, citizens are increasingly resorting to other forms of protection. Fear of crime and violence has led to fortress-like communities that are emblematic of the widening divide between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' and the mental militarisation of communities (Irish 1999). Those who cannot afford 'protected castles and the ... commodification of their security are forced to organise their self-defence outside legal parameters' (Lock 1999: 31). As a result, we are witnessing the privatisation of security 'into a mutually reinforcing system of multi-polar societal "re-armament" cascading down the social ladder where it amounts

to an informal militarisation ... at the lower end of the social pyramid'.

The (re)emergence of privatised security firms follows, depending on the region, between 200 and 50 years of a public monopoly on the provision of safety. The tools of violence, then, have been transferred from the public to the private domain. Since the beginning of the 1990s, private security has come to represent a lucrative growth industry, with significant numbers of corporations and states relying on contracted or in-house services rather than public policing. Private security firms represent not only one of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy, but also a vital sector in the emerging economies of the South. The rapid development and influence of private security and private military companies (PMCs) has been viewed as threatening to democratic and judicial institutions as they prioritise the 'profit-motive' over the 'public good' of communities (Muggah 2001). They have been described as lacking accountability, diffusing power away from the state without adequate re-distribution to the people.

At the same time as people debate the role of private security in the public arena, the growth and reach of transnational crime has been recorded in banner headlines around the globe. The list is virtually endless: Russian, Italian and American Mafias, criminal monopolies in the Golden Crescent and Triangle, the decentralisation of narco-trafficking in the Northern Andean region and giant smuggling operations from South Asia to Central America. In some cases, particularly among developing countries, criminal elements are better equipped and armed than the state's military and police apparatus. The increased economic potency and international networks developed by organised crime, coupled with the new space afforded by expanding markets and rapidly moving capital, has permitted underground or shadow economies to flourish. These are the new venture capitalists – agents that prey on instability and thrive on market risk. Even where multinational companies are forced to pay high fees for private security, the returns in violent and crime-infested regions often far outweigh the costs.

6 Humanitarian

The humanitarian discussion of the impact of small arms and light weapons rotates around two overlapping issue areas: (1) the violation of international humanitarian law resulting from legal, grey or clandestine shipments to particular regimes, and (2) the violation of international humanitarian law and the human rights of civilians and humanitarian personnel during armed conflict. The Ottawa Process, a successful campaign to ban the production, export and sale of landmines, combined both approaches to great effect. Furthermore, the recently launched International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), a loose coalition of over 350 NGOs addressing all facets of arms control, also draws from both streams.

The first perspective, advanced by certain like-minded states, international human rights organisations and non-governmental agencies actively pursuing demilitarisation, highlights the importance of supply-side controls on producer or exporting states to rights-abusing regimes (Carle and Lewis 2000; Gillard 2000; Saferworld 1999; DFAIT 1999; Oxfam 1998). It takes the view that 'states that distribute to regions of conflict are, by their acts of commission or omission, or sheer neglect, accessories to the abuses that are being committed. If the abuses rise to the level of war crimes, they may be accessories to war crimes, even genocide' (Hilterman and Bondi 1999). Proponents argue that the major exporting states, the USA, Russia, UK, France, Germany and China, have a moral obligation to impose restrictions on licensing arrangements and sales to abusive regimes. Adopting a rights-first approach, these actors call for increased accountability, parliamentary scrutiny, policies on brokering and end-user certification, in addition to ethical policies and codes of conduct governing transparency, production and distrib-ution of small arms. Of course, proponents of the rights approach recognise the limitations of focusing on transfers, particularly in light of the high level of illegal arms circulating or leaking from stockpiles. Ultimately, they seek to situate the debate over arms transfers in the politicised arena of human rights rather than the depoliticised discourse of trade.

A second approach, prioritised by facets of the United Nations enlightened donors, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

and major international relief agencies, seeks to heighten international awareness and actively respond to the impact of armed violence on non-combatants (UNDP 1999; ICRC 1999). Operating in the complex realities of the field, in regions where demand for small arms is high, they are responding to the violence on a massive scale. Such actors condemn and investigate armed attacks and massacres committed against unarmed civilians by belligerent states and non-state actors, torture, the summary execution of captured victims, the forced recruitment of child soldiers and the forced cross-border and internal displacement of civilians. Agencies are alarmed that civilians and humanitarian and development personnel are increasingly the primary target of attack, measures of strategic gain rather than 'collateral damage' (IASC 2000). With combatants either unaware of or shirking international humanitarian law, the implications for humanitarian agencies seeking to deliver assistance to vulnerable groups are vast. In conflict and post-conflict settings where small arms remain widely available, there is a combustible mix of recently active or demobilised soldiers and predatory state activity. For this and other reasons, increasing hostage taking, banditry and violent theft is common in the aftermath of conflict. Consequently, demands for protection, of both beneficiaries and relief/ODA personnel, have risen to the top of the humanitarian agenda.

7 Development

Armed conflict and violent crime have significant effects on the ability of affected countries to implement national development programmes. On the one hand, the diversion of national resources away from the provision of social welfare to arms purchases has severe ramifications for the majority. Vital infrastructure and resources required for development initiatives are imperilled by arms-related insecurity. Further, foreign-funded development projects and assistance are frequently cancelled or postponed to prevent resources from being diverted toward 'criminal' ends. Where development projects are implemented in insecure regions, 'project staff may be at risk, project sites may remain unused by the population for fear of being seen as supporting the government and sites may attract armed attacks to disturb the transition process' (Colletta and Kostner 2000).

Although the absolute developmental costs of responding to armed violence might be higher in the industrial world, the proportional impact on gross domestic product (GDP) and government budgets is higher among industrialising countries. In Latin America, for example, armed violence cost the equivalent of 12 per cent of GDP in 1997 ($US 143 billion) – a combination of lost human capital, private investment and asset transfers (Londono and Guerrerro 1998). El Salvador, for example, has been particularly affected by armed violence in the post-conflict period. In 1996, the costs of responding to armed violence as a function of national budget spending on institutions of health, police and judiciary was an estimated $US 780 million – approximately 13 per cent of GDP (Romano 1997). Indeed, as a result, armed conflict 'can no longer be viewed as an externality to development ... rather conflict and its aftermath is one of the key constraints to development and one of the main causes of poverty' (Holtzman 1999). While the causal relationship is far from straightforward, armed conflict and criminality can be seen as a cause and effect of poverty and inequality.

The effects of insecurity on development opportunities are twofold. First, funding and commitment to long-term development efforts are being inexorably reduced in favour of short-term relief-oriented projects. The intervention focus is narrowing to encompass a range of activities on a 'relief–development' continuum, due to the shift of priorities away from traditional development and towards conflict prevention and response. A second effect relates to the impact of changing priorities on the relative quality of development work. As development operations are frequently suspended or delayed on account of insecurity, the field context has shifted to reflect 'uncontrolled living spaces where not even relief operators will dare to work' (Meddings 1999). The paradox is that, even as aid workers call for more coordination in regions prone to violence, peace-building, development and transitional activities are not taking place in regions where they are most urgently required.

8 Conclusions

Globalisation is shaping the international proliferation and diffusion of firearms while

simultaneously creating opportunities for global inter-sectoral action. Advances in technology, not to mention economies of scale, have increased civilian access to weapons of high lethality and destructiveness. The availability of small arms of high lethality is fuelling real and perceived insecurity. Partly as a result of the growing awareness of the problem, the discursive response to the effects of small arms has become increasingly varied, and the contours of analysis are broadening rather than narrowing. More and more actors are calling for a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to disarmament that takes into consideration the public and population health, criminology, humanitarian and development sectors.

The public or population health perspective has provided a unifying thread to competing discourses. It has re-cast a traditional disarmament issue into a measurable threat to the health and welfare of human beings, bringing to bear the tools of human rights and epidemeology. While an on-going debate in many industrialised countries, the criminology and gun-control sectors have provided rigorous studies of the correlation between availability and use. They have also highlighted the permeable borders between armed conflict and armed crime and the relationship between drug-trafficking and small arms availability. Increasing perception of armed violence is catalysing cultures of violence. Closely allied with the public health community, the humanitarian sector has responded to the threat through a rights-first approach, emphasising the triggering effect of small arms in complex humanitarian emergencies and the implications of availability on personnel and beneficiaries. There is a growing appreciation among most humanitarian agencies that small arms availability imperils the very foundations of international humanitarian law. Although this issue has been taken up only recently by the development community, there is a growing appreciation of the way small arms availability affects spending priorities, distorts the functioning of households and communities and has grave opportunity costs on development initiatives. The UNDP (1999) has repeatedly emphasised the importance of a security-first agenda, whereby human security is required so that human development can take place.

Note

1. For example, the Protocol on Superfluous Injury and Unnecessary Suffering (ICRC 1999).

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