

WHAT NEXT?

THOUGHTS FOR GLOBAL
CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING
ON ARMS CONTROL AND
ARMED VIOLENCE
REDUCTION



Instituto **SoudaPaz**

A paz na prática



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What Next?

Thoughts for global civil society working on
arms control and armed violence reduction

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Introduction

A couple years ago, in a fundraising proposal, Instituto Sou da Paz (SDP) wrote: “2012 clearly will witness the most pivotal UN gatherings on arms control in recent history. One, the ATT negotiations in July in New York will hopefully mark the successful culmination of over eight years of work on the issue for SDP. The other, the UN PoA RevCon a few weeks later, in our opinion could be a watershed moment for this process, which SDP has been involved with for over a decade. In our opinion, international arms control agreements are vessels – or tools – to achieve armed violence reduction. If in design or experience they do not live up to this promise, they have failed their purpose, and we must not insist in eternally attempting to ‘use a hammer to fix a television’. Rather, if needed, we must find novel ways to achieve said objective. In this sense, we believe the (immediate future) may demand a degree of ‘soul-searching’, brainstorming and planning next steps”.

This paper is our attempt at that brainstorming – originally the by-product of a reassessment of the best ways for SDP to work internationally but also, we hope, a provocation for global civil society to consider when debating and setting an advocacy agenda to implement over the coming years. In tandem with an internal restructuring and institutional repositioning, this exercise came at a moment of clear transition in the international processes we have been dedicated to for years, an unusual synchronicity. Therefore, 2013 was largely a year to reconsider, recalibrate questions and establish the way forward. To conduct this brainstorm and present a few possibilities, SDP began by contracting an independent external evaluation of our international advocacy work. With those recommendations in hand, we then conducted a fair amount of research, distilling dozens of articles and publications, including two recent and most relevant books.²

We also interviewed (in person or over email) a couple dozen civil society experts in the fields of arms control, disarmament and armed violence reduction. Together with our thoughts, we compiled a set of recommendations on future advocacy priorities for civil society to consider. While recognizing we have few answers, and only parts (or none!) of the following may be of use to a given organization, our hope is to spark – or assist in – a long-overdue conversation...

It should be noted from the outset that none of the possibilities discussed is particularly revolutionary or previously unknown. We would subscribe to the comment from one interviewed expert, who noted “there isn’t much I could suggest that has not been done already at some point over the past 20 years”.⁴ Rather, our hope is to point to issues that

have not yet been duly prioritized, but perhaps should; or have been undertaken in other areas, periods or geographical spaces, and suggest that they could be used or adapted for future efforts at different levels of advocacy work.

This is, therefore, an attempt to connect thoughts and possibilities that may be worth considering for all of those working on reducing levels of armed violence in their communities, countries, or around the globe. In this sense, we agree with Greene: “the SALW research and advocacy community proved to be creative in opening up routes in the past, and should aim to be so again”.⁵

>>> Some questions...

As foreshadowed, SDP believes civil society and governments alike should take a critical look at the arms control and disarmament landscape, and ask ourselves some difficult questions. Are we collectively making the most effective decisions? In attempting to bridge the gap between policy (what we know) and advocacy (what we focus on for political pressure), have we chosen the themes and methods that deliver optimum results, that is, a reduction of armed violence in affected communities? Are there not perhaps novel themes, ways, and fora to work internationally to achieve better results? (And: do we even know the results achieved over the last decade?)

In the realm of ‘conventional arms’, has our collective focus in the last decade – emphasizing the international trade and trafficking of arms, on one hand, and banning specific types of particularly horrible weapons, on the other – been ideal? Should it continue to guide our efforts? Or should civil society leave the comfort zone it has become somewhat accustomed to, often following United Nations diplomatic processes (or proposing new ones), and construct different paths altogether? Should we not be trailblazers, the vanguard defining the agenda, rather than automatic followers? Innovating and being creative rather than simply mimicking donor priorities? As one expert stated, perhaps civil society for once should “put diplomats in front of a fait accompli: take it or leave it”.⁶

Moreover, shouldn’t civil society apply onto itself the same level of transparency and ‘monitoring/evaluation’ that we demand of our governments? How impactful and efficient has civil society collectively been? The honest answer is that we are not sure. We have little systematic evidence, partially because there are still few objective tools to estimate the potential impact of our advocacy.

For every highly optimistic, even self-congratulatory, appraisal, there are others less so. One interviewee noted “our record would seem to indicate that we have collectively inhibited as much as we have facilitated”, while another goes further: “bluntly put, with at least five decades of work, civil society has nothing to show, and no evidence that it has any effect”.⁷ While these views may be overly pessimistic, we think asking the questions themselves can be quite productive, and a level of self-criticism (and possibly *mea culpa*) and external scrutiny extremely healthy when contemplating future efforts.

Taking stock of recent advocacy efforts, then, is essential for a clear-eyed strategy for the years to come. The same need was identified by Owen Greene regarding small arms research, with refocused priorities “in order to strategically re-engage with present and potentially hot issues for concern of senior policy-makers, recognizing that the dynamism of United Nations and regional SALW diplomacy has been in relative decline in recent years”.⁸

>>> A fresh perspective

After initial discussions on some of these (big) questions, SDP’s next step was to contract a consultancy to conduct an independent external evaluation of our international advocacy work.⁹ The results of this exercise – which included questionnaires sent to about 200 partners, colleagues and government officials as well as 30 detailed interviews – were consolidated in the final report, instrumental in helping us understand our strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the other stakeholders in our arena.

While we were pleased by overwhelmingly positive reviews of SDP’s international work – which was mostly focused on attempting to influence two UN processes, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Program of Action on SALW – many survey participants and individual interviewees confirmed our suspicions that perhaps these priorities should not monopolize our international efforts.

One common perception brought out by the evaluation was that “civil society’s balance of advocacy strategies relies too heavily on direct advocacy at the UN and too little on in-capital work”. In fact, according to the report:

“Civil society seems to have succeeded in shifting their old mass campaigning and awareness activities into this new venue (UN), but only clumsily translated their direct lobbying capacity. First, overrepresentation due to the novelty (and likely a certain amount of herd-effect) of negotiating directly in the UN headquarters has sucked valuable resources away from other, less visible but more effective strategies. Second, unlike in national capitals, “there are not many decision-makers in New York.” “Diplomats have their marching orders,” which make their positions less malleable”.¹⁰

A common thrust of those interviewed was to criticize “the excess quantity of NGO representatives, the ineffectiveness/superficiality of the participation of the majority of these individuals, and opportunity costs of sending large NGO delegations to New York”. Individual respondents (anonymous to us) were even more direct: “The tendency is to take what goes on at the UN too seriously and what goes on in their own countries not seriously enough.” Or even, “a huge problem of the ATT has been taking funds away from the work of groups that are actually going to make a difference in their countries. Instead the money has gone to airplane trips and hotels for professional advocates.”¹¹


Undoubtedly, much of such discontent stems from strongly held views on the PoA. During the evaluation, many respondents noted sentiments such as “the ATT has taken everybody’s oxygen and cast a long shadow over the PoA”. For some, this was frustrating as – in theory at least – according to one stakeholder, “the ATT was never going to be a major preventer of armed violence. The PoA and national gun laws are much more important. The ATT is important in preventing specific, occasional atrocities.”¹²

Of course, there may very well be no causation between increased attention to one effort and decreased to the other, and such a positive view of the PoA may be an overstatement, as “there’s a lot of frustration with the PoA... a lot of NGOs think it’s a dead process”. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of respondents considered that “civil society international activity centered on the PoA is on the brink of collapse, and are mostly skeptical about the prospects of revival”.¹³

In our opinion, as we wrote following the “successful” conclusion of the 2012 PoA RevCon:

“Adopting a document does not alone establish a positive outcome. The substance in the final outcome document would have to be quite strong to call the exercise a real success. The important question is whether that document provides a practical way forward to stopping the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and its dire human consequences. Under this lens, it becomes difficult to celebrate the past two weeks. All in all, the outcome document mostly restates and ‘reaffirms’ decade-old commitments. Establishing a schedule of meetings is not exactly ground-breaking. A decade is a long time to remain stagnant when the world around us and our knowledge of it are expanding at a rapid pace.

Is this outcome not the second option that Ambassador McLay of New Zealand warned about when he wrote that ‘another acrimonious failure would be as damaging to the credibility of the Programme of Action process as would one that simply and blandly restates existing commitments?’ For this RevCon, the items at the top of our wish list went unfulfilled. As I had written at the outset of the Conference, ‘the PoA’s lack of an independent mechanism to assess its actual implementation on a national level poses the largest threat to its relevance. This lethal gap must be effectively overcome during the next two weeks, with the creation of a credible blueprint for the coming into existence of an implementation assessment mechanism as soon as possible.’ No such luck.”¹⁴



Continuously over the past cycle of meetings, doubts about the PoA, and the UN system more broadly, piled up: “how much does the PoA have to show in terms of impact in the real world? Other than expensive meetings and tons of paper, what has been produced? How many lives has the PoA saved? ... can the United Nations provide the drastic changes to the status quo needed to truly make a difference on the ground? Is First Committee a productive forum to tackle global gun violence? If not, what are the alternatives?”¹⁵

Even a leading diplomat in the process, in an otherwise ‘glass half-full’ analysis, noted that “given major shortcomings in the quality and frequency of national reporting, and the lack of comprehensive independent assessments, it is almost impossible to obtain an accurate picture of PoA implementation and effectiveness and strong political cross-winds continue to prevent any meaningful discussions that might result in practical and effective improvements to small arms programs in sensitive areas such as effective border controls and controls on small arms ammunition”.¹⁶

One particularly hard-hitting critique stated that UN “small arms activity may have been a wave, not a vector. Although it undoubtedly constitutes a permanent addition to international priorities, it is not clear that it has become a self-sustaining process. Rather than the small arms movement transforming states, it appears that states have transformed the small arms movement. They accept it because it is safe; posing no serious challenges to the policies they treasure most. Governments sacrifice none of their prerogatives... Even gun rights advocates can rest assured in a process that leaves legal ownership alone. International small arms activity is accepted, in other words, because it has been tamed”.¹⁷

While we would refrain from going this far, upon further reflection, given the outcome of the 2012 meeting, and those of the PoA meetings in the last several years, SDP became convinced that, at least for the moment, investing time and effort into this diplomatic process is a poor choice. While this diagnosis and prescription, of course, is particular to our organization and circumstances, we would nonetheless suggest that it could also be applicable to other civil society actors bent on reducing global levels of armed violence.

Note the emphasis above: this is not to say that the national implementation of its politically-binding commitments should not be a priority. As a framework for action on a national basis, the PoA was and remains an essential guiding document, and many countries could benefit greatly from taking it more seriously.¹⁸ Moreover, often the sidelines

of meetings, between side events, networking and information and research sharing, can be highly productive. It is the discussions among diplomats at the UN that have, in our opinion, reached a crippling stagnation.

Even within these limited parameters, however, civil society continues to have an important role to play. As Kirsten notes of the last several years, it is not that the UN process “had come to a halt or no longer mattered”, but rather that “its range of influence was more limited, with NGO involvement more dissipated and fragmented”.¹⁹ For the important opportunities that remain, or can be feasibly created, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) is poised to remain the major civil society driver for progress.²⁰

Regarding the ATT, our transition was seamless, with the historical agreement at the General Assembly in April 2013 paving the way for a natural focus on its ratification in Brazil – a usually long and complicated process within the Federal bureaucracy and Congress that demands increased attention and efforts in capital.

With Brazil having been one of the early signers internationally, and remaining a significant exporter particularly of small arms and its ammunition, SDP was able to move the ATT “portfolio” to our domestic advocacy efforts while keeping its early ratification and progressive implementation a continuing priority.²¹ Before and beyond the ATT, SDP has continued to advocate nationally for stricter export controls. On an international basis, the Control Arms coalition is well-suited to continue the necessary efforts on issues like universalization, monitoring and Conferences of State Parties.²²

Regardless of differing relative appraisals of the potential impact for each UN-based process, there was a clear and generalized assessment from our external evaluation that, as a collective, civil society was spending too much of its limited time, effort and funds in New York (and Geneva). Undoubtedly, the financial costs of orbiting around major diplomatic process in those cities are exorbitant, in fact prohibitive to many of the civil society actors, particularly those from the ‘global South’ actually affected by armed violence.

There are also significant non-financial costs, in terms of distance – physical and mental – from the realities that need to be transformed. As noted by Bob Zuber, it is essential to insist that “advocates are connected to communities of practice far removed from the global centers of self-importance like UN headquarters in New York. In places like this, we often forget who we’re working for. Or we never knew in the first place. We need to know. We need reminders in case that knowledge has been misplaced”.²³ Further, this distance can have deleterious effects if it

means “we are immune from the consequences of our bad practices”, in the words of one expert, who wonders “the degree to which any of us have credibility with these diverse communities any longer Do we still enjoy working levels of trust from global constituents?”²⁴

As such, unsurprisingly, one repeatedly made recommendation was for SDP, and civil society more widely, to shift the center of gravity of their arms control activities to the regional or national level. Once that geographical focus was adjusted, the main recommendation was for NGOs to “think creatively about effective ways to integrate arms control efforts across issues to create virtuous cycles and resilient governance systems”. In other words, civil society “must find ways to effectively network these devolved efforts across geographic space, issue space, and institutional forums”.²⁶

It is difficult to ascertain the universal accuracy of the premise that “in-capital work is more effective than direct advocacy in New York, but underappreciated and under-utilized by civil society”. We agree with the first sentence and, therefore, have at least attempted not to allow the second sentence to apply to us, working constantly with decision-makers in Brasília. Perhaps in (most?) other countries a similar dynamic also holds and it is an issue of external perception and lack of knowledge of other organizations’ priorities and efforts. As argued below, stronger information exchange is essential.

Nonetheless, the notion of reassessing fora for political pressure strikes us as promising. Undoubtedly, a single organization has virtually no governance over a global process, making it difficult to achieve, and particularly to assess, any potential impact. As pointed out by a few partners during the evaluation, in the case of Brazil and Latin America several institutional avenues are available, and are possibly more malleable. To date, SDP and regional partners have pursued them less than the global processes at the United Nations; some oft-mentioned examples were Mercosur, UNASUR, and the Organization of American States.

Of course, many sub-regions and regions of the world have comparable counterparts to consider as alternative venues for an advocacy focus – though the Middle East and parts of Asia may be exceptions. Moreover, UN regional disarmament offices, such as UNLIREC for Latin America, can serve as valuable partners for civil society contemplating a regional focus.

>>> The return of the Nation-State?

Even if the sought after prize is global, regional advocacy can create essential building-blocks in addition to being impactful in their own right.²⁷ Within the context of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, for example, as noted by David Atwood, the “regional processes have proven more valuable” than global discussions, as countries share “realities and issues”. In this sense, global frameworks “should follow, not lead”.²⁸

Still, as recent experience indicates, regional advocacy is complex and results can also be mixed. An early assessment of PoA implementation (*Biting the Bullet*), found “some evidence that the existence of regional-level SALW mechanisms, resources, and expertise made a qualitative difference to the overall implementation processes in countries with governments broadly supportive of the PoA goals. On the other hand, some hard-negotiated regional mechanisms were barely used in practice”.²⁹

The other obvious “pressure point” for the majority of our actions, repeatedly suggested during the external evaluation, is at the national level. In the words of one respondent, “SDP needs to get Brazil’s house in order ... (this) will be more important than anything SDP can do on the global level”. As such, one of the evaluation’s conclusions was, regarding federal-level advocacy, “SDP should redouble efforts to establish long-term working relationships with the Brazilian government at the federal level”. In the eyes of at least one participant, a by-product of such change of focus would be “to build the profile of the importance of national regulations, which will mean the protagonism shifting back to the ‘global south.’”³⁰

This view had overwhelming support also among experts interviewed for this paper. For Keith Krause, while the focus on “New York and Geneva made perfect sense until 2007, as there was a true political opening”, the “change agents” now would be others: if in fact the “international norms are somewhat set, the focus should be domestic”.³¹ Nicholas Marsh and Adèle Kirsten agree, with the latter stating that “today, the locus should be local and national, with the ‘armed violence reduction’ lens as a starting point”.³² Indeed, it seems clear that, as one expert noted, civil society collectively “fell into a trap” by “believing that change by a global instrument would necessarily trickle down” to the local level it needed to impact.³³

Recent and relevant global action plans have likewise put particular emphasis on the national level. For example, the WHO’s Global Campaign for Violence Prevention has as one of its six pillars to “Develop and strengthen national action plans” for violence prevention, which “provides a foundation for the development of formal policy and legislative instruments; resource mobilization and allocation; program design and implementation; and training and capacity building”.³⁴

For some observers, the shift away from international diplomatic efforts to focus on the national level is long overdue, and completely justified by the objectives that should guide our collective efforts:

“Dramatic new proposals cannot be accomplished through the United Nations or any other universal membership international organization. They must be enacted at the national or regional level. It is no accident that the countries to succeed in the most ambitious reforms have done so through purely national campaigns... Because international consensus tends to inhibit progress on small arms, organizational, financial and analytical support should be channeled down the most promising national paths... On the core issues of small arms proliferation, the best role for the United Nations is not lighting the way forward – this is plainly beyond its reach – but clearing the path of obstructions. Rather than wobbling beneath the full weight of change, the United Nations can contribute more by keeping the international community from becoming an impediment to change. Above all, it can promote an environment favoring restraint, in which countries are encouraged to develop controls tailored to distinct national priorities. But the burden of transformation will continue to lie with national governments, the ones who actually control and regulate the guns”.³⁵

In addition to direct advocacy in national, sub-regional and regional instances, another common recommendation was for SDP to focus on non-governmental ‘spaces’ and activities, that is, less emphasis on direct advocacy (“politics”) and greater focus on issues of research (“policy”) and capacity-building (for “programming”) – for example, conducting regional research and/or capacity-building of other civil society actors.

Particularly regarding research, a common view was that the “international advocacy community seems starved for research from Latin America. SDP should continue and intensify research operations”. A similar sentiment was noted regarding greater (and more professional) advocacy from the region in international processes – with the corollary suggestion that “building regional relations and fomenting capacity in the area of arms control in Latin America” would be an important focus for SDP to consider.³⁶

In this sense, in our opinion, not only SDP but other advocates must make some important decisions. As Kirsten notes, “given the limited resources and competing human development needs, as well as the changing global context, advocates will need to make some strategic choices. For example, the shift to focusing attention at the national and local level is not surprising but needs to be bolstered and more clearly articulated as a strategic choice – one that will result in achieving the overall policy objective of reducing gun violence. The international agreements have played an important role in setting standards and providing a framework, but the hard work now has to happen at the national and local level: this is where people are shot and killed, injured and survive”.³⁷

>>> Different place, same conversation?

Considering alternative ‘pressure points’ for advocacy – as well as performing less directly political but more policy/research activities – may be good advice and should indeed be contemplated widely. But what exactly should civil society focus on thematically within the broad area of ‘arms control and armed violence reduction’? Simply changing venues, while maintaining the exact same messages and priorities, would literally be ill-fitting.

Therefore, what is the substance of the policy “asks” that should be pushed – or better understood and strategized – over the coming years? If advocacy is “the act of supporting or arguing in favor of a cause, policy or idea and to bring about change at different levels, from the personal to the political, and from the local to the global”,³⁸ the possibilities are in fact multiple.

When contemplating the myriad possibilities and combinations, however, we should be cognizant that the objective must define the vessel, not the opposite. In other words, “what” we want to achieve should define “how” we seek to achieve it, not vice-versa. It is therefore essential to recall, for example, that “where small arms policy gets done is a synonym for what gets done. The tacit assumption that the United Nations is the most natural place to pursue small arms issues fundamentally shaped the nature of the global response. The choice of venues led to the emphasis not on small arms per se, but rather on the illegal trade”.³⁹

Of course, there were many historical reasons for said choice of venue, but the counterfactual should at least be considered. Had we clearly defined the “conversation” we wanted to have in a different direction, would our collective choice of “place” have been the same?

But first, some premises...

Before delving into the substance of our thoughts for possible future focus, it is essential to clarify a few premises SDP is operating under – herein and elsewhere.

>>> Premise 1 – No silver bullet

First, there is no “silver bullet” to reduce armed violence, a multi-faceted, complex phenomenon with a long list of drivers, risk factors and causal connections. Regarding the “tools of violence”, the “interrelationships between arms, violence and insecurity are two-way, complex, and dynamic... the appropriate framework is to regard SALW availability and flows as important relatively independent factors in complex multi-causal processes associated with violence, conflict, and insecurity”.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the local manifestation of armed violence often reflects unique factors and peculiarities found in a given community, city, country or culture, but not elsewhere. As once noted for politics, “all violence is local”. Like the concept of “armed violence” itself, there are many different interpretations of the best tools to confront this “global epidemic with local symptoms”. A proven approach for one circumstance may fail miserably a few hundred kilometers away if the transposition is attempted in a ‘cookie cutter’ fashion, without respecting local knowledge, dynamics and institutions.

When any international process or narrative slated to tackle armed violence becomes close to the “only show in town”, it invariably also becomes “all things to all people”. Otherwise essential issues are forced into processes and concepts in which they do not fit, have little prospects of success, or would not be feasible to implement. As one respondent to the evaluation noted of the ATT, “everyone wanted to get their hook in it.”⁴¹

That said, there are problems (and thus solutions) that can be generalized, if not globally, for a given geographical scope. Often times within a country or sub-region, the “tools”, “actors”, “institutions” and “impacts” concerning armed violence are, in fact, quite similar. And globally, while there are no universal patterns, there are certainly trends, numbers and levels of magnitude that should be taken into account.

>>> Premise 2 – It’s the guns

One of these orders of magnitude that should be duly reflected is the preponderance of small arms use in the global armed violence “epidemic”. While levels of armed violence vary widely among world regions, firearms (mostly handguns – revolvers/pistols) are a major part of the story everywhere. Even in regions where armed violence is a relatively small problem (such as Western Europe), guns are more often than not a considerable proportion of said small problem. In the sub-regions of the world where armed violence is ravishing communities and killing scores of people, the role of small arms is preponderant.

In other, decidedly more eloquent, words: “in large areas of many relatively stable non-conflict countries, annual gun death and injury rates are comparable with armed conflicts: such as Brazil, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, USA and South Africa. Even in countries or localities where actual gun injury rates are not so high, insecurities arising from perceptions and fears of gun violence can have major effects on the ways in which people live their lives”.⁴²

Geographically, six of the seven countries in the world with most recorded violent deaths are from Latin America and the Caribbean – El Salvador, Jamaica, Honduras, Colombia, Venezuela and Guatemala (the exception is Iraq).⁴³ All six have a rate over 43 murders per 100,000 – El Salvador with 62. For comparison, the WHO considers any level over 10 per 100,000 “epidemic”. The average annual global violent death rate between 2004 and 2009 was 7.9 per 100,000; the average in Europe less than 3 per 100,000.⁴⁴

In the Americas, 74% of homicides occur with firearms, and the availability of illegal guns is driving rising homicide rates in Central America and the Caribbean - the only sub-regions in the world recently experiencing increases.⁴⁵ All countries in which 70% or more of homicides are due to firearms have rates over 20 per 100,000 – and all are in the Americas. Moreover, in Latin America firearms are overwhelmingly involved in violence at large – not only homicides nor only vis-à-vis other types of “equipment” within the ‘armed violence’ sub-category.

Closer to home for us, an estimated 70% of homicides in Brazil are committed with firearms. In the specific case of São Paulo, according to SDP research launched in late 2013, over 61% of all homicides committed in the city in 2012 and first half of 2013 were committed with a gun.⁴⁶ This was actually a significant decrease from a decade earlier, which, we theorize, may be explained by less accessibility to the weapons due to more efficient gun control measures: between 2000 and 2010, over 200,000 illegal guns were seized by the police – while more than 130,000 fire-

arms were voluntarily surrendered by citizens in buy-back campaigns.⁴⁷ A 2010 study determined that the earlier greater prevalence of firearms in circulation was strongly and positively correlated with higher rates of homicide in São Paulo, estimating that for every 18 guns taken off the streets, one life was saved.⁴⁸

Further research into the characteristics of those guns is also noteworthy and important to guide public policy. A recent SDP report that covered every single weapon apprehended by the police in São Paulo (over 14,000 firearms) in 2011 and 2012 showed that a vast majority of the firearms used in violent crime were handguns, relatively low-tech, made in Brazil, and often fairly old. For example, almost 60% of all weapons were revolvers, while 32% were pistols. In terms of origin, 78% were produced in Brazil (almost entirely by the company Taurus) and a significant 14% were produced before 1980, including 2% of the firearms produced in the 1950s. Only 10% of all firearms were “new” (produced since 2010). Within the universe of firearms connected to homicides, almost 97% were handguns (revolvers and pistols).⁴⁹

The inclusion of firearm suicides and accidents under the rubric of ‘armed violence’ would further consolidate the disproportional role played particularly by handguns in the broader ‘epidemic’. Most highly circulated data on ‘armed violence’, ‘gun violence’ and ‘homicides’ do not include the massive numbers of gun suicides in their statistics. There are, of course, good conceptual and methodological reasons for this, but from the perspective of the loss of life it entails, it cannot be ignored; in the US, for example, more people yearly kill themselves with guns than the number killed with guns by others.⁵⁰

In the case of non-lethal incidents and the psychological effects of armed violence (fear, threats, indirect victimization), guns are also the main tools of injury and intimidation in most of the world, for most people. Though precise numbers are hard to come by, and particularly psychological effects may often be dismissed, these are a major component of the armed violence phenomenon in most of the world.⁵¹

According to the Small Arms Survey, as many as 7 million people around the world over the last decade could be living with firearm injuries in settings outside of armed conflicts.⁵² Even if “specific information on gun injuries is scarce”, in the US “with advanced trauma care capacity, good data collection, and high rates of gun violence—it was estimated in 2001 that for every firearm fatality, three people with non-fatal gun injuries were treated in hospital emergency rooms; many more stayed away from hospitals, increasing the estimate to possibly six non-fatal injuries

per fatality”.⁵³ Physical injuries, moreover, often mask so-called “slow homicides”, deaths recorded as different types of morbidity (such as infection), but in reality originally caused by gun violence months or even years earlier.

Psychological effects are likewise grim, under-reported and widespread. In the case of São Paulo, for instance, though homicides have fallen over 70% in the last decade – a precipitous, historic drop – recent polls suggest that the vast majority of people actually think “violence” has increased – armed robbery being a major culprit. According to a recent victimization poll, more than half of all Brazilians are “very afraid” of being murdered, and almost a third believes they could be murdered in the next 12 months.⁵⁴

The psychological power and effects, therefore, should not be ignored, as “guns do not need to be fired to be effective. The carrying of a gun often symbolizes its use, or substitutes for its use far more effectively than does actual use; provided the willingness of the user to actually fire the weapon has been established”.⁵⁵ In the national psyche of Brazil, and most of Latin America and the Caribbean, said willingness is firmly established, either through personal experience or ubiquitous media coverage of violent crime.

In the private realm, the linkage with violence against women and girls, family violence and other forms of intimate partner violence is likewise critical but little understood. Guns are often used as “tools” of intimidation, to render women and children, predominantly, powerless to escape violence in the home. As Buchanan notes, “the supposedly innocuous act by a male family member of cleaning his gun at the kitchen table or sitting in the living room with a gun watching television, sends a profoundly immobilizing message to women and children in that home; and yet this is yet to be fully recognized as a form of gun violence”.⁵⁶

Quite clearly, then, certainly in the Americas but also most of the world, for those attempting to curb armed violence through better regulation and control of its “tools”, small arms should be the principal focus.⁵⁷ Indeed, they “kill and injure more on a daily basis worldwide than any other type of technology developed by humans to harm other humans”, even if considering “only the output from the UN machinery on ‘disarmament and international security’, you would be pardoned to think that SALW were a lesser problem”.⁵⁸ It is for this reason that in terms of ‘hardware’, this paper’s recommendations – and indeed our planned efforts within the sub-set of ‘arms control’ – focus on small arms exclusively.

>>> Premise 3 - War and peace

Another reason for particular attention to small arms is the distinction between “war” and “peace”. Famously, the Global Burden of Armed Violence (2011) noted that only 10% of armed violence deaths worldwide occur in a conflict or terrorist attack. Those numbers and proportions may shift in the aftermath of the gruesome Syrian conflict, as well as raging wars or quasi-wars on the African continent, but the fact is that the vast majority of people today who die, are injured and otherwise suffer from ‘armed violence’ do so in countries “at peace” – a glaring fact that somehow remains difficult to compute for many in the international community, still operating exclusive in the supposedly neat sphere of “armed conflict”.

In numbers: at least 526,000 people perish from ‘armed violence’ each year – including the estimated 55,000 direct conflict deaths and 396,000 intentional homicides. A slightly different methodological cross-section, one that would consider that many of the 21,000 “legal intervention killings” are also actually “intentional homicides” by police would augment that number, but regardless these deaths occur in countries “at peace”, as do the 54,000 “unintentional homicides” per year.⁵⁹

This scenario reflects a historical trend. As noted by Nicholas Marsh regarding the supply of arms to conflict, “we can see some change over the long run: the flow of illicitly trafficked weapons to wars from stockpiles in post-communist Europe has been greatly reduced; it’s now normal for any peace process to be followed by extensive programs to collect and dispose of arms; and UN arms embargoes are used much more frequently and are routinely assigned panels of experts which investigate violations. The wider context is a long term decline in both the number of wars and of battle deaths in those wars”.⁶⁰

Another clear trend is that “war” itself is less often a military contest between nation-states, but rather an internal conflict, that is, civil war. Indeed, civil conflict “has been the most prevalent form of warfare since the end of the 1950s” and was “responsible for the overwhelming majority of direct war casualties since the 1980s: between 1990 and 2002, civil conflict accounted for over 90 percent of battle deaths”.⁶¹

Current ‘wars’ tend to be internal, and their decrease in prevalence is expected to continue and possibly intensify. In fact, the authors of a recent forecast stated: “we predict a continued decline in the proportion of the world’s countries that have internal armed conflict, from about 15% in 2009 to 7% in 2050. The decline is particularly strong in

the Western Asia and North Africa region and less clear in Africa south of Sahara. The remaining conflict countries will increasingly be concentrated in East, Central, and Southern Africa and in East and South Asia”.⁶²

In fact, some analysts go further, noting a “long-term worldwide reduction in all forms of violence”, as argued by Steven Pinker in *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. Though such a generalization may be overly ambitious and demand methodological caveats, the Human Security Report 2013 notes that most studies

“have reported on reductions in the level of political violence—notably wars and terrorism—and have focused on the post-World War II world. The scope of Pinker’s study is much broader. Its historical sweep traverses some 12-plus millennia. It examines long-term declines in homicides as well as warfare, and a wide variety of forms of violence that are not necessarily lethal—slavery, rape and torture, and even cruelty to animals...

What are the chances that these positive changes will be sustained? No one really knows. There are too many future unknowns to make predictions with any degree of confidence. And Pinker makes it very clear that his thesis seeks to explain the decline of violence in the past, not to predict the future... But, thanks in substantial part to Steven Pinker’s extraordinary research, there are now compelling reasons for believing that the historical decline in violence is both real and remarkably large—and also that the future may well be less violent than the past”.⁶³

While the historical patterns and future possibilities are therefore encouraging, optimism may remain elusive given current realities of warfare. Today, while explosive weapons and other conventional arms wreak terrible havoc in armed conflicts and terrorist attacks – particularly in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan – small arms are also heavily responsible for lethality in those hotspots, as well as in inter- and intra-state in Africa, where the AK-47 has probably accounted for more loss of life than any other type of weapon in history.⁶⁴

As per the exact proportion of small arms deaths in conflicts vis-à-vis other weapons, while “unfortunately, we do not have enough data to make precise calculations”, cases assessed by Kreutz and Marsh showed that “firearms caused between 20-55 percent of casualties (deaths and injuries) in the majority of cases examined”.⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, the range of the case studies is extremely wide: “at the two extremes, firearms accounted for 93 percent of casualties in the Republic of Congo study, but less than 1 percent of casualties in the 2006 Lebanon conflict survey”.⁶⁶

Clearly, even in war, “violence is local” inasmuch as each conflict has its peculiarities. It is also dynamic, adapting to technological realities and advances, as well as larger historical trends. As such, it could be possible that small arms become more and more used in war, as the “high prevalence of gunshot and landmine injuries indicated that combatants in contemporary civil wars generally employ technologically unsophisticated weapons compared to those fighting in interstate warfare (even wars that took place some 60 years ago)”.⁶⁷

Could the trend toward civil wars and the success of the global ban on landmines render small arms even more prevalent in future wars? That is unclear, but it can be stated that “in a world where asymmetric warfare is commonplace, SALW are becoming more, not less important in determining the global strategic balance”.⁶⁸

In a more general sense, it should be noted that despite the large-scale destruction they facilitate, weapons in the hands of rebels, insurgents and other groups in conflict “constitute a tiny proportion of global firearms ownership”. Moreover, even during war, other forms of violence continue – and are often exacerbated – all the while heavily depending on small arms. In fact, “the number of arms employed in a country for criminal purposes could significantly exceed those used in warfare. For example, in 2002 there were a total of 28,989 homicides committed with firearms in Colombia whilst the country’s civil war accounted for a total of 4,195 deaths”.⁶⁹

Regardless of proportions, armed conflict certainly cannot be minimized, often displaying the worst in humanity, with mass atrocities and the utter destruction of communities and, sometimes, entire countries. Probably precisely because of this, the attention, instruments and concepts developed to attempt to intervene in this sort of armed violence are relatively robust and mature. Whether the UN’s involvement (institutional, military and conceptual) in issues of “international security” (think Security Council mandate, blue helmets and the “responsibility to protect”) or media coverage of ‘armed violence’ in general, there are a plethora of explanations to account for the primacy of attention to conflict violence over criminal and inter-personal violence.

Moreover, and this is perhaps the most important distinction of all, the development and operationalization of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) has for decades provided the conceptual and legal framework for most important efforts to curtail armed violence in situations of conflict – including for civil society.

In fact, in terms of controlling the atrocious human effects of weaponry, the lens of “war” – and civil society’s adroit use of it – has been essential in informing many of the most important efforts in arms control over the last two decades. The notion of “indiscriminate effects of weapons” has underpinned efforts to ban anti-personal landmines (1997) and cluster bombs (2008), as have the concepts of “superfluous injury” and “unnecessary suffering”.

This tradition is slated to continue successfully with the crystallization of the “tentative community”⁷⁰ around the concept of ‘humanitarian disarmament’. Encapsulated by “the prevention of human suffering through the prohibition or regulation of weapons that are indiscriminate in their effects or cause unacceptable harm”, the concept of

humanitarian disarmament “covers a range of weapons and technologies that inflict civilian harm and particular risk to civilian populations”.⁷¹

Banning weapons that cause “unacceptable harm” in conflict is absolutely essential, not only for the protection of civilians caught up in war, but also to protect all of us against the possibility of use of those weapons under other circumstances (such as unintentional use or their diversion into the hands of terrorists). In this sense, perhaps the most urgent and transcendent – for its ‘game-changing’ nature for the entire field of international security and arms control – is the campaign to ban nuclear weapons, bizarrely the only weapon of mass destruction not yet outlawed.⁷²

A robust and established legal tradition, a strong conceptual framework and an energized civil society community – this is the current scenario for the “rules of war” and those “certain conventional weapons” and WMD (biological, chemical and, hopefully soon, nuclear), that unequivocally violate them.

>>> Premise 4 – Misuse is the heart of the matter

But what for the weapons that cannot realistically be banned even if they nonetheless account for the majority of the world’s ‘armed violence’? Small arms are not, as Karp noted, “universally demonized. Nor did a taboo on their use emerge” thus “the solution to small arms would have to be more nuanced and carefully crafted to balance competing interests”⁷³ vis-à-vis not only the notion of “military utility” as other weapons, but of ‘civilian utility’ as well.⁷⁴

Another peculiarity, as stated by Kirsten about the early days of advocacy on the issue but still true: “unlike almost any other human security initiative, a key protagonist in the small arms control debate was the organized firearms lobby, an oppositional force within civil society, with the objective of limiting any efforts to control the availability of small arms”.⁷⁵

In the case of small arms – the “real weapons of mass destruction”, a cliché reportedly begun by Kofi Annan in 2000 – the aspects of “distinction” and “rules of proportionality”, of course, cannot be ascribed to the arms themselves, but rather to their misuse. The use (and abuse) of weaponry speaks to the other aspect of the famous Article 36 (Geneva Conventions, Additional Protocol I): “a weapon that can be used with precision can also be abusively used against the civilian population. In this case, it is not the weapon which is prohibited, but the method or the way in which it is used”.⁷⁶

This is the case, for instance, of the international movement to control the use of explosive weapons.⁷⁷ As noted by Richard Moyes, these are clearly military weapons, unacceptable to use by virtually any country against its civilian population, such as in law enforcement, for example. Yet, given that these ‘bombs’ are a main tool of any military – and given the relative complacency with the notion that these are just part of the “ways of war” – it is unrealistic to seek their complete ban. Rather, civil society will seek to constrain practice, by drawing the line (even if not legally-binding) against their use in populated areas.⁷⁸

But what for the weapons mostly used not in military conflict between belligerents (and thus covered by IHL) but by and against a civilian population “at peace”? How can we attempt to prohibit – or at least minimize – the “way in which it is misused” to best reduce armed violence around the globe?

>>> Premise 5 - International attention, national diversion

Our final premise for this brainstorming exercise, which relates to the previously mentioned choices as well as the forthcoming recommendations, is that, in the case of firearms, the assumption that international trade and trafficking is the most important piece of the puzzle in reducing global armed violence is, to put it simply, wrong.

Indeed, asked about mistakes of the past in a recent seminar, Owen Greene mentioned the international community collectively was prone to generalizations and just “went along with international trafficking as the main problem”.⁷⁹ In fact, “major improvements in knowledge” of societies highly affected by gun violence have shown that the “relative importance of diversion or misuse of officially authorized transfers and holdings of SALW, compared to international entirely illegal black market trafficking, has been thoroughly confirmed”. Indeed, and we can strongly confirm this in the case of Brazil, “for most developing or fragile states, a combination of weak domestic regulation of authorized firearms possession with theft, loss or corrupt sale from official holdings tends to be a bigger sources of weapons of concern than illicit trafficking across borders”.⁸⁰

Regarding arms used in conflict, “an oversimplified image of the spread of SALW” emerged but likewise stands corrected, as it “emphasizes a vast stock of SALW circulating in a global-level illicit (or less-than-legal) market, which is accessible to all conflict actors through the actions of irresponsible arms brokers”.⁸¹ In reality, “far from being a function of globalized markets, many SALW flows to conflict occur purely at the regional level. The structures that shape these regional markets are very different from global structures. Whilst there is a strong structured global legal trade, but no distinctly structured global grey or black market, almost the opposite is true at the regional level”.⁸²

The geographical scope has also become somewhat clear: “investigated incidents and recorded cases suggest that illicit trafficking is mostly done on a regional and sub-regional scale, with the most affected regions being East Africa (with a potential resurgence of the phenomenon in West Africa, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring) and Latin America”.⁸³


The case of some regions is particularly noteworthy, given the attention of governments to one “side of the coin” rather than both. For example,

“many of Africa’s diplomats argue that the regulation of small arms and light weapons transfers must begin (and potentially end) by shutting off the tap from the West and East... As a result, the emphasis in arms control negotiations is often on controlling the hardware—from the point of manufacture to its export and import and arrival to the end-user. Not surprisingly, less attention is devoted to the dynamics of supply or demand in Africa itself. Yet a growing body of research indicates that ongoing international transfers, while influential, account for just a portion of Africa’s stockpile of small arms and ammunition. On the one hand, there is considerable “re-transfer” of arms between African countries. Intra-African trade and trafficking is potentially just as important as international commerce. Moreover, a sizeable surplus of left-over weaponry is readily available from armed conflicts waged during the 20th and 21st centuries. Just as significant, weapons are no longer uniquely produced and transferred from Western and Eastern countries to the south. The production and diffusion of weapons and ammunition is a global phenomenon, with Africa increasingly a player at all points in the trade... if security is to be enhanced in the long-term, it is critical that African governments and their supporters move beyond a rigid interpretation of arms availability in reservedly supply-side terms. The current focus on export and import controls, regulation of brokering and promoting border and airway controls on trafficking while necessary, is insufficient. While all legitimate priorities in their own right, interventions must be expanded to account for how weapons are “demanded”— that is, the multiple modalities by which they are supplied, acquired, re-circulated and used”.⁸⁴

Undoubtedly, better understanding and regulating international arms flows remains essential. The close to exclusive attention many have dedicated in the last decade has several reasons, including the state of research in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It also “probably reflects the campaigning by NGOs based in Europe and European governments, which have prioritized international and regional agreements to enhance controls on authorized international arms transfers and to prevent or combat trafficking or diversion of arms to unauthorized users”.⁸⁵

Today, however – and while we recognize that Brazil is quite a peculiar case, given the overwhelming predominance of domestic production of the guns used in armed violence – we know that the following is true of most countries ‘at peace’:

“the transition from the legal to the illegal realm can occur at any stage of a weapon’s life cycle: manufacture, first delivery, domestic or international transfer, possession, storage or final disposal. So irresponsible export practices are only one of the many ways small arms get into the black market. In fact, a significant number of legally acquired small arms enter the illegal trade through corruption, seizure, theft and loss... The idea that arms-exporting countries are primarily responsible for the diversion of weapons to illegal users is a misconception. While states are clearly important, substantial amounts of weapons enter the illegal market years after their export. The responsibility for preventing illegal trade must therefore be as international as the trade itself”.⁸⁶



Somehow, today these realities are both widely known and inadequately reflected in global civil society's advocacy efforts. As noted by Buchanan, "there exists alarmingly low levels of understanding in practical and political terms about the difference between export controls work and reducing gun violence amongst international NGOs, which is all the more troubling given so many NGOs are rebranding themselves to work on 'armed violence'." ⁸⁷

In addition to continuing the essential efforts in relation to international transfers and trafficking, particularly seeking robust implementation of the ATT, there is much more that civil society can and should do – globally, nationally and locally – on the other "stages of weapons' life cycles". In this sense, it strikes us as essential that our collective actions become better balanced towards the state of our current knowledge.

While it may not be surprising that States have preferred a given path, civil society should not simply follow it. Indeed, "so far, the field has devoted most of its energy to the illicit trade, not because it is the most dangerous aspect of small arms proliferation, but because it is the only aspect on which states could agree to work together. To be sure, the black market is a dangerous source of weaponry, potentially highly destabilizing. But the preoccupation with the black market is a political choice based on the needs of states. It reflects the instrumental priorities of governments rather than the intrinsic significance of the black market. Other problems, including legal weapons, theft, catastrophic loss and technological escalation are equal or more serious dangers". ⁸⁸ Or in the words of Buchanan, "it is easy for so many States to sign on to the ATT and yet have appalling gun laws". ⁸⁹

Even a recent – and historic – UN Security Council resolution, the first to focus on SALW, points to a continued tendency towards broad understanding but limited action. The language enshrined therein (and also omnipresent elsewhere at the UN, almost like a mantra) – expounding concern with the "illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons" – reminds governments and civil society alike that attention has been dramatically slanted towards the first of those aspects over the last decade. ⁹⁰ Should we not be doing more regarding the "destabilizing accumulation and misuse" of firearms?

What next then?


Where does this all leave us? In some ways, the current situation is a bit precarious for global civil society as, in the words of David Atwood the “game has moved away from UN processes”, but on the other hand, paradoxically, they are still often the “only game in town”.⁹¹ Adèle Kirsten also identifies a “difficult moment”, with civil society “grappling with the coming 10 years”, and even suggesting a parallel to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa post-democratization in terms of a successful movement with energy and purpose but somewhat lacking strategic direction: “what now?”.⁹²

It is evident, as Atwood notes, that there is a “palpable gap between what we know and our advocacy efforts”, but the question remains “what is the new theory of change”? Likewise, Kirsten wonders what should be new strategic focus, conceding it is currently unclear and difficult to frame: “gun control, human security, armed violence and development, AVR... towards the future, if indeed beginning a new phase, what’s the new conceptual lens?”⁹³ Luckily, as she notes, the “strength of the SALW community has been flexibility to adapt to different concepts and frameworks, as well as responsiveness to global realities”.⁹⁴

Obviously, we strongly agree with the need for a proper collective brainstorm. Global civil society concerned in finding more effective answers to this quandary may benefit from fresh paths, novel concepts, new ways of communicating, updated views of political organization, new campaigns, consolidated thematic “umbrellas” or civil society networks.

When doing so, it is also important to note what “advocacy” should entail, in our humble opinion. It should not be comfortable, easy or accepting of the status quo. Rather than sterile “lobbying”, it should instead follow the principles for activism noted by Alex Dewaal:

“First, activism should be undertaken in partnership with affected people, under their leadership. It should facilitate those people defining the problem for themselves – it is only by defining their problem that they can ever be master of it, rather than it becoming master of them. It should be sensitive to their leadership... Second, activism should seek truth and speak truth. That means being honest to the facts, and doing the hard work of finding out realities, and when required, changing one’s mind accordingly. There should be no sacrifice of uncomfortable and complicated truths for the sake of simple messages that foreign audiences can understand and to which they can relate easily. A central part of activism is the hard intellectual work of understanding. Third, activism should challenge power. That doesn’t mean abandoning the pragmatics of calculating effort and impact, of calibrating intermediate and strategic goals. But it does require being honest about where the greatest concentrations of power lie, and how that power is utilized, and



making that power uncomfortable, at least. Lobbying that merely adjusts the trajectory of super-power policies, in directions that are not uncomfortable for that superpower to shift, is not challenging power, but giving power an alibi”.⁹⁵

As argued to this point, contemplating a new “where” (national rather than global) is as essential as thinking about the new “what” (aspects of small arms control other than international transfers). We hope the following possibilities can assist in suggesting some of these fresh paths regarding “what” civil society can effectively focus on.

1) Get back to basics...

As noted, it's about the guns. Small arms, firearms, handguns. Guns, guns, guns. In fact, there is something to be said about that simplicity: the nomenclature of “small arms and light weapons” – and the acronym SALW – is awkward for campaigning or political action, in some ways watering down and giving a veneer of academic respectability and neutrality to lethal objects. Guns, everybody knows and reacts emotionally to, are instruments created and designed to kill and injure human beings. Widely reclaiming and reasserting the use of the terms “guns” and “firearms” will help in pressing the political urgency of our collective asks.

The anodyne “SALW” is also conceptually burdensome and less relevant in terms of public policy for most societies, as “light weapons” very seldom are part of the most common forms of armed violence. Light weapons (heavy machine-guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, MANPADS, etc.) put simply, are designed for, and used in, war, and thus basically banned for civilians in even the most permissive jurisdictions.⁹⁶

The measures to control their production, trade and use are quite distinct – their numbers smaller, accessibility lower, cost higher, and destructive force greater. While rightly a focus in attempting to reduce civilian harm in armed conflict and terrorist attacks, in some ways ‘light weapons’ have more similarities to larger conventional weapons than to small arms. Equating all these tools of violence in some way renders confusion rather than proper disaggregation for research, policy and advocacy purposes.

Conversely, small arms are indeed the instruments of daily carnage in virtually all societies: revolvers, pistols, shotguns, rifles, carbines, assault rifles, submachine guns. As suggested by Guy Lamb, a renewed “global mobilization around the issue of firearm/gun violence should be a key focal area for the future”. Indeed, he notes that it was precisely this issue (“gun violence by civilians and use of force by the state”) that catalyzed civil society in the first place to become involved in international processes like the PoA, Firearms Protocol and the ATT, but yet “there is no significant international process in place for this”.⁹⁷

The primacy of firearms, indeed, is not only evident within ‘armed violence’, but also, in many circumstances, the broader phenomenon of ‘violence’ itself. Unsurprisingly, even a global action plan to prevent violence at large gives special attention to firearms, as the WHO’s Global Campaign for Violence Prevention establishes, as one of the essential items of its sixth pillar, to “implement evidence-informed measures to reduce the risks of firearm-related deaths and injuries”, given that,

“Firearms increase the likelihood of death and serious injury when used in acts of violence. Evidence-informed measures for reducing the risk of firearm-related deaths and injuries include the prohibition of informal gun markets among youth; education on the safe storage and handling of guns; changing the design of firearms to make them safer, and legislative efforts to reduce the potential for firearm-related violence (e.g. licensing requirements and waiting periods)”.⁹⁸


>>> What, who, why... and how

A renewed focus on “gun violence” should start with clarifications regarding the basic limitations placed upon the “what, who, and how” of firearms in each concerned jurisdiction. In other words, what firearms should be legal, who could own them, and why could they be lawfully possessed? As Buchanan recalls, “the ‘Zimring formula’ remains the touchstone in this area. Effective laws and policies must pivot around three principles: prohibiting and/or restricting certain uses of guns; prohibiting and/or restricting certain users of guns; and prohibiting and/or restricting certain types of guns”.⁹⁹

Most of these definitions, of course, “were left entirely to state discretion, resulting in the global zoo of laws and regulations that continues to this day. These range from the highly restrictive (such as Indonesia, Japan, Kyrgyzstan and the United Kingdom) to the highly permissive (like Mali, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United States). There is no rhyme or reason to this menagerie. It testifies exclusively to the mysteries of national diversity”.¹⁰⁰

Thus, proper thresholds are well-established in many countries, but certainly not all. A surprising number of countries have lax, poor and/or unenforced gun control laws. Therefore, the most basic advocacy gain – a proper, restrictive gun control law and administrative/operational tools to implement it efficiently – is still elusive in many countries, including some heavily-affected countries that are otherwise intent on expending much effort on regional and global arms control processes.¹⁰¹

While global legally-binding rules are far off, establishing different tiers of desirable standards – even if informally – regarding civilian possession and use of firearms is a realistic goal all countries could productively ascribe to. Rather than a “one size fits all” approach, a model with different options, for example, could be developed by civil society – a ‘fait accompli’ not contingent on political negotiations by governments. Each country would be pushed to achieve its




best possible scenario within a given time frame. Importantly, given the nature of international trafficking and the tenuous separation between legal and illegal markets, efforts in one jurisdiction have the potential to positively affect communities beyond its national borders, including in countries that do their ‘homework’ on the matter.

There are other aspects of governance that the vast majority of the international community subscribes to, at least in rhetoric, even much before they have been universally implemented. The respect for human rights and the preference for electoral democracy are examples of ‘common goods’ that most societies value but none have perfected – and some are still yet far from achieving. The existence of repressive and/or totalitarian regimes does not negate these universal values, nor discredits attempts, including by civil society, to achieve them. They are broad objectives, not current global realities, and even once achieved will be implemented in different ways by each nation or society.

Likewise, a vision of what the ideal would be for the relationship between humans and firearms in the long-term, even for states far from being able to achieve the most progressive options in the short-term, could be a helpful blueprint. At the apex of this step-by-step, evolutionary framework would be, in our opinion, the two models established by most so-called “high-capacity” democracies: “a crucial difference between (high-capacity and low-capacity states) being the ability of the state to control violent interaction within their territories... in high-capacity democracies, such as Japan, Germany or the United Kingdom, personal possession of firearms is licensed (such as for hunting) and the possession and use of weapons by private groups, such as in the private security industry, is either outlawed or highly regulated.”¹⁰²

While we believe that, in terms of reducing violence, a properly enforced ban on civilian possession of most firearms – such as in Japan or the UK (for handguns) – is most effective (and could be realistically advocated for in many jurisdictions bereft of strong economic and cultural incentives to own guns), the “highly regulated” model has also shown, in countries like Germany, Switzerland and Nordic nations, that legal gun ownership can coexist with low-levels of gun violence.

Civilian possession, highly controversial but crucial in terms of reducing gun violence in many countries, should certainly once again become a greater area of focus for global civil society. Somewhat abandoned precisely because of the political difficulties it entails at the UN, and in a handful of countries, a long-term campaign to ban civilian possession of firearms worldwide could be a potentially transformative goal.



Conversely, a focus on handguns would tackle the weapons most often used in much of armed violence while allowing for the exception of rifles and other specific firearms for traditional purposes such as hunting. Regardless of the exact ‘ask’, is a world in which the vast majority of civilians are not able to legally access firearms not a vision to pursue?


Within the sought ‘highly regulated’ model, regarding the “what”, we would argue that some firearms (like sub-machine guns and assault rifles) should be purely instruments of “war”. A first matter of business, therefore, accepting that firearms will continue to be legal and acceptable for civilian possession and use in some countries, would be to advocate for each nation to clearly define the threshold between “civilian” and “military” small arms, and unequivocally ban the latter for legal possession by its citizens.

While the civilian versus military firearms debate at the global level has proven impossible to settle, given the drastically different political views, economic interests and cultural beliefs of societies that have banned all firearms for civilians and others that are almost entirely permissive, the barriers for establishing this consensus on a national level are considerably lower.

As noted by Ken Epps, “armed violence is a worldwide phenomenon and it should be possible to channel public concern across communities, states and regions to support disarmament and better controls. As one example, it should be possible to advocate local, national, regional and global bans on civilian access to military weapons in campaigns that operate at all levels”.¹⁰³

Of course, the virulent recent debate regarding the possibility of (re)banning “assault weapons” in the United States, where they were prohibited from 1994 to 2004, suggests it could be one of the last countries to join this perspective. But effects could be felt elsewhere, as the presence of US-made assault weapons in Mexico and even São Paulo (as per our aforementioned research) indicates.

Notwithstanding, we certainly agree that “small arms policy should focus not only on illegal and legally owned weaponry, but also on the most deadly categories of weapons. The burgeoning arms race between police and criminals around the world is one symptom of the revolutionary changes brought by the proliferation of fully automatic small arms. A serious small arms policy must also provide tools to slow or halt the flow of automatic and semiautomatic firearms”.¹⁰⁴



With a consensus at any level regarding which firearms are, at most, permissible, comes the debate regarding who could possess them, as well as how they can be used. As expected, within “who” could own firearms – other than law enforcement and military – we advocate that the minimum politically achievable number of groups and individuals possible should be legally allowed to own guns. Limitations based on age, criminal background, technical skill, mental health and other risk factors (drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, etc.) are the basic factors to take into consideration, though the addition of “proof of need” best reflects the premise of a “highly-regulated” model.

Of course, the spectrum between want and need is a wide one, full of subjectivity. In the most gun-friendly countries, individuals may be allowed to own firearms for self-defense, hunting, sport-shooting and collecting. In terms of balancing perceived gains and lethal risks – and while a strong, evidence-based argument can be made against each category – a relatively “low-hanging fruit” in some countries is ensuring that the notion of collecting lethal instruments (if functioning) simply as a hobby cannot be tolerated given the risks posed to public health and security. That said, banning the category of individual firearms collectors in Brazil has proven difficult despite our efforts, as the group has shown significant economic and political influence.

The last frontier of defining minimum standards – in addition to what, who, and why – of course, would be the “how”. In other words, within total respect of the aforementioned parameters, under what conditions could a gun be used?

Without fully engaging in the ‘hardware versus effects’ discussion (below), an initial important distinction is that between owning and carrying a gun – or between self-defense and potential vigilantes. One of the most important achievements of Brazil’s current gun control legislation (the 2003 ‘Disarmament Statute’) was rendering carrying firearms illegal, even if owning and keeping a firearm at home is permitted under certain constraints. In other words, establishing – and enforcing – that a firearm at home may be legal (even if a very bad idea) under very strict conditions, but carrying one in public is too large a risk to society at large to be permitted.

The implicit constraint to use, of course, is that shooting against a home intruder is the only permissible use of firearms by civilians – other than target/sports shooting and hunting – which would of course prohibit such behavior as “celebratory gunfire” common in some countries or “warning shots”. Regardless of the exact thresholds desired, as noted by Ray Acheson in comparison to ongoing efforts on explosive weapons, civil society could productively “step out of the bubble” of banning or limiting the weapons themselves and instead emphasize the further creation of rules regarding use.¹⁰⁵

>>> “The tools of human rights violations”

The discussion can go further when it comes to firearms use in civilian contexts. While, as aforementioned, International Humanitarian Law in its present form is ill-fitting for armed violence in its most common manifestation (urban gun violence in ‘peaceful’ contexts), what are the future prospects of further applying International Human Rights Law to small arms use by state agents? And, further, can IHRL help reduce firearm violence between civilians?

Seminally, the issue of small arms and human rights was taken up by the UN in 2002, resulting in a report by Barbara Frey in 2006.¹⁰⁶ Yet, “while an important contribution in its own right, this research on human rights has to date had little impact on multilateral fora in terms of concrete policy and practical outcomes”.¹⁰⁷

The only exception, arguably, was the successful negotiation of the ATT, an important step forward in terms of connecting international transfers of conventional arms and risks of IHRL violations. Still, as noted, there are a plethora of human rights violations caused by the misuse of firearms not meaningfully connected to an international transfer, either given domestic production or diversion beyond the possible responsibility of an exporter. Undoubtedly, small arms are the “tools used to violate human rights” on a variety of levels: the right to life; security of person; freedom of assembly, association, movement; free speech; right to education; right to health care, among others.¹⁰⁸ In fact, “because they are portable and highly lethal, small arms have the power to transform a basic violation of human rights into a profound one”.¹⁰⁹

As such, Frey notes, “under international human rights law, the state can be held responsible for violations committed with small arms by private persons in two situations: when the armed individuals are operating under color of state authority; and when the state fails to act with due diligence to protect human rights”.¹¹⁰

In other words, national governments can be held legally responsible for human rights violations with small arms by private actors – not only for commission but also omission. Certainly, the first case is an area ripe for improvement, particularly in countries like Brazil, given the misuse of firearms by law enforcement agencies. Despite international standards and operating protocols for the use of force by law enforcement,¹¹¹ police firearms lethality in many societies is completely unacceptable.

For example, Brazilian (military) police is estimated to kill an average of five people every day (a total of 1890 people in 2012, 351 of those in São Paulo – about 20% of all homicides in the city).¹¹² Like for many other countries, the most basic aspect of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials has not been thoroughly implemented into national law: “Governments and law enforcement agencies shall adopt and implement rules and regulations on the use of force and firearms against persons by law enforcement officials.”¹¹³

Other aspects of international standards have been inputted into the letter of regulations, often at a state rather than federal level, but have not been implemented systematically enough to affect the operating ethos of police forces. Therefore, in many contexts, could civil society do more to constrain the misuse of firearms by state forces through strategic deployment of IHRL?

What is more, could citizens of countries struggling with high levels of gun violence also have legal recourse to force their countries to do more to prevent said violence even if the domestic paths for better legislation and public policies appear blocked?

These are sincere and open questions, ones that international law and human rights experts like Amnesty International, Conectas Direitos Humanos, and Human Rights Watch, for example, can authoritatively respond. From our perspective, the following definitely suggests there may be some scope for further efforts in this arena:

“States would also be held accountable for patterns of abuses committed by armed individuals or groups if a state failed to act with due diligence to prevent the abuses. Examples of failure to act with due diligence include the state’s refusal to establish reasonable regulations regarding the private possession of small arms that are likely to be used in homicides, suicides and accidents... Under the due diligence analysis, states must take reasonable steps to prevent, investigate, punish and compensate with regard to human rights violations committed by armed individuals or groups. Due diligence ‘results from more than mere negligence on the part of state officials... it consists of the reasonable measures of prevention that a well-administered government could be expected to exercise under similar circumstances. Thus, under a due diligence standard, it is the omission on the part of the state, not the injurious act by the private actor, for which the state may be responsible’.”¹¹⁴

To meet the “due diligence standard regarding the regulation of the ownership and use of small arms”, according to Frey’s UN report, “adequate guidelines must include the following State actions with regard to small arms: licensing to prevent possession of arms by persons who are at risk of misusing them, requiring safe storage of small arms, requiring tracking information by manufacturers, investigating and prosecuting those who misuse small arms, and offering periodic amnesties to remove unwanted small arms from circulation”. How many countries in the world

currently fail these standards – and can civil society pressure them to decisively address this failure by using this framework?

Moreover, has global civil society done all it can vis-à-vis the report’s main recommendation regarding small arms “misuse” in ‘peace’? It read, “the human rights community could make a very useful contribution to the international discussion on small arms by drafting model human rights principles on State responsibility for preventing and investigating human rights violations caused by armed individuals and groups”. Has this been thoroughly achieved and deployed?

>>> Knowledge, the most powerful weapon

A final point in getting “back to basics” and refocusing an international spotlight on gun violence entails, unsurprisingly, a basic quantification and understanding of the dynamics of guns and violence in each country. Proper public policy is contingent on establishing knowledge on a national or sub-national level that in many cases has simply been skipped over or assumed given global understandings.

Too many governments today still cannot provide basic information such as numbers of gun homicides (let alone injuries), their costs to the public health and social security systems, or estimates on the number, characteristics and origin of guns in circulation in their jurisdiction.

It is thus beyond urgent to establish “basic data collection in much of the developing world”; as Marsh notes, “the WHO’s mortality database only covered seven sub-Saharan African states, and even in those coverage was estimated to be less than 50 percent. What is required is the development of permanent data-collection procedures as part of existing public health or law enforcement bureaucracy. Above all, governments in the region would benefit most from accurate information on where and when people are killed or injured in incidents involving armed violence”.¹¹⁵

Moreover, in addition to a “marked reluctance to invest in perception/victimization surveys and polling on armed violence issues”, it seems evident that “some governments also remain reluctant to support in-depth national research on armed violence, or seem unwilling to publish or respond to the finding of national research conducted on the incidence and effects of armed violence”.¹¹⁶


In these cases, it is essential that civil society – with academic and think tank partners – strive to fill this gap, as basic knowledge of the dynamics regarding gun violence, of course, is a sine qua non condition for civil society to define its priority advocacy areas. As noted by Karp, in some circumstances, “unable to pinpoint where the weapons are most common and where they are most dangerous, activists and policy-makers have been handicapped in their efforts to formulate priorities and articulate concrete agendas”.¹¹⁷

So, for example, one of the six pillars of the Global Campaign for Violence Prevention is precisely to “strengthen data collection and research on violence”, with a goal that “the number of countries with routine data collection systems, nationally representative surveys, research on risk factors for violence, and outcome evaluation studies of violence prevention programs and services is greatly increased” by 2020.¹¹⁸

In other words, don’t have the data? Pressure the government to produce and make it available, or go get it yourself! SDP has increasingly used the latter approach given bureaucratic resistance on many levels. Luckily, knowledge seldom needs to be perfect to be actionable. Like in the case of the initial estimates on the world’s small arms stock-piles, “easily understood, easily quoted and cited, the numbers supported diplomacy and action. Quantification – even if preliminary, unreliable and irreproducible – transformed the small arms problem. What had been amorphous and elusive became concrete and comprehensible. By showing that small arms could be measured, preliminary numbers inspired hope for management”.¹¹⁹

The best weapon to reduce gun violence is knowledge. It should come as no surprise that one of the most powerful mechanisms used by the NRA in the US has been a successful drive to “suppress knowledge”. In fact, the “National Rifle Association, in its efforts to block gun-control laws it says are unconstitutional, has used many of the strategies pioneered by the tobacco lobby, at least until a national settlement with state attorneys general forced cigarette makers to change some of their ways. Those tactics include suppressing information, blocking research, targeting individual scientists and pushing for state laws that prohibit cities and counties from passing their own gun measures”.¹²⁰

Indeed, knowing that proper information is an unsurmountable adversary over the long-term, the gun lobby even deployed massive efforts to keep needed law enforcement information from the US government and police forces themselves, blocking through administrative measures and legislation proper access and use of tracing information on crime guns.¹²¹



Thus, solid, updated, and comprehensive information is key. But once more, there are “limits to what can be accomplished through global research. The most reliable data continues to be generated at the individual country level; that’s where the action really is and where it belongs. The field needs more national, sub-national and regional studies on how much, and what kind of weapons, are to be found where”... “because national context – culture if you will – determines so much about the effects of firearms, clarity probably has to be more nationally focused as well”.¹²²

For cases where this basic information on guns and violence is available, research “concerned with gun control and the causal relationships between arms availability and homicide/suicide and criminality”¹²³ could still helpfully be conducted in many countries around the world, as the first wave of efforts vastly concentrated on the US and few other “Western” countries. Moreover, as Guy Lamb notes, the “evidence base on what works to reduce firearm violence is weak”, so research on a national level is also ripe for further efforts therein.¹²⁴

In many ways, this echoes a recommendation by Ed Laurance, who argues that global civil society should help facilitate a return to “Mode 1”, basic research, data-intensive efforts, surveys and other efforts – by integrating academia into an area of study, enlarging the community with the inclusion of universities. This should be done keeping an open mind and letting the findings of this research, drive “innovations for policy action” which could then be shared to cross-fertilize on an international level.¹²⁴

2) ...but don't oversimplify.

A rekindled focus on gun violence and a return to some of its basic realities is essential. Yet, despite the need for particular attention, advocacy efforts to better control small arms cannot be deemed a “silver bullet” for reducing armed violence. Nor is the anachronistic and simplistic stance “guns are bad, get rid of them to end violence” enough.

If anything, as defined by Ashkenazi, “firearms are principally designed as instruments of violence... From a neutral stance, we must recognize that firearms are tools and not conceptually different from other instruments: they are intended to enhance a human activity. To paraphrase the US National Rifle Association, guns don't kill people; guns enhance the killing of people. They extend the range, effect, ease and efficiency of performing a human activity: all things a good tool needs to do”.¹²⁶

While such a completely objective view may be difficult to digest for advocates – particularly those of us from affected countries that have seen so much senseless and preventable gun violence – it is nonetheless complete folly to ascribe agency to objects. And yet, part of civil society aiming to reduce armed violence still seems to suffer from this peculiar, and limiting, mindset. Which, in turn, may account for the view from one expert that “much of civil society action in the realm of small arms has been superficial, unfocused, and of doubtful success”.¹²⁷

As noted by Krause, there are several examples “where subsequent knowledge overturned certainties held in 2000”: “it is existing stocks, not new net flows, that fuel most recent conflicts”; “ammunition is a big piece of the puzzle, neglected by almost all analysts in 2000”; and “arms brokers are only one element – and probably not the most important one – in the diversion chain, which almost always involves the complicity of state authorities including in neighboring countries”.¹²⁸

It is thus fairly striking that, in reality, some of these issues have not been entirely integrated into advocacy priorities. Unfortunately, some civil society groups have seemingly continued to be somewhat guided by those earlier thoughts, even as in the last years it has been “demonstrated that some previously widely held assumptions were wrong or misleading”.¹²⁹ Of course, as noted above, in some cases, over-simplification has been a natural consequence of an utter lack of data, while in others the data was seemingly willfully ignored.

The good news, however, is that the new knowledge “has not tended to reduce the importance or salience of SALW and armed violence as an issue for both research and policy – on the contrary. But it has emphasized the wide variability and complexity of patterns of perpetration and victimization of armed violence and their links with SALW availability and flows, and particularly the importance of specific societal contexts”.¹³⁰

Indeed, as noted by Greene and Marsh, a feature of “both academic and policy debates about armed violence has been that experts on ‘arms’ issues have tended to make over-simplistic assumptions about the implications of weapons flows for patterns of violence and insecurity. Similarly, specialists on different types and contexts of violence or conflict have often considered studies on arms questions to be secondary and superficial: addressing mere artefacts rather than deeper social, economic and political factors”.¹³¹

>>> Hardware versus effects

One of the reasons for the initial focus of research and policy on the “tools of violence” was that, at least within the UN, armed violence as a theme came about in the General Assembly First Committee and thus was “owned by the arms control and disarmament element of the epistemic community”. While ultimately the motivation of civil society involvement was the human impact of the ‘hardware’ – that is, the effects, defined as “both the direct and indirect impacts associated with the proliferation, availability, and misuse of small arms and light weapons”, the initial conceptual and policy thrust made perfect sense.¹³³

Unsurprisingly, the conceptual shift towards greater attention to the effects of armed violence “can be traced to growing frustration among certain UN member states in 2005 with the direction of the PoA negotiations and their inability to ensure ‘humanitarian and development’ priorities were adequately integrated”.¹³⁴ This resulted in the emergence of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development in 2006, and its focus on broader aspects of “armed violence reduction” (AVR).

Of particular note in this transition was the development of the so-called “OECD lens”, which suggested four core elements – agents, instruments, institutions, as well as the effects on people – as the main incision points for changing patterns of armed violence.¹³⁵ While the earlier advocacy efforts had been squarely focused on the “instruments” – or the tools – of violence from a supply and accessibility perspective, the prism of “agents” allows for

considering the motives for violence and reasons for demand of weapons, while “institutions” covers “both formal institutions and informal cultural norms, rules and practices that enable and/or protect against violence”.¹³⁶


At that point of conceptual development, “small arms control was no longer viewed strictly in terms of reducing weapons and controlling supply; the focus began to shift toward the human dimension of the problem, including the cost of armed violence and its direct and indirect socioeconomic impacts, as well as exploring the drivers of armed violence such as inequality and poor access to education and livelihoods”. In time, “these changes strengthened the view that controlling the supply and reducing the numbers of weapons in circulation, including reducing demand for weapons, was not enough”.¹³⁷

This, of course, is true. Focusing exclusively on the hardware in detriment to similar attention to the broader context armed violence occurs in – as some civil society groups have continued to do despite the evolution of knowledge and concepts – is quite limiting, and thus less impactful. On the other hand, while the AVR approach has been extremely successful as a framework for local programming, it has not served well as a basis for advocacy strategies, sometimes devolving into an “everything is everything” mindset that has trouble defining a few actionable priorities for political attention. Even the so-called “Oslo Commitments”, a pragmatic and focused improvement, in our opinion, to the tenets of the Geneva Declaration, has failed to garner significant momentum.¹³⁸

What is needed, then, is to fully recognize and incorporate the complexity of the armed violence realities as reflected in the AVR prism, while still respecting the absolute primacy of the role of small arms in the majority of the world’s manifestations of armed violence.

In other words, focus on small arms control is essential – particularly in some affected regions like Latin American and the Caribbean – but not in total isolation. For highest impact, whether through one’s own organization or a broader network/coalition, civil society must integrate efforts to advocate for greater control on small arms (the instruments par excellence) with efforts concerning the agents, institutions and people of the broader AVR lens.¹³⁹

Breaking down the silos in which each element often operates – not only in terms of programming, but also of advocacy – is thus the challenge for global civil society attempting to reduce armed violence. Further conceptual development in this direction is certainly needed, as are ways to define priorities and fora for concerted and strategic action.



In some ways, the simple contraposition between ‘hardware’ and ‘effects’ amounts to a false dichotomy. As the core element ‘instruments’ proves, both are essential, with one residing inside the other (an ‘umbrella’ of sorts). But a global advocacy agenda inspired by the entire spectrum of the AVR lens elements is neither feasible – for its broadness – nor desirable – for the local particularities of armed violence. Conversely, the AVR lens provides an excellent framework for needed local interventions against gun violence, while attention only to ‘hardware’ in programming is too limiting.

Still, serious focus on advocacy regarding the hardware cannot simply be by-passed as a thing of the past because, in most circumstances, it has not been properly addressed. Instead, “moving on” can only occur once serious efforts have been made in overcoming an obstacle, not by simply establishing a new conceptual horizon and ignoring a massive mountain as if it were a speed-bump.

In this sense, dismissing an advocacy focus on guns because it is “too basic” is only applicable for societies that have rendered it too basic through public policy. Changing the conceptual lens or terminology will not be sufficient to assist in decreasing ‘armed violence’ under circumstances in which little is known about how many people are killed and injured and with which instruments. Even prior to tackling the “who” and “why” conundrum – and attempting to resolve it – civil society must press for a basic accounting of the most basic elements of gun violence – and the actions that can reduce them. Otherwise, as in an evolutionary process, civil society runs the risk of attempting to run without having learned how to walk.

A strategy that focuses on different aspects of the role of small arms – as instruments, but also highly relevant under “agents” and “institutions” – is a promising alternative, if embedded and cognizant of the broader landscape. An “enlightened focus” on small arms and their effects rather than “oversimplified default attention only to hardware” will therefore hopefully be the backdrop for the advocacy possibilities discussed ahead. Importantly, it is essential to clarify that conceptual frameworks – even helpful ones – do not directly translate into political action; advocacy demands focus. Moreover, constant and borderless broadening may offer governments an ‘easy way out’ to more politically difficult, but necessary, choices.

Discussing the tension between “deepening” and “broadening”, Karp offers an important reminder that can also perhaps serve here as a final word regarding ‘hardware versus effects’:

“Instead of concentrating more aggressively on the basic problem of weapons proliferation, it has been tempting to pursue other dimensions of the problem. The result has been a dramatic widening of the small arms agenda... From its origins in the immediate causes and consequences of weapons proliferation, small arms-related endeavors now reach far beyond, concentrating more explicitly on small arms effects and the motives that create demand for them. The emphasis on the consequences of firearms proliferation creates opportunities for overlap with related fields. The broader agenda includes support for gun victims, interference with provision of emergency aid, tailoring responses to the different implications for men and women, non-violent conflict resolution, reintegration of former combatants and security sector reform. Few of these concerns are completely novel; most have been acknowledged as important elements in conflict resolution since the late 1990s or earlier. What has changed is their absorption within the ever-expanding small arms project. With broadening has come new sources of enthusiasm and creativity. Small arms research and policy is far richer as a result, drawing closer to the causes and manifestations of gun-violence.

At its most ambitious, broadening emphasizes not just on the direct effects of small arms proliferation – death, destruction and insecurity – but the indirect effects as well. Instead of focusing exclusively on gun homicides and war casualties, broadening encourages the field to devote attention to displacement of refugees, malnutrition, decline of medical and social services and economic welfare. Since small arms are ubiquitous in armed conflict, almost any aspect of armed conflict is related to their presence.

Indirect effects are an important part of the small arms problematique. But they also work like an intellectual narcotic. The leap is irresistibly liberating, transforming a relatively narrow phenomenon into a comprehensive approach to human security. The broader agenda also pushes up numbers, assuring media coverage and official attention.

When progress on issues like small arms transfers and technical advances is frustratingly slow, indirect effects offer a way to keep international attention focused close by. But they also push small arms into the background. Instead of encouraging activists and policy-makers to deal primarily with small arms per se, the wider perspective compels them to deal with the much more intractable challenges of conflict resolution, peace building and state consolidation.

To analysts, relief officials and activists who approach these issues from a background in small arms proliferation, it might appear as if their purview is growing. This undoubtedly is true over the short run, but in the long run the transformation is more likely to auger the decline of international small arms activity. With its priorities spread among a continuously growing catalogue of concerns, the original impulse of controlling small arms proliferation is bound to dissipate. As the resources previously allocated for small arms proliferation go to other issues, it is not mere feasible, but likely, that the salience of small arms will decline.

As an analytical approach, indirect effects transform small arms from a specific phenomenon into an approach for dealing with wider and more fundamental issues of global policy. As a lens for viewing other, related issues, small arms are extremely useful. But intellectual lenses are only approaches to insight, not a target for action themselves. By instrumentalizing small arms, broader approaches reduce the attention devoted to small arms themselves...

It is imperative that this field should cultivate new sources of inspiration. It will be enriched and enlivened by broadening. But it is equally essential that broadening does not come at the expense of deepening. If the original impulse, the determination to diminish the basic problem of small arms proliferation, is allowed to weaken, the field cannot prosper. Broader interests must not be suppressed, but nor can they serve as a substitute for original motives. Important in and of their own right, related issues will make vital contributions, but there is no guarantee that these campaigns will affect small arms as well. Accomplishments in related issues are no substitute for progress in the original field. There is no alternative, in other words, to renewed commitment to dealing with small arms proliferation per se. It must broaden, but it also must deepen”.¹⁴⁰

3) Mopping the floor with the faucet open?

So, let us refocus on guns, deepening our approach, and let us be smart about it. OK. But how do we do this? As noted, while the focus on international movement of weapons has certainly helped in avoiding adding insult to injury as far as the flooding of firearms worldwide, and revived attempts to reduce the “misuse” of guns are absolutely essential, what about their “destabilizing accumulation”? In the last decade plus, has global civil society been attempting to mop the floor with the faucet open?

There are already about 875 million firearms in the world today. 875... Million... Of these, the vast majority (650 million) are in the hands of civilians, another 200 million with armed forces, and finally about 26 million with law enforcement.¹⁴¹ Undoubtedly, “the sheer number of small arms in circulation poses a massive challenge to arms control efforts. This challenge is exacerbated by their shelf life; if properly maintained, small arms can operate for many decades and pass through many hands before the end of their lives”.¹⁴² In the case of São Paulo, according to recent SDP research, 64% of the firearms apprehended in 2011 and 2012 were produced before 2003, when Brazil’s more restrictive gun legislation was passed.

To make matters worse, presumably the planet is not very far away from reaching one billion firearms, as the estimated 875 million are annually joined by several million produced. On small arms alone, “it is estimated that 815,000 military-style weapons (pistols, rifles, sub-machine guns and machine guns) were produced globally in 2000 and that about 7 million commercial firearms (handguns and long guns) were manufactured in the same year”.¹⁴³

The consistent increase in numbers does not appear to show signs of letting up: “military small arms production is in long-term decline but the US segment of the now-dominant civilian market looks, from the producers’ point of view, ‘unambiguously promising’”, according to Karp.¹⁴⁴ Partially, this could be a disturbing displacement effect, however, as at least in the US the “trend in civil small arms production is a move towards higher power and greater sophistication, converging on military standards”.¹⁴⁵

It is probably no surprise that research is less developed than in other areas: “our knowledge of the production of SALW, and how this is related to conventional arms, still has considerable gaps... SALW do constitute a distinct area with its own dynamics which should be the subject of more research”.¹⁴⁶

Nonetheless, the “US appears to account for at least a half of the world’s small arms production”¹⁴⁷, with Europe as the other major ‘culprit’: “SALW production is more widely distributed geographically than major conventional arms but both are concentrated more in some countries and regions than others. In 2007, 44 of the largest 100 arms manufacturers in the world were located in the USA and another 39 in Europe”.¹⁴⁸ Despite this concentration, small arms production is also geographically widespread, as “at least 1,085 manufacturers in approximately 105 states have, at some time, produced SALW and ammunition”.¹⁴⁹

A global industry pouring a steady flow of weapons, virtually all of which are legal and relatively controlled at the point of manufacture. If availability, access and accumulation of small arms are a significant factor in facilitating armed violence, should civil society not attempt to constrain or limit the levels of arms production, at least making the faucet output into a trickle, as we continue to mop up the floor?

To be clear, attempting to reduce the quantities of small arms production should not be done at the expense of increasing the “quality” of the production that does and will exist for the foreseeable future. In other words, best practices for the manufacturing of SALW such as those in the OSCE Handbook are essential and should become universal and obligatory.¹⁵⁰ Likewise, immediate amelioration to the important areas of marking firearms and ammunition (for record-keeping and tracing), including obligations under the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), as well as best practices such as those contained in the respective OSCE Handbook, remain crucial.¹⁵¹

But even if properly controlled, marked and recorded upon manufacture, existing global stockpiles and levels of production are simply too high if transformational change to levels of gun violence are to be achieved.

We would certainly agree, in fact, that the “separation between (the study of the global SALW trade and of stockpiles and weapons production) is somewhat artificial, bearing in mind that these three areas feed off and into each other”.¹⁵² Yet, this separation is precisely what we have collectively done in the last decade plus, in terms of policy, research and advocacy. What we know today, however, points to the importance of advocacy action regarding both production and stockpiles of small arms.

Of course, this would be a very long-term, mammoth enterprise. Some would say quixotic. To start, even the basic knowledge is limited: “the production side remains one of the less tractable areas on which to perform publishable scholarly analysis”.¹⁵³ The economic, military and political interests involved are large, but as we argue below, not

overwhelming. And though diffuse, understaffed and underfunded, some countries have individuals or organizations committed to this struggle. Therefore, there are ways to, at least, get started.

Though competing strategic interests, mere rhetoric and less-than-complete honesty may be invoked as dismissive explanations, there are several governments that, every October at UN First Committee in New York, bemoan the world's excessive level of arms production. Perhaps they would also like to try to actually do something about it? (Of course, ironically, it is precisely many of the governments decrying the status quo that allow the production and transfers to boom, through their insatiable demand for weaponry).

Particularly on small arms, as recalled by McDonald, "in-depth consideration of manufacturing controls" are particularly salient as this is "the one PoA issue that has received considerably less attention than any other - and is treated in a fairly broad, unspecific way in the PoA itself".¹⁵⁴ It could be time to turn a critical eye towards this gap.

We very much agree with Marsh, who suggests our collective "need to focus on a more ambitious approach to arms production".¹⁵⁵ Indeed,

"the technocratic approach works where it is allowed to take place. But on its own it won't engender a much more far reaching systemic change... we'll need a radical and comprehensive change to relations between states, their armed forces, and military industries... civil society also needs to ask why those same states are producing and exporting arms at all, (to) expose the cozy relationships between politics, industry, the military and intelligence which lead to vast sums of unnecessary expenditure on arms; the subversion of laws and principles at the heart of democracy and the rule of law; and the supply of arms to authoritarian regimes".¹⁵⁶

The world's gun violence epidemic is too large and deep in impact to be tackled, even in the long-term, though an incremental approach alone. The scale and dynamics of arms production is such that (only) an 'insider game' approach to advocacy will not suffice. A broader, more ambitious, possibly at first seemingly quixotic or even outlandish alternative should be pursued in addition to the 'technocratic' approach with government officials. Or as put forth by Karp,

"A fully effective, international small arms policy will require a more ambitious agenda and more confrontational activism, pressing states to change policies rather than facilitating existing official predispositions... An agenda targeting guns generally would mark a major departure for international efforts to deal with small arms proliferation. It would transform a community that previously worked to make small arms possession safer into a movement dedicated to reversing proliferation. Such proposals also would reduce the pervasive ambiguity of current campaigns. Even the most comprehensive reforms like those listed above would leave enormous numbers of small arms in official stockpiles and private hands. But even so modest a proposal is guaranteed to arouse controversy.

Whether it were enacted through national action, regional or global mandates, it would require governments to bear a far greater responsibility on these issues than most have had to face before. Such reforms are imaginable only through the dedicated effort of national and international NGOs working in close cooperation”.¹⁵⁷

Whether a campaign, coalition or simply a message, perhaps civil society should demand a one-year moratorium on global small arms production? A freeze on small arms production until the world’s surplus has been destroyed or reassigned? A cap to the numbers of weapons a company, country, or region can produce yearly? Internationally coordinated, but nationally based, campaigns to ban all production of small arms in a given country or region?¹⁵⁸

>>> How many guns does the world need?

The idea of attempting to reduce small arms production, of course, is neither new nor can be meaningfully pursued without tackling the twin area of existing stockpiles. If the premise of this exercise, from the perspective that believes both the tools and agents are relevant factors to intervene in armed violence, is that there are already too many guns in the world and too many of them are easily available to people that are likely to abuse them, future production cannot be disassociated from past production that has not yet been disposed of.

The proper definition of the concept of “surplus” and its logical operational consequence (destruction) must, therefore, be given more attention. As noted by Brian Wood, one of most neglected aspects of the “agenda on controlling and reducing SALW and conventional arms is that concerning the ‘excessive and destabilizing accumulations’... Governments have used this concept for many years but never given it real operational meaning since it implies that arms holdings should be reduced and hence arms destroyed”.¹⁵⁹

While possibly simplistic at first glance, the question “how many guns does the world need?” can and should actually be pursued. A baseline study of each country today – given current legislation, cultural aspects and dynamics – and assuming apprehending and destroying all illegal firearms and minimizing legal stockpiles to what is actually needed for legitimate security purposes (whether only for law enforcement and military, or also for a minimal number of civilians) could be amalgamated to form a global panorama. Based on this estimate, civil society could, nationally or globally, demand that surplus destruction, production and procurement reflect these ‘caps’ – as occurs in other industries with detrimental public health impacts.

Some of the suggestions further below offer other possibilities for more efficient and widespread “mopping” of the world’s firearms holdings – including among civilians. These, in turn, could serve as a basis to “embark upon a

strategy of reduction”, in the words of Marsh, with the “explicit focus upon getting guns off the streets and out of people’s houses”, a return to a “radical agenda that is missing when we take the legalistic approach”.¹⁶⁰ This vision, in our opinion, is crucial. But let us return now to the possibility of turning those “faucets” a bit...

>>> Hit them where it hurts... their pockets

The possibility of attempting to constrain the production of small arms, of course, will not exactly be popular with the powerful – and very greedy – firearms industry. Expecting, or hoping for, self-regulation of this industry is as absurd as would have been for the tobacco and alcohol conglomerates. With profit as their only objective, anything that could be “bad for business” will be fiercely resisted. Therefore, almost by definition, a strategy to curtail firearms production (and associated profit) will have to be fairly confrontational to those economic interests.

As noted by one interviewed civil society expert, “we have always tried to work with the grain and not against it (by being disruptive or antagonistic). While (many NGOs) would not dream of changing their approach, there is definitely a role for an alternative, more confrontational, approach in some circumstances”.¹⁶¹ Is production a scenario in which to test this hypothesis?

Perhaps, as suggested by Ray Acheson, a first step for a proper focus on production/manufacture can be to “engage in a political economy analysis for action”, with the notion that, as a potential asset, most small arms producers are not intrinsically “part of the military-industrial complex”, and thus perhaps more susceptible to pressure.¹⁶²

There is certainly evidence to support this idea. While powerful, the economic and political clout of a Beretta, Taurus, Glock or Smith & Wesson, for example, pales in comparison to that of the massive conglomerates that churn out most of the world’s conventional weapons systems. In fact, on the list of largest military manufacturers in the world, “none of the SIPRI Top 100 specializes purely in SALW, and those that do devote only a small fraction of their productive capacity to SALW”.¹⁶³

To further suggest their relative vulnerability to coordinated efforts tackling their economic standing: “of the SIPRI Top 100 arms producers, 17 had SALW (including their ammunition) among their product lines... given that the value of SALW production comprises a relatively small fraction of overall conventional arms production, however, and given that production is distributed so widely around the world, it is to be expected that firms specializing in small

arms production will be much smaller than the larger conventional arms manufacturers... from perhaps 100-700 workers and USD20-120 million turnover per year in Western Europe and up to 500 staff and USD50 million annual sales in the USA".¹⁶⁴

A further difference we can infer between the industries providing equipment mainly for 'war' in contrast to those selling small arms for countries 'in peace', is that producers of major conventional weapons may have to reinvest more of their earnings in research and development, but also often confront a less competitive marketplace, as few companies produce a given weapon system or one similar enough to compete in procurement.

Conversely, technological advancement of firearms today is basically non-existent, as industry balks at making them safer (with the exception of 'smart guns', see below). Thus, "predominantly civil small arms firms tend to have rather low ratios of R&D to sales (round about the 1 percent level in cases where figures are known), mainly because of the maturity of the technology used in much commercial production".¹⁶⁵

In the case of firearms, "much less is known about profit since only a small fraction of companies involved are publicly quoted and so the majority are not obliged to publish detailed accounts and annual reports. Enough information is available, however, to suggest that the small arms industry, at least in the US, is highly competitive". In other words, a given producer is not in a comfortable marketplace situation, as net losses by Remington for several years between 2003 and 2008 suggest, for example.¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, producers also often have very distinct specialties, and so could be "targeted" in a pinpoint fashion depending on the sort of small arms production to be curtailed; for example, Beretta (Italy) in 2003 sold 90 percent of its production to the civilian market, while Heckler and Koch (Germany) depended on military and police sales for two-thirds of its revenue.¹⁶⁷ In Brazil, Taurus sells almost its entire production to the civilian and police markets in the US and Brazil.

So, while still Goliaths, firearms manufacturers are relatively more susceptible to potential civil society Davids. As foreshadowed, the arena for the dispute can be encapsulated by sayings such as "follow the money" or "it's the economy, stupid!". Purely political efforts to constrain actors that operate mostly as economic beasts are unlikely to be sufficient, particularly as their current economic clout buys them the lobbying that translates into political cover. So to enact change, civil society would have to "hit them where it hurts", their pockets. But what tools can be used as the proverbial rocks to 'hurt' the giants?

The most promising method, in our opinion, would be to focus on divestment efforts. As has been successfully been done for some of the aforementioned “unacceptable weapons” – such as cluster munitions and nuclear bombs – urging institutional and individual investors to withdraw their funds from companies that produce certain products can have a substantial impact, both on the companies’ policy choices but their very survival – in addition to indirectly forcing change to legislation and political choices that could otherwise remain immune to direct advocacy.

Examples to emulate include the Stop Explosive Investments campaign, and its “Hall of Shame” list, which still includes over 100 companies that fund or invest in cluster bomb production.¹⁶⁸ Its annual report, from IKV Pax Christi (now PAX), “Worldwide Investments in Cluster Munitions: a Shared Responsibility”, is a comprehensive overview of how much money still flows despite the treaty banning these weapons.¹⁶⁹

Another effort from PAX is “Don’t Bank on the Bomb”, which offers a “global report on the financing of nuclear weapons producers” that found that US\$ 314 billion – by 298 financial institutions – are currently made available to this industry. The report’s purpose is “to provide accurate and timely evidence on the extent to which the private sector is investing in a weapon which is a threat to humanity”.¹⁷⁰ Even better, the author’s offer a Campaigner’s Guide that, while focusing on nuclear weapons, is full of relevant tips for those that may want to attempt similar reports for the small arms industry.¹⁷¹ Particularly noteworthy are a few of the answers it offers to “why divestment?”: achievable, human connections (“everybody has a bank account”), brings in new actors, non-partisan and apolitical, stigmatizes the weapons, and ‘out of the box’ (among others). We would add: it is advocacy independent from governmental institutions.

On small arms specifically, arguably less has been done even when the ‘targets’ are more plentiful. One important example from the United States, and potentially an inspiration for a global movement, is the Campaign To Unload (<http://unloadtheguns.com>) which has a tagline that is certainly nothing to sneeze at: “are you invested in gun violence?” A group of 30 organizations “that have united to hit back at irresponsible gunmakers where it hurts: their sources of funding”, the campaign “seeks to encourage the gun industry to adopt common-sense, publicly-backed reforms, such as universal background checks and smart gun technology”.¹⁷²

>>> Corporate Social Irresponsibility

This approach, both on a national level around the world and on a truly global level, strikes us as full of potential. There are other similar efforts that could likewise be deployed by civil society operating on different levels, such as advocating for increased “corporate social responsibility” for firearms producers. Incredibly, despite the nefarious human impacts their products can (and do) cause, the arms industry shows a dearth of honest attempts to mitigate or redress acts of violence perpetrated with their products.

In contrast, for example, to the alcohol and tobacco industries, which have been duly shamed into investing a small portion of their earnings in programs seeking to reduce the damage their products can cause, the arms industry seems to be relatively immune to the CSR trend – ironic, considering that beer and cigarettes are not developed with the manifest purpose of killing people.

Lest the arms industry think of donating guns to underprivileged children, suggestions could be to compel companies to donate a percentage of profits to programs for the rehabilitation of victims of gun violence, for example. Some commentators argue it is “not impossible to imagine socially responsible companies in the arms industry”, arguing that,

“Remington could require that their products be sold by licensed and reputable dealers that conduct background checks. They could commit to selling military and law enforcement equipment only to government clients. Magtech could make a similar commitment to sell armor piercing bullets and ammunition magazines with more than 10 rounds only to military or law enforcement clients. Private sellers that want to maintain their credibility could voluntarily pledge to abide by the same rules. Some companies could even get ahead of the curve, for instance, in the creation of tracking devices for weapons or funding research on violence and its prevention. This list is only a start; creative members of the industry could surely come up with much more”.¹⁷³

These possibilities, while incremental, could be positive. CSR efforts, however, have often been misused as a cosmetic ‘mask’ to legitimize unethical behavior, ameliorating corporate images but failing to produce any actual change to practices and effects. Charges of “misleading” or “tricking” the public into greater acceptability of products are common for other controversial industries, serving as a spurious marketing action and perverting the concept altogether.¹⁷⁴

In that sense, any application to small arms producers could not allow “business as usual” to continue in the absence of changes to the industry’s byproduct: gun violence. As has been repeatedly argued for the tobacco industry,

it is quite possible that producing weapons is simply incompatible with the very notion of “social responsibility”. A general analysis of the US arms industry in the Journal of Business Ethics, for example, concludes that “the US arms industry is in violation of CSR standards regarding the environment, social equity, profitability, and use of political power”.¹⁷⁵

More direct “name and shame” approaches, linking small arms producers and human rights violations (which has been done to some extent) or with widespread levels of gun violence (as could be done, for example, in the case of Taurus in Brazil) are arguably more promising but have been undertaken in a timid fashion. To date, the best efforts to tie the arms industry to the mayhem it facilitates – for example, by the organization Facing Finance – have been mostly done regarding major conventional arms producers and necessarily their exports.¹⁷⁶

>>> Is facilitating killing not a sin?

Related, but can be pursued independently from the above, is the notion of advocating for a hefty “sin tax” on the firearms industry worldwide. Also known as “vice taxes”, these are usually levied on industries that produce particularly harmful products or behaviors, and as such is a sort of “sumptuary tax”, one that seeks to reduce legal consumption of a good deemed “socially undesirable”, such as alcohol, tobacco, gambling, pollution, and possibly soon in some jurisdictions, marijuana and sugar.

One good example comes from one of the world’s most affected countries, El Salvador, which is redirecting part of gun sales tax into its public health system to benefit all citizens. As noted by Buchanan, “if a low-income, highly affected nation can be leading the way with such an innovation, surely others can too? All governments tax gun sales, so it is also an obvious issue for national campaigning”.¹⁷⁷

Ensuring, at the very least, that no arms industries receive tax breaks or subsidies from the government is also a step in the right direction. Similarly, determining that any gun sale must be accompanied by compulsory insurance (as is the case with automobiles in many jurisdictions) would increase the costs of firearm ownership.

These revenues could be reverted to programs to reduce gun violence and/or to assist survivors of gun violence. As with other economic attempts to constrain “merchants of death”, it would be essential to ensure that the ‘sin tax’ does not legitimize or sanitize firearm production – or worse, serves as an excuse for increased production!

Incipient, mostly rhetorical and/or conceptually flawed, notions of levying extra tax on international transfers of arms have been ventilated before, including by former Brazilian President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, but a possible “sin tax” on the very production of firearms should not be contingent on an international transfer of the products – just their entry into the market.

An example of this has been recently put forth in Chicago (Cook County), with a US\$25 tax on firearm sales, with proceeds going to several community safety, research and educational programs.¹⁷⁸ Other proposals in the US (California, Nevada, Maryland, and Massachusetts) follow a similar line and include taxes on ammunition, with funding of mental health and gun violence survivors programs.¹⁷⁹

An important aspect of any economics-based effort to constrain the firearms industry is that, in addition to the moral and human rights arguments, there is a strictly financial argument as well, as the net economic effect of the industry is arguably quite negative. As noted by Muggah and McDougal for the US case, “While citizens bear the costs, it is ultimately the manufacturers, retailers, and marketers that profit from the country’s tsunami of gun violence. What do the numbers tell us? Some 32,163 Americans died of gunshot wounds in 2011. Another 70,000 more were non-fatally injured in the same year, and suffer debilitating physical and psychological scars. The economic cost of those losses has been estimated at \$47 billion annually. This grossly exceeds the industry’s economic benefit, as (generously) calculated by the National Shooting Sports Federation, by some \$18 billion per year”.¹⁸⁰

Other gun violence cost estimates are even higher, up to US\$174 billion for the year of 2010 in the US – a cost of US\$564 for each US resident, or a cost of US\$645 per gun in that country!¹⁸¹ This particular estimate, breaking down the costs, suggests that the “societal cost of just one gun homicide averages \$5 million” including “\$1.6 million in lost work; \$29,000 in medical care; \$11,000 on surviving families’ mental-health treatment; \$397,000 in criminal-justice, incarceration and police expenses; \$9,000 in employer losses; and \$3 million in pain, suffering and lost quality of life”.¹⁸²

And these, of course, are the costs in the economy with greatest financial gains from firearms. Many countries in the world, though Brazil is also an exception, only have “liabilities” when it comes to small arms given the absence of “assets” from production. Should global civil society not be actively attempting, through some of the suggested mechanisms, to reduce the costs – human and financial – facilitated by these “merchants of death”?

>>> Take gun violence to court

In addition to the economic focus of these potential actions and the political focus of traditional advocacy actions – whether on diplomats, leaders, bureaucrats or parliamentarians – there is another possible path seldom walked by most in civil society: taking gun violence to court. In other words, in some countries and legal traditions, there are judicial avenues worth exploring as part of an attempt to constrain production, increase regulation, and ultimately reduce levels of armed violence. Usually focused on one or two, civil society can operate in all three branches of government – Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary – to further its objectives.

While in some countries, like Brazil, the legal obstacles to such an approach may be difficult to overcome, in other jurisdictions exploring judicial mechanisms to force greater responsibility and restraint of firearms manufacturers is feasible and, thus, should be seriously considered. A necessary caveat is that the argument below may be overly dependent on the US legal system and examples, and may be impossible to apply in some jurisdictions, but mapping any possibilities should be undertaken.

Arguably, here again more attention has been given to the international movement of arms than their original production. Nevertheless,

“whether we contextualize this problem of liability within or beyond the nation-state, a corporation should not be said to be acting responsibly if it unhesitatingly transfers weapons to any group expressing a need whether government guidelines preclude the transfer or not. For, these weapons are rarely placed in museums as objets d’art. Rather do their purchasers use them as means to power and wealth over the bodies of anyone who stands in their way. This blood-drenched reality suggests a need to reconsider the justification for assigning limited liability to any corporation regardless of its products negative externalities. The present system of token government oversight is, in short, no substitute for comprehensive cost-benefit analyses and human rights standards that take peoples lives and well-being into account. If such constraints were in place and could avoid capture by those it regulated, at least small arms manufacturers and traders would be seen for what they are and what they constructively in-tend to be: facilitators of death and destruction”.¹⁸³

The discussion of industry liability and indirect responsibility for gun violence is particularly advanced – and complicated – in the United States, a highly judicialized nation, where in 2005 Congress passed legislation that shielded corporations from responsibility over the misuse of their products, the “Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act”.¹⁸⁴

Absurdly, this law “not only denies victims of gun violence their day in court, but also encourages gun makers to continue business practices that will foreseeably lead to more violence. The protection provided by PLCAA is un-

precedented and without justification. In fact, PLCAA’s protection is so excessive that victims harmed by toys are afforded greater recourse than those harmed by guns”.¹⁸⁵

Still, legal action has been intense, has precedents, and could become overwhelming:

“If the legal floodgates open, the smaller and less profitable gun industry won’t be able to financially survive the attack that the tobacco companies withstood... As the anti-gun movement begins to hone its strategy, the blueprint is already in place for activists who want to pursue big legal settlements against gunmakers, using the same playbook that was successful against the tobacco industry. But unlike that industry, which staved off efforts to ban or curb smoking for decades before getting socked with a landmark \$206 billion fine in 1998, U.S. gunmakers don’t have deep enough pockets to survive such challenges. Their industry profit margins are much smaller—8.5% on annual revenue of \$11.7 billion... Consider that Altria alone, which owns Phillip-Morris, is a \$23.8 billion business, twice the size of the entire gun industry, with net income margins that are two-thirds higher”.¹⁸⁶

In fact, a bill in the US Congress already seeks to “provide victims of gun violence access to the same civil remedies as are available to those injured through other means”.¹⁸⁷ Undoubtedly, lawsuits are “one of the most powerful methods for wronged individuals to hold the gun industry accountable, and for the broader public to learn about the harmful behavior of the industry”. Moreover,

“unlike the criminal justice system, which has a punitive purpose, the primary purpose of the civil justice system is to compensate injured parties. A secondary purpose is to prevent future injuries. Exposure to liability causes manufacturers, distributors and retailers of consumer products to exercise greater care to ensure their products do not cause harm. The civil justice system does not depend on the criminal, illegal conduct of the manufacturer or seller. Instead, it asks fundamentally different questions, including: Was the behavior of the defendant reasonable in light of what he/she knew or should have known about the risks of making or distributing the product? (...) When businesses are held to account for their irresponsible practices, they are given a compelling reason to avoid mistakes and prevent their products from causing harm. Given the importance of keeping guns out of the hands of criminals, the civil justice system holds the potential to create a powerful check against actions that enable gun violence”.¹⁸⁸

As a former Manhattan district attorney wrote, “a basic function of law in a civilized society is to allocate the costs of harm to those who caused it... Decades ago, the tobacco industry hired doctors to plug the health benefits of cigarettes, and the auto industry claimed that seat belts were an unnecessary extravagance. The results were an epidemic of deaths, followed by civil law suits, followed by industry reform. Today, smoking is down and cars are safer. In part, we have the market to thank. When these industries acted irresponsibly, basic principles of civil liability placed the costs of illness and accident where they belonged. Once their bottom line was affected, even the most myopic executives had to take notice”.¹⁸⁹

A caution to note, as per the case of tobacco, is that greater regulation in some jurisdictions may cause industry to pursue unregulated markets elsewhere, a displacement effect that should obviously be avoided from the onset. Moreover, in the US at least, the road to a more responsible place is long and winding. A New York Times report is telling and chilling in this sense:

“The world’s firearms manufacturers have been largely silent in the debate over gun violence. But their voices emerge from thousands of pages of depositions in a series of liability lawsuits a decade ago, before Congress passed a law shielding them from such suits in 2005, and the only time many of them were forced to answer such questions. Much of the testimony was marked confidential, and transcripts were packed away in archives at law firms and courthouses around the country. But a review of the documents, which were obtained by The New York Times, shows the industry’s leaders arguing, often with detachment and defiance, that their companies bear little responsibility, beyond what the law requires, for monitoring the distributors and dealers who sell their guns to the public. The executives claimed not to know if their guns had ever been used in a crime. They eschewed voluntary measures to lessen the risk of them falling into the wrong hands. And they denied that common danger signs — like a single person buying many guns at once or numerous “crime guns” that are traced to the same dealer — necessarily meant anything at all”.¹⁹⁰

In other jurisdictions, comparable legal obstacles may not exist, and therefore civil society could have greater ease and success in using the courts to attempt to reduce firearms availability and misuse.¹⁹¹ Particularly prior to the 2005 “immunity” law, a rich body of legal arguments was developed in the US with blueprints and recommendations on how to attempt to influence the firearms industry. While much of the knowledge may be limited to the US case (or applicable only to jurisdictions with similar legal traditions) these efforts can be emulated and inspiring to others. The titles alone suffice to suggest their relevance: “The Case Against the Gun Industry”, “The Gun Industry’s Dirty Little Secret”, “Litigating Against Gun Manufacturers”, “A Roadmap For Reforming Gun Industry Misconduct”, and “Gun Control Through Tort Law”.¹⁹²

4) Tighten the ‘nuts and bolts’

Even in the absence of the transformative changes to production and holdings contemplated above, a proper, strategic and systematic “nuts and bolts” approach to small arms controls – on a local, national or global level – could be pursued by civil society in an impactful manner regarding surplus, destruction and stockpile management. Define how many guns are needed, properly lock them up, and destroy the rest. Simple!

While often duly emphasized (and properly operationalized) only by government agencies or by civil society dealing with conflict or post-conflict/DDR programs, better knowledge and implementation of the concepts of surplus and destruction would be absolutely essential almost everywhere. Indeed, in some cases “small arms stockpiles greatly exceed immediate and likely future needs.”¹⁹³

To some extent, the lack of advocacy attention is understandable. Pushing for an exact, transparent public account of how many firearms a country has, how many it can prove essential for military and law enforcement purposes, and precise destruction plans for any discrepancy between those numbers, may be deemed too technical or ‘cold’ to many in civil society. Moreover, definitions render the enterprise complex, as the notion of “surplus” is flexible and can be manipulated. An internationally agreed, evidence-based definition could be an important contribution by civil society experts.¹⁹⁴

Nonetheless, there is a fair amount of evidence that in many (most?) countries, there are many more firearms than “necessary”. For the specific case of military firearms, according to the Small Arms Survey, around 76 million of the world’s 200 million small arms in the hands of armed forces are “surplus”.¹⁹⁵ In other words, an estimated 38% of military stockpiles are not operationally needed! While a similar estimate for law enforcement would be significantly more difficult to make, and the estimate for civilians extremely complex indeed, one can expect significant surpluses therein, regardless of the methodologies used.

In South America alone, about 1.3 million military small arms are “undoubtedly superfluous” and, therefore, should be immediately destroyed.¹⁹⁶ For example, Argentina has over a half million unnecessary firearms (over 77% of its holdings), while in Guyana up to 83% of small arms may be surplus!¹⁹⁷ It is quite possibly no coincidence that, in SDP’s mentioned research, all apprehended heavy weapons originating from Argentina had been diverted from its armed forces.¹⁹⁸

And yet, globally, recent levels of surplus destruction have been insufficient, as estimated at about 430,000 units annually, “probably less than new military production”.¹⁹⁹ Clearly, more needs to be done: “even after years of effort, destruction programs are not reaching more than a small proportion. Destruction is organized, but not systematic. It is enduring, but it is not growing. It is highly legitimate, but not authoritative”.²⁰⁰

Evidently, surplus destruction is more crucial than exciting. Yet, ensuring that all guns apprehended by police forces, or returned in buy-back campaigns, are destroyed as swiftly as possible – rather than increasing diversion risks by having several levels of needed bureaucracy – is absolutely crucial.

Likewise, there is possibly nothing less sexy, in all of human history, than ‘stockpile management’. Yet, “the secure management of small arms stockpiles held by police or national armed forces is instrumental in curbing small arms proliferation. Poor stockpile security is a prime means through which arms and ammunition are diverted from the legal to the illicit markets. Lax security makes theft easy. Corrupt officials may sell or otherwise transfer weapons under their care to criminal groups or rebel forces”.²⁰¹

None of this is particularly novel. In 2007, an experts meeting in Berlin, for example, already had as its “purpose to put the issue of stockpile management on the international agenda” and concluded that “stockpile management was a complex issue which was not receiving sufficient political attention. Often the political will to address the resulting problems in a comprehensive way was missing... Standards and guidelines based on best practice were a prerequisite for providing assistance. However, moving from best practice to multilateral legally binding instruments on stockpile management issues needed to be considered”.²⁰²

How much the debate has evolved since, particularly inasmuch as civil society engagement, is unclear. Luckily, blueprints for stronger efforts on stockpile management and surplus destruction already exist – the work left in many countries is to compel governments to accept and implement them. Of particular note, in addition to the guidance provided by the aforementioned OSCE Handbooks²⁰³, are the so-called ISACS (International Small Arms Control Standards), initially launched by the UN (in a trickle fashion) in August 2012.

Given the earlier discussion, it should come as no surprise that the most important recent step forward on international efforts on small arms did not emerge from First Committee negotiations, but rather was UN-led but not contingent on unanimous governmental approval. Indeed, the ISACS (available at <http://www.smallarmsstandards.org>), are “main-

tained and updated by a voluntary global network of experts drawn from the United Nations, governments, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector”. (Even so, the vitriolic resistance from some governments to their development further suggests that it is unlikely that all UN Member States can be expected to agree and implement truly transformative instruments).


As Garcia explains, the ISACS are a “mechanism to assist United Nations member states in implementing effective controls on small arms availability, from manufacture, marking and record-keeping, international transfer, tracing, collection, and destruction of illicit weapons. These are all new norms now established and some of them emanated from the Program of Action. While there is no doubt that norms have flourished and consolidated, especially weapons destruction, marking and tracing, and brokering, the hardest test remain implementation of the collection of norms the Program of Action prescribes. The ISACS are key in this respect”.²⁰⁵

As McDonald reminds us, “the normative framework at the global level is quite comprehensive” and “you could argue that it’s sufficient, that the key challenge is, not the creation of new norms, but the ‘full and effective implementation’ of existing norms”.²⁰⁶ If one considers ISACS to be part of this broad normative framework (supported by a majority albeit not universally consensual), this claim appears even stronger.

Furthermore, the practical implementation of ISACS on a local, national and global level could be pushed by civil society also as many of the standards are common sense, easy, inexpensive, practical gun control measures not dependent on national legislation or international negotiations. ISACS are meant to be achievable by all nations rather than necessarily “best practices” that may demand high technology or expensive solutions. It could be said that ISACS has only two gaps: their entirely “voluntary” nature and the absence of ammunition (see below).

The final piece of the puzzle missing is proper investment of political capital by governments, fully committing to effective implementation. As noted by Laurance, ISACS is an “important effort but has moved at the speed of governments”.²⁰⁷ But governments can hurry when catalyzed by a strong civil society push. Greater worldwide attention – also by NGOs in the area – and awareness-raising would be an important first step as, despite a mention in the first UNSC resolution on SALW and in several Secretary-General reports, ISACS are less known than they warrant.

For example, the progress report of its first year notes that only about 4000 unique users had visited the website.²⁰⁸ Its Twitter feed (@SALWstandards) has, in early March 2014, only 145 followers. Civil society should help in grow-



ing both numbers considerably.²⁰⁹ So far mostly an internal UN tool for its myriad agencies dealing with some aspect of small arms control, it remains to be seen whether it can definitely enter the “toolbox” of national and sub-national governments, as well as civil society – and if indeed this scenario is of interest to its UN coordinators.²¹⁰

A self-assessment software project by UNIDIR and MIIS, currently ongoing, could be a decisive step forward in this direction.²¹¹ Nevertheless, global civil society should consider whether ISACS provide a roadmap for the measures – and therefore a focus for advocacy – that implemented locally and nationally could significantly reduce gun violence levels.

5) “Guns don’t kill people, bullets do”

As noted above, ammunition is missing from ISACS.²¹² Bullets are also, of course, missing from the PoA, and treated as a lesser category under the scope of the Arms Trade Treaty. And yet, several clichés – such as “guns without bullets are nothing more than heavy sticks” or “guns don’t kill people, bullets do” – are, also, true.

Let us keep going: “guns and bullets have a symbiotic relationship—neither can fulfil their lethal mission without the other. Like the syringes and substances used for lethal injections, they are physically distinct components of a unitary and interdependent system developed to inflict damage to humans”.²¹³ Or, as noted by an African delegate during the ATT negotiations, whether major conventional arms or SALW, the weapons themselves are no more than “delivery systems”— it is ammunition and munitions that kill and maim.²¹⁴

Considering that 12 billion bullets – or enough to kill all of humanity, almost twice – are produced yearly, all the realities and arguments made for better control and reduction of firearms are true for their ammunition.²¹⁵ Or, “understandings of production, use and proliferation of SALW cannot be developed in isolation from analysis of ammunition – the rounds that actually kill and maim”.²¹⁶

What we currently know about ammunition points to a few clear directions in terms of renewed advocacy actions. For example, according to the Small Arms Survey, the average annual international trade in small arms ammo between 2004 and 2009 amounted to US\$1.8 billion; 26 countries had exports of ammunition for small arms worth more than US\$ 10 million (in 2007); and “the global trade in small arms and light weapons ammunition is considerably less transparent than the trade in the weapons themselves”.²¹⁷

We also know that, in countries like Brazil or the United States, much of the firearm ammunition used is produced domestically, thereby excluded from the trade numbers above – in Brazil particularly, the company CBC (Companhia Brasileira de Cartuchos) has virtually a monopoly of the bullets used in the country, by police and civilians (including criminals) alike. For example, CBC – which notes itself as “one of the three largest ammunition producers in the world” – in 2006 sold around 40% of its total production to the Brazilian government and security forces, while in 2010 it reportedly exported almost US\$140 million to around 50 countries.²¹⁸

Moreover, as PRIO has noted, “weapons often last for decades, but ammunition can only be used once. An army fighting a war will need to keep up regular supplies of ammunition, otherwise its effectiveness as a fighting force will degrade and ultimately cease”.²¹⁹ In other words, if small arms production worldwide miraculously came to an abrupt halt, official stockpiles were made totally secure, and all security forces surplus weapons were destroyed, the enormous numbers of firearms in circulation – particularly among civilians – could continue to facilitate high levels of gun violence for many years if access to ammunition remains unabated.

A further complication is that relative to firearms, ammo is cheaper, simpler to produce, expendable, easier to conceal in small quantities, highly fungible and has a much shorter shelf-life – and therefore is produced, sold and used in absolutely enormous numbers. And yet, attempts to stop the free flow of bullets – or at least ensure better controls – have been relatively muted from both governments and civil society. Examples of civil society’s advocacy timidity when it comes to ammunition are plentiful, arguably including a lack of follow-through after both in the PoA and the ATT.

Despite the conceptual absurdity and dozens of governments to this day calling for the formal inclusion of ammunition in the PoA text, most of civil society has pursued the issue in a lukewarm and erratic manner. Nonetheless,

“one could argue that the knowing absence of ammunition in the PoA’s provisions is a clear avenue to circumvent commitments and undermine objectives. At times, omission becomes commission. To pontificate about legal musings, of course, is not the issue. The issue is this: without ammunition, the governments charged with implementing the PoA are ‘shooting themselves in the foot’ in practical terms because they are knowingly refraining from a simple normative improvement that could help in achieving its human security objectives.”²²⁰

During the ATT negotiations, advocates many times demonstrated the absolute need to include ammunition in the instrument’s scope; we ourselves argued that “people don’t die of gun wounds, they die of bullet wounds. An ATT without ammunition in its scope would be like a gun without bullets – it would not serve the purpose it was designed for”.²²¹ Yet, we collectively have been relatively silent on the urgency of better controlling international ammunition flows since the final negotiations. Ironically, the less than ideal coverage of ammunition in the ATT may present an opening for civil society to advocate for proper controls.

It may indeed be time to raise our collective voice once more. As several interviewed experts noted, among the several topics generally seen as “unfinished business” in the PoA, a concerted effort to tackle ammunition is possibly the most pressing. For example, Ashkenazi argues that ammunition control, “badly weakened by manufacturer interests” should be advocated “more than anything I can think of”.²²²

As McDonald notes, “the UN has only dabbled in ammunition control”; in this case “politics has trumped research”. A quid pro quo to keep ammunition outside of the scope of the ITI led to the 2005 statement that ammunition would “be addressed in a comprehensive manner as part of a separate process conducted within the framework of the United Nations”. While this recommendation did yield some important follow-up (such as the development of the IATGs), in general the UN has paid little attention to small arms ammunition.²²³ Thus, “civil society could advocate for new agreements that explicitly cover ammunition, at different stages of the life cycle – covering not just storage, but also manufacture, international transfer including brokering, and surplus disposal/destruction”.²²⁴

Advocating for strengthened controls of ammunition – at a local, national or global level – has several potential assets. One is that much of the work has already been done. As McDonald argues, in terms of research and policy work, civil society could “take existing research and repackage for advocacy purposes, distill the research... that illustrates the importance of ammunition in fueling conflict in zones already awash with weapons”.²²⁵

Also in terms of codifying ammunition control or developing normative frameworks, much has already occurred at least on the national and ‘sub-global’ levels. As we have noted, “regionally and sub-regionally as well, most instruments on SALW—whether on their licit or illicit trade—such as CIFTA, ECOWAS Convention, SICA (Central America), Decision 552 (Andean Plan)—clearly recognize ammunition control and regulations as part and parcel of those for firearms”.²²⁶

Another positive aspect is that ammunition production and commerce is somewhat divorced from the arms industry at large, whether conventional weapons or specifically SALW. In fact, “relatively few firms appear to produce both small arms and ammunition”, with possibly only two examples between the US and Europe.²²⁷

Moreover, while widespread geographically, at least for military grade ammo the industry is concentrated, as “just fifteen states accounted for 90 per cent of all identified ammunition exports in 2011”. Therein, “while there are a large number of companies capable of producing ammunition, we only identified 36 which regularly have significant export sales. It is just these companies that have the industrial capacity, ownership of technology, and marketing expertise required to be global level exporters”.²²⁸

Another positive characteristic of the industry (for military grade ammunition) as an advocacy ‘target’ is its tendency towards state ownership of production, which “gives states additional means by which they can control the international trade”²²⁹ – and thus also civil society clearer incision points. In fact,

“an analysis of the main States that export small calibre ammunition shows that in 40 per cent of States production is state owned. Overall, of 30 companies which are significant producers of military standard small calibre ammunition, 43 per cent are State owned, or States own all or a majority of the shares. Production in some western European countries that might be expected to be owned by private companies is in fact State owned. For example, Nammo AS of Norway is 50% owned by the Norwegian government, 36.6% by the Finnish government and has minor stakes held by the French, German and Spanish governments. RUAG of Switzerland is 100% owned by the Swiss Confederation”.²³⁰


Finally, this uncanny concentration extends to the types of ammunition: “particularly concerning medium and large calibers, there are many occasions in which users of a weapon can only obtain ammunition from a single company, or a small number of companies. In such a circumstance the suspension of supplies of new ammunition could be carried out by a small number of states, or even one acting alone”.²³¹ While this is especially true in the upper ranges, going into the definition of “light weapons”, the quoted report notes, for example, the case of a German-made weapon, in use in over 20 countries, with only six producers of compatible ammunition.

This fact is further relevant for civil society groups contemplating particular areas to focus on as “the caliber of a firearm predicts the level of mortality from a gun-shot wound – the higher the caliber, the more likely is mortality. The difference between death or survival could be explained by nothing more than the caliber of the bullet that inflicted a gun-shot wound”. Therefore in research, and we would add that in strategizing advocacy, there is a need “to disaggregate different types of firearms and ammunition and understand the various ways in which the availability of more lethal firearms (such as larger calibers or automatic weapons) affects the incidence and lethality of violence”.²³²

In general, as discussed earlier for the case of firearms manufactures vis-à-vis the mammoth conglomerates that produce larger conventional weapons, this relative separation and levels of concentration also allow for more precise targeting in terms of advocacy and, why not, greater economic and political vulnerability. In that sense, divestment efforts and the other economic (and judicial) paths discussed for firearms to change industry behavior and output may be a bit more straightforward to strategize.

A final “asset” in the consideration of ammunition controls as an area for increased advocacy is that a considerable majority of the world’s governments already agree that ammunition should be prioritized. While not exactly ‘low-hanging fruit’, given the commercial interests and stance of a few major (and powerful) producers, it is helpful to know that there is considerable political appetite for steps forward.

Indeed, “no wonder that it is precisely the regions of the world most affected by gun violence at the forefront of the call for the inclusion of ammunition in the PoA. From Mercosur to CARICOM, from Central American to African



nations, these countries know that said inclusion would improve the tools at their disposal to undertake efforts to help keep their citizens alive”.²³³ Likewise, during ATT negotiations, an overwhelming majority of countries demonstrated a readiness “to shoulder obligations regarding measures to avoid the diversion and illicit trade of SALW ammunition”, with a particular resoluteness coming from African, Latin American and Caribbean nations. While this push was only partially successful, that desire could again be mustered to carry over to renewed attempts or alternative – hopefully broader – frameworks.

For example, the ambassador of Peru during First Committee 2012 argued it was “undelayable” that the United Nations addresses the issue of ammunition in an “individual manner”.²³⁴ A proposal on a way forward towards legally-binding international controls of ammunition – not only of its trade, but from production to destruction – could indeed be one way forward. (See discussion below on further normative development)

Locally- and nationally-based “nuts and bolts” efforts, or legislative and public policy improvement, depending on the case, with a particular focus on ammunition control, are also widely warranted. Regardless of the geographical scope, these efforts are long overdue and eminently feasible. If, in the words of Peter Batchelor, ammunition control (like civilian possession) has proven “immune” to research,²³⁵ it is because the political will has not reached tipping point. Creating the political will is the job of civil society advocates. The evidence-base, policy recommendations and even normative blueprints are present; our collective mission is to push them into the realm of political reality.

6) Power to the people!

Much of the discussion so far, like advocacy itself, has mostly focused on pressuring the public sector or, to a lesser extent, the private sector. Governments and companies; politics and economics. Still, there is a less direct but often even more powerful way to press for change, particularly transformative and sustainable change: catalyzing societal and psychological progress.

Whether we conceive this as “social advocacy”, “people to people advocacy”, civil society advocating on civil society, use of ‘soft power’, or simply awareness-raising and education efforts, changing ‘hearts and minds’ will truly eventually create political change. With care to avoid immediacy or a naiveté that would have been covered under the “oversimplification” discussed above, seeking increased societal controls over different aspects of the gun violence epidemic can pay handsome dividends.

Recent SALW research suggests that “it is important to adopt a governance perspective to SALW controls, in which the importance of societal or informal controls is recognized societal regulation of SALW refers to the range of ways in which non-state institutions and social norms shape and constrain SALW production, flow, holding, display, and use. Depending on the context, a range of non-state actors can play influential roles in regulating SALW... they can mobilize informal authority structures, social norms and institutions, and cultural practices... the effectiveness of government initiatives to strengthen SALW regulations therefore depends not only on the quality of legal drafting and the capacity of law enforcement agencies, but also on the extent to which corresponding societal norms and controls develop in a similar direction”.²³⁶

Despite common perceptions of “gun cultures” that cannot be bent, the fact of the matter is that societal norms, like legal norms, are flexible and open to adaptation and evolution. Culture is neither monolithic nor static. Indeed, “there is still a wide assumption that existing traditional or informal practices relating to SALW use, possession and display are relatively immutable. They certainly tend to be resistant to crude top-down government regulation. Nevertheless, there is substantial evidence that norms and patterns of societal control can be quite dynamic and open to change, where there are socially perceived needs and opportunities”.²³⁷

Societal control over guns can also be collectively negotiated, through sanctions and incentives, and can use powerful bargains: “gun owners can get something they want, or avoid losing something they value, if they accede to

social norms concerning how they use their weapons”.²³⁸ Moreover, strongly held choices and perceptions by the public may indeed at times supersede formal legal frameworks: “normally law-abiding citizens will turn a blind-eye if illegal practices comply with customary norms, and even socially responsible local police or magistrates tend to be reluctant to enforce firearms regulations which appear to be unreasonable or unenforceable. The effectiveness of government initiatives to strengthen SALW regulations, therefore, depends not only on the quality of legal drafting and the capacity of enforcement agencies, but also on the extent to which corresponding societal norms and controls develop in a similar direction”.²³⁹

According to Ashkenazi, the “most successful gun-control program” in history was that of Japan in the early seventeenth century, when the country was arguably the most armed in the world. Rather than only an administrative or criminal justice imposition, Japan purposefully designed a profound change of the existing ethos, with firearms being “dismissed as unmanly, dishonorable weapons”.²⁴⁰

The analysis of why said change of dominant culture was successful can be very helpful to think about current possibilities. Those efforts, Ashkenazi argues, separated control of violence from firearm use, providing a “social space for expressing violence without using guns”; involved local interests (“a commonality of interest involving group and community leaders and the state is a must”); gained widespread support through symbolism (“providing an emotional or ideological context for rejecting firearm use could well be one of the most critical elements in the ways societies can control small arms. Firearm control needs to be worked into the popular ethos”; and provided actual safety (“firearms thus became neither a desirable item, nor a necessary one”).²⁴¹

In modern terms, this perhaps could be deemed propaganda, but an evidence-based version thereof – an awareness-raising campaign to change perceptions and behavior regarding firearms – can be a valuable tool for civil society in affected countries. The essential question for advocates, then, is “how can community rules which allow firearms, perhaps even encourage them, be manipulated to cause, as the Japanese did 400 years ago, a gradual extinguishing of the need to carry or use firearms by individuals?”²⁴²

Once again, a global ‘cookie cutter’ approach would be both quixotic and counterproductive. In some contexts, a change of culture towards a complete abomination of guns is simply unfeasible in the medium-term. If indeed “certain populations have exhibited a fascination with guns which borders on the erotic”, seeing them more than

instruments but status symbols, “items of value in and of themselves”,²⁴³ then the long-term goal must be simply to break the spell of fetish – which in many societies has been duly broken for decades.

Respect for local needs, realities and knowledge, then, is essential. “Civil society organizations, ranging from churches through to international NGOs, provide input into SALW control at the community level” however, “inasmuch as they are largely informed by international discourse on the issues of ‘disarmament’ and violence, they tend to discount the abilities and forms used in local communities. This is particularly true when local practices control violence, rather than attempt to reduce it, and or where local practices are intended to limit but not eliminate the use of small arms”.²⁴⁴

>>> The gun violence we allow

An uncomfortable, almost unspeakable, truth is that, in general terms, democratic and at least fairly developed countries have the levels of gun violence their respective societies’ tolerate. If “in practice, not only does no government have a monopoly on the use of violence, but also in most countries there is a major grey area of government-tolerated (though not legitimate) armed violence”²⁴⁵ is it because a given society accepts those thresholds through political inaction.

Among the several types of violence tolerated by governments listed by Greene and Marsh, the following is particularly true in the case of Brazil: “routine non-investigation of homicide or other violent crime associated with specific criminal activity (such as drug trafficking), geographical areas (such as in urban slums or ‘borderlands’) or sectors of society (such as the marginalized poor)”. All of these governmental omissions, unfortunately, are deeply rooted in Brazilian society’s views on criminal justice, human rights and public security.

Civil society, then, must be in the business of changing the government’s calculation, demanding reductions and lower levels of armed violence. According to Greene,

“there are at least three generic reasons for tolerating (unauthorized) armed violence: 1. Lack of military or police capacity to prevent or combat such violence with acceptable risks to the political authorities; 2. Lack of concern because it is not perceived to pose an overt threat to overall state authority or politically influential sectors of society; 3. Respect or accommodation by government agencies and officials for the informal authority of elites, or long-standing social or cultural practices that sanction violence. The boundary between what is and is not countered, investigated, punished and prevented by state institutions is fluid and shifting. There are socially constructed ‘thresholds’ below which the state authorities tend to tolerate armed and sometimes violent alternatives to its authority, and above which a line is crossed and the state authorities feel obliged to consider reacting with force. Such socially constructed thresholds of tolerated armed violence and SALW thresholds appear often to be intimately related to types and scale of SALW availability, display, and misuse”.²⁴⁶

Establishing a low maximum threshold for the socially tolerated levels of armed violence – and aggressively working towards that objective – has the benefit of allowing for framing the issue in terms of “positive reinforcement rather than finger pointing”, as noted by Richard Moyes.²⁴⁷

For most violent societies, the limit of 10 homicides per 100,000 people per annum, which the World Health Organization deems “epidemic”, can be a valuable milestone and reference. While the global average is already below this level, as are the rates of the vast majority of countries in the world, for the countries with the worse armed violence levels, achieving this level of mortality would portend severe reductions in lethality. For example, Brazil would have to slash its homicide rates by more than half per year, while some countries in Central America would be urged to achieve in the order of 70 or 80% decrease in homicides – which have been achieved over more or less a decade in places like New York, Medellín and São Paulo.

Creating a worldwide “under 10 per 100,000 club”, as it were, would seek to create a “positive identity” or, according to Moyes, could “create the expectation in society, that we must do better”.²⁴⁸ It would also have the benefit of setting a form of international standards or framework based on indicators of “effects” rather than “hardware”, that is, a result-oriented, pragmatic approach saying “you can have guns, but are prohibited from abusing them”.

Said approach would be less prescriptive in terms of national legislation or firearms holdings – as long as the minimum requirements were met. Whether a “highly regulated” model or one that establishes firearms are generally disallowed for civilians, cultural and political specificities would be protected inasmuch as compliant with a norm hoped to become universal – like respect for human rights or electoral democracy.

The creation of this “club” would have added benefits. In addition to a basic legal framework on national gun control, it would entail as a first objective having decent data recording and collection systems in place – as aforementioned, many countries today are unable to produce this basic information with any reliability.

Moreover, setting a common indicator would also allow its implementation on a sub-national basis, demanding that governors and mayors, for example, be accountable to the norm but also enjoy the political benefits of success. For example, the state and city of São Paulo have in the last year been on the cusp of breaking the “epidemic” threshold, even if the national average is more than double, and several states and urban centers (particularly in Northeast Brazil) display ‘Central American’ rates of gun homicides. (See below for a discussion of cities as a locus for gun violence reduction).

Of course, establishing this sort of societal norm depends not only on convincing public opinion that their political choices must be used to enforce the threshold, but also seeking change on an individual level: a transformation of the cultural, psychological and behavioral aspects of gun ownership and use. This social construction, for example how the vast majority of people in Japan or the UK consider guns as an “alien” reality, can be elusive, but enduring when achieved.

>>> Let's talk about demand

How a given society interacts with firearms, regardless of its governmental edicts or legislation, therefore, is an essential factor in the construction of armed violence levels. For many years, virtually no work was done on issues of demand for firearms or “why armed groups and criminals needed or wanted the tools of violence in the first place”.²⁴⁹ While broader consideration of this aspect has occurred since, it nonetheless remains fairly underwhelming in our opinion, particularly for countries other than the United States.

Yet, better understanding demand – “the preferences, prices, and resources that shape the acquisition, possession, and misuse of small arms”²⁵⁰ – particularly by individuals, remains essential but needs to be made more accessible and understood by policymakers. As Ashkenazi notes, “people choose to own guns or not for very complex motives which range from perceived risk, through tools of the trade, to the symbolic. Critically, what is at fault is our understanding of these motivations and what follows from them. The concept of ‘gun culture’ is, to a very large degree, an ephemeron: a creation brought about through our ignorance of its features, rather than a useful explanatory variable”.²⁵¹

A related point is made by Ken Epps: “the demand side of weapons acquisition and use remains under-explored and –formulated, especially cultural and economic factors. Much more can be done to raise public and political awareness about how and which demands drive the growth in weapons proliferation”.²⁵² Finally, in the words of Elizabeth Kirkham, “tackling arms supply in isolation is unlikely to deliver huge benefits in terms of human security – there is still the need to work on the demand-side as well”.²⁵³

Bridging this gap is obviously a job for civil society, though it requires different approaches, expertise and resources than those predominantly used in the past decade. For the supply-side of the equation (production and trade), it made sense to rely heavily (though not only) on arms control or export control specialists and UN lobbyists, particularly from producing and exporting regions (mainly North American and Europe).

Conversely, to better understand demand (which ultimately establishes levels of production and trade), researchers and analysts from affected countries (mostly ‘Southern’) are best situated, particularly from ‘soft sciences’ such as sociology, anthropology and social psychology.²⁵⁴ Whether they were the “chicken” or the “egg” of the previous focus, funding patterns to civil society would also have to shift. (See discussion on funding below)


Ultimately, an important aspect of any long-term and ambitious effort to reduce the number of firearms in circulation around the world – in addition to ‘closing the faucet’, ‘mopping the floor’, and ‘tightening the nuts and bolts’ – is to attempt to affect the attitudes that lead individuals, groups and nations to procure and hold firearms. Global civil society needs to help create the conditions in which less people globally feel the need or the desire to have a gun. In the words of Nicholas Marsh, “legislation is part of the story but the most important thing is to make owning and carrying a gun unattractive”.²⁵⁵

>>> The people we work for

A final essential aspect of any sustained “people to people” advocacy efforts, unmediated by governments, is to better integrate gun violence survivors in the efforts to tackle violence and make firearms “unattractive” to the public. In fact, several of the interviewed experts, including Kristen, Buchanan, Moyes and Atwood, noted the importance of better reflecting the experiences – and respecting the rights and needs – of those who have actually been struck by bullets and survived to tell their story. What is more, these survivors – and the broader rights that remain unfulfilled for so many of them – should be an intrinsic part in shaping the discourse of global civil society.

One of the unfortunate by-products of the somewhat ‘balkanized’ approach to armed violence reduction by weapon type is that gun violence survivors have received less international attention and legal protection than those injured by a few particularly horrendous – and thus mostly banned – weapons, such as landmines and cluster munitions. In the words of Adele Kristen, it is important to foster a “revived effort on the rights of survivors, particularly as gunshot survivors have specific psychological problems and are much more plentiful than those harmed by ‘inhumane weapons’ but have received relatively less attention”.²⁵⁶

Is this stove-piped approach non-discriminatory, and does it create a hierarchy of victims? As AoAV argues in a recent report, “international law, when it comes to addressing the rights of victims of armed violence, is incoherent and patchy. Existing law covers some rights, for some victims, some of the time. But many victims of armed




violence fall through the gaps of international law, leaving them without actionable rights”.²⁵⁷ Whether pursuing new international law is the best way to fill these gaps is up for debate: another view states that “instead we need to rigorously examine what standards States have already agreed across the board, not just related to arms control, and how these can be improved, applied and strengthened at the national level as part of integrated efforts to reduce and respond to violence”.²⁵⁸

Regardless of the best strategy, the exact technological specifications of the equipment that injures a human being are much less relevant than the physical and psychological impacts of the violent act. This is a clear area in which the effects should be the focus, rather than the hardware.

An extraordinary resource for a better understanding the realities of the world’s main group of victims of violence is the recently published *Gun Violence, Disability and Recovery*.²⁵⁹ This report covers a plethora of specific thematic policy issues such as social protection, rehabilitation and recovery, international standards and principles as well as country case studies; it also includes a diverse set of experiences from survivors. For this paper’s discussion, the essential aspect is that this is an overlooked dimension of gun violence and survivors of gun violence can be tremendous agents of change in a society’s perception of firearm use. Survivors and their families understand the calamitous effects of gun violence like those not directly affected never will. Their experience, replicated over and over again, is precisely the human tragedy global civil society working on armed violence attempts to prevent, reduce and redress.

And yet, civil society to date has been underwhelming in harnessing these powerful experiences into lasting change to public policy. As insensitive as it may sound, taking a bullet does not render anyone a good advocate. But among the many sharp and motivated individuals struck by bullets worldwide, increased civil society investment in capacity-building, training and education could foster a formidable political force – whether at the local, national or global level.

Of course, this may be easier said than done, as the obstacles are considerable. Attempting to answer the question of why the “collective voice” of survivors has been “generally so weak”, Buchanan suggests a few reasons, “including the complex and contentious nature of perpetrators who are also victims. In many contexts where justice is slow and corrupt, paralysis following involvement in gun violence and gang activity is seen as a punishment and little consideration is given to the individual’s on-going rights and needs. Second, the impairments resulting from gun



violence may make it difficult to be involved in advocacy—for example, the ability to engage in public processes may be curtailed by limited access to transport, and difficulty in speaking or writing. Third, many survivors may not wish to draw attention to themselves because of stigma and fear of further violence”.²⁶⁰

Nonetheless, it is striking that, given the questionable attention to survivors of violence contingent on the type of weapon provoking the injury, a group such as the “Ban Advocates”²⁶¹ catalyzed by Handicap International for the process against cluster bombs has not been effectively operationalized among the much more plentiful survivors of gun violence. Whether a similar group would necessarily make sense for gun violence, given many of the realities and peculiarities discussed so far (probably not), having properly capacitated gun violence survivor “task forces” engaging in “people to people advocacy” – not necessarily with diplomats or officials, but fellow citizens – even at the neighborhood level would be an important mechanism for societal change. As has been shown in many urban interventions, rendering the survivor an agent rather than passive victim may also help in breaking cycles of violence that often are based on vengeance and family or gang ties.

Of course, this concept has been successfully implemented in some local or national circumstances, but could be engaged with in a much more systematic and broad way. Undoubtedly, “many people and organizations working to reduce armed violence, promote development, human rights, social inclusion, and gender justice do not see this topic as part of their mandate. The first fundamental change is to adjust our collective perspectives and priorities to include a focus on survivors of gun violence, in order to do justice to the millions of people injured and traumatized every year”.²⁶²

7) “What we have here is a failure to communicate”

The relative dearth of direct, strategic dialogue in many jurisdictions between those that have been unlucky enough to be stricken by a bullet and their ‘neighbors’ who have escaped that fate, speaks to a broader area in which global civil society could increase its investment and improve its impact: communications. Another form of “social advocacy” that does not depend on direct engagement with, or positive consideration from, public officials, is to use the most impactful communication tools to reach the right audiences with the crucial messages.

Of course, a long-term, multi-faceted strategy that encompasses goals to increase government regulation, change industry behavior through financial constraints and modify patterns of societal controls is ideal, but each element has its value and can be independently pursued. An analysis of the local and national circumstances of a given armed violence phenomenon will suggest the potential for each, their assets and liabilities, but pushing for changes in public perception – and their political calculations – is bound to be germane everywhere.

As the case of smoking illustrates, change is possible – not only in public policies to regulate the manufacture and use of harmful products, but also regarding their acceptability to society and the limits the public desires to collectively impose on them. Though it may seem simplistic at first glance – and as complex as it is to achieve – in some communities convincing young men that guns are “uncool” may help reduce gun violence in ways laws or policies never could.

>>> “Barking up the wrong tree”

Reaching the key audiences will be an essential component of civil society’s renewed efforts to curb levels of armed violence. It could be argued that much – possibly too much – of civil society’s attention in the last decade has been devoted to officials that have very little governance over their nations’ mechanisms to reduce the most common forms of armed violence – urban gun violence.

As noted by Keith Krause, “there is a need to harness together the ‘operators’ – rather than the ‘negotiators’ – of gun control and related issues”, as there is still worldwide a surprising amount of lack of knowledge of the existing best practices.²⁶³ Therefore, rather than diplomats, high-level (but not political) staff in ministries of Justice and Interior, for instance, could be a more productive audience for civil society. The same notion was suggested by David

Atwood, who underlined the urgency of “sharing information, experiences and data to the responsible offices and agencies within governments, as well as conduct training and capacity-building” for these operators, who would become the new “mobilizable constituency” for civil society efforts.²⁶⁴

This ‘ministerial’ shift, of course, would reinforce the earlier recommendation to expend less advocacy energy at the United Nations and more in national capitals. Furthermore, a “focus on concrete and practical efforts in addition to formal or legal” aspects, as suggested by Silvia Cattaneo, also underlines that even at the national level ‘nuts and bolts’ approaches can become more impactful than the usual advocacy on legislation. In so many ways, it is the implementation and enforcement of norms – whether global or national – that makes the crucial difference in reducing armed violence (provided, of course, said norms exist in the first place).

Experts including Cattaneo, Krause and Nash emphasized the pressing need to share existing best practices internationally. In this sense, rather than the production of research, policy notes, intervention methodologies, it is their wide dissemination (to the proper audience!) that civil society must dedicate renewed attention to. We should thus all attempt to more directly reach key decision-makers and civil society stakeholders internationally – rather than only diplomats, who often mediate and filter these conversations – particularly professionals who implement gun control and armed violence reduction policies and programs in affected locations.

Therefore, in its international efforts, civil society could productively engage in a major information-sharing and communications push – rendering research, analysis and programmatic materials accessible to much wider audiences, both in terms of languages but also formats that engage stakeholders with different levels of need for detailed information, including video, multimedia, and graphics. These efforts would strive to deliver accessible knowledge based on local successful experiences to stakeholders worldwide that could benefit from efforts to date.

As Owen Greene notes, an essential question for civil society working on armed violence currently is “how do we deploy knowledge?”²⁶⁵ An example of policy-driven research to impact public policy would be a “simple compiled explanation of what works (a sort of ‘manual’), to increase the database of successes on local level”.²⁶⁶ We need to think sub-nationally and catalyze best practices, as Krause states, “to clearly identify what works and share the information internationally”.²⁶⁷

>>> The elusive clearing-house

In addition to more efficient “who” and “what” for communication efforts, civil society could also contemplate changes to “how” it communicates. As with advocacy activities at large, an increased emphasis on disseminating local success stories – knowledge and methodologies – is crucial, but how can we ensure that the mayor’s offices staff in Nairobi has access to that strikingly germane effort from Rio de Janeiro’s favelas? How can an academic study regarding gun violence in New Orleans reach and be put to use by an NGO in Tegucigalpa?

As several of the interviewed experts suggested, a global clearing-house or platform for information exchange on gun violence, particularly sub-national and local best practices, would bridge an essential gap in global efforts for the reduction of such violence. In this sense, rather than an organization or a structure, a coalition or a campaign, the creation of a comprehensive, user-friendly, action-oriented, online depository of distilled knowledge could have a transformative effect on civil society efforts.

Of course, the costs and efforts involved would be considerable, but in a sense the work is one of compiling, digesting, organizing and disseminating existing information. A plethora of resources already exist, but are largely constrained to ‘silos’, as our collective knowledge on armed violence reduction is spread widely over organizations, databases, conceptual frameworks and languages.²⁶⁸

While a multilingual, policy-oriented, searchable online platform with all of the world’s most important knowledge on armed violence reduction may be a far-away objective, certainly civil society can gravitate towards that ideal instead of often relying on long publications (like this one!) that are often relegated to a few bookshelves.

In this sense, potentially interesting efforts are the so-called Knowledge Exchange Initiative by the Global Alliance on Armed Violence and the Mapping Citizen Security database by Instituto Igarapé.²⁶⁹ Though both are somewhat incipient, and the latter is regional, the vision therein is similar to the model sketched above: a platform to connect practitioners around the world with the knowledge they need – even if they do not know of its existence – through direct exchange with colleagues across the globe or the ability to access the information they produce without depending on governments or travel to major diplomatic centers.

>>> Make the news

In addition to direct information sharing among practitioners, disseminating the local best practices to the wider public – obviously in less technical terms – would also serve an essential advocacy objective: creating broader political space and demands for the reduction of armed violence. As noted by Kirsten about the first days of small arms advocacy, a “defining characteristic of these early movements was their use of media advocacy: recognizing the media as a ‘critical organ on political debate’, in particular its role in both reflecting and shaping public opinion”.²⁷⁰

A revitalized and concerted effort in this arena could pay handsome dividends. Particularly with the tools facilitated by the internet and social media, a massive investment in communications regarding the imperative and ways of reducing gun violence would be impactful. In fact, one could wonder whether a given amount of funds, time and efforts devoted to creating and disseminating these messages could not have a greater political impact than lobbying with diplomats. Would the investment to have a dedicated media professional perhaps have more “bang for the buck” than a thematic policy or advocacy staff at the UN?

Regardless of the exact cost-benefit analysis, several of the interviewed experts (including Zuber, Ashkenazi and Acheson) suggested increase investment in media. As Zuber noted, “we are not journalists of course, but we are or can be makers of media and should probably become more thoughtful and intentional around the task”. Ashkenazi also highlighted the value of “far more steady pressure” in what he called “information dissemination” with journalists.²⁷¹ Acheson also noted the value of greater use of investigative journalism regarding issues related to armed violence – such as firearms production – shrouded in opaque mystery. In some cases, particularly independent media outlets, like *Pública* in Brazil or *ProPublica* and *Mother Jones* in the US have published important investigative reports.²⁷²

Another area ripe for civil society collaboration – and pressure for greater use – is “data journalism” and its graphic representations of knowledge, often more impactful and mnemonic than traditional narratives. Excellent examples of such data-driven journalism are created by *O Estado de S. Paulo* in Brazil, and *The Guardian* (UK).²⁷³

>>> Go high tech


A final thought regarding using communications as advocacy to tackle gun violence regards the tremendous possibilities presented by social media, “big data” and information technology at large for reaching broader audiences with more targeted, interesting and easily digestible on gun violence and its solutions.

It probably goes without saying that social media and assorted web-based communication tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, Reddit and others are basic tools to communicate to your audience – particularly the younger, tech-savvy, potentially politically-active ones among them.²⁷⁴ Each medium has its peculiarities and theories of how they can be put to best use for social change.²⁷⁵ Many of the best examples of social media use today have shown that traditional media (big newspapers, TV and radio) can, at times, be bypassed as a gatekeeper for information dissemination quite efficiently.

But civil society can, and should, go deeper into the communications revolution sparked by the wide use of the internet and smartphones. To date, however, most organizations have been fairly timid in using – and more importantly – developing, innovative technological solutions. The possibilities, however, are quite literally endless, and can be adapted to the smallest, most mundane, community aspect of armed violence reduction to global trends and patterns.

One of the exceptions that prove this rule has been the work of Instituto Igarapé (from Rio de Janeiro), which has taken a more proactive, vanguard stance towards innovation.²⁷⁶ Particularly noteworthy, created with partners including Google Ideas and PRIO, is the Mapping Arms Data (MAD - <http://nisatapps.prio.org/armsglobe>), a stunning visual representation of the legal international transfers of firearms and ammunition.

Perhaps more NGOs should consider developing apps rather than papers (like this one!), videos rather than side events, sleek webinars rather than seminars, Prezis online rather than PowerPoints at the UN? While innovation in technological solutions has understandably mostly limited to the private sector and technology experts,²⁷⁷ partnerships with civil society as noted above can be worthy.



Regardless of the exact sort of technology to be deployed, or the modes of communication chosen by global civil society to further its messaging on armed violence reduction, the value of “social advocacy” and knowledge dissemination, unmediated by governments, can be massive.

Like a gun, a given technology or communication method is nothing but a tool with huge transformative potential. It depends on human agency, but can magnify the intended effect to an unprecedented level. Whether through an increased focus on traditional media or social media, information exchange between practitioners, or being strategic about “what” the message is and “who” must receive it, civil society working on AVR and gun control would be wise to update its toolbox.

8) Just do it

Intimately related to this ‘people to people’ focus, but awkwardly located somewhere between traditional advocacy and programming efforts, is the notion of advocating while consciously ignoring national governments. Civil society does not need to be dependent on presidents and ministers to exact meaningful change. Like efforts mentioned under ‘communications’ and knowledge sharing, advocacy also can be unmediated by governments.

An underlying assumption of much of small arms control efforts has been to take federal governments as the only locus for regulation of the use of firearms, as well as for attempts to minimize their effects. However, as in virtually all other aspects of public policy, society can be much more than an interested observer and occasional advocate. In other words, civil society does not necessarily have to depend on mediation of the State to put into place armed violence reduction efforts; it can do some of it itself.

In the words of Jeff Abramson, “I’m not really looking to states as problem solvers... I’m really keen on civil society showing that it can get stuff done and has solutions”. Indeed, as noted, civil society often struggles to create new approaches, becoming used to the ‘business as usual’ approach to advocacy. According to Abramson, in some occasions “we were too blinded by diplomacy... Why don’t we form civil society action teams that jump in without asking/waiting for governments? Why don’t we challenge ourselves to ‘fix’ problems... to address an actual problem in the world rather than a policy issue?”²⁷⁸

>>> Guns and the city

An initial way to break from the obsession with federal government, which was brought up by several interviewees, is to focus political attention on sub-national levels of activity, as alternative “fora” for advocacy efforts. In fact, several experts, including Krause, Nash, Acheson and Godnick, suggested an increased focus on local governments: cities/municipalities, urban centers and mayors.

As stated by Bill Godnick, at times an international process can “divert resources from what I consider to be more important work in linking small arms control at the national and local levels to police and judicial reform. Small arms control needs to be placed on the political agendas of mayors, governors and other sub-national leaders regionally and globally. These actors have increasing amounts of resources to devote to citizen security issues”.²⁷⁹

Whether a creation of a global version of US-based Mayors Against Illegal Guns (or national chapters / similar organizations in many countries worldwide), mainstreaming of small arms by groups like Mayors for Peace, or squarely introducing gun violence as a major policy issue within a more formal group (like C-40 on climate change; why not a C-40 on urban violence?)²⁸¹, there are many ways to increase local government engagement in combatting gun violence. Even in political systems that do not give mayors and municipalities all the traditional ‘levers’ to curb violence, such as independent police forces or criminal justice systems, civil society can press for strengthened control on the tools of violence.

In the case of SDP, for example, one particular focus within the area of gun control over the past three years has been the São Paulo Gun Control Plan. While in Brazil mayors have historically ‘excused themselves’ from responsibility over urban violence, as the constitutional seat for “public safety” – including control over police forces – is at the State (or governorship) level, sustained advocacy and engagement at the municipal level has resulted in the formal incorporation of a gun control governance group into the city’s bureaucracy, creating a permanent official locus for information-sharing among all local stakeholders on any aspect of firearms control, including civil society.

Indeed, if all violence is local, and as Krause suggests is “contagious but more like ebola” than viruses that spread over a wide geographical area,²⁸² it should be no surprise that local attempts to contain violence are among the most efficient. Or in the words of Abramson, “most solutions are, of course, rooted in their local context, because that is where armed violence occurs. Civil society must do a better job of explaining where our work has made a difference. The big message for the coming years is to reframe the debate so it becomes about recognizing the solutions we have”.²⁸³

The spotlight on cities as the locus for gun violence – as well as its solutions – has been convincingly demonstrated. Particularly in the United States, mayors have been proactive in searching for solutions for the gun violence problem in their communities, as well as connecting with other local officials intent on doing so, as either MAIG or Cities United demonstrate.²⁸⁴

On a conceptual level, many recent interesting discussions have even gone beyond the usual public security or human security lenses, with authors such as Rob Muggah and others suggesting that the traditional “humanitarian” prism (perhaps even IHL?) could be applied to the gun violence problem in many of the world’s large cities.²⁸⁵ Moreover, innovation and risks are much easier to attempt on a sub-national level (lesser scale and cost), with the

further benefit that cities often have more progressive political leadership than feasible to elect on a national level, often established as a centrist grand-bargain.

This renewed attention to the sub-national level further crystalizes an overwhelmingly common suggestion regarding “what” needs to be better communicated by civil society. As noted, a repeated perception among interviewees and other experts is that, when it comes to gun violence, much of the knowledge and evidence exists, but often does not reach the ‘operators’ that could render it useful in a particular location.

>>> Technology as advocacy

Another area in which civil society can seize agency, rather than waiting for federal governments to respond, and also lends itself to partnerships on a local level much more than on a national scale, is investing in technological solutions to reduce the incidence of armed violence. In fact, technological innovations can be crucial not only in better understanding and communicating the realities of gun violence, but also in actively attempting to reduce their levels.

A given innovation can compete ‘on the market’ in the absence of a governmental imprimatur and, once it proves its efficiency, be nonetheless taken up by those very instances as part of public policy. That is, civil society can create, test and evaluate solutions without an official go-ahead and still have them impact the realities of armed violence – often a less circuitous path than convincing a large bureaucracy to give a stamp of approval, funding or authorization.

One such example is the Smart Policing project from Instituto Igarapé, which aims “to explore ways to enhance police accountability through technology”, monitor how police is “using technology to recapture urban territory from drug trafficking groups while simultaneously expanding trust and reciprocity with citizens”, and analyze “how technological innovations at the street level, including mobile phone applications, can potentially strengthen the integrity of police work and the social contract”.²⁸⁶

In this vein, particular helpful to contemplate are the many lessons encapsulated in the report “New Technology and the Prevention of Violence and Conflict”, a helpful guide also for civil society, particularly the contribution by researchers who recall that the fact “Latin America is simultaneously the developing world’s most connected region


but also its most violent ensures that it presents a vivid, real-life laboratory for the new field of ICTs for violence prevention”.²⁸⁷

In fact, in any geographic area, the “use of new digital and information communication technologies (ICT) such as crowd sourcing could be used more effectively to help track and understand various dimensions and effects of armed violence in real time in different countries and regions. Examples of these new ‘virtual’ mechanisms include Ushahidi, Crisis Commons, and the Spatial Collective”.²⁸⁸ Other crowdsourcing mechanisms, such as Frontline SMS, could also be disseminated to collect and share information on armed violence, particularly as dependent only on mobile phone messaging, widely available in many affected countries that still lack internet infrastructure.²⁸⁹

In the same direction, and more specifically, another promising web-based area for greater attention are the so-called ICT4Ds (“information and communication technologies for development”) and their potential for reducing armed violence. As the name indicates, these open source communication tools have been to date mostly utilized in the development field, and ICTs have been particularly used in areas such as sexual violence, domestic abuse and gender-based violence, but arguably to a lesser extent on broader armed violence. The aforementioned armed violence “clearing-house” could be a leading example of the web-based communication possibilities.²⁹⁰

Research and analysis – or knowledge development and its dissemination – can likewise turn to technology for more dynamic, broader, and systematic capturing and treatment of data. For one, the “introduction of geographic and satellite imaging technology, for example, has shaped a new wave of research on the effects of armed violence. Likewise, new forms of real-time data collection through mobile phones and social media are also radically transforming the way in which information is gathered and interpreted”.²⁹¹

One potential area for greater civil society involvement is so-called “big data” or “data mining”, as the internet allows the public an enormous amount of information to conduct “open source intelligence” into the risks, geographic realities, and ‘hardware’ related to violence. One data expert, for example, has argued that “big data might have stopped the massacres in Newtown, Aurora, and Oak Creek... combining simple math and the power of crowds could give us the tools we need to red flag potential killers even without new restrictions on the guns anyone can buy... this kind of record-keeping would be an inconsequential task to set up, and the data science to analyze it trivial... Armed only with data, we could begin to see the patterns between guns and ammunition purchases and violence, and to flag those people most at risk of killing dozens of their neighbors”.²⁹²



To facilitate data aggregation and use, specialized online databases for armed violence, disaggregating gun violence specifically, could be created emulating, for example, the “Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone” (<http://datahub.io/dataset/gdelt>), “an initiative to construct a catalog of human societal-scale behavior and beliefs across all countries of the world over the last two centuries down to the city level globally, to make all of this data freely available for open research, and to provide daily updates to create the first real time social sciences earth observatory”, which has “nearly a quarter-billion georeferenced events” in more than 300 categories since 1979 with daily updates.²⁹³

An organization that perhaps is already well on its way of something to contemplate for civil society more widely is C4ADS (<http://www.c4ads.org>) “a nonprofit organization dedicated to data-driven analysis and evidence-based reporting of conflict and security issues worldwide”, which utilizes “cutting-edge emerging technologies to manage, integrate, and analyze disparate data, from diverse languages, regions, and sources, including our own field research in conflict zones and fragile states”. Their current areas of work are certainly germane to this discussion: Arms Trafficking & Transfers; Transnational Crime & Illicit Networks; Conflict, Security & Statebuilding; and Conflict Prevention in Emerging Markets.²⁹⁴

Regardless of the exact tech solution chosen, the widespread use of the internet, social media, smartphones and apps undeniably gives global civil society a whole new toolbox – not only for developing and sharing knowledge regarding armed violence – but, importantly, to directly impact the phenomenon.

9) Link up... and all around

A potential positive by-product of a greater emphasis on communication, or perhaps a further incentive to implement it, would be an increase to civil society's connection with different levels of efforts and realities that could reinforce its work on attempting to reduce armed violence. In addition to the linking 'down' with the city level discussed above, "linking up and all around" should be a directive for our collective future advocacy work, not only geographically but thematically and conceptually.

>>> End the isolation of the Unique States of America

On a geographical level, civil society working on reducing levels of armed violence has been fairly successful in establishing a truly international presence and participation in efforts to date. While often less prominent or resourced, many organizations and individuals from the so-called 'global South' –regions with serious armed violence problems – have contributed research, knowledge and passion to global efforts.

In this sense, civil society has integrated many perspectives and work streams from around the world, even if a bias towards Northern, particularly European, organizations persists. The one exception to this scenario remains the relative isolation of civil society groups from the United States from colleagues around the globe.

Several of the interviewed experts noted that overcoming "US isolation" could be one of the most productive steps forward for global civil society. Indeed, Laurance spoke of the need to create a "true global gun violence community", better integrating the US, which is "deaf to the world, like the world is deaf to the US".²⁹⁵

When it comes to guns and violence, there is no doubt that the United States is a peculiar case. This should come as no surprise considering that "American civilians (buy) over 60 percent of firearms sold globally per annum and over 70 percent of firearms bought by civilians around the world".²⁹⁶ The US is the most heavily armed country in the world, has the largest industrial production (and exports) of firearms, and its levels of gun violence are up to 20 times higher than those of other 'developed' nations.

As opposed to the vast majority of countries in the world, the United States has a constitutional (though

disputed) protection to firearms ownership (the Second Amendment's "right to bear arms") and, because of it, a ferocious and powerful pro-gun lobby, captained by the National Rifle Association.

Undoubtedly, then, the United States are unique in this arena. But is the US in fact so different from the rest of the world – to the extent that it cannot teach, and learn from, global civil society working against armed violence?

True, "you are just as likely to get punched in the mouth in a bar in Sydney as in Los Angeles. But you're 20 times as likely to be killed in Los Angeles".²⁹⁷ Yet, as aforementioned, "gun culture" is probably neither real nor, if it was, should be treated as immutable. If anything, it is possible that rather than the emphasis on the "gun" part of the equation, it is the "violence" aspect that renders the country truly peculiar in relation to other developed Western nations. In fact, "the USA has always been a violent country. As noted by Monkkonen, New York has had a homicide rate 8-12 times that of London since 1800. Moreover, even when firearm homicides are removed from the picture, New York still has had a much higher level of homicide".²⁹⁸

While we shall leave to greater minds the question of why the US is violent, and why so many of its citizens have such an emotional attachment to firearms, it is important to understand, for our purposes, how the isolation of the US's "gun violence community" may have occurred. One possible genesis for this isolation was the development of "two SALW research communities", as described by Greene and Marsh, with the oldest being based in the US and almost entirely concerned with US-specific gun control, using quantitative methodologies, and publishing in academic journals, while the second, more international (though mostly "Western"), "covers a more diffuse range of subjects and research questions", using mostly case studies of "affected countries" and publishing stand-alone reports.²⁹⁹ As a result, unfortunately, "due mainly to political factors, the significant body of research on gun violence in the US was rarely utilized or referenced by the emerging global SALW epistemic community."³⁰⁰

Of course, the US is a particularly "awkward subject for research. It has no national system at all for collecting data on possession and this has hampered the considerable quantity of work on firearms".³⁰¹ Indeed, "If someone were to select the ideal country in which to undertake some three-quarters of global research specifically on the relationship between firearms and violence, it is very unlikely that they would choose the USA as the subject with the greatest potential. The gun control debate in the US has certainly stimulated a large amount of research that might not otherwise have taken place. Nevertheless, this research has been focused upon a country that is harder to analyze than others".³⁰²

It is therefore unsurprising that, in terms of dialogue, “the two bodies of research appear to be largely ignorant of each other... a shame, because they could benefit greatly from increased interaction”.³⁰³

The exact same can be said for advocates. In addition to researchers and academics, campaigners and lobbyists for the reduction of gun violence in the United States have a huge toolbox of methods and a wealth of experience to share more widely with advocates from the rest of the world. Likewise, advocates from other regions of the world could bring important lessons learned from their efforts to be potentially adapted and used in the seemingly intractable situation in the US.

Yes, the political circumstances are by definition different in other countries (or at the aggregate global level), but it is precisely the political and cultural obstacles in the US case that have rendered the levels of innovation laudable and worthy of emulation. It is thus the US’ uniqueness – and the responses it has generated – that make it relevant to the rest of the world. It should come as no surprise that several examples in the previous sections (including in divestment, legal efforts, focus on the sub-national level, communications, use of technology) have originated in the US.

Moreover, while on the federal level overarching gun laws in are bound for the time being to be less restrictive than in most countries in the world, at the State level the United States can serve as a real-life laboratory for gun control laws and their impacts on levels of gun violence. Encapsulated by (largely) similar levels of wealth, development, inequality, firearms availability, law enforcement structures and resources, each US state nonetheless has enough autonomy to implement common sense “gun safety” legislation that can be productively compared over time in its effects.

Particularly following the Newtown school massacre, and the US Congress’ inaction on a federal law on background checks, which fell a few votes short in the Senate even though it was supported by roughly 90% of the population, several US states have engaged in efforts to strengthen their gun laws.³⁰⁴ How these efforts pan out in the medium-term can be quite educational for the rest of the world, not only on how they may be achieved and the obstacles they encounter, but also the impacts of their labor. The state-by-state comparison provided by, for example, the Brady Campaign 2013 State Scorecard is a fascinating display of how States with more restrictive firearms regulations have lower levels of gun violence.³⁰⁵

Global civil society should be mindful of these realities and the political possibilities they suggest for their own

circumstances. Perhaps national organizations elsewhere have much to learn from the advocacy levels on a State level in the US, which in turn could learn valuable lessons from international experiences on gun control legislation as well.

Another aspect of US “exceptionalism”, its often mocked tendency towards “taking everything to court”, could also be productively applied in other locations as a method of advocacy: the robust legal debate in the US concerning the liability of individuals that act irresponsibly with their guns and facilitate daily tragedies. Advocates such as the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence’s Legal Action Project believe that adults should be held criminally liable when their failure to store guns safely results in an accident or suicide, particularly of children and youth, though estimates note that only about 40% of US states have comparable laws.³⁰⁶ Though still an uphill battle (like the liability procedures against gun manufacturers), these efforts could presumably be attempted in other jurisdictions as well, with varying prospects of success. While this judicial route seeks to discourage gun possession and misuse rather than production discussed earlier, it is nonetheless a further example of how US advocates have used innovative attempts to decrease armed violence.

Therefore, we would borrow the verdict from Greene and Marsh regarding the disparate research communities to argue that the same is urgently true for the separate advocacy communities, “it has become a priority that the separation and inadequate engagement and lesson-learning between these two communities is overcome”.³⁰⁷

>>> Become part of the bigger picture

In addition to the geographical integration with the United States, we would suggest that another form of relative isolation, thematic or conceptual, should likewise be overcome by civil society. As several responses to a query during a recent seminar on a “future wish list” for research and advocacy on small arms indicated, it is high time that civil society working on issues related to armed violence reduction “become part of the bigger picture”.

In the words of Owen Greene, we must “become more strategic about getting SALW included into broader frameworks and processes”, while Peter Batchelor put it in terms of “mainstreaming SALW into broader frameworks”.³⁰⁸ Regardless of the exact semantics, of course, this idea is neither novel nor easy to implement. In fact,

“the bigger opportunities arise from efforts to mainstream SALW issues as integral parts of larger programs... it has proved challenging in practice to ensure that SALW aspects of factors are directly and specifically maintained and used, rather than being vaguely subsumed with the dominant program areas. The armed violence reduction (AVR) agenda was designed for this purpose, but it has proved to be no panacea”.... “also important for the SALW research community to prioritize some new or revived ways of engaging with relatively ‘hot’ or emerging international or national policy issues; and to engage with the emerging institutional challenges for properly mainstreaming SALW issues within wider policy and programming spheres”.³⁰⁹

Going forward, even if small arms have gained an international ‘mandate’, inclusion into the “greater scheme of things” will be a burdensome ordeal. Indeed, “effective mainstreaming is a challenging and long-term process, as testified by past experience with efforts to mainstream environmental or gender concerns. In addition to challenges of institutional inertia and awareness-raising, effective analysis and lesson-learning about effective and appropriate integration of SALW and AVR agendas into well-established programming areas need to be established”.³¹⁰

In this sense, the obstacles to fully integrating efforts on small arms and gun violence reduction into development frameworks are telling. In the recent past, the initial integration “meant really taking ‘human security concerns seriously, so that development programs aimed to address both ‘freedom from want’ and ‘freedom from fear and violence’ agendas in a coherent way. This was far from normal practice, either in affected developing countries or in international development cooperation programs”.³¹¹ Indeed, “by 2010 SALW and armed violence issues remain far from fully mainstreamed or accepted in ‘development studies’ or in ‘core’ development institutions and programs; but a critical knowledge threshold has been crossed as far as international aid policy and programming is concerned”.³¹²

Even today, while some development agencies and organizations have dedicated some specific advocacy efforts towards armed violence reduction, one could argue that national development offices, international NGOs or agencies such as UNDP still have space to become more active in issues directly related to small arms and ensuing violence.

Regardless of the international frameworks discussed below, it is also relevant that, on a national basis, many countries do not integrate a proper armed violence reduction perspective into their national development plans, including links to “excessive military and security spending and the need to redirect these expenditures towards basic needs like food security”.

Moreover, it is worth noting that ‘integration’ is a two-way street: in addition to influencing another arena, the broader civil society community working to reduce armed violence should also be influenced by the best practices and innovations from other areas. For example, as noted by Ken Epps, “there is great potential in cooperation be-

tween partners on a South to South, North to South and even North to North basis, and we could learn from the development NGO community in this regard. If we move towards more national-level activity these partnerships could become important for linking local work to a global agenda”.³¹³

>>> After 2015

For the immediate future, the clearest avenue to ‘becoming part of the bigger picture’ – and one that global civil society should certainly invest in – is to fully integrate armed violence concerns into the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) review process and their post-2015 evolution. Once again, this is nothing revolutionary given “efforts to include indicators relating to AVR to be included in the post-2015 development framework, and this remains an immediate priority for the SALW community.”³¹⁴ Moreover, this work is ongoing and in some ways it may be “too late” for organizations to become involved prior to the actual definition of the post-2015 framework. Nonetheless, greater attention to the process (as well as conceptual offshoots such as the Geneva Declaration) and preparedness for more meaningful engagement would be important objectives.

As noted by Batchelor and Muggah, there is already much discussion in this arena as to “reduce violence, and promote freedom from fear and sustainable peace’. Possible targets to achieve this goal include ‘eliminating lethal violence from every community by 2030’ or ‘reducing the number of people and groups affected by violence’. In terms of indicators, proposals include: ‘changes in homicide per 100,000 population’, ‘reported violence crime per 100,000 population’ and others, although “there are indications that many UN member states are resisting such language in the future development agenda”.³¹⁵

In our opinion, many of these political resistances stem from a disconnect, at least in the perception of some states as to what is being discussed, between the concepts of “human development” and “national development”. In the specific case of Brazil, a recent article has unveiled that the obstacles are indeed significant:

“Brazil seems to have settled on a conservative and narrow definition of development. Forged during the Rio+20 meeting in 2012, development is confined to social, economic, and environmental dimensions alone. Politics, along with matters of safety, justice, and governance, are glaringly absent... It could be that its diplomats fear they distract from what they see as “core” development priorities. They may also be loathe to “securitize” development, a regular criticism of “western” aid programs. Either way, an uncritical treatment of development may not only result in wasted investments, it could actually do unintentional harm. Brazil seems to be resorting to an ideological—rather than an evidence-based—rationale when it comes to the SDGs”.³¹⁶

Regardless, proper integration of small arms and gun violence into the UN development framework would include going beyond a vague reference to “peace and security”, but also avoid the adoption of targets so divorced from implementable reality that they would become meaningless, such as “eliminating lethal violence”.


Rather, the inclusion of armed violence numerical indicators into text would be essential. As such, relevant and feasible permutations could be: “a 50% decrease in homicides per 100,000 population” and/or “a 50% decrease in armed violence incidents (deaths and injuries) per 100,000 population”, a further specification of these by including “gun homicides and injuries” or, finally, a global commitment for all countries to, at least, reach the aforementioned 10 per 100,000 “WHO homicide threshold”, with those that have committing to assist those that have not, perhaps in a bilateral “buddy system”.

>>> It’s a big world out there

In addition to becoming fully embraced by the “development industry”, as well as its international and national frameworks, there are further policy and advocacy connections to be made with broader issues of ‘human security’. Like in the case of development, the world’s “human rights conglomerate”, including major international civil society organizations and UN agencies and processes, have arguably dedicated less attention to issues of armed violence and, particularly, small arms as the “tools of human rights violations” par excellence. Certainly human rights violations perpetrated or facilitated by arms are not more important because the weapons have been internationally transferred or banned by a UN instrument?

So, for example, ‘mainstreaming’ armed violence into UN General Assembly committees other than the First (“Disarmament and International Security”), particularly the Third Committee (“Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs”), which covers “agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people all over the world”.³¹⁷ For example, there is certainly space under that body’s current items on “protection of human rights” and “criminal justice”, which mostly deals with items regarding illicit drugs.³¹⁸ Such actions could be worthy initiatives and help to break down some of the ‘silos’ issues of grave international concern are often (uncomfortably) placed into.

A particularly relevant ‘new frontier’ within this framework would be proper deliberation of small arms and armed violence within the purview of the UN Human Right Council in Geneva. As suggested by the earlier discussion of



the need to reignite the connection between human rights efforts and gun violence, mainstreaming small arms and gun violence into the HRC and its Universal Periodic Reviews. Strikingly, the last UPR for Brazil (2012), only as an illustration, has barely any mention of gun violence, even under sections regarding the commitments to the “Right to life, liberty and security of the person” or recommendations concerning “Promoting public security and combating violence”.³¹⁹ Rather, the reports duly cover successes and challenges regarding homicides by police, in prisons, specifically against women and minorities, but not much regarding broader and perhaps the most systematic violations of the human rights of the majority of the population – considering the annual 35,000 gun violence deaths, and unknown levels of injuries and violent robberies undermining any attempt of achieving “freedom from fear”. Even the summary from civil society ‘stakeholders’ pays close to no attention to this facet of human rights.

Could UPRs in the future be required to present and disaggregate the incidence and dynamics of armed violence in each reviewed country? If not always by the country government itself, certainly civil society stakeholders and UN ‘troikas’ could become more systematic about including this information. Moreover, roughly a decade later, should the HRC not nominate another “United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Prevention of Human Rights Violations Committed with Small Arms and Lights Weapons”?

In addition to within the human rights framework, other parts of the UN system are arguably ripe for enhanced civil society engagement, such as the bodies dealing with crime prevention, for example, the Firearms Protocol (UNODC). As argued by Buchanan, “there has been much rhetoric about expanding fields of vision on this issue, into other parts of the UN system, but the disarmament and arms control stranglehold remains one of the distinguishing features of gun violence compared to other weapons types is the necessity of working to transform and strengthen criminal justice and security systems (including police reform). Yet many donors shy away from solid work in this area, and civil society often finds it hard to work in this area.”³²⁰

In addition, greater integration to the wider (and more attended to) “peace and security” agenda is warranted. Beyond the welcome but incipient first UN Security Council resolution on SALW, there are broader issues of “war and peace” that could benefit from closer attention to small arms. For example, procurement and holdings of small arms may be, more than a consequence, a facilitating or causal factor to the outbreak of war: “the combination of poorly controlled and widely available SALW with the substantial presence of non-state armed groups that is widely perceived to be particularly potent for state fragility. Together, they may generate malign cycles of decline into state failure and civil war”.³²¹

Though certainly further thought, conceptual development and analysis is needed, presumably small arms could reach greater thematic protagonism in attempts to prevent and mitigate the effects of war, as well as within the fields of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. What exactly was, and is, the role of small arms in the deflagration and sustainability of the gruesome conflict in Syria? How can closer attention to small arms become part of the debates on the protection of civilians in war, the “responsibility to protect” doctrine (or Brazil’s “responsibility while protecting”)?

Finally, what is (or will be) the relationship, if any, between armed violence and prospective crises threatening human security on a global level, such as severe water shortages, for example? As noted by Ken Epps, it is “important to link SALW/AVR challenges to other major global challenges – notably climate change and the growing gap between rich and poor civil society groups working on global challenges are potential partners that have not been drawn into previous campaigns to the extent that could be possible”.³²²

In this sense, and though covering a broader phenomenon than ‘armed violence’ strictly, advocates can refer to the Violence Prevention Alliance’s Plan of Action (2012-2020), which establishes as one of its six pillars to “enhance integration of violence prevention into major global agendas”.³²³ To wit,

“Some international political agendas are receiving high levels of attention. Several are closely linked to violence prevention, notably economic development, urban development and human security, good governance and civil society, education, HIV/AIDS programming, and efforts to address the global drugs trade and the global arms trade. But these links are often overlooked. Identification of the major global 10 agendas with a high relevance for violence prevention and the integration of violence prevention components into them can help to leverage increased political will, human and financial resources”.³²⁴

What would be those 10 global agendas for armed violence? In all honestly, we have no idea – there may be none for some of the issues mentioned above. But asking bigger, broader, prospective questions could be helpful for global civil society as it attempts to see the entire forest rather than only the single trees it has become accustomed to zoom in on.

Moreover, learning from how civil society colleagues have tackled some of these big issues can be highly instructive for ‘our’ efforts, even when there is no clear thematic connection. As suggested by Marsh, “look at advocacy strategies that worked in many states in the long run – e.g. tobacco, gay marriage, drunk driving, environmental issues – not in the details but to understand the balance between research and advocacy, and the relationship between local, national and international action”.³²⁵

As noted by Bob Zuber, “in order to respond to policy challenges we need more boats rowing in the same direction. Attention devoted by disarmament advocates to complementary security concerns provides a context for reciprocal assistance from other agencies and diplomatic offices, not to mention from many talented educators and advocates away from New York. It is this spirit of reciprocity that has been and remains elusive in this context”.³²⁶

>>> “Whole of society” (or integration with your own colleagues)

Indeed, a final linkage we should collectively attempt to make in a more systematic manner – in addition to the geographic and the thematic – stems from the obvious fact that ‘civil society’ is not made only of NGOs. Rather, civil society includes all groups and individuals not part of the public sector, or government. Thus, the press, academia, the private sector, religious congregations, and, why not, criminals (organized or not) are also part of civil society and may be called upon as an audience or potential agents of advocacy efforts to reduce armed violence.

This inclusive perspective, deemed the “whole of society” approach,³²⁷ often falls in the category “easier said than done”. We have discussed some ways on how to potentially better include the media into our collective efforts, and much more can be said about each of the mentioned categories. Of particular note, demanding a more proactive and involved stance from the private sector regarding armed violence is an important objective for advocates. Armed violence is generally terribly bad for business (other than private security, protection services, and weapons), and companies in affected regions should be sensitized to the fact that rather than ‘philanthropy’, support for these efforts should be deemed an investment, with actual returns, as well as risks.

While NGOs often shy away from this contact, sometimes with good reason given fears of ‘tainting’ their efforts or losing autonomy, there are proven ways to involve the private sector and remain at least as independent as when partnering with governments. Importantly, often together with deep pockets, the private sector has a plethora of resources (human, management, technological, logistics, marketing, etc.) that can be put to very good use by advocates. Overcoming a knee jerk prejudice towards the private sector, at least long enough to strategically analyze the possible gains and risks of a prospective partnership, is a good first step.

>>> Have a coffee with your favorite researcher


A final essential but often not so smooth connection is that between advocates and researchers or think tanks (much of the discussion may be also valid regarding academics, though the relationship there is significantly more detached). Though this ‘integration among colleagues’ ultimately working on the same objective (to reduce armed violence) may seem painfully obvious and taken for granted, in reality dialogue and shared strategizing between the groups could improve.

Greene has discussed in detail the assets and liabilities of the often symbiotic relationship between the two groups:

“From the beginning, a central characteristic of the SALW issue as a field of research was the close and dynamic relationship between research and policy agendas, and between SALW research and policy communities. This has proved to be an enduring characteristic, up to the present day. It has brought both strengths and weaknesses.... It has helped to achieve a dynamism, scale, engagement with policy and practitioner communities, and impact of SALW research that would have been impossible if researchers had been more confined to academic circles. However, this characteristic has also brought some disadvantages. In a context where policy communities demanded quick and clear information on complex and uncertain issues, highly provisional findings have often been taken up and disseminated by policy advocates or decision-makers without proper review and quality control. Moreover, policy priorities and debates have profoundly contributed to significant gaps and inadequately scrutinized assumptions”.³²⁸

While the relationship is close, therefore, is it not simple. Rather, as Kirsten notes, the “relationship between research and advocacy has been complex, cyclical, not linear, and not a one-way influence”. Moreover, it does not necessarily follow a contingent, “one thing first, then another” pattern; in fact, “advocates may go ahead and set the agenda even if many say there is not enough info”.³²⁹

Research has clearly supported and shaped small arms advocacy (some will say defined), but the opposite is also true: “effective social mobilization and participation at the grassroots has helped shaped the research agenda” or, in other words, it is a “mutually reinforcing relationship”.³³⁰ Therefore, at times research may not be essential to initiate the policy change, and advocates have in the past requested the tools they need. Advocates should again do so, demanding the knowledge needed to effectively wage their political battles. It is important, in this sense, to ensure a “coordinated and strategic approach to knowledge generation and research”.³³¹ While some organizations conduct both research and advocacy, a greater number specialize in one or the other, arguably with less dialogue and collaboration than ideal.



The result at times has been knowledge kept ‘academic’ (without noticeable impact on public policies) and advocacy with a shallow evidence-base – surely a less than ideal situation for both sides of the equation. The inherent tension between highly complex issues (often with an academic outlook) and the demand for simple political messages (often oversimplified) will not go away, but happy mediums can be negotiated. As such, more proactive and systematic efforts should be made for cross-fertilization and updates between the two “sides of the coin”. Advocates should have the humility to ask for help, and researchers the humility to listen to what kind of information would be most helpful to change harsh realities on the ground.

Moreover, the necessity to agree a strategic research agenda appears a pressing priority in order to ensure the limited resources available for small arms related research are well spent. As Buchanan reflected, “a key ‘ingredient’ for the coming decade is clarity about what remains overlooked and poorly understood and impedes well-informed decisions at the national level to reduce gun violence to guide the investments of donors, and the work of civil society”.³³²

So, for example, part of the information sharing platforms previously discussed could include joint strategizing between knowledge ‘generators’ and ‘users’, as well as periodic meetings among the ‘whole of society’ working to reduce gun violence so advocates can get a clearer picture of what researchers have on offer and researchers can be fully informed on what advocates need in terms of information. To be the “hammer” of social change, advocates need the “nail” provided by researchers to strike precise and incisive blows to often rigid political structures.

10) “But I’m addicted to the UN!”

If you have read this far and somehow just feel the need to spend more time in a large conference room at the United Nations, the first step may be to recognize you have a problem. In all seriousness, while addiction to the status quo or ‘business as usual’ is a common problem for all, civil society and governments alike – inertia is after all a powerful force, as is momentum once moving in a given direction – there is hope. The good news for UN “junkies” is that there is plenty of essential work to be done in New York and Geneva, notwithstanding the fact we herein strongly recommend a strategic reassessment of our collective efforts for increased impact in “the real world”. Given the UN’s nature and status, there are indeed efforts that can only be productively pushed therein.

>>> Change the rules of the game

Though possibly counterintuitive at first, we would argue that the most important work arms control and armed violence reduction advocates could currently perform at the United Nations has (seemingly) nothing to do with disarmament. In so many ways, the system is “rigged” against transformative change. The UN is deemed the only “legitimate” forum to achieve international change, but it is made up of innately conservative instances, States – some of which are not democracies and/or fail to protect the most basic rights of their citizens.

Particularly in the area of “international security” the UN almost entirely marginalizes those with the strongest desire to seek change, including civil society. For example, compare the perfunctory and tokenistic NGO participation in First Committee debates to how civil society has been ‘allowed’ to take part in international discussions on human rights or environmental issues. Possibly even starker, compare with recent ‘arms control’ fora outside the UN, such as the diplomatic processes that banned landmines and cluster munitions, and the emerging debates around the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons, to see clear examples of how civil society can, and should, be an integral aspect of international negotiations.

Therefore, civil society should seriously advocate for a level of participation in all arms control and disarmament processes compatible with its commitment, seriousness, and collective experience. Or is all of civil society, particularly in a theme where it boasts several international networks and coalitions that collectively account for hundreds of organizations in almost all countries in the world truly less important than bodies bereft of any connection to the theme, that have the right to speak but never show up?

As put forth by the civil society presentation of “Ways of Work” during First Committee 2013,

“Civil society provides a unique and valuable perspective on the pressing issues faced by this body. Some of us bring technical, legal, or political expertise. Some of us bring personal or professional experiences. Some of us speak as victims and survivors of armed violence. We can often advocate for robust transnational positions that individual governments tend to be unable to adopt given narrow interpretations of “national interests”. Our engagement with the UN is meant to provide an opportunity for diplomats to hear from and interact with non-governmental sources of information and analysis that speak with an international voice. Our engagement is meant to elevate the UN’s work. But our capacity to participate varies wildly across UN forums, even across the disarmament forums. Our voice is too often restricted... civil society’s comprehensive participation enhances discussions, enables broader perspectives in working papers, and encourages diplomats to consider new ideas Civil society should be recognized as an integral component of the work of First Committee and other UN disarmament fora. Discussions should be held on extending across all UN forums the good practices that allow for meaningful NGO participation in international discussions”.³³³

Demanding change would include collectively standing up and stating that “crumbs” are not enough – a possibly confrontational and unpleasant stance that may be damaging in the short-term but arguably is the only avenue towards acceptable levels of participation in the medium-term. Sometimes walking away is the best way to demonstrate how important you are.

Advocating for decent participation can be as non-traumatic to the status quo as gaining a seat and plaque in the back of the room, having the possibility of speaking after all governments, UN agencies and the ICRC have, as well as responding to each thematic cluster rather than all at once when many are no longer paying attention. Under no intention or illusion of soon gaining a “vote”, civil society should urgently demand a proper “voice”.

In addition to an enhanced, permanent participation, advocates could turn with greater gusto toward demanding deeper UN reform. Two areas, in our opinion, scream out for change: the membership and modus operandi of the UN Security Council and the General Assembly default decision-making procedures. Changes therein could in turn significantly improve civil society’s prospects – in partnership with concerned governments – to foster UN instruments that could truly make a difference on the ground.

Though the complexity of UNSC reform goes well beyond the purview of this paper, we would certainly agree that “the context in which First Committee operates reflects the concentrated power structure and decision-making created by the Security Council. This generally means the ways of work in First Committee serve that ‘higher’ body’s interests. But this structure is anachronistic. The entire system must be reformed”.³³⁴

A broader, more representative, democratic, transparent Security Council, without unilateral veto power from P5 countries, with the inclusion of countries such as Brazil, Germany, India, Japan and South Africa, for example, could be able to deliver more meaningful and incisive results into matters of ‘human security’ as well as international security.³³⁵ Arguably, however, membership expansion alone would solve the situation, with an equal emphasis needed on overcoming lingering problems with the UNSC’s working methods. To achieve such momentous change, already being attempted by so many organizations and countries for so long, arms control/disarmament professionals could add their weight to these efforts, in a “whole of society” of advocates towards UNSC reform, joining forces with broader civil society in a truly global campaign for reform.

The second way civil society could contribute to a renewed UN ability to deliver would be to engage in concerted efforts to change the way of doing business in the General Assembly regarding the abuse of consensus decision-making, as if it meant unanimity. As noted by aforementioned civil society statement,

“The abuse of consensus is a common factor behind all the stalemates and failures in disarmament fora. ‘Consensus’ at the UN is often more a barrier to commitment than the engine of its development. In this context, it too often means a consensus of the lowest-common denominator, failing to meet the UN’s high calling to ‘save succeeding generations from the scourge of war’. Blocking consensus suits those that benefit from the status quo or do not want the international community to set norms and rules that could affect their room for maneuver... The current stalemates only further the interests of the few. Even with the vast majority of governments supporting the Arms Trade Treaty, for example, it was blocked by three states and subsequently adopted by a vote in the General Assembly. If the treaty had been negotiated just by the states that voted in favor of it at the General Assembly, it would have been a much stronger instrument than the one generated with the involvement of those who have now chosen to not sign the treaty anyway. While some governments argue that the rule of consensus protects their security interests, it in fact undermines the security of the majority who must rely on the rule of law for protection. The abuse of consensus runs counter to a basic principle of the UN—the sovereign equality of states—by allowing the interests of a small number of hold-out states to trump the interests of all the others. It undermines the UN’s promise and possibility of achieving real change in the lives of people threatened by armed violence”.³³⁶

More specifically, as we ourselves have argued elsewhere,

“Let’s be clear: presently, breakthroughs in SALW control cannot be achieved at the UN operating under an unduly strict interpretation of, and misguided deference to, consensus... a handful of countries should no longer be allowed to hold back the rest of the international community in tackling some of the most dramatic problems of our age. Diplomatic comfort and watered-down outcome documents must urgently be replaced by alternatives that can proudly be deemed ‘successful’ towards better impact on the ground. Governments and civil society alike should not continue to settle for less.”³³⁷

In this sense, perhaps enhanced attention to the ‘delivery system’ (or the battle field?), to use arms control terminology, could create better results than simply focusing on each specific disarmament theme or diplomatic process. In other words, civil society would need to ‘rock the boat’ a bit to actually render the vessel seaworthy of the oceans it needs to navigate.

Zuber wisely suggests that civil society could benefit from striking “a better balance between issue advocacy and attention to the structures of the institutions in which we advocate. We can do the best possible advocacy, but it is often like putting new wine into old wine vessels. We end up with lots of wine on the floor. We have to help relevant UN structures to become more accountable to the increased demands now placed upon them”. In particular, “disarmament advocates should invest a significant amount of energy on the institutions and their full spectrum concerns that will ultimately make the decisions regarding security policy”.³³⁸

>>> Hope for normative development?

Tackling these (seemingly intractable) bigger picture issues is not, of course, the only meaningful work to be done at the United Nations for advocates seeking reduced levels of armed violence. In fact, there is still – or again – something to be said for dedicating creative energy to novel approaches, even at the UN.

Indeed, as put by one of the “fathers” of the community, Ed Laurance, “civil society was truly needed at the point of development” of the original small arms international instruments.³³⁹ Regardless of all the obstacles in the path towards agreement, as well as the imperfections of the instruments themselves, all knowledgeable observers would likely agree that neither the PoA nor the ATT would exist without the seminal civil society push. Civil society could once more serve as the catalyst to normative development which, as Garcia has shown, may be sparked by “norm entrepreneurs”, who “persuade towards the need for action in new areas and are essential to gather needed funds, initiate advocacy campaigns, and keep the momentum towards change”.³⁴⁰

The necessary caveats, in our assessment, are that clear human security objectives must drive any normative development – the lessons of greater attention to ‘effects’ rather than (only) ‘hardware’ should be heeded. Moreover, there should be a strong bias towards ensuring that any new instrument is negotiated as a legally-binding commitment rather than another ‘soft law’ framework.

Of course, as Garcia indicates, norms “do not necessarily need to be part of an international treaty in order to thrive and have constitutive and transformative effects on the behavior of actors. Both politically and legally binding norms may pose proscriptions or prescriptions of behavior. Norms may establish a prohibition or a ban on previously existing conduct, and they may also set recommendations or new directions for action. Soft law may herald developments that may signal the intentions of states to act differently in a given area; and can usher in new normative

avenues. The only distinguishing feature of legally binding norms (contained in international treaties or conventions) from political norms, therefore is their resulting effect on creating new national legislation that is usually what occurs when states ratify treaties”.³⁴¹


Nonetheless, we believe that in the case of small arms it is precisely this ‘only distinguishing feature’ that has (mainly) proved an almost insurmountable burden for the real-life impact to several instruments, particularly the PoA. As observed by McDonald, “it has become clearer to me over time that many states disregard the PoA and ITI because they are politically binding. The commitments may be firm – States undertake to control, report, etc. – but the attitude, in some quarters, is that we can take or leave this because it is politically binding”.³⁴²

Rather than a fault of the type of commitment in itself, of course, the failure here rests on the shoulders of the many States that do not take international agreements seriously unless it is illegal for them not to – particularly in the few cases with strong enforcement mechanisms or clear repercussions for lapsed implementation. Unfortunately, many States need to be forced to honor their public commitments.

It is therefore unsurprising, as recalled by New Zealand Amb. McLay, that “the question of whether the effectiveness of the PoA would be better served by transforming it into a more robust global framework – perhaps, to move from the present ‘soft’ normative commitments to hard law – will almost certainly continue to be raised again within the process. No such development is possible within the existing consensus framework, which raises the question whether the cause might be better served by abandoning the consensus requirement altogether”.³⁴³

A new global instrument, however, does not have to necessarily emerge – at least originally – from the UN. In fact, the avenue of a regional or sub-regional cornerstone, to be joined later by other regional ‘building blocks’, is also feasible: “it is important that norms become institutionalized... The UN is usually the main site where norms evolve in general, but this may not be the case for SALW and other cases of conventional disarmament. However regional organizations... are also valuable sites for norm consolidation, and in the case of SALW they are more robust sites of norm development”.³⁴⁴

Regardless of the exact path chosen, the good news, as mentioned regarding the case of considering a global instrument on ammunition controls, is that, if “norms emergence is spearheaded by the generation of credible knowledge as a first initial step”³⁴⁵, civil society is ready to rumble. Indeed, “if new SALW negotiating opportunities opened up



in the UN SALW process, many good research-based publications prepared between 2003 and 2009 remain directly relevant on ‘next-step’ core normative issues such as end-user/end-use controls, regulating arms brokering activities, controls on transit and transportation, reporting mechanisms, or ammunition”.³⁴⁶ In addition, some “nuts and bolts” areas could also be interesting areas to explore for universally binding standards, including robust stockpile management and surplus definition and destruction, arguably the best ways to preclude guns being diverted to the illicit market. Here again, the technical and research homework is done – best practices encapsulated in ISACS, for example, could serve as the basis for legally-binding protocols or treaties.

An even more ambitious possibility was sketched by Guy Lamb, who suggests that civil society could contemplate whether to embark on a campaign for a global instrument, either legally-binding (treaty) or “supplementary to the UN PoA”, and which “could be pursued outside of the UN process”, specifically on the issue of gun violence. Lamb notes that “a large majority of states have solid violence reduction processes built into their policy and legislation. Regional protocols/conventions (SADC, ECOWAS, Nairobi) have provisions too”. These would therefore serve as a basis, for a global instrument in which “States agree to adopt measures (both legislative and programmatic) that are geared towards reductions in gun violence, such as targeted law enforcement; improved licensing (background checks; minimum age; maximum numbers; safe storage), etc. The key outcomes would be a reduction in death and injuries due to firearms, as well as reductions in emotional violence”.³⁴⁸

The fulfillment of this vision, of course, would be a dream, but having a clear objective as a blueprint, roadmap or conceptual framework in itself can have extremely positive impacts. Realistically, for any of these prospects to come to fruition in the next few years would be an uphill battle. Some observers believe that “SALW researchers and associated transnational advocacy networks are no longer widely regarded by international policy makers, or funders, as a particularly dynamic and politically important focus for further international negotiations or norm-setting. In a context of relatively modest diplomatic objectives for further developing SALW norms and programs in UN and other international SALW diplomatic processes, there is relative low diplomatic demand for new SALW policy research”.³⁴⁸

>>> Does civil society like ‘smart guns’?

One area that would clearly benefit from international normative development, given the utter current vacuum, is the intersection of small arms and new technologies. As mentioned, the evolution of firearms technology over the last decades is minimal, particularly because manufacturers have balked at safety improvements. More recently, however, two technological innovations are significant enough to demand the international community’s attention – including that of civil society: “smart guns” and 3D printing.

Despite relative novelty, there is nothing futuristic about so-called ‘smart guns’ or “information technology enhanced weapons” – unless you think an iPhone is also futuristic.³⁴⁹ In fact, as a Washington Post article earlier this year noted, “one of California’s largest firearm stores recently added a peculiar new gun to its shelves. It requires an accessory: a black waterproof watch. The watch’s primary purpose is not to provide accurate time, though it does. The watch makes the gun think. Electronic chips inside the gun and the watch communicate with each other. If the watch is within close reach of the gun, a light on the grip turns green. Fire away. No watch means no green light. The gun becomes a paperweight”.³⁵⁰

Many other similar technologies already exist or are under development to ‘personalize’ guns, rendering them workable only to their authorized user – in addition to fingerprint technology, sensors and radio frequency identification, one company is even offering a smart phone app that can lock or unlock the gun’s trigger, detect motion and geolocate it remotely.³⁵¹

This should come as no surprise, as according to Ashkenazi, “with the incorporation of digital technology into all areas of life, SALW have started changing too. SALW have acquired electronics. Targeting, ammunition counts, and sensors to improve accuracy and lethality are becoming commonplace. Yet safety and security systems have remained the same, unchanged since the early twentieth century. While cars and houses have electronic locks, weapons have none. Computers can be tracked after theft, arms cannot. Thus SALW have not taken full advantage of developments in electronics”.³⁵²

The most comprehensive discussion of these emerging technologies can be found in the materials supporting a seminar facilitated by BICC and the German MFA on the topic in June 2013, the Berlin SmartCon, which SDP attended.³⁵³ While the papers and discussions were broad and fruitful, indeed “the one most prominent and common

finding of the Conference, both in the presentations and in the discussions that followed, is the agreement that smart weapon technology has different effects, and differential benefits under different conditions and scenarios: what is likely to work in one country, or as a solution for a particular problem, may well not work elsewhere or for a different problem. Nevertheless, there is almost complete agreement that in many ways, smart weapon technology for SALW control will be a growing phenomenon in the coming years, notably as both the technology, and the economic sector it represents, matures and expands”.³⁵⁴

Otherwise, governments have been mostly quiet on this development, though as the technology advances, so will legislative reactions. For example, three US states have legislative proposals determining that three years after the technology is available on the market, all new guns produced or sold must be ‘smart’ – one of them, New Jersey, has enacted the law, which will presumably be triggered by entry into market.³⁵⁵ On a national level in the US, a similar bill has been introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, requiring that all new guns to be personalized two years after enactment.³⁵⁶ In Brazil, several legislative proposals currently in Congress determine making the inclusion of chips mandatory in all new firearms.³⁵⁷

A forthcoming report by the UN Secretary General on “new technologies” may provide much fodder for discussion, at it shall cover “the implications of recent developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design for effective marking, record-keeping and tracing.” It should be reviewed carefully by civil society organizations, and will hopefully have some recommendations towards establishing international standards. Regardless, a minimalist framework could certainly be the fodder for normative development at the UN.

So far, civil society seems unsure of whether to engage, denounce or ignore these developments. The most basic question – are ‘smart guns’ good news? – has not yet been answered by most, and has simply be assumed by many.³⁵⁸ Of course, considering any firearm ‘good’ demands evolving from the ‘guns are bad’ default stance, as argued before, and many reactively distrust anything produced by the industry.

Once again, the important aspect to focus on are the ‘effects’, that is, can personalized firearms reduce levels of gun violence in a given circumstance or location? The honest answer at this point, despite the marketing campaigns of manufacturers, is that we cannot be entirely sure. Personalized weapons have not been widely used enough in the ‘real world’ to convince beyond a doubt. Moreover, which features and possibilities will survive or be created by technological evolution is impossible to forecast at this junction.

There is also the question whether smart guns would not simply take up a place, in the market and households, that could otherwise be satisfied by less-than-lethal equipment. Or worse, that they would be deemed ‘safe enough’ by civilians who would otherwise not cross the threshold of purchasing guns, thereby increasing numbers of gun owners. Moreover, technology could render guns safer, but concomitantly more lethal.

Nonetheless, in our opinion, the answer to this dilemma cannot be divorced from earlier questions of production and holdings. If smart guns are simply added to current levels of production, stockpiles and holdings of ‘dumb guns’, it is unlikely they can decisively contribute to a safer world. Conversely, if personalized firearms create a significant substitution effect and are produced, sold, held and used **instead** of traditional firearms, then indeed they could have a positive impact – even if the most likely scenario is that they would play a role in certain circumstances and geographical areas, rather than the entire world, for many years to come.

Particularly for police forces and ‘self-defense’ enthusiasts, having a safer gun in the streets and in the household – provided they give up other weapons – could diminish the lethality of eventual gun use and the prospects of diversion and illicit trafficking. Particularly in the case of unintentional use (many times involving children) and suicides in the household of civilians who possess firearms, safety gains could be significant.

Consider this: in 2010, almost 20,000 people killed themselves with firearms in the US, while there were only 230 legal self-defense deaths (justifiable homicides).³⁵⁹ In the past decade in the same country, over 60% of firearm deaths were suicides, not homicides. Moreover, “if you’re set on ending your life, a gun is the surest way to do it. Eighty-five percent of people who shoot themselves die, versus 1 percent of people who cut themselves and 2 percent of those who attempt to overdose”.³⁶⁰

Widespread personalized guns could presumably be impactful on this statistic alone. Moreover, a fully functional, hacker-proof ‘smart gun’ would entirely lose its value as a means of illicit sales, particularly by corrupt police forces, as it simply would in theory not work for anybody else. And GPS technology could make tracing of stolen weapons as easy as it is, well, for an iPhone.

At an extreme, if by magic every single gun currently in circulation in the world could be substituted by a ‘smart gun’, the planet would undoubtedly be a safer place – though gun violence would subsist at significant levels, as many homicides, accidents and suicides are committed by those who own the weapon. Indeed, “smart weapon technology

melled with firearms will not save the world from armed violence. Not all technologies will work in all situations. Nevertheless, some technologies hold promise of being useful in specific situations. But, with half a million victims every year, even small percentage reductions translate into larger numbers of victims saved”.³⁶¹

Therefore, if the introduction of ‘smart guns’ to the world market could be coupled with the removal from circulation, and destruction, of ‘dumb guns’, this could be deemed a positive development. More thought and discussion is surely needed, but in such a scenario could civil society partner with private sector actors developing ‘smart gun’ technologies?

For example, if smart gun makers gave significant discounts to buyers who return ‘conventional’ guns – and provide the logistics to ensure the weapons are destroyed (a ‘buy-back’/substitution campaign of sorts) – could civil society get behind them? After all, it would be a case of “put your money where your mouth is”, given that some of the companies include reducing gun violence as one of their product’s motivations.

If nothing else, the vitriolic denouncing of ‘smart guns’ by representatives of the traditional firearms industry in the aforementioned Berlin meeting suggests that, if their fears materialize, these more technological weapons could spell trouble to their profit margins.³⁶² These resistances, as well as from potential users, and possibly more importantly market and economic factors – including costs – will play a large role in determining whether smart guns ‘revolutionize’ or ‘slightly evolve’ the global market for guns. “Will they sell?” is indeed the operating question.³⁶³

Probably the most logical entry-point is the use of ‘smart weapons’ by police forces (particularly European ones): “while individual policemen may well object, the fact is that this type of technology has enormous appeal to innocent civilians and their politicians, under threat of unregulated or improper discharge of firearms, as historical precedent demonstrates”.³⁶⁴

In some ways a more ‘futuristic’ scenario – despite the fact that it also already exists – stems from recent developments in 3D printing. With the equipment at home, and production blueprints downloaded from the Internet, individuals can theoretically produce a firearm out of ‘plastic’ – mostly undetectable by X-ray machines – in total secrecy, from the comfort of their living room.

As the case of the ‘Liberator’ pistol denotes, a printed gun that actually fires a shot is no longer science-fiction.³⁶⁵ It has also, however, caused governmental reaction, as the US State Department ordered the blueprints to be taken down from the Internet (after they were downloaded thousands of times), as well as new or renewed proposals to prohibit gun manufacture by individuals or groups not legally registered, or banning ‘undetectable guns.’³⁶⁶

Nonetheless, at least for the time being, 3D guns are unlikely to become a significant threat in most places, exactly because the world is awash in firearms. Not only are the guns (still) of poor quality (often only one shot, poor targeting, dangerous for use) but they make very little economic sense for the vast majority of individuals who chose to purchase and use a firearm, as in most jurisdictions ‘professional’ firearms are available, accessible and cheap.³⁶⁷

In many countries, including Brazil, producing a firearm without manufacture controls and regulations is simply illegal –if you are about to break the law anyway, it would make more sense to purchase or make a cheaper, better gun. As noted by Marsh, it is “not too hard to make a firearm in a decently equipped workshop (with machine tools) and some manufactured components (e.g. barrels, springs)”.³⁶⁸

The risks may be slightly greater in a few European countries (such as the UK) with highly restrictive regulations on firearms, where the difficulty and cost of obtaining illegal guns – combined with more access to high technology and purchasing power – could spark 3D gun entrepreneurship.³⁶⁹ Still, a specific cost-benefit analysis of a jurisdiction’s illegal firearms market would be necessary – and could indeed show that, like elsewhere, it makes more sense to buy illegally than to make illegally.

Nonetheless, in the medium term, as production costs diminish and quality increases, 3D firearms could become much more attractive and mainstream. Likewise with ‘smart guns’, once the products break into market – and they will, even if as only a niche or ‘luxury’ product in more affluent societies – it would be highly beneficial to have at least properly begun international discussions towards their regulation and safer potential use. In tandem, reinforced controls on ammunition will also become more important, as 3D guns will always need bullets to inflict damage.

As such, these technologies constitute a clear area in which the international community (i.e. the UN’s First Committee) should provide a normative framework for their development and use, lest they are allowed to start killing and maiming before governments have attempted to preempt or reduce the harm. Indeed, McDonald singles out

“new technologies” as a top area for small arms normative development at the UN,³⁷⁰ with some movement possible as early as June 2014, when governments gather for the Biennial Meeting of States of the Program of Action. Undoubtedly, international standards should be developed urgently – whether legally-binding or a soft law ‘protocol’ complementary to the PoA framework.

As noted by Patrick McCarthy, it is indeed highly unlikely that “smart gun technology” would be properly ‘included’ in the PoA text itself,³⁷¹ though one option proposed (mention in BMS and RevCon outcome documents) strikes us as entirely insufficient. Rather, another option mentioned, to include ‘smart tech’ as a part of ISACS, would be preferable, inferior only to the possibility of formal normative development with a stand-alone framework.

In the case of 3D printed firearms, a simple legally-binding normative framework on manufacture controls (banning individual and/or unregistered production) would most probably suffice, and include within its scope international regulations for ‘traditional’ firearm production as well. Though such a level of proactive engagement with emerging technologies may not be the rule, the recent attention at the UN in Geneva (CCW) to the possibility of discussing “killer robots” – weapons that after all do not yet exist – may suggest that the UN can be ahead of the curve on some arms control issues.

As well argued by Jacob Parakilas, “it is unlikely that the 3D printing of weapons can be completely stopped or controlled. But with robust action, the potential problem can be contained and controlled rather than allowed to run rampant. Too many times in history, the world has been forced to put the genie back in the bottle by developing a legal and ethical framework to cope with a new weapon after it had already been used to devastating effect. With 3D printed weapons, we have a rare window of opportunity to develop a framework to manage the harms of an otherwise incredibly promising technology while it is still in its infancy. But that window is closing fast”.³⁷²

>>> “Unfinished business”

A final potentially productive set of civil society efforts could be to remedy the gravest gaps left behind by the present international framework concerning small arms. As noted, despite its serious flaws in letter and practice, the PoA will continue to provide a fairly comprehensive framework for further action, if action is wanted. As noted by Krause and McDonald, the UN small arms framework mostly covers the entire spectrum of concerns regarding the weapons, applying “to almost all stages of the weapons life cycle” and serving as a “menu of policy options” of sorts

for virtually any issue that can be singled out for further development, or taking seriously politically.³⁷³

As argued by a UNIDIR study, “the PoA should not be viewed in isolation. Ten years after its adoption, it now stands as a framework document that is, effectively, supplemented by other instruments and processes that enhance and expand on its provisions”.³⁷⁴ It is in this sense, therefore, that it can be argued we have the “minimal requirements on a global level” for advocacy and knowledge-sharing.

Whether (and how) to ‘enhance’ the PoA through further normative development is the question. As noted before, we are skeptical that this path provides much prospect for hope; regardless, there are arguably three ways of doing this: amending, supplementing, and ‘super-charging’ the PoA.

For the first two paths, clearly overcoming the ‘original sins’ or “unfinished business” of the instrument are essential. Of course, it is no coincidence that these substantial problems persist: “often bitter disagreements over the proper place of issues such as regulation of civilian possession and restricting transfers to non-state actors almost derailed consensus on the PoA in 2001; and these issues, together with others such as the illicit trade in ammunition, played a significant role in the failure of the 2006 Review Conference”.³⁷⁵

It should likewise come as no surprise that, as McDonald has noted, “issues that have proven relatively immune to the influence of research to date include the control of ammunition, the regulation of civilian possession, and monitoring implementation of the PoA.” In other words, collectively our ‘heads’ know that these issues belong in the PoA – we have the evidence-base, particularly on the inclusion of ammunition – but our ‘hearts’ have not shown sufficient will. Politics have trumped sensible policy.

If the PoA text itself is deemed “sacrosanct” or a political “can of worms” that cannot be amended as it should, there are still alternative ways to supplement, strengthen, and update it. For example, the ITI model (a sort of protocol to the original instrument) could be followed for any of these issues of substance and supplement the PoA.³⁷⁶ Even better, as McDonald suggests, diplomats could “carve out relatively narrow areas for treaty negotiation” and supplement the PoA framework with “legally-binding add-ons” on essential issues such as ammunition or manufacturing controls.³⁷⁷

Another set of ‘unfinished business’ possibilities, that could potentially supplement the current framework, is suggested by Karp, who notes,

“the small arms community must accept the inherent limits of political institutions. Action to restrain legal ownership or state stockpiles will cross red lines which many governments will try to maintain. Fortunately there is much more that can be accomplished without crossing these red lines. The range of proposals that can be advanced through the United Nations constitutes a minimal agenda for global reform. Drawn from ideas already under discussion, possible elements of a minimal international small arms agenda include: Universal, standardized marking of all newly manufactured small arms, light weapons and ammunition; Universal registration of private and official small arms and light weapons; Require secure storage and continuous, personalized responsibility for all private and official small arms, light weapons and ammunition; Require the destruction of surplus official weapons and ammunition; and Limit the number and types of weapons allowed to civilian buyers. By assuring better control over all small arms, this kind of minimal program would discourage theft, illegal sales and diversion to illicit users. It would reduce the most pathological aspects of small arms proliferation. A minimal program like this is no panacea for small arms violence, but it would far surpass the effects of current initiatives”.³⁷⁸

The final way of enhancing the PoA is to “super-charge” it by rendering the instrument legally-binding – which at least in theory would overcome a central block to its implementation and thus impact. Though the difficulties are obvious, breaking consensus simply by using the General Assembly voting rules is entirely possible with a bit of political gumption by ‘progressive’ states. Diplomats could go step-by-step, for example starting with the ITI or the less controversial sections of the PoA, until momentum is reached for a full overhaul.

And a final word about funding...

In the previous sections, most of our suggestions or thoughts for global civil society are certainly nothing revolutionary. Moreover, they may fall within the “easier said than done” category, for many different reasons. While lack of will, expertise or ambition may at times be the culprit, it is quite possible that readers have interjected with “that sounds great, but who is going to pay for it?”. It would be naïve to list so many areas of potential enhanced attention without recognizing that having the operational ability to implement them is a *sine qua non* condition. In this sense, governments, especially donor countries, have serious responsibilities in the matter.

Maze and Parker have noted that “the main funders of research on SALW were: Canada, Switzerland, Norway, SEESAC, the Netherlands and the UK. A handful of states and organizations are responsible for the vast majority of funding of activities designed to implement measures concerning SALW. The support by these actors has been crucial in putting the issue on the international agenda, and in securing practical assistance. Nevertheless, the small number of donors represents a vulnerability – a few changes in strategic policy could result in a dramatic reduction in activity”.³⁷⁹

Such a vulnerability, which currently may be further exacerbated as some governments on that list have become less ‘generous’ with civil society – given the global financial crisis as well as political changes – is a powerful deterrent against civil society taking risks in their strategies and funding proposals.

When so much of civil society activity on arms control and armed violence reduction in the last decade has focused on international diplomacy, or the so-called ‘technocratic approach’, it was obviously not determined by NGO interest alone. Indeed, as Marsh has argued, this “approach is not without problems. It involves working closely with governments. Gaining their trust. This relationship inevitably involves compromise. There is scope for civil society to set the agenda, but any change in policy is ultimately limited to what governments will accept. More importantly, the vast majority of funding for these endeavors by civil society has come from a handful of governments. They, then, effectively act as gatekeepers and can decline to fund activities not deemed to be useful. The often warned danger is that NGOs risk becoming conservative or even co-opted”.³⁸⁰

Most observers would probably agree that over the last decade, at least some NGOs have shown that danger was real. Possibly the harshest – but quite truthful – critique of these “frustrations of an unequal marriage” comes from


Karp, who argues that NGOs failure to develop an independent voice is:

“the result of a Faustian bargain with sympathetic governments. ‘At the outset’, wrote Silvia Cattaneo and Keith Krause, ‘NGO activities followed, rather than preceded state or inter-governmental affairs, so that state sponsorship was critical to the success of NGO initiatives.’ Because NGOs and research institutes rely on funding from a handful of mostly European governments, they lose the independence required to press for dramatic change... Both sides gain from this reciprocal relationship. For states, few of whom can devote more than a few professionals to these issues, this is an easy way to acquire expertise. For outside experts and advocates, government funding ensures constant activity. Such cooperation is a healthy thing, but it is also limiting. For governments, reliance on contracts and pro bono assistance allows effective engagement of small arms issues, without a binding commitment of their own personnel. For NGOs and research institutes, however, government recognition and financing also means government influence. Despite the apparent reciprocity, no one pretends this is a marriage between equals. Like a firm relying on temporary employees, the official side has greater freedom to drop the relationship. While the government side can divorce at will, NGOs become dependent, sacrificing independence. The official agenda becomes theirs, and in any contest their original concerns are bound to suffer. At a minimum the partners lose healthy antagonism, the fertile breeding ground of innovation. Worthwhile ideas are suppressed to avoid controversy. More invidiously, governments co-opt their potential critics, eliminating any danger of criticism”.³⁸¹

The inherent tension, as one interviewed expert noted, is that NGOs inevitably “bite the hand that feeds them”. Or should, but feel unable to do so for fear of funding conditionality. In the words of another interviewee, it is essential to discuss “the potentially toxic effects of NGOs taking funds from the very governments it is our job (in part) to keep on a more fruitful path” and whether “we sacrifice our independence too readily... making us more likely to hold our tongue in situations where colleagues elsewhere would want and need us to take a few more risks”.³⁸²

Either way, this relationship creates a less than ideal symbiotic relationship for both parties. But the reality of the world is such that there is seldom free lunch. This, of course, is a well-known phenomenon in other areas of knowledge and public policy as well: “directions of SALW research continue inevitably to be profoundly shaped by policy agendas and associated funding as much as with continuing to consolidate and extend reliable research knowledge for its own sake”.³⁸³

Therefore, the shifts argued for herein will have to be also taken up, or at least tolerated, by governments and funders to have any chance of coming to fruition. Notwithstanding, we would argue that funders should indeed embrace the priorities listed above, as the objective of ‘concerned’ governments is, at least in theory, the same as that of civil society: to reduce armed violence where it happens.




In that sense, donors should not perpetuate funding patterns that simply reinforce the status quo described herein. If civil society attempting to re-calibrate its efforts is met with closed doors from donors, our collective ability to make transformative changes will be extremely limited. Friendly governments should thus meet ambition with ambition, supporting novel approaches even if they do not necessarily and immediately bolster their policy priorities or preferred methods or fora.

Too much to ask? Perhaps, but while we are at it, supporting projects focusing on reducing armed violence, regardless of their geographical scope, should not excuse governments from taking domestic steps to curb many of the dynamics described in the previous sections – or in fact being counter-productive by “rowing in both directions” concurrently. In other words, donors paying for “mopping” activities should ensure any “faucets” are duly tightened.

According to Buchanan, “the vision levels of many donors, especially government donors, compounds the challenges in this area, with very few willing to take the necessary risks to move this issue to the next level and invest in scaling up what we know works, testing what appears to be most promising on a meaningful scale. The overall lack of strategic direction coming from civil society further enables some donors to pick the least demanding areas of work to support and to continue funding areas of conventional weapons work that could be significantly cut back.”³⁸⁴ In that sense, NGO’s tendency to mimic their donors is compounded when both sides of the equation display a lack of vision and creativity, with a ‘more of the same’ default approach that comforts and feeds off each other.

Donor decisions would ideally be less political and more impact-oriented. Funding for arms control, human security and the broader armed violence reduction field should not continue to be viewed as philanthropy or (only) humanitarian in nature. Rather, it is a form of investment, which like any other should demand return on investment (results) and efficiency. The counterpart civil society must provide is clear strategy on how proposals will attempt to reduce armed violence, and the indicators that will be used to assess progress – or lack thereof.

One of the problems, of course, with civil society advocacy efforts is that it is extremely difficult to ascertain how influential efforts were in a final political outcome. Nonetheless, tracking specific indicators, monitoring, evaluation, and independent assessment of advocacy efforts can provide some answers, and the level of transparency and self-criticism it entails will render efforts more robust.




Even so, turning away from strictly diplomatic international efforts towards closer to the ground, often local or national, activities may be difficult. For one, UN-based activities are often precisely the *métier* of those considering proposals and establishing funding patterns, through a given country's MFA. Ignoring governments entirely may be particularly counterintuitive to government agencies!

The focus on national and local advocacy – rather than purely international – may be resisted also because of the nature and origin of most funding and ‘work power’ on the theme. While European governments can fund AVR programs without controversy, it may be too politically sensitive or risky to directly fund efforts attempting to ‘lobby’ foreign governments to change their laws or practices. Likewise, for some NGOs based in European capitals, there may be little interest in doing national advocacy on gun violence as, quite frankly, it is almost unnecessary given existing regulations and incidence, while they may lack expertise on how to influence political processes in affected countries. In other words, they do not need to do it at home and do not know how to do it abroad – and thus their focus on international diplomacy.

A further challenge, in addition to diminishing funding sources and amounts, is that the few donors still supporting work in this arena are increasingly seeking evidence of collaboration among multiple actors, or actually prefer big budgets from large organizations in order to cut down on administrative costs and oversight needs – which in turn does not favor smaller organizations and/or those seeking to focus on national-level activity.

A final obstacle for civil society to overcome vis-à-vis existing funding dynamics is the sensitive issue of competition and overlapping. As an interviewed senior UN disarmament diplomat noted, “many times civil society organizations compete amongst themselves for resources (financial or human) and prestige, which causes a dispersal of efforts and undermines efficiency. Why not consider a unified advocacy/awareness framework towards governments and society, which all organizations commit to implementing together?”³⁸⁵

Of course, the existing ‘balkanization’ of many civil society efforts against armed violence – between focus on ‘hardware’ and ‘effects’, and within hardware by specific types of weaponry and the diplomatic processes devised to curb them, does not help in creating a more holistic, global advocacy approach. The incipient “humanitarian disarmament” community has helped in creating some bridges, though as argued at the onset is insufficient to properly reflect the most prevalent form of armed violence: gun violence in countries ‘at peace’, with an emphasis on misuse rather than prohibition.



As may be expected, we would argue that it is precisely the misuse and effects of small arms that should serve as a galvanizing point of departure for all organizations concerned with “armed violence”, a basic common rallying cry that would be complemented by particular attention to other forms of violence, weaponry and geographical scope. Therefore, funding requests and support should consider collaboration on this basis, and increased coordination and dialogue among actors certainly ‘rowing in the same direction’.

Whether this is feasible or not, governments should do what they can to facilitate such a scenario. Like civil society, they should not continue doing ‘more of the same’ when it comes to funding on armed violence reduction. They should be more generous, but also more demanding of civil society. “Show me the money” met with “show me the results”. They should consider that, sometimes, investing in global advocacy and covering UN-based processes may not provide the best “bang for the buck”.

Moreover, the very short list of donors investing in many of these efforts should be lengthened, putting an end to the running civil society joke “Norway or Switzerland?” Several highly developed nations, mostly northern European but also others, invest a negligible proportion of their national wealth in curbing this very serious global epidemic. Moreover, large economies that deem themselves ‘emerging powers’, including Brazil, should “put their money where their mouth is” when it comes to issues of international human security. A larger, more diverse group of governmental donors would dilute perceived conditionality as well as diffuse some of the political and ethical dilemmas mentioned above.

Moreover, when discussing a closer relationship with the private sector, national and international companies should be requested to ‘pitch in’ at a higher level – and civil society, within reason, should allow them to. Finally, the political constraints under which they operate nationally in the United States should not continue to keep some of the world’s largest and most generous foundations to shy away from supporting efforts on curbing gun violence in the rest of the world. In funding, also, a ‘whole of society’ approach is needed to tackle the intractable realities of armed violence around the world.

Conclusion: What next after “What next?” ...

As noted at the outset, our sincere hope is that this paper simply sparks a few conversations. It was meant to be neither all-encompassing nor prescriptive; or for that matter, to offer a polished or deep discussion of any of the many issues put forth. Rather, this paper constitutes a few initial thoughts as a part of a major, collective brainstorming exercise global civil society working on arms control and armed violence reduction could participate in, if it was so inclined.

Indeed, as suggested by Thomas Nash, it would be essential to “get civil society’s pulse” as to what should be the next priorities and methods of work. Most productively, this would probably entail a roundtable or meeting of a small number of global experts, as suggested by Adele Kirsten, for in-depth discussions and strategizing.³⁸⁶ Whether this can happen, as well as the when and where, will depend on colleagues joining and collectively creating a process for taking any initial seeds presented herein and deciding to ‘plant and grow’ them together in the years to come.

In order to do so, we believe, it is helpful for all civil society advocates to look inward in a judicious and searching manner, request external feedback, and listen attentively to constructive, well-intended criticism from wherever it may come. Part of this process for SDP, and we would recommend to other organizations, is to honestly assess past premises and performance, and recognize mistakes.

Taking stock at this juncture is essential. A full eight years ago, one study was already stating that the small arms movement could have a “path of token collective effort and negligible impact”, but suggest that, rather, “participants within the (small arms movement) take stock of where they have come individually and collectively and assess whether they are likely to make more progress together or separately. Our study demonstrates that the movement may be better served if its participants strengthened their bonds and developed more collective goals”.³⁸⁷

We agree. As a first step, where warranted, a collective mea culpa of sorts can be an important component to a clear-eyed vision for the future. In this sense, the stark assessment put forth by Karp as early as 2006 is still worth contemplating today without prejudice, whether it is deemed to be correct or not:

“Critiques of the slow progress on small arms tend to stress either the resurgence of national sovereignty or the weakness of control campaigns. Both are serious barriers. The weakness of the NGO campaign has been widely acknowledged, especially its lack of direction and poor coordination between the various groups. If small arms diplomacy has stalled, the advocates must bear some responsibility...

The movement has been inhibited by the inability of control advocates to frame the issue in terms of readily understood and easily shared goals. In lieu of a straightforward program, the issue has been defined largely by its activities. The justification becomes tautological; the goals of small arms activity are whatever it does. This may explain why it has been difficult to generate excitement for the issue outside its dedicated community... If it is to continue to develop, to progress toward more ambitious goals, influencing not just specific conflicts, but all conflict, small arms activity must take control over its identity the movement must delineate its own long-term objectives. In lieu of a clear agenda or a unified program, the tendency is to always seek more: more control, more transparency, more activity.


Above all, the small arms project requires clear objectives... the lack of explicit goals endangers the long-term survival of small arms activism. Without goals to provide motivation and unity, the project risks drift and incoherence. Only with goals, finally, is there any way to evaluate the project’s achievements and progress, the most fundamental justification for further support. Explicit goals, in other words, provide insulation against the caprices of political fashion and intellectual trends. Goals are not risk-free. Time and again it has been convenient for small arms activists to raise the movement’s ambiguity as a shield against attacks from the political extremes. It allows the movement to sympathize with bold ambitions without having to make a real commitment. Ambiguity also has facilitated adaptation, making it easy for small arms projects to metamorphosize into broader programs for conflict resolution. A more rigorously defined small arms project may not be able to reach out as broadly. With a clearer identity, however, it gains commitment and intensity...

Where is it going now? What are the next steps? The spectrum of small arms activity is very rich, but reviewing current programs and studies, it is hard to discern a clear direction for improvement and innovation. Unless small arms activism changes, there is reason to doubt if there ever will be further great initiatives. Small arms activism needs a stronger dedication to its core principles. This calls for deepening the small arms agenda, reacting to the pathetic pace of change not just by expanding the agenda, but also through renewed commitment to the basic problem of weapons proliferation. This can be achieved only by shifting the fulcrum of action, away from international institutions, toward the national governments. If guns are the problem, the solutions can only lie with the authorities that control them. Those authorities are almost exclusively agencies of the state. It is with them that the prospects for change are greatest. It is there that attention should be concentrated... Consequently, the most far-reaching reforms of small arms ownership must start with a concomitant reform of activist organizations and research institutes. These must shift their focus from international institutions to national campaigns”.³⁸⁸

So, where do we go from here? As an immediate next step we invite readers to offer some feedback on this paper. If you have made it this far, please consider sharing any reactions or feedback to these thoughts, anonymously if you prefer, at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MPZ683X>





Agree, disagree, prove us wrong, call us names! This will help us further organize our thoughts, noting which ideas, approaches or possibilities (if any!) have more traction within the armed violence reduction community at large, which are deemed absurd or unrealistic, essential or marginal, etc. We commit to organizing and sharing this collective feedback as a means to continue this ongoing conversation, probably thorough the creation of a “wiki” page for ongoing commentary and reactions.

Depending on the level of interest, traction, and convergence it would be most productive to actually turn this ‘monologue’ into a real, full-fledged, collective conversation. With a collectively constructed vision, a pragmatic and transformative strategy, perhaps global civil society working on arms control and armed violence can once again prove the naysayers wrong.

This is our opening salvo... care to respond?

Endnotes

- 1 For some background, please see: http://soudapaz.org/upload/file/soudapaz_annual_report_2013_english_version.pdf
- 2 We highly recommend both to all those who work in the area: Greene, Owen; Marsh, Nicholas, editors of *Small Arms, Crime and Conflict: Global Governance and the Threat of Armed Violence*. London: Routledge, 2011; and Batchelor, Peter; Kenkel, Kai, editors of *Controlling Small Arms: Consolidation, Innovation and Relevance in Research and Policy*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- 3 Please see Acknowledgements.
- 4 E-mail interview by author, January 2014.
- 5 Greene in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 276.
- 6 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 7 E-mail interviews by author, January, 2014.
- 8 Greene in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 275. Said tendency has occurred “in the specific context of: enhanced focus on ATT negotiations; adherence to UN consensus procedures that empower relatively small blocking vetoes; and budget constraints and distractions relating to the 2007-2013 global financial crisis and recession”.
- 9 Plan Políticas Públicas is a consultancy based in São Paulo: <http://www.planpp.com/sobre.asp>
- 10 PlanPP 2013
- 11 PlanPP 2013
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Mack, 2012
- 15 Mack, 2013
- 16 McLay in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 287.
- 17 Karp explores both the strengths and weaknesses of the UN process: the “(PoA) focuses exclusively on a narrow slice of the small arms agenda. It provides no new mandate for action on legally owned weapons – widely agreed to cause much of the world’s worst gun problems – and it offers little basis for global action. But the catalytic effects of the conference were vital to the universalization of small arms policy. It was also the vehicle for the rapid expansion and redirection of research organizations and advocacy NGOs dedicated to these issues. Above all, it brought the issue to the top of the international agenda, insuring that it will be fully integrated into internal responses to violence and arms conflict for years to come. While these accomplishments cannot be gainsaid, it is not clear how much momentum they create. The PoA was more of a culmination to a process rather than the beginning of a new one”. Karp, 2006
- 18 A kinder interpretation states that the “PoA is better understood as providing a basic international normative and procedural framework around which broad coalitions of concerned governments, UN and international secretariats and agencies, and NGOs can mobilize, set agendas, take initiatives, spawn associated specific agreements (such as the ITI), and constructively engage with more cautious or reluctant government and agencies. The UN POA provides basic, but nevertheless important norms.” Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 176). Another helpful perspective comes from McDonald, who notes that the PoA “is not merely a set of prescriptions for national action. As a general framework for small arms control, it has inspired regions, sub-regions, and communities to tackle the small arms problem in line with their own needs and circumstances... As a catalyst for this wider range of activity, it is sufficient that the PoA simply identify a problem and sketch out remedial measures in broad outline” though he also recognizes the PoA faces “a credibility gap in some quarters given its politically binding nature”. McDonald in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 157 and p. 152.
- 19 Kirsten, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 187.
- 20 For more information see: www.iansa.org.
- Amb. McLay, for example, recognizes civil society’s essential role: “right since its inception, the standards, implementation and legitimacy of the PoA process have, to a very large extent, been driven by the energy and commitment of civil society groups, who have been influential in defining the PoA’s conceptual framework; have been instrumental in building and sustaining political support for the PoA; and have been important partners in its implementation. It is vital that civil society groups remain central partners on small arms issues, both in formal PoA meetings and on the ground”. McLay, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 292.
- 21 For more information on SDP’s recent domestic efforts on the ATT (in Portuguese), see: <http://www.soudapaz.org/noticia/o-que-falta-para-o-tratado-sobre-comercio-de-armas-sair-do-papel> and http://www.soudapaz.org/upload/pdf/armas_att_internalizacao_03_02_14.pdf
- 22 For more information, see: <http://controlarms.org>
- 23 Email interview by author, January, 2014.
- 24 Email interview by author, April 2014.
- 25 It should be noted, however, that some respondents recommended “doubling-down”, that is, to “consider either adding or shifting staff to focus more exclusively on international advocacy”. PlanPP 2013

26 PlanPP, 2013

27 Kirsten notes that, in the drive to develop a global policy agenda and civil society advocacy network that culminated in the PoA in 2001, “prior to the adoption of any global agreements, several regional small arms control agreements were concluded” and had “a significant impact on negotiations at the global level”. Kirsten in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 177.

28 Interview with author, Berlin, January 2014.

29 Greene in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 277.

30 Plan PP, 2013

31 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.

32 Email interview with author, January, 2014; interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.

33 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.

34 World Health Organization, 2012. The six pillars are: “1. Intensify communication and advocacy; 2. Enhance the integration of violence prevention into major global agendas; 3. Develop and strengthen national action plans; 4. Increase individual and institutional capacity for violence prevention and the delivery of services for victims and perpetrators; 5. Strengthen data collection and research on violence; 6. Implement evidence-informed violence prevention strategies, including: (...) (v) Firearms: implement evidence-informed measures to reduce the risks of firearm-related deaths and injuries...”.

35 Karp, 2006

36 PlanPP, 2013

37 Kirsten, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 190.

38 Kirsten, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 173.

39 Karp, 2006

40 Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 79.

41 PlanPP, 2013

42 Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 79.

43 Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2011: Global Burden of Armed Violence. Of the top 25 countries with most violent deaths, only three are neither in the Americas or Africa.

44 Ibid.

45 UNODC Global Homicides 2012; Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011

46 SDP, 2013

47 SDP, 2012

48 Cerqueira, 2010. For an English adaptation of this work, see Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013.

49 SDP, 2013b

50 See, for example, <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/magazine/guns-suicide-the-hidden-toll/>

51 Estimates point to three to six non-lethal victims (injuries) per fatality (case of the US); however, there is a relative “dearth of analysis on the numbers, needs, and realities of survivors of gun violence”, impeding effecting policies in this arena, while “building a coherent agenda based on responding to the needs and right of those injured and impaired from gun violence is long overdue” Buchanan 2011. For more information, see the Surviving Gun Violence Project: <http://survivinggunviolence.org>

52 Frate and De Martino, 2013

53 Buchanan 2011. Moreover, “one of the challenges in understanding the scale of gun-related victimisation, which largely relies on hospital data collection techniques, is that many people are not treated in hospital—for example, those avoiding being arrested who seek alternative forms of medical “care”; those experiencing psychological trauma months or years later who present to different parts of a health care system, if at all. Further, gun-related victimisation is often lost or inadequately noted in incident recording processes—for example, when a gun is used as an enabling “tool” to perpetrate sexual violence at gunpoint but is never fired and the misuse of the weapon not accurately recorded”.

54 SENASP, 2013

55 Ashkenazi in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 242.

56 Email interview by author, April 2014.

57 In these contexts particularly, the most effective remedy is often to control the “tools of armed violence”, especially when combined with other “medications” such as work with perpetrators and victims; diminishing demand for guns and risk factors (alcohol, drugs, poverty/inequality, conflict prevention/reconciliation skills); changes to institutional environment (criminal justice reform, police training and intelligence, local governance). Implementing a national focus, gun control strategies include legislative measures, enforcement of legislation, amnesties and collection schemes, managing state supplies, safer storage and safety features. These include a broad range of measures to reduce access to firearms by controlling their sale, purchase, and use: bans, licensing schemes, minimum age for buyers, background checks and safe storage requirements. Stiffer enforcement, amnesties for collection, awareness-raising of the risks, improved security for state supplies and destruction of surplus are also essential.

58 Mack, 2013

59 Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2011

Using a different framework, the UNODC presents another estimate: of 468,000 homicides in the world in 2010, 42% were committed with firearms, almost 200,000 lives lost at gunpoint. (UNODC, 2011) It is wise to take any attempt at global numbers with a grain of salt, given problems with data and reporting, particularly on the African continent. Perhaps more important is the notion of the magnitude, as even earlier estimates with “roughly calculated ‘ballpark’ figures enabled decision-makers to assess the relative importance of small arms compared to other pressing international problems”. Yet, “amorphous global estimates have little practical value; indeed, they can obscure important variations in the extent of victimization by SALW within countries and regions” Kreutz and Marsh, 2011, p. 44.

60 Marsh, 2013

61 Marsh in Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 13.

62 Hegre, Karlsen, Nygard, Strand and Urdal, 2011

63 Human Security Report, 2013

64 The numbers are staggering. One example: “in Angola over 500,000 AK-47s were estimated to have been distributed to civilians in and around Luanda in 1992”. Bourne in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 38

65 Kreutz and Marsh, 2012, p. 49.

66 Ibid, p. 51. Other conflicts analyzed, mostly in the 1990s, included Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cambodia, Iraq, Kuwait, Rwanda and Somalia. The “most extensive study (of eight hospitals in five countries) reporting 45 percent” caused by firearms (p. 56). The 2006 Lebanon ‘conflict’, of course, was the almost entirely ‘aerial’ war that provided the political impetus for the global ban on cluster munitions, widely used in that case by Israel.

67 Ibid, p. 56

68 Hall and Dimitrov in Greene and Marsh, p. 225

69 Marsh in Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 19 (drawing on Aguirre and Restrepo).

70 Keynote speech delivered by Susi Snyder (PAX) at the Berlin Sessions on Humanitarian Disarmament, 2014.

71 For further details: <http://berlinsessions.eu/archive> and <http://www.4disarmament.org>.

72 See the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons at <http://www.icanw.org>

73 Karp quoted in Kirsten in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 173.

74 As noted by Greene in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013: “in most states, a relatively large sector of the civilian population can legally purchase, possess or carry at least some categories of small arms, for sporting, hunting, cultural or self-defense purposes. Although there is a gradual trend towards more restrictive firearm licensing laws, only relatively few countries – such as the UK – have seriously adopted virtual bans on legal possession of almost all types of firearms by ordinary civilians” (p. 272)

75 Kirsten, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 173.

76 Additional Protocol I, Geneva Conventions, 1977. See <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201125/volume-1125-I-17512-English.pdf>

77 For more information, <http://www.inew.org>

78 Speech delivered by Richard Moyes (Article 36) at the Berlin Sessions on Humanitarian Disarmament, January 2014.

79 Launch seminar for Controlling Small Arms, Geneva, January 2014.

80 Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 90-91.

81 Bourne, in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 29.

82 Ibid, p.33. Explained in greater detail: “Extra-regional stages of flows to non-state actors relate largely to sourcing mechanisms for various types of flow processes organized primarily within regions (in spite of the global activities of brokers). They thus remain largely legal in character until diverted by regional action. Thus, the global aspects of SALW flows to conflict have become fed by, but de-linked from, the global legal market”. Moreover, the “diversion of SALW from legal transactions to illicit recipients is not predominantly a function of weak-points in the global web of regulation through the actions of dubious brokers or the presence of ailing states in the international system, but rather reflects critical elements of distinctly regional political economies of SALW spread”.

83 Stoicescu in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013 (drawing from SAS, 2008), p. 88. Interestingly, when actually part of the international transfer, “all of the 11 notable diversion cases that occurred from 1987 to 2007 explored by the Small Arms Survey in its 2008 yearbook involved transit countries, and, more worryingly but not surprisingly, high-ranking officials who either falsified end-user certificates or facilitated the re-routing of weapons”.

84 Muggah, 2013b. Moreover, “Military and police departments in East and West Africa experience a comparatively high rate of diversion of arms and ammunition from their arsenals. Likewise, forcibly and voluntarily seized weapons and ammunition, despite being under police custody, routinely go missing. Much of the diversion is facilitated by under-paid public security officials and exacerbated by poorly managed stockpiles... There are a number of practical ways to enhance security governance and ultimately reduce diversions and leakages from national stockpiles. For example, it is critical that African governments and their security sectors start implementing basic checks and balances and establish management practices”.

85 Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 88.

- 86 Paoli, 2014
- 87 Email interview by author, April 2014.
- 88 Karp, 2006
- 89 Email interview by author, April 2014.
- 90 Security Council Resolution 2117, 2013 (September)
- 91 Interview with author, Berlin, January 2014.
- 92 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Alex Dewaal, 'Reclaiming Activism', at: <http://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2013/04/30/reclaiming-activism/>
- 96 Light weapons are also produced in about half the number of countries as small arms, around 50 and presumably in much smaller numbers. Berman and Leff, 2008, p.7.
- 97 Email interview by author, January 2014. Lamb also notes that the PoA has "become stuck on largely technical issues: stockpile management, ITI, cross border, which alienates most civil society organizations as there are only a few specialists that can actually add value to the debates".
- 98 Even though, "most of these measures have not been evaluated adequately, there are some examples of success from several HIC and LMIC. Progress in preventing firearm violence requires more investigation into the effectiveness of such measures. These strategies are aligned to other international instruments addressing armed violence and can help to promote their national adaptation and implementation". Goal: To increase the number of countries implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of evidence-informed measures for reducing the risk of firearm-related violence. Action steps: Advocate for and provide technical support to countries for the prohibition of illegal gun markets; implementation of education regarding the safe storage and handling of guns; changing the design of firearms to make them safer, and legislative efforts to reduce the potential for firearm-related violence (e.g. licensing requirements and waiting periods); Enforce laws designed to reduce the risk of firearm-related violence; and Promote outcome evaluation studies of measures for reducing firearm-related violence and injuries (WHO, 2012).
- 99 Email interview by author, April 2014. For more on Zimring's work, see: <http://www.law.berkeley.edu/php-programs/faculty/faculty-PubsList.php?faclD=127>
- 100 Karp, 2006
- 101 There are some helpful resources and model legislation for countries seeking to improve their gun control laws, such as, for example, the UNDP "How To Guide: Small Arms and Light Weapons Legislation", 2008, available at: http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUpload/Members/Documents/9@SALWGGuide_Legislation.pdf Also, "Missing Pieces: A Guide for Reducing Gun Violence Through Parliamentary Action". Geneva: HD Centre, 2007, available at: <http://survivinggunviolence.org/topic/armed-violence/gun-violence/missing-pieces-directions-for-reducing-gun-violence-through-the-un-process-on-small-arms-control>
- 102 Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 167.
- 103 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 104 Karp, 2006
- 105 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 106 UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, 2006
- 107 Batchelor and Muggah in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013 p. 126.
- 108 <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G03/147/38/PDF/G0314738.pdf>
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Frey, 2004
- 111 UN, 1990
- 112 Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2013. See more at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/20/opinion/barbara-reform-brazils-military-police.html>.
- 113 UN 1990
- 114 Frey, 2004
- 115 Jackson and Marsh in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 115.
- 116 Batchelor and Muggah in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 137.
- 117 Karp, 2006
- 118 WHO, 2012 "The investigation of violence using scientific methods and statistical information from surveys and surveillance systems to describe the problem; research to understand the most salient and pressing risk factors, and outcome evaluations to explore the effectiveness of prevention programmes and services for victims and perpetrators, leads to better understanding of the problem in different social, economic and cultural contexts, and enhances the development of appropriate responses. Information obtained through such data

- collection and research can also be used to advocate for increased investment in strategies of proven or promising effectiveness. The translation of knowledge and data into effective, feasible and acceptable prevention strategies should be an integral part of data collection and research activities and for advocacy purposes”.
- 119 Karp, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 68.
- 120 Hoyer and Szabo, 2013
- 121 Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2006
- 122 Karp, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 77 and 78.
- 123 Batchelor and Muggah in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 120.
- 124 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 125 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 126 Ashkenazi, in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 229.
- 127 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 128 Laurence in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 30-31.
- 129 Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 90.
- 130 Ibid.
- 131 Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 1.
- 132 Laurence in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 29.
- 133 Batchelor and Muggah in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 118.
- 134 Ibid., p. 128.
- 135 OECD, 2009
- 136 Ibid.
- 137 Kirsten in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 184 and p.185.
- 138 Oslo Commitments: <http://www.ocav.org/oslo-commitments>
- 139 SDP's work reflects this view, with advocacy efforts in Brazil – in addition to gun control – on issues of criminal justice, police reform, youth, among others. Internationally, the Global Alliance on Armed Violence (GAAV) appears poised to implement a similar approach: <http://allianceonarmedviolence.org>
- 141 Karp, 2006
- 142 Small Arms Survey 2010. Moreover, as Florquin notes, “researchers need to break down the civilian category to further understand what it means, beyond the current general knowledge. A first step may be to disaggregate civilian gun owners by motivation, which may include protection, hunting, sports-shooting, collection, and ‘illegal’ purposes. Studies should not only focus on the numbers of guns held by each sub-category, but also the presumably very varied threats they pose in terms of diversion and misuse”. Florquin, in Batchelor and Kenkel, p. 111.
- 142 Paoli, 2014
- 143 Hall, in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 208.
- 144 Karp 2009 in Hall, Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 43.
- 145 Ibid. p. 48.
- 146 Hall, in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 207.
- 147 Hall, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 44.
- 148 Ibid.
- 149 Bourne, in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 30.
- 150 OSCE, 2003
- 151 See more at: <http://www.poa-iss.org/InternationalTracing/InternationalTracing.aspx> and [OCSE, 2003](http://www.osce.org/ocse). For a detailed overview of marking small arms and ammunition, see Small Arms Survey, 2013b at: http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-36.pdf
- 152 Stoicescu in Batchelor and Kenkel, p. 100.
- 153 Hall in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 57.
- 154 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 155 Ibid.
- 156 Marsh, 2013
- 157 Karp, 2006
- 158 On the issue of international transfers, a similar approach can be perhaps ascribed to the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) in

the UK: <http://www.caat.org.uk>.

159 Email interview by author, January 2014.

160 Email interview by author, January, 2014.

161 Email interview by author, January 2014.

162 Interview by author, Geneva, January 2014.

163 Hall, in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 211.

164 Hall, in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 209 (drawing from Bevan).

165 Ibid., p. 215.

166 Ibid.

167 Ibid., p. 212.

168 PAX, 2013

169 PAX 2013b

170 Don't Bank on the Bomb: <http://www.dontbankonthebomb.com>.

171 PAX, 2013c

172 Campaign 2 Unload: <http://www.campaign2unload.org/sample-page/faq>. The remainder of its About page further explains the dynamics: "A vast majority of Americans support common-sense changes in public policy while respecting the rights of lawful gun owners, but a small number of well-financed extremists have blocked the political process. Since funding is now driving the process, de-funding the industry has become an appropriate and important priority those committed to sensible reform. When many investors decide it's time to sell at the same time, that company's stock comes under pressure. Over time, a low stock price can make it harder for a company to get loans, finance its sales, or expand the business. And if the pressure is high enough, an entire industry—even a national government—can decide it's time to change how they do business. As the public outcry over gun violence continues to escalate, influential investors such as pension funds have greater reason to reconsider the business, financial, and moral implications of their holdings in firearm manufacturers that refuse even modest changes in their products and practices... As investors of all kinds become more informed of the risks involved, the potential for widespread divestment will grow—and with it, the pressure on the industry to change".

173 Avant, 2013. Further, "Governments still need to purchase weapons and ammunition. Distinguishing between companies that pledge support for socially responsible practices and those that do not could begin to direct the power and money in this industry to socially acceptable purposes. Corporate social responsibility is no substitute for government regulation, but it can be an important element in a larger regulatory system. Thus far companies in the arms industry have not taken this path but perhaps they should reconsider. Elements of the current crisis and debate suggest this might be a critical moment in which arms companies pursuing such a strategy would be rewarded".

174 For example, "The illusion of righteousness: corporate social responsibility practices of the alcohol industry" (Lam and Yoon, 2013): "Our analysis identified three CSR tactics employed by the alcohol companies which are closely tied in with the industry's underlying corporate intents. First, the alcohol manufacturers employ CSR as a means to frame issues, define problems and guide policy debates. In doing this, the alcohol companies are able to deflect and shift the blame from those who manufacture and promote alcoholic products to those who consume them. Second, the alcohol corporations promote CSR initiatives on voluntary regulation in order to delay and offset alcohol control legislation. Third, the alcohol corporations undertake philanthropic sponsorships as a means of indirect brand marketing as well as gaining preferential access to emerging alcohol markets."

175 Byrne, 2007

176 Arms industries: <http://www.facing-finance.org/en/database/business-areas/ruestungsindustrie>. Facing Finance "calls on investors not to invest in companies profiting from violations of human rights, environmental pollution, corruption or the production of controversial weapons". Its main report can be seen at: <http://www.facing-finance.org/files/2013/12/DIRTY-PROFITS-2.pdf>

177 Email interview by author, April 2014. For more details see: R. Peters, "Spotlight: El Salvador Gun Tax and Victims' Services", In C. Buchanan (Editor), Gun Violence, Disability and Recovery, Sydney: Surviving Gun Violence Project, 2014, pp. 26-29.

178 Williams, 2013

179 Keen, 2013

180 McDougal and Muggah, 2014

181 PIRE, 2010; Brown, 2014

182 Goldman, 2012

183 Byrne, 2007

184 "What is PLCAA, and how does this little known law protect the worst actors in the gun industry? In 2005, Congress passed PLCAA, granting the gun industry immunity in state and federal court from civil liability in most negligence and products liability actions. At the time, the National Rifle Association (NRA), which fought hard for passage of the bill, called it "vitally important" legislation. Although there are exceptions in the law, it has been broadly interpreted to preclude most negligence lawsuits. The result is that – unlike the makers of chain saws, knives, automobiles, drugs, alcohol or even cigarettes – gun manufacturers and sellers have a lesser obligation to act with reasonable care for public safety." Schiff, 2013

- 185 Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, 2013
- 186 Cardello, 2013
- 187 House Resolution 332, “Equal Access to Justice for Victims of Gun Violence Act” available at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c113:H.R.332.IH>:
- 188 Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, 2013
- 189 Morgenthau, 2013
- 190 Luo and McIntire, 2013
- 191 For much of the jurisprudence on gun violence legal cases in the US, please see: <http://www.bradycampaign.org/programs/legal-action-project/past-and-present-cases>
- 192 For their full texts, please see:
<http://bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/tort.pdf>, <http://bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/city-lawsuits-review.pdf>
<http://bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/lowy.pdf>, and http://bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/case_against.pdf
- 193 McDonald in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 154.
- 194 Indeed, as noted by the Small Arms Survey, “in this field, definitions are tantamount to policy. As shown here, surplus identification and destruction are unlikely to accelerate or become more systematic until international organizations and donor governments gain more influence over definitions and standards. Above all, there is a profound need for a cooperative military requirement setting. Nothing will facilitate surplus identification as much as shared understandings of how much equipment is reasonable and what is excessive. Such understandings might be codified through formal negotiations like those that led to the CFE Treaty for major conventional weapons. They might emerge less formally through multilateral dialogue. But without wider agreement on how much is enough, surplus destruction seems likely to remain sporadic”.
- 195 <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/2008/en/Small-Arms-Survey-2008-Chapter-03-EN.pdf>
- 196 <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/F-Working-papers/SAS-WP7-Surplus-Arms-in-South-America.pdf>
- 197 Ibid.
- 198 Sou da Paz, 2013b
- 199 <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/F-Working-papers/SAS-WP7-Surplus-Arms-in-South-America.pdf>
- 200 <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/2008/en/Small-Arms-Survey-2008-Chapter-03-EN.pdf>
- 201 McDonald in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 154.
- 202 Auswaertiges Amt, 2007
- 203 Available here: <http://www.osce.org/fsc/13616>. Detailed chapters are available for Manufacture; Marking, Record-keeping and Traceability; Stockpile Management and Security; Brokering Activities; Export Control; Surplus; Destruction; and in Disarmament, Demobilization & Reintegration (DD&R) Processes
- 204 The full list of partners can be seen here: <http://www.smallarmsstandards.org/partners.html>
- 205 Garcia in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 244.
- 206 Email interview with author, January 2014.
- 207 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 208 ISACS, 2013
- 209 For example, on stockpile management SDP offers the ISACS module on its webpage for dissemination: http://www.soudapaz.org/upload/pdf/0520_en.pdf
- 210 The relative absence of civil society in the first year activity report may be telling of a desire to keep ISACS “apolitical”, non-controversial or purely “technical” instead of a tool for advocacy.
- 211 ISACS, 2014
- 212 A related effort, known as the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), has been developed by the UN offering “technical guidelines for the stockpile management of conventional ammunition” to States seeking references on the theme, though this of course is a limited part of ammo’s ‘life cycle’, and entirely technical. Nonetheless, particularly the IATG’s web-based implementation support tool (UN Safeguard) can be helpful from a “nuts and bolts” perspective.
- For more information, see:
<http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/Ammunition/IATG/docs/IATG01.10.pdf> and <http://www.un.org/disarmament/un-safeguard/>
- 213 Mack, 2012b
- 214 Ibid.
- 215 PRIO, 2013
- 216 Hall and Dimitrov, in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 226.
- 217 Small Arms Survey, 2010
- 218 Small Arms Survey, 2010b

- 219 PRIO, 2013
- 220 Mack, 2012b
- 221 Mack, 2010
- 222 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 223 McDonald in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 160.
- 224 Email interview by author, January, 2014.
- 225 Email interview by author, January 2014. Examples of the best research and policy documents on small arms ammo include:
<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/D-Book-series/book-03-targeting-ammunition/SAS-Targeting-Ammunition-Book.pdf>
<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/2005/en/Small-Arms-Survey-2005-Chapter-01-EN.pdf>
<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/2010/en/Small-Arms-Survey-2010-Chapter-01-EN.pdf>
http://file.prio.no/publication_files/prio/Corney-Marsh-Aiming-for-Control-PRIO-Paper-2013.pdf
http://controlarms.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Small-but-Lethal-Small-Arms-Ammunition-and-the-Arms-Trade-Treaty.PRIO_.pdf
<http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/stop-bullet-stop-war-arms-trade-treaty-310512-en.pdf>
- 226 Mack, 2012b
- 227 Hall in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 212.
- 228 PRIO, 2013
- 230 Ibid.
- 231 Ibid.
- 232 Ibid.
- 233 Jackson and Marsh in Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 113.
- 234 Mack, 2012b
- 235 Speech delivered by Ambassador Henrique Román-Morey at the First Committee 2012, Reaching Critical Will.
- 236 Presentation at Geneva launch of Controlling Small Arms, January 2014.
- 237 Greene, in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 273.
- 238 Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 259.
- 239 Ashkenazi in Greene and Marsh 2011 p. 234.
- 240 Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 169.
- 241 Ashkenazi in Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 233.
- 242 Ibid., p. 233-234.
- 243 Ibid., p. 246.
- 244 Ashkenazi in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 242. In addition the US, other examples mentioned are Yemen, Albania and the Philippines.
- 245 Ibid. p. 240.
- 246 Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 254.
- 247 Greene in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 268 and 269.
- 248 Interview by author, Berlin, January 2014.
- 249 Ibid.
- 250 Laurence in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 28.
- 251 Batchelor and Muggah in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 127.
- 252 Ashkenazi in Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 231.
- 253 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 254 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 255 For a multidisciplinary approach towards a “theory of small arms demand”, see: Brauer and Muggah, 2006, available at:
<http://www.contemporarysecuritypolicy.org/assets/CSP-27-1-Muggah.pdf>
- 256 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 257 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 258 AoAV, 2014
- 259 Gun Violence, Disability and Recovery (pp. 285-318) includes an annex which summarises 56 international standards of relevance to preventing, reducing, and responding to armed violence. These necessarily cross human rights, IHL, social protection, women’s rights, health, rehabilitation, disability rights and other realms.

Available at: <http://survivinggunviolence.org/book/table-of-contents>. Helpfully, 100% of the sales go to the Transitions Foundation (Guatemala), established by gun violence survivors and working on disability rights, violence prevention, and practical support to those living with disability.

260 Buchanan and Widmer, “Introduction”, in Buchanan 2014, pp. 7-22. As positive precedents to possibly emulate, Buchanan notes “two specific fields: the rights of crime victims in judicial processes (including in post-war, transitional justice contexts), and disability rights... Disability rights advocacy is a hard-won success story, though much more remains to be done globally. This advocacy community brings together people experiencing disability regardless of the cause or nature. Indeed, how a person became impaired loses significance over time, compared to the daily struggle of living with disability, discrimination, and lack of access to public facilities and work opportunities. Victims and survivors of crime have come forward in many countries to reshape policies and services that are more responsive, humane, and effective. Victims’ rights movements gained prominence in the 1970s, followed by the first advocacy organisations calling for procedural rights and welfare needs of crime victims in the 1980s. While these gains benefited all victims of crime, they directly concern gun violence survivors. In the mid-1990s, the field of transitional justice began to expand with the movement towards an International Criminal Court and increasing gains in the realm of people-centred international law and practice related to armed conflict, crimes against humanity, and genocide”.

261 For more information, see: <http://www.handicapinternational.be/en/the-work-of-the-ban-advocates>

262 Buchanan, 2014

263 Interview by author, Geneva, January 2014.

264 Interview by author, Berlin, January 2014.

265 Presentation at Geneva launch of Controlling Small Arms, January 2014.

266 Ibid.

267 Interview by author, Geneva, January 2014.

268 Examples include the Small Arms Survey, PRIO, SIPRI, World Bank, UNDP, WHO and many others.

269 For more information, see:

<http://allianceonarmedviolence.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/gaav-knowledge-exchange-initiative.pdf> and <http://igarape.data4.mx/>

270 Kirsten in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 175.

271 Email interview by author, January 2014.

272 For Pública’s take on Brazil arms industry, see: Santini and Viana, 2012

273 For example on homicide levels, in São Paulo: <http://blog.estadaodados.com/taxa-de-homicidio> and worldwide:

<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2009/oct/13/homicide-rates-country-murder-data> For an example based on SDP research data, see: <http://noticias.terra.com.br/infograficos/armas-usadas-pelo-crime>.

274 For examples, see:

<https://www.facebook.com/institutosoudapaz>

<https://twitter.com/isoudapaz>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/institutosoudapaz/collections/>

275 A good discussion on how to use social media for digital campaigning is the following short piece by Lorey Campese:

<http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/chapter6.pdf>

276 Instituto Igarapé, 2014. <http://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/NE-13-Changing-face-of-techology-29jan.pdf>

277 For example: <http://oreillynet.com/pub/e/2979> and <http://strataconf.com>. Particularly impactful, on gun deaths and the ‘stolen years’ they entail in the US, is: <http://guns.periscopic.com>

278 Email interview by author, January 2014.

279 Email interview by author, January 2014.

280 C40 is a network of the world’s megacities taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. <http://www.c40.org>

281 For more information on the São Paulo Gun Control Plan, please see:

http://www.soudapaz.org/upload/file/soudapaz_annual_report_2013_english_version.pdf (page 18).

282 Interview by author, Geneva, January 2014.

283 Email interview by author, January 2014.

284 For reference, see

<http://www.mayorsagainstilllegalguns.org> and <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families/violence-prevention/cities-united>

285 For a good discussion, see: <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/03/gun-violence-mayors-104389.html>

For example, see: Muggah, 2012 (available at <http://www.hasow.org/uploads/trabalhos/98/doc/1401774567.pdf>) and Muggah and Savage, 2012 (available at: <https://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/1524>)

286 Igarapé, 2013

287 International Peace Institute, 2013

- 288 Batchelor and Muggah in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 137.
- 289 For example: <http://www.frontlinesms.com>. However, the difficulties of deployment may be significant, as explained by a FrontierSMS leader: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlRkipQ7nPw>
- 290 Another example to possibly emulate: <http://www.greengrowthknowledge.org>
- 291 Batchelor and Muggah in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 133.
- 292 Parrish, 2012
- 293 Though this particular database has been criticized (McCubbins and Weller, 2014), its ambition serves as inspiration.
- 294 For further details: <http://www.c4ads.org/#!what/cc7t>
- 295 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 296 Hall, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 53.
- 297 Jackson and Marsh in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 110.
- 298 Ibid., p. 117.
- 299 Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 85.
- 300 Laurence in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 28.
- 301 Jackson and Marsh in Greene and Marsh, 2011, p. 116.
- 302 Ibid., p. 118.
- 303 Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 93.
- 304 It should be noted that, particularly in States with a Republican majority in the state Congress, many of the changes have been negative, though most of the change in areas such as background checks, assault weapons, gun access and lost/stole guns has been highly promising. For a complete breakdown, see: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/12/10/us/state-gun-laws-enacted-in-the-year-since-newtown.html>
- 305 Brady Campaign and the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2014
- 306 For more information, see: <http://www.bradiycampaign.org/programs/legal-action-project/representing-victims>
- 307 Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 104.
- 308 Presentation at Geneva launch of Controlling Small Arms, January 2014.
- 309 Greene, in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 266.
- 310 Ibid, p. 278.
- 311 Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 96.
- 312 Ibid, p. 99.
- 313 Email interview by author, April 2014.
- 314 Greene, in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 280.
- 315 Batchelor and Muggah in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 137.
- 316 Hamann and Muggah, 2014. A further worrisome development noted was that Ambassador Patriota “set up a false dichotomy between “conflict” on the one hand, and “violence” on the other. Conflicts, he argued, are predominantly “international” issues and thus best dealt with through multilateral mechanisms, not least the UN Security Council. By contrast, violence was described as a purely “domestic” issue subject exclusively to national jurisdiction. This kind of statement is at odds with virtually all scientific research on conflict and violence over the past decade. In fact, the vast majority of today’s armed conflicts are “internal,” even if they are fuelled in part by complex global drivers. Likewise, collective and interpersonal violence, including in Brazil, is sustained by both local and international stressors, not least drug trafficking, arms dealing, and price shocks. There are always risks when speaking of preventing conflict and violence of giving space to interventionist agendas. But to ignore them altogether is equally irresponsible”.
- 317 For further details: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml>
- 318 For a list of current items: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/third/68/documentslist.shtml>
- 319 <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g12/116/18/pdf/g1211618.pdf> and <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g12/124/65/pdf/g1212465.pdf>
- 320 Email interview by author, April 2014.
- 321 Greene, in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 270.
- 322 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 323 WHO, 2012
- 324 Specifically: “Goal: Violence prevention is increasingly reflected in major international agendas, by strengthening existing and developing new strategic partnerships with multilateral agencies, governments and civil society organizations. Action steps: Identify those agendas with high visibility and funding that intersect with violence prevention and establish entry points and potential champions in each agenda. Strengthen ties to and define shared violence prevention objectives with the UN agencies mandated to address these global agendas”.

- 325 Email interview by author, April 2014.
- 326 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 327 For further details on GAAV: <http://allianceonarmedviolence.org/gaav-home/>
- 328 Greene, in Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 258.
- 329 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 330 Kirsten in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 173 and 174.
- 331 Ibid., p. 192.
- 332 Email interview by author, April 2014.
- 333 The list of NGOs signing statement is available at:
http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com13/statements/29Oct_NGO-ways-of-work.pdf.
- 334 First Committee - Civil society presentations, 2013.
- 335 For information on the UNSC, see: <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org>. For some interesting views on the debate on UNSC reform, see: Rothwell, 2013 and Muggah, 2013. An argument as to how UNSC reform would further the “protection of civilians” is put forth by Conor Foley in http://pt.igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/SP_04_To-Save-Succeeding-Generations_9th_aug.pdf.
- 336 First Committee - Civil society presentations, 2013.
- 337 Mack, 2013
- 338 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 339 Interview with author, Geneva, January 2014.
- 340 Garcia in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 239.
- 341 Garcia in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 236-237.
- 342 Email interview by author, January, 2014.
- 343 McLay in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 297.
- 344 Garcia in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 246.
- 345 Ibid.
- 346 Greene, in Batchelor and Kenkel, 2013, p. 265.
- 347 Email interview by author, January 2014.
- 348 Greene in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 278.
- 349 BICC, 2013
- 350 The article also does a nice job of listing the possible ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of smart guns:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/we-need-the-iphone-of-guns-will-smart-guns-transform-the-gun-industry/2014/02/17/6ebe76da-8f58-11e3-b227-12a45d109e03_story.html
- 351 Companies and products include Armatix iP1 Pistol (<http://www.armatix.de/iP1-Pistol.779.0.html?&L=1>), TriggerSmart (<http://www.triggerSMART.com>), Kodiak Arms(<http://kodiakarms.com/product/intelligun>), and Yardarm (<http://www.yardarmtech.com/our-technology>).
- 352 Ashkenazi in BICC 2013
- 353 SmartCon was “the first major interdisciplinary and international conference on the topic of smart weapon technology” and concluded that “smart weapon technology is not the silver bullet in controlling SALW, in reducing the threat of SALW, or in reducing casualties from firearms. It is part of the array of instruments, the foremost of which is human will, for limiting the scourge of uncontrolled SALW use. Similarly, the Conference was not intended to provide a definitive answer to the issue of smart weapons. To the contrary. From the start, it was viewed as an exploratory event, and a preparatory one. As an exploratory event, it allowed all interested parties—firearm manufacturers and users, control advocates, smart weapon devices manufacturers, development agency representatives, and representatives of governments—to explore both the advantages and limitations of this new technology” BICC, 2013. For further detail particularly on the technological and legislative aspects, see: Small Arms Survey, 2013c
- 354 BICC, 2013
- 355 Boyette, 2013
- 356 LeBlanc, 2014
- 357 Agência Câmara de Notícias, 2013
- 358 To be clear, such a question needs not be posed, in our opinion, to “smart technology” in the realm of SALW other than ‘user authorized firearms’, as technological advances for stockpile management, tracing, and other external control mechanisms are vastly positive and should be implemented as soon as, and wherever, feasible.
- 359 Khazan 2014
- 360 Ibid.

361 Ashkenazi and Bindseil in BICC 2013, p. 65.

362 “The fear that traditional gun makers express about personalized guns appears to stem from two situations. The first is the threat of punishment from gun groups if the manufacturer embraces new technology and the second the fear that governments will mandate that all new guns be made personalized, which would make the manufacturers’ present product lines obsolete, resulting in a loss of revenue”. Teret, p. 31, Small Arms Survey, 2013c

363 Currently, “the cost is high. Amatrix’s iP1, a .22-caliber pistol, is priced at \$1,399 — plus \$399 for the watch. A .40-caliber Glock handgun can be had for about \$600” in the US. (Rosenwald, 2014) Furthermore, market forces and customer preferences have still not kicked in: “Market forces... will drive different elements of the input, output, and processing cycle. Each of these potential consumers is likely to take a different piece of the whole. At present, with the industry in an embryonic state, improvement is driven, if at all, by manufacturers’ assumptions. This is largely due to the fact that while there are clear reasons for using some forms of SWT, consumers and potential consumers are either unaware of the technology, or have yet to put demands on it, shaping the product sector as a whole into a viable commercial sector”. Ashkenazi in BICC 2013, p. 31.

364 Ashkenazi in BICC 2013, p. 30.

365 An example can be seen at: Defense Distributed, <http://defdist.org>

366 Martinez and Parnass, 2013

367 A good argument against panicking over 3D guns is here:

http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/05/3_d_printed_gun_yes_it_will_be_possible_to_make_weapons_with_3_d_printers.single.html

368 Email interview by author, April 2014.

369 Though these days seems still relatively far away: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/25/world/europe/uk-police-3d-printer-gun/index.html>

370 Email interview by author, January 2014.

371 McCarthy in BICC 2013, p. 61.

372 Parakilas 2013

373 Interview with author (Geneva) and email interview with author, respectively, January 2014.

374 UNIDIR,

<http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/improving-the-effectiveness-of-the-programme-of-action-on-small-arms-implementation-challenges-and-opportunities-372.pdf>

375 McLay in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 292.

376 McDonald in Batchelor and Kenkel 2013, p. 151.

377 Email interview by author, January 2014.

378 Karp, 2006

379 Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 181.

380 Marsh, 2013

381 Karp, 2006, p. 17.

382 Email interview by author, April 2014.

383 Greene, in Greene and Marsh 2011, p. 262.

384 Email interview by author, April 2014.

385 Email interview by author, January 2014.

386 Interviews by author, Berlin and Geneva respectively, January 2014.

387 Grillot, Hannah, Stapley, 2006

388 Karp, 2006

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