A soldier inspects ammunition at the armoury of the Philippine military headquarters in Manila, August 2003.
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Conclusion
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This book reviews the information available on the characteristics of ammunition for small arms and light weapons, the processes underpinning authorized or illicit transfers of such ammunition, misuse of ammunition in specific contexts, and the challenges involved in developing common policies and approaches for controlling the proliferation of ammunition for small arms and light weapons. The book sets out a range of characteristics that set ammunition for small arms and light weapons apart from the weapons themselves. It is important, for instance, that small arms and light weapons can be used for many years, while each cartridge or round of ammunition can be used only once. This means that ammunition stockpiles are quickly depleted in contexts of sustained use, such as in criminal or conflict settings. Illicit ammunition flows sustaining armed conflicts and crime, which may thus be particularly interesting to researchers, also seem to be a prime area for targeted policy action. Legal flows of ammunition are also of interest. Reported annual authorized small arms ammunition exports average USD 700 million. This represents about one-third of the value of authorized transfers of small arms and light weapons. It is worth noting that the actual value of ammunition exports is almost certainly much higher than this because of underreporting from exporting and importing countries and the absence of reliable data on transfers of light weapons ammunition and related equipment such as hand grenades.

Production of guided ammunition for light weapons is not widespread because the technology involved is not easily accessible. While ammunition for small arms is produced widely around the world, large-scale production capacities and production capacities for high-quality products are much more difficult to obtain. Tanzania, for example, has been seeking external assistance in recent years in order to update its 30-year old Chinese-built ammunition factory. Responsible export regulations for transfers of ammunition production capacities are important because the establishment or refurbishment of production facilities

has the potential to create future sources of destabilizing ammunition proliferation in states that do not have, or are still in the process of establishing, effective national systems for the control of domestic ammunition production, stockpiling, and transfers. The importance of these regulations is underscored by evidence from a review of the latest developments in ammunition for small arms and light weapons, which indicates that the accuracy and destructive capacity of ammunition—particularly for light weapons—are continuously increasing.

In conflict situations, the availability of ammunition can affect the level of intensity of conflict as well as patterns of use and misuse. The reliable resupply of the correct type of ammunition (i.e. corresponding to the calibre of weapons used by the fighting groups) is crucial during conflict. Instances where armed groups find themselves in possession of weapons they cannot use because of a lack of suitable ammunition are the best evidence of the interdependence of weapons and their ammunition. In addition, disrupting illicit flows of ammunition could make ammunition less available to embargoed actors and increase its price. This, in turn, could provide the incentive to find a negotiated settlement to armed conflicts.

The need to prevent leakages from national stockpiles and to identify the origins of illicit flows of ammunition highlight the importance of putting in place systematic and reliable systems for marking and tracing. The detailed study of how ammunition reaches armed groups, whether in conflict or criminal settings, underlines the importance of the ability to identify the provenance of ammunition that is misused. Even a limited measure, such as the reliable identification of state actors who order and then procure a given quantity of ammunition, would be an improvement on the present situation because it would allow ammunition holders to identify patterns of leakage from their own stockpiles should some of their ammunition be recovered from the illicit sphere. Measures such as the new Brazilian Statute of Disarmament and its provisions on the marking of ammunition are therefore encouraging steps and it is important to monitor its effects in order to assess the extent to which it will prevent ammunition diversion from state stockpiles, allow reliable identification, and discourage misuse by state forces.

In addition to strengthened national measures, regional and international cooperation should be improved. Trafficking networks, such as those that allow

criminal gangs to procure their ammunition, take advantage of the lack of information exchange that still exists between countries. Insufficient consultation and coordination can also be found inside countries: between the different law enforcement bodies (e.g. the army, police, and customs officials) or between the different levels of administration (e.g. federal and local). International cooperation is crucial not least in order to identify patterns of trafficking and to track recovered ammunition back to its origin.

The proper management of ammunition stockpiles and the destruction of surplus ammunition are of paramount importance. Lax stockpile control poses serious risks of diversion of ammunition—sometimes in large quantities—to the illicit sphere. It may also prove dangerous to populations living in areas neighbouring ammunition storage facilities who may be victims of an accidental explosion. The issue of ammunition disposal is particularly crucial in post-conflict situations where explosive remnants of war pose serious threats to populations attempting to return to a normal life.

The management of ammunition stockpiles has not yet been accorded sufficient priority on the global political agenda, where it should rank as a serious security and proliferation issue. Many countries seem to lack a political awareness of the significant challenges posed in this area. Countries may also lack national capacities in this regard, and need to rely on the financial and technical assistance of donors. In some cases, when problems are too serious, radical changes to current management systems and the promotion of elementary principles of explosive safety are required to complement financial support and infrastructure development.

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The reviews carried out in this book aim to serve as a first step—or 'primer'—for further efforts by the small arms and light weapons research community to tackle the issue of small arms and light weapons ammunition control. Additional research is required—particularly on such issues as national standards for state actors on stockpile management and for marking of and record-keeping on ammunition that is produced for state actors. Useful research could also be conducted on global small arms ammunition production and trade flows in

order to better identify potential sources of concern and patterns of flows in relation to diversions of ammunition from the legal sphere. There is also scope for studies at the regional and sub-regional levels on measures for ammunition control with a view to developing harmonized national approaches at these levels to complement standards on small arms and light weapons control.

At the same time, the scope and depth of much of this research will be dependent on greater transparency by states, and a greater willingness by them to engage fully with the small arms and light weapons ammunition issue. There is currently a severe lack of transparency about domestic ammunition production, including the number of manufacturing facilities and their outputs in terms of volumes and types of ammunition produced. States should also be encouraged to be more open about authorized transfers and to report regularly—and in greater detail—on cross-border transfers of ammunition. Increased transparency is essential for the development of a more accurate picture of global production and transfers of ammunition for small arms and light weapons. This, in turn, is required in order to identify more accurately and to prevent destabilizing accumulations and proliferation of ammunition as well as illicit trade flows. It could also make an important contribution to combating the proliferation and trade in illicit small arms and light weapons. Finally, existing sources of information should be improved, and press agencies and the media generally should be more careful to distinguish between small arms, light weapons, and their respective ammunition when covering news items.

This book highlights avenues for future research and also areas for political action. While there is significant overlap between controls on small arms and light weapons and those suggested for their ammunition, there is also a need for controls that take account of ammunition-specific challenges. For example, controls on the export of ammunition could easily be integrated into controls on the export of small arms and light weapons. In contrast, ammunition-specific efforts are more relevant in the areas of stockpile management and ammunition destruction. Further efforts are needed to raise awareness and to promote a better understanding among states, donors, and other stakeholders about the

challenges posed by insecure and unsafe stockpiles and the requirements for the safe destruction of ammunition. Ammunition collection and destruction should become an integral part of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes and other relevant post-conflict efforts aimed at reducing destabilizing accumulations of ammunition. Wherever possible, ammunition stockpile destruction must be coordinated with other small arms and light weapons control or security sector reform programmes and initiatives. There is significant synergy, and opportunities to rationalize administrative costs should be explored for each project. This will require better coordination between international organizations, donors, and other stakeholders.

Other areas for future political action are marking ammunition at its point of manufacture and improved record-keeping on ammunition transfers to allow the tracing of ammunition that is recovered from the illicit sphere. In the light of the fact that ammunition flows often take place across international borders, agreement between states would be required to cooperate in the tracing of illicit ammunition. A political debate on these issues would benefit from a more focused approach that distinguishes between the different levels of traceability for ammunition and the relevant requirements.

States should be encouraged to make greater efforts to exchange information on their national regulations, rules, and procedures relating to the control of ammunition for small arms and light weapons. This should include exchanging information on national systems for the management of ammunition stockpiles and on standards for the marking of ammunition procured by governments. Greater openness in these areas, where rules and procedures often remain classified, could increase the understanding of common approaches and the scope for developing relevant minimum standards.

Furthermore, states should ensure that national legislation and regulations covering production, domestic transfers, and ownership of ammunition for small arms and light weapons make the best possible contribution to preventing ammunition diversions. To some extent, this is already the case for small arms and light weapons. States should at least ensure they can identify ammunition diversion from stockpiles by domestic state actors such as the military or police forces. There is also a need to harmonize domestic controls with high common standards set at the regional and sub-regional levels. This is impor-

tant in order to prevent states with weaker controls from becoming 'sources of choice' for those seeking illicit ammunition.

Strengthened controls should also be applied to ammunition exports. These should include a rigorous assessment at the licensing stage of: the risk that the ammunition being exported will be diverted or misused; the proper use of authenticated end-user certificates; as well as physical checks to verify that adequate records have been kept about the transferred ammunition and that it reaches the authorized recipient. This should be complemented by restraint in export policies and the development of common standards at regional and international levels on when a licence or authorization for an export should be denied by licensing officials. In addition, there is also a critical need to control the activities of those brokering or otherwise facilitating the transfer of ammunition. As indicated above, such controls on ammunition exports and brokering might best be addressed in the context of existing controls on transfers of small arms and light weapons.

In sum, this book highlights the desirability of taking a comprehensive approach to the control of ammunition for small arms and light weapons. Where possible, controls should be integrated into standards and systems for controlling the production, possession, use, transfers, and stockpiling of small arms and light weapons. Certain aspects of ammunition controls, however, are better addressed by efforts that are geared to the specific challenges posed by ammunition. In either case, a continued policy debate is essential in order to encourage greater national, regional, and international efforts to fully address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons ammunition in all its aspects.