

‘Etuó Mu Ye Sum: The Barrel of a Gun is Dark’

Clouded in Darkness: Reflections on the Uncertain Future of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Ghana

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I. Introduction

Small Arms and Light Weapons certainly belong to the most current topics in security-related studies of African states. In the case of Ghana, wide range of newspaper articles concerning criminal abuses and dangers of firearms report a delicate gun situation in one of West Africa's most stable democracies. However, it is widely acknowledged that little hard facts are known about the true extent of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and armed violence on the ground. This is not surprising considering that small arms mainly circulate illicitly and armed violence is widely beyond public control. In 2001 the Ghanaian Government carried out a voluntary arm collection programme being titled: "Etu Me Ye Sum" or in English "The Barrel of a Gun is Dark" which introduced further campaigns. Interestingly enough, this experience reveals that there are indeed more aspects of darkness regarding the proliferation of small arms in Ghana. For instance, it has never come to light how many small arms have been recollected in Ghana (Aning, 2001). However, what has been reported is that the Chief of Police Operation Adu-Gyimah was accused of "providing" armed robbers with some of the seized guns and was dismissed from his position in the same year (Aning, 2010). These anecdotal pieces of background information behind "The Barrel of a Gun is Dark" speak volumes: There are numerous nebulous mechanisms, relationships and facts that have to be taken into account in order to understand the dynamics behind the gun problem in Ghana. This paper aims to shed light on the realities and secrets of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Ghana, a phenomenon that is often conjured, but understood very poorly.

Ghana is known as one of the most secure Sub-Saharan African states with crime rates even lower than those of certain highly industrialized countries. As an illustration, the rate of robberies in Ghana in the year 2000 was lower than in Japan. However, this positive trend seems to go into reverse with firearm related crime rates overall rising in Ghana. There is a great level of insecurity as to how the security situation in Ghana will develop in the coming years and how Ghanaians might react to a less favourable security situation, eventually leading to new dynamics. Seen from a different perspective, it can be debated whether the surplus of guns is the root of deteriorating security situation or not.

With so many open questions in mind it might seem completely unrealistic to talk about future developments of SALW proliferation in Ghana. Indeed, the proliferation of SALW in Ghana is a problem with high levels of uncertainty. For this reason, this paper will introduce four scenarios of the future proliferation of SALW in Ghana. As we know from several illuminating scenarios, such as the Mont Fleur Project which introduced outlooks of post-apartheid South Africa, scenarios do not aim to present definite truths or forecasts, however they should stimulate debates about the future. With this in mind, this scenario-building can help to discuss plausible mechanisms and factors that are crucial for the development of small arms proliferation in Ghana.

First of all, some basic facts of today's guns situation in Ghana and different debates around small arms shall be examined. Specifically, the extent of the problem in concrete facts and in perceivable impacts shall be described in order to provide background knowledge. In the next step, four scenarios on small arms proliferation will be presented. These outlooks reveal the meaning of different variables and strategies for the solution of the problem.

II. In Need of Enlightened Debates

Public and official discourse centering on Ghana's gun-problem can be broken down into different debates. Beside these mainstream discussions, alternative debates are indeed triggered, but have reached meagre attention with policy-makers and the general public.

Against the background of multiple civil wars in the 1990ies, the international community began to express its growing concern about the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW)¹, a type of armoury which lethality had remained unnoticed for a long time, especially in comparison to spotlighted landmines. With this new momentum to curb SALW in less developed and fragile states, the member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) accepted small arms as a security problem and elaborated a voluntary Moratorium that was later on transformed into the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. In line with this new wave of criminalisation of small arms on the international stage the debate of how production and trade of small arms can be regulated was willingly carried on in Ghana.

Another debate which is deeply anchored in the general public resolves around changing crime patterns in Ghana. Evidently, the perceived and real crime situation in Ghana has deteriorated in the course of the last years. The issue that worries Ghanaians is the question of how to end armed robberies which are frequently carried out with small arms. Consequently, the discussion regarding small arms control in Ghana is limited to firearm-related crimes, illegal production and the general threat that firearms mean to any society.

New debates should pick the non-criminal use and longstanding omnipresence of weapons in many societies as a central theme. Focusing on small arms as a security problem caused by criminals, little attention is paid to the rationale behind the wide Ghanaian gun culture: What is the true problem behind the possession of guns? Further, attention ought to be paid to the indiscernible effects of the proliferation of SALW in Ghana. More action needs to be done to investigate into SALW-related violence in the domestic context. Similarly, little attention is paid to the fact that Ghanaian small arms do have negative effects on the wider sub-region. An important question to ask is: Where does the current debate lack scrutiny and vision to grasp the multilevel implications of the growing SALW proliferation in Ghana?

To refer to some of these questions mentioned, it is important to take a look at the rationale and the issues behind the acquisition of guns. In fact, guns have rich symbolic meanings and practical significance in pre-state Ghanaian society; to name a few, the protection of cattle, and the representation of manhood, self-defence, hunting and ceremonial purposes. One could argue that guns do not necessarily have negative implications for peace and security. However, when guns become the individual warrantor of security, because security is not provided by any collective body, the proliferation of guns is a hint for state's failure to provide high levels of security or arguably security in general.

There is the argument that the whole understanding of security in newly independent African states has always been about the well-being and survival of the state itself. However, it did not include human security, a people-centred concept that summarizes the manifold basic needs to which all human beings are naturally entitled to. One illustration of the historical absence of human security provision is given by criminologist Justice Tankebe, who

¹ By definition, small arms are designed for individual use (such as pistols, rifles etc.) whereas light weapons are designed to be used by two or three persons (such as heavier machine guns).

elaborated on the role of policing in Ghana (2008, 2009). He draws us to the fact that police service has been introduced by and for the safety of colonial mastery and was used against Ghanaians with a great share of arbitrariness. Fatally enough, in the post-colonial state the police service has not been transformed into a pure community-oriented institution. Instead, it continued to operate in the agency of the minority elitists for example during the military rule under J. J. Rawlings. According to the Ghana Integrity Initiative, nearly 80 per cent of Ghanaians see the police as the most corrupt institution in their country today (2005). In all this, vigilantism which is the immediate and violent self-help among citizens faced with crimes is fairly widespread in Ghana. These observations are symptomatic for the citizens' mouldy judgement of the state's exercise of legitimate power and accentuate the need to look at those problems that cannot be solved by blanket policies focusing on weapons alone.

In regard to the question about what is missing in the debate, it can be observed that the implications of SALW proliferation in Ghana for different societal groups have been too little discussed. Armed robberies have been picked out as one of the central themes dealing with the SALW problem, but there are more problems on different levels. So far, too little is known about the role of small arms with regard to human rights infringements. Understanding the gun situation in Ghana is hampered by the wide gap in criminological knowledge about crime patterns and perpetrators profiles. Just as much, it is time to face the fact that plenty of arms and light weapons are being exported from Ghana into the fragile countries in the West African sub-region, such as Ivory Coast. These objections to the limited debate are voiced to remember the fact that a possible securitization of the SALW problem in Ghana will untimely restrict lots of analysis and debates that urgently need to be conducted.

III. Facts and Figures

It is simply impossible to truly tell how many small arms are in circulation in Ghana. Official estimations reckon 40, 000 illicit weapons while other sources expect this number to be ten times higher or more. The most illuminating triangulation takes into account firstly, different estimations of illicit weapons in civilian hands including those that are locally-sourced; secondly, the data on legally registered weapons of the National Firearms Bureau; and thirdly, the fact that attrition rates are low because blacksmiths are capable of repairing weapons (Aning, 2008, p. 176). Between 1955 and 2004 over 400, 000 guns were legally registered. Dark figures tell us that there might be between 180, 000 and 430, 000 illicit weapons and possibly even more. Beyond this quantitative vagueness, it is easier to enumerate the different sources of weaponry, both legal and illegal, which supply a high share of civilians in Ghana with guns and ease access to weapons considerably. There are legally imported weapons and ammunition that are brought into the country by licensed companies; unfortunately, there is no official data on how many companies have licenses that permit to import weapons into Ghana. Furthermore, there is a considerable amount of weapons from Libya and Eastern European States having entered Ghana in the early 80ies when Jerry John Rawlings equipped militia-style revolutionary committees. These freely distributed weapons are still either in the hand of previous military personnel or await in caches or unsecured dumps just to be discovered with the advancing urbanisation. In

addition, there are locally-sourced craft guns and replicas of factory-made guns. Even though Ghana does not have an official industrial capacity to produce weapons, indigenous production in blacksmiths' workshops takes place in all of Ghana's ten regions and is highly advanced in terms of quality and quantity. Last but not least, there are leaking government stockpiles which also include uniform men borrowing or selling arms to criminals.

According to security experts and scattered empirical proof there is reason to believe that locally-sourced small arms and light weapons are dominantly used in criminal activities in Ghana. In fact, it is believed that 80 per cent of weapons used in armed robberies are locally-manufactured (Ghana Government, 2011). Compared to many of its sub-Saharan counterparts where massive post-conflict stockpiles continue to sow death and devastation, a new influx of illicit small arms is at the core of Ghana's small arms challenge today. Certainly, domestic underground production is already out of government control as it is reported that hundreds of black- and gunsmiths all over the country produce outstanding sophisticated weapons in large quantities under the cover of lawful artisan craft production². Emmanuel Kwesi Aning, Director of the Research Department of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, assumes that Ghanaian blacksmiths all over the country have the potential to illegally produce over 200,000 weapons annually (Aning, 2005, p. 83). By comparison, one decade ago production capacity was still estimated to be as low as 35, 000 to 40, 000 weapons per year. Locally-sourced small arms are most attractive to consumers with base motives as they are mainly produced illegally and are sold at low cost at the black-market. In addition, the porosity of Ghana's border, in terms of infrastructural safeguard and with regard to the free movement of ECOWAS citizens, allow illegal trade with small arms in West Africa, where over eight million firearms are believed to be circulating.

IV. Impacts Loom Large

In the past years negative effects of the growing circulation of locally-produced and imported small arms manifested themselves in Ghana. On a general note, small arms can have multiple impacts on society. The impacts range from direct disruption of public or private life, which can be precisely traced back to specific incidents of gun-use, to substantial changes in the social fabric of a country. In the following, the most obvious manifestations of the circulation of small arms and light weapons shall be summarised in order to create some realistic common ground with regard to the implications of the problem of small arms and light weapons today.

Regrettably, direct impacts of gun circulation seem to be quite obvious in Ghana. The probably most predominant challenge of small arms to national security are the vast selection of fire gun-related crimes, naturally linked to the growing availability of small arms. Newspaper articles give a good overview on the wide range of crimes in which firearms are involved. There are among others armed robberies in residential areas, robberies of fuel station and Forex-bureaus, highway-robberies, and interpersonal and family disputes³.

² For an elaborated investigation on underground production of weapons in Ghana, see Aning, 2005: The Anatomy of Ghana's Secret Arm Industry.

³ For a selection of newspaper article on gun-related incidents go to <http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/ghan>

Even though Ghana is considered as a peaceful country where societal peace is settled, there are various latent conflicts which regionally break out. One should not forget that in the last two decades several longstanding chieftaincies conflicts caused regional states of emergencies such as in Bawku, Yendi or Gushiegu in the northern parts of Ghana. Private small arms can accelerate the intensity of disputes as the lethality of gunshots is high. However, it needs to be said, that as far as it is known, unsophisticated weapons such as cutlasses and sticks used to account in general for the majority of homicide cases in Ghana (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002, p. 238). Furthermore, the proliferation of weapons into the hands of unemployed youths in Ghana led to the phenomenon of land-youngster that use small arms with brutal force to enforce land claims on behalf of their employers. Due to the demographic and urban changes in Ghana multiple ownerships over plots of land and cruel land fights are a big challenge. Despite strict intermission, guards are frequently deployed to protect territory, a development that leads to shootings which regularly injure and kill people.

Apart from this list of incidents, the presence of guns in Ghana does have more implicit impacts on the country. The fact is that the vast majority of citizen deal with these not so obvious impacts even if a lack of data renders it impossible to quantify the scope of the following phenomenon. The circulation of guns in Ghana does have an economic impact on the country. Quantifiable Interviews with market women in Madina (Aning, 2010) in the north of Accra confirmed what any Ghanaian already knows, which is that people start to be restricted in the way they are doing business because they avoid travelling in the dark. In the cases of the chieftaincies disputes mentioned above, it has been reported, that banks contemplated to close down as economic activities came to halt. It is a well-known and accepted truth that security and development belong together, which is also valid in Ghana. Further on, tourism, the third biggest economic sector in Ghana, is very vulnerable to the public security situation. E. K Aning speaks of possible 21,000 tourists who were restrained from travelling to Ghana and a general perception within the tourist sector that rises in gun-related violence is reflected in the number of people choosing Ghana as their tourist destination (2010, p.14).

What impact do these trends have on Ghanaian citizens? In order to understand the situation of this society, it is necessary to underline the fact that Ghana has belonged to the more secure Sub-Saharan African states. For the time being, newspapers report extensively about gun-related crimes on an almost daily basis raising public awareness of the security situation. Drastic measurements such as the contested Shoot-To-Kill policy which were introduced in Ghana to fight armed robbers, contributed to the general impression that firearm-related violence gradually got out of control. Especially, the growing middle class in Ghana begins to see it as a necessity and normality to have electric fencing around their properties and the demand for private security companies in Ghana is skyrocketing. To reinforce, Ghana comes from an extremely low crime and security awareness level, which means that all changes are perceived as relatively big jumps. In all this, one can argue that the mere perception of increasing violence can influence the security situation for worse as citizens might see the need to take care of their own safety.

V. Overview of Scenarios

Scenario One:	State Dualism with Regard to Small Arms – The Diplomatic Invitation to Mayhem
Scenario Two:	A Ghanaian Initiative against Local Gun Production – Losing Sight of Demand
Scenario Three:	Full-Fledged State Responsibility – A Bright Hope of Complexity
Scenario Four:	Unmanageable Legalization – A Call to Arms

Scenario One: State Dualism with regards to Small Arms –

The Diplomatic Invitation to Mayhem

Ghana officially sticks to the Arms and Ammunition Act of 1962 which bans the local manufacture of guns, but allows for reparation works. At the same time Ghana stays signatory of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons that explicitly calls for dialogue with local manufactures. These legislative inconsistencies erode official regulations and encourage outmanoeuvring small arms control. The Ghanaian government fails to critically review and improve the state of the art of Ghanaian law in terms of small arms and with this tolerates loopholes. Legislative initiatives end with draft bills which are not passed, let alone implemented. At the same time, Ghana imports ammunition and arms via licensed companies and is illegally supplied with cross-border inflows of weapons. In public, it is not known how many guns are legally entering the country. The extent of illegal flows is completely unknown anyway. Furthermore, there are speculations about impacts of SALW proliferation, but no empirical verification. Information that can be taken out of reports on fire gun-related incidents is restricted because it suffers from an uncooperative information policy on behalf of Ghanaian authorities.

The state acts as a key player in the fight against small arms on the international arena, but de facto acts with fewer ambitions at home. Further, Ghanaian Civil Society Organizations strive to influence political processes for the better. However, at the end of the day, the government makes too little use of their expertise to bring about substantial change. The in-depth knowledge of civil society groups has not trickled down to the ordinary citizens who are terribly worried about new surge of crimes and are for the most part left alone with pieces of information the printing press has to offer.

With regard to the extent of small arms proliferation, the number of small arms circulating among civilians is gradually on the rise. For blacksmiths the benefit of producing small arms exceeds possible costs such as the degree of penalty. Particularly, the unclear and ambiguous legislation blocks possible repercussions for gunsmiths. Additionally, there is a great deal of legal dualism, which would mean that official laws banning small arms

production exist next to unwritten rights. According to traditional rights the production of small arms is taken as an inherent due. Frequently, the traditional legal understanding is favoured over official regulations which are rather seen as imposed than deeply rooted. This point of view is even shared by representatives of the police and law. Over the years, the illicit blacksmithing activity finds more followers and becomes more institutionalized. Traditional guilds are getting bigger and better organized and also former apprentices start their own workshops on individual basis. The commercialization of guns reaches new levels. The benefit of artisan gun production is evident: The gun-smiting is lucrative as locally-sourced guns bring substantial returns and might also bring about a good reputation. With the deepening scope of the activity, the commodity gun is becoming more and more elaborated, which in return catches the interest of more international customers. The structural unemployment is a particular problem for many young people in Ghana. Economic growth in Ghana does not trickle down to ordinary people and the young population finds itself without job prospects. This unfavourable development drives many young people into the gun-smiting business. The economic situation is a relevant driving force for the proliferation which decides whether people are ready to exploit loopholes in order to enter the profitable business of gun-making or not.

It can be summarized that the subtle increase of small arms in circulation leads to a point where control over the proliferation of weapons is certainly lost. In this context, there is a high risk that people amateurishly start to use omnipresent guns in criminal activities which worsens the overall security situation. The presence of guns has destabilizing effects on the region as the easy availability of small arms encourages smuggling of guns out of the country. Fatally, this comprehensive supply of small arms means that the costs of not having a gun seem to increase for the ordinary citizen. It is self-evident that it is also getting easier for criminals to access guns. Considering that an ever rising share of people is in possession of a gun, it is becoming more and more unreasonable to be one of the few households that cannot defend themselves.

Scenario Two: A Ghanaian Initiative against Local Production of SALW – Losing Sight of Demand

Ghana forges ahead in the fight against small arms. A new legislation specifically on small arms that leads to a single more coherent national law on small arms and light weapons is issued. The new legislation still bans local manufacturing of small arms and brings an end to the most blatant contradictions. For instance, the new law also prohibits repair works and thus prevents smiths from precisely knowing how different guns can be assembled. The dialogue with blacksmiths promoted in the ECOWAS Convention is implemented in the form of conversion programs. These programs are possible because blacksmiths are able not only to produce weapons, but a wide range of handicrafts such as agricultural products. Conversion programmes provide an alternative income to blacksmiths as the state as purchaser buys peaceful products from Ghanaian blacksmiths to offer alternative ways of income. These programs are integrated in outreach strategies on regional levels. Next to these incentives, more rigorous steps are being taken in case law is transgressed. Punishments become stricter on paper and in reality. An improved intelligence system

including surprise checks in blacksmiths workshops allows for heightened controls. The government's effort is certainly focused on the strategic cutting of the supply chain; specifically the local production of guns is being tackled. In the contrary, in regards to other sources of weapons, little action is done and few laws are passed.

In the area of curbing locally sourced small arms the state does demonstrate an elaborated activism. Particularly, on the international agenda Ghana enrolls as a facilitator in the issues concerning SALW. Local production is debated intensely; but critical discussions on the need for guns are not touched upon. The state spends resources to narrow down the proliferation of guns without ever tackling root causes. There is a heated public discussion around small arms, partly because outreach strategies aiming to reach blacksmiths are conducted all over the country. People do not feel assured that the small arms problem is handled right by the government. Citizens wonder whether the state has the capacity to solve the problem of small arms as security risks have been stressed, but on the other hand the lack of human security has been ignored which is of far greater concern to the people. In fact, wide parts of the society feel overlooked by the state activism. Similarly, the numerous Civil Society Organizations feel that their expertise is only listened to in pieces, but their scrutiny to the whole problematique is not appreciated. A lot of blacksmiths take part in the conversion initiative. Still, there are some who do not agree with the governments offer. Firstly, there is a higher profit margin when staying with the production of guns for the black market; secondly, the demand for cultural weapons has not been touched by official mechanisms; and thirdly, as long as cooperation with government and police officials is thinkable, blacksmiths will exploit possible relationships to make sure they will not be discovered.

The share of locally-sourced weapons is reduced, but the overall amount of weapons in circulation does not decrease substantially. Part of the reason is that weapons are still accessible, because illegal cross-border importations have not been broken away. With demand being stable, channels through which weapons from the sub-region enter Ghana are better organized by professional smuggling gangs. With the growing criminalization of weapons, gun production is still taking place below the surface. There are still some workshops functioning as arms plants because certain blacksmiths continue to produce weapons, may it be because of traditional understanding or because of greed for profit. Certainly, the proliferation of weapons is linked to the state of the economy and political attitudes. There is the risk that the state will stop to order those alternative agricultural products made during conversion programs as soon as demand is satisfied or state budgets get smaller. Further on, the efficiency of anti-arm initiatives is subject to heights and valleys as elections might bring new people to power and will change the face of administration. The whole project is liable to have no long term effects because when initiatives will be temporarily neglected or even totally abandoned people will produce small arms again. The biggest weakness of the strategy against the local production of small arms is that the concept of human security and the role of security forces is not touched upon. There is still a great deal of corruption involved in guns entering the country. Further, illegal sourced weapons are registered as legal ones for a small bribe. Knowing those channels provide criminals with weapons, Ghanaians stay worried about the small arms situation and do keep their arms in operation.

Scenario Three: Fully Fledged State Responsibility – A Bright Hope of Complexity

Ghana takes far-reaching measurements to control supply and demand side of small arms. Basically, the reduction of supply of SALW is made possible because government sets out to obtain empirical data on small arms supply and strives to understand why the demand for small arms is increasing. A coherent single law act manages to cut the local artisanal manufacturing. Combined with the conversion programs that inspire blacksmiths to produce other products instead of weapons and due to more severe punishments in the case of non-compliance, the supply of locally manufactured guns is significantly reduced. In addition, it is acknowledged that the stock of guns in Ghana stem from various sources. Consequently, attention is also directed to the problem of leaking caches of arms and illegal cross-border smuggling. To avoid fraud on the official side, improved intelligence is employed to check internal procedures which are in place to safeguard national stockpiles or to secure borders. Fundamentally, apart from supply side control there is also endeavour to curb the demand for small arms. Most importantly, the link between human security and the proliferation of weapons is tied. The failure to provide an overall feeling of security is admitted, and greater agency is shown to take care of the basic security needs of the wider public. In a general positive trend, this agency is expressed in various improvements that can be felt at the local level, ranging from road constructions to health service. Specifically, measures are taken to improve the image of the police in Ghana and it is campaigned that police officers are first and foremost obliged to cater for the needs of citizens.

The state plays a truly complex role in order to sort out the right means to control SALW in the country. For once, the government as facilitator enters into dialogue with the blacksmiths acknowledging their artisan skills and their financial needs, and offers sustainable alternative income. This way, the state also steps back from the standpoint that guns are equal to a pure security challenge. The state shows a more nuanced understanding that guns do mean different things in society, and also have a respected traditional and societal significance. In this context, the state also comes to terms with its own past, especially, by admitting the militarization of society during the 1980ies. It comes to light how many weapons were freely distributed, not in festive or traditional purposes, but by sheer political motivations. Furthermore, with the introduction of control measures towards its own forces, the state acknowledges that there has been too much space for corruptive deals. The state allows to be held accountable for its provision of security. This gradual process is made possible by agents of change in political offices. With the changing understanding from a state-centred to a human-centred concept of security, the state's provision of security becomes a benchmark, against which the state performance is measured. It is obvious that one of the crucial points for re-election is the output of human security brought about by the incumbent government. Civil Society Organizations (CSO) are important partners of the state as their expertise is appreciated and demanded to find out more facts about SALW proliferation. The output of the CSO work definitely benefits from the new flows of information by the state. Citizens do play the role of critical observers with regard to the security provision of the state. As long as the state does provide basic security, they are willing to rely on the state's responsibility to take care of personal safety instead of preparing for self-defence. Certainly, the state is not in the position to enjoy blind trust. In case there is reason to believe the state does not take its responsibility seriously to secure basic security citizens are not reluctant to swing to alternative way of self-defence.

The amount of newly acquired weapons circulating in Ghana is declining. As blacksmiths do not offer guns for high amounts of money anymore and the state proves new agency for better security provision, citizens think twice whether it is worth it to illegally hold a weapon. In particular the growing middle class is cautious whether it is reasonable to acquire a gun over a broker. There are still weapons manufactured in Ghana's blacksmiths workshops, but it seems that the guilds do have the means to monitor that traditional shotguns are sold to the hands of traditional leaders and respective community networks. Most notably, the traditional role of guns is not crossed out in the national debate about SALW proliferation in Ghana; this bestows blacksmiths the freedom to use their artisan skills for other artefacts which becomes to represent a successful transition of traditional art into a new era. Despite the growing ambition of the state to provide more security, people stay sceptical whether the state is capable of solving the problem. Buyback programmes do have limited success as the majority of guns are kept silently and people are afraid to be prosecuted of having an illegal gun in the past years. However, there are less and less blacksmiths who do reparation works and over time the attrition rate of guns takes its toll and there are less useable guns. In the long-run the experience of human security will make people more receptive to further buyback programs.

Scenario Four: Unmanageable Legalization – A Call to Arms

A new law permits the local production of small arms by blacksmiths. This constitutes a massive change in the nations' legal framework as local production of guns had been banned for over decades. The process of legalization is based on the assumption that former criminalization has driven the gun situation underground and has made the business even more profitable. It is assumed that it is favourable to legalize weapons: Registered weapons are better controllable and are less worrisome because they can be traced back to their owners. Every single gun holder is obliged to register his or her gun in community small arms registers. Theoretically, everyone who acquires a new locally-sourced weapon can have it easily registered. Financial means for the maintenance of small arms registries are raised, but in reality, the registration process does not run smoothly, as for example, certain region in Ghana are missing basic resources, such as electricity, paper or access to databases.

The Ghanaian State has clearly lost control of the situation as legalization took place. Instead of having better means to overlook the guns situation in the country, the proliferation of weapons advances too dynamically to be regulated. It was a misassumption that all citizens will have their locally-sourced weapons registered as criminals in particular are not willing to register their arms. The vast supply of weapons available at low cost causes a ripple effect and leads to a situation in which everybody has a gun. While the state fails to manage the exploding proliferation of guns, criminal networks are improving their internal organization. Small gangs exploit liberal laws by selling weapons abroad in order to make profit. Furthermore, guns are used as exchangeable commodities in the drug trade or in support of other forms of organized crimes. The new liberalization of gun-smiting leads to the situation in which blacksmiths have individual businesses and do not operate within the framework of guilds anymore. The process of legalization undermined the traditional organizational structure of the gun-smiting business which has been traditionally reserved for certain

families. Instead of a better management of the gun trade we see that there is indeed a loss of control mechanisms. Soon, it becomes evident that the decision to legalize the production of guns is not supported by the Ghanaian public that perceives the new flows of weapons as a big threat. Ghanaian citizens are affected negatively by the legalization process which adds to a feeling of insecurity and growing criticism towards the state.

The number of small arms is dramatically increasing in Ghana. Blacksmiths do not have to fear any legal consequences when they produce small arms which they can also sell at the black market all over West Africa. Considering that the well-reputed guns can be produced with low material costs, the high profit margin is a big incentive for anyone to get involved into the gun-smiting business. With unlimited guns in circulation, people know that criminals will not face any hindrances to acquire weapons. Basically, everyone is suspected to be in possession of a weapon which worsens the perceived security situation drastically. The trust in state forces is getting more and more restricted as it is obvious that there are more guns in private hands than with the police. The cost of not having a gun seems to be extraordinarily high in an environment of insecurity. There are more incidents of gun use whenever chieftaincies disputes flame up which has a negative effect on the security situation. The whole proliferation of weapons moves in a drastic pace. Blacksmiths and their middlemen export weapons to foreign countries and make sure that Ghana certainly belongs to a net exporter of weapons, even though the country does not have a single trademarked company.

VI. Conclusion

These four scenarios teach us that the future of small arms proliferation in Ghana is not yet decided upon and that very different outcomes are imaginable. It is evident that there is too little known about the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Hard facts concerning the number of weapons circulating in Ghana are missing and the focus of interest seems to be put on wrong questions. Too little attention is paid to the right role the state should play in the fight against small arms and light weapons and what resources are needed to successfully do so. Most importantly, the question how the proliferation of SALW will develop is an issue of how the state can provide human security in a wide sense and foster economic inclusion. The different scenarios show us that it is only one side of the coin to discourage blacksmiths to produce weapons. The only sustainable solution to stem the circulation of small arms and light weapons needs to take into account why people are ready to hold small arms. Light needs to be shed on the mistrust in state and police power which can be better understood when looking at the history of guns in Ghana. There seems to be agreement that barrels of guns are dark, but what does that mean? The challenge in the fight against small arms is to lift the focus from the darkness of the barrel of a gun meaning the gun as an object to the obscure reasons why guns are held in present-day Ghana.

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