

The Bane of Peacebuilding: Appraising Problems of Small Arms Control in Liberia 1989-2016

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Abstract

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons did not pose a challenge prior to the Liberian Civil War. The events leading to the war and subsequently 14 years of near continuous conflict created a demand base for a huge amount of small arms and light weapons to flood the country. Attempts at restricting the flow of weapons during and after the conflict represent the central thesis this research seeks to investigate. A theoretical overview of gun control is first situated within the discourse, followed by an interrogation of the problems encountered in all the phases of disarmament exercises conducted to rid Liberia of illicit weapons. The comparative method of analyzing the processes and results of weapons collection programs and Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) exercises affords a clear understanding of the challenges faced by small arms control in Liberia. These problems pose a critical challenge to the process of peacebuilding after the conflict in Liberia. The paper examines all the associated problems of small arms control from conflict resources to a proper legal framework. The paper argues that the cessation of hostilities did not necessarily ensure a peaceful society. One of the culprit for the high levels of insecurity in present day Liberia is the problems faced by small arms control.

Introduction

The concept of peacebuilding involves the need to identify and support the structures that tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse to conflict. The former United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali championed this

position within the United Nations system and since then, more elaborate and engaging approaches to understanding the concept have been advanced.¹ Most notably the Brahimi report of 2000 attempts to integrate into the definition the wide range of activities that retain the ability of re-aggregating the foundations of peace and provide tools for building on these foundations.²

This understanding of peacebuilding suggest that tools for building post-conflict peace can be sourced during the conflict while the process of conflict resolution is still ongoing. The control strategies for small arms and light weapons during an ongoing conflict happen to be one of such tools. Once a conflict is starved of weapons and other military supplies, there is every likely hood that the belligerents can be coaxed to the negotiating table. Consequently, diplomatic instruments like arms embargoes and sanctions can prove to be quite effective giving the efficacy of the collective security arrangement on ground.

Small arms control during the Liberian Civil War was one of the tools referred to in the 2000 Brahimi report of the United Nations. The various strategies engaged in the control efforts are not restricted to arms embargoes and sanctions during the conflict but also involve Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR); Voluntary Weapons Collection Programs (VWCP); Legal and Institutional Frameworks and the Domestication of International Arms Control Instruments. The effectiveness of these strategies after the Liberian conflict was however impaired by several factors that this paper investigates.

These problems created critical setbacks to the process of peacebuilding after the Civil War. The paper theorizes the problem and then engages the associated problems of small arms control from issues relating to arms embargoes; DDR and VWCP's; conflict resources; a proper legal framework to the challenges facing international control efforts. The paper argues that the cessation of hostilities did not necessarily ensure a peaceful society. One of the culprit for the high levels of insecurity in present day Liberia is the problems faced by small arms control.

Understanding the Problem

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Africa has expanded progressively since the 60's despite efforts to check it. This has also posed a great challenge to all forms of

Conflict resolution. The proliferation of small arm is generally characterized by the arms or gun control debate which oscillates between two positions. The first supported by criminologists like Gary Kleck and E. Britt Patterson holds that the availability of guns or arms does not necessarily influence the intention to commit homicide since the intention to kill can be accomplished using any means including weapons that are not small arms.³ This discourse however gravitates towards the second position, which holds that the availability of small arms creates greater potential for violent crimes as maintained by researchers like Frank Zimring and Phillip Cook.⁴ Hence the need for arms control as a key process of conflict resolution.

Small arms are market commodities and therefore sustainable small arms control is essentially challenged by two basic economic forces. One is the ever-growing international arms market that feeds supply and the second is the debilitating local insecurity and armed conflicts that provide demand. The supply side of the market is so entrenched that the international control system that has been evolving over the years is confronted with a daunting crusade against a global market system that is intricately interwoven with regions, governments, multi-national corporations, illegal arms dealers, and embargo bursting cartels.

In spite of the fact that disarmament is an effective demand side approach to small arms control, ridding 'weaponized societies' and ex-combatants of items that have assumed the place of 'economic instruments' of livelihood poses a real challenge. Ex-combatants who still hold onto their weapons possess an edge in a society that has developed a weapons culture. This is because these small arms do not just answer the security question but present a means of livelihood whether in the form of a commodity or as an instrument of criminal aggression. Post-conflict peacebuilding in Liberia after the 14 year long war is a case in point with regards to the challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the post-war society. Stabilizing post conflict societies in Africa has proved to be a great challenge owing to the myriad of challenges that emerge in the reconstruction era. This paper identifies the problems faced by small arms control during and after the Liberian conflict as strongly impacting on the peacebuilding process that followed.

Problems Encountered by Arms Embargoes During the Liberian Civil War

As part of the Attempts at conflict resolution during the Liberian conflict, arms embargoes were instituted by the United Nations which would be monitored by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Although ECOMOG was fairly successful in monitoring the arms embargo on Liberia, the efforts of ECOMOG were subverted at various occasions. This was because members of ECOWAS were at political and economic variance regarding the conflict. Certain factions within the Ivorian and Burkina Faso government were economically involved with the NPFL and did benefit from the conflict.⁵ The Burkina Faso government under Blaise Campaore was an active conduit for the sale of arms to the Taylor government⁶ while Côte d' Ivoire provided logistical support.⁷ Apart from this, ECOMOG also came under criticism for allegedly supplying arms to anti-Taylor forces.⁸

Although published after Resolution 1343 (2001), the report of the first United Nations panel of Experts on Liberia claimed that a certain number of arms transfers from ECOWAS countries were made to Charles Taylor's government that effectively contravened Resolution 788 of 1992.⁹ The report discussed eye witness accounts that reported the smuggling of arms by ships into Harper, Greenville, Buchanan and Monrovia. These accounts also included that of trucks coming from Burkina Faso bringing in small arms from San Pedro and Abidjan. However, since concrete evidence was not available to support these claims the panel's report focused solely upon shipments delivered by air for which documentation was available.¹⁰

Attempts by the United Nations sanctions committee to closely monitor the supply of arms to the interim Liberian government during this period of embargoes was circumvented at certain instances by the interim government itself. In 2005 for instance the UN sanctions committee on Liberia received two requests on 2 September by the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). The purchase of three hundred hand guns for Liberia's police being trained in Nigeria was the part of the requests received by the UN. The sanctions committee looked favourably upon the request, but sought more information on the proposed supplier.¹¹

Liberia's transitional government did not follow up this request with the necessary procedures, but went ahead to obtain 50 Beretta pistols, 6,000 smoke cartridges and 3,000 hand grenades from the Nigerian government without due process by the end of that year. This was unethical in the sense that the transaction was boycotting the sanctions committee.¹² Furthermore the UN Panel of Experts 2006 report also revealed that Romania had supplied the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) with 150 Kalashnikov rifles fitted with bayonets and 69,000 rounds of 7.62x39-mm ammunition without due clearance from the UN sanctions committee.¹³

The activities of international arms traffickers also proved to be a challenge to arms embargoes in controlling small arms and light weapons during the war. Despite the UN embargo, known international arms dealers were able to use other West African countries to smuggle weapons to the conflict zone. The UN panel of experts also reported several cases in which well known international arms brokers Leonid Minin and Gus van Kouwenhoven in collaboration with Victor Bout forged end user certificates to transfer weapons to Taylor's regime. They used Pecos, an arms brokering firm registered in Guinea along-side Bouts air transport company which also owns logging concessions in Liberia.¹⁴

The contravention of UN embargoes observed by the sanctions committee involved Military hardware and supplies that were procured from Ukrets Export, the state export company of the Ukrainian government. End User Certificates meant for the Burkina Faso National Defense Department were used to import about 68 tonnes of Military hardware which eventually found their way to Liberia.¹⁵ According to ECOMOG commander in Sierra Leone, Major-General Felix Mujakperuo, the president of Burkina Faso, Compaoré, was instrumental in the transfer of these weapons to Liberia and eventually to the RUF in 1999.¹⁶ Several other embargo bursting transfers were organized by these arms dealers using timber companies registered in Liberia. It is clear that the continues supply of weapons that was enabled by the contravening of arms embargoes enabled the Liberian conflict to become protracted over the years it lasted.

Problems of the First Liberian Post War DDR

Disarming and demobilizing ex-combatants in post conflict situations is a very crucial part of demand side aspects of small arms control and by extension peacebuilding. Weapons must be retrieved from ex-combatants and their command structures decommissioned. Without this process, weapons remain in circulation with greater potential for a resumption of hostilities. After the first Liberian War ended in 1996, a D&D process was initiated between November 22, 1996 - February 7, 1997. The process was however fraught with problems that made the disarmament process ineffective. Little wonder the country was plugged back into war shortly afterwards.

An estimated 60,000 ex-combatants were to be disarmed in this process and ECOMOG and UNOMIL were not fully deployed consequently many parts of the country were inaccessible due to the insecurity which prevailed.¹⁷ This proved to be a primary problem of the D&D process at the initial stage. Even more detrimental to the entire process was the traditional rivalry between United Nations Department of Peace-Keeping Operations (UNDPKO) and The United Nations Department of Humanitarian Assistance (UNDHA). This rivalry created competition for resources (controlled by DPKO) it resulted into shifting of priorities regarding the D&D process and continual budget skirmishes. These issues were exacerbated by the lukewarm response by donors to the UN consolidated appeal for the funding of DD&R programs.¹⁸

The disarmament process was not successful across board. Some major cities recorded about 70% success rate as opposed to 85% in Monrovia. This was because people were not entirely forthcoming about arms caches, since they were generally sympathetic to a particular warring faction.¹⁹ Most weapons caches were hidden in the forest and in houses and since the UN did not conduct house to house searches for weapons caches such weapons were not turned in.²⁰ More importantly most of the war lords who were involved with the interim government were not transparent and forthcoming with the issue of disarmament. They are reported to have hidden caches of arms to fall back on in case the peace process caved in.²¹

Problems of the Second Liberian Post War DDR

A resumption of hostilities in 1999 took the form of insurrection from a rebels group named Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) backed by the government of Guinea with the political purpose of forcing Charles Taylor out of office.²² The conflict ended after Taylor went into exile and a Comprehensive Peace Agreement(CPA) was signed in 2003.²³

The DDR process that followed has been deemed a success by both local and international observers, however it was not without challenges that reduced the effectiveness of the small arms control process but also impacted on the peacebuilding efforts. The first attempt at disarmament on 7th December 2003 failed because of insufficient preparation on the part of the UNMIL. Aside from this, the UNMIL had undefined administrative and operational issues within its command structures that led to near disaster with the process.²⁴ After the process was reengaged, certain problems emerged that included an overload of cases, victimization and a faulty demobilization framework.

The second post war disarmament experienced the problem of bloated case load. This was essentially because the disarmament process “pegged a price” on weapons and ammunition. This resulted into the hoarding of weapons and ammunition which were later sold out for a price to those seeking to exploit the opportunities presented by the disarmament and rehabilitation programme that included the disbursement US \$150 to ex-combatants.²⁵ Consequent upon this, the case load became bloated because the monetary incentive prodded by the conflict economy created a large number of fake combatants. Since planning had not taken cognizance of this, it over stretched the financial commitment to disarmament at the detriment of demobilization and integration. The slackening of disarmament criteria also impacted on the expanding case load. Several commanders were able to infuse the names of non-eligible people into the disarmament list because of the non-standard verification criteria which were introduced. Consequently an excess of about forty thousand was reported at some point to have illegally become part of the disarmament process even though they did not meet the requirement for eligibility.²⁶

Initial estimates for demobilization was 38 000 ex-combatants, by the end of the disarmament process which lasted until 2005,

more than 100,000 people participated, nearly three times the original estimate. As earlier stated the case load became bloated essentially because of the benefits accrued to those who were disarmed.²⁷ These benefits included the demobilization fee of \$300 that was handed to the ex-combatants at the point of disarmament. They went on to receive identity cards and were housed and made to run through medical screening for 5 days. As part of the reintegration process the ex-combatants were offered courses of civic education, peacebuilding and career counseling in one of four areas: formal education, vocational training, public works or fishing/agriculture/livestock.²⁸

Cases of victimization also abound during the DDR process. Some former combatants claimed that their commanders had received their weapons under the pretext of handing them in but instead had redistributed them to their own family and friend to enable them access the benefits of the DDRR. As a result they had no weapons to present at the point of disarmament and thus were disqualified for the process.²⁹

The impact of foreign combatants was also felt in the Liberian DDR process. This is generally negative because it helped inflate the number of ex-combatants to be disarmed. Since most West African conflicts are contiguous combatants migrate to other conflict zones with their weapons as mercenaries. They often enroll in disarmament programs that offered the most attractive benefits in exchange for their weapons. According to UNMIL, as at 15 February 2005, 612 foreign combatants had officially entered the Liberian DDRR Program (308 Guineans, 242 Sierra Leoneans, 50 Ivoirians, 7 Nigerians, 4 Malians and 1 Ghanaian). Of this amount, 485 were adults while 127 were children.³⁰

Access to Conflict Resources by both State and Non-State Actors

The ability of purchase weapons is largely dependent on the resources available to both state and non state actors. This often has a direct correlation to the length of the conflict as availability of means to prosecute war sustains the conflict. Both Liberian wars saw the involvement of a large number of non state actors who sourced weapons mostly from the black market using funds from conflict resources like timber, diamonds and rubber. Consequent upon this, the United Nations Security Council (UN) banned the export of forest products from Liberia in 2003.³¹

The Taylor's regime access to the international arms and mercenary market was largely dependent on the sale of conflict diamonds and the Liberian timber industry alongside the financial and logistical support it provides to this end. He received massive financial and logistical support through the Liberian timber, shipping and diamond industries.³² Specifically the Oriental Timber Company (OTC) owned by Gus van Kouwenhoven's, is reported to have a key facilitator to the transfer of weapons to Taylor's forces from China National Aero-Technology Import and Export Corporation (CATIC) between 2001 and 2003.³³ These illegal arms transfers facilitated by OTC were funneled into Liberia through countries like Nigeria, France, Bulgaria, China, Libya, and Hong Kong. Eventually Kouwenhoven was apprehended in Rotterdam on 18 March 2005 on charges of war crimes and breaking UN Arms embargoes from 2001 to 2003.³⁴ He was tried and found guilty by a court in The Hague and on the 5th of June 2005 and was sentenced to 8 years in prison.³⁵

The Taylor government financed its war machine by using these timber companies which were mostly run by arms dealers like Leonid Minin who was a co-owner of Exotic Tropical Timber Enterprise (ETTE), a logging company operating out of Liberia. The Taylor regime used this company to front for arms procurements and compensated it with exclusive logging rights.³⁶ When Minin was eventually arrested in Monza, Italy on 5th August 2000, he was processing a huge arms delivery for Liberia originating from the Ukrainian state-owned company Spetstehno Export using a photocopy of an End User Certificate (EUC) signed by Côte d'Ivoire's President, General Robert Guei.³⁷ Minin also provided the panel of exports with evidence indicting other associates involved in arms transfers to Liberia and also documents authenticating payment of US\$500 000 to Victor Bout's company for obvious reasons.³⁸

Apart from Oriental Timber Company (OTC) several other logging companies like Royal Timber Corporation (RTC), Mohammed Group of Companies (MGC), Maryland Wood Processing Industries (MWPI) and Inland Logging Company (ILC) have been implicated in sponsoring the procurement of weapons and other war efforts. **Table 1** below details the levels of involvement of these various business concerns.

Table 1: Some Timber Companies Association with Arms Proliferation in Liberia

Oriental Timber Company (OTC)	Run by Dutch national Gus Kouwenhoven- a close associate of President Charles Taylor-OTC is by far the largest, and most notorious, logging company operating in Liberia. Kouwenhoven has been described as “responsible for the logistical aspects of many of the arms deals [with the RUF, Sierra Leone]”.
Royal Timber Corporation (RTC)	Gus Kouwenhoven also runs RTC, the second largest timber operation in Liberia. RTC is believed to have vastly under-reported its timber production over the last two years in conjunction with its closely associated company OTC. RTC began logging in an extension of Liberia’s only national park, Sapo, in November 2002
Mohammed Group of Companies (MGC)	Mohammed Salame, Liberian ambassador-at-large based in the Ivory Coast, has been involved in aiding sanctions-busting arms transfers to Liberia. He owns two additional companies, Salami Molowi Inc (SMI) and BureauxNgorian (BIN).
Maryland Wood Processing Industries (MWPI)	Abbas Fawaz, President and chief shareholder of MWPI, is closely associated with President Charles Taylor. MWPI also operates Harper Port, through which illegal weapons enter Liberia. For example, in December 2002, several loads of weapons and ammunition were imported on board a Liberian coast guard vessel Under the pretence of bringing in food supplies. Weapons are being transported through Harper Port with increasing regularity, with MPWI managing the port logistics, while OTC arranges the actual weapons deals.
Inland Logging Company (ILC)	Maurice and Oscar Cooper, both long-term associates of President Taylor, manage ILC. The company reports that it exported around 20,000m3 of logs in 2000; indications are that this figure was nearer 50,000m3. The destination of the missing revenue remains unclear. In addition, ILC is known to have a private militia which harasses and intimidates local communities in Sinoe county.

Source: Green Peace, “Liberian Timber Trade Fuels Regional Insecurity,” Forest Crime File : Country Profile April 2003, <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/planet-2/report/2002/2/liberian-timber-trade-fuels-re.pdf> (Accessed 28 Dec 2012).

The timber companies which appear in the table above all had connections to the Taylor government. In 2001 alone, eighty-eight percent of the total exported round logs in Liberia valued at almost US\$69 million were exported by these group of Liberian timber companies. Consequently when Liberia's transitional government came on board it promptly suspended all extracting concessions that were awarded under the Taylor regime through the Forest Concession Review (FCR). It maintained that they were illegal and not in compliance with Liberian Law.³⁹

Apart from diamonds and timber, rubber also featured as a conflict resource that was exploited by LURD rebels to fund their campaigns. LURD rebels exploited government rubber plantations especially in Guthrie Sinoe and Cocopa, to sustain their activities as the end of hostilities approached in 2003.⁴⁰ After the ceasefire, efforts to disengage the former fighters from the plantations came to a head with the collaboration of UNMIL in 2006. The ex-combatants numbering over 200 were eventually extracted and made to go through the DDRR programme and eventually resettled in their counties of origin. This was accomplished via the efforts of a Joint Government-UN Task Force known as Government Interim Management Team.⁴¹

The availability of these resources at the disposal of war lords aided the prosecution of the war. Crucial to demand side aspects of small arms control is the need to separate non state actors from the means of procuring weapons. The greater access they have to resources, the more difficult the control process will become. In spite of the various sanctions that were placed on timber and diamond these industries still effectively served the purpose of the Taylor government and other war lords because government officials from foreign countries were corrupt and willing to assist in the contravention of UN sanctions and embargoes.

Inadequate Legal Framework

The 1956 Liberia National Firearms Control Act has proved to be inadequate in sustaining a legal framework for the control of small arms and light weapons in the Liberia during the conflict. This Act was not only outdated it was very limited in that it made no provision for the collection and destruction of illicit weapons. It also had poor provisions for keeping track of guns through a registry and lacked elements for regional collaboration

which were necessary in view of the ECOWAS Convention and cooperative security.

A total ban in 2006 on firearms through an executive order of the president represented the strongest legal instrument put in place by the Liberian government. However the need for a comprehensive review and amendment of the 1956 Act is crucial to the small arms control process in Liberia. A new draft bill for the firearms control law was passed through parliament for adoption and in 2016 was signed into law. The review of this law has to be followed by proper enforcement which has remained a challenge to date.

International Transparency and the UN Register on Conventional Arms

Transparency means to make an issue plain or deliberately unveil and make open ones action.⁴² Hence, within the context of international arms trade, it requires that countries should produce full, accurate, comprehensible, and timely reports on their small arms shipments abroad and on the transfers, they have licensed for export or import in the preceding year.⁴³ Parliamentary oversight in matters of arms transfers is more desirable more so when it is accompanied by public awareness of arms licensing and buying decisions.⁴⁴ The issue of lack of transparency represents a key problem for small arms control on the global stage which by implication impacts on the availability of small arms in Liberia.

Reporting state-authorised transfers of small arms in the manner stated above would enhance the effectiveness of attempts at curbing international small arms proliferation via the black market. This would have gone a long way in curbing illicit transfers to Liberia during the war. Documentation for transfers from countries of origin to destination countries should be properly verified to keep weapons from being diverted.⁴⁵ Furthermore if more information is made available to civil society, they would be in a better position to help provide oversight in aiding government efforts at curbing weapons diversion from their intended end-user.⁴⁶

On the other hand, globalization (the relaxation of obstacles to the free flow of goods across borders) has rendered arms smuggling easier than during the Cold War era. Maintaining adequate checks at the world's customs and border posts, airstrips,

and ports is impossible under the weight of vastly expanded trade. Improved government coordination is needed to counter the increased ease and possibility of gunrunning. Transparency in the arms exports that are being authorised would be an important component of any such effort.⁴⁷

In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, the need for greater control on conventional weapons led the UN general Assembly to create a United Nations Conventional Weapons Register by means of a resolution. One of the key objectives of the register is to help prevent build ups of major conventional weapons.⁴⁸ Member states were expected to voluntarily furnish the UN Register with data on sales and transfers of weapons which will be published annually. The register did not cover all forms of conventional weapons. Only military aircraft, ships, armoured vehicles and missiles were covered by the register.⁴⁹

Negotiating an International Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

The creation of a global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was initiated in the late 1990's by a group of Nobel Laureate who provided inspiration for the United Nations General Assembly resolution (61/89) in 2006.⁵⁰ Several countries sponsored the resolution and a Group of Government Exerts set to work on determining the feasibility, scope and parameters of the treaty. They submitted their report in August 2008 and since then, several meetings have been convened by the UN to push for its signing and ratification.⁵¹

These efforts towards creating a single global mechanism has been gaining momentum over the years. This is a treaty that will be based on fundamental principles of international law, it will target the reduction of the humanitarian cost of small arms proliferation and use, constrain the international illicit trade in arms, and create a common global standard for arms exporters thereby making it easier to monitor arms transfers.⁵²

In 2009, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/48, which included a decision to convene a United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, "to sit for four consecutive weeks in 2012 to elaborate a legally-binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms."⁵³ Between 2010 and 2011, the General Assembly established four preparatory committees intended to proffer recommendations to the negotiating conference on the most appropriate modalities

for an effective conference. Out of one hundred and seventy three countries, one hundred and fifty three voted for the treaty while nineteen abstained and Zimbabwe remained the only country who voted against it. At this point the US government, which had failed to support the treaty from the onset, had retracted on its position.⁵⁴ The ATT however came into force on December 24th 2014 and between 2014 and 2017 its report card has not been good presenting great concern for the international community.

Controlling Surplus

The handling and disposal of surplus arms had always been a serious concern to the international community. This is why the United Nations 1997 resolution on Small Arms and Light Weapons stated that;

All States should exercise restraint with respect to the transfer of the surplus of small arms and light weapons manufactured solely for use by the military and police forces. All States should...consider the possibility of destroying such surplus weapons.⁵⁵

In order to strengthen the international drive, countries in Europe produced a binding document on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control in 2000 on the platform of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).⁵⁶

All the 15 EU states and the 10 new states, all members of the OSCE are bound by the agreement in Section 4, part C, paragraph 1 which states that:

The participating states agree that the preferred method for the disposal of small arms is destruction. Destruction should render the weapon both permanently disabled and physically damaged.⁵⁷ Any small arms identified as surplus to a national requirement should, by preference, be destroyed. However, if their disposal is to be effected by export from the territory of a participating state, such an export will only take place in accordance with the export criteria set out in by the OSCE document on small arms.⁵⁸

All the instruments discussed here remain veritable means by which the control of small arms and light weapons is carried out

Proliferation of these weapons to West Africa is regulated by these instruments, which may not be entirely fool proof, but nevertheless contribute largely to the international control network that seeks to stem the flow of arms to West Africa and countries like Liberia.

Conclusion

In spite of the elaborate regional and global network of control instruments put in place by the international community, small arms and light weapons still freely proliferate in Liberia. This is a function of the challenges outlined in this paper. The building of peace in Liberia is still in progress. The cessation of hostilities did not ensure a secure environment overnight since peace cannot be factored without security. The state of affairs in post war Liberia suggests that peace may have been achieved, but the accompanying security is still lacking. For instance after the end of hostilities and the second post war DDR in 2003, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) reported increasing crime rates with armed robbery involving firearms high on the scale. In 2010 Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) in collaboration with the group Small Arms Survey, conducted a baseline assessment of armed violence in the counties. The result indicated that respondents from 50,000 households acknowledged the ownership of at least one weapon.⁵⁹ There may arguably be no correlation between weapons proliferation and violent crimes, however economic hardship and other factors inherent in a post war dysfunctional societies may represent compelling factors for the use of these weapons that are readily available.

To this end it is critical that conflict transformation strategies should be implemented that address social and economic grievances within the grassroots of Liberia's Post conflict population. This is because early warning signals for local conflicts always emerge in the mist of protest against economic disenfranchisement. The institutionalization of small arms control within the state structure should also take the centre stage in issues of national security. This is in light of the fact that, the lack of proper institutionalization of small arms control has been the bane of control efforts since the inception of global efforts at the control of small arms and light weapons. Security governance at the regional level should also be strengthened via the various

provisions for security cooperation in the ECOWAS treaty. The role of ECOWAS in the Liberian crises indicates that stronger cooperation oversight control regarding security governance will possibly prevent conflicts in the future.

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