

The Economics of Peace and Security Journal

© www.epsjournal.org.uk, ISSN 1749-852X

Book Review

Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva. 2007: *Small Arms Survey 2007: Guns and the City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. viii + 360 pp. ISBN: 978-0-521-70654-4 (paperback). Price: £17.99.

by Jurgen Brauer (26 March 2008)

The seventh edition of the yearbook from the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey project, hosted by the Graduate Institute of International Studies, is again an excellent piece of work. Some themes of this year's edition are carried over from earlier editions, such as updated research on production (this year, on licensed and unlicensed production), stockpile counts (this year, more on civilian firearms), and an update on the perennial small arms transfer issue. This is complemented by country studies (the Philippines, Burundi, Brazil, Uganda, and South Sudan) and — this year's main theme — research on “guns and the city.”

Among the main findings are that urbanization is associated with rising rates of gun violence, worrisome as all projections suggest more urbanization in the decades ahead; that rapid urbanization frequently goes hand-in-hand with a failure to equally rapidly upgrade urban services, including those related to safety; that urban violence is often as much political as it is criminal and, if criminal, is often well organized; that response strategies can “push” violence to select parts of the urban landscape, thus fragmenting cities; and that from the available options of coercive, compliance-based, and voluntary interventions, a judiciously chosen mix can be more successful than any single option by itself.

To economists, the chapter on Kalashnikov prices will be of particular interest. Collecting 326 data points over 115 countries over 20 years, prices ranged from a low of US\$12 to a high of US\$6,000. Among other findings, the results of regression analysis suggest that more stringently enforced small arms-related regulations lead to supply restrictions and higher average prices; that porous borders among neighbors increase supply and thus lower average prices; and that lower prices are associated with increased risk of civil war. Perhaps surprisingly, once other factors are included in the analysis the collapse of the Soviet Union by itself does not appear to have affected weapons prices.

Another interesting chapter continues the small arms-research community's relatively new interest in the relation of ammunition to guns. Two cases are examined, those of Uganda and of Brazil. Contrary to a widely-held assumption, a bullet-by-bullet sampling and examination strongly suggests that one set of nonstate actors in northern Uganda may obtain its ammunition supply through state sources. Since most bullets are marked to permit identification of producer (or at least producer country) and year of production, the existence of a fairly close overlap between ammunition stocks in state and nonstate actors' guns makes it difficult to argue that ammunition enters nonstate actors' arsenals from outside the country. Just as we have learned that most illicit weapons leak from initially legal stockpiles, so now it appears that ammunition likewise may leak from legal sources to illegal holdings. A very detailed and closely reasoned examination for the case of police weapons in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the highly specific

ammunition required to fire these weapons shows that ammunition that finds its way to nonstate actors most likely is due to unauthorized diversion from official stockpiles.

The yearbook ends with a chapter on Sudan, South Sudan that is, rather than Darfur in the West. I find this highly appropriate. Whereas far too little is in fact done to assist Darfur's victim, and whereas the conflict has spread to Chad and the Central African Republic, the situation in South Sudan is by no means solved. As in other cases — for example — El Salvador in the 1980s and 1990s, the “peace” that followed the peace agreements can be worse than the preceding war itself. Such appears to be the case for South Sudan as well.

All-in-all, the yearbook once again makes valuable contributions to our knowledge.

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