

"Orphans" and Icons: Small Arms Control and Armed Groups in Southeast Asia

Stephanie L.K. Koorey

**Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
College of Asia and the Pacific
Australian National University**

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This thesis is my own original work

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Stephanie L.K. Koorey

Dedication

To Holly, Edie and Caius whose childhoods were so dominated by this project.

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Abstract

Over the past decade, the international community has initiated programmes and policies to redress the worldwide availability and circulation of small arms and light weapons. These efforts are principally aimed at curbing the illicit transfer and retransfer of small arms and light weapons.

This study evaluates small arms control as it relates to non-state armed groups in Southeast Asia. It is guided by the research question “to what extent does the current small arms control architecture affect how armed groups in Southeast Asia obtain, retain and surrender their weapons?” The core findings of the study are that there are three defining features of the illicit small arms proliferation pattern in Southeast Asia, augmented by two enduring themes. Combined, these features and themes contribute to a more nuanced appreciation of the illicit small arms proliferation and control dynamic in the region.

The first feature is that the current illicit diffusion dynamic in Southeast Asia is that of a “mature” market, which has characteristics that the current control architecture does not address. This mature small arms market is distinguished by a tendency for armed groups to obtain weapons from sources that are mostly internal to the conflict zone. The second defining feature is that the disarmament of armed groups appears to have a number of intangible dimensions. Appreciating the importance of these intangible dimensions becomes particularly apparent when looking at the third feature of the small arms proliferation and control dynamic, which is the characteristics of demand for small arms by armed groups in Southeast Asia.

Running parallel to these three features are two sub-themes. The first is termed “sufficiency”. The numbers of groups, and more particularly of combatants and weapons in this region, do not appear to be particularly large. Given the duration of many conflicts in this region however, there is clearly a sufficiency of each. Sufficiency also underscores the credibility of a disarmament process. The second sub-theme is the creation and nurturing of paramilitaries and private armies, which may be growing.

These findings are reflective of, but not necessarily restricted to, the examples studied in this region. The study suggests that the current control measures do not fully capture the proliferation dynamic as it appears in Southeast Asia at the

present time. It argues that reconceptualising the current small arms proliferation and control paradigm may prove beneficial. In particular, an extended small arms control architecture may capture the spectrum of small arms proliferation that is particularly evident in Southeast Asia. This extended architecture involves a deeper and broader approach to the control of small arms and light weapons.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABSDF	All Burma Students Democratic Front
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AK/47	Eastern European or Chinese-origin automatic rifle (Automatica Kalashnikov)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEANAPOL	ASEAN Chiefs of National Police
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
BA	Burma Army
“Balik baril”	Bring A Rifle Improve Your Livelihood, weapons buy-back scheme (the Philippines)
BCP	Burma Communist Party
BMA	Bangsamoro Army
BIAF	Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces
CAFGUs	Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units

CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
CNRT	National Council of Timorese Resistance (Concelho Nacional de Resistência Timorense)
CQ	Chinese M16
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
Falintil	Forças Armadas De Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor)
Fretilin	Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente)
FN FAL	Belgian-origin automatic rifle (Fabrique Nationale de Herstal Fusil Automatique Leger)
GAM	Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka)
GPMG	General Purpose Machine Gun
G3	German-origin Gewehr 3 automatic rifle

HN5	Chinese-origin Surface to Air Missiles
KKY	Burmese “defence” groups (Ka Kwe Ye)
HK	Heckler and Koch rifle, usually meaning a G3 or G33 or HK33
IANSA	International Action Network on Small Arms
ICBL	International Campaign to Ban Landmines
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
IRA	Irish Republican Army
KMT	Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
KR	Khmer Rouge
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
M1/M2	US-origin semi-automatic rifles
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
M16	US-origin automatic rifle
M249	US-origin Light Machine Gun, also known as a Minimi or a Squad Automatic Weapon.
M79	US-origin grenade launcher

MANPADS	Man Portable Air Defence System
MNLA	Mon National Liberation Army
MTA	Mong Tai Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
“Paltik”	Craft-produced weapon (Philippines)
PNP	Philippines National Police
PRC	People’s Republic of China
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RPG2	Soviet-origin Rocket Propelled Grenade (Ruchnoi Protivotankovii Granatomet2)
“Rakitan”	Craft-produced weapon (Indonesia)
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SAM	Surface to Air Missile
SAS	Small Arms Survey
SA7	Soviet-origin Surface to Air Missile (also known as a Grail or Strela 2)
SKS	Eastern European or Chinese-origin self-loading carbine rifle. (Samozaryadnyj Karabin Simonova)

SPDC	State Peace and Development Council, (the Burmese government.) Formerly known as SLORC, State Law and Order Restoration Council
SS1	Indonesian-origin automatic rifle (Senapan Serbu 1)
SSA-S	Shan State Army – South
SSN	South-South Network
SSR	Security Sector Reform
Steyr	Austrian-origin automatic rifle
“tatmadaw”	Burmese Armed Forces
TNA	National Army of Aceh (Tentara Nasional Aceh) formerly known as forces of the Free Aceh Movement, AGAM (Angkatan Gerakan Aceh Merdeka)
TNI	Indonesian Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia)
Type 56	Chinese-origin AK47 (also known as an M22)
UDT	Timorese Democratic Union (União Democrática Timorense)
UN	United Nations
UN RoCA	United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

UN PoA	United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
US or USA	United States of America
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic
UWSA	United Wa State Army
WA	Wassenaar Arrangement
WWII	World War Two

The Sword Hunt

Sovereign powers have long struggled with the paradoxes of small arms proliferation and the nuances of small arms control.

In 1588, Japanese Emperor Hideyoshi proclaimed that all “swords, bows, spears, muskets, or any other form of weapon” in the hands of farmers and peasants were to be turned over to local lords in order to be melted down and used in the creation of a statue of the Great Buddha.¹ⁱ Recognising the inherent difficulties in taking away people’s personal weapons, and enforce the disarmament of an undoubtedly unwilling population, (and in attempting to do so even add to their discontent), Hideyoshi’s subtle actions reveal a great deal about small arms control. While stating the purpose to be a higher ideal of ordinary people confirming the collective religious values of their community, the aim was in fact to “eliminate local caches of weapons, and to break the habit of armed response to disturbances.”²

This “sword hunt” appears to be a classic case of disarmament. However Hideyoshi’s actions are broader than disarmament alone; his intent was to remove the demand for weaponry. In creating a higher ideal, seen as a better communal use of the metal in the swords, he removed the desire of the population to retain its weapons. The result was disarmament; removing the weapons from those deemed unsuited to have them. His actions also reflect the intrinsic need of a sovereign power to monopolise armed force.

¹ Mary Elizabeth. Berry, *Hideyoshi*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 102.

² Mary Elizabeth. Berry, *Hideyoshi*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 104.