

create casualties where and when intended. Their proper use should create very few collateral casualties. New developments are making small arms and their ammunition more efficient and thus more discriminate in their effect. This does not, however, mean there will be fewer casualties. SALW, like all weapons, are merely inanimate objects – it is the person operating the weapon who is ultimately responsible for the damage created. New and very discriminate SALW in the hands of indiscriminate users have the potential to effectively create more casualties than their predecessors. With few exceptions, these weapons are by and large easier for all to use – be they men, women or youths. There is little to suggest that the weapons entering military and law enforcement inventories or presently under R & D require any more control than those which they are replacing, assuming appropriate controls already exist. The problem remains by and large the huge inventories of older SALW that are already beyond the purview of responsible governments or are being circulated by irresponsible state and non-state actors.

Global Resolution

While regional and local initiatives to SALW issues are welcome and indeed probably easier to obtain agreement on and implement, a global approach is preferable for a number of reasons. Without the involvement of major manufacturing states on all continents, supply constrained from one area may simply shift to another region. There is no question that the majority of SALW circulating in areas of recent and current conflict originated in Europe and North America. State subsidies, economies of scale, productivity and the geo-politics of the day gave NATO countries and former Warsaw Pact states a decided advantage in the production of such weapons and the wherewithal to distribute them. Enhanced controls that attempt to deny (or have the potential to deny) SALW to states and groups outside of Europe and North America may encourage states from the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Africa to fill the void through production increases in those countries already in possession of such a capability, shift production from current states to new states, or encourage states that do not produce SALW to begin manufacturing. Western developed states cannot solve this issue by themselves.

As a final note to SALW issues both current and future, attempts to address the symptoms without considering the causes may only serve to check or mutate the disease and not cure it. It appears that the brutal Lord's Resistance Army is anticipating a world free of SALW. According to Ayebare Adonia, a journalist with the *East African Newspaper*,

“LRA fighters are quietly collecting spears from the villages in anticipation of the ‘silent world’ ...when this new era arrives all guns in the world will fall silent. Only those who know how to fight with stones, machetes and spears will be victorious”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Ayebare Adonia, “Bullets Puncture Faith of Ugandan Rebels,” *Ottawa Citizen* (18 October 1998), p. F8.