

Chapter 3

Strengthening International Cooperation: A New Agenda for Control Regimes?

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Firstly, we report on the presentation by Martin Roeber on the Role of the Intelligence Services.

Addressing the subject of strengthening international cooperation as regards illicit trafficking, the speaker emphasized that the intelligence agencies were merely one part of the network of organizations involved in this issue. He added that the priority which had been given to other issues such a drug trafficking over and above illicit trafficking in small arms was due basically to the difference in the sums involved.

He emphasized that this subject was not the focal point did not mean that it was less important. This was an issue which required a transnational approach so that it could be dealt with effectively.

In this respect, international cooperation should work towards:

1. Identification of purchasers;
2. Exchange of information between the different administrative areas involved in the operations;
3. Assistance and cooperation on judicial matters.

Another element to be taken into account, so as to achieve greater international attention to this subject, is the impact which it could have on society, given that the greater the priority given to it by governments, the more effective the cooperation would be.

In his talk on international policing (INTERPOL), Donald Manross reported on the establishment of new cooperative links in international policing. He began his lecture with an explanatory introduction on the functioning of INTERPOL, its character as an international organization with national offices in different Member States and its basic objectives which were to ensure mutual assistance between police authorities and to establish institutions capable of

contributing to the improvement of its functions in the pursuit of international crime.

He acknowledged that in spite of the efforts deployed there were still difficulties in terms of cooperation in this domain and a reluctance to examine it in more depth, which would have to be overcome.

He illustrated how the illegal trafficking in small arms appeared to be growing as did its links with organized crime. This increasing flow was revealing a lack of effective mechanisms of cooperation, above all in relation to the exchange of information, the monitoring of the flow of traffic and its destination, the sources of the weapons and even the types of weapons being traded. However, he added that the lack of effective mechanisms of cooperation was not the only obstacle which must be overcome, as, for example, there are some legislative systems which are extremely lenient in terms of the possession of light weaponry or handguns.

It could also be said that there is no awareness at a societal level of the dangers which result from the current proliferation of small arms nor of the terrible consequences it has for modern society.

In his lecture, Dr Saborío reported on the Central American experience in relation to the control and patrolling of border zones. He mentioned that small arms were a problem in Central America and that the control mechanisms consisted of efforts by the region which at internal level involved various inter-institutional initiatives.

The Central American region had, over the last few decades, shared three common phases which distinguish it from the rest of the hemisphere:

1. A phase of excessive militarization;
2. A phase of civil war;
3. Implementation of peace processes.

In essence, following Esquipulas II (1987), the pacification process involved demilitarization and disarmament. It was in this context that joint activities were initiated for the reduction of the armed forces and the disarmament of the militant groups.

In terms of the specific case of the illicit trafficking in small arms, it was the Security Commission, established as a result of Esquipulas, which served as the forum for the agreement of measures such as:

1. The commitment by all countries to strengthen their mechanisms for control and monitoring at points liable to be used for the illegal trafficking in small arms;
2. The fluid exchange of information in border areas, and the patrolling of these areas;
3. Harmonization of legal procedures, judicial cooperation and assistance;
4. Mechanisms for multilateral consultation for the resolution of controversial cases.

He also reported on a recent important event which took place in January 1997 when the Central American Presidents signed the “Declaración sobre Recolección de Armas Ilícitas en Manos de Civiles” [Declaration on the Collection of Illegal Weapons in Civilian Hands] in Nicaragua (he emphasized that Belize also signed it). Its purpose is to plan and carry out the collection of weapons so as to eradicate illegal possession and reduce illicit trafficking. It should be added that these documents also contained a request for cooperation from friendly countries and international organizations such as the UN/OAS, especially in border areas.

In her lecture on the role of the State, Swadesh Rana formulated the following assessments:

1. In spite of the difficulties presented by this issue, future prospects are not completely negative though, nor should they give rise to an unrealistic sense of optimism. It must be acknowledged that one difficulty lies in the fact that the global response to this subject has been far less substantial than the attention it has received at national level;
2. The global repercussions of the problem must be studied in depth;
3. The involvement of the various communities in the treatment of the issue, due to the resulting social consequences, is an element to be taken into account when considering the importance which the problem is acquiring. Ms Rana gave a breakdown a posteriori of what in her opinion were the various essential components of the issue:

**A. Type of Weapon:
Breakdown into the Following Categories**

1. Military weapons, i.e., those conforming to military specifications, produced by governments or in accordance with the requirements of States;
2. Weapons not manufactured for military purposes (hunting, etc.);

3. Home-made (clandestine industries);
4. Tools and accessories.

B. Weapon Activities

- Violence;
- Crime, urban crime;
- Illicit trafficking;
- Threats against the State and its institutions.

Ms Rana explained that it was very difficult to establish an exact correlation between the type of weapon and its applicability.

To conclude, she emphasized that the role of intelligence was today far removed from the espionage stereotype, rather it was related to investigation, systematization and harmonization with a view to the prevention and limitation of the consequences resulting from illicit trafficking.

The panel chairman, Ambassador Marcos Castrioto de Azambuja, provided a conclusion to the lectures, underlining the following points:

It is clear that we find ourselves facing a new and different army. The Cold War period prioritized weapons of mass destruction. The post-Cold War period finds the international community better prepared to tackle the complex issue which forms part of the enlarged international agenda.

The international community, which up till now has sidestepped this issue, in which various factors are interlinked and different players are involved, and which requires a multi-dimensional focus, now has the opportunity to take on a new agenda in which this subject must occupy a preponderant position.

The subsequent questions revealed the interest in studying various aspects of this subject in more depth:

1. The level of sensitivity which still exists between States and which obstructs the free flow of exchanges of information and inter-agency cooperation;
2. The link with drugs trafficking and the possibility of tackling the issue using the same strategy used to confront the drug problem, including devoting the same amount of financial and human resources to it;

3. The flow of small arms must be the object of increased monitoring, and the same level of monitoring must be directed at the resources involved in this type of illicit trafficking;
4. It would be useful to analyse the possibility of agreement on the establishment of a register of transfers of small arms as a way of making this trade more visible.

At this point a distinction was made between the various mechanisms, forums and objectives which exist in the international context:

1. The United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons. Pre-determined categories. Measures to promote mutual confidence;
2. Prevention of crime and the consequences for society which result from the proliferation of small arms;
3. United Nations working group on the illicit trafficking in small arms and handguns.

These are initiatives of different types but nonetheless convergent, though there is no a priori coordination. As things stand, it does not seem right to give precedence to one forum above another, given that, while some duplication of effort must exist, the nature and consequences of the issue justify these different focuses which, even though they are moving forward in parallel, are working towards the resolution of a single problem.

