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Who Cares About Small Arms Anyway? An evaluation of research and policy

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WHO CARES ABOUT SMALL ARMS ANYWAY?
AN EVALUATION OF RESEARCH AND POLICY

by

JOEL RAFFETY

Under the Direction of Jelena Subotic, PhD

ABSTRACT

This research explores the various security and post-conflict complications that are in part a result of the global proliferation of small arms — including organized crime, rebellion, civil war, and fractionalization of the state. The paper 1) defines the issue, 2) contextualizes why the issue matters, and 3) evaluates the effectiveness of policies at the international level. I define the actors in the debate, defines the solutions at regional and international levels, and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of weapons collection, destruction, disarmament, tracing, import and export control, and associated legislation. I find that serious violence-reducing measures should include: increasing the role of local law enforcement organizations capable of carrying out meaningful and region-specific legislation, tightening border controls, uniform

implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, and effectively disarming and integrating former opposition groups in post-conflict societies.

INDEX WORDS: Weapons, Security, International Policy, Micro-Disarmament, Firearms

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family – singled out as my daughter (and perhaps future scholar) Maeleigh, sister Marie, father Brian, mother Rita, and girlfriend Amanda. Without the support (both financial and personal), I would most likely be working in mechanics, which I instead gave up on years ago. Amanda, my apologies for the numerous hours spent in front of the computer screen ignoring my usual domestic chores.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The post-Cold-War period left many questions about the state of international affairs, security, and, more specifically, arms control. A state-centric, great power model of international affairs dissolved with the Soviet Union, and there were still a host of problems yet to deal with including nuclear disarmament, regionally rooted conflicts, border disputes, and a host of religious and ethnic grievances among developing nations. In many ways it seems as though the developing world, once used a proxy measure for Soviet or American strength, interpreted the end of the Cold War as a signal to confront longstanding, historically rooted tensions.

Today, intra-state conflicts are observed all over the developing world. Examples include domestic instability that occurred, and continues to occur, during the Arab Spring (Tunisia, Libya, Egypt), ongoing civil conflict in Syria, organized crimes committed by Boko Haram in Nigeria, the creeping (and now overt) role of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, or the prevalence of global drug networks across multiple continents among other activities undermining both sovereign authorities and overall global stability. The fuel keeping rebellions, criminal networks, and civil conflicts moving are not conventional arms, rather, it is small and light weapons. While conventional weapons are by no means out of commission (take the Ukrainian crisis as an example of contemporary great-power confrontation), there is an increasing presence of small and light weapons, which is the product a combination of factors – including the large-scale use, and abandonment, of small arms during the Cold War, the disarmament of the Soviet Union and other FSU states, the increasing rise of weapons manufacturers, and the lax regulations of interstate small-arms trading.

During the 1990s, a handful of conventional arms scholars discussed the next threat to international security, and developed the idea that small arms were the next destabilizing factor

to international security on the grounds they contained specific properties not inherent in conventional arms: small (and light) arms are low cost, portable, concealable, lethal, and easy to trade, which makes grey- and black-market weapons trading so attractive to non-state actors and/or terrorist organizations (Klare 1995, Latham 1995). While Cold War-era stockpiles already existed within developing state borders, increasing production of weapons became more globalized, and additional states began producing their own small arms (Bitzinger 1994). The primary assumption was that small arms were already highly concentrated in developing nations during the post-Cold War era, and it follows that as numbers increase so will the probability that existing or dormant conflict (especially in troubled or low-functioning states) would continue because of the ease of access to small and light stockpiles. These observations, in turn, sparked a reactionary epistemic community composed of researchers, scholars, activists, states, and NGOs.

This research was prompted in part because of my personal experiences in conflict and military affairs. Prior to beginning this research, I observed that contemporary conflict is primarily fought with small (as opposed to conventional) arms, which prompted questions about how opposition forces acquire such weapons. After some preliminary investigation, I found that because state conduct during the Cold War focused on balancing power (and preventing total war), small weapons were largely underemphasized in international security and viewed as relatively inconsequential. Because of this Cold War-era policy shortcoming (in conjunction with the rise of free-flowing information), hotbed issues such as global poverty, ethnically divisive ideologies, terrorism, and the resurgence of asymmetrical and guerilla warfare has ensured that small and light weapons are essential components of modern conflict. Further, economically motivated criminals procure weapons to support networks and organizations capitalizing on past policy failures. My first impression was that shortsighted Cold War policies serve as a stark

reminder that, as the actor Phillip Baker Hall emphasizes in the film *Magnolia*, “we might be through with the past, but the past ain't through with us.”

This paper accepts a constructivist conception of cooperative norm building, and emphasizes an internationalist view of coordination among non-state actors. As such, this paper accepts the position that negotiated policy is the result of multiple actors sharing information to facilitate political deliberation to the end of implementing effective international standards. I further assume that the goal, for arms-control advocates, is a universal legal framework following multiple iterations of consensus norm building. The paper is internationalist in the sense that actors other than states matter in the development of effective international controls, and underemphasizes the condition of anarchy in the international system. This, however, does not mean that anarchy is ignored. To the contrary, this paper accepts and assumes realist assumptions that a state's (as opposed to an NGO, researcher, academic, or third-party actor's) decisions emphasize national security over cooperative norm building; however, because I take an internationalist approach, states are not the only actors in contemporary political conduct. At the international level, negotiations are a constant battle between states vying to preserve national security, and non-state actors vying to champion portions policy. Generally, I find that an internationalist approach emphasizing the role of multiple actors appropriately contextualizes how small-arms policies emerged to overcome state emphasis on national security. I conceive of the small arms issue as a problem that is the result of a combination of the following: unaccountable state-based policies, opportunistic violence-seeking entrepreneurs, largely unregulated international markets, weak state intuitions, and inconsistent border security.

This research attempts to demystify and clearly explain small arms issue-area development, solutions, and effective controls. By exploring key developments in the small arms literature, this

paper asks the question: Are small arms measures adequately dealing with the small arms problem? To answer this question, this paper 1) evaluates how small arms are connected to the broader concept of international security, 2) identifies key actors in the small-arms-control advocacy community and how the issue evolved, 3) identifies and analyzes ongoing regulatory efforts targeting the problem, and 4) evaluates research to determine whether or not these efforts as a whole adequately help achieve the goal of reducing global violence. To these ends, this paper is organized in three sections. The first section defines what the small and light arms problem is, and highlights how the issue is framed at an international level. For the most part, the small arms problem is portrayed as a transnational issue originating from a complicated web of leftover state stockpiles, black-market arms dealers, globalized criminal networks, and corrupt state officials. I highlight how the issue gained momentum, how it is connected to global security, and identify key actors involved in the debate, their role, and how research evolved from a small subset of conventional arms scholars to now include states, activists, lawyers, doctors, and civil society as well as various other practitioners. To date, the United Nations has formally adopted three policies (of various effectiveness) and one international control to deal with small and light arms. Policies include the Small Arms Protocol, the Programme of Action, and the Arms Trade Treaty; the first of which has no binding authority, where the two former hold politically binding authority, and the one international control is a weapons-tracing measure called the International Tracing Instrument. These controls are very useful theoretically, however, domestic ratification is necessary for successful implementation; which is something that states can not, as of yet, overcome. The second portion of the paper traces the evolution of small and light arms research and advocacy programs to explain how proposed solutions ended up being heard, and eventually adopted, in the United Nations. This section defines the proposed

solutions to the small arms problem, such as: arms and equipment marking and tracing efforts, arms reduction campaigns, targeted regional controls, international policy based norm-building efforts, and the tightening of import and export controls. The third section evaluates the effectiveness of firearms controls from micro- (e.g. personal firearms ownership controls), national- (e.g. border controls), and international (e.g. tracing efforts or facilitating cooperation) levels. Finally, the paper concludes that international controls rightfully target import and export controls as well as illegal weapons networks; however, they (as of now) lack any strictly legal power, and are mostly the result of strategic norm-building strategies meant to increase communication and cooperation as opposed to coherently regulate and remedy the problem. By-and-large, one-size-fits all applications would have little effect on overall international security. Current policies, unless states are willing to adhere to outlines policy recommendations, thus provide a normative basis for what could eventually become legal regulations. Current policy is the result of competitive actors who share information in an attempt to have sway in international policy, which attempts to negate the state-centric conception of “national security,” and frame the issue as a human rights issue (as opposed to a security concern). Because these third party actors facilitate information sharing, states generally agree that problems linked to illegal weapons proliferate human suffering. However, states are also reluctant to sign controls that compromise security or vested economic interest. Because international agreements exist largely to facilitate cooperation, firearms governance at micro and local levels have a far more important role in the reduction and control of small and light arms. If the goal is to mitigate human rights abuses and global violence, as assumed in this paper, then states are the gatekeepers of such violence-reduction strategies. Because states create citizen security, social grievances that facilitate the organization of opportunistic violence-seeking actors should be addressed in

conjunction with arms control and reduction efforts to minimize the probability of conflict.

Generally, this paper finds that if policy exists to mitigate violence and disrupt illegal arms trading, then controls should 1) tighten or adapt local regulations to accurately reflect locally held views of firearms, 2) emphasize the state's responsibility to implement the International Tracing Instrument on all firearms imports/exports to target illegal trading, 3) standardize international border import/export controls, and 3) successfully disarm (meaning the recall of all opposition arms) and integrate opposition forces in post-conflict and transitional societies. While the reduction of post-Cold War small arms is a critical component, this paper finds evidence that implementing such policies lack efficiency, and that, by focusing on opposition disarmament, Cold War-era small arms are indirectly reduced because most opposition groups (without international support) are, more likely than not, armed with stockpiled Cold War-era small arms. While this research generally confirms the approach the United Nations' has taken, additional discussion should focus on standards that would control future weapons flows as well as comprehensive disarmament and reintegration procedures at local levels. Because arms reduction requires either near-draconian policies or costly (mostly ineffective) buyback programs, future control efforts should emphasize creating international law bodies capable of finding and disrupting illegal, transnational criminal networks.

1.1 The impact of small arms

Generally speaking, small arms became a salient issue during the immediate post-Cold War era, in the mid 1990s. Because of the immense proliferation of small arms (and arms more generally) during the Cold War period, developing countries were left with large stockpiles of functioning weapons that were looted, stolen, traded, and/or sold. The Middle Eastern, Asian, Latin American, and African regions were all, at some point in time, the recipients of small arms supplies from major powers – primarily, though not exclusively, from the United States and Soviet Union. While not wholly responsible for global arms proliferation, the former Soviet Union and United States flooded developing states with small arms either to arm guerilla fighters or prop up state forces and leaders in order to maintain regional dominance, and many of these weapons were left within borders following conflict or simply unaccounted for. The following pages detail what the small arms and light weapons problem is, and frames the origins of the issue as a policy failure during the Cold War years.

Small arms (commonly lumped together with light weapons (SALW)) have qualities that are distinguishable from conventional arms. Per the Small Arms Survey's definition, small arms consist of "revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, sub-machine guns and light machine guns;" and light weapons include "heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems (MANPADS); and mortars of calibres of less than 100 mm." While these definitions vary slightly, the core of the concept remains intact; the key difference between small/light and conventional arms is *portability*. The portability of these weapons is appealing to a variety of individuals and/or organizations where conceal-ability and lethality are the most-

desired properties in a weapon. While conventional arms include the use of tanks, planes, precision-guided munitions and such, small arms are much more accessible to third-party actors, rebels, militias, and/or criminals.

Traditionally, Cold War-era conventional arms transfers would serve as either balancers for proxy states, or, on occasion, were intended to exacerbate conflict to the ends of coercing smaller states to ally with one of the great powers (Kinsella 1994). While the transfer of conventional arms has lasting balance-of-power implications in hostile regions (Paul 1992), small arms were generally not a threat to Cold War-era conceptions of power. Small arms were typically underemphasized, and considered not to have any significant impact on international security.

During the Cold War, great powers would arm various groups across the globe in order to provide incentive for allegiance to either Communist or western forces. The United States supplied arms in Central America to various militias or political groups in the region during a time when there was intense global competition with the Soviet Union. Callanan (2010) underscores a few of the foreign military-based aid entanglements: during 1970s, the United States provided military and firearms-based aid to both El Salvador's government and the Nicaraguan Contras. U.S. forces armed and funded the failed resistance at the Bay of Pigs in 1961; Between 1960 to 1964, the CIA implemented "preventative" operations in regions of the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and British Guiana. When the Cuban revolution was successfully achieved in 1959, the Callanan posits that the Soviets then used Cuba as a dispersion point for small arms going into Central American countries as well other states – including North Korea. To counter these arms flows, the US overtly promoted coups against both Truilljo in the Dominican Republic and Castro in Cuba. In reaction to western arms-brokering actions, the

Soviet Union further supported the FMLN opposition forces in El Salvador. Another example of great power influence includes the transfer and training of U.S.-sanctioned defensive programs in Venezuela. Additionally, further along in the Cold War, when the United States suspended the sale of small arms to a few Central American states in response to accusations of increased human rights abuses, Israel stepped in as a primary supplier of arms to Nicaragua, Haiti, and Guatemala. In sum; small, light, and conventional arms alike flowed relatively freely in Central America and the Caribbean regions.

The weapons used to arm militiamen and guerillas alike, in turn, were stockpiled (usually hidden) and maintained within state borders, and these weapons were abandoned following the end of conflict. In the Central American region, Bendaña's (1999) research emphasizes how small arms were supplied to the point of saturation, and when disarmament occurred many civilians, ex-military, militiamen, and ex-fighters held on to arms illegally – most likely for personal security reasons and fears of reprisal. While some weapons were dispersed among the returning combatants and the general population, many stockpiles still existed en masse along borders – which in turn were procured by illegal arms dealers and sold on global black markets. These situations are further complicated when attempting to create policy that both ensures citizen personal security while simultaneously disarming opposition parties in a comprehensive manner (Potgieter 1999) – for example, farmer's must own arms to ensure livelihood, and effectively creating a policy accounting for instances of weapons ownership is near impossible. Consequently, post-conflict small-arms policies are essentially rendered useless unless local enforcement and policy accurately treats the issue.

Generally speaking, during the Cold War (and after as well), states have used far less caution when treating the small arms problem – these weapons have been abandoned, illegally

traded, and given trafficked under guises of and humanitarian assistance. Broadly speaking, it was both economical and easier logistically for states to leave outdated and sub-par weapons within conflict-ridden borders than to either transfer them back to the supplier or destroy them. Take, for example, the Asian region: Smith (1999) reports that between Vietnam and Cambodia, the United States abandoned the following weapons and associated ammunition in 1975: 114,000, .45 M1911A1 pistols; 946,000, 5.56mm M15A1 rifles; 961,580 additional rifles; 15,320, 7.62 M60 GMPG machine guns; and 65,500 40mm M79 grenade launchers for a total of 2,102,400 weapons. One could speculate that this was a rudimentary attempt at donating arms in order for the state to form coherent authorities. Speculations aside, the abandonment of outdated weaponry effectively created conditions under which weapons could be stockpiled and procured by non-state actors following conflict, which hindered post-war reconstruction in fractionalized states. While the United States abandoned massive quantities of weapons, there is evidence that the Soviet Union illegally sold and traded, abandoned, and failed to secure arms and associated equipment. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, massive numbers of weapons and ammunition alike were unaccounted for or lost. In former Soviet Union (FSU) countries, illegal arms networks began cropping up and illegal arms trading was conducted sometimes under the guise of “humanitarian” assistance. As a result of this, millions of tons of light and heavy weapons alike entered illegal networks across the world. Some examples Smith (1999) gives include: Russian soldiers leaving East Germany and “losing” 81,000 tons of ammunition in the process, 5,560 sub-machine guns illegally transferred to Bosnia in 1992, 3,000 Russian soldiers were implicated in illegal arms deals in 1993, 12 containers of automatic rifles were found masked as humanitarian supplies in 1993, and six former officials charged in Slovenia with smuggling weapons labeled as humanitarian supplies in 1995. The Soviet Union and United

States are not the only violators of questionable uses associated with these weapons. Smith (1999) highlights additional violations of illegal weapons transfer include Islamic countries pumping \$160 million USD worth of weapons (grenade launchers, radios, anti-aircraft missiles) into Bosnia (paid for with humanitarian funds between 1992 and 1994), and 600,000 and up to 1 million weapons being “lost” following protests in Albania in 1997 (of which, 30,000 were recovered). Generally, these weapons flows were meant to bolster Islamic communities, however, most of the time, these weapons are unaccounted for following conflict. Even after Soviet collapse, global world powers continued to provide arms to weak states with prior-existing Cold War stockpiles, which further increased the availability of arms. Contemporary African intrastate conflict is fueled in part with arms (past and present) supplied by major world powers. For example, Smith (1999) further investigates how the Somali army abandoned 500,000 weapons during its civil war in 1992, and the United States donated 5,000 M16 rifles and 5,000 pistols to the Somali police, which soon fell relapsed into the hands of criminals thereafter. Additionally, in 1993, the Hutu government purchased AK-47s from Russia, which armed the Hutu majority, which added fuel to the genocide of the Tutsi minority. Both during the Cold War and after, small arms carried relatively little weight when looking in the face of biological and nuclear weapons, and carelessness with small arms is highlighted by the casual abandonment and illicit trade that occurred following Cold War and post-Cold War conflict.

In Africa (and the Middle East and Latin American as well), the AK-47 – Russia’s staple small arm – is a highly-prominent and admired automatic weapon. More generally, the AK-47 is the most-popular small arm in the world, and as such it has legendary status among violence-seeking entrepreneurs. “The AK-47, or Kalashnikov, named after its Russian inventor, was placed into service in 1947 and has killed far more people than drones, missiles, or tanks. Loved

by some (even featured on the national flag of Mozambique) and hated by others (especially international peace groups), the AK-47 is a cheap assault weapon that when placed in the hands of warlords and their sometimes child soldiers can not only destroy human life but can also destroy a country through internal conflict and violence. Small arms manufactured in large quantities by low-cost countries can be very dangerous.” (Rarick et al. 2013, p. 8). Through the Central and Latin American illegal and illicit arms trade, some small arms are traded as far north as the United States and Mexico. Where an AK-47 would fetch \$100 in Central America (or \$15 in Namibia, Mozambique, or Angola), United States’ citizens are willing to pay up to four times more for such weapons (Bendaña 1999). Essentially, there is incentive for arms dealers to sell their product in more industrialized countries – particularly states where gun culture is dominant. In essence, one part of small arms problem involves illegal exporters and importers, and cross-border trade, which is highly difficult to target and control. This in turn complicates the nature of the small arms problem, and highlights it as a transnational issue – even for developed states.

Within the broader context of social interaction, views of small arms have negative cultural impacts and hinder positive societal norm building capacity. Jacklyn Cook (1999) underscores how the AK-47 is not just another weapon; rather, it is *the* weapon and a universal symbol of aggression and masculinity. Even members of criminal organizations identify the gun-holding male as “big man,” and other terms glorifying hyper-militaristic societies emphasizing the use of the AK as a legitimate method to resolve disputes. Aside from observations that these norms have negative effects for broad societal health, Cook empirically concludes that policies lack initiative aimed at integrating ex-military and guerilla combatants in post-conflict societies, which is a key policy failure. This failure perpetuates emphasis on violence encourages the probability that a non-reintegrated pool of ex-combatants, in conjunction with the glorification of

the AK-47 and other weapons as legitimate means to resolve conflict, promotes historical legacies of militant ideologies compounding to create a unique phenomena not treated in any holistic, comprehensive policy.

Failures of disarmament policies to effectively deal with ex-combatants has further effects for the conditions under which citizens live in post-conflict societies. In post-conflict Zimbabwe, Nyambuya (1999) finds that a depressed economy, coupled with widespread poverty, forces citizens to find alternative means of survival; and an easy way of securing domestic finances is to find and sell leftover small and light arms stockpiles, which, in turn, creates local arms-oriented economic competition. This competition among local arms dealers increases the number of local small arms dramatically. In addition to increasing numbers and violent attitudes towards dispute resolution, higher weapons numbers (in societies already experiencing high levels of violence) are said to exacerbate incidents of gun violence. While existing illegal arms are traded, legally imported arms continue to flow into the country – mostly to upgrade outdated police and military weapons, which, again, occasionally fall back into the hands of criminals. Because of increased weapons numbers, lax regulations, widespread poverty, local competition, and strong consumer demand of small arms (from civilians and the state alike), the proliferation of small arms in Africa occurred at a rapid rate.

Drug-trafficking organizations and locally embedded economies are another negative consequence associated with the proliferation of small arms in resource-rich countries. In the Latin and Central American context, the drug trade is a highly profitable and notoriously dangerous business that is inseparable from small arms. In Peru, during the Cold War, armed Marxist revolutionary movements capitalized on coca plant profits to strengthen their organization, which became intertwined with the local economies to the point that citizens, and

to some extent the state, relied on their rule and financial assistance. This situation eventually devolved and pro-American state forces were pitted against “insurgent” communist forces, thereby extending civil conflict (McClintock 2005). More recently, the spread of arms (acquired primarily through looting) among factional warlords and drug dealers in both Libya and Afghanistan resulted in widespread competitive violence among groups that undermined the role of state authority (Newberg 2005, Strazzari 2014). Because acquiring small weapons is easy, and the pay off can be great (as seen in Peru), it is in the interest of drug leaders to acquire such weapons to either embed themselves in local economies, counter competing groups, or challenge state dominance.

Drug-trafficking organizations, such as the Marxists in Peru, utilize small arms at micro levels to the furthest extent possible, and competition among locally entrenched drug economies promotes diffused violence both domestically and across borders. During all stages of drug production (primary and secondary production, transportation, distribution, and consumption) small arms are used. Research conducted by Jaramillo (1999) highlights the highly complex, fragmented process of the drug trade as well as the intimate connection these organizations have with small arms. During the primary stage, Jaramillo explains that local farmers allocate shotguns and other traditional weapons customarily available to maintain security and migrant workers growing coca plants. Though mostly done for cultural reasons, these arms also protect the farmer’s crops and livestock. During the secondary processing stage, guards carry heavy, semi-automatic and automatic weapons in order to ensure the safety of the product.

Transportation stages are where operators hide weapons and drugs in specialized compartments, wheel wells, and on personnel to protect and conceal the product when crossing borders. The distribution phase is commonly taken care of by highly organized organizations (mostly in

developed states), and small arms are readily available during phases of distributing the product down to the street level. Further, drug users (either recreational or habitual) generally have higher rates of small-arms ownership as well, and of course at any stage violence is highly likely. It is interesting, however, that arms are seen as a cultural component for Jaramillo at the micro level and first stage of production. These localized views of firearms, consequentially, should be taken into consideration when policymakers contemplate solutions to small arms issue areas.

Drug networks are not the only organizations capitalizing on the availability of small arms. Where small arms contribute to illegal drug trades in Latin American countries, in African countries small arms are used for illegal poaching, ivory trading, as well as diamond and gem trading. Poachers pay arms dealers in Zimbabwe with ivory and precious gems in exchange for weapons, and poaching activities have further emerged a highly profitable trade (Nyambuya 1999). In Namibia, black market arms dealers hijack leftover Cold-War small arms and take advantage of insufficiently secured borders to spread illegal arms to criminals and associated organizations for large profits (Ipinge 1999). In Swaziland, weapons are smuggled into central depots and then distributed to criminals involved in car-hijacking organizations (Dlamini 1999). In South Africa, theft, robbery, and reported loss of firearms drastically contribute to criminal activities, car hijacking, poaching, and all the identified criminal activities above. To illustrate how much of an issue small arms are: during the years 1993-1995, there were 516,289 firearm permits issued in South Africa; of those, 35,098 were stolen, 134,685 were reported lost, and were 69,736 seized by the state (Dewey 1999). In sum, African-based violence entrepreneurs have taken advantage of arms availability to create additional illegal resource-trade networks.

The modes by which these weapons are acquired are additionally important – especially in the context of civil conflict. Moore (2012) finds that if rebel groups get a hold of advanced

weaponry (most notably anti-aircraft MANPADS), civil conflict becomes more deadly. The author also adds that if states receive advanced weaponry in opposition to rebels during conflict, the conflict duration is likely to be prolonged. Rebels with only looted small arms are able to sustain conflict, but upgrading such weapons escalates the lethality. In the 1980s, the procurement of MANPADS (light anti-aircraft missiles) to Mujahedeen fighters helped defeat Soviet forces in Afghanistan. “The transfer of MANPADS from state actors to non-state actors has occurred and black- and grey- markets for such weaponry have been identified in several countries including, inter alia, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Iraq” (Jonsson 2014, p. 315). Non-state actors, most likely organized via income generated through one of the illegal networks, purchase small, light, or conventional arms to the ends of achieving political aims (MANPADS can be purchased for around \$5000 USD on most occasions). If weapons are donated from international powers, it is assumed that organizations have specified training attached to such, and if organization is tightly regimented, the impacts on civil conflict are significant. Because of these dynamics, small arms and light weapons can sustain conflict or/and increase lethality.

Part of the reason why small arms were overlooked during the Cold-War years was because the international community was largely concerned with concentrated, conventional power as opposed to diffused power among factional states. These weapons were viewed as secondary threats in the face of nuclear and conventional arms power: and as such, small arms were seldom given a second thought in terms of international security (Smith 1999). For the most part, arms producers and exporters were once considered to be the United States and the Soviet Union. In the contemporary context, however, small arms producers and exporters alike are usually the most powerful (and a few middling) states. According to the Small Arms Survey,

there are over 1,000 global arms producers across 100 countries. Of these, the Survey catalogs top the exporters (100-500+ million USD worth/year) of small arms to be the United States, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, China, Germany, Italy, and the Russian Federation. Generally speaking, the world's top and middling states have significant stake in global export of such weapons, which does have implications for the possibility of strictly legal framework at the international level. Because of the negative effects small arms proliferation has in post-conflict and transitional societies, the issue is seen as a destabilizing factor from both domestic and international perspectives. Domestically, illegal criminal organizations use small arms for organizational purposes that promote localized competition and further spread transnational criminal networks, which ultimately affect developed countries. At the state level, small and light weapons acquisitions modes have an effect on civil conflict lethality and duration, as well as opposition strength. While this section identified the various reasons how small weapons became a global issue, the next section briefly identifies the actors involved in bringing the debate to the floor of the United Nations.

1.2 Actors in the debate

In observing some of the issues associated with small arms proliferation, a loosely linked epistemic community composed of researchers, governments, scholars, NGOs, and civil society converged to address and lend credibility to the issue and help find possible solutions. With the aggregate of information researched, the community ultimately helped advocate and propose legislation to the United Nations in an effort to facilitate consensus norm building at the international level, which is included into the most-recent Arms Trade Treaty, which is a treaty that addresses all arms-trading controls at all levels (from small arms up to conventional).

The first publication reacting to the dangers of small arms proliferation was the result of a workshop hosted by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences with scholars Michael Klare, Jeffrey Boutwell, and Laura Reed (aided with research from Aaron Karp – now of the Small Arms Survey). The resulting publication was titled *Lethal Commerce: The Global Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons* (1994). The workshop presented the small-arms topic as an emerging issue that required a policy-oriented solution, and framed the issue as a sub-topic of conventional arms control. Klare distinguished small arms from conventional by identifying the intrinsic qualities that small arms have – the compactness, cheapness, existing availability, ease of use, reliability, and lethality. Klare’s empirical observations highlighted the power small arms have to induce violence at multiple organizational levels.

The following year, there were kernels of Klare’s research echoed, when then-Secretary General Boutros Ghali addressed the United Nations Security Council announcing that he wished to concentrate on international “micro-disarmament,” stating that small arms that were “actually killing people in hundreds of thousands (UN Report A50/60 of January 25, 1995).” With this

document, the United Nations secretary general effectively emphasized small arms as part of the official arms-control agenda.

In 1996, Michael Klare and David Anderson (with a forward by Nobel prizewinner and former Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sánchez) wrote *A Scourge of Arms*, which directly confronts the issue of Cold War-era small arms proliferation in Latin America. In the acknowledgements, the authors highlight that no existing database, yearbook, or governmental organization addresses the issue of small arms in any substantive manner. The authors instead relied on information from the Arms Sales Monitoring Project, the Federation of American Scientists and Freedom of Information requests to collect and compile data. The book examined the role of small arms in Latin America, their effects and offered additional policy recommendations.

Perhaps in response to observations that the small-arms issue lacks data, or that the United Nations placed emphasis on the problem, like-minded states pushed the issue forward by pooling resources together in an effort to create a credible research program meant to investigate these weapons. In 1999, the Small Arms Survey was established by the Swiss department of Foreign Affairs. Additionally funded by the governments of Canada, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (with project support from Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, New Zealand, Spain, the United States, and United Nations agencies), the Survey has since become the premier source of small arms information for the public and governmental organizations alike. The Survey was established with the intent of producing a yearly publication, and represents non-governmental organizations, research institutes, and participating governments. Additionally, the program is consulted for policy guidance and conducts field research across the world. The Survey's research program started with a few like-minded states

interested in understanding small and light arms dynamics by producing both qualitative and quantitative research readily available for all interested parties. In response to the growing threat of diffused small-arms violence, states began discussing possible avenues to curb such widespread violence through mechanisms of regulating the global arms market (Keppler 2001).

The small arms problem has also been framed across multiple academic disciplines by approaching the small-arms problem's unique impact, as opposed to conventional arms where impacts are more easily observed.¹ One interesting question is: Why is state-to-state trading so popular if it lacks any real positive economic impact (Smith et al. 1985)? Some human rights research implies that small arms transferring policies to countries with known human rights issues are intentional because of the inherent demand, thus underscoring a lack of any moral policy towards arms-trading patterns (Yanik 2006). Legally speaking, practitioners stress the importance of adhering to articulate guidelines and policy points spelled out in treaties (Biggs 2011). Researchers also cast the small arms issue as both a public health and public policy issue (see the World Health Organization's research). Despite how the issue is framed, research from various fields helped raise awareness of the issue, and critically examine the role these weapons have for international affairs.

Nongovernmental organizations also took a leading role in advocating issues at the international level. Most notably, the efforts (Nobel prize worthy) of nongovernmental organizations is most apparent with three organizations – the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines – all of which significantly contributed to the progress of arms control (Knopf 2012). While these NGOs focused on conventional arms

¹ The next section explores some of the research conducted within the United States that connects violence and gun ownership, as well as the connection between crime and illegal weapons.

control, small-arms-control advocates attempted to piggyback off of the successes of landmine ban successes NGO organizations achieved. A casual Internet search related to small arms and associated problems (especially since the ratification of the most-recent UN arms treaty) refers the user to the Small Arms Survey, the Arms Control Association, Freedom House, or Amnesty International. Knopf concludes that “NGOs have directed more of their energy to working with international organizations and influencing multilateral negotiating processes” with reference to arms control. United Nations agreements came about not from only state-to-state political negotiations; rather, the issue was raised through the efforts of academics, states, the United Nations as well as NGOs (aided by research conducted in civil society referred to when defining the issue).

While the general consensus was that the SALW problem is one that required a policy-oriented approach, opposing, anti-arms-control norms successfully penetrated the debate at all levels – especially when considering that United Nations’ values intrinsically advocate opposing universalistic policy implementation. In response to the small arms issue, the National Rifle Association, the primary international lobbyist of leading U.S. arms manufacturers, registered with the UN as a Non-governmental organization in 1996 (one year after the United Nations announced a micro-disarmament approach to mitigating human suffering) to hedge any insistence of international small-arms-control policy. The following year, the NRA hosted a global forum on sport shooting to bolster global support for defeating any small-arms-control measures. Because the small-arms epistemic community framed the small-arms-control debate as a human-rights problem, a reactionary coalition of anti-gun-control groups was formed to combat universalist claims to legally binding framework (Grillot 2011). Anti-gun-control advocates effectively argue that there are conflicting norms between gun control measures and

those embedded within the United Nations; conflicting norms include the United Nations' advocacy of the right to the right to domestic (extended to individual) self-defense, self-determination, and sovereignty.

Denise Garcia (2013) describes the evolution of global small arms norm-building as moving through Finnemore's defined stages: the first was during the 1990s, when there was a lobby to put small arms on the international agenda (typified by Klare and other's insistence), the second was marked by like-minded states and organizations taking action (embodied by the formation of the Small Arms Survey) by disseminating information, and the last phase where norm builders develop effective mechanisms of peer pressure for control of the issue (currently ongoing with United Nations' policy-oriented actions). All of these stages theoretically culminate into a critical tipping point, where small-arms controls are adopted and adapted by states over time; however, norms builders are in constant competition with opposing norms (embodied with the coalition of the NRA, weapons manufacturers, and pro-globalization advocates). While relatively weak international controls are gradually implemented, opposing norms generally prevent any meaningful, legal small-arms-control framework. Negotiated policies, however, are rendered problematic because the multitudes of actors involved are all vying for various aspects of this dynamic issue (Rogers 2009). Because problem solvers (researchers and NGOs) desire control over one aspect of the issue, they are effectively hindering political negotiations. Opposing coalitions of anti-weapons-control advocates compounds already politically difficult negotiation measures, which in turn hinders both the speed and adequacy by which policies are created.

Because the general consensus was that illegal small arms trafficking and associated issues were considered a priority to international security, a non-formal epistemic community

proposed possible solutions ranging from disarmament to weapons tracing measures, enhanced border and import/export controls, and successful opposition reintegration programs. While there is general agreement that small and light arms are problem areas, there are a multitude of actors both vying to champion policy points, which hinders effective solutions. To address the emerging issue area, a reactionary coalition of opposing NGOs effectively came together to champion normative concepts such as free markets, sovereignty, and self-defense. These opposing norms arguably, compounded with politically difficult negotiation procedures, resulted in solutions that largely lack any enforcement among states where accountability is low. The following sections of this paper evaluate the various solutions and policies implemented, which is followed by an investigation as to whether or not controls are consistent with what researchers find mitigates violence at the individual level.

2 DEALING WITH SMALL ARMS

Currently, the small arms agenda, internationally speaking, has produced four solutions to date – all implemented by the United Nations, which are: 1) the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2) The UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons provides the framework for activities to counter the illicit trade in such arms, 3) the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, and 4) the Arms Trade Treaty. While there are several regional controls against small arms, the three UN initiatives are the only international controls thus far – all of which are politically binding agreements (which means that, for each state, it is optional to ratify the policy or treaty and is not legal until each state has ratified it). These agreements, though holding some weight, are implemented by-and-large to facilitate cooperative norm building among states, and lack any concrete enforcement mechanisms. Though a universalist-oriented policy gained traction at the international level, the resulting policies largely ignore fundamental state-oriented problems – namely poverty, economic inequality, and weak political institutions. These small arms policies highlight a multitude of difficulties facing states when coordinating policy aimed at reducing global violence. The primary question answered in this section is: What should be done about small arms?

Because state-to-state coordination problems at the international level affect policy outcomes, recent research points to regional and local controls as the favored approach. By localizing and curtailing policies that cater to regions on a case-by-case basis, policy can theoretically target localized problem areas more effectively. Proponents of regional controls argue that regional policies have the ability to regulate current stockpiles, as opposed to only

regulating future weapons imports/exports. However, regional controls generally assume that domestic and local institutions are effective and have the capacity to carrying out agreed-upon policy.

The following section defines some of the proposed policy-oriented solutions at the international, regional, and local levels, and explains how opposing norms have in part hindered any legally oriented international small-arms policy. In addition, this section will consider how controls affect on-the-ground situations.

2.1 Issue area solutions

Within the small-arms literature, there is a growing consensus that regionally or domestically based policies are most effective for disarmament and post-conflict development. Some of these proposed solutions come from regional specialists and pinpoint hot-topic issues – one issue in particular addresses how the state reintegrates military and guerilla forces (Galal 1999, Picasso 1999). When ending conflict, some of the most-critical actions states should take into consideration are how to: 1) ensure demobilized rebels turn in arms, 2) ensure rebels are willing to adhere to agreed-upon policies related to wartime crimes and prosecution, and 3) reintegrate demobilized forces effectively and peacefully into society. Most of the time, former combatants (especially those of higher rank) own small arms, and some even know where weapons caches are stored and stockpiled – most of the time insecurely.

Former combatants in Guatemala adopted a comprehensive disarmament approach in 1996, when the task was to demobilize 3,000 Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca ex-combatants. Agreements included: 1) treating all wounded former guerrillas, 2) trying all instances of human rights abuses, 3) allowing an outlet for foreign fighters to obtain citizenship, and 4) creating integration commissions and foundations with representatives from both the government and rebel forces for effective implementation (Orellana 1999). Generally speaking Orellana describes the approach's results as mixed, though generally favorable – according a United Nations report (A/59/307) in 2005, the agreements lacked broad economic and social programs for the former fighters, and those who relied on government assistance eventually found themselves in tough situations once they went through the reintegration programs. Despite its shortcomings, the agreements set general reintegration guidelines, and it certainly stimulates conversation for future research related to transitional justice and reintegration. How

reintegration occurs could have impacts for the resurgence of opposition groups as well as the health of the public at large. Though an entire paper could be written on the various methods of reintegration, this paper limits itself to considering how to control demobilized arms. Because of how localized the issue is, regional controls should consider how to reintegrate combatants, control arms, as well as provide sustainable support to avoid relapse into civil conflict.

Stockpiles could be collected and destroyed. Generally, proponents suggest that controlling numbers is best to preventing illegal and illicit gun trading. Edward Laurence (1999) estimates that initiatives in El Salvador, conducted by the UN, resulted in the collection of 142,000 weapons and 250,000 pieces of ordinance; in Haiti, the US Army collected 30,000 weapons; and voluntary weapons collection was conducted in Panama, Nicaragua, Haiti, and El Salvador. While some of these programs were perhaps successful, they are more forceful and resource-intensive than alternative means of collection. Less intrusively, El Salvador also implemented a “Toys for Guns” and consumer-goods program coordinated by a host of religious, civic, and political authorities. The Catholic Church coordinated with local business, the Rotary Club, and the Legislative Assembly to successfully run the weapons-collection drive. With seed money of \$4,500 in the 1990s, the program collected a total of 4,277 weapons, 1,589 magazines, and 52,693 pieces of ammo (Guitierrez 1999). Though these numbers are relatively small, the economic investment was proportionally quite small. With reference to weapons collecting during wartime: from my own experience, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. forces implemented measures of small-arms control by locating and destroying hidden caches of weapons with controlled detonations. Laurence in particular highlights the importance of destroying Cold War-era stockpiles as a necessary first step towards the implementation of any

meaningful small arms control. While intrusive policies are generally more successful, community-organized collection efforts have also enjoyed modest success.

Policy implementation is hindered by a lack of reliable firearms-related data. As far as researchers and academics are concerned, practitioners highlight that there is difficulty obtaining consistent and valid data regarding small arms numbers and patterns more generally (Greene 2013, Karp 2012, 2013, Stoicescu 2013), especially when considering that the numbers that are reported by most states is inconsistent at best, and nonexistent at worst. Part of the United Nations' policies were targeting the issue of unreliable data between states, however, many states place emphasis on national security over arms agreements. Despite attempts to coordinate international programs pooling together information, some states consistently fail to report points of contact, reports detailing arms-control procedures, and many states have yet to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. Dryer et al. (1999) stress that the UN needs assert its role as international mediator by setting rules regarding small arms reporting, transparency, oversight, and control. This, however, is negated by Anthony (1999), who argues that general weapons control cannot act as an effective substitute in place of state actions to address underlying domestic issues; namely poverty, economic distribution, and ineffective governance. Where some researchers conclude that tighter international controls are a necessary step towards effective arms control, others take the position that state capacity and ineffective governance are to blame for the problem.

Despite resistance from anti-arms-control advocates and those critical of domestic governance, the United Nations implemented several policies in response to the growing small arms concern, the first of which in December of 1998 (one year prior to the establishment of the Small Arms Survey) with resolution 53/111, titled the Firearms Protocol. Though the Protocol is not either legally or politically binding, Article 2 states: "The purpose of this Protocol is to

promote, facilitate and strengthen cooperation among States Parties in order to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.” For the most part, the measure was meant only to deal with illicit and illegal arms networks associated with the mass distribution of former Cold War small arms and targeted organized markets, and is further used as the foundation for all other small-arms agreements. The protocol provides guidance on weapons deactivation, licensing procedures, security procedures, training and technical service, brokering procedures, and how to settle firearms-trading disputes. What the Protocol did *not* address was state-to-state transactions, legal trading, or “national security” exceptions. Essentially, the resolution offered guidance and support if states were compelled to implement firearm controls or legislative measures targeting illicit arms and global trafficking.

In July of 2001, the UN adopted the Programme of Action (PoA), which is the second iteration of policy designed to effectively tackle illicit arms trading. This politically binding document defining measures states should take to effectively eradicate such illegal and illicit activity (which would be legal if ratified at state levels). In all, there are 41 points for implementation; the first 23 points of the Programme call for states to introduce national controls while the rest call for regionally based points of program implementation and stipulates biannual meetings to report progress. The PoA encourages states to implement criminal measures associated with illegal small arms trade and ownership, create regional councils and organizations pooling together information on local firearms issues, establish points of contact, encourages enhanced small arms identification and record keeping measures, and offers guidance on how to mark small arms for tracing and identification purposes. While participation is voluntary, the measure is politically binding until ratification at the state level, the document was

a second step towards consolidating globally accepted small-arms-control policy stances. Specifically, some measures include reporting weapons numbers, implementing effective domestic control legislation (which is a highly complex process requiring significant political capital), encouraging manufacturers to etch unique markings on all arms exports, and coordinating with and creating regionally based organizations to control the spread of these weapons. Although these measures are spelled out in bullet points, most of the language is still quite vague, lacking legal language, and states inconsistently report numbers (if at all), fail to report to appropriate UN committees, and inconsistently apply points articulated in the agreement, either because of domestic constraints or a lack of interest. Parker (2011) reported that, of the signatory countries, five listed no point of contact, and 146 reported an email contact for the Programme to contact. Of the 146 who provided a contact, 47 (39%) of the contacts responded to an email in some way. Phone contacts similarly had a 29% contact rate, and Parker concludes that, while states claim to strengthen borders and controls, they provide little details on how borders are tightened, inspections are increasing, or how domestic controls are tightening. While the Programme agreement was agreed-upon, there was considerable disagreement of how the document's language would read – most notably the United States, one of the largest exporters of small arms, and the Bush administration vocally dismissed the potential of a legal instrument aimed at controlling the trade of legal weapons. Generally, the Programme has served much like the Protocol in that a bulk of the responsibility is transferred to the state in order to effectively control weapons, associated stockpiles, and relevant materials.

Within the first two years of Programme implementation, states met regularly to discuss controls and future measures, and, in 2006, the International Tracing Instrument was implemented as a means of controlling weapons with states agreeing to report every two years on

progress. The United Nations agreements stipulated that a program be established in each country aimed at improving states' small-arms import and export tracing and record-keeping controls. The Instrument is an optional control ensuring that all small arms traded globally will have identifiable marks that allow tracing back to host states. While methods range from laser engraving to hand etching, the ultimate method was left up to host states. The Instrument fails to address ammunition and associated parts related to small arms. Aaron Karp (2006) finds that the proponents of the political agreement, similar to the Programme, articulated that a political agreement as advantageous in several ways: 1) it applied to all states in the UN (not only those directly involved in negotiations), 2) comprehensive legal framework would delay implementation or agreement, and 3) states can address the tracing issues individually. Advocates for legal framework naturally advocated for stronger normative frameworks and greater binding force. In 2010, Parker (2011) finds that just under 1/3 of all states reported updates on the ITI's implementation, and generally concludes that very few states separate the ITI as a separate arms-control measure.

While the Instrument is another step forward for arms-control advocates, it is by no means a comprehensive policy to address the need for global cooperation. In order to successfully implement the Instrument successfully, states must offer clear information regarding marking requirements for manufacturers, national contact points, voluntary disclose weapons numbers, because there was no discussion of implementing enforcement offices at either Interpol or the United Nations (Karp 2006). The Instrument does, however, offer guidance on how to mark and implement markings on imports, exports, and military and police to civilian transactions. While these regulatory efforts largely lack any enforceable components, they do

represent a continual integration of policy on the part of norm entrepreneurs and pro-arms-control advocates.

The latest policy attempt at the international level centers itself more on conventional weapons, though was able to incorporate existing small-arms policies under the same banner. The Arms Trade Treaty aims to regulate weapons trade in arms ranging from small to conventional (including tanks, aircraft, and associated equipment). Signed in April, 2014, currently 121 states signed the treaty (signaling intent to join the treaty), and 53 adopted and have ratified it. Though suffering from the same vague language as all previous regulatory controls, the ATT is meant to be the next step in global arms regulation by holding annual meetings and updates regarding state implementation, and includes all weapons trading to include conventional and heavy weapons (and aims to come into effect in December of 2014). While the Treaty is another step forward for arms control, it essentially reiterates with both the Protocol and Programme detail and adds little weight to the small and light arms controls that already exist for small arms, but did manage to be incorporated within the larger weapons-control framework. While the four UN measures lack any comprehensive legal credibility, they do represent continual (though perhaps minimal) attempts to prevent unlawful weapons trading and, more broadly, loss of human life.

Small arms controls at the international level are essentially political agreements, lacking any enforceable legal framework until they are ratified by all states. This policy failure (perhaps due to coordination problems or conflicting interests on the part of producer countries), in turn, fails to adequately enforce stipulated bullet points meant to target a complex global networks of both legal and illegal arms trading stemming either from domestic political restraints or willful rejections of cooperative efforts. These issues also more generally represent game-theory-like

dilemmas commonly emphasized throughout comparative and international studies literature, and further complicate the prospect for international cooperation. The next section of this paper questions whether international agreements, if they could be implemented effectively, would have any positive effect on international security. Because there are debates over whether tracing and tighter border controls are an effective measure of containing these weapons, there is a need to further investigate what controls have a meaningful impact on the reduction of violence – which is the assumed goal of policy. Where this section detailed some solutions at state and international levels, and highlights the complexity of such problems, the next section tackles the issue of effective policy. Thus the question becomes: In a world where all small arms controls are implemented, which controls effectively target violence levels?

3 EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICY

Small arms are blamed for a multitude of problems, and there is little doubt that they contribute to widespread violence among human beings. The mass diffusion of the small arms results in a fractured, multi-faceted and dynamic problem among developed and developing states alike. But are these problems because of the quantity of small arms, or are there underlying issues yet to be dealt with? While political mechanisms are slow to induce change, national governments have at their disposal the ability to create effective regulatory efforts that would dampen the effects of the widespread use of weapons, given the political will exists. But what controls effectively mitigate violence? The policies adopted by the United Nations imply that tracing and record-keeping, regional controls, and enhanced border security combat illegal arms trading, which results in fewer criminal organizations, opposition forces as well as localized violence. There is, however, reason to doubt that fewer weapons results in less violence, and this section seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of various control propositions by exploring the connection between guns and violence.

Various firearm controls have been advocated and lobbied for by a pool of specialists passionately involved in small arms issue development. A bulk of gun-violence research is most prevalent in the United States and other western countries, and this research adds some evidence that suggests that reducing firearms numbers and implementing concentrated and targeted legislative measures reduces gun violence. It should be noted, however, that in the developing world, weapons dynamics are obviously far removed from that in the west, and most likely developing states face more-immediate matters of state capacity and mitigating corruption. However, the case of the United States is an important to consider because of the diversified state laws towards weapons as well as providing a case study on the effects of lax border

regulations. Generally, the United States, as a case, helps add evidence that confirms or denies the hypothesis that less arms leads to less violence, or, additionally, that tighter legislation leads to less weapons.

3.1 What controls are effective?

In exploring what factors prevent firearm violence, Mark Duggan (2001) explores the connection between firearm ownership and homicide rates. By using state- and national-level sales levels of the popular magazine *Guns & Ammo* as a proxy for firearm ownership, and comparing it to National Center for Health Statistics, Duggan contradicts findings that increasing conceal and carry permits reduces crime rates. In other words, that the probability that a heroic stranger concealing a weapon prevents crime is a low probability. Instead he suggests that by increasing weapons numbers, incidents of firearm homicide predictably increase as well. To complement this research, by using Gun Control Index data (measuring rigidity of gun control) and data from the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Gius' (2008) findings suggest that stricter gun-control legislation decreases ownership and, as a result, gun-related crime. Though these studies pertain directly to the United States, these findings add empirical weight to the claim that decreased access to weapons in turn reduces instances of firearm homicide. The interesting dynamic in the United States is that there is a patchwork of varying firearms laws, and situations arise when more-tightly regulated states border states with loose regulations.

If less weapons equates to less crime, then why are there illegal weapons markets, and what are these weapons used for? Some research finds that illegally procured arms have more-significant impacts on violent crime. Researchers explain that illegal guns are nearly impossible to track (once they enter the illegal pool), have further geographical reach, and are used in homicides more often than their legal counterparts. In addition, introducing stricter firearms laws (especially in states of close proximity) may increase the likelihood that firearms will be sold and traded illegally. Kahane (2012) finds that, in the American context, "federal and state laws

restricting gun ownership for some individuals have given rise to the illegal market for guns” (p. 631). These illegal weapons, in turn, are used to commit various crimes. By using the Incident Database from South Carolina (1991-1994), Stolzenburg et al. (2000) find there is a relationship between illegal gun availability and violent crimes, gun crimes, and juvenile gun crimes. Additionally, offenders of these crimes do not substitute knives for guns; implying those owning illegal firearms prefer to use them during the commission of crimes. In the United States, guns are purchased in states with weak regulations and illegally sold in states with strong regulations, and the closer two opposing states are the more likely this trade occurs (Knight 2013). Thus if the goal is to reduce violence, tougher regulations may paradoxically increase the flow of illegal and illicit small arms, which in turn increases the likelihood that these weapons will be used for violence. Because tighter weapons controls induce black-market trading, regulatory efforts should occur in conjunction with disarmament and firearms-reduction programs, which indicates that there are considerable investments to be made if regulations are to be taken seriously.

Within the United Nations’ policies, most of the control is given to the state, and it is stipulated that legislative measures should tighten lax gun laws (this generally is meant to target weapons not meant for collecting or recreation). However, because varying “community standards” exist and the views of firearms change according to locality, Blocher (2013) concludes that local levels of government should be the primary regulators of firearm controls. Because rural communities emphasize gun culture, self-sufficiency, and hunting more than their urban counterparts, weapons regulations should account for these two fundamentally opposing views with reference to firearms regulation. In sum, Blocher answers the regulatory question by setting central guidelines, and delegating control procedures and responsibilities to adapt to local standards. While this approach may have favorable results in the case of the United States and

other western states, local institutions at the local level in developing countries would most likely lack institutional longevity or credibility to account for such variation. The solution of delegating responsibility to the local level presupposes effective regulatory control across locals, which is something that cannot be uniformly assumed.

If reducing weapons numbers reduces crime, then buyback programs should reduce weapons numbers, and effectively reduce crime. While there is some evidence to suggest that stricter controls on firearm ownership reduce crime, Phillips et al. (2013) conduct a time series analysis, and find that the reduction of weapons via buyback programs had little-to-no impact on violent crime in the United States (and if there is an effect, it takes years to see the results of such). This finding highlights important aspects of buyback programs – namely that most weapons collected are out of date, non-functional, or are weapons that are typically not connected to violent crimes (instead they are perhaps smaller caliber or sporting weapons). The authors did, however, note that there was a successful buyback campaign conducted in Australia where, in response to a massacre that killed 35 people, legislative action was taken to collect 65,000 weapons in an effective buyback program. This implies that, for buyback programs to maximize effectiveness, there must be collections of scale in order to make any substantial impact. These findings have impacts for regional arms control policy and disarmament strategies in post-conflict societies, and, drawing on this research and the modest success of the “Toys for Guns” program in the Latin context, buyback generally appear to require highly coordinated efforts or significant capital investment to be effective.

Interestingly enough, there are studies that highlight how environmental conditions and factors can result in security dilemmas that contribute to the increased potential of gun-related violence. Shrira et al. (2013) find that societies that are exposed to deadly disease and parasites

are more prone to commit increased levels of violence. Because the existential threats in disease-prone societies, in-group interactions (as opposed to interactions more broadly) are emphasized and banding together with familiar faces is a common defensive tactic. This banding effect in turn increases the fractionalization of society, which increases ethno-centrist views and promotes xenophobia, which in turn dehumanizes the out-groups. This dehumanization increases chances of violence in threatening environments – especially if weapons are easily available. Thus the localization of arms policies, legislation, punishment, and norms are a highly local matter, which is why blanket policies are next to impossible in combating both firearm violence and illegal weapons trading. The United Nations’ agreements from this perspective are justified in delegating responsibility to the state level. Because small arms dynamics and associated issues are so heavily localized, the imposition of top-down approaches are generally considered to be ineffective in combatting locally rooted problems.

To supplement localized arms reduction efforts, societal norm building is a critical component to reducing violent crimes committed with guns. Dr. David Hemenway, in framing gun violence as a public health issue, opines that a number of norm-construction strategies aimed at reducing gun violence are possible and public health practitioners should advocate such change. Anti-gun campaigns should take measures similar to that of anti-smoking campaigns. Anti-smoking campaigns market smokers as compulsory and weak in contrast to tobacco company portrayals of cigarette smokers as modern, alluring, and mysterious. Guns should additionally be delegitimized as masculine, and instead be condemned as instruments of unwarranted violence. News outlets could give more attention to weapons used in crimes, and how the violence stems from illegal arms trading, which would raise awareness of the issues with illegal weapons buying, selling, and trading. Dr. Hemenway effectively highlights the need for

norm entrepreneurs to capitalize on recent normative victories and emphasizes the need for cooperative norm building as a means of combatting firearms-based violence.

The rise of transnational gun markets, in turn, has far-reaching consequences for states more broadly. When evaluating how effective regulatory efforts are, policy aims to streamline border controls and procedures, which accounts for the transnational nature of the problem. Gagliardi (2012) reports that transnational illegal arms trading threaten the traditionally held norms of state sovereignty, contributes to the modern enslavement of migrant workers, and are globally destabilizing. The author notes that Mexican drug cartels take advantage of lax U.S. gun regulations to fuel drug wars, and maras(gangs) undermine government tax-collection efforts in Guatemala and El Salvador. Additionally, many of these maras (60%) extradited from the United States return illegally. In reaction to the growing issue of illegal arms trading, there is evidence to suggest that tracing and tracing efforts could have an impact on violent crimes. However, weapons control is only one dimension of the problem – more broadly, transnational crime involves drugs, money laundering, prostitution, human slavery, robbery, vandalism, and a number of other illegal activities. Because small arms are so intimately connected to organized, transnational criminal networks, appropriate agencies should stress pooling of information to effectively target such organizations, and in this way the United Nations appropriately advocates weapons tracing, record-keeping, and tighter border controls. Regionally based controls should generally adhere to agreed-upon regulations of border control as well as import/export measures. In the Balkans, licensing efforts are largely under utilized, and transparency efforts and quality by-and-large vary drastically. Because of the variation in border security, one-size fits all approaches (with the exception of strengthening borders and improving customs procedures) are not advisable (Grillot 2010); instead, states should strive to enforce existing mechanisms in

place. Generally, once weapons enter grey or black markets, they become incredibly difficult to control or locate. Salton (2013) advocates starting with simple enforcement of origin and end-user certificates (the paperwork authorizing general and special arms exports and imports). “The legal restrictions on sales are at best vague and uncertain, and violations of those regulations carry no adequate relief, equitable or otherwise” (Salton, p. 414). Though understandably addressed in the multiple United Nations’ policies targeting international trafficking, these mechanisms are left up to national regulations and regional controls and are unevenly enforced from state to state, which negates any positive impacts.

Alam (1999) describes how the United Nations offers assistance to countries if requested. In 1995, and UN security resolution mandated that, in Rwanda and Burundi, a team of investigators 1) collect reports on the sale of arms, 2) investigate charges that local factions are training military forces, 3) identify illegal arms-acquisition processes, and 4) recommend policy mechanisms that would limit such activity. While such support is available, few states utilize such services. One notable conclusion of such investigations, however, was that the Rwandan genocide and illegal mineral networks in Burundi were connected with illegal small arms. Thus the United Nations does offer services; however, proposed solutions at the state level are perhaps not considered even despite security council resolutions and UN investigations.

With reference to civil conflict, rebel and state-controlled arms supplies and transfers have impacts on the lethality and duration of civil conflicts. Suzuki (2007) finds that large increases in the number of *conventional* arms imports prior to war do not increase the chances of civil conflict. Given this; What effect do small arms have on conflict, and would looking at increasing small arms help predict the onset of civil conflict? While outside the scope of this research, it certainly would be an interesting study. There is, however, research exploring the

role that small and light arms play in conflict (See the Impact of small arms section of this paper). As far as regulations are concerned, consider that when the Dayton Agreements ended the Serbian/Muslim war, conventional arms agreements were situated within existing regional controls, and, in addition, were consistently restructured to accommodate military balances of power – including the United States bolstering arms to the Muslim-Croats. These agreements did not, however, address small arms, civil-military arms restructuring, or local controls (Tanner 2000), which affected the long-term stability of the region and undermines micro disarmament concerns, which increases the possibility of the identified issues associated with weapons proliferation.

So which controls effectively mitigate violence? In drawing conclusions from this section, I draw on some important observations; namely that 1) fewer *illegal* firearms may reduce crime, 2) no research emphasizes the lethality of sporting or collectible weapons, implying that such ownership is negligible, 3) tougher regulations, if not uniformly implemented in the rest of the region, increase the potential for illegal markets to emerge, 4) arms-reduction efforts require significant political will or startup capital (and perhaps time) to prove effective, and 5) conventional arms can provide military stability in post-conflict societies, yet small arms disarmament should be accounted for to help prevent future violence.

Because of the issues connected to small arms (as identified in the first section), reintegration and disarmament measures should be implemented proportionally because, following conflict, opposition arms are presumably considered illegal. Because illegal weapons are connected to increased crime (as identified in this section), current international policy correctly identifies illegal arms trafficking and sales to be connected to increased global violence. This evaluation generally concludes that, because collection efforts are difficult, policy

should instead focus on ex-combatant reintegration, enhancing local governance capability and legitimacy, regionally targeting firearms policies and laws, and the tightening import and export controls.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The first part of this paper explained that small arms constitute a threat to global health and security for a number of reasons. First, small and light arms are lightweight, cheap, lethal, portable, reliable, and can be operated with minimal training. Secondly, massive small-arms stockpiles across the world left over from global Cold War-era rivalries resulted in a cache of weapons ripe for illicit and illegal arms deals. Third, the diffusion of weapons, through both illicit and illegal means, has societal, political, and environmental impacts when considering that networks involved in trading stolen property, drugs, ivory, precious minerals and stones, and weapons themselves operate with impunity. As a result, the global diffusion of small arms facilitates the spread of radical ethnic and religious tensions. Additionally, these weapons are linked to the formation of illegal drug- and resource-trafficking groups who have the means to secure small arms at budget prices. Because of these dynamics, there are implications for both domestic and international security (one ought not look any further than the current crisis in Syria and Iraq involving the Islamic State as an example of effective arming and organization that began with small arms).

The second part of the paper explained how the issue of small arms became an international priority. Beginning in the 1990s, there was an accumulation of knowledge that addressed the growing threat of small arms. An epistemic community composed of researchers, academics, NGOs, and governments facilitated information diffusion, which ultimately reached the United Nations and marketed the issue as a serious destabilizing force for international security. The UN, despite facing opposing, anti-gun-control reactionary forces, implemented agreements targeting the control, reduction, and inventory of small arms. While these measures lack legal language and uniform enforceability, they are still touted as examples of states

agreeing to sweeping policies meant to target global violence. Even though enforceability is low, language is vague, and producer states argue that “national security” concerns trump international agreements, it is important to evaluate the method of international policy formation. Additionally, the hesitancy to regulate arms markets is because activists in major producer states are able to organize effective anti-arms-control reactionary coalitions in opposition to the global epistemic pro-arms-control community. Further, among arms-control advocates, various actors wrestle to champion policy approaches to the small-arms issue (Rogers 2009), which results in a multitude of fragmented policy options with little consensus. The lack of state reporting and information delivery generally negates the initial momentum that small-arms agreements gained during the 1990s. However, while states generally ignore requirements of the agreements, there is some intrinsic value in states at least acknowledging any arms-control policies. Generally, the function of the United Nations’ various international policies should be viewed as facilitating information flow, and advocating greater international cooperation as opposed to creating comprehensive solutions to a highly complex and localized problem.

The last portion of the paper highlights important observations for effectively mitigating violence, which draws on research that highlights the determinants linked to the reduction of gun-related violence. General recommendations point to a need for greater local capacity in the development and institutionalization of locally effective gun laws. Additionally, regulations that are too rigid may paradoxically promote illegal arms trading because new markets demand regulated firearms. In this view, policies the United Nations has followed are justified in delegating responsibility to domestic levels; however, because there is a division between the intrinsic value of firearms from urban to rural cultures, local controls and authorities are necessary to both account for these views as well as combat the proliferation of illegal arms. To

supplement this, van der Graaf (1999) contends that successful small-arms controls must incorporate and facilitate trust between security forces, police, and citizens, and localized legislation must target the regulation of the weapons that tend to be tied to violent crime. Thus if policy does not account for localized issue areas, and does not maintain trust between the state and the citizen, the small-arms problem is bound to persist.

Not all countries follow internationally dictated advice, and leaders choose which values to emphasize over others; however, his paper generally points to a need for governments to enhance border security by targeting both arms imports and exports as a means of controlling the proliferation of arms. It may be coincidence that former Cold-War proxy states (and those rich in natural resources) are targets for civil conflict, or it could be because actors capitalize on what resources (weapons in conjunction with natural resources) are available to further political agendas. Whether the policy emphasizes weapons reduction or regulation strategies, it is in the interest of state and the general public alike to eliminate the underlying social conditions frequently associated with the rise of civil conflict – namely poverty and GDP per capita disparities. While controlling weapons will not eliminate the possibility of violence, it would theoretically limit an opposition's ability to form effectively – these actions, however, do not eliminate or accurately address concepts such as greed or grievance articulated by conflict scholars.

The control of arms trading is quite obviously an ambitious project for the United Nations. The fact that a pool of activists, NGOs, academics, researchers, and states continually push small arms control and are willing to face anti-arms-control advocates in reaction is a test of Martha Finnemore's three-phase theory of norm diffusion theory. While norm entrepreneurs are facilitating the policy creation process by diffusing information, a critical mass may very well be

forming; if this is such, it will be interesting to see if globally accepted arms-control norms will be genuinely internalized and have effects on international conduct. Another future research avenue is to test Finnemore's norm-diffusion hypothesis by applying the case of small arms.

This paper has explored the problem of small arms from an international perspective, identified the proposed solutions from a policy perspective, and evaluated the soundness and effectiveness of such policy. More abstractly, this paper has reviewed small arms research and the historical development of associated policy. Because civil conflict and transnational criminal activity appear to be going nowhere soon, it is perhaps advantageous to identify and research innovative methods to effectively mitigate the effects of mass proliferation of arms (either conventional, light, and small) – which is perhaps one of the most-difficult security challenges in the contemporary world.

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