arms watching

integrating small arms and light weapons
into the early warning of violent conflict

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INTERNATIONAL ALERT

Contents

Executive summary

By the mid 1990s it had become clear to the international community that the promise of a post-cold war world free of conflict was not going to be fulfilled. The intra-state violence in Bosnia, Rwanda, South Africa, Mali, El Salvador, Albania, Mexico, and a host of other states meant that preventing, monitoring, and resolving armed conflict was still a major challenge to the international community.

In response to the continuation and changing nature of conflict, particularly complex and violent humanitarian crises resulting from these armed conflicts, the issue of early warning and its role in conflict prevention grew in importance. Actors at all levels of the international community, including academics, began to develop indicators and warning systems in an effort to predict, prevent, prepare and, in the worst case, manage these humanitarian crises. The goal was clear: to improve the prediction of the massive flow of refugees fleeing from conflict in order to do a better job of humanitarian relief.

Parallel to this development a similar urgency evolved regarding the tools of violence used in these complex and violent humanitarian crises: small arms and light weapons such as assault rifles, hand grenades, and anti-personnel landmines. Analysis of these same conflicts produced a body of knowledge and action which increasingly demonstrated that the proliferation, accumulation, availability, and misuse of small arms and light weapons is directly linked to the outbreak, escalation, resurgence and lethality of these conflicts.

At the moment there is little interaction between these two bodies of expertise and experience. The goal of this report is to promote the merger of these two fields so that early warning scholars and practitioners can begin to integrate weapons-specific early warning indicators into the important work of modelling and preventing violent conflict.

In the introductory chapter, Edward Laurance of the Monterey Institute of International Studies examines both of these fields in detail, demonstrating how the introduction of weapons-specific indicators could enhance the early warning process to prevent conflicts that lead to humanitarian crises. His chapter develops eighteen indicators that could be used by those working in conflict and conflict-prone areas. After a discussion of the sources for these indicators – military forces, conflict resolution organizations, human rights monitors, humanitarian relief and development personnel, and media – Laurance addresses the early warning and early response debate. While it is true that information was available about weapons build-ups and availability during some of these crises, not enough was done to make more of the international community aware of the human consequences of the lethality and coercive power of these weapons.

The report then presents three area-specific treatments of early warning and small arms and light weapons. The goal of these three case studies is to demonstrate that weapons-specific early warning is already underway in some regions, and has the potential significantly to enhance the early warning and conflict prevention work of NGOs, states, and international organizations.

Sarah Meek of London-based International Alert looks at two very different instances of weapons use in conflict and shows the ways in which, with the benefit of hindsight, an analysis and response system (i.e. early warning) could have been implemented to prevent the subsequent outbreak of violent conflict. The first case is the conflict in the South African province of Kwazulu-Natal, focusing on violence which erupted in the Natal midlands in March 1990, and became known as the Seven Days' War. The second case examines the situation in Angola from late 1994, with the signing of the Lusaka Accord (which was to have ended decades of civil war), to January 1999, by which time full-scale war had resumed. Meek's chapter concludes with some recommendations for turning theory into practice.

Tara Kartha of the Institute for Defence and Strategic Analysis in New Delhi examines early warning and light weapons in five critical cases in South Asia: societal diffusion (Pakistan), proxy wars (Kashmir, Punjab), and weapon flows from the black market (Sri Lanka, Indian north-east). After briefly describing the underlying historical factors behind these conflicts, Kartha discusses in each case how the border and security forces, media, think tanks, and governmental bureaucracies dealt with early warning signs related to weapons. She concludes by developing model structures and processes to improve early warning involving weapons-specific information.

Maria Elena Escobar de Tudyk of the Program for Security and Development at the Monterey Institute of International Studies examines the massacre in the village of Acteal, Chiapas, Mexico, in December 1997. Applying a selection of weapons-specific indicators from the Laurance chapter, Escobar de Tudyk demonstrates that the presence of the media, human rights NGOs and a governmental commission produced a multitude of early warnings of the massacre, carried out by government controlled paramilitaries with military-style weapons, and now the subject of a major international effort.

The report concludes with a brief discussion of why these weapons-specific indicators have not been better utilized and some specific recommendations as to how these important indicators can become a vital part of the early warning process, in theory and in practice. Weapons-specific early warning discussed in this report could serve as the basis for practical work in those areas where early warning is critical. There are major obstacles to inducing NGOs and other personnel in the field to begin making better use of weapons-specific information. The authors of this report are involved with the global effort underway to deal with this issue. We have heard more than one NGO remind us that those with the guns have a great deal of power and may not view kindly the generation and use of weapons information. This is countered by the reality of tens of thousands of innocent civilians killed with these weapons, and the lack of much needed economic, social, and political development due to their availability. At some point, and in some specific place, those seeking to prevent, ameliorate, and resolve conflict will find such information useful. It is only prudent that we continue to develop weapons-specific early warning techniques.

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Monitoring the Flow, Availability and Misuse of Light Weapons: A New Tool for the Early Warning of Violent Conflict

Edward J. Laurance

Introduction

The past few years have seen an explosion of knowledge in two fields which are logically connected but in practice have developed with little synergy. In response to the changing nature of conflict, especially the prevalence of complex and violent humanitarian crises, the issue of early warning and its role in conflict prevention now is centre stage. Major centres of study and policy development have taken up the issue, with much of the generated knowledge reported in two recent books.[1] The Forum on Early Warning and Response, the Centre for Prevention Action of the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict are examples of organizations that have been created to illuminate this issue and develop practical solutions to preventing conflict through better early warning.

Parallel to this development has been an increased focus on the tools being used in these complex and violent humanitarian crises – small arms and light weapons such as assault rifles, hand grenades, and anti-personnel landmines. Academics, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations have established a body of knowledge that demonstrates that the proliferation, accumulation, availability, and misuse of small arms and light weapons are directly linked to the outbreak, escalation, resurgence, and lethality of these conflicts.[2] This knowledge has been accompanied by significant political action by national governments, international organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the European Union, and the formation of NGOs into the International Action Network on Small Arms.[3]

At the moment there is little interaction between these two bodies of expertise. The goal of this report is to foster the merger of these two fields so that early warning scholars and practitioners can begin to integrate weapons-specific early warning indicators into the important work of modelling and preventing violent conflict. The first step is briefly to discuss what is known about the role of weapons proliferation, accumulation, availability, and misuse in the conflict process. This is followed by a brief typology of these indicators and their sources. The report then establishes that very few of these indicators are being used in the significant amount of modelling of early warning that has developed in the past few years. The reasons for this are then clarified as a prelude to some specific recommendations as to how these important indicators can become a more vital part of the early warning process, in theory and in practice.

Integrating weapons-specific early warning into the work of conflict prevention is important for two reasons. First, these indicators will enhance the warning process by providing indicators, improving the ability to prevent conflict. This will be accomplished by providing unambiguous warning of massive casualties from lethal weapons exported to or distributed within areas of tension. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, early warning work can be conducted by the growing number of NGOs, governments, and international organizations which are now beginning to address the effects of these weapons. Such work will provide a motive for these groups, especially NGOs, to integrate their activities and create the political force needed for governments to change the way that they export, import, acquire, distribute, use, and secure these weapons.

The Role of the Tools of Violence in the Conflict Formation Process

The proliferation, accumulation, availability, and misuse of light weapons is associated with the violent conflicts and humanitarian crises which are the subject of the early warning community. This association is gaining acceptance as an important element of international action. The basic logic is as follows:

- Light weapons, not major weapons such as tanks and aircraft, are the primary tools of violence in those conflicts that have plagued the world in the last ten years and are now the focus of the early warning community. They are more readily available to all actors in violent conflicts than at any time in modern history.
- Light weapons by themselves have rarely caused the conflicts in which they are being used, but their ready availability always contributes towards exacerbating and prolonging these conflicts.
- The human cost of violent conflict is highly correlated with the lethality of assault rifles, machine guns, grenades, and other readily available light weapons. One of the major distinguishing characteristics of a humanitarian crisis is the magnitude of civilian suffering. The availability of highly lethal weapons, which can kill or wound hundreds of people in minutes, is a humanitarian crisis waiting to happen.
- All conflicts have well-known root causes, including relative economic deprivation, repression, ethnic rivalries, and competing ideologies. Addressing these root causes takes time and cannot move forward without providing for the security of individuals within the conflict area. A necessary first step is preventing or reducing the possession and misuse of light weapons, which in turn reduces the magnitude of human suffering.
- These weapons not only kill and injure the civilian population, they are also the main tool of intimidation by illegitimate groups and, in many cases, government police and military forces. In these hands their presence is a symbol of repression. They also facilitate the forced and massive dislocation of unarmed civilian populations.

- The International Committee of the Red Cross, and other humanitarian relief organizations, have begun to link the availability of these weapons with violations of international humanitarian law as a strategy of preventing conflict. These weapons are the tools being used in such violations, and are a natural focus of such work. Fewer weapons mean fewer and less damaging violations.

- Short-term weapons-related policies, such as laws and procedures to lower the visibility and possession of military weapons by civilians, or the collection and destruction of such weapons, provide an insecure and frustrated populace with concrete actions that can be seen as the start of the necessarily longer policies of addressing root causes.

- Recent history has shown that dealing with weapons after they have been proliferated, acquired and misused is a very difficult and long-term process.

President A.O. Konare of Mali, whose country recently conducted a successful disarmament campaign as a prelude to the return of political stability and a renewal of economic development projects, put it this way: "This belief in disarmament does not proceed from idealism, or from naiveté. The best strategy for prevention of armed conflict is to eliminate the means of violence."[4]

There is also agreement on the effects of the excessive availability and misuse of these weapons.

- The use of these weapons increases the destructiveness and lethality of conflicts. Individuals and groups who politically disagree more easily resort to violence instead of resolving conflicts peacefully. Large accumulations of light weapons, especially assault rifles and hand grenades, increase the lethality of conflict when compared to weapons such as handguns and knives. This leads to greater numbers of civilian casualties and refugees, which overwhelm health care systems and in general disrupt the economic, social and political development of the country.

- The second basic effect is the increase in criminal or non-political acts committed with these military-style weapons: armed robberies, hijacking, terrorism, stealing of livestock, drug trading, and smuggling. The criminal elements in a state are in some cases better armed, in quantity and/or quality, than the legitimate security forces of the state. This also enhances the proliferation of agents of violence, including drug dealers and criminal gangs. Rival groups within a state race to achieve parity in weapons inventories.

- Third, the level of violence promulgated by these weapons is so high that citizens are forced to arm themselves, either personally or through private security organizations. Additionally, the availability and use of military-style weapons emboldens the disaffected. Faced with little or no prospects for economic or social development, desperate citizens opt for acquiring a weapon for individual survival, basic needs, or commercial purposes. The result is an overall increase in the number of weapons in the society.

- Finally, the availability and use of this class of weapon threatens peace-building. Reformed or reconstituted security forces in states making the transition to more democratic forms of government often revert to repression when faced with a surge in criminal activity or intra-state violence. It becomes more difficult to conduct development projects and programmes, leading to a decline in economic aid from donors who question how their funds can achieve goals in a violent environment. Even when a United Nations peacekeeping operation is successful, the post-conflict reconstruction process is imperilled by violence with this class of weapon. While eliminating the root causes of the violence would require socio-economic development, effective democracy, and a credible law and order system, these developments take time and are harder to maintain in an environment where light weapons are available.

The Utility of Weapons-Specific Early Warning Indicators

There are four aspects of the light weapons problem that can be shown to be highly correlated with the outbreak, escalation, resurgence, and lethality of violence: proliferation, availability, accumulation, and misuse. Observing these four aspects as event streams will provide important indicators and early warning of violent conflict and the subsequent humanitarian effects described above. Perpetrators of violence precede their efforts with an arms build-up. In most cases these build-ups take enough time to allow for an early warning process to work.

Operational Indicators

The following operational indicators are illustrative of those phenomena known to be highly correlated with violent conflict and in fact have been noted in the initial research which specifically links light weapons and early warning.[5] They are summarized and inform the remainder of the discussion in this paper.

Conflict area indicators

Much can be learned about the escalating nature of conflict by analysing the effects of the misuse of light weapons. Analysis of weapon-related injuries and deaths can reveal the type of weapon, ammunition, explosive or grenade being used. The victims can often provide eye-witness accounts of the types of weapons being used. Crime reports often contain evidence of the use of a particular type of weapon, by common criminals and organized non-state actors, which give clues as to a new phase of conflict and the organizations responsible for the violence.

Monitoring and analysis of other activities may also yield information on weapons-specific indicators, for example:

- The location, collection, and disposition of arms collected in post-conflict peace operations needs to be monitored and recorded.
- Insecure arsenals, police stations, and other weapon storage facilities have been the source of weapons for participants in armed violence. A closer monitoring of these facilities, and especially any weapons thefts, could signal the start of an arms build-up.
- By its nature corruption is difficult to monitor. However, information on corruption among officials responsible for weapons security would give some warning of illicit arms trafficking and potentially destabilizing build-ups.
- Since so much of the trade in these weapons is illegal, monitoring black market prices of weapons can give a good indication of the magnitude and availability of supply.
- Monitoring weapons flows in border zones between the countries of warring factions could reveal an impending build-up of weapons. Also, citizens of border regions may be very involved in the buying, selling, and storing of weapons for those intermediaries and non-state actors who will fuel the conflict.
- Violent attacks carried out with modern military weapons (e.g. hand grenades rather than home-made bombs) are an indicator that arms are plentiful and destabilizing. The monitoring of the weapons used by gangs would also provide a warning as to the increased availability of military-style weapons.
- The use of child soldiers increasingly means a plentiful supply of assault rifles, as these are the types of weapons most often used by children in combat.
- In many intra-state conflicts a shift from direct fire weapons (e.g. rifles) to indirect and less accurate fire (e.g. mortars) normally results in the direct targeting of social sectors (e.g. market places) and civilians themselves. Reports of the flow or availability of these indirect fire weapons indicates that the conflict may soon escalate and produce significantly greater casualties among the civilian population.
- An upsurge in the legitimate acquisition of weapons by individual citizens is often a predictor of violence in a society, since many of these weapons are then stolen by gangs and drug dealers. Additionally, many civilians are ill equipped to store, secure, and use these weapons safely and responsibly.
- The sudden display in public of military-style weapons, such as assault rifles or a belt full of hand grenades, may indicate a shift in political power.
- Government programmes that distribute weapons to poorly-trained citizens or paramilitary organizations are a good indicator that the potential for uncontrolled violence is increasing.
- Effective monitoring of the demobilization of former combatants and redundant military personnel could provide early warning of their dissatisfaction and probable return to the way of violence of their former profession.

External indicators

The post-cold war era has been marked by the creation of an extensive surplus of small arms and light weapons. States have been reluctant to destroy this surplus, choosing instead to export it, even to zones of conflict. A closer monitoring of this surplus and its disposition would give advanced warning of the arrival of excessive arms into a region or country.

Most lists of early warning indicators mention external support as a key factor in the potential for escalation of conflict. External support from a country with extensive arms supply capacity and experience would be an early indication of arms supplies. Other activities which could yield information include:

- The monitoring of illicit commodities networks should also include watching for arms shipments, as the two are often associated.
- Unlike the weapons themselves, which can be produced in a conflict region or re-circulated from existing surplus stocks in the region, ammunition for the most part must be mass produced using precision tools. Because of this, it is normally acquired from arms-producing states outside the region. Detection of excessive ammunition production and export would be a critical indicator of impending armed conflict, since no military operation can succeed without adequate ammunition supplies, even with adequate numbers of weapons.

Reliable and publicly available indicators

Davies and Gurr posit that there are two prerequisites "for persuading those in a position to act that they should do so". The first is more reliable warnings, analytically derived and communicated in a manner that allows their reliability to be evaluated. A second prerequisite is the use of primarily open sources so that the early warnings "can be made more publicly available, and hence provide the basis for more broad-based discussion and collaborative decision-making".[6] During the cold war weapons-specific data could rarely meet these two criteria, as the two superpowers, their allies, and their clients put a premium on control and secrecy on all things military. The character of post-cold war conflicts has changed, now being marked by significant civilian casualties, the collapse of governmental structures, and massive quantities of lethal weapons available for acquisition by all parties. One of the ironies of a deteriorating pre-conflict situation is that the actors often feel they have impunity, thereby allowing observers to collect data on weapons flows and visibility not available in normal situations.[7]

Indicators and conflict phases

The growing volume of research and practical work on early warning divides indicators into two major categories: those related to root or underlying causes, and those related to more immediate effects, variously termed operational, trigger, and accelerating indicators. Weapons-specific indicators fit neatly into both of these two categories. For example, West European and former Warsaw Pact states have exported to conflict zones a great deal of the light weapons and ammunition made surplus by the post-cold war downsizing. Non-governmental organizations are now pressing NATO governments to pay attention to how the new NATO members, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, cope with the surplus of light weapons that will be made available as they switch to NATO-standard weapons and ammunition. NATO has the power to allocate resources to destroy this surplus and prevent any of it from being exported.

There is also a consensus that there are three stages of crisis development: structural tension, escalation, and crisis.[8] The above observation on an emerging NATO surplus in its three new members is an example of the background conditions and risk assessments called for in the first stage. Another would be the global capacity to produce ammunition for conflict zones. For the most part actors in a conflict demand high quality ammunition produced mainly at a finite number of ammunition factories in industrialized countries. Monitoring such factories or their exported versions could contribute to a risk assessment. The problem, as with many risk assessments, is that at a very early stage arms flows can be legitimate behaviour designed to assist states to defend themselves, a right under international law.

It is the second stage, where dynamic factors or accelerators come into play, that weapons-specific information is more critical to early warning. It is at this stage that the tensions detected in the first stage can be quickly converted to violence, especially with the acquisition of arms, the critical ingredient for controlling and terrorizing populations and inflicting the massive casualties that are the very definition of a humanitarian crisis. Weapons information is also critical in the third stage characterized by trigger incidents. In Albania, for example, one of the trigger incidents signalling the deterioration of an already unstable situation in the spring of 1997 was the opening up of the country's arsenals and releasing more than 500,000 weapons to the population at large.[9]

Sources of Weapons-Specific Early Warning Indicators

The above indicators can be and are generated by a variety of organizations. The types of information which could be gathered by these organizations are suggested below.

Military and conflict resolution organizations

- National military intelligence organizations have as one of their basic missions the collection of weapons-specific information. They know the types and characteristics of weapons that could predict their impact on a potential conflict.

- The post-cold war era has seen an increased use of multinational peacekeeping and peace-building forces deployed to actual and potential conflict zones. All of these organizations have mandates, only some of which require the submission of weapons-related early warning information. Irrespective of mandates, the early warning of arms flows and other weapons-specific indicators is part of the culture of the military personnel who staff such operations.
- Military observer and fact-finding missions have a specific mandate to collect military information. Also, they are staffed with military experts.[10] As a result of the information gathered by Human Rights Watch in the Great Lakes region,[11] the United Nations formed a Commission of Inquiry to verify the alleged violations of the arms embargo put in place after the genocide in 1994. Even a few officials on the ground were able to verify the violations.

Service-providing organizations

- Many non-military governmental bureaucracies, governments in the conflict region to organizations external to the region, are deployed in the field. They have the capacity to give early warning. These organizations are connected by communications networks that could be utilized for this purpose. This is especially true for personnel from donor states operating in states where the potential for violent armed conflict is high.
- One of the most important sources of weapons-specific indicators is those organizations providing services related to governance and human development, whose work is being negatively affected by the availability and misuse of light weapons. The literature is extensive on the role of NGOs in conflict situations and the experience gained could be developed into effective monitoring practices.[12]
- The public health community at all levels is in possession of significant information about light weapons and their effects.
- Networks that already provide monitoring services for early warning should be encouraged to include the monitoring of weapons-related indicators into their work where it is feasible.

Media

The media are often the only providers of weapons-specific indicators. They are usually more willing to take the risks necessary to gather such information. On the other hand, they are rarely in an area long enough to gather the steady stream of indicators needed to develop meaningful early warning indicators. For example, they may write about the black market value of assault rifles, but this is usually a one-time observation designed to gain the attention of readers. But journalists do see much more than they write about and could contribute such information to an early warning system.

Current Status and Prospects for Using Weapons-Specific Early Warning Indicators

Weapons-specific early warning indicators are observable and could contribute to the prevention and resolution of violent conflict associated with humanitarian crises. In this section of the report, the evidence from recent research and practice of early warning is reviewed. Weapons-specific indicators are rarely used, and some indicators that are used lack validity as conflict predictors.

Weapons-specific indicators have rarely found their way into the research and practice of early warning, at least as reported in the various recently published compendia.[13] This is true even for the so-called accelerators or triggers to conflict, where weapons proliferation, accumulation, availability, and misuse have historically been a source of useful early warning of impending inter-state conflict. However, the military dimension is not altogether neglected. The well-developed United Nations Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) does list "arms inflows" as one of its indicators. The FEWER list of indicators includes "growth in illicit trade." But little work has been done to operationalize these indicators for use by observers who could transmit such warnings.

The Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) list of indicators for the Great Lakes programme has a category called "Security Expenditure & the Proliferation of Arms".[14] One indicator in this category is "Changes in security budgets".[15] Use of monetary indicators can be problematic on several grounds. First, over time expenditure data may give observers a clue as to state intentions. But it would take several years to establish a trend given the procurement cycles accompanying such activity. Second, expenditure data is rarely a valid surrogate measure for arms build-ups and other weapons-specific activities important for early warning. This was true even for industrialized countries during the cold war. For those states in areas experiencing humanitarian crises, such data are even more unreliable. Normal procurement procedures have given way to the new reality of inexpensive and re-circulating weapons as a major source of supply, even to governments. But there is a third and even more critical reason to question the utilization of monetary indicators. That is the unreliable nature of the data produced. Some of this is due to lack of capacity to collect data but it is also true that deception becomes a major tool of security for states threatened by neighbours and internal non-state actors. In developing the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, for example, asking states voluntarily to supply monetary values of weapons exports and imports was a non-starter.[16]

Some of the various indicator lists include the general phenomenon of the formation of non-state actors who are prone to violence. For example, PIOOM's Master List of Potential and 'Good Prospect' Domestic Conflict (De-)Escalation Indicators includes "violence-prone groups begin to mobilize (formation of private militias; paramilitary groups)".[17] The difference between their mobilization and the level of violence actually perpetrated can often be the type and number of weapons these groups acquire. Indicators of availability (e.g. unguarded arsenals, arms depots) could provide the type

of warning needed to prevent such groups from acquiring the type of weapon that can turn sporadic murders and assassinations into massacres. In the town of Acteal, in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, 45 people, mainly women and children, were massacred by a group armed with assault rifles and other sophisticated weapons in December 1997. Evidence provided by eyewitnesses, made possible by a communication network established by human rights monitoring NGOs, revealed that sporadic violence and repression using highly lethal military weapons marked the run-up to this massacre.[18] But these 45 people were killed in just a few minutes, an act designed to make an impact on the victims and their supporters. This impact would not have been possible without the government-supplied assault rifles and ammunition specifically supplied to a paramilitary group the previous day.[19]

PIOOM makes an important distinction between their work and that of war researchers, such as those who produce conflict data for the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), who count battle-related deaths. "By concentrating on 'battle-related' deaths war researchers have, as one example, listed Burundi as only a minor armed conflict while already more than 150,000 have been killed in this genocide." PIOOM also takes into account the rise in common crime in post-conflict situations.[20] In many situations a post-conflict environment can escalate as common crime takes on a political tone when disaffected former combatants do not benefit from the peace, and restart the armed conflict. The wider definition of casualties seems appropriate in assessing early warning indicators.

Major advances have been made in using event data, machine- and human-coded, to provide early warning systems, models and mechanisms.[21] This approach has a long history[22] and has most often employed open sources such as the Reuters news service. As such the number of events involving weapons are low, due to under-reporting and the lack of attention paid to monitoring weapons-specific events. This latter problem is most likely due to the larger trend being addressed in this report, that is, up to now the proliferation, accumulation, availability and misuse of weapons *per se* have not been viewed as causally linked to violent conflict. Monitoring the regional press can generate a significant number of weapons-specific events.[23]

Why Haven't Weapons-Specific Early Warning Indicators been Utilized?

Early warning has not been effective either because it did not exist, or because it was not heeded by an organization that could have used it to prevent conflict. This is also the case for weapons-specific indicators. As one example, Hilterman concludes that the work of Human Rights Watch in the Great Lakes region of Africa in 1994-96 was adequate warning. In January 1994 Human Rights Watch issued a report that documented the influx of weapons from France, South Africa, and Egypt. "Our report received scant attention despite the news of escalating strife and disturbing information that radio stations were broadcasting incendiary appeals to exterminate the Tutsi… We are doing our jobs in gathering information and bringing it to public attention. But what does it take to stir the powers into action?"[24]

But lack of political will is an over-simplified answer to the larger question of why weapons-specific early warning indicators are rarely generated, let alone heeded. The Arms Division of Human Rights Watch pioneered the generation of weapons-specific indicators through field research. But it is very new and practised by very few other NGOs. But if the purpose of this report is to promote the generation and use of such indicators, some serious challenges must be addressed.

The conflicts of greatest concern to the international community use weapons that are small, light (can be carried by one or at the most two persons), cheap, and require little or no maintenance or support systems. One clandestine flight can transport thousands of these weapons and the requisite ammunition. In short, the challenges start with the difficulty of observation associated with the commodities themselves, especially when compared with the tanks and aircraft normally the charge of military intelligence. The lack of transparency associated with the transfer and accumulation of weapons of this class also complicates collection efforts.

Governments have the sovereign right to acquire weapons, especially the types being used in the conflicts now raging, for their self-defence. That is why there is little transparency for this class of weapon. It gets to the core of most countries' national security, unlike nuclear weapons, which few countries have in the first place. Also, it is the first reason given by many analysts as to the ineffectiveness of early warning.[25] Further, non-state actors are also protected by a basic tenet of international law stating that oppressed peoples may arm for the purpose of throwing off their oppressors. Granted, there is always wide disagreement among the parties involved as to who is a terrorist, liberator, defender of a sovereign state or oppressor. But in every effort by the international community to establish norms and policies related to preventing the negative effects of weapons, these two norms are the first to be put forth by a variety of parties.[26] This also hampers any effort to establish an early warning system that includes weapons-specific indicators.

A major obstacle to implementing a system of weapons-specific indicators is that observing and reporting such indicators may be dangerous to the collectors. Humanitarian relief, human rights and development practitioners have learned first hand how sensitive governments are to the revelation of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law associated with armed conflict. The topic of arms accumulations and flows is even more sensitive, especially since every state has the sovereign right to acquire arms to defend itself. The line between defence and offence, even genocide, can be very thin, as was seen in Rwanda. Since much of the trade is illicit, and often associated with illicit trade in drugs and other commodities, gatherers may well find that delving into this type of information will be very dangerous.

The vast array of types and models of weapons being used may hamper the collection of reliable data. Some effort will have to be made to develop military expertise to the degree not usually found among the gatherers who operate in conflict zones. Armed with 'what' becomes an important aspect of weapons-specific early warning indicators.

The author's experience in promoting the generation and use of such indicators for conflict prevention reveals that in most cases early warning practitioners and researchers remain sceptical of the role of weapons *per se* in the outbreak, escalation, resurgence, and lethality of violence. This is understandable since the organizations best placed to observe an unfolding conflict are those associated with the root causes of conflict. Weapons are still seen by many as instruments and means, not causal instruments. In addition, the nature of the work of these organizations usually means that there are higher priorities than noting the type of weapon being used.[27]

The process of collecting data on the proliferation, accumulation, and availability of weapons was developed and remains a critical part of intelligence gathering for formal interstate armed conflict, normally conducted by organized militaries with troops in uniform. With the upsurge in intrastate conflict, military forces have been slow to add to their expertise the effects of using weapons for such non-military goals as the targeting of civilians. Ascertaining the availability of weapons always relied on an analysis of the enemy's supply lines. Small arms and light weapons rarely need such traditional supply lines. In current conflict environments, analysis requires such activities as spot checking illegal arms markets for prices and interviewing residents of border areas.

There is the general early warning problem of false triggers, the sending up of information that may not be true. Organizations are reluctant to bear the costs of false triggers, such as the risk to gatherers, money expended, and the opportunity cost given other priorities. "There are many more prior indicators than there are ensuing events; many warning signals simply fizzle and seemingly impending events work themselves out… What is needed is tornado warnings that announce tornadoes but also that do not announce non-tornadoes."[28] This would seem to be less of an objection for weapons-specific indicators, since in most areas of tension, even in a post-conflict situation, weapons hang around. They remain an indicator of potential. Expending resources to monitor their locations, types, and availability would seem to be valuable.

Bureaucracies are often cited when explaining why early warnings do not result in a response. But bureaucracies can also affect the generation of the early-warning indicators. Krumm notes, for example, that in the United States the humanitarian response agencies are designed to react to crises. "Their rules of engagement are predicated on having received a disaster declaration by another government or an emergency appeal from an international organization. They have no mandate to prevent humanitarian emergencies, even though they are dramatically impacted by them."[29] At the international organization level, the mandate problem is well known. An example of how this affects collecting data, occurred while the author was the consultant to the United Nations Experts Panel on Small Arms. The panel was tasked with identifying the types of weapons used in conflicts where the United Nations was involved. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations was unwilling to task the various operations under its command for these data, for fear that this would appear to be intelligence gathering, a task not in their mandate.[30] Significant problems exist in field operations as well.[31]

Early Warning and Early Response

This report shows that the generation of weapons-specific early warning indicators is in its infancy. This is the major reason that this type of warning is not being used in practice or in the various research efforts underway. However, this report also indicates that there is a multitude of practical indicators that can be generated from a variety of sources. Therefore, it is only prudent also to ask the question that is the subject of much concern in the field of early warning, one asked earlier by Hilterman in regard to the warnings provided by Human Rights Watch. Given weapons-specific early warning, why do governments and others who could act ignore these warnings? Several conceptual frameworks can be used to help answer this question.

George and Holl present several factors that explain why warnings are ignored. The first of these is the signal to noise ratio concept, i.e. the policymaker cannot receive the weapons-specific information due to so much other information. The heretofore secret nature of weapons-specific information makes this a particularly relevant explanation. Another factor explaining the lack of response is the costs and rewards of responding. "Early warning does not necessarily make for easy response. On the contrary, warning often forces policymakers to confront difficult or unpalatable decisions. Taking available warning seriously always carries the 'penalty' of deciding what to do about it."[32] Certainly this factor is applicable when explaining a lack of response to weapons-specific early warning. In the case of Rwanda, the response options to the weapons-specific warnings were indeed costly. Responding to a message from the head of the United Nations operation that assault rifles had arrived at the airport in large quantities and were being unloaded or being distributed presented many unpalatable options. The experience we have with collecting weapons, even in societies where there is a consensus that the weapons have reached a destabilizing level, indicates the difficulty of such tasks. The same is true for the experience with arms embargoes. The fact is that acquiring weapons, by states and non-state actors, is a decision not taken lightly, and policymakers know that reversing the process is a high-cost option.

Schrodt and Gerner provide three basic reasons why warning are not heeded: cognitive, bureaucratic, and political.[33] This typology can also be usefully applied to weapons-specific warnings and is only touched upon briefly here. Cognitive constraints are those related to the inability of an analyst or policymaker to correctly process information that they receive. The literature on the correlation between arms build-ups and the outbreak of conflict is filled with such examples. As stated earlier, much of this problem is due to analogies developed when weapons-specific information related to more conventional interstate armed conflict between structured military forces. The arrival of a transport plane full of assault rifles in this case is a more normal event, compared to the current situation where such a warning may foretell a massacre.

A second explanation for the lack of response lies at the bureaucratic level. Schrodt and Gerner focus on two issues specific to early warning of humanitarian crises: the competition between international governmental organization (IGO) early warning efforts and the efforts of national intelligence agencies, and the ambiguity in the information-gathering and operational roles in NGOs. Both are relevant to the task of integrating weapons-specific information into an early warning system. As to the former, the collection by IGOs to date of weapons-specific information confirms their conclusion that "intelligence agencies will consistently attempt to limit access to information and discredit the analysis of the IGOs, thereby limiting their potential impact."[34] As for the second bureaucratic factor, this report has pointed out that NGOs primarily concerned with the delivery of services, not conflict resolution, will find it difficult to add early warning tasks to their work.

Given weapons-specific early warning, who can and should respond? Illustrative examples include:

- United Nations and other multilateral peacekeeping forces have often expanded the operational meaning of their mandates when faced with weapons-specific early warning. In Haiti the US Army participating as part of the UN operation focused first on collecting weapons in the hands of civilians as a precursor to the peace-building phase of their work. The same thing happened in Eastern Slavonia. In El Salvador and Mozambique this task has also fallen to NGOs and civil society.[35]
- Medical teams and others providing services have set up gun-free zones as a proviso for their services.
- Government security forces can respond to warnings of non-state actors in search of weapons by increasing security on arms depots.

There is a downside to early response to weapons-specific early warning. Governments may use this information to further exacerbate the conflict. In the case of the December 1997 massacre in Chiapas, the government did acknowledge that too many weapons were uncontrolled and in the hands of civilians. But their response, collecting such weapons, was one-sided in that only the weapons of the Zapatistas were targeted.

The following case studies illustrate the possibilities, and also the limitations, of collecting information on weapons and how this information can be used as indicators in the generation of early warning.

Putting Theory Into Practice: Light Weapons and Early Warning in Southern Africa

Sarah Meek

Introduction

The 1990s have brought positive and negative together in Southern Africa, often within the same country. Mozambique, which successfully ended a devastating civil war, has also had to cope with the debilitating effects of landmines, unemployed demobilized soldiers and crippling poverty. South Africa, the other success story of the region, is on a daily basis facing the remnants of its apartheid past, and a combination of high crime and violence levels is causing citizens to purchase firearms to protect themselves against armed criminals. Other countries are doing even less well than these. Angola, with the Lusaka Accord in shambles, has returned to full-scale civil war, while the majority of the members of the Southern African Development Community are embroiled in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a war which threatens not only Southern African, but also sub-Saharan African stability, and has the potential to engulf a swath of the continent from east to west in conflict. There is a common denominator in each of these situations: the weapons, most of them portable and easy to maintain, that are killing people, crippling efforts at development and indoctrinating populations into a culture of weapons that has little use for non-violent conflict resolution methods.

Weapons have played an incontrovertible role in conflict, crime, and violence in Southern Africa. As the sophistication of weapons has increased, so have levels of violence, as has been seen in the Kwazulu-Natal province of South Africa. In questioning a decision to ban the carrying of 'traditional' weapons in public areas (spears, *pangas,* etc.) the South African police noted "Almost without exception those who were killed [in political violence] or injured were killed or injured by being shot by firearms. Whatever is said about so-called 'traditional weapons', they did not appear to contribute much to the actual killings and injuries, as the attackers were using more sophisticated weapons."[36] There are, of course, instances were simple knives and machetes can be as deadly as the most sophisticated assault rifle. Rwanda should live on as an example of this. However, given the access to weapons, history suggests the combatants and criminals will continue to use them in acts of crime and violence.[37] In Southern Africa at least three negative traits can be assigned to weapons used in conflict: their contribution to the violence and intensity of conflict; the lasting presence (and effects) these weapons have as they move from conflict to conflict; and the impact they may have upon development in war-torn areas and the security of citizens. In general, the weapons that are being used to these purposes are the light weapons considered in this report. Their characteristics make them well suited to the realities of war in dense jungle or being moved over wide areas. They are relatively light, easy to maintain, and readily available from a list of suppliers both in Africa (through brokers or arms smugglers) or abroad.

The realization has been growing among governments of Southern Africa that weapons have increasingly become responsible, in part, for high levels of fear of crime and violence, especially in South Africa. The region was taken largely unawares in the early 1990s when the first waves of weapons began to move out of Mozambique into the sub-region (again, South Africa was a main recipient but Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and other countries have also felt the effects). Policy responses were slow in coming, and those which have emerged tend to be reactive – trying to deal with the weapons already circulating in the illegal market – than proactive. The exception is a series of joint operations carried out by the Mozambican and South African police services in Mozambique to destroy arms caches *in situ*. To date, more than 300 tons of weapons and 40 tons of ammunition have been destroyed, and more apparently still remains. There is recognition of the need for proactive responses to weapons in the region, and the early warning of conflicts provides one way in which weapons indicators can be incorporated into a pre-conflict response. As is apparent, war is not over for Southern Africa. And so, the use of early warning has more than a theoretical purpose. It may, with due analysis and response, eventually prevent what is today in Angola displacing thousands and killing hundreds.

This case study proposes to look at two very different instances of weapons use in conflict and show the ways in which, with the benefit of hindsight, an analysis and response system (i.e. early warning) could have been implemented to prevent the subsequent outbreak of violent conflict. In South Africa, the province of Kwazulu-Natal provides an example of how the existence, or lack, of weapons may indicate the prospects for violence or peace. A region with a history of brutal political violence, which continues into the present with a recent spate of assassinations and massacres, Kwazulu-Natal is a largely rural province with isolated communities and little effective policing.[38] Violence monitors spread throughout the area in the late 1980s and early 1990s to identify areas of conflict and gather information from residents on political violence. In terms of the typology of conflict in which small arms and light weapons are prevalent[39] the conflict in Kwazulu-Natal of the 1980s and 1990s could be classified as a version of civil war, in which the apartheid government was using political, cultural, and ideological differences between the two main black opposition parties[40] to create instability and promote the view that the violence in the country was 'black-on-black'. Although not genocidal, in the course of 1960-94 more than 18,000 to 20,000 politically motivated killings are estimated to have occurred in Kwazulu-Natal alone.[41]

The second case study briefly examines the situation in Angola from late 1994, with the signing of the Lusaka Accord (which was to have ended decades of civil war) to January 1999 by which time full-scale war had resumed. Although there are several possible categorizations of this conflict, I have chosen to identify it as a conflict arising out of the transition of political power (although not necessarily towards democracy) and the resulting upsurge in violence related to the power struggle between two political opportunists: the President, Eduardo Dos Santos, and the leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi. An equally strong argument could be made for saying that the civil war in Angola never ended, and that the current resumption of fighting is only a continuation of a war that has lasted for two generations. Whichever is chosen, the facts remain that thousands have been killed and more than 1.3 million people displaced in the course of the conflict. A recent spate of attacks on civilian areas, including a market in Luanda and the downing of two United Nations aircraft, signal an increasing ferociousness in the attacks.

Kwazulu-Natal[42]

Kwazulu-Natal is one of nine provinces in South Africa and the one which saw a large proportion of the violence during the apartheid era, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. At the time, the conflict in the province was attributed to various causes, but with the completion of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1998 much more is now known about collusion between the government of the day, its security forces, and the support provided to Inkatha, a Zulu-dominated political party, against the African National Congress (ANC) and the United Democratic Front (UDF).[43] However, at the time these causes, while suspected by some, were not known, and the violence which wracked the area in early 1990 remains as some of the worst ever in the province.

The province had experienced violence in the past as well, but following the February 1990 unbanning of the ANC, the face of violence in the province changed. During the twelve months of 1990, 3,699 people nationally died in political violence (10.1 per day), and in 1991 almost half of all deaths attributable to political violence occurred in Kwazulu-Natal.[44] Today it is accepted that three key variables in the pattern of conflict from 1990-94 appeared in the first four months of 1990: the violence spread from largely contained urban centres into vast rural areas; attacks on women, children, and other vulnerable groups grew; and the numbers and types of weapons in the region increased dramatically. This brief case study will focus on violence which erupted in the Natal midlands in March 1990, and became known as the Seven Days' War. It was chosen because it marks the increase in the violence noted above, has been well documented by violence monitors and academics, and was one of the first occasions that weapons were poured into the region and used almost indiscriminately.[45]

There are three elements which, had an early warning system been in place, and had the government been receptive to receiving the information, could have prevented the outbreak of violent conflict. However, neither of these conditions existed at the time. Violence monitors, who did play an important role in identifying possible violent attacks and reported information to the police, were not used to the degree that would have been necessary to prevent violence, nor was the apartheid government especially interested in preventing internal wars that were being fought with weapons and training provided by government security forces. The three indicators selected here to review are: the presence and use of military-style weapons and attackers trained to use them; the 'external' backing provided by the apartheid government and the selective disarmament of some prior to the outbreak of the Seven Days' War; and the targeting of women and children by attackers.

The role of weapons

During the seven days of war in 1990, more than 100 people were killed, most by firearms, and thousands fled from the fighting into neighbouring areas. There are few incidents in which a flood of new, more accurate and more lethal weapons emerge in an area which is so quickly engulfed in violence.

Although weapons were not uncommon in Kwazulu-Natal prior to 1990, they were more likely to be used in urban areas and were fairly uncommon in the rural midlands. In these areas traditional weapons (spears and *pangas*) or home-made weapons known as *qwashas* were commonly used. However, the use of firearms in conflict began to increase in early 1990.

"According to 'well-placed sources', this first became evident during the violence which erupted around Pietermaritzburg after the Inkatha rally on 25 March."[46] Notably, "the sudden proliferation of modern weaponry had brought a new and frightening dimension to the conflict."[47] The types of weapons used were largely military-style: AK-47s, R1s, and R4s, although 9 mm handguns were also sighted. The use of AK-47s in massacres (the killing of more than five people at one time) increased from 4 per cent in 1990 to 23 per cent in 1992, an increase of 19 per cent, while overall the use of firearms (including automatic weapons) in massacres grew from 42 per cent in 1990 to 72 per cent in 1992.[48]

External backing

Although not confirmed at the time, there were suspicions that the weapons moving into the Natal midlands were being supplied from outside the province.[49] The police attributed the proliferation of firearms to trafficking from the Johannesburg area and the presence of "trained and armed Umkhonto (MK, the armed wing of the ANC) groups that had infiltrated the conflict area" but acknowledged that they could not be responsible for "the sudden availability of weapons".[50] Reports of the violence during those seven days actually implicated the police in the attacks on ANC/UDF supporters, saying that police vehicles were present in the area but did little to stop the attacks by Inkatha and even, prior to the outbreak of conflict, that "the police were beginning to disarm people selectively, effectively taking weapons away from 'comrades' [ANC supporters] only".[51]

In addition, the magazine the *Financial Mail* reported that "the scale of organization and logistical back-up behind the well-armed *impis* [Inkatha warriors] – coupled with wide-ranging reports that many of the attackers were bussed in last month from northern Natal led to suspicions that coordination of the violence could have been taking place at a fairly high level".[52] Little did people then realize that 'high level' would reach to the offices of apartheid cabinet ministers.

This role of a government arming one group against another is not confined to South Africa, and poses a particular problem in developing an early warning system. No matter how great the amount of information collected and analysed, the recipient must want to hear what is being said or no action – preventive or reactive – will occur.

Attacks on women and children

Another indicator that the violence which occurred in March 1990 heralded a different type of violence is shown in the way in which women and children, formerly spared, were targeted during the Seven Days' War. Again, the *Financial Mail* noted "a disturbing new trend was that women and children had become indiscriminate victims of the violence, which in the past had generally been limited to fighting between men and youths on either side."[53] A study of casualties from 1990 to 1993 noted that "While some of these women and children will have been simply 'cross-fire' victims there have been numerous instances where their slaughter was deliberate."[54] Nationally, in 1991 295 deaths of women and children were recorded as being attributable to political violence. In 1992 the figure rose to 311.[55]

Other indicators

In addition to those indicators directly or indirectly related to weapons, other warning signs were recorded prior to the March violence. This included the unbanning of the ANC in February, which may have triggered renewed opposition violence, and an Inkatha rally in Durban on 25 March, which has been directly linked to the subsequent violence. Such incidents highlight the need for weapons-specific indicators to be incorporated into an early warning process, but not to be isolated from other social and political events which may impact on the escalation or outbreak of violence.

Angola[56]

The signing of the Lusaka agreement in November 1994 was to have brought an end to the civil war in Angola. By late 1998, however, it had become apparent the fragile peace had crumbled, and it was only a matter of time before full-scale war began again. The breakdown of peace, or, perhaps, a peace that never was, took place over the course of three and a half years and included thousands of ceasefire violations,[57] population displacement, arming of civilians, and rearming by both sides, even while demobilization and disarmament programmes were nominally underway.

The conflict in Angola over the past four years has passed through three phases: structural tension immediately following the signing of the Lusaka accord; escalation of the conflict over the intervening period; and the critical outbreak of war in late 1998/early 1999. It is the first two phases which this short analysis will focus upon, as incidents in these periods had identifiable weapons-specific indicators, which in retrospect show the escalation of the conflict over time – a period long enough that had an early warning process been in place it might have succeeded in postponing, if not preventing, the outbreak of conflict.[58]

The following section will briefly review specific types of incidents which have occurred over the past four years in violation of the Lusaka accord and as clear indicators of the role of weapons in the build-up towards conflict. Those listed here are not exhaustive – with careful monitoring many more could be found – but are indicative of the type of information that could be collected and analysed within an early warning system.

Rearming/Foreign assistance

By March 1995, only four months after the signing of the Lusaka accord, the United Nations was already reporting that the Angolan government forces (FAA) were probably in the process of rearming. At the time, the countries which were reported to be selling weapons to the Angolan government included Russia, Brazil, North Korea, Bulgaria, Israel, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic.[59] The UN Special Representative said that the UN committee monitoring arms shipments should become "more active".[60] At the same time, UNITA was also reported to be smuggling arms into Angola, via what was at that time Zaire, a regime friendly to Jonas Savimbi. This same period was marked by additional flouting of the peace accord, including FAA troops moving into declared 'buffer zones' and reportedly launching a military offensive against UNITA. Two weeks later, on 20 March 1995, FAA was reported to be distributing "large quantities" of AK-47 automatic weapons to civilians.[61]

By early 1996 the FAA was reported to have weaponry ranging from aircraft and helicopters to AK-47s, grenades, mortars, artillery, and grenade launchers, while UNITA, in addition to assault rifles and other weaponry had purchased "a range of hand-held SAMs [surface-to-air missiles], including Russian SAM-7, -4 and -16 and, initially the US FIM-92A Stinger" to make up for its lack of air support.[62] Reports of arms build-ups and reports of outbreaks of fighting have see-sawed back and forth during the past four years. A more detailed chronology of reports of new weapons arriving and subsequent outbreaks of conflict would provide important information on patterns of arms accumulation and use that could be incorporated into a weapons-inclusive early warning system.

Movement of surplus weapons/weapons collected during the disarmament process

A variety of analysts have concluded that the demobilization and disarmament process undertaken by the Angolan government and UNITA under the conditions of the Lusaka accord was a farce. UNITA troops that reported to UN demobilization camps often arrived "barefoot and in rags, looking suspiciously like village youths and peasant farmers".[63] These men and youth carried weapons that were often barely serviceable, leading to strong speculation that UNITA was keeping back most of its weaponry in anticipation of further outbreaks of violence. As noted by Potgieter, "one can expect that the disarmament process in Angola… will leave hundreds of thousands of weapons in the hands of the population and spread throughout the region."[64] Zambian and Namibian authorities have caught bandits along their borders with Angola smuggling weapons south towards South Africa, and there is sufficient information to suspect that weapons have been moving in a great loop from Angola, through the two Congos into the Great Lakes and back again.

In an interesting indicator of the *deceleration* of conflict in Angola, arms smuggling increased along the border into Namibia (and on to South Africa) during lulls in fighting in Angola. Monitoring this type of cross-border trade could supplement information gathered on trafficking into a region of conflict. If the trade out of Angola were to suddenly drop off, it could indicate that combat preparations were taking place. The fluidity of weapons movements in Southern Africa presents a particular challenge, as (given the complexity of conflicts and the multitude of governments and rebel groups involved) establishing patterns of trade and recipients requires careful analysis. However, the importance of such information makes its collection especially important.

Civilians and weapons

Between 1994 and 1998 UNITA consistently accused the Angolan government of distributing weapons to the civilian population in the country. Intermittently, as part of the Lusaka accord, the government recalled weapons in civilian possession – giving some credence to UNITA's claims. In recent months, as the tension between the two sides has escalated, there have been increasing reports of civilians being attacked and of massive population movements away from conflict areas. There have also been reports of armed gangs being active in urban and rural areas. In January 1998 a grenade attack was carried out in an urban market in Luanda, although it is not clear by whom. By mid January of the same year, international humanitarian agencies were reporting that UNITA and the government were re-mining cleared areas, including populated areas, leading to eight reported casualties.[65]

After open conflict resumed in December, the Angolan government announced that it was initiating the conscription for all males over 18 in Angola. Although not an effective indicator to prevent the outbreak of conflict, it does give an indication that the Angolan government is preparing to wage war against UNITA on a larger scale than past skirmishes, and possibly over a longer time.

Additional indicators

Other weapons-related indicators have also been present during the escalation of conflict in Angola. Briefly, these include illicit commodity trading, in which weapons are traded for other contraband, including precious gems, ivory, and precious metals; increased movement of weapons along border areas; and incursions by troops of one country into another. For example, the western border of Zambia is effectively controlled by UNITA, and UNITA forces often move from bases in Zambia into Angola to carry out attacks and then retreat back across the border.

Collecting and Analysing Available Information

It is evident that important, and useful, information is being collected and widely disseminated, even in an active conflict zone such as Angola. The information presented above was largely collected from a comprehensive news wire service that was able to provide large numbers of specific weapons-related incidents in Angola. Journalists and the monitoring of radio broadcasts are two important sources for information in conflict areas. Others that have been critical to gathering early warning information in Angola have included international humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organizations, and United Nations organizations. If the effort is to gather data via open source information, the focus falls back, largely, to the media who often see, and report, more than is picked up in the newspapers and on television.[66] This presumably will make the case more persuasive to those to whom the need for early warning is presented, as the information cannot be seen as being 'intelligence' or 'propagandistic' and allows for some measure of cross-checking to ensure reliability, a critical factor in buying political support for the process of early warning.

The experience of the violence monitors in Kwazulu-Natal, still active today, is also another way in which information may be gathered. These individuals, either working independently or as part of a non-profit organization, make contacts within communities and are trusted well enough that information is passed to them. However, as independent actors they are unable to ensure that information they pass to the police is acted upon, or even noticed.

However frustrating it was for violence monitors at the time to have their warnings unheeded, the information they collected became critical to the TRC process and will prove to be important in analysing the potential for the outbreak of violent conflict in Kwazulu-Natal. Even today, reports of outbreaks of violence are often predated by residents of a community noticing more weapons in the area. However, policing resources are thin and few calls for action are heeded until violence has broken out.

The challenge in collecting and analysing large amounts of information is that it is time-consuming and susceptible to subjective analysis. In order to be effective, something much closer to 'real-time' information gathering and analysis (and verifying of both) must occur than the historical case studies presented here. There is also the challenge of verifying what is often propagandistic information picked up on radio broadcasts and from other sources. This task becomes increasingly difficult as conflict escalates and non-combatants (i.e. humanitarian relief organizations or political monitors) become scarce in conflict areas. This 'perception versus reality' gap can be critical to how information is received and acted upon.

Putting Early Warning to Use

The development of an early warning system falls prey to a number of difficulties. In order to be used, such a system has stages at each point of which information must be processed and verified. Ultimately, without a receptive audience all the work can still come to naught. The two case studies presented here are in some ways proof of such an exercise in frustration. In both instances, there was enough available information through weapon-specific indicators during the escalation of tense situations to provide some evidence of the possible outbreak of conflict. Both cases ended in open war and both, to a lesser and greater degree, are continuing today. Kwazulu-Natal shows clearly that if the message is not what those in power want to hear, it can be completely ignored. In the case of Angola, the listeners should have been in the various neighbouring capitals, the Organization of African Unity, and the United Nations, and yet those who heard were unable to act.

These limitations are recognized by those who are gathering and analysing the information, and to some degree by those who receive the information. The lessons that have been learnt within Southern Africa point to some initial steps that may prove to be (partial) solutions. These include:

- Improving methods of gathering early warning information: the process of information gathering must underpin any early warning system and so the gatherers become critical. The development of networks, educating providers on which type of incidents to report and ensuring reliability and neutrality of reporters, violence monitors, and others called in to gather information becomes all important.
- As a second step, the analysts who review the material must be seen as being neutral and being capable of providing valid, reliable information.
- Attempts to establish early warning systems have been hampered by the fact that little can be done until something happens (i.e. the outbreak of conflict). Therefore, ensuring adequate resources to maintain a basic level of monitoring becomes important. Later, the ability to shift resources as possible outbreaks of conflict are identified will also need to be addressed.

- In a world in which everyone and everything is clamouring for attention, it becomes difficult for policy makers to distinguish what is vital from what is white noise. An important function for providers of early warning is to identify why policy makers are sometimes not responsive to information and what can be done to change this.
- And, as a final challenge, an early warning system must be able to close the gap between warning and response. Unfortunately there are many examples of adequate warnings being issued that are lost or not responded to quickly enough. The break-up of Yugoslavia and the massacre in Rwanda were both anticipated and yet little was done until it was too late.

The region of Southern Africa will probably continue to be victim to outbreaks of conflict, and in all likelihood weapons will continue to play an ever-increasing role in the prevention, outbreak, and termination of these. It therefore behoves those involved in early warning to strive towards moving the early warning process out of the realm of theory and into the realm of practice. The available information may be inadequate for all needs, but, as these case studies have tried to indicate, is often adequate to show the possibility of the outbreak of conflict, which will hopefully soon become reason enough to try to prevent it.

Early Warning and Light Weapons in South Asia

Tara Kartha

Introduction

After the virtual disappearance from the international stage of three states, the disintegration of a fourth, twenty-two peacekeeping operations, and more than two million children killed, and six million injured,[67] the world has now recognized the threat from light weapon[68] proliferation and diffusion. From being a rather ignored infantry weapon, the 'small arms family' has proved itself to be a weapon of civilian destruction, and a 'stealth' fighter of no small proportions. Media reports underline the destruction wrought in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and indeed in Pakistan and India, as these weapons quietly diffuse into the hands of non-state actors, thus eroding the traditional monopoly of the state in controlling the instruments of violence.

Different academic and multilateral organizations are now working towards various solutions – be it control of further proliferation, retrieval of the existing excess, or confronting the problem from the point of view of the conflict itself. Whatever the persuasion of analysts, the first lesson that is abundantly clear from ongoing efforts is that weaponization of any internal disagreement, be it ethnic, religious or political leads inevitably to a cycle of events that creates tremendous regional instability and adds to a diffused global violence. Huge flows of refugees, transnational crime, narcotics, weapons trafficking, and human rights violations are now typical of conflict areas. Ultimately, it is the state itself that is the prime victim, and when it falls, there is clearly no one involved who can claim advantage. The second lesson that anyone working on these issues has learnt is that once weapons are out of state hands, the difficulties of getting them back are simply enormous. While there have been success stories of 'gun buy-backs' especially in Australia, the fact remains that the weapon will not be exchanged for money or land, nor given up, as long as the owner sees a higher profit in continued ownership, or sees it as necessary for his continued existence. Where security is non-existent or at risk, as is the case in most conflict areas, any attempts at retrieval of weapons will fail.

Ideally, therefore, the state should have some instruments to warn it of approaching dangers. Such forewarning should be used not simply for policy action, but also to put in place such measures to ensure that the armed elements are not able to exploit a volatile situation. Simply put, an early warning system cannot hope to keep track of every weapon that comes in and prevent its use, but aims to limit the sources of those weapons, and the maximal use of those already in the hands of non-state actors. This would ideally be a mix of gun detection, control, and conflict de-escalation measures. In short, it would aim at a more narrow framework than conflict resolution, in that it does not seek to go into root causes of a conflict, but merely seeks to put in place a framework that reduces violence, and allows the state the breathing space to consider resolution measures, with or without the assistance of the regional and international communities.

Light Weapons and Conflict in South Asia

Conflicts in South Asia were predominantly a result of proxy arming – premeditated and calculated state action. For example, the period 1977-85 was one where incidents of 'proxy wars' were at their highest. Pakistan was the conduit state for the US Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) sponsored $5 billion[69] weapons pipeline that fed the resistance forces. From 1984 to 1989, Pakistan launched its own effort against the Indian state of Punjab and in Kashmir, arming and training militants with weapons siphoned from the CIA pipeline. Once the superpowers withdrew from the area, Pakistan continued the campaign. In 1983, India began to arm and train the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka as part of government policy, while China until the early 1980s was helping rebels in eastern India with weapons and aid. Both Bangladesh and India have armed each other's separatists, while Myanmar/Burma was also thought to have at least tolerated various separatist armed groups within its borders. Today, while conflict continues in Afghanistan and Kashmir, patronage in these other areas largely was withdrawn by the mid 1980s.

However, the proxy war history of the past has certain important implications for conflict today. Firstly, proxy war arming in Afghanistan, as well as the country's continuing involvement in Kashmir, has been the primary reason for the huge societal diffusion that is apparent in Pakistan today. Secondly, in a continuum of conflict, the stoppage of aid in other proxy wars in the subcontinent has led to many of these actors turning to alternate sources of arms, namely the black market in weapons. Militants in Sri Lanka and the Indian north-east have found the weapons they needed in the markets of Cambodia and on the international black market, and indeed have done better for it. They are now much more dangerous than before, since they are better armed.

In short, light weapons continue to be the main propagator of conflict in South Asia, and their effects have been deleterious in various ways. Large swathes of Pakistan have virtually become ungovernable, as weapons have fuelled tribal feuds, drug trafficking, and ethnic and sectarian violence. An estimated one million weapons are loose along the volatile Frontier region, a gun in every family in Baluchistan, and at least 100,000 guns of all kinds in Karachi.[70] In Kashmir security forces have apprehended enough weapons to outfit a brigade, while at least two shiploads of weapons for the north-east have been intercepted by security forces. Hapless Sri Lankans have watched as their country continues to be wracked by terrorism and continuous war.

Conflicts in all these locations have caused huge casualties and a refugee exodus of more than 1.7 million people into India[71] and approximately 2.5 million Afghans into Pakistan. Sri Lanka's refugees have found shelter in various countries including India, Canada, and the United Kingdom. While no comparable numbers of Indian refugees have gone abroad, more than 300,000 people have been displaced from Kashmir, while ethnic minorities have also been displaced in the north-east. Political stability was also directly affected, as governments were questioned on their inability to stop the violence. Then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in particular was castigated for his 'junkets' abroad at a time of turmoil, while the opposition party in India staged protests after a particularly bad bout of violence in Kashmir. Terrorism has led to the assassination of an Indian Prime Minister, a Chief Minister, and a former Army chief in 'retaliatory' measures, while Sri Lanka has lost almost an entire rung of leadership both at the political and military levels. As anti-aircraft

weapons are seized in Kashmir and plastic explosives seized along the border, the violence seems set to continue. This has not only caused problems within states, but has also bedevilled relations between states – most particularly between India and Pakistan, each of whom has accused the other of sponsored terrorism. Given that both are now declared nuclear powers, there are many who feel that the potential for an escalation of conflict into war is serious.

This case study therefore will examine early warning in situations of societal diffusion (Pakistan), proxy war (Kashmir, Punjab), and weapon flows from the black market (Sri Lanka and the Indian north-east). Since this is a prescriptive analysis, only a brief review of the main points of the conflicts and major events relating to the subject are given here.

Examining the Conflicts – Historical Factors as Early Warning

The history of the various conflicts in South Asia have had strong historical precedents. For instance, Afghanistan's geographic location has historically allowed it only a limited sovereignty over its territory and the conduct of foreign policy. Its king ruled over a country that was in effect a grouping of fiercely independent and fractious tribal republics, where the control of the centre was often challenged by feisty local chieftains belonging to at least ten different ethnic groups, with the Pashtuns dominating. This group, which straddled the Afghan-Pakistan border, was often the cause of much bad blood between the two countries, and the demand for a 'Pashtoonistan' continues to cause tension within Pakistan. To deal with this, Pakistan used a 'trans-border ideology' that would effectively negate Pashtun nationalism, and ensure its dominance over the affairs of Afghanistan above those of secular India (towards whom Kabul tended to gravitate). Islam provided the answer, and from 1973, Pakistan began to arm and train disaffected groups, in an operation that was carried out with assistance from the CIA, according to a former Governor of the Frontier Provinces, General Fazle Haq.[72] At the same time General Zia, the administrator during martial law, declared Pakistan an 'Islamic state' thus giving the country the moral legitimacy to intercede in the name of Islam, as well as a trans-border ideology that would allow all interested parties to unite on the issue.

The same history is evident in Kashmir, which has been the bone of contention between the two states since their inception. Pakistan has used irregular forces in the first thrust aimed at destabilization (specifically in 1947, 1965) before following through with regular forces. In 1990 there were clear indications that an extensive revision of strategy was being undertaken within the Armed Forces, with General Aslam Ben (COAS) noting in 1989 that the lack of strategic vision in the past had since been corrected. The reliance placed on the use of guerrilla forces has been noted by foreign scholars,[73] and was underlined in a curious article in the country's leading defence journal, which called upon the army to use the 500,000 Afghan mujahideen as such a force (with the Pakistan army following) in order to wrest Kashmir from the Indians.[74] While this did not take place, the use of Afghan mujahideen began in early 1992, by which time the Kashmir Valley was already engulfed in violence.

Similarly, the conflict in Sri Lanka was also one that had begun fitfully since independence, with insurrection in the north-east beginning in the early 1970s. India always has kept a wary eye on Tamil aspirations, due to its own Tamil-dominated state in the south which had shown signs of rebellion against the centre from the same period.

In retrospect, it is surprising that Pakistan thought it could insulate itself from the conflict and criminal activities next door. Firstly, the border between the two countries had always been a porous one, with a yearly migration of around 100,000 to 300,000 nomads, as well as the movement of border-straddling tribes to visit families or take advantage of markets on either side. Secondly, there were already regular smuggling rings which used to bring in consumer goods of every kind into Pakistan through the passes, and through the hundreds of mountain paths across the Frontier. Thirdly, weapons smuggling has long been a way of life along the Frontier and the kind of operation that was mounted in conjunction with the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) would have been welcomed by the *Darra* businessmen.

Pakistan's political turbulence alone was not historical, in the sense that while the ethnic divisions were worsened over the years by a lack of representative democracy, the spread of violence was because of a massive diffusion of weapons into criminal, political, and other sections of the state. An already uneasy situation erupted basically due to the struggle for democracy launched in 1983.

Punjab alone had few historical precedents, and it is the one case which proved resistant to proxy arming. Though there were many reasons, at least one factor accounting for this failure (though in fact the concentration of violence was greater) is the lack of any of the factors outlined above.

Geographical location

It is worth noting that all cases of proxy war – Kashmir, Punjab, Afghanistan in the initial stages – were all border states, with even the Tamil north bordering the Indian mainland a mere 40 km away by boat. With border straddling ethnic groups, the long existence of smuggling rings are also a common factor in all these areas, especially in the case of Punjab and Sri Lanka – where smuggling was almost a way of life. Significantly, in Punjab the highest incidence of violence was around three border districts known for their criminal links, accounting for at least 75 per cent of the activity till July 1987,[75] and remained so until the end of militancy.

Internal instability and warning of proxy war

Punjab in the mid 1980s had already shown itself as a hotbed of student agitation, vituperative politics and a general (though not extreme) discontent due to an economic slowdown. The first phase of militancy was unabashedly a result of the government at the centre trying to embarrass the local ethnic political group in power (the Akalis) by backing a local religious leader (*Sant*[76] Bhindranwale) who set himself up against the local government. Significantly, however, this group was never able to access weapons of any significance, other than a few light machine guns, and their arsenal was overwhelmingly made up of .303s.

Similarly, the Kashmir Valley area in the late 1980s was ripe for unrest. The cynical corruption that pervaded all parts of state administration, growing unemployment, and the rise of Islamic parties all were seen as disparate happenings, but appear not to have been seen as the link up to form a 'critical mass'. The spark that is considered by almost all analysts to have lit the fire was however the Assembly elections of 1987, when heretofore fragmented Islamic parties got together under one umbrella party, the Muslim United Front, to challenge the ruling party, the National Conference (NC). It was extremely unlikely that this grouping would have received any significant vote, but at any rate the government is alleged to have gone in for blatant rigging of the elections. Violence was almost immediate, and a servile police leadership was severe in 'controlling' the situation, and many were sent to prison under a draconian law that allowed no appeal. There is enough evidence to prove that while in detention, these elements actually were able to meet with those who had already been sent by Islamabad.[77]

In Pakistan, as noted above, the problem was one of a massive societal diffusion of weapons, rather than proxy war. However, the fact that internal unrest was at an all time high was a reason for the swift diffusion of weapons into society. Viewing the problem retroactively, the Sindh Chief Minister noted "A law and order situation had been developing in Sind since 1982-83… the situation has deteriorated mainly because of the massive availability of arms."[78] This was the period when the political opposition against the Zia regime had gathered strength and had united in the form of the 'Movement of the Restoration for Democracy,' an umbrella group made up of nine parties (except the Jammat and other extremist religious groups who were General Zia's power base and provided him with Islamic legitimacy). Any form of violence against the regime was condoned, and even dacoits were encouraged to target government buildings and were portrayed as latter day Robin Hoods. All political parties deemed it prudent to acquire weapons against the wrath of the state, as the state unleashed a storm of repression and violence. Weapons also moved into universities, and one of the earliest to take to lethal weapons was the student militant wing of the Jammat I-Islami, the Jamiat e Tulba, present in strength around Lahore. In response to the agitation, the Zia regime resorted to the time honoured tactics of 'divide and rule' arming (and in some cases creating) ethnic-based parties (like the Mohajhir Quami Movement, which is made up of those who migrated from India during Partition).

The narcotics input

In this exercise, the Central Intelligence Agency was able to draw upon its 'Afghan resources.' In 1989, a US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) official was quoted as saying "140 tons of heroin was to pass from Punjab to India, whose receipts were to be used for terrorism by Sikhs and Kashmiris, and to Sindh where it could fund ethnic groups."[79] Thus by the late 1980s, narcotics and weapons were used not only to fund covert operations abroad but also to further political objectives in internal politics.

One clear signal for conflict and early warning analysts, which should have activated alarm bells, was the steady rise in narcotics cultivation and refining in Pakistan, which was annually estimated and noted by the UN Drug Control Programme as well as the US State Department. Given also that at this juncture the systematic cultivation and refining of narcotics was being adopted both by mujahideen groups and the Army in Pakistan to fund the operation was hardly a hidden factor, even being noted by the press, which described the use of the Army's Logistics Cell to move the heroin.[80] Little attention appears to have been paid at a time when the term 'narco-terrorism' was pallid in comparison to the cold war dangers. In fact, as a later report notes, Pakistanis were apt to see narcotics as a resource – in fact comparing it to the oil of the Middle East – seeing it as a problem for the 'decadent West' rather than Pakistanis themselves.[81] Today Pakistan is estimated to have more than three million drug addicts.

A second warning signal was when violence began to enter centres clearly identified with the drug trade.[82] This was interpreted in part as a fight between sectarian groups. However, the link between these and criminal gangs was noted in 1993, with some of the violence seen as a fight for the lucrative drug trade. This was noted by none other than the Prime Minister, who publicly condemned the patronage of sectarian parties by the drug mafia.[83] At the international level, there was more than enough evidence of the rise of the money generated by drug trafficking, a clear indicator of trouble and violence in the country.

The narcotics signal was most pronounced in Punjab, rather than Kashmir. In fact, such warning has always emanated from areas bordering the conflict areas. The Revenue Department noted a sudden rise in narcotics seizures along the western border,[84] while in 1984 operations against gold and silver smugglers taking place in a different sector noted that these contraband smugglers were now showing considerable interest in narcotics as well.[85] There was apparently at this stage no scrutiny of a possible link to arms smuggling. Later, it was noted that many of the terrorists apprehended had case histories of narcotics smuggling. Interestingly, the construction of an electrified and patrolled fence along the border saw a simultaneous drop in drug users.

In the Indian north-east, no significant seizures were reported due largely to the extremely hostile terrain which makes border control difficult. However, police officials were warning of the use of narcotics by militants, even as heroin began to be traded heavily along the border. In Sri Lanka, the drug connection to militancy has been hard to prove, but the steady rise of ethnic Tamils seized with heroin has increased substantially. Shipments of mandrax have been seized on the way to Tuticorin (south India) with Sri Lanka identified as a possible transshipment point.[86]

Warning Indicators of Weapons Flows by Border Forces and Security Forces

According to the DIG of Kashmir, until 1987 in Kashmir "there was no evidence of training and certainly no guns".[87] Between October 1988 and April 1989 more than 100 people were arrested, with weapons so strange to the police officers still equipped with .303s that "we had to rely on captured extremists to demonstrate to us how they were used".[88] In 1990, the first firing incidents were apparent on Central Reserve Police pickets, with explosions timed to cause damage rather than loss of life. Between 1988 and 1990, over 1,474 AKs, over 1,000 mines, and 2,994 grenades were seized by police and border forces. In Punjab, over 26 per cent of the 2,497 Kalashnikovs seized were intercepted along the border. Cross border traffic increased with security forces apprehending some 45,650 persons trying to cross the international border illegally between 1986 and 1992.[89] In 1988 alone, some 8,421 persons were arrested in the Punjab and Rajasthan areas with weapons and drugs.[90]

This type of border surveillance is not seen in Pakistan or other conflict areas in the region, since the Pakistan-Afghan border had to all intents and purposes ceased to exist as the CIA-ISI operation mounted. As weapons moved into Karachi and Lahore, the ensuing rise in violence was seen as a 'law and order' problem rather than one of over-weaponization arising from overall dangerous policies. In the north-east, the methodology has been to seize weapon shipments on the seas, before they enter the jungles along the border.

Early Warning Inputs by Intelligence Agencies

The main intelligence organization involved in Afghanistan – the CIA – maintained a single-minded determination to 'bleed the Soviets', a personal attribute of Robert Oakley that is noted by those in close contact with him during the operation.[91] The leakage of the pipeline, the fact that more than two thirds of the weapons went to the extreme Islamists, and that nationalist parties were not accepted in Pakistan could not possibly have been unknown to the CIA. Given the corruption and multitude of actors involved, it would also have been apparent that weapons were being diverted, though it is possible that the extent of this skimming was not known. (Sources put this at nearly 60 per cent while others put it even higher.)[92] The setting up of the BCCI (Bank of Credit and Commerce International) to launder this money, its operations into the US and the distribution of drug money to the very top of the ladder in Pakistan was not proactively noted by the US until 1993, when a CIA report on drug cultivation was published by a Pakistani paper[93] and the country itself came under the threat of being declared a terrorist state.

The ISI, being the main contractor to ferry weapons into Afghanistan was hardly likely to 'warn' any department, since it was itself mired in narcotics operations both internally and externally (as described above). The armed forces, which in Pakistan have traditionally remained at the helm of affairs, were deeply involved in drug trafficking and gun running. Several arrests of junior officers underlined the 'profit' aspect. More dismaying was a later statement by a Prime Minister that the Chief of the Army had requested permission to use the proceeds from drug trafficking to pursue covert operations.[94] Thus, the only otherwise stable institution in the state which might have put the brakes on a slippery slope of conflict could not provide the warning that the state so urgently needed.

In India, the intelligence inputs in the case of Punjab seem to have been timely. The clear proxy war input was revealed in 1988 when details regarding Pakistani training of militants were published in the press.[95] Activities are said to have started in February 1986 (marking the second and highly intense phase of militancy) with the first group of 100 infiltrating in twelve batches in July of the same year, with the assistance of Pakistani Rangers.[96] The arrest of another militant revealed that his weapons had come from a well-guarded 'bungalow' (large house) in Lahore where large quantities of missiles, weapons, and ammunition were regularly stored to be passed on to Sikh militants. He also revealed that one of his contacts was a heroin smuggler.[97] In 1993 again, the CIA report revealed the close links between the politicians and the drug smugglers of Lahore who used Sikh militants as 'mules'. This detailed report was worth close attention, but was hardly a 'warning' since the drug running and proxy war were already in full swing.

Little is known of intelligence agency inputs in the case of Sri Lanka. But it would seem that the Indian Army, which was inducted into peacekeeping operations under the most difficult conditions, had little early warning that the group most vital to the solution of the conflict had plans to renege. Nor were they at all aware of the strength and resilience of the Tamil Tigers. This attitude was evident in the mandate of the IPKF which required it to implement disarmament within 72 hours. This was clearly unrealistic, but the comment by the Army chief is illustrative. Queried by the Prime Minister on the Army's opinion on possible Tamil Tiger intransigence, the chief is said to have commented that *"they had no wherewithal to… confront India"* (author's italics) "and if they did, they would be neutralized within two weeks."[98] Obviously either military intelligence had been kept in the dark, or else the Indian intelligence as a whole failed. In the event, the Tamil Tigers simply waited until the first shipment of arms came in from Thailand, and then reneged on the agreement.[99]

In Kashmir, intelligence collection was handicapped by precise attacks on lower rung intelligence officers, police personnel, and key decision-makers. A prominent and well-liked trade unionist, who had become a negotiator between the government and the militant groups, was targeted. Tragically, he was quoted in October 1991 as saying "I feel no threat."[100] Thus, over time the intelligence base vanished, the police were completely cowed, and the bureaucracy riddled with militant moles and suspicion. By 1990 the State Administration had virtually come to a halt. The inability of the intelligence community to tap warning signals early enough is explained by one journalist as due to the fact that it relied too much on the inputs of Kashmir pundits, who either gave a one-sided view, or later were too scared to speak.[101]

Early Warning by Non-Governmental Organizations

Significantly, the most notable warning in the case of Kashmir came from a research group, and their publication of a document by a leading defence journal of India called *Op Topic*.[102] It outlined what many believed was a Pakistani plan of subversion. Written in July 1989, it was a result of meticulous research by a team of specialists, which was then presented in a narrative form. As a piece of early warning, it is unique, since the scenario that followed was almost identical as far as the strategy and tactics followed went. Most significantly they also noted the possible and large scale use of irregulars once Afghanistan quietened down.

Another unique analysis was from K. Subramanyam, then Director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses. In 1981 he was warning of the costs to Pakistan, and observed that "if arms can flow in one direction, they can flow in the reverse direction". He later warned that increased supply of arms in one country could lead to a greater flow of arms into other trouble spots around the globe.[103]

Think tanks in Pakistan had not been particularly involved in the past, though many have now energized themselves. Some prominent analysts however were able to see the turmoil created by firstly the US sponsoring of undemocratic regimes in Pakistan (as long as they followed its Asia policy) and the fallout from Pakistani interference in Afghanistan. I.A. Rahman was one who noted that the repeated bomb blasts in Karachi and the Frontier were hardly a 'law and order' problem, but were linked to the Afghan problem. As he notes "neither the authorities' noise about vigilance against terrorists, nor President Zia ul Haq's discovery of the Kashmir dispute as the second most important issue before the nation… has prevented a debate on the central cause of Pakistan's predicament, namely its involvement in the Afghan conflict."[104] This perception was not shared by the majority of Pakistanis affected by the violence, traders who downed shutters for instance, who saw it as a 'law and order' problem. However, even these protests gathered steam only in 1987, while the problem of weapons movement had already begun five years earlier.

The Human Rights Watch Arms Project did an extensive study in 1994, which was useful in bringing the weapons and narcotics linkages to international attention. This had the result of focusing the attention of the foreign media, who were then quick at reporting the advanced state of weapons diffusion in Pakistan. Journalists like Christina Lamb and Emma Duncan (of the *Economist*) are notable in bringing early detailed accounts of the drug and intelligence linkages,[105] while retired bureaucrats and military officers found the think tanks a good outlet for their analytical articles.

The Role of the Media in Early Warning

The press in Pakistan was the most energetic in covering issues that the authorities wanted to 'hush up'. The most diligent among these were the Karachi based *Herald* and the newspaper the *Frontier Post*, both of which underwent considerable harassment later. The former's story of the involvement of the Army in the narcotics trafficking in September 1985 was some of the earliest public information available regionally. Journalists were the first to warn of the consequences of an uncontrolled spread of Islamic fighters and their outfitting, as well as noting the sudden rise in the number of *madrassas*, which imparted military training to their students. While many of the more established ones owe their lavish organization to state funding during the Zia period, at least 23,000 (around 1,600 officially registered) were reported by the Pakistani press, who were as one in calling for an end to military training in religious institutions.[106]

Similarly, the press in the case of Punjab and Sri Lanka functioned clearly as early warning inputs. In Punjab, major news magazines noted the fact that weapons had reappeared within the Golden Temple Complex (after the army action which cleaned up the area) and that the fight for 'Khalistan' by violent means was hardly over, unlike claims by the bureaucrats that the situation was 'normal'. Major newspapers noted that the acknowledged killer of the head of an alternative sect was made the head of the *Akal Takht* (the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Sikhs) and the firing in the air to greet his appointment, even as gun-toting activists guarded vantage points around the congregation. In spite of a clutch of laws passed to prevent such activity, it was obvious that weapons were once more part of the politico-religious scene.[107]

The press in the south of Sri Lanka was fairly even in its reporting, but were dependent on government information on the fighting. In the east, they were unabashedly the mouthpieces of the Tigers. More analytical were the reports from the Indian press, with investigative journalists often providing early warning intelligence of the mood of the Tigers. Journalists were among those who warned the Indian decision-makers of the Tamil Tigers' decision to renege on the agreement, and the inadvisability of turning against them. This advice appears to have been disregarded.[108]

In Kashmir, the contrast is marked. With the killing of a TV station director and the Director of the Information Department and repeated threats, the local press was completely cowed, and as the governor said "were reporting at gunpoint".[109] Editors and journalists were as one in admitting that they simply published what was given to them or alternatively filed 'reports' that were slanted heavily in favour of the militants or simply notices calling for strikes. The Kashmir Valley has some thirteen dailies and around fourteen 'lithos'. One paper in the vernacular, which has one of the largest readerships and is also one of the oldest, notes that local journalists were well aware of the coming of the Pakistan trained militants as well as the conviction engendered in the Valley that 'independence' was approaching, though no one had the slightest idea of how this was to be implemented. They noted that their representations to bureaucrats had been ignored, and that the state bureaucrats had been compromised well before the uprising began. Another journalist with a national daily also confirmed that while he had a little more flexibility than local journalists, he also was forced to be careful when reporting.[110]

In the Indian north-east, the sway of the militants was so complete (for a period of about two years) that a journalist was to observe "[its] writ ran unchallenged… not a leaf stirred without its approval."[111] Media from the national press and television were unable to get ordinary Assamese even to admit the existence of the group the ULFA, (United Liberation Front of Assam) while those who did do so (under anonymity) admitted that far from running a parallel government, ULFA was the government.[112] While initially this silence was due to sympathy with the 'boys', later it was to change to fear, as the intelligence system of the ULFA was incredibly efficient. Though some excellent reporting was done by major television and newspapers,[113] the local press remained out of the picture. Later, once the group's smothering hold had been somewhat broken, the local press was able to give warning of impending shifts in strategy or attacks.

Government Inputs into Early Warning

It needs to be stated clearly that the bureaucracy is by its very nature not suited to be an early warning instrument. However, it can be expected to respond swiftly to indicators and warnings given by other actors. In South Asia, the bureaucracy tends to be so secretive as to make any real analysis of their role in early warning difficult. However, from the facts as they unfolded it would appear that bureaucrats worked in unison (instead of being departmentalized) when there was strong leadership from above.

In Pakistan, the bureaucracy seemed to be divorced from reality. For instance, a Special Committee which submitted a report (December 1989) on the violence in Sind province merely mentions the need to have a 'ban' on unlicensed arms in a 77-page report and to 'eliminate' the drug mafia.[114] The rest is devoted to the political and social history of the province. The Foreign Office appears to have maintained an aloof attitude to events, giving the impression that they had hardly any say in the running of the Afghan policy (which at least up to 1992 they apparently did not). An account by a high-ranking officer of the ISI, in charge of the Afghan weapons pipeline, reveals that the foreign office was held in lively contempt by the ISI,[115] though its rapport with sections of the political elite was obvious. A former chief close to General Zia notes that the ISI was a law unto itself, and after the death of General Zia continued its operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere.[116]

However, the power of the bureaucracies is not to be underestimated. They usually work closely with the army, and the fact that a civil servant, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, eventually became the president is one indicator. However, the decision-making is considerably 'politicized' and slow in the extreme. In rural areas, decision-making follows traditional tribal patterns, with an overlay of modern corruption. Similar to the Indian system, the bureaucracy can do as it so wishes, hastening policy-making or slowing it to a non-pace.

For instance, as the country reeled under sectarian violence, a report to the Prime Minister alleged large scale external funding of training centres by friendly Islamic nations and gave a detailed summary of activities which involved 'field training' in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Centres had mushroomed all over the country including Karachi, which had 43.[117] But this report to the head of state was made in 1997, more than ten years after the problem had surfaced in 1980-87, by which time matters had gone far forward. As a prominent journal noted "there seems little argument that Pakistan is currently the world leader in hosting international terrorist organization…".[118] Pakistan's bureaucracy has reacted to the problem by bringing in more draconian laws (like the Anti-terrorist Act) which have alarmed civil rights leaders.

Bureaucrats in India shared the Pakistani instinct of 'hushing up' unrest, rather than dealing with it determinedly. In New Delhi, the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, mired in political scandal and short of experienced advisors, was too preoccupied to note the trouble in the Valley.[119] In 1988, the Governor's address to the Legislature reflected little of the trouble brewing, noting that the last vestiges of 'terrorism' were being wiped out.[120] The inability of the bureaucracy (both at federal and state level) to comprehend 'ground realities' was graphically illustrated when the Home Minister's daughter was kidnapped. The militant group demanded the release of five of their colleagues, and the government caved in within 120 hours,[121] in spite of the advice of the security forces and intelligence, who noted that the kidnapping of a young Muslim woman would impact negatively on the militants' image, and this would force them to release the girl. The jubilation apparent on the streets of Srinagar after the release, and the triumphant march of the militants was the one incident that convinced the fence-sitters that the militants were on the right path. The cry on the streets was *"Jo kare Khuda ka Kauf, utha le Kalashnikov"* (All God-fearing men should now pick up a Kalashnikov).[122] Soon after this, recruitment of militant ranks rose dramatically, even as the number of Pandits leaving the Valley rose, peaking in February 1990. The targeting of Hindus with psychological warfare (for example, black marks on houses and denunciations from mosques) should have alerted the government to attempts at ethnic cleansing, and the larger impact of such an exodus. But as it is the government reacted (admittedly on humanitarian grounds) by 'helping' their exit and giving them generous allowances. Those who stayed were given nothing.

In the north-east, the state bureaucracy had either been co-opted or sidelined by terror tactics. The report of the then Governor D.D. Thakur to the President[123] is an indictment of a government paralysed – of central assistance in the form of additional vehicles and arms remaining unused, of training camps run in broad daylight and in full view, and of the fact that although 113 murders had been committed, not a single case had been investigated by the police.[124] Army action in 1990 and 1992 led to the militants taking up residence in nearby Bangladesh, which proved to be a better outlet since from here the groups could easily visit Thailand and Bangkok. This possibility was apparently overlooked by the local bureaucracy, which was lauding itself on 'dealing firmly' with militancy. When the ULFA reappeared, there was little surprise among the locals, nor among police officials.

In Sri Lanka again, policy makers appear to have grossly underestimated the Tamil Tigers' capability and commitment to their own homeland. When the Tigers were pushed by Indian peacekeepers, the Sri Lankan government armed the Tigers with several truckloads of weapons, 40 crates of ammunition, and explosives.[125] After having removed the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF), the Tigers again turned upon the Sri Lankan army, and the war continues to date.

In Punjab, matters were somewhat different. As noted earlier, it seemed that all concerned were working together – for instance following a ministerial meeting in April 1988, the decision to 'seal the border' was made, as well as various other measures calculated to deny entry to terrorists and weapons from Pakistan. This latter included an electrified and patrolled fence along the Indo-Pakistan border. Moves were also made to include stepped-up border security in neighbouring countries. The state government, with the strong backing of the national government, set out to revitalize a highly demoralized police force, increasing its firepower, mobility, and communications ability (all of which were more or less non-existent prior to the operation). With the crackdown by the police, and border security under army control, militant violence began to decline and came to a complete halt by 1993. This instance shows the relative success that is possible when early warning is combined with prompt action.

Weapons-Specific Early Warning Indicators

Apart from the role of the actors described above, it is pertinent to note the various indicators of coming violence, which are (not surprisingly) dissimilar. Sudden appearances of weapons prior to the actual 'crisis point' of a conflict, crashing prices in black markets, and other data regarding weapons are only briefly discussed.

The black market

In Pakistan, the apparent ease with which firearms could be bought in 1989 was underlined by an incident in a medical college where a student sat cleaning his pistol, while all around him the rest of the college, teachers, and students went about their business.[126] The price of a T.T. pistol, once prized at Rs 5,500 (US $127) went down to less than Rs 3,000 (US $69) in 1989,[127] while an AK-47 which had been priced at Rs 30-40,000 (US $690-920) in the early 1980s dropped to Rs 13,000 (US $299) in 1989 and to Rs 8,000 (US $184) in 1994[128] at the weapon bazaars along the Frontier. However, this fall may have been partly the result of a changeover in weapon demand, since following the ban on public carrying of weapons the trend had shifted to smaller weapons and multibarrel weapons for "rich people and politicians".[129]

While security forces in Kashmir seized over 18,000 Kalashnikov rifles, 2,000 other guns, rocket propelled grenades, explosives, rocket boosters, and rockets (not to mention mountain clothing, tents, boots, and NATO-type communication systems),[130] there does not appear to have been a market for weapons within the Valley, though weapons were being traded in nearby states. Significantly, the price is far lower along the western border (Rs 40,000 – US $920 – or less, depending on the customer) than the east.

The local black market in the north-east, which first offered the .38 only in 1987, was later able to offer a much larger selection of weapons. Some ULFA cadres interviewed speculated on the sudden availability of cheap weapons and are at a loss to explain where they come from. Licensed dealers who were allowed to sell weapons of a smaller bore soon found it more lucrative to change to the larger varieties, while corrupt politicians from neighbouring states also provided some assistance. However, unlike the western border, prices remained high. The M-16 was available at Rs 40,000 (US $920), while the AK Chinese copy (M-22) was more expensive at Rs 1.5 lakh (US $3,450). A Sterling was available for between Rs 65-70,000 (US $1,495-1,610), though by the end of the year, almost all prices had gone up in apparent response to rising demand.[131]

Sri Lanka's black market was fed by the weapons issued to border villages threatened by the Tamil Tigers, and weapons sold by an estimated 28,000 deserters from the army.[132] The media has been noting an additional source of proliferation, which is the fact that cadres are allowed to operate from safe houses bristling with weapons of all kinds. Additionally, many ex-militants are suspected to be involved in the trade in weapons, with the government understood to be turning a blind eye.[133]

A sudden surge in weapons holdings is usually indicative of a group accessing the black market. Both the ULFA and the Tamil Tigers were noticed to have emerged into well-armed groups once they were able to break into these circles (possibly introduced to contacts by intelligence agencies). The Tamil Tigers are understood to have begun a dedicated search of the international black market after 1984 with the purchase of a ship from Singapore.[134] By 1989 (when the Indian peacekeeping forces were involved in fighting the Tigers) the commander of the forces notes that the strength and capability of the LTTE had surged.[135] By 1997 the armoury of the group included shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles, sophisticated communication equipment, satellite Global Positioning Systems, their own 'Arul' missiles, and an arsenal of over 10,000 assault rifles.[136] Clearly the break into the black market had proved extremely rewarding. An almost identical type of 'growth' can be tracked in the north-east.

Licensed weapons

Other warning signals included the sudden loosening of the licensing system as the rush to acquire arms for protection – by householders but largely by politicians began. Pakistani reports note that 41,600 guns licenses were issued between December 1988 and May 1992. Another 92,000 were said to have been issued in the rest of 1992[137] (when the mayhem in Karachi was at its highest).

A series of political assassinations in Sri Lanka led to the ruling party diluting licensing laws to political parties to defend themselves, thus raising the level of weapons proliferation within the country. The issue of illegal weapons and the 'gun culture' came to a head following yet another murder,[138] a violence-ridden election with 1,248 incidents reported,[139] as well as a rising incidence of armed crime. The incident led to a public debate which appeared to point to the fact that all political parties had been equally responsible for issuing licenses from the early 1980s. Apart from this are the weapons that seem to be in the hands of 'bodyguards' of prominent political personalities (each parliamentarian is allowed two weapons). While these are government-allotted security guards, the fact that at least two of these were involved in the Nalanda killings illustrates the dangers of proliferation of weapons even in state hands.

Yet another indication of widespread societal diffusion is the spread of private security agencies in Pakistan. While it is not known just how many of the 15,000 operating in Karachi alone are armed, there was apparently a surge in demand by 1994. The Punjab Inspector General of Police confessed in 1990 that there were at least one million Kalashnikov rifles in the state in various hands.[140] The demand for protection was therefore understandable. Similar figures are not available for India, but there is a clear and apparent increase in such services in major cities like New Delhi.

Crime

Where the conflict was not conducted by proxy, a rise in crime immediately before the onset of militancy was apparent. In the north-east the militants found a group willing to give them training and weapons – for a price. An initial 'gift' of about 10-15 weapons of various types obviously helped. As a former commander confided to the author, he was able to 'mobilize' Rs 13 lakhs (US $29,900) in 3 months with the aid of these weapons.[141] The spate of bank heists and kidnappings was put down to criminality, while the rebels were viewed by the police as 'our boys' who were simply misguided youths, who would eventually settle down. Soon the group graduated to large-scale extortion and 'taxation', and with more money, more weapons arrived.

The same pattern is evident in Sri Lanka, where a series of bank robberies preceded the onset of militancy. The Tamil Tigers did not 'announce' their arrival until they were able to amass sufficient funds and weapons.

Conclusions

When assessing the inputs from various actors, such as the press, bureaucrats, and others, it must be noted the problem of light weapons proliferation or references to the 'Kalashnikov culture' are very much a thing of the late 1990s, and therefore may not have elicited the same reaction in the 1980s, when the cold war threat and dangers overshadowed most of these problems. This aspect needs to be taken due note of. Even Pakistan, which had a severe problem with societal arming by early 1990, was more inclined to see it discussed as a law and order problem in Sindh, a 'refugee' problem in Baluchistan, and a 'political' problem in the Punjab. The government itself was busy with drafting denials of arms and training given to Kashmir separatists, even as New Delhi warned Islamabad of serious consequences of such actions.

Bureaucracies (not just in South Asia) are traditionally given to 'playing down' a problem, assigning all kinds of roles to opposition parties, the 'foreign hand', and others. The heavily departmentalized approach in this region meant that each would not part with information to the others, and this is most apparent in Pakistan, while least apparent in Sri Lanka (where the bureaucracy is more compact). Bureaucracies have traditionally only reacted after inputs from intelligence agencies or from sharp criticism in the press. It was only in the Punjab that all systems – the government, the police, bureaucracy, and the army – worked together, thus reversing quickly a situation that threatened to go out of control. It is in fact the one success story in an otherwise dismal show by governments.

Given that there was adequate warning in proxy cases studied above, why was there no reaction? The answer to this lies partly in the nature of wars fought with light weapons (especially proxy wars) where the militants seek to 'control' and take over as much of the state administration as possible. This results in a cowed bureaucracy, judiciary, and press. Intelligence assets were systematically wiped out or chose to lie low in the face of such a virtual collapse of authority. Strong leadership was able to retrieve the situation, though after heavy costs and over a period of time.

Non-governmental think tanks in Sri Lanka and India have produced quality analyses of impending crises, also sometimes alerting the press to the dangers involved. However, think tanks alone have not been able to sensitize governments on issues where the dangers are not obvious, as in the case of light weapon flows. When these are presented as clear proxy war instances, the reaction is likely to be more encouraging. All this underlines the continuing problems of a 'cold war era' bureaucracy unable to adapt itself to the present.

In India, the border security forces were valuable inputs in warning of impending light weapons flows. The collated data, which is published as an open source, were what alerted analysts, press, and think tanks in the Kashmir area. Similarly, the narcotics control bureau did produce relevant statistics, as did governmental institutions like the Crime Records Bureau, which noted the rise in crime in neighbouring state conflict areas. In Pakistan also, data collection on the Karachi issue appears to be efficient. However, given the lack

of awareness of that period, the latter two were not earlier taken as inputs for decision-making. After 1992, the narcotics input was sufficiently appreciated by the government in India to start an expensive border fencing project. Similarly, the narcotics bureaus in Pakistan and Sri Lanka have now energized themselves to tackle the threat.

In all of the instances related above, the press has provided a strong early warning input, especially news magazines who devote greater space to analysis and strong criticism of the government. However, given the nature of its job, the press will not be able to continuously focus attention on a subject once the 'news value' goes down. Therefore some other body has to take it one from that point.

A strategy for the future

Creating a national early warning system

In sum, it appears that a wide variety of data are available for early warning of weapons flows, from different sources both in proxy wars and in black market operations. The crux of the problem is integrating the whole to allow greater linkages between the specialists, the information gatherers and decision-makers. 'Specialists' here refers to those whose profession by its very nature requires them to be aware of illegal weapons flows. Such actors are border forces (inclusive of coastguard and air surveillance), immigration officials, and customs. This is referred to as the 'first circle' of surveillance. The second circle of information consists of the police forces and internal intelligence (including narcotics), who monitor events within their districts or areas. The third circle are the concerned ministries involved – in the South Asian case this would mean primarily the Home Ministry, the Defence Ministry, and the Foreign Ministry working together. Each of these has its own intelligence sources, and these would provide additional inputs. The primary aim would be to speed up information between these circles.

At a second level are the inputs from non-governmental organizations, research institutes, and the media. The latter reaches a wide audience and can promote awareness of issues, perhaps its main strength, while think tanks have greater ability to provide analytical solutions and inputs (formal/informal) into decision-making centres. The main strength of NGOs would be that they are often closer to the problem than the others, though their advantages lie in their relative anonymity. Given that they would dislike going to the government, a greater lateral integration between these three would also be needed to hone each of their skills.

At a third level are the static systems which are required to quickly analyse data. These are the central data collection agencies – in India called the Criminal Records Department – whose input would be invaluable for both levels. This system, which is more or less defunct in other South Asian countries (and non-existent in others), depends on accurate and timely information from the first and second circles of early warning.

Since early warning is clearly a process, the objective would be to speed up information gathering, dissemination, and analyses between and within these levels identified above. This essentially means that the two circles of primary information need to utilize the press at the earliest possible moment on weapon seizures, which in turn would assist the work of government think tanks, an analysis which would be immediately available to the concerned ministry. Data also need to be fed into the third level (criminal records bureau) – if possible in real time, thus creating a database on weapons movement, increase or decrease, which in turn would be made available to the press, interested NGOs, or think tanks. Relative changes in a given area or within a given group therefore would be immediately recognized. This information needs to be relayed back to the action takers (the police, security forces, narcotics bureaus, revenue departments), who could act upon this constant update of information.

The third circle of information (ministries and intelligence) in turn would be 'sensitized' by the above analysis of impending danger from a particular direction, allowing intelligence agencies to focus their attention on one direction. These bodies cannot be expected to divulge their activities. However, some yearly 'risk assessment' would help the other two circles immensely in providing a framework for activity.

At the apex of all this activity would be an early warning panel, made up of the chiefs of all the concerned departments, including the Home and Foreign ministries, with a senior level politician in the chair to ensure coordination. The press and think tanks should be part of selected sittings where data are made public, or may be called in to provide expert outside opinions. The emphasis would need to be on transparency, with the clear realization that secrecy benefits the militant and the criminal, not the state.

Ultimately, this process is based as much on new information technology – which includes not only the hardware, but also flexibility and speed inculcated into organizational structures. If the nodal group were to function just like any other government group, its efficacy would be considerably reduced.

At the international level, such nodes of warning should be linked to United Nations (UN) groups set up for the purpose, which would have a direct link to the UN Secretary General. Links to relevant multilateral organizations would also be useful in attracting attention – especially in the case of proxy war. Denial of equipment, cut-off of aid, and other tools of multilateral persuasion could be applied. This assumes that proxy arming and illegal weapon supplies have already been made punishable and a crime against the international system.

There is little doubt that an early warning structure would be immensely useful to developing states, enmeshed as they are by diverse demands upon their resources, which are essentially limited. The costs to the state of weapons diffusion is not clearly quantifiable, since apart from the clear economic losses, costs of state forces, costs of refugee repatriation, etc., there can be no 'quantity' assigned to the loss of a child to its mother, or the gunning down of the helpless and the weak. Early warning is a tool that allows the state to fulfil its primary function, that of ensuring the safety and security of its citizens. Unfortunately, it seems to be a function that many countries have forgotten.

Early Warning and Light Weapons in Chiapas, Mexico

Maria Elena Escobar de Tudyk

Introduction

In recent years Mexico has been increasingly plagued by a rising incidence of armed violence, much of which is carried out with military style weapons. The world is aware of the uprising that took place in Chiapas in 1994 coupled with a devastating economic crisis. Consequently, as all too often happens during political and economic upheaval, crime increased significantly in Mexico. With the Chiapas uprising, the emergence of other rebel groups and the subsequent measures taken by the government to control them, particularly in the south, have resulted in the deaths of many innocent civilians.[142] This armed violence has not occurred in a vacuum.

First, the incomplete disarmament accompanying the end of the civil wars in Central America has led to a surplus of weapons in Central America that can easily cross extremely porous borders, including Mexico's, lacking proper control. It is estimated that two million military weapons remained in Central America after the civil wars. Disarmament programmes sponsored by the United Nations in the region have not been able to recover even a fraction of the weapons that were introduced for the war efforts.[143]

A second factor is the increased drug trade in Mexico. The Mexican drug cartels have expanded their control of the international market and their power throughout Mexico. Mexico has been reported to be the second-largest supplier of heroin to the United States and the principal cocaine route into the United States.[144]

Third, increasing scandals involving corruption and inefficiency, together with economic crises, have diminished the power of the ruling government party, the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI). Year after year, fewer PRI party members have been voted into office. Together with this, the current administration has taken great efforts to decentralize the federal government through streamlining and granting public institutions and state governments more independence. As a result of this, the links in the chain of command have been severely weakened resulting in a chaotic situation, and further inefficiency and corruption in many institutions, particularly the police and military.

All of this has contributed to rampant crime and violence. Mexicans are further frustrated by the situation and feel the need to take up arms to protect themselves from criminals. This has been particularly the case in Mexico City, where people have demanded the easing of laws regulating weapons possession or the use of the death penalty for violent criminals.[145] Reports of arms black markets have also increased concern over armed violence.[146] These demands for further protection have subsequently led to the growth of private security companies. Laws regulating these types of businesses are either weak or, in some cases, disregarded altogether. Reports of policemen and security guards with criminal records and involved in criminal activities while on the job have further intensified the feeling of insecurity in cities throughout Mexico.

It is within this context that we look at Chiapas. Since the spark of the rebel movement in 1994 in that southern state, armed violence had been increasing exponentially. By 1997, violence had reached higher levels, and just two days before Christmas 1997, in the small town of Acteal in the highlands of Chiapas, 45 people, mainly women and children, were massacred by a group armed with assault rifles and other sophisticated weapons.[147]

What follows is a brief account of the situation in Chiapas. Later, events leading up to the massacre and an explanation of the warning indicators that were present are discussed.

Overview

In 1994 the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) launched several surprise attacks throughout Chiapas as a way to call attention to the plight of the indigenous peoples of the area. As a result of this, the Mexican army has substantially increased its presence in this state. Together with the increased government militarization of Chiapas, a growing number of paramilitary groups, *guardias blancas* (vigilante groups), and other armed groups have emerged. Since 1995 at least six paramilitary groups have appeared in Chiapas.[148] This has led to increased violence and volatility of the situation there. Repeated outbursts of violence have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians, destruction of property, and further misery in an impoverished region.

The conflict in Chiapas was located in three regions: the highlands, the jungle, and the northern region of Chiapas. The latter had been the region with the deadliest and most frequent violent incidents. Reports of the strong presence of paramilitary groups in this area have been numerous. Paramilitary groups such as the ironically named Paz y Justicia (Peace and Justice) had been repeatedly linked to the state and local government. For example, there was a report of the governor of the state of Chiapas handing out cheques for 'development projects' to this group in spite of claims by the local people and observers that they were engaged in criminal activities.

After two years of negotiations the government of Mexico and the EZLN signed the San Andres Peace Accords on 16 February 1996.[149] However, ten months later, on 20 December 1996, the president of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo, sent a message to the EZLN with a counterproposal to the San Andres Peace Accords he had already signed.[150] On 11 January 1997 in a communiqué, the EZLN emphatically rejected the President's counterproposal calling it "unacceptable".[151] Almost immediately, tensions in Chiapas heightened. Violence increased and spread from the north to the jungle and particularly to the highlands. Chenalho, the municipality in the highlands where the town of Acteal is located, saw itself engulfed in the violence incrementally throughout 1997, culminating in the massacre of 45 men, women, and children on 22 December 1997.

Early Warning Indicators

Looking back at events preceding this massacre, it is clear that numerous warning indicators were present. A series of events indicated the direction the violence was taking and clearly pointed to the tragedy that was to come. Focusing more specifically on the tools of violence, in order for this type of violent attack to be carried out, those who perpetrated it had to arm themselves. The outbreak, escalation, resurgence, and lethality of violence has been shown to be highly correlated with the proliferation, availability, accumulation, and misuse of small arms and light weapons.[152] It is in these instances that weapons-related indicators can be crucial in predicting violence.

These weapons-related indicators can be divided into two types: direct and indirect indicators. Direct indicators are those that are found to be present in the particular area of conflict or potential conflict. An example of these is the presence of civilians armed with grenades or other military-style weapons. Indirect weapons-related indicators are those that are not necessarily found in the area of potential conflict, but that can affect it. These could be national policies such as increased importation of weapons or transnational problems such as drug trafficking in the country where conflict could take place.

The main sources used for the presentation of these indicators were *La Jornada*, and the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Centre. The first is a Mexican newspaper known for its veracity. The latter is located in the city of San Cristobal de las Casas in the highlands of Chiapas near the site of the massacre. It is a non-governmental organization that has the objective of promoting and defending human rights. It was created at the request of Samuel Ruiz Garcia, bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas (the main city in the highland region) and president of the CONAI, the National Commission for Mediation in the Chiapas Conflict.[153]

Indirect indicators

- *State's reluctance to destroy surplus small arms and light weapons, choosing instead to export them, especially to zones of conflict*
  In spite of efforts to collect the weapons once the civil wars were over in Central America, it has been evident that the weapons collections carried out were not effective in removing the thousands of military-style weapons in the hands of civilians. Years before the massacre in Acteal, as the conflict between the EZLN and the Mexican army unfolded, repeated reports of weapons going to Mexico through Central America were publicized.[154] After negotiations with the government broke down, reports of weapons flows into Chiapas continued. On 17 February 1997, the Chief of the Judicial Police of Honduras, Wilfredo Alvarado, said that weapons from guerrillas in El Salvador and Nicaragua were sent to Zapatista rebels in Mexico. The weapons included Soviet-made AK-47 rifles and RPG-7 missiles.[155]

Furthermore, in spite of the end of all civil wars in Central America, a flow of small arms, light weapons, and ammunition into that region remains. In fact, Guatemala, which has just recently ended 30 years of conflict and remains engulfed in violence, even after the peace accord was signed in 1996, imported more ammunition in 1997 than in the conflict years.[156] The flow of ammunition into Mexico through porous borders is more than likely.

- *External support from a country with extensive arms supply capacity and experience as an early indication of arms supplies*
  Although we cannot directly link the external support given to Mexico in regards to arms and training to the massacre in Acteal, we can point out the increased demand for weaponry and able personnel by the Mexican government before and during the conflict as a dangerous trend.

  Despite reports of corruption and human rights abuses in the police and armed forces, the US has continued to provide weaponry to Mexico to fight drug trafficking. In fact, in the last 12 years Mexico has imported ten times more weaponry from the United States than in the preceding 33 years. From 1984 to 1996, 34.4 million dollars worth of small arms and light weapons, including pistols, M-1s, M-16s, carbines, and small machine guns were imported.[157] As well as supplying arms, the United States has continued to train Mexican military personnel. The Mexican army had 1,800 soldiers trained by the Pentagon incorporated into its ranks between 1996 and 1997. The training included 'rapid assault' operations, intelligence, and piloting of UH-1H helicopters. The training of Mexican soldiers by the Pentagon was expected to continue at least until 1999.[158] Additionally, on 14 November 1997, Guatemalan Christian Action (ACG) announced that members of the Mexican army continued to receive training at the Kaibil Military School in the northern department of Peten in Guatemala.[159]

- *Monitoring borders for an increase of weapons flows*
  A lack of monitoring of the borders surrounding Mexico could have enhanced weapons flows into Mexico from other countries. In 1996 the EZLN admitted to having bought weapons in gun shops in El Paso, Texas, and other American cities.[160] Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the porous nature of the borders of the Central American countries and that of Mexico in the south has made it relatively easy for drug traffickers, criminals, and rebel groups to introduce weapons into Mexico. Heightened supervision of the borders would have prevented the accumulation of weapons in an already volatile area.

- *Illicit commodities including arms shipments*
  There has been a link between flows of weapons and drug trafficking. In the case of Chiapas, there have been incidents of arms flowing into Mexico directly linked with drug trafficking. Ironically, the Mexican government has increased the militarization of the area because of alleged drug plantations (coca and marijuana) and drug trafficking through Chiapas in the years preceding and following the massacre, thus increasing tensions in an already volatile region. On 7 October 1995 arms and drugs allegedly destined for delivery to Zapatista rebels were seized at the Honduran border by Mexican officials. The cache included 31 AK-47s, 4,000 rounds of ammunition, 82 grenades, a rocket launcher, 4,000 revolvers, 30 electric detonators, and 45 kilograms of cocaine.[161]

In 1997 there was increased concern over illicit flows of weapons into Mexico. A report in the Mexican newspaper *El Universal* informed of an agreement between the governments of the United States and Mexico to implement a programme to identify, stop, and sentence the major arms traffickers. In a document drawn up by both governments, the need to increase efforts to intercept the traffic of arms between the countries, especially that related with drug trafficking was highlighted.[162] Furthermore, on 10 December 1997, President Zedillo announced tougher laws for the illegal possession, stockpiling, and dealing of illegal arms, including two- to seven-year sentences for those illegally possessing a .357 Magnum or a 9 mm Luger. Stockpiling such weapons (possessing three or more weapons) carries a sentence of five to fifteen years, carrying 7 mm rifles, sub-machine guns, or machine guns carries a sentence of ten to fifteen years, and illegal possession of cartridges carries a one- to six-year jail sentence.[163]

Direct indicators

- *Corruption among officials responsible for weapons security: indicators of illicit arms trafficking and destabilizing build-ups*

  Two factors indicated that officials with access to weapons were involved in facilitating weapons access to paramilitary groups and *guardias blancas*. First, repeated reports of armed men demanding a 'war tax' from people so they could go to the army bases to buy guns and ammunition were made public throughout 1997. Less than two months before the massacre, on 27 October, a witness report claims that weapons went to a group of 56 PRI supporters in Los Chorros in Chenalho who charged a 'war tax' and then went down the road to Yaxjemel, where the State Police camp is, and bought more weapons and ammunition including *cuernos de chivo* (AK-47s), UZIs and R-15s. Every night, from August of 1997, shots could be heard from the paramilitary training camp in Puebla (Chenalho).[164]

  Second, the open collusion between military, law enforcement, and paramilitary groups repeatedly reported by non-governmental organizations and the Mexican media is certainly an indicator that the paramilitary groups and other government supporting groups would not only have no problem acquiring military style weapons, but also faced no legal consequences to the actions they carried out with these weapons. As early as 15 February 1997, a group of observers from different human rights organizations was attacked by members of Paz y Justicia. One member suffered a bullet wound and another was injured with a machete. Once the police arrived, the policeman in charge, said to the attackers: "So far you have had Procuraduria's (law enforcement) support and ours, but now that you have done this you are on your own. We are leaving."[165] While this particular policeman claimed to be taking away his support, this incident shows that this set-up existed between law enforcement and armed civilian groups.

  This collusion was increasingly evident as time passed. On 24 September 1997, hundreds of PRI militants and members of paramilitary squads gathered in PRI villages near Polho (Chenalho) and met with squadrons of army soldiers, judicial police, and public security forces.[166] By November, overt impunity and abuse of power were undeniably present. For example, the mayor of Chenalho, Jacinto Arias Cruz, threatened a French priest's life.[167] According to a press release from the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Centre, "there is a situation where impunity and taking justice in their own hands prevails."[168]

- *Monitoring borders for an increase of weapons flows*
  As mentioned, the conflict in Chiapas had been brewing in three zones: the north, the highlands, and the jungle. It was the northern zone that had been reported to be the one that suffered the most intense and repeated violence. As soon as the dialogue between the Mexican government and EZLN broke down, violence escalated and spread. Throughout 1997, reports of armed violence spreading from the north to the other two conflict zones increased in number and urgency. As early as May, human rights organizations claimed that both pro and anti-Zapatista civilian groups were beginning to arm themselves and there was fear of the escalation of violence.[169]

  In the first week of September there were reports of the emergence of a new paramilitary counter-insurgency group called MIRA, Indigenous Revolutionary Anti-Zapatista Movement, with apparently 500 to 600 sympathizers or militants of the ruling party PRI. This group operated for three to four months in the municipalities of Oxchuc, Huixtan, San Juan Cancuc, Altamirano, Ocosingo, Chilon, Chanal, and Sitala (located in the jungle, highlands, and north).[170] Chenalho was repeatedly mentioned when referring to the increased violence in the highlands of Chiapas. The weapons required to carry out this violence necessarily spilled into this area. As the massacre drew nearer, there were several incidents reported of weapons being brought in to this municipality by groups aided by army personnel and local police while protecting the 'borders' surrounding it. On 27 October 1997 a representative of the Abejas Indian organization (a group sympathetic to the EZLN's cause), Antonio Gutierrez Perez, announced that in recent days arms trafficking had increased and that armed groups were controlling the accesses to the communities that sympathized with the EZLN.[171] There were also reports of a new paramilitary group with training camps in Chenalho.[172] On 9 November 1997 members of the community of Yabteclum in Chenalho witnessed the transportation of weapons in an ambulance to the house of a PRI supporter.[173] These reports reveal how the violence from the north reached this area, and how arms mostly reached one side of the conflict.

- *Violent attacks increasingly carried out with modern military weapons*
  As the months went by there was an increase in the use of firearms in confrontations and other violent incidents. It was not until November that reports of the use of 'high power weapons' in violent incidents started to become more frequent. On 12 November 1997 two Chamula Indians were shot and killed near the limits of San Cristobal de las Casas and San Juan Chamula. They were ambushed by a group of men armed with 'high power' weapons. One of the victims had 15 gunshot wounds.[174] On 24 November 1997 residents from Chimix to Polho in Chenalho claimed that they had seen armed men threatening to exterminate the Zapatistas and members of Las Abejas. It was also reported at that time that bursts of machine guns could be heard (near Pechequil) in Chenalho.[175] Finally, a report on 25 November 1997 stated that the community of Acteal (Chenalho) had been under paramilitary attack for seven days. Four houses in the community were burned and Zapatista sympathizers were attacked. Fifteen armed men were responsible according to Chenalho officials and members of the autonomous government of Polho (Chenalho). Women accused the attackers of rape, carrying high calibre weapons and stealing crops. A woman said she recognized an 'ex-military' man with a machine gun burning houses with other armed men in the community of Pechequil in Chenalho.[176]

- *The sudden display in public of military-style weapons*
  Throughout 1997, the public display of military-style weapons became increasingly common. On 25 September 1997 a young PRI supporter was stopped from firing at a crowd during a protest organized by the autonomous municipal authorities of Chenalho. He was turned in to the authorities for carrying a weapon of exclusive army use, but was freed a few hours later.[177]

  According to the director of the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Centre (FBCHRC), Pablo Romo, armed civilians were seen on a daily basis driving around together with policemen, "as if they were part of the Mixed Operations (police and army)".[178] On 24 November 1997 residents from Chimix to Polho (Chenalho) saw armed men threatening to "exterminate" the Zapatistas and members of Las Abejas. Bursts of machine gun fire could be heard near Pechequil (Chenalho).[179] On 3 December men in Federal Army and Police uniforms, as well as seven state police agents in the community of Majomut, were seen with AK-47s of exclusive use to the Mexican Army. According to FBCHRC, those weapons were seen in Tzajalucum and Pechequil. Additionally, members of the Autonomous Council of Polho said that there were 8,000 refugees from 32 communities in Chenalho alone.[180]

  Just four days before the massacre, on 18 December 1997, armed PRI supporters were patrolling the highway that connects the villages of Acteal and La Esperanza. At the same time, army and police units were patrolling other areas literally facing the armed PRI supporters on the other side of the highway. Finally, the Zapatista Autonomous Council of Polho confirmed that at least 150 armed PRI supporters belonged to a paramilitary group in Chenalho.[181]

- *Government programmes that distribute weapons to poorly-trained citizens or paramilitary organizations*
  As mentioned earlier, the open connivance between government police and military forces with paramilitary groups was seen throughout the year preceding the massacre. On 6 November Senator Carlos Payan Velver addressed the Congress regarding the situation in Chiapas and discussed the violence Paz y Justicia had been causing in the north of Chiapas. He reported that the leader of this organization was a state congressional representative and also belonged to the Peasant Solidarity Magistrate, which receives funds from the state and federal government. Among the members of Paz y Justicia is the lieutenant and regional coordinator of the Chol region, who was also responsible for distributing and selling weapons in the area. He also gave the names of 12 other officers that belonged to Peace and Justice.[182]

  However, funds to this paramilitary group persisted. On 16 December 1997 the governor of Chiapas signed an agreement with Paz y Justicia. He gave 4,600,000 pesos (about US $575,000) to encourage agricultural development and production. This was done even after human rights abuses committed by these groups were reported. According to *La Jornada*, there had been two previous payments (4 August and 4 December 1997) and the final payment was to be in May 1998. According to Zapatistas and PRD supporters, this group received sophisticated radio communication equipment as well as vehicles and money for the leaders.[183]

In November the *caciques* (political bosses), supported by the mayor Jacinto Arias Cruz and the ex-representative to the federal congress were reported to be forming small armies to fight Zapatistas. Ten communities in Chiapas were under the PRI (and the Cardenista Party) paramilitary group's control. They charged fees to local residents, recruited young men, and trained them. Armed incursions were carried out in the communities of Puebla, Los Chorros, and Chanembolo. In Mercedes Isidro, Chitamulkum, Emiliano Zapata, Simojovel, and Huitupan, Zapatista sympathizers were murdered.[184] No investigations were carried out by authorities in regard to these murders.

As late as 23 November 1997 a report from *La Jornada* described the forced recruitment of young men by paramilitary groups in Chenalho. The young men were forced into training. Families in the area were charged fees under threats of reprisals.[185] According to a report from Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Centre the young men ranged between the ages of 15 and 25.[186]

- *Effective monitoring of the demobilization of former combatants and redundant military personnel*
  Once the peace accords were signed in 1996, there was no effort by the Mexican government to demilitarize the area or disarm paramilitary groups. After the talks between the government and the EZLN broke down, there was an increased military and paramilitary presence throughout Chiapas. There were 30,000 troops stationed in Chiapas and repeated reports of military encroachment on civilian communities were made. Although some efforts to disarm the population were made, they were seen as biased toward non-PRI supporters or possible Zapatista supporters. In fact, some of the operations, in the form of roadblocks, were being carried out by the army and police with the help of (armed) PRI members and supporters.

  By November, the increased presence of military and police forces together with armed civilians was prevalent. On 24 November 1997 four military and police vehicles entered the community of Acteal in Chenalho to look for weapons. None were found. Witnesses said women were attacked by the army/police when they tried to block their way.[187] And just four days before the massacre, about 50 PRI supporters fired shots and blocked the area of Chimix in Chenalho. Vehicles were stopped and inspected. Anyone who identified himself as a Zapatista sympathizer was detained.[188]

- *Effects of the misuse of light weapons*
  There are four major consequences or effects stemming from the proliferation, ready availability, and excess accumulation of weapons in a society, all of which were present in Chiapas. First, it is the civilians who suffer. While casualties to the police, paramilitary groups, and their guerrilla opponents in this region were occurring in the lead-up to the massacre, it was mainly civilians who were killed, wounded, or displaced because of these weapons. Second, the presence of these weapons and the armed environment they created brought economic, social, and political development in this very poor region to a standstill. Third, Chiapas reflects the growing reality that the proliferation of weapons leads to the militarization of society, in which disputes are increasingly resolved by force of arms. Development cannot be effective, let alone begin, in the presence of an armed society. The fourth negative consequence of an armed environment is that citizens who would not normally acquire weapons feel that they have to do so for security.[189]

Violence in the highlands and particularly in Chenalho began immediately after the breakdown of talks between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government. The first sign was the threat of ejection of the non-governmental organizations in San Cristobal de las Casas by the mayor in January.[190] Following that, intimidation and threats of violence escalated with arrests of priests and peasants in March.[191] By May, violence, including what was referred to as "two days of shooting and mayhem" was present.[192] Armed confrontations between peasants in the municipality of Chenalho increased in intensity and frequency with deaths, injuries, disappearances, kidnappings, and arrests becoming more common. In just two days in October, 475 people were expelled from Chenalho accompanied by civilian deaths and injuries and dozen of homes destroyed.[193] By the end of October, in Chenalho paramilitary violence caused a state of siege in which hundreds of Indians from at least eight communities fled. Most of the people that fled the area left after 15 October when police and the military started streaming into the area.[194] In October and November alone it was estimated that 15 people had been killed as a result of the violence in Chenalho.[195]

Furthermore, it was in these two months that violence became extreme and frequent. On 8 November 1997, about 50 Indian, peasant, human rights, and Christian organizations met in the Meeting for Peace and Reconciliation. They expressed their concern over the increased appearances of paramilitary groups in the three conflict zones (North, Altos, and Lacandon Jungle) and the creation of new paramilitary groups like MIRA (Anti-Zapatista Revolutionary Indian Movement) and Red Mask. Groups like Paz y Justicia and Chinchulines had become stronger and now had sophisticated radio communication equipment and training camps.[196]

A press release from the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Centre from 17 November warned, "Terror is spread in this municipality (Chenalho)… People here have called for help and justice… However, the people here see police and armed civilians closely together."[197]

It was in November that the situation really turned critical. Not only did the violence become more intense, but it also became focused on the particular municipality of Chenalho, where the massacre was to take place. On 18 November 1997 the paramilitary group Red Mask,[198] alleged PRI supporters, killed six Tzotzil Indians, Zapatista supporters, burned about 50 homes, and expelled 4,000 people from 12 communities in Chenalho.[199] According to several non-governmental organizations, in just one day 500 families fled from the violence in Chenalho.[200] A witness to one of many ambushes carried out by armed groups stated, "There is no authority or law… We will take justice into our own hands."[201]

By mid November there were reports of paramilitary groups and policemen holding communities in Chenalho under siege and controlling roads and paths. It was at this time that the director of the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Centre stated that the rate of violence had been very high, perhaps reaching the highest level in almost three years of conflict in the state, with more than 100 houses burned and 1,800 refugees in a municipality (Chenalho) with 30,000 people.

As a result of the escalation of violence in Chenalho, thousands of Zapatista-supporting Indians from different regions of Chiapas marched in San Cristobal de las Casas to demand the implementation of the San Andres Accords and to denounce violence and impunity. "If they keep killing our comrades we have to defend ourselves with weapons," said Zapatista Comandante Ezequiel.[202] At the same time it was reported after the massacre how the paramilitary group who perpetrated it was looking for weapons that "kill a lot of people", days before the incident.[203]

By the beginning of December the wave of violence had left a total of 29 Indians dead and between 1,500 and 4,000 refugees in Chenalho alone.[204] Thirty-two observers (National and International Civilian Observation Mission for Peace in Chiapas) confirmed the volatile situation in Chenalho and noted that 60 per cent of the refugees, in a camp of 1,000 people from five different communities were children. A brigade of the National Human Rights Commission in the Altos and Jungle region sent to inspect the communities in Chenalho affected by the violence was "prevented" from visiting several communities including Acteal.[205] It was at this point that, because of the fear of a further escalation of violence, PRI and Zapatista supporters signed a non-aggression agreement in the community of Las Limas in Chenalho.[206] However, almost immediately the commission established to verify the implementation of this non-aggression agreement (between local fighting groups) had to cancel its tour of the communities in Chenalho affected by the violence after it was ambushed by hooded armed men. One person died and at least seven were injured. Fifteen of the members of this commission were "kidnapped" for two hours by drunk PRI militants near Chimix.[207] Just four days before the massacre, about 50 PRI supporters fired shots and blocked the area of Chimix in Chenalho. Vehicles were stopped and inspected. Anyone who identified himself or herself as a Zapatista sympathizer was detained.[208]

Finally, on 22 December 1997, several dozen gunmen armed with AK-47s, some armed with expanding bullets, .22 calibre rifles, and machetes, and wearing uniforms and masks, killed 45 Tzotzil Indians in the municipality of Chenalho, the town of Acteal in the state of Chiapas. Fifteen children were also injured in the incident. State police and army outposts were located within a mile of the village; however, nobody was sent to the scene.[209]

Conclusion

An analysis of the events leading up to this massacre reveal an all too familiar pattern: civilian casualties, disrupted development and the collapse of mechanisms for peacefully resolving conflicts which accompany the proliferation and misuse of sophisticated light weapons of war.[210] It is a great tragedy that in spite of the presence of multiple warning indicators, weapons-related and otherwise, this terrible incident was not prevented.[211]

The argument is often made, when discussing early warning and the need to act, that it is impossible to know which incidents are inevitable and which are false alarms. This is indeed a concern and should always be considered. However, this case in Acteal is particularly compelling. By isolating the weapons-related indicators, both direct and indirect, there was little or no doubt that a human tragedy was to take place. Moreover, these indicators pointed to the exact place where it was to be carried out. Finally, the indicators left little doubt as to what could have been done to stop this massacre. For an entire year observers had watched the area become flooded with weapons at the same time as tensions increased. This was not done in secrecy, yet the repeated calls from residents and observers in the area for the disarming and disbanding of paramilitary groups went unanswered. In fact, there was overt collusion between those who committed the massacre and those who should have been the first to act on the warnings – the local government, police, and military personnel in the area.

In sum, the massacre in Acteal presents a near perfect case of weapons-related early warning indicators predicting a human tragedy. Why nothing was done to prevent the massacre is beyond the scope of this report, although hints of the answer are implicit in the chronology of events. Acteal strengthens the case that the presence of military-style weapons in an area of instability can only lead to further destabilization, heightened tensions, mistrust, and the loss of human life.

Incorporating Weapons Indicators into Early Warning: The Way Forward

Edward J. Laurance

The growing literature and experience of early warning has also produced a list of tasks that point the way forward. Many of them are applicable to making progress in the specific area of integrating weapons-specific indicators into the work of early warning. For example, Krumm in the Davies and Gurr book has outlined "Next Steps to Advance Early Action", with specific advice to the early warning community, donor governments, international organizations, and the private sector. Heeding this advice could well serve the goal of advancing the use of weapons-specific early warning.

In the author's *Light Weapons and Early Warning*, a similar list of next steps was developed, focused more broadly on solving the problems that stem from the proliferation, accumulation, availability, and misuse of light weapons. Some of those recommendations are directly relevant to the goal of increasing the development and use of weapons-specific early warning, especially for the United Nations. They are revisited in light of the significant attention paid to early warning in the year since they were written (April 1998).

This report has established that the UN has problems in providing weapons-specific early warning. How can this be fixed? The first focal point would be the mandates of these operations. Given the importance of arms flows and build-ups on conflict, any mandate should give the UN the capacity to monitor and report such activity. The list of early warning indicators developed in this report is a good place to start. In addition:

- UN forces should be given the mandate to collect and destroy all weapons related to the conflict. In addition to taking them out of commission, such a mandate would give peacekeepers much more information as to the types, models, and sources of weapons in the region.
- A third action could be the creation of a specific department dedicated to arms issues at UNDPKO in New York and in each peace operation headquarters in the field. In New York this department could focus on creating transparency, in the form of a reporting system that focuses on the types of information previously discussed in this report.
- All of these actions would serve the critical overall purpose of emphasizing the importance of weapons in the outbreak and exacerbation of conflict. They would be huge steps forward in developing an international norm against the proliferation, accumulation, availability, and misuse of lethal military-style weapons by civilians. The way the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) dealt with the anti-personnel landmines issue makes the point. DHA has a web site on the Internet which arguably serves as the focal point for most of the action dealing with anti-personnel mines, for NGOs as well as national governments and intergovernmental organizations. They are also active in publicizing the negative effects of this weapon. A similar UN organizational home is needed for small arms and light weapons, such as the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

- One reality emerging from the recent efforts on early warning is that UN agencies often work at odds with each other, due to differing mandates and bureaucratic norms and practices. Another reality is that weapons-specific early warning is in many cases best provided by non-military organizations, the service providers whose work is being disrupted by the effects of these weapons. An obvious next step is the increased coordination of the UN agencies affected by these weapons, and such an effort is underway. At the direction of the United Nations Secretary General, the Department of Disarmament Affairs has developed the Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA). Agencies involved include the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Department of Public Information, the UN Development Programme, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, UNICEF, the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[212]
- The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is promoting an initiative on the humanitarian implications of small arms at the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The OCHA has submitted a paper to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group with proposals for action in the area of advocacy on humanitarian grounds and the collection of data essential for an effective advocacy programme. Weapons-specific early warning indicators are an important component of this document.

In addition to these specific recommendations for the United Nations, there is a general set of steps suggested by the analysis contained in this report.

More work on establishing the link between weapons and conflict

Case studies and reports from the field must continue to advance the proposition that concentrating on the proliferation, accumulation, availability, and misuse of weapons will have a pay-off for conflict prevention. Weapons-specific indicators will not become fully integrated into early warning until the researchers and practitioners believe that eliminating the tools of violence is one of the best ways to reduce violent conflict and get on with needed economic, social, and political development.

Bringing in everyone affected by light weapons

It is clear that in the conflicts taking place today, weapons are much more than a military or security question. They are a humanitarian issue, and because of this many more types of organizations must be involved in developing early warning of their accumulation and availability. For the reasons stated in this report, this will be a challenge for humanitarian relief, development, and human rights NGOs unfamiliar with the specifics of weapons, their use, and methods of transfer. But the effort will be worth it. It is true that NGOs are busy delivering services. But when these services are disrupted because of weapons, at that moment they are in possession of information critical to the future development of the conflict.

Enhance knowledge of light weapons in general

To develop reliable and credible weapons-specific indicators, much needs to be done to enhance knowledge of such weapons in all their aspects. Efforts need to be taken to reduce the stigma attached to dealing with weapons, heretofore and still in some circles considered within the purview of military or intelligence agencies only. As one example of what can be done, efforts are underway to develop a field manual or handbook that would describe the various weapons typically used. This would enhance the capability of field personnel from civil society, the media, NGOs, governments, and IGOs to recognize when lethal weapons were being accumulated and displayed in the streets. In addition, this handbook could instruct field personnel in how to develop a locally-administered voluntary weapons collection programme, along with specific instructions on how to destroy these weapons. The mere distribution of such materials to the field would be a signal in itself that the taboo of reporting on weapons was being eliminated.[213]

Weapons-specific event data

The rising importance of event data should be carried over into the realm of weapons-specific events. The goal should be to incorporate such data into conflict monitoring systems.[214] Even reporting news related to weapons can be important. As reported earlier, the Monterey Institute and the Bonn International Center for Conversion have developed an abstract event data base on specific aspects of the light weapons issue. Strengthening this effort awaits further progress on the utility of integrating weapons information into conflict prevention. For example, if the effort at the UN to integrate its agencies on the issue of light weapons progresses, and NGOs become more involved in this regard, the sources for event data generation will increase significantly. Bringing national military intelligence agencies into this effort, despite the challenges involved, should also be attempted. This is and always has been their comparative advantage.

Light weapons and the "early warning about what?" question

Much of the literature focuses on the importance of selecting indicators that are appropriate for the growing variety of situations for which early warning is required. Several chapters in the Davies and Gurr volume put forth typologies of conflict. As Brecke puts it, "most studies of conflicts and their causes either do not distinguish between different types of conflict or else employ only the most simple categorization schemes". Much more work needs to be done to answer Brecke's question: "What are the combinations or configurations of those indicators that 'point' to different types of conflict?"[215]

A final plea

It is imperative that all those involved in the processes discussed in this report make the warnings louder and more graphic. In the words of Andrei Dmitrichev of the UNHCR, there is a need for a "language to formalize communication between actors with a vertical information system".[216] This is a particularly relevant need in the often arcane and secret world of military affairs, weapons in particular. Understanding hate radio broadcasts requires a cross-cultural interpretation and is easier to ignore than the universally accepted truth as to how many rounds can be fired from an assault rifle and with what effect.

Assault rifles, hand grenades, and other lethal light weapons that are imported and distributed in areas of tension can have no other impact than exacerbating conflict. Their effects are well known and need to be graphically portrayed as a means of getting the attention of those who can respond. This was the method used by the successful campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines. In reporting on the Rwanda case, George and Holl state that one reason for a lack of response to early warning is that "[s]uch events are likely to remain equivocal… capable of diverse interpretations".[217] This is what must and can change. What are the "diverse" interpretations of the act of handing out assault rifles and ammunition to poorly-trained Hutu citizens groups being told on national radio to kill Tutsi? The dictum that early warning indicators do not speak for themselves seems less true in the face of such evidence.

Endnotes

1 John. L. Davies and Ted Robert Gurr (eds.), *Preventive Measures: Building Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems.* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998; Susanne Schmeidl and Howard Adelman (eds.), *Early Warning and Early Response.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Available online at www.ciaonet.org.

2 The literature is extensive. For a readily available summary see Edward J. Laurance, *Light Weapons and Intrastate Conflict: Early Warning Factors and Preventive Action.* Washington: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1998. Also see Documents section of the website of the International Action Network on Small Arms (www.iansa.org).

3 Documents on all of these developments can be found at the website of the International Action Network on Small Arms (www.iansa.org).

4 Raymond Bonner, "Nations Endorse Measure to Limit the Spread of Small Arms." *The New York Times*, 5 April 1998.

5 Laurance, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-78. See also, Edward J. Laurance, "Small Arms, Light Weapons, and Conflict Prevention: The New Post-Cold War Logic of Disarmament" in Barnett R. Rubin (ed.), *Cases and Strategies for Preventive Action.* New York: The Century Foundation Press, 1998), pp. 135-168. Report of The Center for Preventive Action, Council on Foreign Relations and Sarah Meek, "Light Weapons and Early Warning: Initial Steps" in Virginia Gamba and Sarah Meek (Eds.), *Society Under Siege: Licit Responses to Illicit Arms.* South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 1998, pp. 93-103.

6 Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

7 The Arms Division of Human Rights Watch has generated critical early warning information on weapons flows and misuse based on this reality. See Joost Hilterman, "Human Rights Abuses and Arms Trafficking in Central Africa" in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-180.

8 Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

9 Laurance, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.

10 D.M. Last, "Early Warning of Violent Conflict: The Role of Multi-functional Observer Missions" in Schmeidl and Adelman, *op. cit.*, Chapter 9.

11 Hilterman, in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*

12 For an in-depth assessment which reveals the extensive and in some cases exclusive access of NGOs to such information, see Bruce Jones and Janice Gross Stein, "NGOs and Early Warning: The Case of Rwanda" in Schmeidl and Adelman, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6. Also, the fall 1998 issue of *Foreign Policy* is dedicated to the new role of NGOs. For commentary on the information-gathering role of NGOs see P.J. Simmons, "Learning to Live with NGOs" in this issue.

13 Exceptions include the proposed indicator list of John Cockell of Canada in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 238. He proposes a category called "Military/Arms Supply" which includes weapons-specific indicators. Brecke, in this same volume, includes as "catalysts" such indicators as "military begins increasing weapons production or purchases" and "organized political groups are procuring weapons, probably from the black market". Peter Brecke, "A Pattern Recognition Approach to Conflict Early Warning".

14 *Early Warning Indicators.* Undated publication. Forum on Early Warning and Early Response. (www.fewer.org)

15 Other work on early warning that includes military, security, or defense expenditures as indicators includes the UNHCR (military expenditures) and the FUGI model, which uses "growing ratios of military expenditure to GDP". Akira Onishi, "The FUGI Model as a Global Early Warning System for Refugees" in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

16 The author was the consultant to the first two United Nations panels of governmental experts convened in 1992-94 to develop the UN Register of Conventional Arms.

17 Alex P. Schmid, "Indicator Development: Issues in Forecasting Conflict Escalation" in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

18 See the chapter by Escobar in this report.

19 *Light Weapons in Chiapas: Negative Consequences and Difficult Solutions.* Report by the Program for Security and Development, Monterey Institute of International Studies, California, http://sand.miis.edu.

20 Schmid, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

21 See the chapters in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.* on the GEDS, KEDS and PANDA projects.

22 Edward J. Laurance, "Events Data and Policy Analysis: Improving the Potential for Applying Academic Research to Foreign and Defense Policy Problems. *Policy Sciences*, 23 (1990), pp. 111-132.

23 Both the Program on Security and Development at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and the Surplus Weapons Project of the Bonn International Center for Conversion collect such events. See http://sand.miis.edu and www.bicc.de.

[24] Hilterman, in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*

[25] For example, Krumm refers to the "Paralysis Induced by Sovereignty". Donald Krumm, "Early Warning: An Action Agenda" in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*, p. 249. Meek also cites the views of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) regarding the development of an OAU early warning system. "Any efforts at early warning must, as a matter of course, recognize the fundamentals of national sovereignty, the need for confidentiality and a means of verifying information." Meek, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

[26] For example, see the Preamble of all of the General Assembly Resolutions on conventional arms, especially small arms, in the past four years.

[27] For an example see Aldo A. Benini, Anthony V. Minnaar, and Sam Pretorious, "Persistent Collective Violence and Early Warning Systems: The Case of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa" *Armed Forces and Society,* Vol. 24, No. 4 (Summer 1998), p. 508.

[28] William Zartman cited in Alexander George and Jane Holl, *The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy.* Washington: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997.

[29] Krumm, in Davies and Gurr, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-250.

[30] Interviews with UNDPKO personnel 1997-1999.

[31] For additional commentary on the role of intelligence-gathering in peacekeeping, see Laurance, *Light Weapons and Intrastate Conflict, op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

[32] George and Holl, *op. cit.*

[33] Philip A. Schrodt and Deborah J. Gerner, *The Impact of Early Warning on Institutional Responses to Complex Humanitarian Crises.* University of Kansas, September 1998.

[34] *Op. cit.*

[35] Information on this and other weapons collection experience can be found at the Program for Arms Control, Disarmament and Conversion (PACDC) at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and the Surplus Weapons Project of the Bonn International Center for Conversion.

[36] Anthea Jeffrey, *The Natal Story: 16 Years of Conflict.* South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1997, p. 709.

[37] Although by no means conclusive, the increasing use of firearms in crime in South Africa has followed the increasing availability of firearms to civilians and the increase in illicit firearms in the country. In other studies, gun availability has been linked to increased levels of gun violence, see J Roth, *Firearms and Violence.* National Institute of Justice Research in Brief, US Department of Justice, February 1994, p. 1.

[38] As will be discussed in the following section, the investigations into policing during the 1980s and early 1990s in Kwazulu-Natal have made public collusion between the apartheid police and security forces and Inkatha, a political party in opposition to the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front, in fomenting political violence and being involved in the political killing of thousands of people. Most of the available information is being made accessible through the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was released in November 1998.

[39] See Edward J Laurance, *Light Weapons and Intrastate Conflict: Early Warning Factors and Preventive Action,* Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Carnegie Corporation, New York, July 1998, p. 26.

[40] Following the banning of the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front was created. It and Inkatha represented the two black opposition parties in South Africa until the unbanning of the ANC.

[41] *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,* Volume 3, Chapter 3, paragraph 22.

[42] Thanks to Jenni Irish and Antoinette Louw for their assistance in this section.

[43] See endnote 40.

[44] Anthea Jeffrey, *The Natal Story – 16 Years of Conflict.* South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1997, p. 255.

[45] For more on this period of South African history, see Anthony de V. Minnaar, *Conflict and violence in Natal/Kwazulu: Historical Perspectives.* Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1991; Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Final Report,* 1998; John Aitchison, *The Seven Days War: 25-31 March 1990 – The Victims' Narrative.* Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1991; Anthony Minnaar and Sam Pretorius, *Unsuspecting Targets: An Analysis of Massacres in South Africa 1990-1993,* paper presented at the 37th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Toronto, Canada, November 1994; and Anthea Jeffrey, *The Natal Story – 16 Years of Conflict.* South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1997.

[46] A. Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] Anthony Minnaar, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[49] See the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol 2, Chapter 2.

[50] A. Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 325 -326.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] Max Coleman (ed.), *A Crime Against Humanity: Analysing the Repression of the Apartheid State.* Human Rights Committee of South Africa, Johannesburg, 1998, p. 218.

[55] *Ibid.* Data for 1990 not available.

[56] I am grateful for the assistance provided by Jakkie Potgieter in preparing this section.

[57] In 1996 over 1,500 ceasefire violations were reported by the United Nations as having occurred in 1995.

[58] The Angolan situation is complicated by the fighting that occurred in the Republic of Congo, Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Great Lakes region and other parts of Africa in which Angolan governmental or UNITA forces were involved. For the sake of brevity, these have not been included in this analysis in great detail, but the point should be made that discussing a case such as Angola in isolation cannot be done at a practical level.

[59] Cristina Muller, "UN Envoy Warns Angola May be Rearming". *Reuters News Service,* 13 March 1995.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] "UNITA Radio Catalogues Government Actions Against UNITA and Civilians". *BBC Monitoring Service,* 20 March 1995. It should be noted that much of the information in this section is sourced from radio transmissions of UNITA and the Angolan government. The incidents mentioned here are for illustrative purposes and have not been verified by other sources.

[62] Al Venter, "Mercenaries Fuel Next Round in Angolan Civil War". *Jane's International Defence Review,* 1 March 1996, p. 63.

[63] Bob Drogin, "Angolan Demobilization More of a Trickle than a Flow". *Los Angeles Times,* 2 April 1996, p. 5.

[64] Jakkie Potgieter, "The Price of War and Peace: A Critical Assessment of the Disarmament Component of United Nations Operations in Southern Africa" in Virginia Gamba (ed.), *Society Under Siege: Crime, Violence and Illegal Weapons.* Institute for Security Studies, Halfway House, 1997, p. 154.

[65] "Angola – As War Escalates, Cleared Areas are Re-mined". *Global Information Network,* 11 January 1999.

[66] See the earlier section of this report on reliable and publicly available indicators.

[67] Olara Otunnu, Secretary General's Special Representative for children in armed conflict at the UN Security Council, Prep Com newsletter No. 11, 30 June 1998. (www.prepcom.org)

[68] This paper uses the term 'light weapons' to cover all man-portable weapons up to 100mm, including shoulder-fired weapons with a capability against low flying aircraft, but excluding pistols and revolvers.

[69] This figure is for 1986-90 and is provided by Barnett Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan.* Yale University Press, 1995, p.182.

[70] See Jasjit Singh (ed.), *Light Weapons and International Security.* New Delhi: Pugwash, IDSA, BASIC, 1992. Also see Tara Kartha, "Non Conventional Threats to Security" in Jasjit Singh (ed.), *South Africa-India Strategic Partnership.* New Delhi: IDSA, 1997.

[71] This includes in India 57,000 Sri Lankans, 98,000 Tibetans, 51,000 Chakmas, 19,916 Afghans.

[72] See Robert G. Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security under Zia 1977-78.* Houndmills: Macmillan 1991. Also see Christina Lamb, *Waiting for Allah.* London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991.

[73] See Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistani Army.* New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1984.

[74] Barrister Samin Khan, "The Islamic Revolution and *Jihad* in Afghanistan". *Defence Journal (Karachi)* Vol. XVI, Nos 4 & 5, 1990.

[75] *Indian Defence Review.* July 1987.

[76] *Sant* is a religious title.

[77] This is brought out in interrogation reports as well as by Pakistani newspapers which note that at least 300 ISI top line agents were operating in Kashmir by the mid 1980s.

[78] *Herald.* July 1993, p. 60.
[79] Syed Imran Akbar in *Frontier Post* (Pakistan), 31 August 1993.
[80] See *Herald* (Karachi) 1985. Also see Barnett Rubin, *op. cit.*
[81] *The Friday Times.* September 3 1993.
[82] Even today, these centres like Karachi and Lahore (which are nodal distribution points) and Sheikpura, Khokrapar, and routes from the frontier into Karachi are still experiencing violence.
[83] *Asian Age*. March 1995.
[84] Crime In India – 1988 *National Crime Records Bureau, New Delhi.*
[85] Joint Operation by Revenue and Finance Ministries in coasts of Gujerat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala, and also in New Delhi. The operation netted some 140 smugglers and goods worth Rs 90 crore.
[86] *India Today.* 31 May 1994, p. 129.
[87] *India Today.* 31 May 1989, p. 71.
[88] *Ibid.*
[89] Crime In India – 1992 *National Crime Records Bureau, New Delhi.*
[90] Crime In India – 1988 *National Crime Records Bureau, New Delhi.*
[91] For an account of the pipeline see Mohammed Youssef and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap*. Jang: Lahore 1992.
[92] For two different estimates see Christina Lamb op. cit., and *The SIPRI Yearbook 1995.* Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 1995, p. 584.
[93] CIA Report as published in *Friday Times* (Karachi) 3 September 1993.
[94] *The News.* 13 September 1994.
[95] *Asian Recorder.* 17-23 June 1988.
[96] Senior militant cadres like Ganga Singh Dhillon, Manjit Singh of Babbar Khalsa, and Gurjit Sigh of A-ISSF met with Pakistani officers in Rawalpindi in the last week of December 1987, and are reported to have agreed to escalate the violence. Others who received training were the elements of Khalistan commando Force, Damdami Taksal and A-ISSF. This was revealed after interrogation of infiltrators by BSF.
[97] For more details see *Times of India* in *Asian Recorder* 17-23 June 1988, p. 20066.
[98] Dixit. n 65. p. 143, *op. cit.*
[99] Lt. Gen. Depinder Singh, *"The IPKF in Sri Lanka"*. Trishul: Noida, 1992, p. 77.
[100] *Frontline,* 12-28 October 1991, p. 11.
[101] Tavleen Singh, *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors.* New Delhi: Viking, 1995, p. 115.
[102] *Indian Defence Review* (July 1989).
[103] K. Subramanyam, "Arms for Afghan Rebels", *Strategic Studies*, Vol. IV. No 10, January 1981.
[104] For a collection of essays on the political state of the country see I.A.Rahman, *Pakistan under Siege.* Lahore: Rhotas, 1990.
[105] See Christina Lamb, *op. cit.* Also Emma Duncan, *"Breaking the Curfew"*. London: Michael Joseph, 1989.
[106] *Dawn* (Karachi). 30 January 1995.
[107] See the *Indian Express* and *Times of India in Asian Recorder.* 29 April-5 May 1988, p. 19989.
[108] Prominent among these were reports filed in *Frontline* (Madras) which were detailed and of a high quality. Particular mention needs to be made of reports filed by V. Jayanth and S. Suryanarayanan.
[109] See for an account by the then Governor of the province Jagmohan, *My Frozen Turbulence.* New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1991.
[110] Author's interviews with local journalists of vernacular and English press, 16 April 1998. Names of papers have been kept out at their request.
[111] Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist.* New Delhi: Viking, 1994, p. 189.
[112] *Newstrack.* September 1990.
[113] For example see *Newstrack* September and October 1990. Also see reporting by *Hindu* for the period 1989-1992.
[114] Report of the Special Committee of the Senate "The Situation in Sindh". 8 December 1989. See *Herald* January 1990 for an analysis of this report.
[115] Youssef and Adkin n.11, *op. cit.*

116 General K.M. Arif *Working with Zia.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
117 Report detailed in *News.* 6 May 1997.
118 *Jane's Intelligence Review.* March 1997, p. 136.
119 Tavleen Singh. *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors.* New Delhi: Viking, 1995, p. 109.
120 *Hindustan Times,* 27 February 1988.
121 For details on the release see *Hindu in Asian Recorder* Vol. XXXVI, No.4. January 22-28 1990.
122 *India Today.* 31 December 1989.
123 *Report of the Governor to the President of India,* November 1990 (tabled in Lok Sabha on 27 December 1990).
124 *Ibid.*
125 The Report of the Special Presidential Commission of Inquiry probing into the assassination of Lt. Gen. Kobbekaduwa. *Government Publication Bureau,* Colombo, Sessional Paper No IX, 1997.
126 *Newsline* (Karachi). October 1989.
127 *View point.* 31 May 1990, p. 8.
128 For a price comparison see Rahimullah Yusufzai *Newsline,* October 1989. For 1994 prices see Jasjit Singh (ed.), *"Light Weapons and International Security" op. cit.*
129 See Tara Kartha, "The Diffusion of Light Weapons in Pakistan" *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol. 8. No 1. (Spring 1997), pp. 71-87.
130 *Annual Report 1995-96.* Government of India. Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi. These weapons have been exhibited both at Srinagar and at Delhi.
131 Interview with sector commander of ULFA (1988), 28 April 1996.
132 Brig Tissa Jayatunga, Army spokesman in *Asian Recorder,* January 1-7 1997, p. 26156.
133 There is no clear indication of this, but media persons, students and others repeated the allegation during the course of the author's visit.
134 Rohan Gunaratna, *International and Regional Security implication of the Sri Lankan Tamil Insurgents.* Alumni Association of the Bandarnaike Centre for International Studies and International Foundation of Sri Lankans, United Kingdom, p. 29.
135 S.C. Sardeshpande. *Assignment Jaffna.* New Delhi: Lancer, 1992.
136 Author's interview with a Sri Lankan official source.
137 The figures for 1992 are not entirely clear. See *Herald* 1990. Also see Navaid Hussain in *Dawn,* 31 March 1996.
138 *Nalanda Ellawala,* 11 February 1997.
139 *Island,* 16 March 1997.
140 *Viewpoint,* 11 January 1990.
141 Interview with the then ULFA district commander by author (1987), 30 April 1996.
142 On 12 December 1997 the Mexican Center for Historical Research of Armed Movements (CIHMA) reported that "at least 14" guerrilla groups exist in Mexico. Three of them operate in Chiapas including the EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army), he EPR (Revolutionary Popular Army) and the FACLN (Clandestine Armed Forces of National Liberation). [Joshua Paulson, "CIHMA: Fourteen Armed Rebel Organizations in Mexico," Zapatismo News Page/ News Summary 19 November-12 December 1997/ Briefs, www.peak.org/~joshua/fzln/, 12 December 1997.
143 William H. Godnick, *Illicit Arms in Central America.* Program for Arms Control, Disarmament and Conversion at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Prepared for an international workshop of the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) "Small Arms and Light Weapons: An Issue for the OSCE". Vienna, 9-10 November 1998.
144 *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 1998.* Released by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, US Department of State, Washington, DC, February 1999, Updated August 1998, *The Ties That Bind,* By Aileen S. Yoo.
145 On March 28 1998 thousands of people marched in Mexico City and 14 other cities across Mexico to demand stricter punishments for criminals and corrupt police. One of the banners read, "Institute the death penalty or give us the right to carry guns!" In Mexico City there were approximately 628 crimes committed with weapons resulting in 6 deaths each day. "Thousands March in Mexico City Against Crime". CNN Interactive, 29 March 1998.
146 61.8 per cent of the people murdered in Mexico City were shot. It has been reported that anything from a revolver to an AK-47 can be bought in Mexico City's black market from US$200 up to US$1,000. Baleadas, 61.8 per cent de personas asesinadas en tres años y medio, señala Altamirano. *La Jornada,* 4 de noviembre de 1998, Mexico, DF, Mexico.

147 *Light Weapons in Chiapas: Negative Consequences and Difficult Solutions.* Program for Arms Control, Disarmament and Conversion.

148 Jesus Ramirez, "Chiapas, mapa de la contrainsurgencia" taken from La *Jornada,* spin.com.mx/~flores/FZLN/archivo/paramilitares/home/html, 23 November 1997; Jesus Ramirez, "La Accion de Nuevos Grupos Paramilitares Confirman Ofensiva Silenciosas Los Zapatistas," *El Tiempo,* San Cristobal de Las Casas, 27 October 1997.

149 Jose Gil Olmos, "Hoy, 12 meses de las observaciones presidenciales al anteproyecto de Cocopa". *La Jornada,* 20 December 1997.

150 Jose Gil Olmos, "Hoy, 12 meses de las observaciones presidenciales al anteproyecto de Cocopa". *La Jornada,* 20 December 1997.

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152 Edward J. Laurance, *Monitoring the Flow, Availability and Misuse of Light Weapons: A New Tool for the Early Warning of Violent Conflict,* Prepared for the Meeting of the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response, December 1998.

153 http://www.laneta.apc.org/cdhbcasas/.

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157 Jim Cason & David Brooks, "EU vendio a Mexico en 84-93 diez veces mas armamento y equipo militar que de 1950 a 83". *La Jornada,* 21 August 1996.

158 Joshua Paulson, "Resurgence of Violence Takes Toll on the Highlands and Northern Zone of Chiapas". Zapatismo News Page, 21 September-20 October 1997 – taken from *La Jornada.*

159 "Siguen adiestrando kaibiles a soldados mexicanos, acusan en Guatemala" *La Jornada,* 15 November 1997.

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163 Rosa Elvira Vargas, "Menos Trabas para la detencion de criminales, plantea Zedillo". *La Jornada,* 10 December 1997.

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207 This incident was used as the original argument for the massacre-revenge; his father allegedly helped organize the group. See Juan Balboa, “Emboscada en Quextic dejo un muerto y 7 heridos; gresca priista: Las Abejas”. *La Jornada,* 18 December 1997; “Comunicado de Prensa”. National Mediation Commission & Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Center, Chiapas, Mexico, 18 December 1997.

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[211] On 2 December 1997 the governor of Chiapas, Julio Cesar Ruiz, was informed of the grave situation observed by the National and International Civilian Observation Mission for Peace in Chiapas in Chenalho and he promised to protect the lives, security and properties of people there and find the people who are responsible for this. See “Boletin de Prensa”. Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Center, Chiapas, Mexico, 3 December 1997.

[212] Document located at http://www.un.org.

[213] For a recently published weapons identification manual, See Chris Smith. *Light Weapons, Small Arms and Landmines: An Identification Manual*. London: Centre for Defence Studies, Kings College, 1999. A more inclusive manual with tutorials on weapons collection, destruction techniques, safe use and handling has been published by the Monterey Institute and the Bonn International Centre for Conversion. *Tackling Small Arms and Light Weapons: A Practical Guide for Collection and Destruction.* Monterey/Bonn: Program on Security and Development, Monterey Institute of International Studies and the Bonn International Center for Conversion, February 2000.

[214] For an example of how weapons-specific information was included in an operational database related to conflict, see Benini *et al., op. cit.*, pp. 507-508.

[215] Peter Brecke, “An Agenda for Conflict Early Warning Research”. *International Studies Notes*, Vol. 23, No.1, (Winter 1998).

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[217] George and Holl, *op. cit.*