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IDSA ISSUE BRIEF

21st Century Proliferation and Tracking

Tackling Arms Proliferation in the Modern Conflict Landscape

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Summary

Time and again, civilian masses the world over have been at the receiving end of legions of conventional weapons systems leaving destructive direct and indirect consequences in their wake. The copious arms -and their ammunition- currently in circulation range from assault rifles, rocket launchers, anti-aircraft weapons to pistols, machine guns as well as missiles, grenades and other explosive ordnances. This Issue Brief addresses the nature and challenges of arms proliferation today, briefly discusses the solutions and tools at the disposal of states and the global public like the Arms Trade Treaty, and analyses a recently launched, innovative global online system of tracking, mapping and reporting weapons found in on-going conflict zones, called "iTrace".

What would constitute an immediate, 21st century arms proliferation catalyst? Civil War? Separatist rebellion, genocide, urban gang wars of turf and business? International and domestic narcotic smuggling, terrorism, transborder movements of foreign terrorist fighters? The list goes on. In fact, entire checklists can be enumerated based on various incidents of conventional weapons and weapons systems being used against civilian masses to grasp how the wildfire-like spread of illicit arms and ammunitions has come to constitute a potent- yet less tackled- threat to internal and international security.

Many international organizations including the United Nations are increasingly vexed with the rising number of deaths and sheer loss in intra-state and intra-regional conflicts and the magnitude of civilian non-combatant deaths. According to a UNICEF report, wartime civilian fatalities increased from 15% during World War I to 65% by the end of World War II and over 90% in the conflicts of the 1990s[1]. In 2014, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reported 10,548 civilian casualties compared to 8637 in 2009.[2]

Several armed and violent events over the last few decades have involved mass casualties across the globe. In all of these incidents (and many more), knowing where the weapons used originated from and how they made their way to their final destinations would be beneficial. For instance, in India on June 4th 2015, Naga insurgents[3] ambushed an Indian Army convoy carrying fuel and soldiers of the 6 Dogra Regiment passing through Chandel in Manipur; About 18 died and 11 were wounded. They were first attacked with a potent IED which trapped the soldiers there and then were bombarded with heavy firepower from RPGs and assault rifles. An insurgent attack of this magnitude has not occurred for decades and the fact that they had access to such heavy weaponry is a cause for concern.

In Ukraine, on 17th July 2014, Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was shot down killing all 298 people on board. This occurred in the disputed separatist-controlled region of Donetsk and an oft-discussed opinion of what caused the crash is that a Buk surface-to-air missile

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1 "Patterns in Conflict: Civilians are now the target", *UNICEF*, Section on Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, at http://www.unicef.org/graca/patterns.htm, (Accessed on June 3 2015).

2 UNAMA and UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights , , "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict", *Afghanistan Annual Report 2014*, , February 2015, at http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf, (Accessed on June 3, 2015)

3 According to CNN IBN's IBN Live site, the insurgent groups that took the credit for this attack were the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland-A (NSCN), the Manipuri Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) and the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL). See "Indian Army Hunts Down Northeast Terror Groups, Kills Some Insurgents Behind Manipur Ambush", *CNN-IBN*, June 9, 2015 at http://www.ibnlive.com/news/india/indian-army-hunts-down-northeast-terror-groups-kills-some-insurgents-behind-manipur-ambush-1004011.html, (Accessed on June 11, 2015).

system was operated by a Russian-backed group of separatists[4]. Earlier that week allegedly Russian-backed separatists had shot two Ukrainian military aircrafts (the AN-26 and IL-76), and in that same week Associated Press journalists saw a Buk missile system launcher in the separatist-controlled eastern town of Snizhne.[5] Ever since the crisis began, there has been an escalating trend of arms flowing into eastern Ukraine including heavy weaponry like assault rifles and tanks as well as explosive weapons like cluster munitions.[6]

In Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State or IS (ISIS/ISIL/Da'esh) is increasingly becoming known for its brutality, and access to various types of weaponry acquired from earlier US packages provided for battling Assad's Syrian armed forces as well as those smuggled via Turkish border towns. Their arsenal includes Chinese, Russian and Soviet Man-portable Air-defence Systems (MANPADS) as well as newly manufactured Chinese, Iranian, Russian and Sudanese ammunition, IEDs produced on an industrial scale[7] and even those raided from Syrian air bases like Taqba.[8]

The bulk of illicit weapons in circulation further fuel these conflicts and are drivers of civilian casualties. Since these casualties keep increasing over time, there is a need for a mechanism to ascertain how licit weapons become illicit. In fact the indirect consequences of the illicit flow of weapons are many- especially the human cost. Millions of civilians caught in the middle of civil war escalated by the flow of arms die due to a lack of access to clean water, food and health care facilities. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of

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4 Man-portable Air-defence Systems (MANPADS) were not used despite the common misconception. Those are designed to target low-flying aircrafts like helicopters, not civilian/commercial aircrafts at 33,000 ft. in the air. See Gibbons-Neff, Thomas, "Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17: What Would it Take to Shoot Down Passenger Jet?", *Financial Review*, July 18, 2014, at http://www.afr.com/business/transport/aviation/malaysia-airlines-flight-mh17what-would-it-take-to-shoot-down-passenger-jet-20140717-j2cos, (Accessed on June 11, 2015).

5 Leonard, Peter, "Ukraine: Pro-Russia Rebels Downed Malaysian Plane", *Associated Press*, July 18, 2014, at http://www.bigstory.ap.org/article/official-malaysian-plane-shot-down-over-ukraine, (Accessed on June 3, 2015).

6 See "Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine", *Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*, November 15, 2014, at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/OHCHR_seventh_reportUkraine20.11.14.pdf, p 4, p.7 and p.47, (Accessed on June 3, 2015).

7 Findings and comments on " Tracking Arms in Conflict: Lessons from Syria and Iraq", *Forum on the Arms Trade and Stimson Center*, at http://www.forumarmstrade.org/uploads/1/9/0/8/19082495/april7_findings_final.pdf, (Accessed on 5th June 2015).

8 Sengupta, Kim, "It's Not Just the Savagery of ISIS that is Shocking- its Weaponry is too", *The Independent*, August 29, 2014, at http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/the-savagery-of-isisis-shocking—and-so-too-is-its-weaponry-9700476.html (Accessed on June 9, 2015).

Congo, an estimated 5 million people have died indirectly from armed conflict since 1995.[9] Those who do not die face other harsh realities like abuse, injury, torture, forced disappearances etc. Some conventional weapons like Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) are "weapons of the easy kill"[10] since they are portable, easily accessible and can even be operated by children.

CHALLENGE OF PROLIFERATION

Legitimate shipments of weapons get diverted through a number of ways- apart from being retrieved from active war zones full of abandoned or stolen weaponry. The subsequent ease of cross-border communication and transactions due to globalization has contributed to the diversion and trafficking of weapons and fuelling of arms black markets. At ports, not all shipping containers undergo cargo checks[11], end-use certificates are easily forged and falsified[12] and attempts are made to exploit legal loopholes and weak end-use (and end-user) certification standards. Containers are deliberately mislabelled as ordinary commercial goods or even humanitarian aid and corrupt officials are utilized for bypassing barriers. Globalisation has flowed hand in hand with a technological revolution which has also been exploited by arms traffickers who use tools like cloned sim cards and modified satellite phones.

Other technological innovations in arms like modular weapons[13]- whose components can be modified or moved about in an armoury workshop or in the field- make monitoring their use very difficult; and the 3D printing of guns[14]- which can be easily destroyed and thereby leave no evidence of a crime- are threats to future non-proliferation efforts.

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9 "Q&A: Global Arms Trade Treaty Enters into Force", News: Armed Conflict section, Amnesty International, December 22, 2014, at https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2014/12/global-arms-trade-treaty-enters-force/, (Accessed on June 5, 2015).

10 High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein's remarks during the 7442nd UN Security Council Meeting on the "Human Cost of the Illicit Flow of SALW", UN Press Release, May 13, 2015, at http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11889.doc.htm, (Accessed on June 11, 2015).

11 Malhotra, Aditi, "The Illicit Trade of Small Arms", Geopolitical Monitor, January 19, 2011, at http://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/the-illicit-trade-of-small-arms-4273/, (Accessed on May 13, 2015).

12 "Study on the Development of a Framework For Improving End-Use and End-User Control Systems", UNODA Occasional Papers No. 21, December 21 2011, at *www.un.org/disarmament/HomePage/ODAPublications/.../OP21.pdf,* (Accessed on June 11, 2015).

13 Acheson, Ray, "Editorial: 'New' Challenges or Old Ones?", Small Arms Monitor Vol. 7 No. 2, Reaching Critical Will of the WILPF, June 2, 2015, at http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/salw/mge2015/sam/SAM-7.2.pdf, (Accessed on June 2, 2015.)

14 Ibid.

The influx of licit arms into the black market not only boosts the proliferation of arms in general but also the illicit trade of other products often by exchanging arms for narcotics (like Afghan heroin), money, conflict diamonds, humans (mostly children and women) etc. Thus the expansion of one aspect of the black market also expands others like forgery and creation of false identity documents for traffickers and smugglers. The trade of a specific illicit commodity therefore is not an isolated crime or problem but also an interconnected one. Therefore it stands to reason that engaging tougher law enforcement practices in tackling one crime should benefit efforts to curtail others.

In May 2015, UN Secretary General Ban-ki Moon said at a Security Council Meeting, "deny access to illegal weapons and ammunition, and you deny criminals, armed groups and extremists a central means to perpetrate violence, intimidation and harm".[15] Therefore, given the extent and crime-fuelling nature of the proliferation of arms, availing of certain means of knowing where particular illicit weapons originate from, what routes are used to smuggle them (often across borders), which structural loopholes are exploited etc. is crucial.

Certain international instruments and projects exist to monitor and prevent the illicit trade and proliferation of arms. These include the International Tracing Instrument (ITI)[16], the Firearms Protocol[17], and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UN PoA)[18]- which requires state parties to ensure that licensed manufacturers treat the application of appropriate and unique markings on every weapon as a crucial component of the production process[19]. The recent entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) has also been hailed as an instrument to potentially curb the global illegal arms trade:-

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15 UN Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon's remarks during the 7442nd UN Security Council Meeting on the "Human Cost of the Illicit Flow of SALW", UN Press Release, May 13, 2015, at http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11889.doc.htm, (Accessed on June 11, 2015).

16 ITI stands for the International Tracing Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, at http://www.poa-iss.org/InternationalTracing/ITI_English.pdf.

17 It stands for the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. See http://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/a_res_55/255e.pdf.

18 The UN PoA stands for the UN Programme of Action footnote to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

19 Wairagu, Francis , "Marking and Tracing: A Critical Link in Combating the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, at http://www.poa-iss.org/RegionalOrganizations/RECSA/RECSA-Marking-and-Tracing-EN.pdf, (Accessed on June 5, 2015).

ATT

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)[20] is a historic piece of international legislation brought into force in 2014 by UN member states to regulate the international trade on conventional weapons (e.g. tanks, large-calibre artillery systems, attack helicopters, small arms, rifles etc.) and thereby attempt to prevent the consequences of irresponsible trade like conflict, poverty and human rights abuses.[21] It comprises of robust enforceable global rules meant to prevent the inflow of arms and ammunition into states if it is known that a particular transaction will lead to war crimes or crimes against humanity.[22] Every State-party is obligated to assess the risk and veracity of the end-use and user and proceed only when there is no chance of a crime resulting from that transaction. Such risk assessments have not always been common practice and this leads arms dealers, corrupt/destabilized governments and/or non-state factions to exploit loopholes to increase the inflow of weapons and further criminal activity in a region.

While it is too soon to tell if the ATT will successfully curb proliferation and irresponsible trade, it certainly helps that of the 69 states that have ratified the treaty (out of 130 signatories), some of them include the world's top arms exporters like Germany, France, UK and Spain.[23] Overall, the ATT is meant to be a standard of accountability that states and civil society can hold one another to, and ensure better management of conventional arsenals and arms trade. However, prominent exporters and importers like Russia and Saudi Arabia have not signed or ratified the treaty and the fact that two of the world's biggest arms importers i.e. India and China[24], abstained from voting on the ATT questions the long-term relevance of this treaty in Asia.

Other global guidelines and parameters like the UN Register of Conventional Arms, International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and the International Small Arms Control Standards[25] (ISACS) are relevant resources. INTERPOL also has operations like the Integrated Border Management Task Force's HAWK, STOP, Lionfish etc. and arms

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20 See NTI's summary of the key provisions of the treaty text and developments at http://www.nti.org/treaties-and-regimes/arms-trade-treaty-att/, (Accessed on June 5, 2015).

21 "Why We Need a Global Arms Trade Treaty", *Oxfam International*, at https://www.oxfam.org/en/campaigns/why-we-need-global-arms-trade-treaty, (Accessed on June 5, 2015).

22 See no. 9.

23 Ibid.

24 "The United States Leads Upward Trends in Arms Exports, Asian and Gulf States Arms Imports Up, says SIPRI", *SIPRI Press Release*, March 16 2015, http://www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases/2015/at-march-2015, (accessed on June 11, 2015).

25 For the standard modules of the ISACS, see http://www.smallarmsstandards.org/isacs/.

tracking databases (like iARMS) oriented towards curbing the illicit weapons trade and the crimes enabled by it. However, databases like iARMS can only be accessed by law enforcement personnel.

While the UN Register records licit arms transfers between various states and the ATT advocates exercising caution in arms trade practices, diversion can still occur, therefore it would be advantageous to see how licit weapons become illicit and how they are procured by non-state groups, in order to formulate corrective measures. New technologies and projects have been developed to monitor and track the movements of illicit weapons and one such innovation is "iTrace" which attempts to help accomplish the goal of the ATT and other international non-proliferation instruments.

CASE STUDY: iTrace and tracking weapons today

iTrace is a new online global weapons mapping system through which anyone can track the transfer of illegally diverted conventional arms and ammunitions across the world based on data collected and verified by the investigative field teams of Conflict Armament Research (CAR). It is funded by the EU and was launched for the public in October 2014 at the UN in New York.

"Tracing" itself is the systematic tracking of illicit arms -usually small arms, light weapons and other conventional arms- "found or seized on the territory of a State from the point of manufacture or the point of importation through the lines of supply to the point at which they became illicit".[26] Further, this point of entry into the illicit category occurs through what is known as "diversion".

Reference materials and training courses on how to track illicit weapons have existed for a while now.[27] However, there has never before been an active, expanding database focusing on tracking and reporting the movements of weapons found in on-going conflict zones.

Every bit of information about every weapon, munitions crate, shell casing etc. found is documented amidst dangerous conflict conditions, verified and then included in the iTrace database. This could include images, make and model, country of origin / use / discovery, intended destination, point of diversion, time frame of use, manufacturer, serial numbers,

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26 See Small Arms Review Conference 2006 Document on the International Tracing Instrument, at http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/international_instrument.pdf, p. 2, (Accessed on May 8, 2015).

27 For an excellent collection of sources of reference materials, see James Bevan's website, at http://jbevan.com/researchresources.html, (Accessed on April 15, 2015).

factory markings, whether it was abandoned or used in an incident, possible users or perpetrators etc.

All of this information aims to determine who the proliferator of illicit weapons is, where these weapons are heading, and at exactly what point in time (and chain of custody) did they transition from licit into illicit weapons. The database is also supplemented by the profiles of key players and groups involved (be they state militaries or non-state armed opposition / "rebels / militias") in the relevant area as well as an interactive map showing where the weapons / containers have been. Therefore one could identify potential diversion risks and arms trafficking entities, and possibly be better equipped to create counter-proliferation strategies.

CAR was founded by James Bevan in 2011 and comprises of weapons-tracking specialists including former members of UN monitoring / inspections teams[28] who wanted to create a global weapons tracking and reporting system to help provide a fuller picture of illicit arms transfers and their transborder and global linkages. They operate in on-going armed conflict areas like South Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq etc. and their methods combine those used by UN sanctions monitoring groups and the Small Arms Survey's tracing guidelines. The investigators, usually in teams of 2, always document one case at a time[29] and speak to weapons users like rebel groups and the military, weapons manufacturers and exporters as well as national defence, intelligence and security agencies. CAR employs an extensive verification process which includes: on-site investigation, verification by both internal and independent experts, evaluation of any objections from states, release of the information through iTrace, and lastly, right of reply.

The teams frequently face certain investigation challenges like attempts to make weapons untraceable by removing the serial number or any markings that could indicate its origin or history of use. In Syria and South Sudan, guns have been found whose serial numbers were removed with an oxyacetylene torch.[30] To counter this, CAR interviews different armed opposition groups and ascertains when, how and through whom the weapons came into their possession. For instance, it was found that in South Sudan's case it was

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28 Gibbons-Neff, Thomas, "Tracing the World's Weapons, One AK-47 at a Time", *The Washington Post*, , June 25, 2014, at http: / / www.washingtonpost.com / news / checkpoint / wp / 2014 / 06 / 25 / tracing-the-worlds-weapons-one-ak-47-at-a-time / (Accessed on April 17, 2015).

29 Interview with Jonah Leff, Director of Operations at CAR, by Gibbons-Neff, Thomas, "Tracing the World's Weapons, One AK-47 at a Time", *The Washington Post*, June 25, 2014, at http: / / www.washingtonpost.com / news / checkpoint / wp / 2014 / 06 / 25 / tracing-the-worlds-weapons-one-ak-47-at-a-time / , (Accessed on April 17, 2015).

30 Interview with CAR's Timothy Michetti by Viling, Miles, "Conflict Armament Research", *The Firearm Blog*, December 23, 2014, at http: / / www.thefirearmblog.com / blog / 2014 / 12 / 23 / conflict-armament-research / , (accessed on April 2015).

the Sudanese National Intelligence who were physically removing all signs of their involvement in supplying certain groups in the South Sudan conflict.

The way the iTrace database itself works is that upon inputting a search item- a weapon, country, manufacturer, non-state group etc. a number of results will come up. If one types "MANPADS" in the search bar, two results in Africa emerge. Upon clicking one, the map shows a history of possession from Russia to Ethiopia. The summarized case file on the right hand side states that this particular weapon i.e. the 9K38 Igla (SA-18) MANPAD, was manufactured by KBM (Konstruktorskoye Byuro Mashynostroyeniya) in the Russian Federation. Its serial number is 03267 and it has these additional marks- 03-95 HE FUZED. Upon clicking "View Report", all the waypoints on the map through which the weapon travelled are enumerated thus: it was manufactured in Moscow's Kolomna City from where it made its way to Eritrea and then Galgaduud in Somalia where an arms dealer transferred it to Hargeisa in Somaliland. From there, it finally reached Harar in Ethiopia where the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) was holding them[31].While the initial shipment from Russia to Eritrea was actually legitimate at the time, this would not have been possible today because of the sanctions imposed on Eritrea since 2008-09 by the EU, UN Security Council and unilaterally by states like the UK.[32] However, the mid-1990s was a violent phase for Eritrea due to its conflict with Yemen so arms shipments to Eritrea, albeit legitimate, would have faced the risk of diversion, which is ultimately, exactly what happened.

A critical look at iTrace though is necessary, and it reveals certain weaknesses. For instance, iTrace has been available for public use for less than a year, so the number of entries per conflict area covered is low. There also are not enough recovered items included in the database. Most often the data gained from the search results are indicative of routes and players but not every item can be linked to an incident.

Secondly, James Bevan rightly says that "weapons are evidence"[33]; they have markings and according to procedure, CAR investigators are contacted by the group(s) which have come across the weapon/ammunition/crate etc. A danger however lies in the possibility that regardless of the weapon's markings, the group could be lying about where they found it or when they received it, who gave it to them etc. in an attempt to implicate another party. The process of collecting human intelligence is not fool proof and the information acquired can still be biased. Weapons markings can only reveal origin or

31 The author performed this search on May 12, 2015.

32 See the list of sanctions at https://www.gov.uk/arms-embargo-on-eritrea, (Accessed on May 12, 2015).

33 See Weapons and Ammunition Tracing section at http://jbevan.com/weapontracing.html, (Accessed on April 15, 2015).

some history of use and forensic testing could ascertain where the weapon has been by testing foreign particles present on (and within) the weapon. However, it is not always possible to do forensic testing in the field (like in an active conflict zone) so this is more of a challenge that CAR would need to overcome rather than an inherent weakness.

A rather key challenge does arise when CAR is not allowed to investigate in a particular country. If a state is actively proliferating, in all actuality it is not going to allow CAR to investigate on its territory, simply out of self-preservation and the risk of unilateral/multilateral sanctions and blacklisting if evidence of its proliferation came to light. States play a key role in the realization of CAR's iTrace investigations and so ensuring greater awareness of the database and its applications amongst states would aid implementation, and support for venturing into more conflict zones. Simply launching it at the UN headquarters is insufficient so more outreach programmes like High-Level Workshops (about the technology itself and how it can help) with various states and regions can help with this.

It could be argued that almost all the weapons covered by iTrace happen to be small/light or other conventional arms and so this provides an incomplete picture of the illegal arms trade today. However, more than chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons and their components, conventional arms like handguns, RPGs, rifles etc. are the types of illicit arms most commonly found in circulation. iTrace also unintentionally provides a potential for misuse: non-state armed groups are increasingly internet-savvy and it would not be particularly difficult for them to use this new technology to ascertain potential sources for acquiring weapons (or even which ones to avoid).

While iTrace has the above challenges to overcome, it also possesses certain strengths and potentials which set it apart from other tracing and/or monitoring efforts. For instance, getting external independent experts to verify their findings enhances both the credibility of the information they acquire and also CAR and iTrace's image of reliability and effectiveness.

iTrace also helps tackle the myths about the origins of weapons in contemporary conflict.[34] For instance, the assumption that most unauthorized weapons in circulation are Soviet surplus stocks is untrue since many of the arms and ammunitions found in several African conflict zones are from Iran, China and Sudan. The program is certainly young but with the increasing additions of more conflict zones, it has the potential to be a very effective means of identifying weapons trafficking patterns and violations of various domestic and international controls. And while it is impractical to assume that the illicit weapons

[34] See no. 30.

trade can be entirely shut down anytime soon, tools like the ATT and iTrace can help us ascertain and understand the various sources, distribution points and illicit trade networks.

CONCLUSION

Various fields can benefit from tracking illicit weapons as a means of identifying and/or apprehending perpetrators of various crimes. Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations, border security, anti-smuggling as well as illegal trade monitoring units of numerous law enforcement and military agencies can track weapons since it helps unearth intelligence like how many elements and who all are involved in an illicit activity, how many times the products (or even the weapons used to protect the products) changed hands, what is the geographic area they are operating in, which infrastructural barriers are being exploited to enable the flow of illicit weapons and goods or even which loopholes are allowing for these weapons to be acquired in the first place.

iTrace may prove to be important for determining the path that conventional arms traverse globally and it would enable analysts and policymakers to create or select mechanisms to minimize these illicit flows. Without verifiable data on the history of possession of illicit weapons, tackling the proliferation of arms becomes even more difficult- and not just in active conflict zones. Scholars of area studies too can gain insight into the crime networks and the flow of illicit products in a specific region by using tracking resources.

Regardless of what technology or strategy is used, states need to embrace the security culture of tracking- tracing the sources of illicit arms, ascertaining supply routes and sources, using this information to prosecute and secure convictions, heightening the security measures of weapons caches in overseas military bases and so on. In fact, cooperation between organizations like CAR and INTERPOL would be very useful to states who truly want to crack down on proliferators and arms black markets.

Weapons and war are as old as mankind, but what sets the 21st century apart from previous eras is the very nature of conflicts and threats faced. Insurgencies, invasions, annexations, genocide, civil war and gendered violence are intricately tied to the burgeoning and stifling forces of profit and industry dictated by arms dealers, war lords, drug lords, corporations, oil barrels, and of ideology and misuse of religion. The one element that remains the same throughout the various modern conflicts is the astronomical human cost, particularly that of civilian life. Therefore, tackling arms proliferation today with modern and creative resources and strategies would go a long way in offsetting that cost.

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