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**Tackling  
Small Arms in  
Central Africa**

# Tackling Small Arms in Central Africa

*by Lucien Mufor Atanga*

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### **About the Author**

Mufor Atanga was a Ford Fellow at BICC for the period between September 2001 and April 2002. He is now a senior analyst at SaferAfrica and based in Pretoria, South Africa. He graduated with a combined honours degree in History and Political Science and proceeded to undertake graduate studies in Political Economy at Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria.

From 1992 until 2002, and at various times, he offered lectures in political science and political economy in both the Universities of Buea in Cameroon and Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria, as well as at the Catholic University of Central Africa as visiting lecturer. In 2002, he also served as country researcher (Cameroon) for the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey. Mufor Atanga has researched and published widely in the following areas: Alternative Development Strategies; Civil Society, NGOs and Non-Formal Development Assistance; Gender Issues; Micro-disarmament; Peace and Security issues in Africa and NEPAD; Structural Adjustment and Privatisation in Africa; Democratisation processes; Human Rights; Ethnicity; Ethnic Conflicts and Conflict Resolution.

## 1. Introduction

In the West and Central Africa sub-regions alone, the figure of over five million dead has been advanced as the toll of violent conflict over the past decade (Woudenberg, 2002). A number of the countries in this region, from Chad to Burundi, are still experiencing some degree of violent conflict. The primary instruments of violence in the sub-region are small arms and light weapons. This paper seeks to find out if an understanding of previous micro-disarmament programs could serve as the basis for policy measures that could effectively tackle the problem of small arms and their misuse in the sub-region of Central Africa. The paper attempts this by first reviewing the literature on micro-disarmament with particular reference to post conflict disarmament in developing countries. The paper argues that while weapons collection may be perceived as a technical problem, there are overwhelming socio-political and economic factors that hinder any attempts to effectively address the issue of surplus weapons, its proliferation and misuse within the region. The magnitude and complexity of the problem warrants a multi-dimensional approach that deals with the issue at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Guns and conflict

### *1.1 Background and Problem*

It has been estimated that over 100 million small arms and light weapons are circulating in Africa (Salopek, 2001). While not being responsible for the multiplicity of ethnic and religious strife, political instability and violent crime that abound in the region, the proliferation of small arms certainly does contribute in no small measure in fueling them (Collier, 1997; Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Gamba, 1998; Reyneke, 2000).<sup>1</sup> This proliferation has been facilitated by among other factors, the lengthy, porous and very often poorly policed borders, inefficient border controls, corruption, that make illicit trafficking in small arms difficult to

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<sup>1</sup> The UN Small Arms Panel Report (September 1997: 15) pointed out that “accumulations of small arms and light weapons by themselves do not cause conflicts in which they are used.... These conflicts have underlying causes which arise from a number of accumulated and complex political, commercial, socio-economic, ethnic, cultural and ideological factors. Such conflicts will not be finally resolved without addressing the root causes.”

control.<sup>2</sup> The sheer volume of the estimated quantity of over 550 million small arms in circulation in the world (SAS 2001:59) and the economic interests involved, complicate the issues, and the complexity of the range of measures that could be adopted to effectively stem the flow, and of what Oxfam (1998a) has described as its horrific consequences.<sup>3</sup>

Not surprisingly, as SIPRI (1998) notes, Africa has more major armed conflicts than any other continent. In 1998, there were 11 major armed conflicts in Africa, making it the worst

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<sup>2</sup> As recently as in 1997 the U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan raised an alarm at the increased rate in the stockpiling and proliferation of small arms within the Central African sub-region (*Pan African News Agency*, 9 July 1997). It is not surprising then that the numbers of armed conflicts have not only increased in the sub-region during this period but have become more complicated and remain intractable. The availability of light weapons alone may not be responsible for these conflicts but there is no gainsaying that it contributes to the outbreak and escalation of such conflicts (Albright 1999; O'Grady, 1999). It is not surprising then that more than half of the over 700,000 deaths recorded annually from small arms occur in sub-Saharan Africa (IRIN, June 11, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> While for instance, a country like Britain often publicly declare its concern over, and commitment to working towards an end to the numerous armed conflicts in Africa, it has been documented (see for instance, Richard Bingley (February 3, 2002, in *The Observer*; and, Catherine Brown, Nick Gilby and Simone Kearns, <http://www.caat.org.uk/news/newsletter/1201/Africa.html>) that it was one of the leading exporters of small arms and light weapons to Africa in the 1990s with some £ 400 million worth of arms annually. The US on its part, spent \$ 227 million for arms sales and training programs between 1991 and 1998, according to John E. Peck (2000, <http://www.zmag.org/Zmag/articles/oct00peck.htm>). Lora Lumpe (1998) points out that in 1996 alone, the State and Commerce Departments approved more than \$500 million worth of small arms and shotgun exports. The influence of the military-industrial complex and the gun-lobby in US internal politics on the one hand, and the volume of China's arms trade with the third world, in particular Africa, no doubt informed the role which both countries played at the July 9 – 20, 2001, UN-organized *Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*, in New York, in blocking the adoption of a comprehensive convention on small arms and light weapons. What all of this indicate is that often commercial and political considerations far outweigh the concern for security since most of the transfers are commercial transactions and to regimes that have proven to have little respect for human rights.

conflict zone in the world for the first time since 1989.<sup>4</sup> More to the point, Africa averaged 7 high intensity conflicts annually from 1990 to 2000. Nowhere else in the world has there been such a high concentration of intensive conflict over such a long period since the end of the Second World War (SIPRI, 1998). It has been established that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the continent is one of the major factors that are directly responsible for the frequency and intensity of the conflicts Africa has been experiencing over the last two decades (Laurance, 1998; Oxfam, 1998b; 2002; BIR, 1999).<sup>5</sup>

The post-cold war world has seen the emergence on the arms control agenda of a relatively new issue: that of tackling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the consequences of their misuse.<sup>6</sup> Several factors could be advanced to account for this relatively recent concern with issues relating to this aspect of disarmament. Until the end of the decolonisation process in Africa from the mid 1970s to the early 1980s, there was very little widespread use of small arms, and they were largely confined to governmental arsenals and to the liberation movements and as such, restricted to particular conflict zones.

A new arms  
control issue

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. BBC Online Network World: Africa, "Light Weapons trade 'fuels African wars,' July 15, 1999. SIPRI (2001:15) defines a major armed conflict "...as the use of armed force between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organized armed group, resulting in the battle-related deaths of at least 1,000 people in any single year and in which the incompatibility concerns control of government, territory or communal identity."

<sup>5</sup> The figure of seven million military-style small arms and light weapons (Stohl, 1999) have been advanced for the sub-region of West Africa alone, as of 2000, and five million for the Horn of Africa (Yifru, 2002), where in both regions, as well as in others, they facilitate the abduction and exploitation of children as child soldiers in armed conflicts. These weapons are also pervasively used in crime and criminal activities. It is estimated that over 120,000 child soldiers are involved in the conflicts in Africa (O'Grady, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Small arms control' emerged as a prominent issue on the international agenda as recently as 1998, when the ECOWAS moratorium was signed. According to Lora Lumpe (1998), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the South African Development Community all took up aspects of small arms control. During this period almost all major UN departments and agencies, particularly the Security Council got increasingly engaged with the issue.

Moreover, until the early 1990s when the matrix of conflicts changed with the appearance and multiplicity of violent internal and communal conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, partly as a direct consequence of the alienation of important segments within states and their attendant disillusionment with the fruits of independence.

Prior to the 1990s, small arms and light weapons were generally not perceived as a problem, in spite of the fact that they accounted for the overwhelming majority of deaths in conflicts since 1945 (Krause, 1998), and hence was largely ignored by the international community. The emergence of small arms and light weapons as a multilateral disarmament issue is also related to the increasing demands on the UN and other multilateral peace and security interventions in conflicts, such as, in Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Congo, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, etc. On the other hand, the new concerns and challenges posed to regional organizations and the UN by radically different peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building operations, where problems posed by weapons stocks and flows to combatants, make peace-building not only difficult but highly hazardous. The collapse of the Soviet Union, and attendant economic difficulties in Eastern Europe, partly as a result of the end of the cold war, has meant that there has been a cheap supply of vast stocks of small arms and a ready market for such weapons in the conflict zones. Various armed and rebel groups and governments have funded these wars and financed their purchase of arms by illegally exploiting various resources such as timber, coltan, diamond, gold, ivory, etc, or engaged in drug trafficking and other such illegal activities.

“Legitimate  
Security”

Effective measures for tackling weapons proliferation have been complicated by the fact that these weapons are seen to have legitimate uses and as has often been the case, are acquired by governments within the regions for the legitimate security purposes of the state and internal policing. But it is often precisely these weapons acquired by countries for supposedly legitimate purposes that often find their way into the hands of non-state actors and rebel groups. This has been highlighted by the Robert Fowler (2000) Report presented to the UN Security Council in March 2000 that indicted a number of countries in West and Central Africa for assisting UNITA to evade UN sanctions. Similar panels set up by the UN Security Council for Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), have unraveled the patterns of sanctions busting and illicit arms trafficking (Berman, 2000; Wood and Peleman, 1999; O’Grady, 1999). There is no doubt that it is the enormity of the devastation



caused by the use of small arms in conflicts that led Roman Catholic Bishops from Africa during the 12<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the symposium of African bishops' conferences in Rome, from October 6 – 9, 2000 to among other appeals, demand, as John L. Allen (October 20, 2000) puts it, for an outright “cessation of arms trade between rich nations and African countries.”

In pursuit of the objective of curbing the excessive and destabilizing proliferation of small arms and light weapons in sub-Saharan Africa, a number of practical measures have been proposed, exemplified by the ECOWAS (October 31, 1998) declaration of a *Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons*. The governments of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to immediately follow up this moratorium, by amongst other measures, adopting an implementation instrument known as, the “Code of Conduct for the Implementation of the Moratorium’ in Lome, Togo, on December 10, 1999, within the framework of a regional United Nations project, the *Programme for the Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development* (PCASED).<sup>7</sup> Critics of the ECOWAS moratorium, for instance, maintain that neither has it prevented the recycling of weapons from one conflict zone to another, as some states within the region flouted commitments, nor have the wars in the region abated (Berman, 2000, 13-17; UN Security Council, 2000, Part Two, paragraphs 252-54; SAS 2001, 260-61). Whatever its demerits, the moratorium has generally regarded as providing the possibility to begin curbing excessive weapons proliferation into the sub-region. Similar albeit not as encompassing initiatives have started in Southern Africa, East Africa,<sup>8</sup> the Horn of Africa,<sup>9</sup> the Great Lakes region, and by the

## Moratorium

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<sup>7</sup> ECOWAS Press Release No. 65/2000, “ECOWAS Adopts Curriculum to Control the Flow of Small Arms,” August 31, 2000. The series of measures geared towards the prevention of conflict within the region, adopted by the 16-member Economic Community of West African States, included facilitating the resolution of violent conflict, enhancing peace-building measures, stepping up arms control, curbing the proliferation of light weapons and enhancing cooperation, confidence and transparency among regional states in military matters (UN Press Release AFR/199DC/2675).

<sup>8</sup> In the revamped East African Community made up of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, has an Inter-State Security Committee, comprising representatives from the various national departments of defense, state security, and immigration are supposed to have responsibility for small arms issues. Moreover, both the EAC and IGAD countries under the aegis of the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs

Organization of African Unity (Faltas and Di Chiaro, 2001). The several African initiatives still await proper implementation.

Such problems related to acquisition for legitimate use, could be seen in the manner in which some adhering countries to the *ECOWAS Moratorium* such as Ghana, The Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Nigeria have sought exemption from the ECOWAS Secretariat to import small arms ostensibly for the training of the police or armed forces, or for peacekeeping in Sierra Leone (IRIN, June 11, 2001).<sup>10</sup> This demonstrates that these governments have increasingly become conscious of the risks and havoc that the excessive accumulation of these weapons poses. It also indicates a degree of sincerity by some of these governments, that they are willing to take practical measures to curb the excessive flow of small arms and light weapons into the region.

The Central Africa sub-region<sup>11</sup> has witnessed in recent years a number of conflicts, some of which are still continuing, and remains awash with small arms. This disturbing situation is at the center of this study, since in almost all of these countries, the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons remain one of the major stumbling blocks to security. This compounds the lack of development and impedes the effective take-off of any meaningful sustainable development. The analysis begins with the

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Committee (EAPCCO) initiated a number of meetings and proposals that culminated in the March 2000 *Nairobi Declaration*. What is important to point out here, is the fact that these mix of organizations concert to come out with the *Nairobi Declaration* and a framework for action, titled *Coordinated Agenda for Action* (November 2000), as a follow-up, and *Implementation Plan* (2000) indicate a clear desire by the countries concerned to effectively address the small arms problem.

<sup>9</sup> The seven countries of the Horn (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda), under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), are involved in a collaborative project, funded by the *German Technical Cooperation Agency* (GTZ) and *Bread for the World*, and implemented by the *Bonn International Center for Conversion* (BICC, Bonn) in partnership with the *International Resource Group on Disarmament and Security in the Horn of Africa* (IRG) on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the IGAD countries, popularly known by its acronym SALIGAD since 2000.

<sup>10</sup> See, "West Africa: IRIN Focus on renewal of small arms moratorium," June 11, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> This sub-region covers the following eleven countries: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, (DR) Congo-Kinshasa, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tomé and Príncipe.

assumption that endemic violence and conflict, and the attendant proliferation of small arms in the sub-region are symptoms rather than the cause. From this perspective, as we argue, micro-disarmament cannot be adequately carried out without seeking to address why the arms were required initially. As such a holistic approach that enframes the problem within the context of the failure of the state in Africa to deliver, in the widest sense of the word, to its varied constituents and stakeholders might provide a basis to tackling the issue. If one were to go by the statements of a number of African leaders, then they have recognized the necessity for "...policy measures to address the political and social vulnerabilities on which conflict is premised."(NEPAD, October 2001: 15).<sup>12</sup> However, given the demonstrated collective and individual leadership incapacity of most of the African rulers, so far, since they have tended to pursue agendas that are not compatible with good governance, it is doubtful if this new initiative is going to go beyond the level of pious declarations.

## 1.2 Scope

This study will mainly be concerned with those countries within the sub-region of Central Africa that have experienced one form of armed conflict or the other – armed rebellion, civil wars and *coups d'état*. While not underestimating the problems posed by small arms and light weapons in other countries within the sub-region - which sometimes are the negative spin-offs of conflicts in neighboring countries - they are particularly acute in the countries where there has been some form of armed conflict. Recent statistics tend to aptly profile these societies as being very violent (Laurance, 1998: 49). Such weapons have been used to wage 46 of the estimated 49 wars fought in Africa between 1970 and 1996 (IRIN, June 11, 2001). Indeed, as Paul Collier (1999a) has amply

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<sup>12</sup> The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), has been initiated by the five African states that constitute its steering committee: Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa. It is meant to serve as the basis for an "African solution" to Africa's multifaceted economic, political, and social problems. What is particularly relevant to this study, is the "MAP Peace, Security and Political Governance Initiative" component of the program, which amongst others, aims at (a) the promotion of long-term conditions for development and security; (b) building the capacity of African institutions for early warning, and to prevent, manage and resolve conflict, etc. For further information, see <http://www.mapstrategy.org/>.

Weapons  
reduction and  
political reform

demonstrated, more than 20 percent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa live in countries that have been impacted by wars. The attendant rising wave of violent crime and the intensification of local conflicts only go to increase human insecurity, and thereby exacerbating the problem of lack of rudimentary development that all the countries in this sub-region face.

*1.3 Objective*

Our study will seek to find out whether attempts at weapons reduction and control can contribute to, and be effectively combined with political reform and development efforts in the sub-region of Central Africa. It will proceed by first examining the literature that has been generated on micro-disarmament and surplus weapons collection in post-conflict societies with the intention of exploring the possibilities of how this could be improved on and applied in a manner that contributes to sustainable security and development in the sub-region.

*1.4 Research Propositions/Questions*

Conflict and insecurity in the Central Africa sub-region is to a large extent a result of the availability and ease of access to small arms and light weapons. The elimination of surplus weapons would remove one of the core factors responsible for exacerbating insecurity within the sub-region. As such, we attempt to answer the following questions:

- How does the literature conceptualize the link between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and endemic intra-state armed violence/conflict?
- What is the best approach to addressing the issue of surplus small arms and light weapons in the sub-region of Central Africa?
- What are the lessons that could be gained from previous attempts at curtailing the proliferation of small arms?
- What role can various stakeholders – local communities, local NGOs and actors in civil society, the international development community and national governments play in post-conflict micro-disarmament and sustainable development?

*1.5 Significance of the study*

An attempt at understanding the extent and nature of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, on the one hand,

and the link between the availability of these weapons and violence in the Central African sub-region, on the other, could provide the basis for informed and effective policy measures to reduce them. Such a study could also serve as a basis for further field research in the sub-region.

### *1.6 Definition of Core Concepts*

The definition of small arms features but is not limited to the following characteristics. These weapons are generally smaller, weigh less, cost less, and are more portable and less visible than major conventional weapons. Except for ammunitions, weapons of this class do not require extensive logistical and maintenance capability and are capable of being carried by an individual combatant, pack animal or by a light vehicle. (Laurance, 1998, 43). The more prevalent weapons include assault rifles, hand grenades, rocket launchers, landmines and explosives. (Laurance, 1998, 43).<sup>13</sup>

## Micro-disarmament

The concept of micro-disarmament was used as understood here, for the first time in the 1995 UN publication, “Supplement of the Agenda for Peace.’ Micro-disarmament refers both to the type of weapons that are to be collected and the extent of the operation. This could be undertaken within a given locality, national territory or across several states in a given region. As such micro-disarmament should be regarded as a long-term process to improve on security, peace and stability in affected communities and societies. Practical disarmament refers to the actual process of collecting and disposing of these weapons. In the context of this paper, these phrases are often used interchangeably to refer to both the type of weapons and the extent of operations.

### *1.7 Methodology*

This work relies heavily on the literature that is available on practical disarmament and related security and development issues. Used has also been made of information from diverse print and internet publications.

This study is divided into four principal sections. Section one broadly provides an introductory background to the problem. Section two looks at micro-disarmament generally and specifically

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<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive definition of small arms and light weapons, and as used here, see, United Nations (1997); also see, SAS 2001, p.8.

looks at micro-disarmament in developing countries. In Section three we focus mainly on broad measures through which local and specific issues pertaining to micro-disarmament in the sub-region of Central Africa could be understood and tackled. Section concludes the work by summing up that the challenges posed by weapons proliferation and micro-disarmament in sub-Saharan Africa remain daunting.

## **2. Literature and Analysis**

### *2.1 The Literature*

#### Postwar recovery

For varying reasons, weapons collection programs have been implemented in several countries in different parts of the world, using different means.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the reasons, the underlying concern for such programs has been to improve on human security.

Carbonnier's (1998: 3-4) work, while not focusing strictly on micro-disarmament, is important in that he examines the challenges faced in post war reconstruction in war-torn societies in general. The thrusts of his arguments are that the most appropriate approaches to understanding and dealing with post conflict reconstruction in developing countries is by first recognizing the wider differences in agenda between donors and recipients today than they were between the United States and Europe after World War II. Even if most of the capital was generated in Europe itself, the US contribution from 1948 to 1951 amounting to about 2.5 % of the recipients' GDP, was not insignificant, particularly given the conditions that were attached to it.<sup>15</sup> The Marshall Plan, which is Carbonnier's starting point, as such, did facilitate the implementation of sound economic policies by reducing the costs of adjustment borne by competing distributional interests.

Whatever the case, these countries need (external) assistance not only for post conflict reconstruction in general but to be able to sustain the often fragile peace and reverse the lack of development. This means that issues of ownership and distributional equity that often are at the heart of conflicts need to

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<sup>14</sup> For an idea of the nature and diversity of such programs, see for instance, Faltas and Di Chiaro III (2001).

<sup>15</sup> De Long and Eichengreen (1994) have argued that aid was granted provided recipient governments made a commitment to keep budget and inflation under control.

be addressed (Berdal and Keen, 1997; Rufin, 1996; King, 1997), since these would contribute to strengthening political stability (Carbonnier, 1998). Stability here also implies a degree of efficiency, as this will reduce the risk of people resorting to violence to address perceived grievances. As such, one of the critical areas that need to be at the center of sustainable development is institutional strengthening. Good governance thus provides one of the most appropriate safeguards against political violence. However, this often remains a daunting challenge given the negative dynamics that prolonged conflict generates (collapse of educational system, lack of competent manpower, and various professional corps, weak civil society, etc), which often are responsible for the outbreak of violence in the first place. This suggests that tackling issues related to post-conflict reconstruction, violence (Carbonnier, 1998) and disarmament in an integrated manner remains the most rewarding approach in the long run.

Keith Krause (2000) argues, rightly, that small arms and light weapons proliferation is a complex problem, requiring various categories of interventions that are often at variance with the interests of various actors at different levels. Since broad-based solutions require the intervention of a diverse range of competence and communities this invariably compounds on the complexity of the problem. Krause (2000: 6) examines the nature of production and proliferation of small arms that broadly involve three sets of actors, viz: the producers (governments and private commercial concerns), clients, mainly national arsenals, non-state actors (domestic and extra-national), and other foreign governments. At least these categories of weapons and their ammunition are produced in at least 95 countries, by over 600 firms (SAS 2001; ECOWAS 2000).<sup>16</sup> A significant proportion of the production done by these firms, most of them whom are private, are not necessarily tied into a particular government procurement network. While these may be legitimate producers for small arms they all represent, depending on the situation important proliferation concerns. In essence these categories of weapons are fairly easy to obtain. Estimates that exist for the volume of annual global production are most unreliable.

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<sup>16</sup> The leading producers are Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Poland, Romania, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, United Kingdom and The United States, most of whom regularly supply arms to countries in sub-Saharan Africa, as 'development assistance.'

Whatever the case, what is certain is that the stocks of small arms is increasing.

Krause's 'circuit of proliferation' and attendant proposals for points of policy intervention include: national multilateral export policies; national policies on weapons possession; control and oversight of stockpiles; reducing weapons stockpiles; weapons marking and transparency, regional codes of conducts and registers (Krause, 2000: 7). He discusses the most important specific policy initiatives that have been proposed on the national or multilateral level, between suppliers or recipients. A careful reading of Krause thus suggests that what has exacerbated the problem of proliferation is the lack of political will within the international community to take appropriate measures to tackle the problem generally, and in particular, on the supply-side given the economic interests involved.

## Second circuit of proliferation

Krause's outline of the 'secondary circuit' of proliferation includes transactions that are not authorized by relevant state authorities or that are authorized but secret. This includes, as he puts it, domestic 'leakage' of legally held arsenals in both producer and recipient states either through theft, loss or illicit transfers. Acquisitions by non-state actors such as insurgent groups, organized crime, private security forces, and private dealers within or across state borders and retransfers between non-state actors also fall under this category. For Krause (2000:18), what is revealing about this circuit is the fact that 'virtually all illicit weapons transferred were, at some point in their life, legally produced or procured,' and hence the ambiguity that shrouds transactions within this circuit makes a clear-cut distinction between licit and illicit transfers hazy.

Policy proposals, Krause (2000:21) suggests for dealing with this secondary circuit of proliferation includes:

- tightening and harmonizing export control systems and policies;
- increasing international transparency;
- establishing tighter control over private arms dealers, brokers and transporters;
- prohibiting international transfers to non-state actors; and
- building the capacity of weak states to monitor activities within their own territory.

The consequences of proliferation could be witnessed in increased conflict and insecurity, human rights violations, stalled development and a further weakening of governance structures, and public health, crime control and other negative social consequences. These clusters include:



- post-conflict disarmament and gun buy-backs, demobilization and reintegration, and regional cooperation measures;
- increased domestic transparency and accountability, grassroots monitoring of human rights violations, enhanced respect for or modifications of international humanitarian law;
- post-conflict reconstruction, security sector reform and reduced military spending, security-building development efforts;
- harmonized national and international firearms regulation, enhanced police and customs cooperation against illicit trafficking (Krause, 2000: 27-42).

The intricacy and politically-charged nature of the problems posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is recognized and highlighted through out Krause's report. One can only agree with Krause (2000:41) that the ultimate success of efforts to tackle the problem will not necessarily be measured by such means as the number of weapons collected, the robustness of governments' export control or firearms legislation, the transparency of the trade in small arms and light weapons, or the strengths of codes of conduct. Rather the ultimate measure of success will be determined by how adequately particular measures in the short or medium term increase the security of states, communities and individuals from the threat of force and use of violence.

For Edward Laurance (1998:42), the link between disarmament and development was made previously during the Cold War, as a result of the 1978 UN General Assembly's *Special Session on Disarmament*. He classifies four categories of intra-state conflicts that permeate the international system and affects economic and social development:

- random acts of violence by individuals or groups having no aspiration to the status of state, such as criminality among rival gangs;
- sporadic incidents of violence by organized groups seeking greater political participation, cultural autonomy and economic benefits within the existing state structure;
- sustained resort to violence over long periods of time by organizations and movements with intent to supplant the existing governmental authority of the state over all or part of its territory; and

Conflicts within  
states

- intense acts of extreme violence by groups operating within the context of the partial or complete breakdown of the state (1998, 42-43).

These conflicts require multilateral solutions since the acquisition of the small arms and light weapons for their execution often occurs across national boundaries. For Laurance (1998, 43), another cause of the conflicts is the inability of affected states to cope with the influx of these weapons in their territory. He points out that the 1997 *UN Small Arms Panel* concluded that arms are attracted by:

- intra-state conflicts and terrorism;
- situations characterized by the loss of control of the state over its security function;
- the incomplete reintegration of former combatants into society after a conflict has ended; and
- the presence of a culture of weapons. (Laurance, 1998, 43)

On the supply side,

- a primary factor is the principle that sovereign states have a right to export and import small arms and light weapons
- producing states seek to dispose not only of their new production but also the large surplus of this class of weapons created by the reduction in armed forces in the post-cold war period; etc (Laurance, 1998, 43).

Incomplete disarmament of former combatants in peacekeeping operations is an important contributory factor to the availability of weapons and illicit trafficking.

Consequences of excessive accumulation of offensive weapons are:

- increase destructiveness and lethality of conflicts
- greater number of civilian casualties and refugees
- increase in criminal or non political acts committed with military-style weapons (armed robberies, hijacking, terrorism, stealing of livestock, drug trading and smuggling, etc)
- the level of violence promulgated by these weapons is so high that it obliges citizens to arm themselves, either personally or through private security organizations, (Laurance, 1998, 43).

Illicit transfers

- covert or secret transfer of weapons to government or non-state actors from another government;

- the black market supplies states under embargo
- illicit in-country circulation

The availability and use of military-style weapons emboldens the disaffected in many parts of the world, who, faced with little or no human development, opt for acquiring a weapon for individual survival, basic needs, or commercial purposes (Laurance, 1998: 44). For example,

- individuals and groups who disagree politically more easily resort to violence
- increase in criminal and non-political acts committed with military-style weapons – armed robberies, terrorism, stealing of livestock, drug trading and smuggling.

Faltas, McDonald and Waszink (2001), in “Removing Small Arms from Society,” look at the various reasons why and how practical disarmament is undertaken, and some of the actual experiences. These authors differentiate practical disarmament in situations of political and communal conflict which they refer to as peace building whilst contrasting this in the context of crime prevention. This distinction is often blurred in some cases between criminal violence and political violence. Political and communal violence in several instances, such as in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Cambodia has been sustained through various forms of criminal activities. Like other analysts, one can only agree that successful peace-building entail uprooting the causes of lethal conflict from society, and this requires a comprehensive and sustained approach (Faltas, McDonald and Waszink, 2001: 5).

These authors, like others, such as Laurance and Godnick (2001), distinguish a number of disarmament phases to be applied depending on the nature of violence. What they term *Phase I* disarmament is intended at recovering the tools of war from irregular militias and fighters immediately after the end of an armed conflict. They argue that this phase may involve a degree of coercion. The process also involves rehabilitation and reintegration, since ex-combatants are provided with some form of assistance aimed at facilitating their return to civilian life or integration within the regular armed forces as the case may be. *Phase II*, is largely voluntary and its success is determined by the extent to which weapon holders believe they need to retain or surrender their weapons. This makes its success more problematic since as Faltas, McDonald and Waszink (2001:7) point out, unless demand is effectively reduced voluntary disarmament will achieve little reduction in illicit weapons stocks.

Practical  
disarmament

It might be necessary to emphasize that both *Phases I* and *II* disarmament and weapons collection programs rely on cooperation of individual firearm holders, and both are aimed at removing from society weapons that threaten political stability and public safety.

## *2.2 Practical Disarmament in Latin America*

Laurance and Godnick (2001) begin by outlining the sources of illicit arms within the region. They point out that in the 1970s and 1980s a lot of weapons poured into the region from a variety of sources mainly due to tensions related with the cold war. While weapons have continued to flow into the region from the United States, Brazil and Europe the primary nature of illicit weapons is through diffusion and circulation within the region. An important contributory factor for continued weapons proliferation is the illegal and violent nature of narco-trafficking inherent in its clandestine and lucrative nature and the development of mafia-like networks. Effective control is hampered by the nature of the terrain and porous borders.

Besides, a longstanding gun-culture that predates recent proliferation exacerbates the current situation. All of this is complicated by problems associated with attempting to foster (or the lack of) meaningful democratic governance. The absence or the inability of the state to provide adequate security has meant that private security outfits (there is the strong suspicion that some have been created for political purposes) have been created to meet increasing demands by businesses to protect their facilities and personnel. However a lot of these private security companies usually operate on the margins of legality. In the case of Guatemala for instance, Laurance and Godnick (2001:17) claim that only 30 out of the 200 companies were registered in 1998.

Given the human toll of the complex problems associated with weapons proliferation in the region the authors recommend a multi-dimension approach to tackling Phase II weapons collection programs. They proffer as basis these three considerations:

- The availability of weapons is so great that traditional supply-side arms control measures alone would be inadequate. Efforts to lower demand must also be based on the local and national political, cultural and economic context.
- Phase II weapons collection programs cannot stand alone, but must be combined with programs that address the root causes of conflict, such as drug use and trafficking, poverty, and inadequate justice systems.

Phase II:  
mop-up

- The effects of these weapons on the population at large, especially on innocent civilians, suggest that a human focus should take priority (Laurance and Godnick, 2001: 18).

Nicaragua's disarmament program was primarily because that carried out at the end of the war in 1990 did not prevent some ex-combatants from rearming by 1991 with hidden weapons. These isolated but large numbers of disorganized bands were mainly not happy with the peace agreements or with the individual fruits of the peace dividend. With external assistance the Nicaraguan government created the Special Disarmament Brigade primarily to dissuade the rebirth of violence. In late 1991 the Special Disarmament Brigade initiated a gun buy-back program. Money, food and micro-enterprise programs were offered in exchange for weapons. By the end of the program in late 1993, about 142,000 weapons had been either bought back or confiscated and destroyed (O'Connor, 1996; BICC, 1997: 161; Faltas, McDonald and Waszink, 2001:10; Laurance and Godnick, 2001: 25).

In El Salvador, a disarmament and demobilization of combatants started in June 1992, after over a decade of conflict. The armed forces of neighboring Nicaragua and Honduras carried out several search and destroy missions in these countries of weapons caches belonging to the *Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front* (FMLN), under the auspices of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). Over 11,000 FMLN fighters surrendered some 10,200 small arms and light weapons and 9,200 grenades. These were destroyed while weapons belonging to the government forces were collected and stored. At the end of the process it was estimated that over 360,000 military-style weapons were still circulating within the country (Laurance and Godnick, 2001; Faltas, McDonald and Waszink, 2001). Laurance and Godnick (2001) have described this type of disarmament program carried out as part of the formal end to armed conflict, as *Phase I* programs. This is often undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations or some other peace-facilitating agency.

It is worth pointing out that disarmament of former combatants in El Salvador had to overcome enormous challenges arising largely from mutual distrust between the guerrillas and the government's management of the peace process. The government displayed remarkable inability to control the activities of death squads. Further, instead of disbanding security forces as agreed it instead transformed both the *Treasury Police* and the *National Guard* into the *Military Police* and the *Frontier Guard* respectively. As Laurance and Godnick (2001), argue, this led the FMLN to delay the reintegration of its ex-combatants, while even ONUSAL

officials doubted the figures provided by the FMLN on its arms holdings. This is what informed ONUSAL's decision to conduct the search for arms caches in both Nicaragua and Honduras with the assistance of the armed forces of both countries. Arms were found in both countries and almost all of them destroyed. However doubts persisted if all of the FMLN's arms had been discovered in spite of its declarations that this was indeed the case. Further arms disclosures from the FMLN were made, only after the peace process almost came to a halt, when the FMLN revealed in a letter to the UN Secretary General that it had not declared all of its caches simply because it had a profound mistrust of the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES).

The rest of this paragraph summarizes what Laurance and Godnick term *Phase II* disarmament. This is implemented to recover the weapons that the more formal disarmament program was unable to collect. A salient feature of this type of weapons collection is the pivotal role that civil society plays in its implementation, and consequently its success or failure. From September 1996 to June 1999, another weapons collection program was undertaken in El Salvador. This new program was propelled by a coalition of concerned Salvadoran citizens and businesses, civil society organizations and the Catholic Church under the umbrella coalition of *Patriotic Movement against Crime* (MPCD). The *Goods for Guns* program, as it was called, undertook 23 rounds of voluntary weapons collection. International donors, the Salvadoran government and the private sector provided funding for the project. While the program had little impact when compared to the proportion of weapons in circulation, it did raise awareness of the issues related to proliferation and security (Laurance and Godnick, 2001; Faltas, McDonald and Waszink, 2001). An important point that is emphasized by the *Goods for Guns* experience in El Salvador is micro-disarmament programs must be accompanied by measures to restraint the acquisition of weapons even legally.

## Goods for Guns

The disarmament of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG) in Guatemala, from 3 March to 14 May 1997, was undertaken under the auspices of the *United Nations Observer Mission in Guatemala* (MINUGUA) as part of a broader program of demobilization and reintegration. This was a follow-up to the peace agreement signed between the government and the URNG that brought a 36-year civil war to an end. Incentives that were provided to the former combatants included literacy programs, medical and dental services, and vocational guidance. It is estimated that 2,928 of the about 3,370 URNG combatants handed over 1,665 small arms, 159 light weapons, and nearly

535,000 rounds of ammunition. Laurance and Godnick (2001), states that this was only a slight fraction of the estimated 2 million weapons that continue to circulate within the country illegally (Faltas, McDonald and Waszink, 2001).

An important observation that Laurance and Godnick (2001:38) make and which should be given closer attention in other post-conflict societies is the pattern and rate of armed violence in relation to socio-economic factors. They point out that the regions that have experienced the highest rates of post-conflict armed violence are not those rural regions that are most backward in terms of socio-economic development. While poverty and lack of education are as it were important considerations when arms are readily available in a society, these factors on their own may not necessarily be responsible for armed violence.

The San Miguelito arms exchange program in Panama was initiated in 1997 with the aim of improving public safety. The approach to this project employed both coercion and incentives, as enforcement efforts and police raids were stepped up while at the same time people were encouraged through the provision of vouchers for foodstuffs, domestic appliances construction materials, and employment in construction projects to hand in weapons. Most of the weapons collected were destroyed. By the end of 1998, three rounds of collections, and police raids yielded 205 firearms (Godnick 1999; Faltas, McDonald and Waszink, 2001).

### 2.3 *Practical Disarmament in Africa*

A number of weapons collection and destruction programs have taken place in Africa. However, these have been mainly in the context of post-conflict peace-building. Given the link that has been established between small arms proliferation, armed violence and crime (Faltas, McDonald and Waszink, 2001), it is not surprising that this has influenced the design of several programs in the region such as in Mozambique and South Africa. *Operation Rachel* in Mozambique and the *Gun-Free South Africa campaign* are outstanding examples of such programs.

As part of post-conflict disarmament and demobilization in Mali, from October 1995 to January 1996, former combatants turned in about 3,000 weapons that were publicly burnt in a ceremony dubbed the *Flame of Peace*. Coordinated and financed with a trust fund established by the UNDP, the project was supervised by a joint-commission of military authorities and representatives of various rebel groups. The weapons collection

Flame of Peace

took place in four demobilization camps in the North of the country.

Former combatants were provided with food, medical treatment, and paid vocational training in exchange for their weapons. The collection of weapons may not have substantially reduced the stock of illicit firearms in Mali, but it did contribute towards national reconciliation in the powerful symbol of the *Flame of Peace*. It also served to galvanize several community-based practical disarmament projects, including broader initiatives such as the West African Moratorium on small arms and light weapons (van der Graaf and Poulton, 2001:13).

## Tools for Arms

Within the context of a wider and long-term peace-building initiative, the Christian Council of Mozambique undertook from October 1995 to 2000, a weapons collection program termed the *Tools for Arms Project*, in collaboration with both the government and the opposition (former rebels). The project provided a wide range of tools and machinery in exchange for arms. The collected weapons were destroyed while their fragments were used to produce works of art, ornaments or practical objects. (Christian Council of Mozambique, 1999.).

A parallel joint institutional weapons destruction program, popularly known as 'Operations Rachel,' was launched from 1995, by the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Police of the Republic of Mozambique. Aimed at discovering and destroying arms, were the legacy of the over 30 years of civil war in Mozambique, the participation of the South African Police force was informed by the concern that these weapons could be fueling criminality and violence in post apartheid South Africa (Chachuia, 1999).

The former rebel movement most often had kept these caches. It was hoped that offering rewards commensurate to the value of the cache would encourage locals to reveal the location of such caches. The weapons were then destroyed on-site by a combined team of South African and Mozambican police specialists. The use of incentives has encouraged the disclosure of weapons caches but has meant that the price for information has increased over time (Faltas and Paes, 2001: 15).

*Operation Rachel* was hampered initially by the legacy of tensions stemming from the nature of relations between the two countries during the apartheid era. Moreover, the two forces had different working capabilities. However, with the political commitment of the governments of the two countries and the experience of working together mutual suspicion was soon set aside as both forces gained confidence, and this was bolstered by the popular support the project enjoyed in Mozambique.



A weapons collection and confiscation program was initiated in Bangui, the Central African Republic (CAR), in 1997, with the principal aim of recovering from the population arms looted from government armories from April-May 1996. The role played by the peacekeeping force (*Mission interafricaine de surveillance des accords de Bangui*, MISAB), was instrumental in this government of the CAR project that succeeded in recovering 95 per cent of the heavy weaponry and 62 per cent of the small arms and light weapons (Faltas, 2001: 77 - 96). He qualifies this apparent success by pointing out that an unspecified number of weapons recovered that had not be looted from government depots were included in the 95 percent count.

Faltas (2001) maintains that some of the illegal arms in circulation were brought in or obtained through former combatants in Chad, Sudan and Congo, and such influx had considerably increased in recent years. He argues rightly, that when compared to other countries in the region the challenge for the CAR is to prevent proliferation rather than reducing it. He however, does make the point that the influx of weapons has increased considerably in recent years.

Given the recent violence in the CAR (2001 - 2002), Faltas is prescient when he points out that what should have been a remarkable achievement given the quantity of arms collected, left large segments of the population feeling not only insecure but bitter. This was primarily because only the mutineers were disarmed. This has to do with the ethnic and political dynamics in the CAR. In effect, the problems highlighted by Faltas (2001: 86 – 90) relating to how the CAR regime attempted disarmament is a classic example of how not to carry out a disarmament project.

Following the end of the civil war in Liberia, the UN, the US, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), assisted the government of Liberia in over a three-month program that succeeded in destroying 19,000 small arms and light weapons and over 3 million rounds of ammunition. These arms had been collected as part of the demobilization and disarmament program from 1996-1997 that was complimented by a separate search and confiscation operation undertaken by the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) during the first half of 1997 (Berman, 2000; Fraser, 2001).

The government of Sierra Leone attempted to disarm rebel factions from November 1999 to May 2000, with the assistance of ECOMOG and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). After initially collecting some the program became a failure primarily because the peace process on which this was hinged collapsed, and since weapons collected were not

immediately destroyed this facilitated their recapture when the peace process became untenable. Moreover, while the program was being carried out the rebels were simultaneously rearming. (Berman, 2000; Fraser, 2001).

#### 2.4 *Some Technical Aspects of Micro-Disarmament*

### Preparation

Faltas, McDonald and Waszink (2001:23-25), outline four stages for a successful weapons collection project. However, it is pointed out that each project is informed and determined by its unique peculiarities and circumstances. For these authors these ingredients should invariably take into consideration undertaking a feasibility study such that general and particular factors are put into proper perspective. For instance, it would be quite foolhardy to attempt to undertake a disarmament project during an ongoing conflict. The nature of the feasibility study would depend on whether it is a *Phase I* disarmament project (cf. Laurance 2001), or a *Phase II* project. Whatever the case, it is clear that it is necessary for both types of disarmament projects to be carried out after any conflict. This is because as has been pointed out, when conflicts end the instruments of war need to be disposed of in a methodical and safe manner. In the case of the Central Africa sub-region, it is preferable that the weapons that cannot be converted into, for instance, farming tools, or some form of art work, be immediately destroyed since giving them to a reconstituted army may lead to their being recycled to other conflict areas within the region. As has been pointed out most of the weapons in the region were initially acquired legally.<sup>17</sup> Take for instance, the civil conflicts that Chad experienced in the 1980s and 1990s, and that are not yet completely over. It remains an open secret that some senior military officers of the Cameroonian armed forces trafficked in arms that fueled these internecine wars.<sup>18</sup> The ramifications are still influencing events today in Chad, and the neighboring countries.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. ADM Interview granted by Edward Laurance, December 1998, <http://www.cdi.org/adm/1216/Laurance.html>.

<sup>18</sup> In February 2001, an explosion occurred at the military headquarter armory in Yaoundé. It is speculated that the explosion was meant to cover up the fact that large numbers of arms were “missing” – possibly as a result of arms trafficking by some senior officers of the military (BICC, 2002). Informed observers are of the opinion that it is no coincidence that the discovery that arms were missing from the armory at the Military Headquarters in Yaounde, and its subsequent criminal explosion apparently to cover up the magnitude of the

These authors point out that a key factor (stage two) that influence the outcome of such a project is proper planning, as this outlines goals and objectives. Setting out the objectives from the very beginning could also serve as part of the criteria for assessing the degree of success or otherwise at the end of the project or what needs to be corrected. Moreover, it is necessary to integrate a weapons collection initiative within a broader strategy of promoting human security and development since this not only addresses the immediate problem of weapons proliferation and their misuse but the root causes of violence in a sustainable fashion. In the case where armed conflicts come to an end, weapons collection programs have to be undertaken within a broader context of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration as well as reconstruction (DDR). DDR should not be regarded as a continuum but as a process. Hence it is not simply a technical problem with clear-cut technical solutions but one that lies in the heart of sustainable conflict resolution, since this determines whether violent conflict is permanently made an unattractive option or a society soon reverts to violence.

Planning

Integration

### 2.5 *Aspects of Conceptual and Theoretical Considerations*

Various analysts (Alesina and Perotti, 1993; Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997; Berdal and Malone, 2000) have established amongst other factors, a correlation between economic (under)development, inequality and violence. It is important to qualify that the problem is not simply one of poverty but more importantly the manner in which individuals and groups react to perceive grievances and marginalization arising from the inadequacies of the state in the sub-region.<sup>19</sup> While Collier (2000) or even Reno (1997; 1998) make a valid argument on the rapacity motivation underlying postmodern conflicts in Africa. These alone do not account for the outbreak of conflict nor its prolongation. In this regard, the literature is also unambiguous about the link between the availability of small arms and light weapons and the outbreak and intensity of conflicts.

Underdevelopment

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“missing” weapons in early 2001, also witnessed a return to coup attempts and fighting in the neighboring Central African Republic.

<sup>19</sup> Two recent books examine to a large extent how the state operates in this region of Africa. These are Chabal, Patrick and Daloz, Jean-Pascal (1999), and Bayart, Jean-Francois, Stephen Ellis and Beatrice Hibou (1999).

State failure

Returning to Carbonnier (1998), the question to ask is who creates and regulate competing distributional interests? How do we strengthen the states in the sub-region of central Africa such that they could provide security and stability while at the same time respecting human rights and upholding the rule of law?<sup>20</sup> It is through addressing such challenges that micro-disarmament could be contextualise and made to be effective in the sub-region. In other words, how do we make the state take on its responsibilities? This is where the role of the international community becomes crucial to the success or otherwise of attempts aimed at responsabilising the state. In order to foster the development of a strong civil society that can withstand the vitiating nature of the state within the region the international donor community has to use its financial leverage to impose the kind of political conditionality that creates the enabling environment for the flowering of democracy. Here too the nature and manner of application of conditionality is important and should be and is seen to be applied without exception to similar situations. It should not be perceived that for instance, the European Union condones human rights violations and the muzzling of democratic development in the Republic of Congo while at the same time it proactively condemns similar practices in Zimbabwe as exemplified by its role or lack of same in the presidential elections in both countries in 2002.

Given the negative but fairly accurate characterisation of the state in Africa, how then do we make it to provide solutions rather than being seen as part of the problem? What for instance, is responsible for the 'Botswana exception?' To further substantiate the thrust of my argument, what will stop Idris Deby of Chad, for example, from squandering 4.5 million dollars of oil money on arms procurement (Raeburn, 2001) again, rather than putting this into acutely lacking social investment? Arms procurement in violation of agreements with both the World Bank and the IMF not to indulge in such wasteful spending will be repeated in Chad, and replicated in different countries in the region, as long as weapons continue to be perceived as legitimate merchandise of trade. This is precisely one of the basic lessons of the now often quoted tragic events of September 11; we cannot for shortsighted and short-term economic gains encourage or

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<sup>20</sup> On the nature of the state in Africa in general and with particular reference to the Central Africa region see Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1999); Bayart (1993); Chabal and Daloz (1999); Chabal (1997); Global Witness (2002), Willum, (2001); Mbembe (2000a; 2000b; 1999), etc.

allow spaces of anarchy in areas and regions of the world. For, it is in these regions or because of them that terrorism is bred. No one captures this better than Duffield (1998) who situates post-modern conflict in the interlinkages of global capitalism, which Negri and Hardt (2000) refer to as the construction of empire. In this regard, conflict is not necessarily sporadic no random, be it criminal or political as Laurance (1998) posits but should be understood within the logic of post modern conflict, with various transnational actors in localized and transnational theaters. From this perspective the effectiveness of the role individual states could and should play can only make sense if regional and international actors make determined efforts to apply strong measures and adhere to conventions. In this regard the solution for such conflicts and micro-disarmament, as Laurance (1998) also holds, should be multilateral.

It has been very complicated and difficult to deal with problems related to the proliferation of small arms, partly because these weapons are perceived rightly or wrongly to have legitimate military and civilian uses. For instance, countries like Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Romania that have often been accused of supplying arms to rebel movements in Africa have provided proper documentation for deals involving arms that turned out to be illegally trafficked to Africa, as Robert McMahon (2001), rightly points out. Two separate panels set up by the UN Security Council in 2000 revealed that arms from Eastern Europe found their way to rebel groups in Sierra Leone and Angola who were under sanctions. Given the dynamics of the internal conflicts, in which they are used, and the different and often secretive means, by which they are transported, the traditional measures of arms control and disarmament do not apply.

Part of the problem thus has to do with the understanding of what constitutes illicit arms trafficking by supplier governments that are to be found mainly, but not only in the North. Most often these governments mean the actual stocks of weapons already in circulation outside of government control in the developing world. Whilst for instance, several EU governments have organized seminars and workshops focusing on the demand side, few of them have actually reformed national laws regarding offshore brokering of arms deals, improved end use certification and monitoring of transfers, and increased transparency around state-sanctioned small arms exports (Lumpe, 1998). What this means is that more effort and better ways need to be devised to tackle the problem on the supply-side, short of advocating that they cease to be regarded as legitimate goods of trade. Indeed, given the havoc that the misuse of these weapons both by state

## Arms trafficking

and non-state actors particularly in the developing world is causing, it is time to begin questioning their continuous production and supply to these governments. It has been well documented that these regimes regularly favor spending on the military and on arms in general, at the expense of social spending, which they badly require for development.

### **3. The Way Forward?**

#### *3.1 Elements for Practical Micro-disarmament in the sub-region of Central Africa*

The literature on micro-disarmament provides us with ample evidence to realize that although the proliferation of small arms do provoke the outbreak and aggravate the intensity of the conflicts in which they are used, these weapons on their own are not responsible for these conflicts.<sup>21</sup> This is primarily because those who often take up arms against the state in the region usually have a political agenda. Their availability often makes them the favorite tools for settling ethnic and internal territorial disputes. Krause (1998:1) is quite insightful in this regard, when he states that these weapons in most cases are being used not only to terrorize and control populations, but also to influence politics, and to gain livelihood. Given the ease with which these weapons could be, and are acquired, the impoverished and desperate in many parts of the world frequently resort to violent means to gain a foothold in society and thereby perpetuating a vicious circle of insecurity and poverty. What are the policy implications of these observations for undertaking successful practical disarmament in general and in the Central African sub-region in particular? There seems to be a need for:

- immediate measures that eliminate or reduce the availability of weapons in society, as well as
- intermediate and long term measures that progressively eliminate the root causes of violence from society.

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<sup>21</sup> No less an eminent personality than the UN Secretary General, Koffi Annan (1997:2), has presented the situation succinctly by stating: "...While not by themselves causing the conflicts in which they are used, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons affects the intensity and duration of violence and encourages militancy...most grievously, we see a vicious circle in which insecurity leads to a higher demand for weapons, which itself breed greater insecurity..."

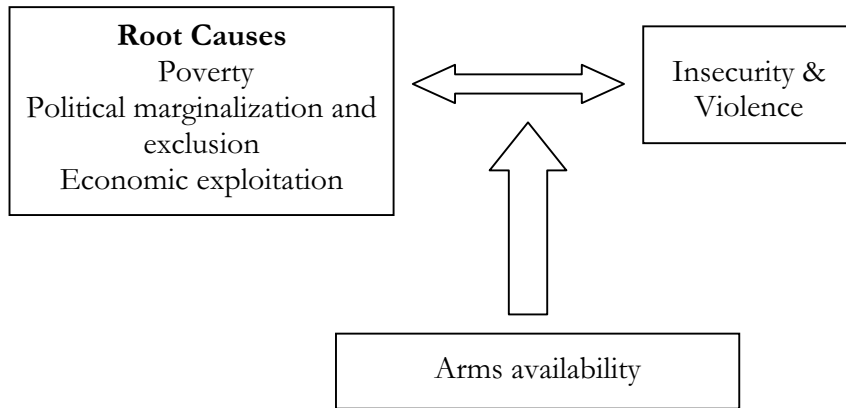
Moreover, as the experience in trans-border areas that have witnessed prolonged instability and conflict indicate, there is often rapid increase in violent criminal activities. The development of armed highway banditry, otherwise commonly known as the *coupeurs de route* phenomenon in the Northern region of Cameroon is a classic case of such a combination. This is largely a fallout of years of internecine conflict in Chad, political instability and low intensity armed conflicts in the Central Africa Republic, ethnic and political violence in both the Northern region of Cameroon and Northern Nigeria, and the general political and civil turmoil in the West and Central Africa regions. The criminal bands that operate in these trans-border areas of these countries use mainly sophisticated military-style automatic and semi automatic weapons such as AK-47s and AR-15s.

Understanding this is crucial to formulating appropriate policies to deal with the havoc and threat from small arms and light weapons, and in undertaking successful disarmament programs in sub-Saharan Africa. The sub-region of Central Africa is not dissimilar to West Africa from this perspective. Long-term adequate remedies to the situation thus require measures that address these grievances that lead people to be participate in violent conflict. One cannot avoid examining issues relating to governance, political stability and institutional capacity as important determinants of individual and group security, since these factors contribute in determining violence and conflict in society in the first place. Thus a crucial lesson that stems from a reading of successful disarmament programs is that factors central to human security must be taken into consideration and conscious attempts made at eliminating those that motivate individuals and groups to take up arms.

What then are the most appropriate ways of approaching the problems posed by small arms and light weapons within the sub-region? Issues relating to curbing surplus weapons and the effects of their misuse have been compounded by the different ways in which various groups with varying concerns have perceived the problem, depending on their understanding of reality. The problem has generally been enframed from seven perspectives. Thus it is regarded as a human rights issue, while others see it as a public health and development issue. Yet others perceive it simply as a problem of post-conflict disarmament, terrorism or criminality. This reflects the multi-dimensional and complex nature of the problem. This also means that to effectively address these problems a multidimensional approach is necessary. Attaining consensus on how to perceive the problem and thus

most appropriate measures to tackling it has proven to be so far, rather elusive.

***Figure 1: Simple model of the causes for the Demand and Use of Weapons***



Krause (2000), like most western analysts begins with the assumption that the arms trade particularly as it pertains to sub-Saharan Africa should continue to be regarded as legitimate business. Few western analysts suggest an outright ban on the arms trade in spite of the devastating consequences of their misuse both by state and non-state actors in the region. The experience of these countries particularly from the 1990s demonstrate that the negative repercussions of arms proliferation far outweigh whatever benefits that they are claimed to have. Part of the argument that has been advanced to continue with the arms trade is that they have legitimate uses. Moreover, as it is argued, sovereign states make decisions on what they desire. Even as is the case, arms purchase, and military expenditure generally remains at the expense of badly needed social investments in for instance, education, health and the creation of employment opportunities. Besides, policy proposals as those proffered by Krause above remain untenable in sub-Saharan Africa, and in particular in the sub-region of Central Africa since most of the regimes retain their grip on power through force, and as such, use the arms acquired to perpetrate human rights violations. Civil society in these states in spite of apparent semblance of democratization since the early 1990's – in some of these states – remain repressed, fragile, understandably fragmented and has little or no influence on the policies and activities of the various regimes. Appropriate conditionality aimed at strengthening civil society and making the state apply principles of democratic accountability, and adopt the right policy-mix for security sector



transformation will not be out of place. As such in spite of the nature of the state in the region, it remains central in any long-term measures that adequately address issues of proliferation and weapons misuse.

Practical disarmament, remains largely a catalogue of experiences of ways in which it has been undertaken, and of what has worked so far and failures. How do we move beyond the experiences with specific reference to the sub-region of Central Africa? Recent events in Congo Brazzaville more than anything else highlight the shortcomings of disarmament as a project rather than as a process. Three critical but interrelated issues are poignantly demonstrated by the return to political violence here: a lack of commitment to the November and December 1999 peace accords and the peace process among all parties; a botched democratic process and relative disinterest by the international community to post-conflict disarmament and democratic governance in Congo-Brazzaville.<sup>22</sup> Besides, no serious attempt was made to bring in key parties who did not sign the 1999 peace accords. How else do we explain a return to armed violence in the Pool region from 27 March and parts of Brazzaville shortly after the March 2002 presidential election, which Sassou Nguesso supposedly won by a massive 89 per cent? Did the violence stem simply from a military operation to forcefully search and retrieve illegal arms from the population of Brazzaville?<sup>23</sup> The forceful

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<sup>22</sup> The fighting that broke out between the Ninja militias led by the Reverend Frederic Bitsangou and government forces, the *Forces Armées Congolaises* (FAC) from late March, 2002, is largely as a result of: a rather very slow disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process of former combatants; dissatisfaction with the peace process in which key actors such as Pascal Lissouba and Bernard Kolelas have been left out; a make-belief pseudo democratic transition in which most of the key opposition forces and parties were not allowed to participate or pulled out like Andre Milongo did, because of what they perceived and described as ‘...bias in favour of Dennis Sassou Nguesso’ who had forcefully seized power in 1997; and, the relative display of lack of interest by the international community to events in Congo (Brazzaville), partly because of the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, and partly because the oil producing areas have remained relatively unaffected.

<sup>23</sup> See BBC News/Africa, April 10, 2002, “Calm returns after Congo panic,” [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/africa/newsid\\_1920000/1920477.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/africa/newsid_1920000/1920477.stm). However, *ReliefWeb: WFP Emergency Report* No. 16 of 2002, claims that “On 9 April, following altercations between Ninjas and

search might have been motivated by concerns over security given recent heightened rebel activity but was this the most opportuned moment? Should this not have been preceded by a public information campaign? These are dilemmas that post-conflict disarmament and peace-building need to grapple with if any degree of success is expected.

While what works best is determined by local specificity, it is important to always have in mind that trade-offs between various criteria and approaches are often unavoidable. It would seem from the Mali and Gramsh<sup>24</sup> experiences that development projects have a contribution of their own, independent of, and irrespective of the merits and demerits of weapons collection, to public safety, economic progress, and community development. It needs to be recalled that it was the consultations by the UN mission led by William Eteki Mboumoua in August 1994 in Mali, and from February to March 1995 to six countries in West and Central Africa that established that proliferation of illicit small arms needed to be appreciated in an Africa-wide perspective (van der Graaf and Poulton, 2001). Several historical, socio-anthropological and politico-economic reasons that we need not rehash here inform the view that for the sub-region of Central Africa, the most appropriate path to pursue, is the 'weapons for development' option. It may then be pertinent to state at this juncture that practical disarmament can only be most effective when it addresses all major concerns of peace and security in a given society in an integrated manner.<sup>25</sup> In other words, what are the reasons that make individuals and groups desire to acquire and use guns? Obviously, simply collecting weapons cannot adequately address these issues. Our simple model above advance reasons as to why individuals want to own weapons. What will make individuals and groups want to give up these weapons? Hence the issue of weapons collection is inextricably linked to addressing chronic underdevelopment and poverty, deprivation

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army forces in the southern neighbourhoods of Brazzaville, about 80,000 people have left Makelekele and Bacongo towards other areas of the city..." Hence, one needs to question if what actually transpired was simply as a result of a misconceived forceful attempt at weapons collection.

<sup>24</sup> Gramsh, a district 100 kilometers South of Tirana in Albania has been the beneficiary of a UNDP pilot project that linked weapons collection to development projects that benefit the community (See van der Graaf and Sami Faltas, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> For an understanding of the concept of human security, see for instance Sverre Lodgaard (2000).

and exclusion and lack of democracy and democratic governance structures. These situations are prevalent in the sub-region of central Africa.

This brings us back to the Malian experience, and why it remains, so far, one of the most successful practical disarmament projects in Africa.<sup>26</sup> It also highlights the problems that practical disarmament in the Central Africa sub-region encounter. These are:

- authoritarian regimes but weak states;
- administrative over-centralization;
- the suppression of civil society and civil liberties
- socio-economic neglect and chronic lack of development;
- lack of employment opportunities;
- poverty; and
- the widespread perception that the governments in these states are corrupt.

Hence, the State lacks power as well as legitimacy, both of which are essential to weapons control. These multidimensional problems therefore also require multidimensional approaches that are aimed at resolving them. Successful practical disarmament in these states will necessarily be linked not only to political reform, but also to the implementation of targeted development projects with a view to creating sustainable income generation opportunities, which require external development assistance. Most of the governments in the region are unable and often unwilling to undertake the broad range of reforms that could create the enabling environment, which would facilitate practical disarmament. The role of the international donor community is crucial if it could proactively push for the implementation of appropriate policies through broad consultation with various stakeholders. So far, the perception is often that the agenda the multilateral donor community is pushing is not necessarily in the interests of countries in the region. The Malian experience remains illuminating in several respects, not so much because of the quantity of weapons collected but because it created the atmosphere for continued weapons collection, and most importantly, the government remains committed to attaining

Power and  
Legitimacy

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<sup>26</sup> For the situation in Mali, particularly in the North, prior to the implementation of the post-conflict disarmament in 1996, see van der Graaf and Poulton (2001).

sustainable peace and democratic governance. It also demonstrated the circumstances in which successful weapons collection was not only viable but that this could be done within the context of development facilitation. It showed the most appropriate strategy to adopt for micro-disarmament under similar circumstances. In this regard, the international community, western governments and international development organizations need to impress upon the governments of the sub-region of Central Africa the desirability and necessity for a multi-dimensional and all-inclusive approach to practical disarmament within the broad context of individual and collective security.

Perhaps it needs to be underscored here that practical disarmament can only be considered successful in the long term only if it is accompanied by measures designed to strictly control weapons supplies and reduce the demand for them. In essence, small arms producing countries in the North that remain the largest supplier of these weapons to sub-Saharan Africa need to go beyond current measures at regulating the trade to measures that progressively and substantially curtail production altogether.<sup>27</sup>

Our understanding of *Phase II* practical micro-disarmament therefore indicate that even with all its apparent shortcomings, so far, in terms of the quantity of arms collected, the most successful practical disarmament projects are those that involve the broad participation of civic organizations and the population in general. Individuals and groups within the society often hold these arms and weapons in the first place.

In the Central Africa region the population could be accessed and mobilized through several organizations and institutions. It is important to point out that no one institution or organization could rally everybody, neither should this be desirable. It is also important to point out that rallying everyone is not achievable. It is however desirable to have as broad a base of organizations, institutions and individuals in support of, and working towards disarmament since this guards against perceptions of exclusion, in a way. Simply put, confidence-building measures are essential for the success of any practical disarmament effort. This is what Faltas (2001: 90) describes as the failure of the CAR experience since the weapon collection program did not contribute to a general feeling of security in the population. It is not surprising then that the CAR soon reverted

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<sup>27</sup> A discussion of supply-side measures that could help in stemming the flow of weapons to sub-Saharan Africa is beyond the scope of this paper.

to political and military crisis beginning from the failed coup attempt in 2001. The failed coup attempt also highlighted the ease in which illegal arms are moved through borders and the destabilizing uses to which they are put. Hence, it is essential that practical disarmament enjoy the broad support of the population.

Given the ability of various religious bodies and denominations to communicate with and mobilize their adherents it is imperative that they part of any disarmament process. They tend to be more effectively and physically present everywhere and in particular, in remote areas and often remain far more credible than the state. Indeed, from the perspective of peace building and micro-disarmament, groups reluctant to disarm would rather trust such organizations than the state. As such it is imperative that micro-disarmament be managed nationally through an independent outfit specifically created for the purpose, and with very strong civil society representation.

Another factor that determines outcome is the organizational structure that is put in place to successfully implement a weapons collection program. A degree of specialized expertise is required for various stages of the weapons collection and/or destruction program. It is necessary to have a coordinating organ and clear definition and distribution of functions and roles for all participating structures. One cannot overstate the political and oftentimes-legislative mechanisms that need to be put in place to build-broad based support for micro-disarmament. These include but are not limited to political liberalization, democratic accountability, security sector transformation and judicial reform. Indeed, there are a plethora of requirements that need to be looked into that are often critical to successful weapons collection programs. These include but are not limited to clear guidelines and procedures for collecting the weapons, duration of the program, disposal methods and post evaluation.

### *3.2 Traditional Authorities*

Traditional authorities are unavoidable in certain areas of the sub-region if weapons collection is to attain a modicum of success. Indeed they tend to be particularly important in the rural areas that it would be unimaginable to attempt to ignore them as key actors in any weapons collection project. Traditional authorities still wield enormous influence in the rural areas where they are often referred to as auxiliaries of the administration. Indeed in certain circumstances they have been responsible for fueling conflicts. In Cameroon for instance, it is widely held that highway armed banditry in the Northern region is sponsored by some of the very powerful traditional rulers largely because of the material

benefits to be derived therein. It only make sense then to engage them in disarmament efforts, since this makes them part of the solution rather than remaining part of the problem. This often requires dialogue and education as well. Besides, in certain areas, like in the North West Province of Cameroon for instance, we can learn and benefit from the knowledge of the traditional authorities, where they have been able to regulate the acquisition and use of traditional weapons such as dane guns through traditional regulatory mechanisms that also employ a wide range of traditional sanctions.

### *3.3 The International Community and NGOs*

## Civil Society

The element of trust is also very important. Individuals would only be willing to give up their weapons if they have a certain degree of assurance that they would be protected, or not be prosecuted for illegal possession of firearms in the first place. The criminal use of small arms and light weapons is now an acute problem in the sub-region of Central Africa (e.g. Chad, Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc). The strategy employed by the state thus far in combating armed criminality in this region could best be termed fire-brigade approach since rather than anticipating needs, the state seems to be reacting to the situation. Hence, the reason why its attempts at combating growing armed criminality in urban and rural areas as typified by its tactics in Chad, the CAR, the Northern regions of Cameroon and Nigeria have been met with both national and international outcry deploring the excesses of security forces.

In a number of these countries, the state exerts little or no influence in a number of areas and regions. The vacuum created has given rise to the development of criminal networks that are often intricately linked to key elements amongst those who control what remains of state apparatus. In fact in certain cases such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it may not even be possible to attain a semblance of peace without a massive UN presence given that countries in the region have become embroiled in the DRC debacle. It would however be naïve to expect criminals to willingly give up the tools of their trade. The problem of hardened-armed criminals would only be resolved through reinforcing the security capacity of the state and transnational collaboration. This includes amongst others, improving on discipline within the security services, and the quality of training. However, this can only be effective if measures are also taken to improve on the economy and provision of social

infrastructure and special programmes to reduce unemployment amongst the youth in whose ranks criminals are recruited.

Potential key players of micro-disarmament in the central Africa sub-region include international NGOs. The demonstrated inability of the state to fulfil its obligations over the past two decades in the region has meant that the interventions of various development-oriented international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have become increasingly important. Indeed in several instances they have remained the lifeline of various post conflict communities. This has led a number of them to become involve with issues of small arms-related insecurity. The concern of some of these organizations has been informed by experiencing the horrors of the use of these weapons in conflict areas, such as in Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, the DRC, etc. Moreover, they have discovered that their work has often been hampered, if not made impossible, in several instances and situations by post-conflict insecurity stemming largely from the misuse of small arms. However, since such issues are invariably political, they have tended to shy away from directly confronting them. These organizations can participate and influence micro-disarmament in several ways: through mainstreaming micro-disarmament in development facilitation projects such that in collaboration with civil society organizations and the state, weapons are handed in exchange for development project; by working with local NGOs on micro-disarmament issues; by influencing the policies of western governments and multilateral development agencies on issues relating to small arms. Various INGOs have taken up aspects of these measures but these need to be reinforced and made more coherent.

Traditional Chiefs

### *3.4 The Role of Business and MNCs*

It is essential that a weapons collection program enjoy broad-based political support. It may be necessary to emphasize that the viability of such a program depends on the financial and other resources committed to it. These resources are usually provided by a variety of sponsors that often include local and/or national governments, international donors, intergovernmental organizations, local businesses, NGOs, community groups, churches, etc. Multinationals doing business in this region and generally in conflict zones need to be actively encouraged, if not obliged to contribute to weapons collection programs and conflict

Business

management in general.<sup>28</sup> This raises questions of interference: but it is better to interfere positively in the open than to allow negative secret interference as in Elf's role in the Congo Republic debacle from 1997 to 1999. The pay-off for such a strategy to these corporations could be enormous. Although it could be argued that the returns are quite high for doing business in an anarchical environment, it could also be pointed out that the dividends for doing business in a stable environment far outweigh the immediate material returns or limited advantages of a chaotic environment even if a lot more has to be made as social investment.

Multinational corporate collaboration in conflict management is not a leap in the dark, as it were; the NGO *International Alert*, with the *Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum* and the New York-based *Council on Economic Priorities* that has done pioneering work on social investing, and together with oil companies operating in the Caspian Sea region, is working to avoid the escalation of violence in future in the region. Back in the sub-region of Central Africa, thanks to the critical activism of local and international NGOs, Exxon-Mobil that is constructing a 1,070-kilometre pipeline project through the heart of Cameroon's littoral rainforest to the Atlantic port town of Kribi, has had to become more receptive towards upholding and promoting social development efforts that benefit the local population (Rosenblum, 2000; Useem, 2002). This giant multi-national corporation might still not be doing enough. But for its own reputation it has been compelled to adopt a new approach to doing business, at least as it concerns this particular project, and to collaborate with NGOs. Thus involving MNCs in weapons collection programs will simply be extending the new innovative ways of managing conflict, which in several instances, they played an important role in fueling in the first place. Besides, we have seen that local businesses have helped fund some of the weapons collection programs in Latin America. No doubt the influence of civil society organizations as we have seen, is playing a critical role in shaping the social and political activities of multinational corporations are expected to assume in the societies where they operate.

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<sup>28</sup> A word of caution here. We are not advocating the kind of collaboration that has resulted to tragic situations as in Nigeria for instance, where Shell's provision of funding for special forces in the oil-rich riverine areas simply facilitated political repression. See for instance, Ken Wiwa (2000); Saro-Wiwa (1991).



#### **4. Conclusion**

What emerges from a reading of the literature generated on micro-disarmament is the overriding concern for improving human security, and curtailing violence and the loss of lives as a result of weapons misuse, stemming largely from the uncontrolled and illegal proliferation of small arms within these societies. A related factor is the impediment that the presence of these weapons poses for development in all its dimensions. This leads us to the question as to what to do such that citizens do not see the need for owning small arms? How do we eliminate the conditions that encourage people to want to own weapons?

There are three pivotal elements that could address these concerns. These are centered on:

Systematic destruction of stockpiles of small arms is one of the major issues that need to be tackled in order to drastically curb the quantity of surplus weapons that keep finding their way and are being recycled in the conflict regions of Africa. Most analysts agree that the distinction between legal and illegal transaction is rather blurred. Moreover most of the weapons that get into the illicit circuit often start off as legal transfers. Besides, rogue states will continue to act beyond the pale of the law regardless of the robustness of whatever international conventions that are enacted. Thus a core component of the multidimensional approach to tackling the problem of small arms proliferation and the nefarious consequences of their misuse, is implementing effective controls that drastically limit small arms transfers and availability to sub-Saharan Africa.

This also requires that producer countries should go beyond simply becoming more open and transparent with information regarding the export of small arms. At the moment, this is still not the case. In this regard, the Wassenaar Arrangement could serve as a pivotal mechanism in conjunction with national and regional policies for not only regulating but working towards eliminating the flow of small arms and light weapons to sub-Saharan Africa, since most of the participating countries are also the leading arms suppliers to the region.<sup>29</sup> Failure to do this, and under the current

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<sup>29</sup> Except for China and Israel, the other major small arms and light weapons producers that make substantial exports to sub-Saharan Africa are amongst the 33 countries that are in the Wassenaar Arrangement. Established in 1996 by its 33 founding members as a multilateral export control regime, with the aim of contributing to 'regional and international security and stability by promoting transparency and

Good  
Governance

dispensation in sub-Saharan Africa, weapons collection will remain a Sisyphean exercise. It is in the same vein that effective micro-disarmament cannot afford to ignore the link between big business and violence in the Central Africa sub-region.<sup>30</sup> The operations of multi-national corporations could be and need to be made more transparent. This should go along with developing binding and enforceable codes of conduct that should compel these corporations to act more responsibly in their host countries. Doubtless, this demands a break with previous thinking, particularly in countries in the North that see the production and trade in arms as legitimate, and in the South, where the development of the military has been regarded as part of the necessary accoutrement for the postcolonial modern state.

Another key factor is encouraging democratic governance and political accountability. We had earlier posited that individuals and groups do not embrace violence simply because they are poor. The causes of violence in the sub-region are to be found in the presence of authoritarian regimes, decades of misrule, lack of accountability and corruption. These factors have helped to widen the socio-economic gap between the economic and political elite and the ever-growing mass of deprived poor. The suppression of civil rights, frustrations inherent in the feeling of exclusion and alienation often lead to ethnic, communal and political violence. The presence of modern weapons often makes such conflicts very deadly. In the Northern region of Cameroon for instance, the ever-increasing manipulation of ethnicity with the advent of multi-party politics in 1990 and the consequent exacerbation of

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greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use (i.e. has both civil and military uses) goods and technologies' so as to prevent the destabilizing accumulations of these items. The Wassenaar Arrangement establishes lists of items for which member countries are to apply restrictive export controls. However responsibility for implementation lies with national governments. The activities of the Wassenaar Arrangement are coordinated by its permanent secretariat based in Vienna, Austria, although it is named after a suburb of The Hague in the Netherlands.

<sup>30</sup> The nefarious role a number of multinationals have played in instigating and fueling conflicts in the central Africa sub-region, and where in certain instances they have provided arms to warring factions such as in the Congo Republic (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, and Angola, has been well documented by a number of organizations and authors. See for instance: Jakkie Cilliers (2001); Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, (1998); Indra de Soysa, (2000).

ethnic conflict amongst for instance, the Kotokos and the Shuwa Arabs has also led to the demand and misuse of small arms.<sup>31</sup>

The suppression of civil society has meant that peaceful ways of expressing grievances and dissent are limited when and where they are possible. Meanwhile the state often spends large amounts of money trying to root out dissent. The security apparatus is thus not oriented to combating crime in society and indeed elements within the security forces often participate or are accomplices to criminals in the society. Cameroon again remains a good example where research found out that most of the sponsors of armed criminal activities in the principal cities of the country are junior and middle level officers within the security and military forces. It was ascertained that erring soldiers, gendarmes or the police either work closely with bandits or are part of gangs and provide most of the modern weapons. It was also established that at least about 75 per cent of firearms used in crime within the city of Douala and its environs are provided by elements from the police, gendarmerie or military.<sup>32</sup>

Regime change in this instance is often only possible through the recourse to arms, and since successor regimes behave no better because of similar reasons, the vicious circle continues. This implies that for an inherent change in the nature of these regimes external pressure remains critical. Here too, the role of international non-governmental organizations in lobbying and pressuring western governments to adopt the right policy mix and apply appropriate pressure on these governments remains instrumental in bringing about change towards the right direction. However, the deficit of political goodwill where private agendas often shroud public rhetoric to the contrary has to be transcended before any meaningful progress could be made on this issue.

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<sup>31</sup> To understand this phenomenon within the politics of Northern Cameroon, see for instance, Ibrahim Mouiche (2000); also, Collectif (1992).

<sup>32</sup> This dynamic link between the activities of the security forces and violent criminal activities in Cameroon has been in Atanga (forthcoming).

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