

The Humanitarian Impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Threat to Security

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“The world is awash with small arms and light weapons, numbering more than 600 million, enough for one in every ten people on earth.”¹

During the Cold War, arms control negotiations have focused on major weapons systems like nuclear bombs, ballistic missiles, and aircraft. This was partly because the devastation that a nuclear war could cause. However, these are not the weapons that are being used in many of today’s conflicts. Today’s conflicts now depend almost entirely on small arms and light weapons. Therefore to reduce armed conflict and global insecurity, there is need to focus attention on these weapons. The lethal nature of these weapons together with their ready availability and ease of handling is at the root of the small arms problem. Consequently the problem has acquired greater international attention.

The uncontrolled proliferation and stockpiling of small arms and light weapons (SALW) before, during and following violent conflicts has led to many regions being flooded with small arms with devastating consequences on individual (human), national and international security. SALW are the primary instruments of violence, have prolonged or aggravated conflicts, produced massive flows of refugees, undermined the rule of law and spawned a culture of violence and impunity. It is in this context that the impact on security can be analysed.

This article discusses one aspect of the SALW impact on security: the humanitarian impact. The paper is divided into three main parts and a conclusion. The first part introduces the small arms problem, and its relationship to security, the second parts discusses the humanitarian impact of small arms and the third part highlights some of the international and regional responses to the small arms problem. The final part is the conclusion.

Scope of the problem

There is no agreed definition of SALW. Most widely used is the definition proposed by the UN Panel of Experts on Small Arms in its 1997 report.² According to the Panel, small arms include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns. Light weapons, include heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles (sometimes mounted), portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems (sometimes mounted), and mortars of calibre less than 100 mm. Ammunition and explosives includes cartridges (rounds) for small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines and explosives.³ This is the definition adopted in this paper.

¹ Kofi Annan, “Foreword” *Small Arms survey 2002 Counting the Human Cost*. A project of the Institute of International studies, Geneva, 2002

² Report of the Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms, United Nations Document A/52/298, United Nations, New York, 7 August 1997.

³ Ibid.

It is estimated that there are more than 500 million military-style small arms in the world. Between 1980-1999 the annual production of military style small arms was estimated at 2.1 million and 21 billion units of ammunition. Worldwide there are about 98 countries with the capacity to produce small arms and 1000 companies are involved in some aspect of small arms production. In 2001, 720 000 military-style small arms – pistols, rifles, sub-machine guns and machine guns – and 7 million commercial firearms – handguns and long guns- were produced. In addition 16 billion units of military calibre small arms ammunition were also produced.⁴

Approximately 80-90 per cent of the global trade in small arms is legal.⁵ According to the estimates by the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), the legal export of small arms and the corresponding ammunition constitute 13 per cent of world trade in conventional arms which translates to US\$ three billion annually. The illegal global trade in small weapons is estimated to lie somewhere between US\$ two billion and US\$ ten billion. Finally, the value of international trade in machine guns, light artillery and anti-tank weapons should be added to the sum, as these are not included in the ACDA estimates. After these adjustments have been made, the total value of legal and illegal international trade in small arms and light weapons, including ammunition, amounts to roughly US\$ six billion annually. This sum does not include the value of small arms and light weapons sold on domestic markets.⁶ Klare estimates that the small arms and light weaponry trade consumes an estimated \$10 billion of the world's \$850 billion per year in military expenditures.⁷

The major suppliers of small arms and light weaponry include about a dozen governments who dominate the legal trade and untold numbers of independent dealers, brokers, and middlemen who control the illicit trade. Major government suppliers include the five permanent members of the UN Security Council along with key niche suppliers such as Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Germany, Israel, Italy, and South Africa.⁸

Although most of the SALW are produced in the developed countries, the major impact is felt in the developing countries where they are used in the myriad of conflicts taking place there. The number of small arms in developing countries is estimated to be likely to be at least 100 million. Some authors estimate the numbers to be higher.⁹ The majority of these arms were originally produced and supplied by industrialised countries. Mass supply occurred during the Cold War as the superpowers sought to increase the military strength of their allies and the enemies of their rivals. For example between 1950 and 1975 the USA donated 2 174 000 rifles alone to friendly countries in Europe and the Third World.¹⁰ In the 1980s, the United States Intelligence Agency (CIA) distributed weapons worth between US\$ six billion and nine billion to Afghan combatants to fight against the Soviet Union.¹¹ After the end of the Cold War, the former Warsaw Pact and

⁴ Small Arms Survey. *Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the Human Cost*. A Project of the Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 2002 pp. 11-14

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Michael Renner. "Arms Control Orphans." *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (January / February 1999), p. 24

⁷ Jeffrey Boutwell and Michael T. Klare, "A Scourge of Small Arm s," *Scientific American*. No. 6 June 2000, p p. 48–53

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Michael T. Klare, "The Kalashnikov Age." *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (January / February 1999), p. 21

¹⁰ John Walter. *Rifles of the World*. Northbrook, Illinois: DBI Books, 1993, p. 32

¹¹ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). *The Problem of Small Arms in Developing Countries: The current international debate and recommendations for Development Cooperation, in particular Technical Cooperation*. Eschborn 2001, p.13

NATO countries undertook a hitherto unparalleled reduction in their arsenals. Most of the surplus weapons were sold or provided free of charge to the developing countries.

In recent decades, Latin America has been inundated with massive quantities of small arms and light weapons, fuelling a deadly epidemic of political and criminal violence. Light weapons have played an especially significant role in Latin America, where interstate conflicts are rare and internal warfare the norm. Of all major conflicts that have occurred in the region since 1945, only a handful involved the systematic use of major weapons; most were fought with light and medium weapons alone. This is true of even some of the most protracted and bloody conflicts, such as the guerrilla wars in Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru. Moreover, light weapons figure prominently in the criminal violence that has beset many Latin American nations, including Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. Light weapons are also used by state security forces, government-backed and covert “death squads” to suppress opposition forces in many countries. There is accurate data on the trade in small arms and light weapons in Latin America. However, the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) has estimated that about 13 percent of the international arms traffic is composed of small arms and ammunition. If applied to the \$8.15 billion worth of arms transferred to Latin American countries in 1989-1993, this percentage would yield a figure of approximately \$1 billion in small arms deliveries over this period. In addition, it is likely that approximately the same amount was devoted to the acquisition of imported machine guns, mortars, grenade launchers, and other infantry support weapons. In fact, these figures probably underestimate the value of small arms and light weapons brought into Latin America because of the prevalence of internal conflicts.¹²

The SALW problem is not, however, restricted to the Third World. In Europe, this problem is most acute in the Balkans where the various conflicts in the region have attracted a flow of weapons from other parts of Eastern Europe. For example, in 1997 following the collapse of the state in Albania rampaging citizens looted more than 650,000 small arms from military camps and police stations.¹³

The United States is not only a major supplier but also major consumer of small arms. During the Cold War, the United States military maintained large reserves of small arms for its armed forces as well as for allies. The Pentagon deliberately preserved enough equipment to maintain a small arms inventory equivalent to roughly 2.3 small arms for each man and woman in uniform. At the end of 2001, the US army alone had an inventory of 1 607 772 small arms. In total the US military had an estimated 2 688 000 small arms.¹⁴

Throughout the Cold War period, the United States and the Soviet Union (and some of their close allies) provided large quantities of arms and ammunition to Latin American military and police forces in the form of grants and sales. According to the Defence Security Assistance Agency, the United States provided Latin American governments with \$660 million worth of arms and equipment under the Military Assistance Program between 1950 and 1979. In addition, the United States supplied these countries with \$230 million worth of “surplus” U.S. weapons under the Excess Defence Articles program, along with \$960 million in credits toward the purchase of U.S. arms through the Foreign Military Sales program – bringing total U.S. arms aid (excluding training and purely commercial arms sales) for 1950-1979 to \$1.86 billion. While a large share of these expenditures were devoted to transfers of major military systems like tanks and aircraft, a significant portion was allocated to transfers of small arms and light weapons. The United States also provided large quantities of small arms and anti-riot

¹² Michael Klare and David Andersen. *A Scourge of Guns: The Diffusion of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Latin America*. Arms Sales Monitoring Project Federation of American Scientists. On line <http://www.fas.org/asmp/library/scourge/scourge-ch1.pdf> p. 2

¹³ Ibid. p. 15

¹⁴ Small Arms Survey. *Small arms survey 2002*, pp. 83-85

systems to Latin American police forces through the State Department's Office of Public Safety (OPS).¹⁵

The Soviet Union also provided arms and military services to its allies in Latin America. However, such aid was highly concentrated in a handful of countries—principally Cuba, Nicaragua, and Peru.²⁵ According to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), the Soviet Union provided these three countries with an estimated \$15 billion of arms, military equipment, and military services between 1964 and 1988 (in current dollars), with Cuba receiving \$11.5 billion, Peru \$1.3 billion, and Nicaragua \$2.2 billion.²⁶ As in the case of U.S. security assistance programs, much of this largess was devoted to major military systems.¹⁶

SALW proliferation and international security

Under traditional security, the state is the primary object (referent) of security and external military threats constitutes the major threat to national security. Security is a condition of the state, to be achieved by the state, through the instrumentality of military power.¹⁷ Security policy was aimed at the protection of the physical, political and cultural identity of the state against the threats and potential threats posed by the capabilities of others through military means. This implied that a state is free from the threat of war; that it feels safe against potential aggressors, that is, war is believed to be unlikely but should one occur, the state in question does not expect defeat.¹⁸ Consequently, security could be achieved through the pursuit of power hence the need for effective military defence. “Military power is the central focus of the field” and security studies is concerned with the “study of the threat, use, and control of military force.”¹⁹ Weapons provided most of the questions, and most of the answers – whatever the weapon, whatever the context, and whatever the cost” (Booth 1991: 315-316).

The focus on national military means as the basis of security gave rise to arms races that had the potential of causing more insecurity. Arms races are action-reaction phenomena whereby countries locked in political conflict steadily augment their military capabilities in response to a perceived growth in each other’s military preparations. Thus arms races paradoxically leads to more insecurity, what Jervis (1978) and Posen (1993) refer to as the “security dilemma.”²⁰ Simply put, a security dilemma exists when the actions of one state, in trying to increase its own security causes a reaction in a second state, which, in the end, decreases its (the first state's) own security. It is against this background that arms control and disarmament were pursued. A number of arms regulation treaties aimed at cementing the relaxation of international tensions such as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) which bans the development, possession and use of chemical weapons has eliminated an entire class of weapons were concluded.

¹⁵ Klare and Andersen. *A Scourge of Guns*. Pp. 29-29

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 34

¹⁷ Hans Morgenthau. “Another Great Debate: The National Interest of the United States” *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 46 No. 4 1952, p. 972

¹⁸ Arnold Wolfers. *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press 1962, p.5

¹⁹ Stephen Walt. “The Renaissance of Security Studies.” In *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 35 No. 2 (June 1991) pp. 216-222 at p. 212

²⁰ Robert Jervis, R. “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma.” *World Politics*. Vol. 30 No. 2 pp. 167-214; Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict.” in *Survival* Vol. 35 No. 1 (Spring 1993) pp. 27-47.

Since the end of the Cold War, the diminishing possibility of a nuclear war has increasingly shifted international attention to problems arising from the worldwide proliferation of small arms and light weapons. This is partly because these weapons have been the primary tools of violence in the many ethnic and internal conflicts that have erupted in recent years and the re-conceptualisation of security that has taken place. This importance was underlined by the UN secretary-general's October 2000 'We the People' millennium speech to the General Assembly in which he states,

The death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems - and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as 'weapons of mass destruction.' Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development. The proliferation of small arms sustains and exacerbates armed conflicts. It endangers peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. It undermines respect for international humanitarian law. It threatens legitimate but weak governments and it benefits terrorists as well as the perpetrators of organised crime.²¹

The end of the Cold War has also enabled the consideration of non-state actors such as individuals, society and the global systems as alternative objectives (referents) of security. The importance given to the state and military threats can no longer be sustained in the current world. This paper will however focus on human security.

Under traditional security, 'the security of individuals was subsumed, as a political epigram, in the security of the nation.'²² However it has been argued that, "the individual is the irreducible basic unit to which the concept of security can be applied."²³ It is from the human values that the term 'security' derives its meaning, and a security policy derives its legitimacy and power to mobilise resources. Therefore, the individual forms the ultimate ground and rationale for securing anything (the subject). People should be treated as ends not as means, whereas states should be treated as means and not ends.²⁴ A human security approach focuses on the security of people and their communities. It also broadens the scope of the concept from a narrow range of military threats to a broader range of threats that impact on the safety of individuals.²⁵ According to the UNDP's *Human Development Report* (1994) human security has two principal aspects: safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression, and protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life.²⁶ Thus, the primary focus of a human security approach is on the human costs of the widespread availability of small arms.

²¹ Kofi Annan. *We the peoples: The role of the United Nations in the 21st century*. Report prepared for the United Nations Millennium Summit, New York (2000, September).

²² Emma Rotschild. "What is Security?" *Daedalus*. Vol. 124, No. 3 (Summer 1995) pp. 53-98 at p. 64

²³ Barry Buzan. *People, State and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press. 1991, p.35

²⁴ Ken Booth, and Nicholas Wheeler. "Contending philosophies about security in Europe" in Colin McInnes (ed.) *Security and Strategy in the New Europe*. London and New York, Routledge. 1992, p. 4

²⁵ Ken Booth. "A Security Regime in Southern Africa: Theoretical Considerations." *Southern African Perspectives* No. 30, CSAS, 1994. p. 4

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 1994: New dimensions of human security*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1994 p.23

Small arms are identified as a major factor that can violate the security of individuals.²⁷ It is also acknowledged that the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, have a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic effects and pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels.²⁸ As the Report of the African Experts on Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms states,

The proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have adverse effects on human security, in particular on women, children and other vulnerable groups, and on infrastructure. Furthermore, the misuse of arms promotes a culture of violence and destabilises societies by creating a propitious environment for criminal and contraband activities ... Violence caused by small arms undermines good governance, jeopardises fundamental human rights, and hinders economic development. It exacerbates armed conflicts, the displacement of innocent populations and threatens international humanitarian law.²⁹

Focusing on human security in practice means greater putting attention to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and to the impact that small arms have on public health, public safety, and the prospects for human development.³⁰ This paper addresses the humanitarian consequences related to small arms proliferation and accumulation.

Small arms and conflict

It has been argued that “the massive quantities of small arms in circulation have been primary contributors to a world-wide epidemic of ethnic, sectarian, and criminal violence.”³¹ Although weapons themselves do not cause conflicts, their proliferation and easy availability exacerbate the degree of violence by increasing the lethality and duration of hostilities, and encouraging violent rather than peaceful resolutions of differences.³² As Harting observes,

Guns don't kill people, but societies awash in guns are far more likely to resolve their differences violently, in ways that can quickly spiral out of control. Once this

²⁷ See for example *The Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa* (Nairobi, 15 March 2000); *Report of the Meeting of African Experts on Illicit Proliferation, Circulation, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons*, 17-19 May, 2000 Addis Ababa Ethiopia; *Report of the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects* (July 2001); Sidney Bearman, *Strategic Survey 1990-1991*. Brassey's for IISS London, for 1992. pp.21-22

²⁸ United Nations. *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons*. UN Document A/CONF.192/15

²⁹ Organisation of African Unity (OAU). *Report of the Meeting of Experts*. First Continental Meeting of African Experts on Small Arms and Light Weapons, 17-19 May 2000 Addis Ababa Ethiopia. available on <http://www.smallarmsnet.org/docs/saaf03.pdf> see also The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons

³⁰ Don Hubert. *Small Arms Demand and Human Security* Ploughshares Briefing 01/5 at <http://www.ploughshares.ca/CONTENT/BRIEFINGS/brf015.html>

³¹ Michael T. Klare. *Light Weapons & Civil Conflict: Controlling the Tools of Violence*. Lanham MD, 1999, p. 19

³² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2002. *UNDP's Role in Small Arms Reductions: A Primer*. <http://www.undp.org/erd/smallarms/undp.htm>

happens, the international community can neither stop the killing nor heal societal wounds inflicted by militias, warlords, criminal gangs or repressive governments.³³

Small arms and light weapons have certain characteristics that make them the most widely used weapons by countries and groups involved in armed conflict: They are cheap, wide availability, highly lethal, simple to use, durable, portable and can be easily concealed. They are also germane to military, police, and civilian use.³⁴

Available data indicate that SALW are the major weapons used in today's conflicts. Out of the forty-nine major conflicts fought in the 1990s, small arms were the only armaments used in forty-six conflicts.³⁵ Furthermore, SALW were the dominant weapons used in the 95 internal conflicts that were fought around the world between 1989-1996.³⁶

The availability of light weapons has also transformed the very nature of conflict from traditional combat between nation-states to intra-state conflict involving a wide variety of actors, including governments, rebel movements, militias, ethnic and religious groups, tribes and clans, refugees, criminal gangs and mercenaries.³⁷

Further still the consequences of violence perpetrated with small arms extend well beyond the direct effects of a single bullet. The mere threat of armed attack compels civilians to alter their behavior in an attempt to minimise the associated risks to both themselves and their families.³⁸ The presence of SALW acts as a magnifier of violence, both in conflict and non-conflict situations. Social groups, including children and women who have usually been outside the traditional patterns of conflict, find themselves caught up in a new, more threatening environment. In addition, small arms have contributed to a "culture of violence" characterized by gun dependency and their glorification.

Small arms and human rights abuse

The proliferation of SALW is largely responsible for the violation of humanitarian laws. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, "the proliferation of weapons in the hands of new and often undisciplined actors has outpaced efforts to ensure compliance with the basic rules of warfare" resulting in "appalling levels of wanton violence and a stream of horrific images which threaten to immunise the public and decision makers to ongoing violations of international humanitarian law".³⁹ Although a study by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) shows that weapons availability posed a grave threat to the security of civilians, and indeed the entire humanitarian enterprise, it however, emphasised that a causal relationship between the availability of small arms and human rights violations or the use of violence against the civil population, is not proven.⁴⁰ The Human rights Watch thinks otherwise.

³³ William D. Hartung. *The New Business of War: Small Arms and the Proliferation of Conflict*. Available at http://www.cceia.org/media/488_hartung.pdf p. 83

³⁴ Jeffrey Boutwell and Michael Klare. "Small Arms and Light Weapons: Controlling the Real Instruments of War." *Arms Control Today* Vol. 28:15-23 August-September 1998.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 20

³⁶ Michael Klare. "The Kalashnikov Age" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (January/February 1999), pp. 20-21

³⁷ George Musser and Sasha Nemecek, "Waging a New Kind of War," *Scientific American*, June 2000, p. 47.

³⁸ Muggah, and Eric Berman. *Humanitarianism Under Threat: The Humanitarian Impacts of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Special Report commissioned by the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee*. Geneva/New York: Small Arms Survey/IASC.2001

³⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) *Arms Availability and the Situation of Civilians in Armed Conflict*. 1999 p. 8

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

In a briefing Paper for the UN Biennial Meeting entitled *Small Arms Small Arms and Human Rights: The Need for Global Action* Human Rights Watch argues that the uncontrolled proliferation and widespread misuse of small arms represents a global human rights crisis by facilitating countless human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Small arms-aided abuses by either governments or private actors occur in wartime, post-conflict settings, and in countries not at war. These violations include the deliberate targeting of civilians or other non-combatants, and indiscriminate attacks likely to disproportionately harm civilians and torture. In post conflict situations the widespread availability of small arms has greatly added to the death toll. Particularly where security is weak, former combatants have not been disarmed, and abusive actors have not been held accountable for past behaviour, a situation of lawlessness can emerge where civilians are at grave risk. Even in countries nominally at peace, the misuse of small arms accounts for many serious human rights abuses. Small arms confer power, even without being fired. The coercive potential of these weapons, when exploited by abusive government agents, can enable human rights abuses such as torture, rape, intimidation, and looting.⁴¹

Deaths from SALW

A key indicator of the direct impact of small arms on human security is firearms-related deaths and injuries. The proliferation of SALW has also led to higher combat and civilian casualties during conflicts as well as deaths from rising criminal activities. In the foreword to the second Expert Report in 1999, Kofi Annan wrote,

Small arms are widely used in conflicts in which a high proportion of casualties are civilians, and in which violence has been perpetrated in gross violation of international law. This has led to millions of deaths, injuries, the displacement of population, and suffering and insecurity around the world. ... Although accumulation of weapons of such weapons by themselves do not cause conflicts in which they are used, their easy availability tends to exacerbate and increase the lethality of the conflicts and obstruct development and relief assistance efforts.⁴²

Although the influx of firearms is not the cause of conflict “the abundance of arms at every level of society means that any increase in inter communal tensions and hostility will entail an increased likelihood of armed violence and bloodshed.”⁴³ Medical research indicates an empirical correlation between gun ownership and rates of homicide and suicide⁴⁴ and other violent crimes.⁴⁵ According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the “gross estimate of global deaths from all forms of homicide, war and suicide stood at

⁴¹ Human rights Watch. *Playing With Fire: Weapons Proliferation, Political Violence, and Human Rights in Kenya*. Human Rights Watch, New York May 2002

⁴² Kofi Annan, Foreword’ *Report of the Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms*. United Nations Document A/52/298, United Nations, New York, 7 August 1997.

⁴³ Quoted by Michael Renner, ‘Small Arms Big Impact: The Next Challenge for Disarmament.’, *Worldwatch* paper No.137, available on www.Worldwatch.org

⁴⁴ Wendy Cukier. “Firearms Regulation: Canada in the International Context.” *Chronic Diseases in Canada*. Vol. 19, 1 (April 1998), pp. 25-34; Martin Killias. “International correlations between gun ownership and rates of homicide and suicide.” *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, Vol. 148, 10 (15 May 1993), pp. 1721-1725

⁴⁵ Ted, R. Miller, T. and Mark Cohen. “Costs of Gunshot and Cut/Stab Wounds in the United States, With Some Canadian Comparisons.” *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Vol. 29, 3, pp. 329-341

2,272,000 in 1998. In the same year war casualties were estimated at 588,000.⁴⁶ Civilian non-combatants accounts for an estimated 80-90 per cent of the parties killed in current conflicts, compared to roughly 5 percent rate of civilian deaths that prevailed during World War I.⁴⁷ Approximately 52% of war related fatalities among civilians and combatants were attributed to small arms, and more than half of all victims were from sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁸ Even after the end of hostilities SALW continue to main and kill. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that, 18 months after the formal end of hostilities, weapons-related casualties remain at 60-80 per cent of the previous rate.⁴⁹

The widespread civilian possession of small arms frequently interrupts humanitarian operations, constrained access to beneficiary populations, and led to violent acts against aid workers. More than 1,500 people on UN missions have been killed.⁵⁰ Thousands of relief and development workers have also been targeted. As the UN Secretary- General's report on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel of 2000 notes, 'threats against NGO staff can ... directly affect UN humanitarian and assistance programmes, especially since conflicting parties often do not distinguish between UN and NGO personnel.'⁵¹ Over the decade 1985-94, more than 60 ICRC workers were killed while 147 'disappeared.'⁵²

The impact of small arms is mostly felt in developing countries. A few examples will illustrate the point. In Kenya, firearms homicide rates range between 25 per 100,000 in Nairobi (capital city) to 590 per 100,000 among towns in the northwest and north east of the country affected by banditry and cattle raids.⁵³ Further, the introduction of modern arms has turned cattle rustling and normally benign inter-communal competitions over resources into utterly catastrophic experiences.⁵⁴ In Sierra Leone immediately after the invasion of the country's capital (Freetown) by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1999, a senior government forensic pathologist reported that more than 7,330 people – almost 1% of the city's population – had been fatally shot in a single month. Thousands more suffered lacerations, mutilations and firearm injuries. Additional surveys carried out over the same period recorded that 60% of all war injuries were gunshot related, that 11% of all victims were under the age of 15 and that 43% were women.⁵⁵ Recent studies from Mindanao, the Philippines, demonstrated that more than 85 per cent of all external deaths in 2000 were attributable to small arms injuries. The same report claims that 78 per cent of

⁴⁶ World Health Organisation (WHO). *Small Arms and Global Health*. Geneva: WHO, 2001 cited Small Arms Survey. *Profiling the Problem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 p. 236

⁴⁷ Klare "The Kalashnikov Age" pp.20-21

⁴⁸ C J L Murray, B. G King, A D Lopez, N Tomijima, E G Krug "Armed Conflict as a Public Health Problem." *British Medical Journal* (February 2002)

⁴⁹ Peter Herby. "Arms Transfers, Humanitarian Assistance, and Humanitarian Law." In *Light Weapons and Civil Conflict: Controlling the Tools of Violence*. Jeffrey Boutwell and Michael T. Klare (eds.) (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999, p. 199

⁵⁰ UN press release, July 22, 1997

⁵¹ Robert Muggah. In the Line of Fire: Surveying the Impact of Small Arms on Civilians and Relief Workers. Available on line

http://www.desarme.org/publique/media/In%20The%20Line%20Of%20Fire_ing.pdf.

⁵² Nicholas Berry. *War and the Red Cross: The Unspoken Mission*. St. Martin's, N.Y.1997

⁵³ Mugaah and Bearman. *The Humanitarian Impact of Small Arms*

⁵⁴ Salih Mohammed A. Agro-pastoralism: an underestimated regional food production system. *East African Social Science Review* Vol. IX No. 1 pp.23-37, also see J. Markakis (ed.) *Conflict and the decline of pastoralism in the Horn of Africa* London: Macmillan 1993 p.146

⁵⁵ Salama et al. "Health and Human Rights in Contemporary Humanitarian Crises: Is Kosovo More Important than Sierra Leone?" *British Medical Journal*, vol. 319, 1999, pp, 1569-71

all reported violent deaths and injuries resulting from criminal acts were committed with military-style automatic weapons and handguns.⁵⁶

While the developing world suffers most of the human toll, developed countries, especially those with widespread gun distribution, are also vulnerable and traumatised. In 1996, 34,040 people died from gunfire in the United States. Of these deaths, approximately 54 percent resulted from suicide, 41 percent resulted from homicide, and 3 percent were unintentional. Firearm injuries are the eighth leading cause of death in the United States. In addition, for every fatal shooting, there are roughly three nonfatal shootings.⁵⁷ In 2000 it was estimated that the total annual cost of gun violence in the U.S. is \$100,000,000,000 (One Hundred Billion dollars).⁵⁸

SALW and crime

It is often assumed that there is a relationship between small arms, their misuse, and levels of armed criminality. However, perspectives differ on whether easy access to weapons increases or decreases crime. One view is that small arms possession serves as a deterrent leading to improved personal security and a reduction in interpersonal crime. Proponents of this view assume that small arms possession in controlled circumstances serves as a micro-deterrent to would-be criminals. Another view is that small arms availability, ownership, and portability are linked to a greater incidence of violent death (e.g. homicide, suicide, and unintentional death), interpersonal violence, intimidation, and criminality. Accordingly, more firearms equal more violent crime.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the proliferation SALW is said to be partly responsible for the rise in criminal acts such as armed robberies, hijacking, terrorism, stealing of livestock, drug trafficking, and smuggling. Armed robbery and other indices of crime in developed countries are estimated to have increased dramatically since the late 1960s. The rate of intentional homicide increased by 50 per cent between 1980 and 1990 in Latin America and Africa, and more than 100 per cent in eastern Europe and central Asia.⁶⁰ In East Africa, the International Police (Interpol) sub-regional bureau in Nairobi reports that small arms are the common denominator in the commission of the five major crimes in the region: terrorism, cattle rustling, firearms trafficking, drug trafficking and motor vehicle theft.⁶¹ In Kenya, gun-related incidents in the country rose by 200% in 1995 (most recent available figures) over the previous year.⁶² According to police reports, “the proliferation of illegal weapons is probably the most significant contributing factor to crime in the country... Unlike in the past, there is use of guns in almost every robbery today.”⁶³ There is thus a relationship between SALW proliferation and rise in criminality.

⁵⁶ Oxfam-GB. ‘Up in Arms: Controlling the International Trade in Small Arms.’ Oxfam-GB Paper for the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, July 2001

⁵⁷ L.A. Fingerhut. *Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1_34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States. 1985_1990*, Advance data from Vital and Health Statistics, No. 231, Washington, DC: National Center for Health Statistics, 1993.

⁵⁸ Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig *Gun Violence: The Real Costs*. (Oxford University Press, 2000)

⁵⁹ Small Arms Survey. *Small Arms Survey 2003 - Development Denied*. Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva p. 136

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 136

⁶¹ Interpol, in Andrew McLean (ed.) *Tackling Small arms In the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa: Strengthening the Capacity of Sub-regional Organisations Seminar report 7 - 8 May 2000*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Maclaren, Interpol report Ibid. p. 47

⁶² U.S. Department of State op. cit

⁶³ ‘Crackdown on guns’ *Daily Nation*, 7 July 2001

SALW and forced displacement

One particularly disturbing example of the indirect impacts of small arms is the forced displacement of populations, both internally as internally displaced people (IDPs) and externally as refugees. At the beginning of 2003, almost 35 million people - 13 million refugees and 22 million internally displaced persons - remained uprooted by war and persecution world-wide.⁶⁴ Small arms-related intimidation and insecurity are a key factor inhibiting sustainable repatriation or resettlement. The UNHCR has acknowledged that 'armed conflict is now the driving force behind most refugee flows'.⁶⁵ The UN has repeatedly observed that 'in many recent and current internal armed conflicts, combatants deliberately intimidate, attack and displace local populations to further their pursuit of economic control over natural resources'. In such cases, combatants rely on, even profit from, civilian displacement.⁶⁶

The widespread use of mines, for example, renders vast areas of territory uninhabitable. Mines are targeted at civilian populations. Not only do they force people to flee their homelands, but they also prevent them from return. Arming of militias and local factions has intensified conflict leading to forced displacement. In the Sudan, for example, since the early 1990s the government increasingly relied on armed militias, especially Arab militias, to fight the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) rebels and its rural support on the ground thus massively widening the scope of the war.⁶⁷ The Arab militias concentrate exclusively on civilian targets looting cattle, women and children. For example, Arab militias were responsible for planning the massacre of 1,000 civilians on 27-8 March 1987.⁶⁸ The SPLA has responded to the militia attacks by meeting violence with violence and in some has also targeted civilians in retaliatory attacks.⁶⁹ Arming militias has led to the proliferation of cheap weapons and the development of a 'kalashnikov culture', which has increased violence and led to further flight of civilians. In Somalia, following the collapse of the state, the proliferation of small arms resulted in the rise of militias and armed gangs. Civilians became the main targets of warlords that further led to forced population displacement.

Further, small arms have been used to violate civilians during flight, or while in camps. The militarisation of refugee camps and populated areas and IDP camps has resulted in insecurity not only to civilians but also to states concerned. UNHCR recognises that curtailing the sale or transfer of small arms would contribute to greater stability and security, and would reduce people's incentive to flee in the first place. Predictably, household entitlements and the access of individuals to basic needs collapse when people are forced to flee. Food security is also undermined by the activities of armed groups. For example, the threat and harassment of civilians by armed groups constrains mobility (e.g. of farmers to their fields or traders to markets) and trade.⁷⁰

Small arms and development

The spread of SALW adversely affects economic development by discouraging investment, divestment, misallocation of resources to security instead of development, and affects the implementation or initiation of development projects. Health and education provision is adversely affected when providers work in a dangerous environment. Doctors

⁶⁴ Refugee Report May 2003

http://preview.refugees.org/world/articles/RR_May_2003_lead.cfm#lead).

⁶⁵ UNHCR (2001: 283)

⁶⁶ Muggah and Bearman. *Humanitarianism Under threat* p.13

⁶⁷ Minority Rights Group International. *Sudan - Minorities in Conflict*. Minority Rights Group, 995 p. 24

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 15-16

⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 18-19

⁷⁰ Muggah and Bearman *Humanitarianism Under threat* pp. 2-3

and teachers are difficult to attract to work in areas where they are at greater risk of being attacked. The proliferation of arms will prevent development objectives from being reached.⁷¹ It is in recognition of this that the UNDP has established a special organization under the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) to deal with the SALW problem. According to the UNDP,

Where guns dominate, development suffers, schools close, shops close, commerce stops, and the local economy grinds to a halt. Buildings are destroyed, bridges are blown up, and whatever development there has been, is gone. Private investment dried up and development organizations can't operate. Even after the shootings stops, there is no security. People can't return to their homes or a normal life...⁷²

Humanitarian workers have noted persistent food insecurity among households in arms-saturated areas – even where those locations are ‘benefiting’ from substantial agricultural and food aid – indicating a relationship between armed violence and access to basic entitlements. In Kenya, for example, services like schooling and healthcare have deteriorated or collapsed in areas where small arms availability and use are high. Literacy and school enrolment rates in arms-affected regions are well below the national average.⁷³

Besides arms hinder development by diverting limited national resources to weapons purchases, especially in developing countries. In the past decade, military spending (partly for small arms) by the poorest countries rose by 20 per cent while dropping for the richest. Developing countries spent \$172 billion on armed forces—almost five times the official aid they received, and 44 per cent of their expenditures on education and health combined (compared to about 20 per cent for industrialised countries).⁷⁴

SALW and the problem of child soldiers

A number of factors are believed to have encouraged the use of children as soldiers. Among them technological developments and the proliferation of weapons, especially small arms, have made semi-automatic rifles light enough and simple enough to be stripped, reassembled and used by a child of 10.⁷⁵ Although the recruitment and use of children for combat is outlawed,⁷⁶ more than 500,000 children under-18 have been recruited into state and non-state armed groups in over 85 countries. At any one time, more than 300,000 of these children are actively fighting as soldiers with government armed forces or armed opposition groups. Child soldiers under 15 years of age are believed to be part of non-state armed forces. Those children, who are not fighters, are typically used as runners or scouts, porters, sex slaves, cooks or spies.

More than half of all armed groups in Sierra Leone's so-called children's war were under 18. In northern Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army has abducted at least 12,000 children since 1985 that are then forced to become fighters or sex slaves. In Colombia, guerrillas, paramilitary groups and security forces routinely recruit children for combat. Up to 30 per cent of some guerrilla units are made up of children. Many children are

⁷¹ Statement by a UNDP Participant to the preparatory committee for march 2001 a UN Meeting

⁷² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). *UNDP's Role in Small Arms Reductions: A Primer*, 2002. <http://www.undp.org/erd/smallarms/undp.htm>

⁷³ Muggah and Bearman *Humanitarianism Under threat*

⁷⁴ UNDP. Human Development Report 1998: Consumption Patterns and their Implications for Human Development; also Human Development Report, 1999- Globalization with a Human Face

⁷⁵ Graça Machel. Expert of the Secretary-General, on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, UN doc. A/51/306 of 26 August 1996, p. 14

⁷⁶ See for example *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Articles 21, 38 and 39)

abducted, others join voluntarily in order to survive or to avenge atrocities committed against their family or community.⁷⁷

In addition small arms and light weapons kill thousands of children each year and millions more die from the indirect consequences of armed conflict. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that during the 1990s, more than 2 million children died as a result of armed conflict, and more than three times as many were permanently disabled or seriously injured. Many children experience emotional trauma, suffer from malnutrition and are denied access to education.⁷⁸

Impact on women

Another humanitarian impact of small arms and light weapons is their impact on women. SALW facilitate gender-specific atrocities, and raise the risk threshold for women.⁷⁹ The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has highlighted the impact of SALW proliferation on women. According to UNIFEM, small arms deeply affect women because women and other civilians are the primary victims of conflict and the presence of small arms interferes with the provision of basic needs. More specifically, the prevalence of SALW facilitates violence, harassment, displacement and other abuses of women's human rights. Small arms have been used to terrorise women and empower armed individuals and gangs to commit rape and other sexual abuse and violence, abductions, forced slavery and prostitution. In countries such as Uganda, Sudan and Sierra Leone, women as young as 10 have been abducted at gunpoint from their homes. In addition women in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons are routinely gang raped and abused at gunpoint. Some 20,000 women were raped at gunpoint by Bosnian Serb soldiers as part of a deliberate strategic campaign to dehumanise and demoralise their opponents.⁸⁰

Secondly, constrained by fear of violence exacerbated by the easy availability of SALW, women's political participation, as well as their capacity to perform daily household functions such as food provision, water and fuel collection and other family sustenance activities, is severely curtailed. In a climate of fear and intimidation, women's participation in all public sphere activities is constrained. Education, access to markets and formal employment all become more difficult under the threat of small arms.⁸¹

From the above analysis there is no doubt about the adverse humanitarian impact SALW proliferation. The linkage between humanitarian well being and international security would therefore imply that small arms are indeed a threat to international security. The next section highlights some of the responses that have been initiated to deal with the problem.

Responses to small arms and Light Weapons problem

The devastating effects wrought by SALW proliferation has led to a flurry of activities, at national, regional and global levels, to deal with the problem. At the international level the UN has placed the issue of small arms and light weapons firmly on the international political agenda. In 1995 the then UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-

⁷⁷ UNICEF, *Taking Aim at Small Arms: Defending Children's Rights* available on line at <http://www.unicef.org/smallarms/exhibit/html/sa03/index.html>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Dybdhal, R and I. Pasagic (2000) 'Traumatic Experiences and Psychological Reactions Among Women in Bosnia During the War'. *Medicine, Conflict & Survival*. Vol. 16, 2000

⁸⁰ Marija Olujic. 'Embodiment of Terror: Gendered Violence in Peacetime and Wartime in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina'. *Medical Anthropology*. Vol. 12 1998

⁸¹ UNIFEM, *Women, War, Peace and Small Arms* available at http://www.womenwarpeace.org/issues/small_arms.htm

Ghali, in his Supplement to “*Agenda for Peace*” challenged the international community to “find effective solutions” to the problem of small arms proliferation and misuse, particularly in the context of UN peacekeeping operations. The UN has established a number of expert groups such as the Panel of experts on Small arms (A/52/298), the Group of Governmental Experts on small Arms (A/54/258), and the Group of Experts on the Problem of Ammunition, Explosives (A/54/155) to study the small arms problem. The climax was the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects.⁸² Recognising the right of states to bear arms (Article 51 of the UN charter) international efforts have focused on looking for ways to limit the transfers, availability and (mis)use of illicit small arms.

The Security Council has also taken the issue in its consideration of peacekeeping and peace-building mission. In the presidential address of 24 September 1999, the Security Council acknowledged that the challenge posed by small arms is multi-faceted and it involves security, humanitarian and development dimensions. In his address to the Security Council in 1999, Kofi Annan, stated that, “the need to constrain small arms proliferation was one of the key challenges in preventing conflict in the next century.”⁸³ Further still, under the auspices of the UN Crime Commission, work began in 1999 on a legally binding Firearms Protocol. Based on the OAS Convention, this instrument seeks to “prevent, combat and eradicate” illicit firearms through the development of international standards in certain areas.

In Africa, in July 1999 the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government meeting at its Thirty-fifth Ordinary Session in Algiers adopted decision AHG/Dec. 137 (LXX) on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons. In pursuit of this decision, in May 2000 the First Continental Meeting of African Experts on Small Arms and Lights Weapons was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Opening the conference, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim the OAU secretary-general stated that the problem of the proliferation of small arms and combating the illicit trafficking and its adverse consequences to African societies has become a priority on the agenda of the OAU. He reiterated the urgency and the need for Inter-African co-operation in the search for solutions to the problems posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and stressed the primary role that the OAU should play in the co-ordination of efforts in this area.⁸⁴ Issues discussed included prevention of illicit transfers; establish norms regulating production and transfers; collection and destruction of surplus, seized or obsolete stocks; marking, record-keeping and tracing; and international co-operation amongst law enforcement official.⁸⁵

A number of sub-regional initiatives have also been concluded. The most important being the Bamako Moratorium signed by member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). According to this agreement West African states declared a three-year renewable moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons. They also adopted a Code of Conduct governing its implementation.⁸⁶ ECOWAS has also established a UNDP administered regional project - the Programme for

⁸² Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, United Nations, July 2001.

⁸³ Kofi Annan, “We the People”: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century ; available www.un.org/millennium/sg/report, p.3

⁸⁴ Salim Ahmed Salim, “Opening statement.” *Meeting of African Experts on Small Arms and Lights Weapons in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17 to 19 May 2000*

⁸⁵ OAU. Final Meeting Report, International consultation on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons Addis Ababa 22-23 June 2000

⁸⁶ OAU. Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, December 2000

Co-ordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) – involved in the collection and destruction of surplus and unauthorised weapons, revision and harmonisation of national laws on weapons, dialogue with supplier and producer countries, enlargement of the moratorium, and the establishment of a database and an arms register.

In Southern Africa, in October 1995 Southern African Development Co-operation (SADC) member states established the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operating Organization (SARPCCO) to deal with cross border crimes. In 1999, SADC took a decision to establish a working group on small arms under the auspices of SARPCCO to draft a protocol that would deal with the illicit use, transfer and manufacture of small arms and light weapons within the sub-region.

In the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa a number of activities have been undertaken culminating in the signing of The Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa on March 15, 2000.⁸⁷ The signatories agreed to *inter alia* to comprehensively address the problem of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in the sub-region; to join efforts to address the problem, to encourage a concrete and co-ordinated agenda for action for the sub-region to promote human security and ensure that all States have in place adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the possession and transfer of small arms and light weapons.

In Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) at its November 1999 Istanbul summit agreed to mandate the OSCE Forum on Security Co-operation to initiate discussions on the problem of small arms proliferation. On 24 November 2000, the OSCE adopted the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons. This document *inter alia* adopted a definition of small arms, states agreed to supply arms only to governments and government approved organisations, and provided for weapons markings and tracing. In addition NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council stresses stockpile management and small arms control in the context of peace missions.

In Latin America, the Organisation of American States (OAS) has developed two instruments to combat the illicit trade in firearms. On 14 November 1997, OAS adopted the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related Materials (CIFTA). This is a legally binding multilateral initiative aimed at addressing the problem posed by SALW. The Convention requires the establishment of export, import and transit licenses; marking of firearms; criminalisation of illicit production and sales; exchange of information among states parties; co-ordination and co-operation among states parties; and technical assistance and training. Currently, 33 states have signed the OAS Convention, and 20 have ratified it. Additionally in 1998 OAS adopted the Model Regulations, which harmonised procedures governing the movement of firearms and ammunition among OAS states.

In addition to these inter-governmental initiatives a number of NGOs, civil society and community organisations have been involved in advocacy, training, and the collection of small arms. A number of research institutions dedicated to the problem of small arms have also proliferated. The close linkage between development and small arms proliferation has also resulted in a number of development agencies such as the UNDP, GTZ, Oxfam etc to include the SALW problem in their agenda.

⁸⁷ The Nairobi Declaration of March 15, 2000, was signed by government delegates from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region representing Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Conclusion

In recent years the number of producers, both legal and illicit, of SALW has grown making it easier and cheaper to purchase more lethal weapons, and in greater quantities. With the end of the Cold War the problem of SALW proliferation has taken a prominent stage in national, regional and international agenda. This is largely because of the security, humanitarian and socio-economic costs that emanate from SALW proliferation and misuse. This paper highlighted the humanitarian problems associated with small arms and light weapons proliferation and accumulation.

The changing nature of war from inter-state to intra-state conflict in which major weapons play lesser role while small arms and light weapons becomes more significant makes it imperative that the issue of small arms and light weapons proliferation and accumulation must be addressed. In this regard a number of national, regional and international initiatives have been undertaken to address the problem. However, many of these measures are just but declarations of 'political intent', with little practical implementation of those measures. There is need for more research to assess the impact of these measures in dealing with the problem. What cannot be in doubt however is the linkage between small arms and international security. Because of the inter-linkages between individual, national and international security, any security policy must address the issue of SALW proliferation.