

Military Demand and Supply

PRODUCTS AND PRODUCERS

This chapter approaches small arms production from a demand perspective: the demand for small arms and light weapons by the world's militaries. By estimating the scale of demand, for both new and surplus weapons, it projects global rates of production and surplus transfer.

The global stock of small arms is never static, but rather in constant flux. Demand for new stock varies according to need, political will, and the availability of funds; the global small arms production rate is consequently never fixed, but fluctuates to meet changes in demand. As Figure 1.2 illustrates, military procurement periodically peaks.

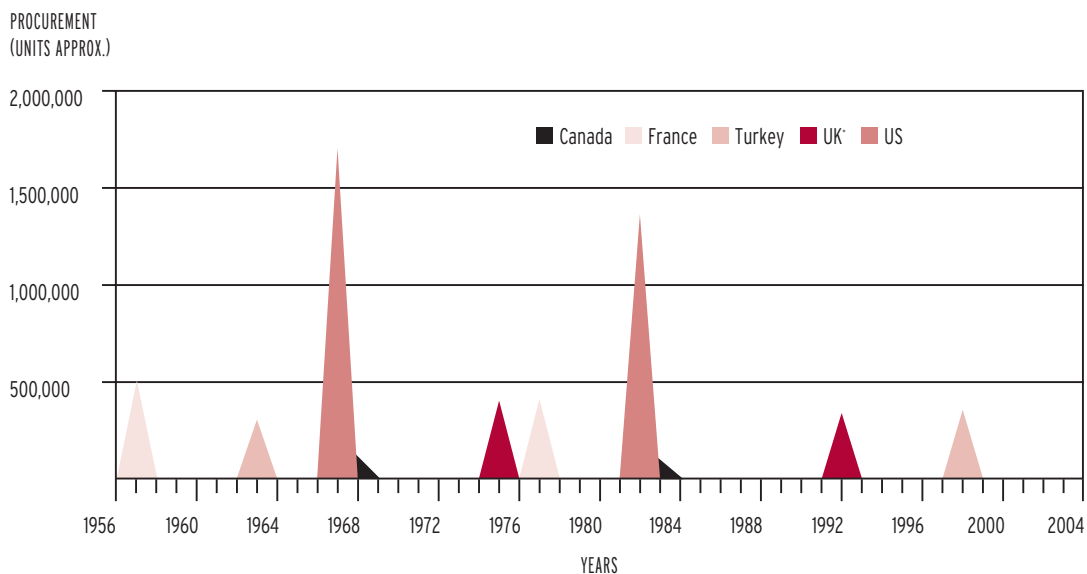
The method and its implications

It is not sufficient simply to note that production this year increased in contrast to last year, or the reverse. A demand-side approach explains why production rates change over long periods of time. It can establish trajectories, and hence predictions, of small arms acquisition.

The analysis presented in this chapter estimates procurement and production for a 'global' sample of 151 countries' militaries. It focuses on the acquisition of assault rifles and carbines—the most numerous small arms in military service. By using ratios of each type of weapon stocked by militaries, it projects assault rifle and carbine procurement data to estimate pistol as well as light and heavy machine gun acquisition in the 151 states. In so doing, the chapter covers the procurement of the majority of infantry weapons in use today.

The study uses a proxy for procurement rates to project data from 29 countries (see Figure 1.4) for which relatively reliable data was available onto the 151 countries in the analysis. This proxy is the age of a state's small arms and light weapons stocks; it is based on the design age of weapons and is used to illustrate a country's commitment, over time, to procuring weapons.

Figure 1.2 Major procurement of assault rifles and carbines by selected NATO countries, 1956–2006



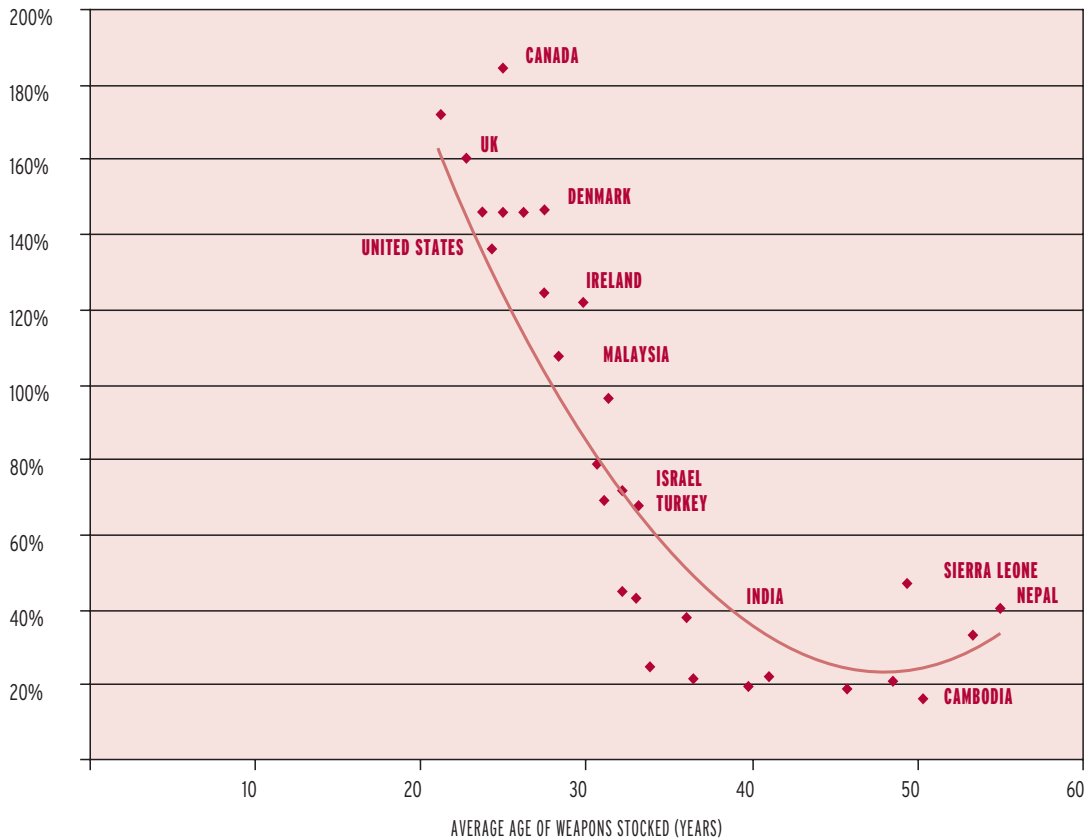
Note: Total units procured are condensed into the year in which the procurement initiative began. The graph must therefore be read as a stylized presentation of procurement trends.

* Information regarding the United Kingdom was provided in a letter from the UK Defence Logistics Organization (UKDLO) to the Small Arms Survey concerning the procurement of the SA80 weapon system, 9 November 2005.

Sources: Canada (2005); DFASP (1998); US DoD (1997; 1998; 1999; 2000a; 2001a; 2002a; 2004; 2005a); Forecast International (2005); Heyman (2001); *Jane's Defence Weekly* (1995; 1996); Ness (1995); Sariibrahimoglu (1998); Watters (2005)

Figure 1.4 Average age of weapons stocked and procurement rates in major initiatives for 29 countries

P_D/S: PERCENTAGE OF WEAPONS PROCURED
PER CAPITA ACTIVE MEMBER OF ARMED FORCES



Main findings

The chapter finds that the world's militaries procure around 50 million small arms and light weapons over a 50-year period, or around 1 million units annually. However, not all of this acquisition is of newly produced weapons and the chapter flags a critical dynamic: the cascade effect of new acquisition displacing surplus stocks.

The production of military small arms and light weapons over a 50-year period ranges between 36 and 46 million weapons and averages 0.7–0.9 million annually to meet this demand. The trade and transfer of surplus stocks to militaries across the globe could number up to 14 million units over a 50-year period.

Surplus stocks are largely transferred to the world's poorer states, while the wealthier states tend to rely more heavily on newly produced weapons. Yet because demand is cyclical—and to a large extent generated by states attempting to maintain parity with one another or adhering to alliance membership rules—production and surplus transfers fluctuate.

The important thing to note is that production and surplus transfers are linked. There is a significant cascade effect as wealthy states renew their arms and displace older weapons via surplus transfers to less wealthy states.

Some of the world's largest procurers will launch major procurement programmes in the next 10–15 years. Whether this will prompt the kinds of surplus transfers witnessed in the 1990s remains to be seen, but the potential for an increase in the transfer of surplus small arms and light weapons is a distinct possibility.

Unless these stocks are removed from circulation by destruction, more weapons will be destined for the armouries of some of the poorer states of the world, where stock security is often weak, regimes are unstable, and armed conflict more prevalent. ■