

**Regional Cooperation and Third World Security:
The Case of Small Arms and Light Weapons**

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27 August 2007

First draft: Please do not cite without permission. Comments welcome!

Prepared for the Sixth Annual Pan-European International Relations Conference, Torino
12-15 September 2007

Abstract

This paper examines two interconnected puzzles in the field of Third World security in the context of multilateral small arms initiatives beginning in the 1990s. First, it asks why, given previous resistance to arms control, persistent regional insecurities, and a historic lack of coordination capacity, states in the developing world have been at the forefront of addressing the problems of small arms proliferation through regional agreements. Second, it asks why this unexpected and extensive regional cooperation has failed to translate into a clear and coherent voice to promote similar initiatives in the international arena. Instead, while “affected state” solidarity has been strong at the regional level, it has been conspicuously absent from major United Nations processes. These questions, I argue, emphasize the continuing need to address the crosscutting nature of security in the Third World, which includes internal stability and human security as primary state concerns increasingly requiring solutions beyond national borders. At the same time, the lack of effective representation at the international level may reflect a need for capacity-building in the small arms diplomatic community, an absence of relevant coordinating organizations for the developing world more broadly, and a lingering reluctance to take actions perceived as potentially limiting government access to arms from the industrialized world.

If the problem of state cooperation has been much debated among scholars of general international relations, then it was long dismissed largely as improbable or, at best, an aberration within third world security. To the extent that many studies of international or third world security explicitly consider the topic of cooperation, the standard argument has been that states in the developing world simply face too strong a security dilemma and too weak an internal structure for cooperation to be either a desirable or feasible outcome. Issues regarding the arms trade and arms control especially had been thought to drive regional rivalries and create destabilizing regional dynamics. Despite these obstacles, however, a plethora of regional initiatives to address problems of small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation has emerged in Africa and Latin America in particular since the late 1990s, suggesting that further attention to security cooperation in the developing world is needed.

This paper addresses two overarching questions regarding African regional cooperation on SALW: First, what explains the new willingness of states to cooperate on a regional level on an issue that was once at the heart of regional rivalries? Second, why has cooperation at the regional level not been similarly observed at the international level? NGO activists, in particular, note an absence of a common voice of lobbying pressure from “affected states” in the developing world on SALW and arms trade issues in international negotiations. That is, if states *are* willing to overcome regional insecurities and cooperate at a regional level, why do we not see similar behavior at the international level? Presumably, if a cooperative strategy is the most effective solution in one arena and has already been proven politically acceptable, the remaining hurdles to cooperation at the international level would be minimal.

The study that follows presents a preliminary look at these questions and sketches out plausible explanations for the discrepancies they identify. The answer to the first question, I argue, is not surprising: Given the broadening of the concept of security since the end of the Cold War, high levels of internal instability, and the absence of a polarizing superpower rivalry,

African states have found it both feasible and necessary to turn to multilateral agreements to address problems that are by nature multilateral. The answer to the second question, however, is more complex and begs a closer examination of both the relationship of cooperation and state capacity, and the purpose and effectiveness of international institutions. This discussion is, in turn, instructive for ongoing debates in the policy and academic worlds alike, as both policymakers and scholars consider how to integrate African politics into the work and theories of international politics and its institutions.

Security in the Developing World

Regional security cooperation has been a growing trend in international affairs, especially since the end of the Cold War (Hurrell 1995; SIPRI 2006: 195-223), but not one that was necessarily expected for states in the developing world. Amitav Acharya (1992), for example, does note the existence of regional military-security groups during the Cold War, but sees them as ineffective and irrelevant “due mainly to their limited resources, different levels of military capability, divergent threat perceptions, and incongruent political and security interests” (9). Mahnaz Ispahani (1984), too, notes the slow emergence of regional security cooperation in southern African and the Persian Gulf regions, attributing the trend in part to weak states seeking confidence in numbers (154). Even so, they were weak “halfway houses on the road to security cooperation,” dependent on relationships with external powers (175). Others take a more overtly pessimistic view of the conditions in the third world and the international system working against cooperation in favor of continued rivalries. Mohammed Ayoob (1983/84) concludes that

The effects of weak state structures, weak domestic political institutions, lack of societal consensus, distorted economic development and lack of regime legitimacy on the one hand, and the adverse way in which systemic variables impinge on the security problems of the Third World states on the other, create an environment of insecurity and instability in which inter-state rivalries encouraged as they are by the policies and actions of external forces, are relatively easily transformed into overt military hostilities (49).

Leaders had a regional political outlook,¹ but not for the purposes of cooperation. Threats, Ayooob (1989) continues, “emanate largely from within their regions, if not from within these states themselves” (70-71; David 1991). Security links are therefore not sought with other third world states, but with major global powers instead (71).² Moreover, internal instability may invite intervention by neighboring states or as a political strategy for weak states to build domestic support, further intensifying tensions and military build-ups (MacFarlane 1984: 133).

A case in point, arms transfers and military spending, aided and encouraged by the two superpowers, were thought to exacerbate tensions in the developing world and allow the cold east-west rivalry to play out in hot wars in distant places (Ayooob 1983/84: 47, 48; Buzan 1991: 433; Kinsella 1994; Obasi 2002; Thomas 2003: 219; Thomas & Mazrui 1992: 163-5). The United States and Soviet Union made liberal use of arms sales and gifts to win friends and maintain the global balance of power (Brzoska & Ohlson 1987; Kolodziej 1991; Pierre 1982). Brzoska and Ohlson (1987), for example, note that “African arms imports increased dramatically in the second half of the 1970s” due to numerous conflicts on the continent and “a simultaneous growing awareness [by the major powers] of Africa’s strategic importance” (21).

The durability and easy transport of countless SALW especially have had long-term social, economic, and security consequences for countries in recipient regions. Weapons transfers also helped to create and reinforce unstable and militarized regional politics, in which the security dilemma between neighboring states took on very real dimensions. As Robert Rosh (1988) observes, “These states require military force for their own security; but once acquired military force generates a countersecurity dynamic of its own, thereby serving to threaten

¹ Although a debated concept, regions are social constructs defined by geography, in addition to culture, identity, and the views and reactions of outsiders to them (Adler & Barnett 1998; Hurrell 1995; SIPRI 2006: 198-9). See Thompson (1973) for a detailed discussion about the concept of the regional subsystem.

² Nevertheless, as Jeffrey Herbst (1990) remarks, “African states have seldom fought interstate wars and the continent has not witnessed significant boundary changes, because independent leaders have continued the system of boundary maintenance that the colonial powers first developed to regulate the scramble for Africa in the late 1800s” (123-4). Attention to state and regime security has instead been focused internally, though war could still result from border disputes, threatened ethnic groups, and resource control, for example (135; Thomas 2003).

individual states as well as the system as a whole” (673; Ayoob 1991: 274). In fact, rather than decreasing, levels of military assistance rose dramatically to states involved in conventional and unconventional conflicts alike during the Cold War (Neuman 1986: 82-83). Restraint was exercised in the technology transferred, not in the quantity of weapons themselves (95).

With the end of the Cold War, the question was wide open as to the nature of international security in a non-bipolar era. While regional dynamics were expected to become increasingly relevant, the nature of interactions within them remained uncertain (Buzan 1991, 1992). Rather, many scholars initially anticipated relative continuity in periphery relations, even as dramatic changes were taking place in core-periphery relations (Buzan 1991: 439). As Barry Buzan (1991) argued, “the local roots of many regional rivalries, especially in South Asia and the Middle East, are so deep that the ending of the Cold War in the centre will make little difference to them” (442). Moreover, with the economic pressure for producers to export arms and cheap defense goods flooding the global market, the trend of third world militarization was likely to persist (445; Obasi 2002: 35; Thomas 2003). External and internal threats continued to threaten state survival (Goldgeier & McFaul 1992: 479), just as military force remained “a valued means for influencing outcomes and increasing state power” (477). Others pointed to positive trends of reduced arms sales and, early on at least, fewer bloody conflicts, but nevertheless warned that the potential for intra-state tensions to increase in the years ahead (Thomas & Mazrui 1992: 158). Even later, amidst the purported development of a new regional security framework in Africa, “strong statist and realist tendencies” have persisted (MaClean 1999: 955), questioning the depth, relevancy and persistence of cooperative regional initiatives (Bøås et. al. 1999: 1063).

Regional Cooperation in Africa

So what has changed? How did states in Africa overcome regional insecurities and sovereignty concerns to cooperate on SALW issues? Initially, regional cooperation was – as the usual story goes – concentrated on the economic realm and the goal of economic gain (Awori 1992: 119).³ As Charles Lipson (1984) points out, economic issues more easily present opportunities for “significant joint gains” and “the prevention of joint losses” than security issues, making the latter more rare – but not impossible – in international politics (13). Nevertheless, African regional economic organizations, such as ECOWAS and the SADC,⁴ in the past ten years have become active players in security issues such as small arms and light weapons. To do so, this means that regions in Africa (sometimes referred to as subregions) had to perceive themselves to some degree as coherent communities with common security interests and the political will and capacity to apply a collective approach to cross-border security problems. I argue that this ability stems from four major factors: (1) absence of superpower rivalry; (2) broadened understanding of concept of security; (3) transnational conflict and instability; and (4) domestic political pressure to address problems associated with SALW.

Before turning to these factors, however, it is useful to examine why states seek regional solutions to some security challenges more generally – and why these reasons may or may not apply to African countries. The accepted definition of cooperation is states’ coordination or “mutual adjustment” of policies, and not simply the presence of greater common interests than conflicting ones (Keohane 1984: 12, 51; Milner 1992: 467). More broadly, it can be considered “any joint activity among states” (Martin 1992a: 10), with the particular form cooperation takes depending on the nature of the issue itself (Martin 1992b). On the issue of SALW, however, it is a matter not simply of adjusting policies in anticipation of the preferences of others, but actually

³ Thomas and Mazrui (1992) observe that cooperation itself should not be taken for granted as an outcome of economic relations among developing states. IMF structural adjustment programs (SAPs), they suggest, present a dilemma for African leaders: “[W]hile lending agencies are pressuring them to reduce military spending, the main effect of SAPs may be to increase their insecurity dilemmas and encourage a new wave of militarization” (173).

⁴ Economic Community of West African States; South African Development Community. See Powers and Goertz (2006) for a discussion about the role of regional economic institutions in security affairs.

creating policies in line with one another, where none had existed before. SALW simply was not an issue on domestic or international policy agendas, even for a few states, before the late 1980s, and did not gain widespread attention until the late 1990s. Getting involved in the issue, in alignment with other states' emerging policies, was a matter of cooperation for states in both the western and non-western worlds.

Theories of cooperation typically focus on the shared interests of states and their expectation that “they will continue to interact indefinitely,” or iterated (Milner 1992: 474). In addition, it is important to note that states' domestic politics influence their willingness and ability to cooperate (Milner 1992; Putnam 1988), including the role of national and bureaucratic culture in shaping states' preferences (Legro 1996). In security matters, according to Walt (1990), what creates the preference to cooperate most directly is the existence of shared threat perceptions among states. Indeed, this explanation for state cooperation on SALW may be more relevant to “affected states,” who face a common threat of regime insecurity and internal instability from the widespread availability of small arms, rather than the major powers, whose security is far more removed from the issue. In this sense, cooperation is functionally oriented – multilateral problems are best addressed by multilateral solutions.

But what distinguishes regional cooperation from international cooperation, and why has regional security cooperation become an increasingly popular form of interstate relations? On the one hand, it could simply be said that problems requiring common solutions are more likely to be shared among neighboring states or regions, especially those which involve regular cross-border exchanges and possibly instabilities. Galia Press-Barnathan (2005) notes this as a part of security regionalization: “a change in the objective conditions wherein the security externalities emanating from regional security threats or challenges become more and more confined to the region itself” (283). In this regard, however, the level of multilateral solution most practical is at the regional level. This perspective does not offer any distinction from explanations of

international cooperation offered above – and perhaps none are necessary. Regional politics become another level of analysis, but without any distinctive characteristics.

On the other hand, it could also be argued that states in a geographic region are more likely to develop a security community amongst themselves, in turn facilitating their cooperation. This is a more social constructivist, rather than rationalist, approach. Neighboring states have a greater ease of opportunities to engage in the social interactions necessary to establish the shared values, expectations, and norms of a security community (Adler & Barnett 1998; Deutsch 1966). Nevertheless, this perspective may be overly optimistic, especially outside of Western-oriented international relations. Morten Bøås (2000), for example, argues that lower – not higher – frequency of interactions might be the recipe for more peaceful relations (311). In West Africa, for example, “we find very high frequencies of cross-border/cross-region interaction, built on well-established formal and informal networks, and a whole heritage of shared norms, values, and identities” (312) but without a peaceful security community as a result.

Bøås’s description of African relations suggests that the barriers to cooperation among developing states today have not changed much since the Cold War. This certainly adds to the puzzle, but does not help to solve it. If security communities cannot explain SALW cooperation among African regions, it must still be the case that the incentives to cooperate somehow outweigh past (or even present) regional distrust and rivalry. I argue that whatever the depth of their cooperation, regional efforts have been at the forefront of SALW control for four reasons, strongly rooted in the survival and interests – not the social relations – of African regimes.

SALW Initiatives in Africa

Agreements on small arms control have spread throughout Africa in the past ten years (see Table 1) and are among the most comprehensive and elaborate in existence (SAS 2003: 237). The dramatic systemic shift with the end of Cold War bipolarity and its superpower rivalry

was the first – but by no means sufficient – condition to open the door to such regional cooperation (Greene 2000; Ochiai 2006; Thomas & Mazrui 1992: 173). Instead of seeking to divide the global south in order to bolster their power, the major powers lost interest in the periphery and interfered less in politics outside their centers of power (Buzan 1991). Intra-periphery relations were allowed to proceed on their own accord, without tensions reinforced by external actors. To illustrate, military expenditures from the mid-1990s tend to be a small percentage of national GDP and do not exhibit any notable patterns to indicate strong regional tensions, with the exception of Eritrea (see Table 2). Elsewhere, it is possible that bipolarity actually encouraged cooperation, by making “exit from cooperative arrangements a less credible threat than it is in a multipolar system” (Martin 1992b: 786). However, in the case of the global south, the bipolar system encouraged core-periphery cooperative ties – themselves often malleable – and, the perception at least, of periphery-periphery competition. Removing the source of the competition lifted a major impediment to cooperation, but certainly did not actively facilitate it.⁵ For this, additional factors – factors directly related to the survival of states’ regimes – were necessary.

Second, African governments began to approach security policy with a broadened understanding of the concept, beyond traditional terms of military and defense alone (Cock 1996). Instead, threats to economic development (CfC 2005: 159; Obasi 2002: 117; Powers & Goertz 2006: 11; Reyneke 2000), social stability (Gamba 2006a; Obasi 2002: 105; Reyneke 2000), and the protection of civilians (SAS 2002) are now often tied together under the heading of “human security” (Gamba 2006; SAS 2003; Yankey-Wayne 2005).⁶ SALW issues especially

⁵ Cilliers (2004) also notes that the removal of superpower interests in the global south increased state-society tensions there, which feeds into problems of regime security and internal instability discussed later in the section.

⁶ Although the definition of human security is a continued matter of debate, it is generally accepted that its object is the protection of individuals (HSC 2005: viii). The narrow definition focuses on violent threats to individuals and their protection from internal violence (HSC 2005: viii). A broader definition encompasses “safety from chronic threats” and “protection from hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life” (UNDP 1994: 22). This is the version typically followed in Africa (Cilliers 2004: 8). Others define it as an absence of “generalized poverty” or “the risk of severe deprivation” (King & Murray 2001/02). In general, Roland Paris (2001) argues that it might be better to use

are far-reaching and have been promoted on policy agendas under the heading of human security (Garcia 2006; Werthes & Bosold 2006). This is not without reason: individuals and societies are often more directly affected by the negative consequences of widespread SALW availability than state-centric concerns of regional or international military balances and interstate war. The OAU, for example, makes a point to emphasize “the consequences of the proliferation of [SALW] on peace processes and human security” (OAU 2000: 2, 6; Reyneke 2000). Thus, conceptions and concerns of security in the developing world are not necessarily captured by traditional realist definitions (Pettiford 1996).

At the same time, the depth of genuine interest and commitment many states – African and otherwise – have toward the security and wellbeing of their populations has frequently been questioned (Bøås 2000; Chilliers 2004; Werthes & Bosold 2006). Attributing African states’ involvement in SALW initiatives to “new trends on international security politics” or “a new paradigm in arms control” (Garcia 2006: 30) should therefore be done with caution. Rather, problems of regime insecurity and the security of the political and economic elite are perhaps better argued as the persuasive factor for state involvement in security affairs (Bøås 2000: 315).

In particular, small arms become a relevant security interest for the regime itself by way of their connection to internal stability, itself linked to regime security. Moreover, the easy access of non-state groups, including separatist movements, to SALW challenges state authority, already often weak (Berman & Florquin 2005; Obasi 2002: 108). As Berman and Florquin (2005) point out, all but two countries in the ECOWAS region have experienced a coup d’état, and governments “change frequently and often violently” (1; UNRCpra 2000: 34). Regime stability is by no means a given for governments (Thomas 2003: 224-5), and their interests to maintain it is strong, especially amidst concerns of upheaval and violence of the ongoing processes of state formation in the developing world (Krause 1998). Thus the focus is on regime

human security “as a label for a broad category of research in the field of security studies that is primarily concerned with nonmilitary threats to the safety of societies, groups, and individuals” (96).

security, with human or population security a convenient overlap in this case, but not necessarily the main objective of policy. Because the threat emanates from internal instability, regime security is to some extent dependent on achieving a degree of security for its population.

The link between economic development – a primary focus of regional policy in Africa – and state security can be seen explicitly in the lead role regional economic organizations have taken on SALW issues. Multiple regional and subregional SALW agreements have been reached in Africa, with the two most comprehensive through ECOWAS and SADC, founded for the purpose of economic development. As Powers and Goertz (2006) argue, regional organizations began “using conflict management as a route to stability in order to encourage free trade and economic development” (2). Certainly, the ready presence of pre-existing institutions also helped to spread regional cooperation on security issues (Press-Barnathan 2005: 299). Indeed, “When countries realized security and economic problems were linked regionally; they restructured their regional economic institutions [REIs] to deal with this linkage by adding security treaties and mechanisms to REI structures” (Powers & Goertz 2006: 12). Doing so, however, does not indicate an explicit policy goal of enhancing human security. Human security may be served by regional SALW initiatives, but likely as an indirect result of the governing regime seeking security for its own existence by way of economic growth and internal stability.⁷

Related to this, the third factor addresses the role of internal and transnational conflict and instability, in which SALW are by far the weapon of choice for their sheer availability and ease of acquisition. Internal instability not only threatens the regime in power, but also risks spilling over into neighboring states (Allio & Candia 2007; CfC 2005: 159; Gebre-Wold & Masson 2002: 50; Obasi 2002: 49). As Raju G.C. Thomas (2003) observes, the main concern of transnational security, narrowly defined, “involves violence conducted by nonstate actors across national boundaries” (206). Of course, this once threatened intraregional regime relations

⁷ Cock (1996) points out that improving economic development also discourages a high rate of participation in the black arms market, since people have other alternatives to provide for themselves.

(MacFarlane 1984), but in the absence of superpower promotion of rivalries, states have been able to focus on the source of threat as domestic instability not regime hostility. Fragile regimes in similar geographic areas have shared interest in addressing these shared threats – and avoiding the destabilizing ripple effects of the collapse of their neighbors. As Jakkie Chilliers (2004) argues, “State security, in most of Africa, is not threatened by conventional threats of armed attack by other countries but by more insidious measures many of which flow from the very weakness of the state and its absence of control over its own territory” (9; Wisotzki 2005). African leaders can therefore in a sense agree on the source of a shared threat, which increases the possibilities and incentives for cooperation (Ispahani 1984: 156).

Fourth, but less centrally, domestic pressure has also served to highlight the SALW problematic and demand state attention to policy solutions for it. Civil society has not typically been active in African policymaking (Gebre-Wold & Masson 2002: 45; Thusi 2003), nor is knowledge or awareness about SALW problems necessarily widespread. Indeed, the importance of civil society in this issue as others remains a matter of debate and difficult to resolve – yet it has nevertheless been very active on SALW issues of possession and destruction in some countries (Agboton-Johnson et. al. 2004: 8; Kirsten 2004; SAS 2003) and the public has expressed its own concern about the effects of SALW on society (KNFPSALW 2006: 21). Adèle Kirsten (2004), for example, argues that civil society and social movements have played a key role in the development of gun control legislation and the reduction of gun violence in South Africa and Brazil by engaging the state and assisting in grassroots mobilization. Similarly, groups in Ghana and Senegal especially have seen a significant degree of collaboration with the government on SALW initiatives (Agboton-Johnson et. al. 2004: 8), and the government of Kenya has sponsored civil society workshops on the issue (KNFPSALW 2006).

Yet while the role of civil society and NGOs in African politics may be growing, it is often still weak. Jakkie Cilliers (2004) takes it as a matter of course that civil society

organizations are not invited to take part in creating or shaping government's regional policy agendas (5, 45; Gebre-Wold & Masson 2002: 45). Thokozani Thusi (2003), in contrast, acknowledges that "[c]ivil society organizations have played an impressive role in the formulation of the [Nairobi] Declaration" but simultaneously also notes that "tensions seem to exist between these groups and the Secretariat." Moreover, African governments have not traditionally felt pressured to be responsive to civil society and at best have had an ambiguous relationship (Thusi 2003) – at worst, their relationship has been one of suspicion and hostility (Cilliers 2004: 45). This suggests that the influence of civil society on SALW policy, as other issue areas, varies by country even within regions. As a result, civil society and public pressure cannot alone – or even perhaps primarily – account for regional cooperation in general. On the other hand, it might be worth investigating whether those countries with a high degree of civil society engagement also have a high degree of agreement compliance, due to its ability in democracies in particular to attempt to hold governments accountable to their public agreements. ECOWAS states have, for example, all made varying rates of progress on the implementation of their regional agreements (SAS 2001: 260), which could possibly be connected not only to state capacity but also to levels of civil society activity and the incentives they impart to governments for compliance. The Bamako Declaration makes explicit note of the importance of civil society inclusion in this regard (SAS 2001: 266), though this can be difficult for groups lacking resources and, due to low government transparency, the necessary information about compliance in the first place.

Ultimately, what appears as the most central factors in promoting regional cooperation on SALW issues, then, is a combination of the absence of superpower intervention and artificial building of intraregional rivalries, as well as – most prominently – the interest of regime stability and security. Rather than dealing with other states as a threat, regional dynamics have been able to turn their concern to internal instability, non-state actors, and illegal trafficking as the real

threat to their survival. Such a perception of state security does not prohibit cooperation with other states and in fact, encourages cooperation in an environment of loose borders and frequent spillover of problems from one state to another. What remains unclear, however, is the absence of similarly widespread cooperation on SALW initiatives at the international level, in the United Nations in particular.

Africa and International SALW Cooperation

Although regional SALW cooperation is widespread, the nature of the problem is global in scope. As the Small Arms Survey (2001) explains, “State and armed opponents [look] to the whole world for the sources and transit routes of their weapons,” just as affected states “were asking the international community for assistance” (276). Indeed, with the legal and illicit trade in arms, as well as their production, now commonly conducted on a global scale, progress on controlling the negative consequences of SALW proliferation – for state *and* human security – could not be done effectively without an approach to match. In addition, in the case of Africa, the developed world’s “participation in the trade in small arms and ‘conflict resources’ have contributed to Africa’s instability” (CfC 2005: 157). The two main international mechanisms for SALW have been concluded through the United Nations and include the UN Firearms Protocol and the UN Programme of Action (POA). In 2007, the UN also began work on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which will regulate both SALW and major conventional arms transfers. If the rationale of regime security and stability has been a valid justification of regional cooperation, it would logically also apply to similar international initiatives.

However, despite intentions that Africa would be a key player in UN small arms discussions (AU 2005; Gamba 2006; OAU 2000: 10), state engagement and national implementation have been significantly weaker, compared to the regional level (Agboton-Johnson et. al. 2004: 9). This is not universally the case, of course: Most recently, Kenya and

Mali have been among the lead states on the ATT initiative and have been actively involved elsewhere in the UN on SALW issues. Moreover, elements of the African Common Position on the UN POA were promoted by African states and ultimately included in the final POA document (Yankey-Wayne 2005: 86). Nevertheless, for the most part, “affected countries haven’t really banded together,” which is both surprising and potentially problematic for the acceptance and effectiveness of various initiatives.⁸ Indeed, one NGO representative went so far as to describe affected states and their regional groups as the 2006 POA review conference as “invisible” and less active than had been expected.⁹ Similarly, ATT leaders and advocates were frustrated by the low level of submissions of national papers by developing states in the first half of 2007 (Allio & Candia 2007; De Capua 2007; Reuters 2007).

This could be due partially to a lack of consensus among developing states, which constitute a diverse group with diverse interests. On the one hand, there is a “desperate need for control” due to instability and other problems stemming either directly or indirectly from high concentrations of SALW in certain communities.¹⁰ As has already been argued, this has been part of the motivation behind existing regional agreements. On the other hand, some countries do not want to close the door on producers or markets, for fear of losing their ability either to buy or to sell small arms.¹¹ Yet even regional groups, such as ECOWAS, have not appeared at the POA review conferences as active and cohesive political entities, despite their close cooperation on the issue at the regional level.¹² The prevalence of regional cooperation throughout Africa, however, indicates that agreement is not impossible and that there is interest in cooperation for a large number of developing countries.

⁸ Author interview with NGO representative. Geneva, Switzerland (10 November 2006)

⁹ Ibid; author interviews with NGO and government representatives, London, UK (30 April 2007, 3 May 2007)

¹⁰ Author interview with NGO representative. Geneva, Switzerland (7 November 2006)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Author interview with NGO representative. Geneva, Switzerland (10 November 2006)

In this section, I argue that broad descriptions of non-cooperation are unfounded in the sense that developing countries often do support international SALW initiatives. Rather, the problem lies in the lack of *active* cooperation in terms of leadership and implementation. Although African states generally support UN protocol and agreements (Cilliers & Sturman 2002; Sabala 2004), their lobbying for and implementation of various initiatives is spotty at best (see Table 1). This stems from two major factors: (1) A lack of capacity, both by way of a lack of experience in international negotiations and a lack of expertise and resources for national implementation; and (2) a prioritization of scarce resources to regional agreements, which may be perceived as more relevant and effective for ameliorating the negative effects of SALW. These conclusions, in turn, suggest that the concept of cooperation should be studied in more nuanced ways, considering both political support and active participation, in order to capture better the role of developing states in international affairs.

First, capacity problems hound African states' participation problems on two levels. At the international level, the lack of experience in negotiations can prove detrimental for developing states to play key roles in reaching the compromises necessary for international agreements. Many NGOs and governments, for example, have sponsorship programs to enable developing countries to send knowledgeable representation to UN meetings. Yet these representatives often do not have experience with international negotiations and cannot diverge from their points, leaving them less able to lead others or themselves to compromise.¹³ Other states may send representatives who do not know the issue well or have the staff to represent themselves at all.¹⁴ The lack of cooperation within regional blocs to present a unified or vocal front at international conferences reinforces the idea that it is not a disinterest in cooperation but rather the ability to do so that is holding some states back.

¹³ Author interview with NGO representative. Geneva, Switzerland (10 November 2006).

¹⁴ Author interviews with NGO and government representatives. London, UK (30 April and 3 May 2007).

At the domestic level, implementation often suffers from a lack of capacity and relevant expertise to achieve the technical tasks laid out in international (and sometimes regional) agreements (Sabala 2004: 10; Yankey-Wayne 2005: 89). As Kizito Sabala (2004) observes, African countries have made political commitments to broad areas of policy related to SALW, but “despite these undertakings, an examination of compliance reveals a wide discrepancy between policy and reality” (2). Often, such problems are attributed to political will. In the case of the developing world, however, it is often the case that problems are either compounded by or a result of a lack of technical capacity. Indeed, even after its first year, “a significant amount of political will [had] been generated by the adoption of the [POA], “along with a large number of implementation programs all around the world (Geneva Forum 2002: 5). At the same time, its most prominent shortcoming had already been identified as “the lack of resources and capacity to carry out necessary work” (5). SALW agreements typically require not only the development of legislation and bureaucratic offices and contacts, but also weapons collection and destruction, stockpile management and security, and capacity building of relevant law enforcement and border patrol personnel, to name but a few (Maze & Parker 2006; Maze & Rhee 2007). The top obstacles to implementation are often cited as insufficient skills, resources, capacity, and information, along with insufficient funding commitments by donor governments in developing countries (Geneva Forum 2002: 10; Maze & Parker 2006: 23).

To address problems of implementation, NGOs and foreign governments have offered some aid to interested countries, along with international workshops and trainings (Geneva Forum 2002: 7; Maze & Parker 2006; Maze & Rhee 2007; UNGA 2003). In doing so, international cooperation remains important, but challenges in carrying through with it remain. Without a single central clearinghouse or agency for requests, donor states often do not know which recipient states are in need of assistance, or what type (Maze & Parker 2006: 29). Requests can be received through a number of international institutions or to donor states

directly, and donors and organizations commonly cite a need for “improved coordination of activities” (19). Conversely, recipient states are not sure how to make their needs known and where to address their requests (1, 17, 23, 29). In addition, states that have *not* suffered recent conflicts tend to be overlooked in donor priorities (Kytömäki & Yankey-Wayne 2006: xxiv). These simple but consequential conundrums speak strongly to the usefulness of international institutions in sharing information among states to assist in their cooperation. A high percentage of states do report taking action on relevant concerns in some form, but their ability to carry through with their commitments has not been uniform in practice (Kytömäki & Yankey-Wayne 2006). Since 2002 from Africa alone, 92% of states have reported on their progress on implementation – the highest of any region (Kytömäki & Yankey-Wayne 2006: xx); however, as can be seen from Table 1, the level of their follow-through has been varied. What could therefore usefully be studied in this context is the relationship between SALW and disarmament aid received and the depth and breadth of national POA implementation.

It is worth noting, moreover, that implementation suffers both at the regional and international levels. Agboton-Johnson et. al. (2004) argue that weak implementation of the POA “is also an obstacle for the subsequent implementation of other declarations which are even less constraining” (10). While the UN Programme of Action tends to be weaker than many of the regional initiatives, some of which have in recent years been made legally binding, this suggests that the implementation of *stronger* regional initiatives will be even more difficult. As Alex Vines (2005) observes, implementation of regional programs has also been limited and that the capacity of regional organizations like ECOWAS is weak. The ECOWAS moratorium, for example, is supposed to prohibit the import of SALW, except in the case of granted exemptions. Yet, as Table 3 shows, no consistent pattern seems to emerge in terms of lower imports by ECOWAS states over time, or between ECOWAS and other reporting states.

Indeed, the discrepancy in either regional or international implementation is not very surprising. States may be serious about programs in both political arenas, and implementation may be weak at both, as well. If capacity is lacking in one fora, it will likely be lacking in the other. Nevertheless, the degree to which states attempt to rectify these shortcomings may still rely on political will when states are forced to allocate their limited resources to the implementation of a range of programs.

Thus, while many African states take the implementation of small arms initiatives seriously (Maze & Rhee 2007: 12), the second explanation is that regional initiatives simply take priority over international initiatives, for a number of either political and/or practical reasons. Resources are limited and must be dedicated where the gain – either in terms of effectiveness or political value is greatest. In part, there is a concern that multilateral work will overtake regional initiatives, which are considered politically important and more directly address African SALW problems.¹⁵ Domestic constituencies are much more familiar with regional programs than the UN POA (Agboton-Johnson et. al. 2004: 10), just as regional links may be stronger and more important for states in the post-Cold War era.

In addition, there is a strong concern that UN work will get bogged down in politics not related to African concerns and lead to weak or ineffective programs. As Muchai (2006) notes, the perceived failure of the UN review conference in 2006 “left regional initiatives as the only way of ensuring that the process of addressing the proliferation of small arms continues unabated and with determined actions.” Moreover, there was a danger that UN work would be considered a “one size fits all” approach that would not sufficiently acknowledge or address – and perhaps would even detract from – problems specific to individual regions (SAS 2002: 210). As Owen Greene (2000) observes, the appeal of regional arrangements might lie in the reality that “each region and sub-region experiences and perceives the problem in different ways” and that

¹⁵ Author interview with UN representative. Geneva, Switzerland (7 November 2006). See also SAS (2002: 210).

“countries are typically most affected by and concerned about the problems in their immediate neighbourhood” (156).

Finally, it has been suggested that some states in the developing world are reluctant to sign on to something perceived as from the agenda of the Western or Northern world.¹⁶ Part of this may have to do with states not wanting to be told what to do by their old colonial masters.¹⁷ Ochiai (2006) remarks, regional organizations in Africa in particular grew out of “the perception that African countries have the primary responsibility to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts in Africa” (3). In this case, there is a priority to regional programs for the sake of encouraging regional responsibility and self-determination, and their greater significance for regional problems. In contrast, the UN agenda appears to many states as very Western led.¹⁸ Indeed, it has been argued that “the legacy of European political institutions and practices, as well as memories of racial and economic subjugation of nonwhite regions by white colonial powers, is reflected in the postcolonial age through occasional expressions of resentment in these states toward Western intrusions into their domestic politics” (Thomas 2003: 208). If states are either suspicious of Western motives – for example, to prevent developing states from gaining military equipment or technology – or feel that agendas of Western institutions are simply not helpful in practice, whatever their intentions, the impetus for active cooperation or implementation will be minimal, whatever state capacity.

Discussion and Conclusions

This paper highlights a number of points related to security cooperation in the developing world. First, it argues that regional cooperation has been possible because of the removal of east-west competition after the Cold War and the subsequent interest of regimes to control SALW for

¹⁶ Author interview with NGO representative. London, UK (1 May 2007).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Author interview with UK government official. London, UK (3 May 2007).

the sake of their security and stability in the face of economic problems and internal conflicts. Second, it argues that African states have in fact been cooperative on SALW issues at the UN, even if their participation has often not lived up to expectations, due to limited resources and technical capacity. These fairly simple explanations, in turn, reveal deeper lessons for the study of international relations and its incorporation of the developing world.

Like much of international relations in the years since the end of the Cold War, this case usefully highlights the need to approach threats to security more broadly than the traditional state-centric interpretations. As MaClean (1999) points out, broader, more individual-oriented definitions of security are often “most appropriately dealt within the new regionalism/new security framework” (954). Moreover, threats may still drive security cooperation (Ispahani 1984; Walt 1990), but it is not realistic to focus solely on states as the main actors or sources of threats (Brown 2006). Nonstate actors are important players in the developing world and a source of concern for national and regional security, as conflicts and instability travel easily across porous borders. Nevertheless, the African SALW story also points to the need to consider the state – and the regime more specifically – as the primary mover in much of international affairs, especially where states are autocratic or only weakly democratic. Notions of security may be expanding to include the individual, but it is state interest as defined the regime that strongly drives policy, and more so in places where civil society is weak.

In fact, the need to incorporate civil society and local communities is often identified as both an area for improvement and perhaps a necessity for effective implementation. In part, this has to do with decreases the demand for SALW in societies, which may have to do with “the actual or perceived failure of the State to provide adequate security for civilians living in [certain] areas” (KNFPSALW 2006: 17). However, an active civil society in democratic states may also push a government to respond more thoroughly to its policy commitments and implement them in practice.

More fundamentally for the study of international relations, the concept of cooperation may require a more nuanced understanding. According to Keohane (1984), cooperation “requires *active* attempts to adjust policies to meet the demands of others” (12; emphasis added). The experience of African regional and international cooperation, however, suggests a need to apply greater nuance to this definition. First, there is a distinction between cooperation that consists of supporting a policy and actively promoting that policy with other states. Second, there is a distinction between simply supporting a policy and actively implementing that policy in relevant political arenas at home. In dealing with multilateral policymaking, it is necessary both to adjust state policy to support multilateral initiatives so they come into being, and to follow through on adopting new policies in practice as “the policies actually followed” (52).

This approach acknowledges a need for compliance in order to achieve full cooperation, as well as the existence of a more passive form of cooperation, which may more often be followed by states with limited resources, negotiation expertise, or implementation capacity. It may be that these states do cooperate to some extent but fall short of the ability or relative willingness to carry out their policy agreements. This does not mean discord follows, but instead that cooperation is by some definitions incomplete. As Chayes and Chayes (1993) argue, one major source of states’ noncompliance of international agreements is their lack of capacity and that, as a result, a practical solution is the provision of financial and technical assistance. In response, Downs et. al. (1996) observe a need to examine “depth of cooperation,” which they define as “the extent to which [a treaty] requires states to depart from what they would have done in its absence” (383). Although they do not associate depth of cooperation with technical ability – an explicit but perhaps inappropriate omission – Downs et. al. make an interesting connection between level of cooperation and compliance. In the case of African small arms policy, it may not be that noncompliance can just be considered another form of non-cooperation across the board, but that in some circumstances it indicates simply a lower level of cooperation. For states

with severely limited financial and technical resources, active policy adjustment does not automatically lead to full policy implementation. The same might be said for wealthy states, though in such cases states may choose (or be forced into) low implementation or compliance for different reasons more obviously related to political will, in place of technical constraints.

Thus, to encourage active participation from the developing world in multilateral initiatives, whether regional or international, increased aid from donor countries would be a major asset. In fact, aid at both levels is already being provided, though more is needed (Maze & Parker 2006; Maze & Rhee 2007; UNRCPPRA 2000: 29). In the end, there is a place for both regional and international cooperation, as scholars and policymakers recognize that different states and regions have their own interests and security concerns, which are inextricably intertwined in an increasingly integrated world. But for states truly to invest in multilateral policy implementation, the legitimacy and the relevancy of related international institutions to the third world must be enhanced. This is a lesson that extends beyond developing countries and speaks to the ability of international organizations to advocate, facilitate, and effect international policy change more broadly.

Appendix

Table 1. African Participation and Implementation of Multilateral Arms Trade Agreements

Country ¹⁹	Regional Conventions ²⁰	UN Firearms Protocol ²¹	UN POA NPC ²²	UN POA NCA ²³	ATT Vote	ATT Papers ²⁴
Angola	1, 4	No action	N	N	Y	N
Benin	1, 2	Ratified	Y	N	Y	Y?
Botswana	1, 4	No action	Y	Y	NA	N
Burkina Faso	1, 2	Ratified	Y	Y	Y	Y?
Burundi	1, 3	No action	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cameroon	1	No action	Y	N	Y	N
Cape Verde	1, 2	Ratified	N	N	Y	N
CAR	1	No action	N	N	Y	N
Chad	1	No action	Y	Y	Y	N
Comoros	1	No action	N	N	Y	N
DRC	1, 3, 4	Ratified	Y	Y	NA	Y
Congo, Republic of	1	No action	Y	N	Y	N
Côte d'Ivoire	1, 2	No action	Y	N	Y	Y?
Djibouti	1, 3	No action	N	N	Y	N
Equatorial Guinea	1	No action	N	Y	NA	N
Eritrea	1, 3	No action	N	N	Y	N
Ethiopia	1, 3	No action	Y	N	Y	N
Gabon	1	No action	N	N	Y	N
Gambia	1, 2	No action	Y	Y	Y	N
Ghana	1, 2	No action	N	Y	Y	Y
Guinea	1, 2	No action	Y	N	Y	N
Guinea-Bissau	1, 2	No action	N	N	NA	N
Kenya	1, 3	Ratified	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lesotho	1, 4	Ratified	N	N	Y	N
Liberia	1, 2	Ratified	N	N	Y	Y
Madagascar	1	Ratified	N	N	NA	N
Malawi	1, 4	Ratified	N	N	Y	Y?
Mali	1, 2	Ratified	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mauritania	1	Ratified	N	N	Y	N
Mauritius	1, 4	Ratified	Y	N	Y	N
Mozambique	1, 4	No action	Y	Y	Y	Y?
Namibia	1, 4	No action	N	N	Y	N
Niger	1, 2	No action	Y	Y	Y	Y
Nigeria	1, 2	Ratified	Y	N	Y	Y?
Rwanda	1, 3	No action	Y	N	Y	N
Sao Tome and Principe	1	No action	Y	N	Y	N
Senegal	1, 2	Signed	Y	N	Y	Y?
Seychelles	1, 4	Signed	N	N	NA	Y?
Sierra Leone	1, 2	Signed	N	Y	Y	N
Somalia	1	No action	N	N	NA	N
South Africa	1, 4	Ratified	Y	N	Y	Y?
Sudan	1, 3	No action	Y	Y	ABSTAIN	N

¹⁹ All African countries, excluding North Africa (as considered Middle Eastern)

²⁰ (1) Bamako Declaration; (2) ECOWAS Convention; (3) Nairobi Protocol; (4) SADC Protocol

²¹ Information from IANSA. Retrieved on 14 August 2007 from <http://www.iansa.org/un/firearms-protocol.htm>

²² National Points of Contact established as of 31/1/2004. See Annex 4, Kytömäki & Yankey-Wayne 2004.

²³ National Coordination Agency/Committee as of 31/1/2004. See Annex 4, Kytömäki & Yankey-Wayne 2004.

²⁴ Reports on state submission of ATT papers taken from <http://www.controlarms.org>. Y indicates a paper has been submitted and made public; Y? indicates a paper is believed to have been submitted but has not been made public; and N indicates no paper is believed have been submitted.

Swaziland	1, 4	No action	N	N	Y	N
Tanzania	1, 3, 4	No action	Y	Y	NA	N
Togo	1, 2	No action	N	N	Y	Y?
Uganda	1, 3	Ratified	Y	Y	Y	N
Zambia	1, 4	Ratified	Y	N	Y	Y
Zimbabwe	1, 4	No action	N	N	ABSTAIN	N
48 Total	1 (11); 2 (35); 3 (2)	R (16); S (3); NA (29)	Y (26); N (22)	Y (16); N (32)	Y (38); AB (2); NA (8)	Y (8); Y? (10); N (30)

Table 2. Military Expenditures as Percentage of GDP, 1995-2005²⁵

Country	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Angola	7.9	9	10.3	5.2	9.9	2.2	1.4	1.8	2.2	4	5.7
Benin	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Botswana	3.5	2.9	3.1	3.7	3.2	3	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.8	3
Burkina Faso	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.3
Burundi	4.2	5.9	6.4	6.6	6.3	6	8	7.2	7.3	6.6	6.2
Cameroon	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.3
Cape Verde	1.3	.8	.8	.9	.8	1.3	.8	.7	.7	.7	.
CAR	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chad	1.7	1.9	1.3	1.2	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.1	1
Comoros	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
DRC	.	1.5	1.4	.4	1.2	1	.	.	2.1	3	2.4
Congo, Republic of	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.4	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.4
Côte d'Ivoire	.	.9	.8	.	.	.	.	.	1.5	.	.
Djibouti	5.1	4.2	4.5	4.4	4.2	4	3.9	4.2	.	.	.
Equ. Guinea	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Eritrea	20.9	22	12.8	35.3	37.4	36.2	24.7	23.7	24.1	.	.
Ethiopia	2	1.8	3.4	6.7	10.7	9.6	5	3.9	2.9	2.8	2.6
Gabon	.	.	.	.	.	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.5
Gambia	.8	1	1	1	.8	.8	.6	.7	.5	.5	.
Ghana	.8	.6	.7	.8	.8	1	.6	.6	.7	.8	.7
Guinea	.	.	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.5	2.9	3.1	2.3	2	.
Guinea-Bissau	.5	.6	.7	1.4	.	4.4	3.1	3.1	3.1	.	4
Kenya	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7
Lesotho	3.7	3	2.8	3.1	3.7	3.6	3.1	2.8	2.6	2.3	2.3
Liberia	.	.	.	.	.	.	8	7.7	.	.	.
Madagascar	.9	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.1
Malawi	.8	.9	1	.8	.8	.7	.7	.8	.7	.	.
Mali	2	1.9	2	1.9	2	2.2	2	2	2.1	2.2	2.3
Mauritania	2.6	2.8	3.2	3.4	2.4	3	3.6	5	2.8	4	3.6
Mauritius	.3	.3	.2	.2	.2	.2	.2	.2	.2	.2	.2
Mozambique	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.3	.9
Namibia	1.9	1.9	2.3	2.3	3.1	2.8	3.1	2.9	3	3	3.2
Niger	1	.9	.9	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.4	1	1	1.2	.
Nigeria	.7	.5	.6	.9	1.4	.8	1.3	1.9	1.1	.8	.7
Rwanda	4.4	5.3	4.2	4.4	4.2	3.4	3.3	2.9	2.5	2.3	2.9
Sao Tome and Principe	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Senegal	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5
Seychelles	2.3	2.1	2	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	2.3	1.8
Sierra Leone	2.9	2	1.1	.	.	4.1	2.4	1.7	1.8	1.2	1
Somalia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
South Africa	2.2	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5
Sudan	2.3	1.3	1	2.4	4.1	4.8	2.9	3.2	2.3	.	.
Swaziland	2.3	2.1	1.9	2.1	2	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	.
Tanzania	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.1
Togo	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.6	1.6	.15
Uganda	2	2.1	1.9	2.3	2.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.6	2.3
Zambia	1.6	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.8	.	.8	.	.	2.3	.
Zimbabwe	19.1	31.9	3.4	2.6	4.4	4.7	2.2	2.2	2.5	5.4	2.3

²⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.sipri.org> on 13 August 2007. Figures are given in 2005 constant US dollars.

Table 3. Trade Value (USD) of SALW Imports, 1998-2006²⁶

Country ²⁷	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Benin*	2880	13212	9942	11684	13654	15844			
Botswana			91926	260833	1226830	763750			
Burkina Faso*				58589	59358	21114	189		
Cameroun			2580	624	10926	119394	6203	131612	137791
Cape Verde*	71740	588	2579	45367	4039	4912	5193	1475	2073
CAR			23805						
Côte d'Ivoire*							36112375	156396	8930314
Eritrea						54879			
Ethiopia				3660915	126318	2922934			
Gabon	242135	14613	1414151	234240	6168	198018	415738	119162	98861
Gambia*	56			96					
Ghana*						306940	2040	155	1913
Guinea*		3536	279						
Kenya	4721927	61706	101186	4626979	6073894	4885931	3089861		
Madagascar	5967	1220	1289	2526		428			
Malawi		2458	489	48786		201	965	11385469	7438220
Mali*			304449	300483	9941	200362	510		
Mauritius	5169	5361	658	5741	294031	47860	4126	20506	5880
Mozambique			45834	20370	32214	23481	21550	10374	45581
Namibia			173128	1308521	235623	8644144	272724	464723	
Niger*	43714	78278	19967	16933	1833	7256	120924	7931	
Nigeria*		787870		108901	1602589	152			
Rwanda					10571				
Sao Tome and Principe		647	2517	3223	868	7219			
Senegal*	1024927	456662	57610	22819	47328	128326	103758	101587	634373
Seychelles	16637								7267
Sudan		328	497	10358	4568070	18021777	6022007	11741089	
Togo	1457			1275					
Uganda	2525	795	3208	10085	76317	672372	675990	361	121675
Zambia	39713	23637	29806	42620	28123	35403	80116	15462	42457
Zimbabwe				29354	7593		12718		

²⁶ Figures are from UN Comtrade Database records, retrieved on 13 August 2007 from <http://comtrade.un.org>. The data is derived solely from state import reports for categories 930100 (military weapons, other than hand guns, swords, etc) and/or 930200 (revolvers and pistols). Only states that reported at some point during the time period are included on the table.

²⁷ ECOWAS member states are starred.

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