Winning the post-war: norm localisation and small arms control in Kosovo and Cambodia

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Abstract

This article asks how domestic elites contest and localise global norms in contentious post-war contexts. Engaging with critical norm research, it develops a 'two-step localisation' framework in order to explain how seemingly technical security governance programmes depend on active congruence making with constitutive state-society narratives – both by international practitioners and domestic elites. The first step consists of the adaptation that practitioners working in the field make in order to tune their message to local contexts, and the second step constitutes the locally driven processes of contestation through narrative construction. The article thus brings in deeply political negotiations over state-society narratives in order to unpack how local agents contest and reframe global norms. Applying the two-step localisation framework to a comparative case study of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control programmes in Kosovo and Cambodia, the article illustrates how the relationship between arms and state-society narratives is key to understanding the outcome of security governance processes.

Keywords: arms; Cambodia; Kosovo; localisation; norms; post-war reconstruction.

Introduction

While the hubris of the liberal peacebuilding era is waning, if it is not but over, the practice of exporting 'ideal standards' through security assistance is still the business of international actors. One such practice of socialising post-war societies in global norms and standards is Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control, designed to transfer international 'best practice' for weapons collection, destruction, management and regulation. Having invested in the practice, and in developing international standards, we may expect international 'norm entrepreneurs' to continue pursuing SALW control at the end of armed conflict, despite its varying success rate to date. While evaluations of small arms control abound, few have treated it as a norm diffusion process. In order to understand the way the global enters into local contexts, this paper analyses the constitutive processes at play when SALW standards are promoted, contested, localised, and renegotiated in two key cases of post-war civilian disarmament campaigns.

Research has by now moved beyond a focus on how international standards and norms are accepted or rejected, and gone on to emphasise their intersubjective meaning in historically specific local contexts (Wiener 2004, 2007, 2014; Acharya 2004, 2009). This article contributes to the literature on how international norms – contested by definition – find local meaning in post-war transition contexts, following recent debates (Zimmermann 2016; Tholens and Gross 2015). It does so by critically advancing Acharya's framework of norm localisation (2004, 2009), and explores the way local actors give meaning to international norms in such tense political transformation periods as after armed conflict. The article proposes a framework of 'two-step localisation' to analyse such processes: the first step constitutes the adaptation strategies that international practitioners make in order to tune their message to a local context, and the second step uncovers the locally driven process of giving meaning to international norms through endogenous, but contestatory, state-society narratives. Bringing in negotiations over narratives permits analyses that go beyond the realm of formal institutions, and probe what localisation and 'dynamic matchmaking' mean in informal, fluid and frictional post-war contexts. It also means challenging perceptions of disarmament as being

primarily a matter of insecurity, security maximisation, or a material understanding of political bargaining more broadly. Indeed, it argues that disarmament may take place even in the most insecure environments, as long as it is accompanied by powerful, locally defined, and constitutively embedded narratives of state-society relations.

SALW control are multifaceted processes of arms control, and have evolved significantly since the 1990s (for an overview see Bourne and Greene 2010). SALW control encompasses programmes that seek to reduce the availability of weapons, manage remaining stocks, and control arms possession and flows. It has become an integral part of peacebuilding and the Security Sector Reform (SSR) over the last two decades, but with a varying record of success (Karp 2009; Bourne and Greene 2010). However, the SALW problematique continues to have relevance, as post-war countries often witness widespread and uncontrolled weapons in circulation, both among state forces, armed groups, criminal organisations, and civilians (Kreutz *et al.* 2010). Whereas Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes tackle armed groups and recognised armed fighters, SALW control programmes are broader and refer to 'those activities, which, together, aim to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of uncontrolled SALW proliferation and possession' (SEESAC 2006b: 1), especially aiming at civilian weapons holdings (Parker 2011). It involves weapons collection and destruction, legislative and regulatory reform, training of police and military in arms management and democratic security governance, stockpile management, and awareness-raising and risk sensitisation among the general population (SEESAC 2006b: 1). Countries in which SALW control in its various forms has been applied span the world, from Afghanistan to El Salvador and Mozambique,[1] indicating its widespread nature.

Beyond the technical components, SALW control implies centralising the use and maintenance of SALW in post-conflict situations, so as to strengthen the state's capacity to uphold the monopoly on legitimate use of force at the expense of other, non-state agents, while introducing systems of democratic security governance. SALW control projects a collective social order, or collective security culture more specifically. Collective security sees the security governance of a state to be the

concern of central security institutions, not by individuals or extended families, and security institutions as legitimate representatives accountable to their community. Constructing such a collective social order is not a new or 'fragile state' phenomenon: 'The British working class was armed and militarised to facilitate collective disciplining when it suited the national purpose, and they were disarmed and demilitarised later for precisely the same reasons,' notes Squires (2000: 34). Henceforth, contemporary SALW control, created to enable re-socialisation processes and adjustment of mind sets and behaviour (Colletta and Muggah 2009: 10–15), is certainly more than the technicality of removing weapons of war from societies undergoing transitions to peace. It is fundamentally about establishing a new, collective social order where the state is vested with the legitimate monopoly on the use of force. Rather than tracing specific aspects of SALW control (its very technical nature has already produced plenty of evaluations and research), this article casts the net wide and focuses on the overall configuration of state-society relations that form part of an endogenous security culture. This makes for broad contextual analyses of key post-war narratives governing state-society relations, rather than micro-evaluations of specific SALW standards.

The article proposes a critical norm approach for this purpose, and applies the adapted norm localisation framework to two post-conflict SALW control programmes: the EU-ASAC project in Cambodia (2000–2005), and the UNDP-ISAC/KOSSAC projects in Kosovo (2002–2014). The two programmes took place roughly during the same time period; they consisted of roughly similar types of international actors; and they were completed with similar-sized budgets. Their project outcomes are, however, quite different: the Cambodian project collected large amounts of civilian-held weapons, set them ablaze in publically sanctioned 'flames of peace' ceremonies, and effectively eradicated the problem of gun crime among the public. The Kosovo project, instead, was unable to collect even a few hundred weapons, found unfertile ground among local stakeholders to support anti-gun campaigns, and struggled to endow a new Arms Law with legitimacy – although later iterations aimed at embedding the programme within post-independence Kosovo institutions, achieved some success with less ambitious targets. There are certainly a number of explanations as to why these two

outcomes were so different: there might be reasons to believe that Kosovars did not want to give up their weapons due to the unsettled conflict with Serbia. Yet, neither was Cambodia a secure place in the early 2000s, where the Khmer Rouge had been active up until the late 1990s. In fact, prominent observers in early 2000s were pessimistic about the future stability of Cambodia after 30 odd years at war. Moreover, SALW control outcomes might be related to the length of the preceding war: Cambodians might have been tired of war and conflict after nearly three decades of it, while Kosovars were perhaps still keen to ensure their battle readiness. In addition, tradition – *e.g.* hunting practices, or the so-called 'gun cultures' – might influence the outcome of SALW control projects. There are almost certainly numerous inter-related reasons why some disarmament programmes succeed, while other fail.

This article shows *how* state-society narratives contributed to shaping the way these outcomes came about, in conjuncture with other context-specific factors. The comparative research design is used as a tool to expose the crucial role of narratives in making sense of all the other factors influencing post-war security governance. The research was conducted through *in situ* interviews between 2008 and 2012 with SALW control stakeholders. In the absence of ethnographic research, the empirical case studies also rely on secondary data analysis from sociology, anthropology and historiography. The research puts forward an interpretivist thesis that the *story of disarmament* matters as much as the weapons themselves.

The paper proceeds by first reflecting on the nexus between norms and post-war security governance, before presenting the adapted norm localisation framework, linking a critical norm approach to parallel debates in the field of peacebuilding studies. It then details how the proposed framework of analysis enables us to uncover the processes shaping the 'failed' and the 'successful' Small Arms Control programmes in Kosovo and Cambodia, respectively.

Security governance, SALW control and norm diffusion

Research in the field of post-war peacebuilding has been concerned with international attempts to socialise and engineer target states and domestic societies (Gheciu 2005a; Ignatieff 2003). It has been noted that the neoliberal peacebuilding enterprise deeply resembles the imperial practices of socialising and co-opting elites (Chandler 2006; Darby 2009), and that the use of local ownership models and capacity building techniques are essentially aimed at teaching a selected segment of the population the correct 'formula' of liberal democratic systems (Gheciu 2005b). Lately, mixed systems of liberal and illiberal norms are observed to exist (MacGinty 2010; Jarstad and Belloni 2012), and some see 'friction' as a distinct condition between the 'global' and the 'local' in post-war reconstruction processes (Björkdahl and Höglund 2014; Millar *et al.* 2013).

What peacebuilding studies have shown us is that the struggle to (re)assemble a community set of rules and values in the aftermath of war is crucial: legitimacy between governors and the governed is key to sustainable peace, and to effective governance. States can rule by coercion alone, but there are significant gains in ruling by consent. Legitimacy enables the state to assume authority over society, which relinquishes some degree of autonomy in return for protection and collective goods. Such a contractual view of the state focuses on the functional aspects of relations between the state and society. However, one way of fixing the analysis in cases where formal institutions act as sites of contestation rather than as governing bodies, is to work with *ideational properties* of specific state-society relations. Ideational properties are those configurations of norms, values and ideology from which the state elicits legitimacy from society, and which guide the relationship between the two. This is akin to constructing what Joel Migdal has called 'symbolic configurations' of rewards and sanctions, ordered and packaged in a 'moral economy' by those seeking social control (Migdal 1988: 26). Migdal argues further that social control by the state is indicated first by compliance to its demands; second by participation in state-authorised institutions; and third by legitimation of the 'state's rules of the game', which 'indicates people's approval of the state's desired social order through their acceptance of the state's myths' (*ibid.*: 27). By focusing on the construction of these

'state myths', this article argues that it is possible to link state-society narratives with the success or failure of SALW control.

This speaks to the literature on the social construction of weapons (*cf.* Perrin 1997; Eyre and Suchman 1996), which demonstrates how even this core aspect of realist thought must yield to non-rationalist analyses. Weapons lie at the heart of crafting legitimacy for the state's monopoly on the use of force, and synergy between state policy and societal mechanisms for controlling weapons is crucial for effective firearms control (Ashkenazi 2010: 234). Therefore, when we discuss very material dimensions of power – firearms – we cannot escape analyses of how elites *construct* state myths aimed at fostering legitimacy for their rule in the aftermath of war (*cf.* also Widmaier 2007).

Contrary to other norms often studied under the banner of 'conventional' constructivism, the set of norms called SALW norms in this article is highly contested by key international actors, and lacks a clearly delineated scope. SALW norms still lack a critical mass making it 'cascade', and are a far cry from internalisation (Garcia 2006; Grillot 2011). The patchy support to the Arms Trade Treaty,[2] the reluctance of states to yield information on their weapons holdings and the difficulties in agreeing on a common definition of SALW make it difficult to talk about global standards in this realm. However, international organisations involved in post-war security governance prioritise promoting SALW norms in post-war countries, and they are therefore more likely to influence these countries than strong states. The gradual roll out of UN International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS)[3] testifies to the influence of international organisations over 'weaker' states in the system. This makes for pertinent analyses: given that SALW norms at the international level are still 'emerging', there is much room for interpretation and negotiation of what they mean in the specific local context. Findings from South East Asia, for example, show that SALW norms have been framed in terms of strengthening the state over other non-state actors, be they traffickers, armed groups or civilians, while other aspects such as more transparency on government weapons holdings have been largely ignored (Capie 2008). The constantly negotiated content of SALW norms can be said to allow

for analyses that take seriously a definition of norms as fundamentally contested, while centring the foci on those non-linear and global-local linkages that undergird post-war struggles.

Adapting norm localisation to post-war security governance

The literature on global norms has moved from a focus on the purely international level to a focus on what happens when international norms meet local contexts, and especially how contestation is a key process in giving meaning to external norms (see the other contributions to this Forum). Acharya (2004, 2009) argues that norm localisation is particularly apt to capture the process of a 'dynamic matchmaking' between an external idea and the local 'cognitive prior'. This resonates with studies that consider agency as decisive in norm diffusion processes (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Price 1998), and where local salience is taken seriously (Cortell and Davis 2000, 2005). Yet, while the localisation framework shifts the focus of analysis to local agency explicitly, and goes beyond static models of a global-local 'match', or static 'salience', it does not pose an epistemological challenge to 'conventional' constructivism, with its neo-positivist perspective where norms constitute a form of independent variable that causes an effect. Acharya treats localisation explicitly as the outcome of diffusion, akin to such an 'effect'. While there is merit in the localisation framework, it could be enhanced by uncovering what the 'dynamic matchmaking' implies beyond formal institutional adjustments. Focusing on congruence making instead connects with conceptualisation of norms as processes, rather than as 'things' (Krook and True 2012). Non-rationalistic approaches emphasise that ideas are symbolic and representational, and thereby social and intersubjective, rather than a collection of individual beliefs, and that ideas are themselves forms of power through their capacities to produce representations (Laffey and Weldes 1997: 210). Treating norms as process rather than 'things' or a 'cause' allows a better and deeper understanding of the constant reconstitution of norms. This is consistent with critical norm research, where contestation describes a process of constituting meaning through interactions, and which demonstrates that norms are constantly negotiated and acquire divergent meanings depending on the context in which they are used (Wiener 2004). Such

critical norm research locates agency at the local level of norm negotiation, which resonates with findings from the 'local turn' in peacebuilding studies, concerned with how local actors and politics determine the outcome of peacebuilding interventions (cf. MacGinty 2011; Schroeder and Chappuis 2014). The period following armed conflict can often be as politically contentious as the period of war itself, and is characterised by intense negotiation over the creation of state myths, *i.e.* sociocultural forms of interpretation meant to delineate and confine interpretation strategies and agency constellations.

In order to take the localization framework to a more critical engagement with 'dynamic matchmaking', it is purposeful to define this process as creating 'state myths' through *narrative construction*. Narrative construction as a concept originates from cognitive psychology, for which it has been used to explain how people construct the nature of their reality (Bruner 1991). Similarly, for the purpose of studying struggles over interpretation in post-war contexts, narrative construction takes the form of a series of negotiations over the content of key concepts guiding state-society relations: authority, legitimacy, national identity, and the persona of the state itself. Narrative construction, in this case, signifies the process in which agents promote historically conditioned conceptualisations of (national) identity, with the intention of legitimising a specific view of state-society relations. Security models, in the case of post-war security governance, act as institutions, which narrative construction processes compete to influence. The contest over dominant narratives is an international-domestic struggle, as well as a struggle between different sets of domestic actors that seek to provide the winning 'symbolic configurations', ordered and packaged in a 'moral economy', in Migdal's words. Referring back to the SALW control context, we may therefore identify three sets of agents with interest in promoting specific narratives concerning the type of 'security culture' of a given country: international actors, primarily the SALW control implementing organisation, but potentially also other competing international actors; domestic elites, such as political party leaders emerging out of war time configurations, local mayors, economic elites, and military actors; and the public, functioning as reservoirs of values, norms and beliefs with which competing elite narratives must

engage. Negotiations over master narratives bounce back and forth between these three agential levels, and interact in what is described below as two-step localisation. The outcome of SALW control, ultimately, depends on the extent to which these narratives feed into intersubjective ideas consistent with a collective security culture, in which the state is seen as the legitimate defender of individual, societal and national security. Constructing the frames of interpretation and systems of representation is more than an intuitive exercise in understanding the social world. It is fundamentally an exercise in power over knowledge. Power in the process of narrative construction means the ability to provide strategies of interpretation that legitimises certain systems of representation and specific types of action. For example, successfully constructing narratives of a society that is meant to take order from its rulers, complete with historical references and national mottoes, may enable rulers to act with impunity, but also to facilitate civilian disarmament, as will be made clear in the case study of Cambodia below.

Two-step localisation

We may distinguish between two sets of legitimation strategies over the winning 'state myths': first, international actors are forced to make adaptations based on conditions they encounter in the specific post-war environment, and second, local actors contest and give their own meaning and interpretation of global norms promoted by international agents. As we will see in the cases of Cambodia and Kosovo, international adaptation and domestic reinterpretation are pragmatic processes of 'dynamic matchmaking' – even as the original meaning of the international norm might get lost in the process.

The first step of the revised localisation framework takes the form of practitioner-driven strategies aimed at creating synergy between the external ideas underpinning specific security governance and local realities. What is intended by practitioner is staff of international organisations who work in the field offices of their respective organisations, and who are responsible for the implementation of specific programs. We can identify at least three elements of such a localisation strategy in post-war settings: *local ownership*, whereby domestic institutions are included in the

project planning and/or implementation; engaging with the local *political culture*, thus actively seeking legitimacy by manoeuvring domestic political actors and discourses; and *adaptation*, *i.e.* those adjustments, alterations, and selective process of making the external model of SALW control 'work' within the political, cultural, and social context. We can recognise adaptation where the original design of the disarmament project is altered during the course of the implementation phase. Empirically we often observe that field-based practitioners have significant scope for adapting SALW control norms, but that it takes political, cultural and social skills to achieve an acceptable balance between international expectations and local politics. This strategy consists of constructing narratives that hedge SALW norms of collective security with often prevalent post-war discourses of victors, victories and domination. While agreeing that many peacebuilding missions are out of touch with local politics, effectively viewing its politics as 'noise' that 'distorts' the 'prescribed' policy path, it is also empirically pertinent to observe how practitioners working in the field are keenly aware that their success is dependent on tailor-made solutions suitable to the conditions on the ground. Moreover, practitioners often seek to juggle expectations from the international organisation with the limits and potentialities defining the local context in which they operate, rendering their role as 'dynamic matchmakers' critical.

The second step is the process in which domestic elites promote historically conditioned conceptualisations of society, the state and their inter-relationship, with the intention of convincing the public of a specific representation of state-society relations. 'State myths', which may afford new political elites the privilege of ruling by consent, are at stake. In order to determine how state-society narratives come about, it is necessary to scrutinise two elements of dominant discourses. First, it matters how the 'authentic' peoples of the land are portrayed. Considering that 'the nation' is very much in the making, making claims about the characteristics attributed to the real, or 'authentic', citizen is key to understand how society is framed. Constitutive features of the nation shape the ideational properties of state-society relations, and these properties subsequently influence the outcome of security governance programmes. As will be demonstrated in the empirical cases below,

for SALW control purposes, we may discern diverging narratives of the nation; a 'militant and rebellious' type and a 'peaceful and compliant' one. In the 'militant and rebellious' type, local elites valorise the armed struggle with the intention to exclude other actors competing over political legitimacy, and cement coherence among the national group. By feeding the public with heroes, folkloristic symbolism, and exclusionary national identity politics, they ensure their own political survival. In the second type, society is characterised in 'peaceful and compliant' terms. Elites provide narratives based on peaceful and compliant society because they believe they will lead to their own long-term political survival, and because they are confident that no significant alternative narratives exist to which the public can turn.

The second set of narratives to explore in the second step is that which defines the persona of the state, meaning the identity, character and attributes of the polity. Is it egalitarian *vis-à-vis* the nation, or does it encompass absolute power both internally and externally? The use of the term persona indicates the constructed nature of the state in the consciousness of society. *Vis-à-vis* society, it is crucial to outline convincingly a narrative that reinforces the constitutive dimensions of the nation. Enacting the state persona is a key role for national elites. But the persona of the state is also linked to wider international configurations, especially to the immediate geopolitical context. There is thus a dual exercise of constituting the state by framing it in terms consistent with the domestic state-society framework, as well as with the regional and international order.

The next section will demonstrate how these processes work in practice. Through a thick description of two key SALW control cases, it shows how state myth-making created such divergent interpretations of weapons in society in a Cambodian and a Kosovar context.

Beyond gun culture: identity politics in Kosovo small arms control

DDR process of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in 1999–2000, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) launched the Kosovo Illicit Small Arms Control (ISAC) project in 2002. It was based on the logic that high prevalence of gun ownership feeds insecurities in post-conflict societies,

and the main project aim was to reduce the availability of weapons in Kosovo society (SEESAC 2006a). The ISAC project was, according to even some of its own project staff, a dismal failure, and while it served as a sort of awareness-raising exercise, it failed in its stated aims, infamously illustrated by the 2003 Weapons for Development (WfD) campaign that brought in only 155 weapons – too few for qualifying for the development award advertised (BCPR 2006: 8). The 2003 release of a report that estimated illegal weapons holdings between 330,000 and 460,000 weapons (Khakee and Florquin 2003: 17) among roughly 2 million Kosovars yielded further evidence as to the failure of the UNDP to reduce availability of weapons in Kosovo society. Following this lack of traction, the UNDP launched a more ambitious Kosovo Small Arms Control (KOSSAC) project in 2007. KOSSAC sought to be a more comprehensive and inclusive SALW control program than its predecessor, and evidence from the interviews with stakeholders indicates that this was, to some extent, achieved. Local actors were increasingly included, and a number of activities were implemented, notably the development of a Kosovo SALW Strategy, the establishment of a Kosovo SALW Commission, development towards a legal framework regulating all weapons-related issue, and 'institutional mentoring and training' (UNDP 2010: 14). Yet, while KOSSAC succeeded in redeeming the local discordance of ISAC, and operated largely in the post-2008 environment of the more tangible prospect of viable statehood for Kosovo following the unilateral declaration of independence, KOSSAC also struggled to alleviate the impression of a Kosovo in which 'wide possession of weapons by the civilian population remains a serious concern' (European Commission 2009: 46). According to an official evaluation of KOSSAC in 2010, the situation following the first phases of the KOSSAC project was better than that of its predecessor, although this might have been due to more realistic targets rather than tangible impact and implementation, which still seemed to be lacking (UNDP 2010).

Step 1: international adaptation of SALW control narratives

As identified in the framework of 'two-step localisation' above, the first step in the process of introducing new norms of collective security to post-conflict societies is through field-based international practitioners' strategies. We can scrutinise their strategies systematically through three dimensions: involvement by domestic actors ('local ownership'), engagement with relevant political culture, and tuning the message of SALW Control through context-specific adaptations.

First, the UNDP's main challenge regarding local ownership rested with the authoritarian role of international peacekeepers in Kosovo from 1999 and until today: NATO's KFOR troops were highly regarded and seen as the most trusted international institution within Kosovo, yet their role as guardians of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the province until 2008 was highly problematic for the purpose of promoting disarmament. Discontent with UNMIK and its neo-colonial legacy in Kosovo created a lack of legitimacy and precisely ownership over politico-security processes. Kosovo was to be a disarmed, de-militarised, and to some extent servile entity, protected by, but also existing at the mercy of, its international protectors. This was linked to the 'status neutral' position adopted by international actors in Kosovo until 2008, which required international actors to avoid partisan politics which could influence the unresolved issue of Kosovo's future and independence. Including domestic actors in SSR activities such as SALW control would therefore potentially legitimise Kosovar (as opposed to Serbian) political structures,[4] and although in later iterations of the KOSSAC project there were attempts at involving both Albanians and Serbs in the implementation of the project, the damage had been done: giving up weapons is also a part of authorising that structure to govern, and Kosovars were not willing to see the UNDP, NATO or any other foreign force as that authority. This eventually also extended to local civil society organisations. The ISAC programmes during the first half of the 2000s relied substantially on civil society groups to spearhead the message of disarmament, in the absence of credible government institutions. International support to NGOs was substantial in this period, but their ability to influence such a sensitive matter was limited: they had little leverage in shaping the programmes, and local politics was unreceptive to the voice of internationally funded civil society organisations. Local mayors proved powerful veto-players, and

NGOs operated largely at their mercy.[5] This rendered civil society weak as transmitters of SALW norms. They did not present credible alternative narratives to those provided by influential local politicians. As Enver X, a member of staff with an NGO in Gjilan, experienced, raising awareness of the problem of SALW in society at schools in 2006 had little effect since the local mayor did not see any interest in supporting this message among its wider constituency, *i.e.* the parents and families of the 'taught' school children.[6]

The lack of any formal institutions after the Serbs' withdrawal from Kosovo in 1999 resulted in the territory effectively turning into an international protectorate, or 'Unmikstan', as critical commentary would have it. Security institutions were built 'from scratch', which meant that they were at the receiving end of micro-disarmament programmes, rather than executing them. The experiment in international governance failed to engage with the emerging political culture, which some of the international personnel described as 'a political landscape based upon a blueprint of clan structures'.[7] Political cleavages in post-war Kosovo were deeply informed by developments in the 1990s (*cf.* Ingimundarson 2007), and two blocs dominated post-war politics throughout the 2000s: the Democratic party (LDK) (led by 'the father of the nation', Dr Ibrahim Rugova, until 2006) on the one hand, and the two parties emerging from the KLA, the PDK of Hashim Thaqi and the AAK of Ramush Haradinaj. These two blocs represented different approaches to dealing with Serbia and the repression of Albanians in Kosovo during the 1990s: whereas the LDK represented an urban-based intelligentsia that formed a response to Serbian oppression based on pacifism and internationalising the conflict (Malcolm 1998), the KLA developed a rural-based and militant guerrilla movement to counter Serbian oppression. These two approaches, aiming however at the same goal of autonomy for Albanians in Kosovo, never reconciled (Judah 2000). Subsequently, identity politics in the post-war theatre were defined by competing strategies by these two blocs, and their sub-units of Albanian political elites. Such 'clan-based' politics was not only alien to the UNDP – it was rejected and ignored in strategic planning and implementation. Insisting on a neutral policy, where local politics were seen as detrimental to the state-building project, rather than as a natural part of it, Small Arms

Control in Kosovo would not escape the mistake of treating post-war societies as clean slates, so characteristic of liberal interventionism of the period.

Finally, the UNDP ideas of SALW control were difficult to adapt to the Kosovo landscape due to a prevalent idea of 'European' peace- and state-building at its very finest. After all, if the massive machinery of peacebuilding activism could not succeed in such a small and geopolitically insignificant province, where could it? The UNDP was particularly concerned with civilian weapons collection because it would mark a symbolic move towards improved security, a commitment to peace, and a definition of Kosovars as 'modern Europeans'[8] – not as part of a 'savage' Balkan heritage often propagated by media accounts. The way disarmament was conceptualised, however, was as an external model at odds with local identity politics taking place during those crucial post-war years. The politics of state-building, and the internal struggle for dominance, was ignored in this attempt at 'civilising' the province, and the message of ISAC/KOSSAC was not properly fitted to match local discourses concerning 'what kind of state' was in the making. Instead, it provided a recipe of state-building alien to the local conception of what the Kosovo state ought to be, illustrated, for example, in the lack of local sanctioning and acceptance of the Arms Law that was passed in 2009, and which applied a strict licencing system to civilian weapons holders. Interviews with stakeholders in Kosovo Police (KP), Kosovo Security Forces (KSF), and with members of the Parliament indicate that this law resonated poorly with Kosovo society[9] and, as such, was seen as difficult to implement. As one interviewee stated, 'The problem with the drafting of the new law was that the influence of the internationals was too big. Everyone have weapons here, for tradition, or because it is a part of our history. We learned to live in this environment, these are our habits.'[10] The lack of adaptation to Kosovo political processes, and an uncompromising approach to SALW control were detrimental to a flexible approach that would permit Kosovo-style disarmament.

Henceforth, SALW control remained an external, European, and distant idea that resonated poorly with post-war Kosovo. The UNDP was constrained by their own interpretation of their role and purpose as peacebuilders in Kosovo to establish connections with key political personalities and

tap into societal-level discourses. The second step of the localisation framework explains this in more detail.

Step 2: localisation through contestatory narratives

Contrary to a reading of failed disarmament as due to the security situation or the ubiquitous 'gun culture' that supposedly was to be found in some parts of Albania/Kosovo, three specific state-society narratives are key to the constitutive dimension of 'weapons in society' in post-war Kosovo. Taken together, they yield a more complex and embedded explanation for why civilian disarmament became such a sensitive and sticky issue.

First, it has been shown how a segment of Albanians in Kosovo constructed a narrative of the nation as *militant*. During the war, the KLA actively utilised a recruiting discourse based on what was seen as traditional Albanian values and features, which stressed the role of militancy, heroes and masculinity (Small Arms Survey 2005: 219). This is far from unique to the KLA, and may be observed in many contexts of war. However, a glorification of the armed struggle and of intrinsic militant characteristics of the nation is not a given post-war characteristic. In many cases, people can be seen as tired of war, and refuse an identity linked to warrior culture and militancy (*cf.* the Cambodian case below). In Kosovo, however, there has been a conscious preservation of militant characteristics of the Albanian nation, witnessed most overtly in the construction of statues across Kosovo towns, featuring prominent KLA commanders in uniform sporting large weapons. The PDK has valorised the armed struggle and adopted militaristic identities that persistently remind the nation of the 'heroic masculinity' of those who fought in the war (Krasniqi 2007). Constructing a militant Kosovo persona after the war, however, was not a mere crystallisation of events; both because not all Albanians supported a militant approach, as noted above, and because the militant approach itself was possibly brave, yet, rather marginal both in terms of fighters and strategic achievements (Ingimundarson 2007). The pacifist camp led by Ibrahim Rugova dominated Kosovo society up until about 1997 and still enjoys a respected legacy and space in the historical narrative. But, as Di Lellio

and Schwandner-Sievers (2006) have documented in their work on the role of KLA martyr Adem Jashari in post-war Kosovo, public discontent with what they call the master narrative of KLA and their militant heroes in Kosovo's history writing is non-existent. Interestingly, Kosovars seem to have no problem supporting both the narrative of the KLA and the narrative of Rugova as the 'father of the nation'. In the post-war political landscape, the LDK has sought to promote a civic and peaceful conceptualisation of the Albanian nation,[11] while the PDK and AAK have been making the armed struggle of the KLA the centrepiece of their political legitimacy.[12] Yet, the LDK had to renounce its public discord with the militant master narrative: the KLA/PDK dominance proved too influential to risk a confrontation based on civilian disarmament and other 'foreign' ideas.

The second, and interrelated, narrative preventing the UNDP SALW control from rolling out successfully is what several authors have observed as locating the national in the *traditional* (Krasniqi 2007; Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006). The KLA emerged from the rural countryside of Kosovo, and in particular in three regions: Drenica, Llap, and Dukagjini (Bekaj 2010: 19; Judah 2000: 135–42). These regions recruited leadership, soldiers, and not least a set of historical analogies and structural grievances: it was in the Drenica valley that the historical hero Azen Bejta and his wife Shota Galica had fought against the first Yugoslav forces after the First World War, and it was here that the most ostracised and poorest people in Yugoslavia lived. What is more, it was in the Drenica village of Prekaz that Adem Jashari and his extended family became martyrs for the KLA in 1997. Observers have described Prekaz as a site of memory significant for Albanian nation-building in Kosovo (Obućina 2011). Drenica, Llap and Dukagjini were strongholds of resistance during the 1990s war, and subsequently played important roles as points of reference for the Kosovars in the post-war history writing. However, elevating traditionalism to the national level was not a process without resistance. In the 1980s and 1990s, the urban/rural divide was an obstacle to overcome in order to close ranks in the face of an existential threat, and a weakness exploited by Serbia, who targeted the 'rebels' in the countryside but left urban centres such as Prishtina and Mitrovica largely in peace (Sugarman 2010). The former KLA party leaders came out of these most rural areas in

Kosovo, and their political office depended on the loyalty of voters in the same rural areas. Their interest in constructing the narrative of Kosovo society as grounded in the traditional rested with the realisation that this rendered them representative of the nation, and their voters the 'most authentic' of Kosovars. These heroes of the KLA had vested interest in creating synergy between the nation and the traditional, by encouraging folkloristic symbols and cultivating the particularistic as the 'true Albanian way of life'. Moreover, the historical autonomy and authenticity of the Albanians were constructed through the 'right of first occupation', based on the original Illyrian tribes, of which the Albanians see themselves as direct descendants (Kostovicova 2005). Faced with an onslaught of Serbian myths of Kosovo as their 'cradle of civilisation', the Kosovars developed a nationalist narrative largely as a counter-discourse to Serbian myths (Mertus 1999; Sugarman 2010). Lacking a religious basis to counter the Serbian claim to Kosovo (Duijzings 2000), the narrative of the Kosovars as historically and culturally true heirs of the land served as a paradigm from which Albanians could overcome internal conflict and heterogeneous composition, and construct a common basis of identity *vis-à-vis* Serbian claims to the territory. However, the narrative of autonomy also entailed a horizontal state-society model, in which society – in its 'most authentic' version, located in the rural areas – was self-sufficient, resilient and beyond the control of central institutions. Such a narrative proved enduring, and relevant even where the new political entity gradually became governed by their own kin. Henceforth, new Albanian elites in Prishtina could not undo this constitutive idea of the Kosovar nation, as it represented one of the unifying dimensions to this composite body politic. As an interviewee in the Kosovo Parliament recalls, 'My bother in Peja is often concerned that I don't have a gun in my house here in Prishtina – in the "Old Community" one was supposed to have guns to fight the establishment, and the KLA was established on this rationale. Bearing this in mind 10 years is a short time.'[13] As such, political elites were stuck between the pressure from 'above' and 'below', left to express only hope, even by parliamentarians: 'The citizens must be educated that public security institutions should take care of individual security!'

The nested relationship between politics and these three interrelated narratives – autonomy, militancy and traditionalism – did not resound with the UNDP's idea of civilian disarmament and SALW control. Collecting weapons meant projecting a modern conception of the state as the legitimate providers of security and the use of force. It was at the time not seen as compatible with a traditionalist, autonomous and militant nation to embrace a collective security model of this kind. And the political protagonists risked their political survival in exposing themselves as promoters of such processes. In this climate, the LDK, symbolised by the silk scarf-wearing philosopher Rugova, would have risked their legitimacy had they advocated for such a disarmed and 'muted' society. The position of the LDK was already precarious considering their lack of support to the KLA during the war, and while they were present in the political landscape they were in no position to project aggressively a conception of the Kosovo nation as idle and disarmed.

This competition over dominant state-society narratives and the new social order in Kosovo provides a persuasive argument in explaining why the UNDP was unable to convince the Kosovars that society should give up its right to self-defence, and entrust state security institutions with the legitimate monopoly on the use of force. SALW control was not adapted significantly to the Kosovo context and it did not square with competing constitutive ideas of the role of this new, primarily Albanian entity. It was not so much that the weapons themselves were seen as useful for the defence of the new state – far from it, even the KLA knew well that their own role in terms of military utility was always limited – but rather the way weapons were encircled by identity narratives that fostered representative power by the emerging political elites in Pristina and effectively precluded localisation of a collective 'European' security culture during the formative post-war years.

'Put down your weapons, pick up the dharma': Cambodian small arms control

After the long-running civil war in Cambodia, the United Nations Transitional Assistance in Cambodia (UNTAC) first attempted to tackle the SALW problems in 1992–1993. The UNTAC was forced to abandon the disarmament component of their mandate, however, and the distributions of

weapons by armed groups ceased first in 1998, when the Khmer Rouge defected and was integrated into the Royal Government of Cambodia. The most recent micro-disarmament programme in Cambodia aimed at rural areas and civilian weapons holdings and was financed by the EU's Assistance on Curbing Small Arms in the Kingdom of Cambodia (EU-ASAC), mandated under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and operational from 2000 to 2006. Its 'contribution and technical assistance would pursue the aims of influencing public opinion in favour of civilian disarmament, consolidating and developing civil society involvement in the process of weapons collection and disposal of arms collected and/or rendered surplus through demobilization' (European Union Council 1999). The EU-ASAC engaged in financial and technical assistance to the Cambodian government, conducted Weapons for Development (WfD) programmes in nine provinces throughout the country, and supported local NGOs in awareness-raising campaigns. According to two commissioned evaluations, the programme was considered successful in relieving the Cambodian society of surplus weapons, as well as strengthened gun control and state security structures (GTZ 2005; SEESAC 2006a). Notably, the EU-ASAC assisted in the collection of about 142,000 weapons from civilians and armed groups in Cambodia. The resultant situation after the SALW project is one where criminal groups or gangs, as well as high-ranking officials and their children and bodyguards, are the main abusers of weapons, while firearms among the civilian population is no longer considered a general problem. There seems to be a conviction among community leaders and in society at large that weapons do not have a function in times of peace (GTZ 2005).

Step 1: international adaptation of SALW control narratives

Local ownership was a key feature of the EU-ASAC process: the project was clearly an *assistance* mission, and its mandate was advisory in nature. The Cambodian government voluntarily requested the assistance of an external organisation to provide expertise in the disarmament process. With the launching of the EU-ASAC programme in April 2000, few observers were optimistic about the faith of the precarious stability that had followed Hun Sen's 'coup' and the monarchy's political

devaluation in 1997. Hun Sen's violent attempt to fully control the government was seen by prominent observers at the time as another event in the bloody history of Cambodia (Doyle 2001). The initiative to run small arms control in the country, henceforth, was premised on this voluntary invitation by the sitting political power; namely Hun Sen and the Cambodia's People Party (CPP). The foundation of the EU project was furthermore *ad hoc* in nature: there was no formal agreement between the EU and the Cambodian government guiding the EU-ASAC programme. Instead, it was based on and developed through close personal relations between the international EU staff and key figures in the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of National Defence (MND) (Roberts 2008). In addition, the project worked directly towards communities and civil society organisations – traditional and NGOs. The ability to reach out to communities by means of mobilising Buddhist institutions was important to ensure a locally sanctioned approach to the issue. This conscious collaboration with Cambodian institutions is part of the story of how the EU-ASAC could be successful in introducing SALW control in the challenging environment of post-war Cambodia.

Acknowledging and actively engaging with Cambodian political culture proved a crucial inroad to project legitimacy. Personal relationships are of utmost importance in Cambodian social and political life. It is highly unlikely that the EU-ASAC would have been able to work as extensively as they did had it not been for a slow and gradual process by the EU-ASAC staff to win the confidence of two key influential persons in the military and the police. These two liaison persons, in turn, gave access to the top political brass, which was a *sine qua non* for operating in the country. As a part of the confidence-building process, intimate family-like relations were born, and the liaison generals and the EU-ASAC staff started referring to each other as '*bong*' – the Khmer word for 'brother'.[14] While the relationships were instrumental at their foundations, they slowly moved towards more personal bonds, and the manifestation of the emotional-instrumental links have been recounted during author interviews.[15] The dynamic was one in which the personal became intertwined with the professional, and where the international staff learned the Cambodian way of doing business on the basis of personalised contact, discreetness and confidentiality. In turn, this enabled the EU-ASAC to

work as a partner to the government, and to be given space and permission to work with fewer constraints than if they were seen as intruding, bypassing or otherwise hampering internal affairs. Furthermore, as a former EU-ASAC staff explained, this unofficial way was considerably more efficient: permissions that would normally have taken three months to obtain through the formal bureaucratic system would take a week through these informal channels.[16] As the project progressed, and Cambodia became one of the SALW pioneers in South East Asia, the role of the EU-ASAC staff actually accelerated, as the pressure from outside on the internationally inexperienced Cambodian generals increased with respect to dealing with international negotiations or conventions: the EU-ASAC became a trusted reservoir of knowledge, and was seen as useful to enhance Cambodia's regional standing.

Moreover, the disarmament message was adapted significantly to fit the domestic context and manoeuvre instrumental-normative boundaries. First of all, the disarmament information meetings with local communities were held in local pagodas across rural Cambodia, and attended by Buddhist monks who sanctioned the message to the constituencies of believers. The slogan was: 'put down your weapons, pick up the *dharma'*, thereby locating the message within Buddhist notions of virtue and moral ethics.[17] Another example can be seen in the adoption of a legal framework of SALW control. Developing an Arms Law is one of the ways in which SALW control is introduced in post-war societies, and it is often endowed with great expectations from international practitioners. In Cambodia, the scope and content of the Arms Law were subjected to intense negotiations. The EU-ASAC's effort to enhance the role of civil society had proven relatively successful, and it was the Working Group for Weapons Reduction (WGWR), a local NGO that worked extensively on the issue of SALW between 1999 and 2006, which was seen as the main voice in the process of negotiating the Arms Law. WGWR was the leading advocate for a strict and universal law, in which there would be a full ban on civilian weapons ownership, and the government seems to have taken many of these aspects into account in the final version. But one principle was not up for negotiation: while the government banned civilian ownership of weapons, certain high-ranking civil servants would still be

permitted to own licensed firearms, which, according to the director of the WGWR at the time, was due to the fact that the person in charge of the licensing bureau within the MoI was a particularly influential person. If all civilian gun possession were illegal, his office would lose serious 'income' (*i.e.* extra-legal fees). On this point, the MoI refused to budge and said 'this way or no way'.[18] In the MoI, this particularity of the Arms Law was explained from a security perspective: 'we must consider the role and responsibility and rank, and compare to the military. In the end it is for their own security'.[19] This example illustrates the prevalence of corruption practices within the Cambodian bureaucratic system. However, it also illustrates the strength of neo-patrimonial forms of governance and the fact that a powerful person in the seemingly insignificant licensing office exerted his personal influence so as to affect the outcome of a national legal document. Furthermore, it illustrates what will be described in the next section as the state-society narrative of 'natural authority': the idea that high-ranking civil servants *should* own weapons fits well with the Cambodian state-society narrative attached to it. The final Arms Law is, therefore, an example of norm adaptation: while deeply influenced by an idea of controlling weapons in society consistent with SALW control standards, it also contains 'Cambodian' elements that strengthen the existing institutions within the bureaucracy, and is aligned with the normative framework that guides power relations in society.

Step 2: localisation through contestatory narratives

Explaining the outcome of the EU-ASAC through narratives of representation begs an analysis that centres on the normative properties of the Khmer nation that emerged after the dust of war had settled. The state-society model that was narrated during the EU-ASAC years, and which has been further consolidated thereafter, pinned the Khmer society as the bottom part of a hierarchical system structured by absolutism, natural authority, and notions of a peaceful agrarian society, as will be explicated below. The political elites in the Cambodia's People's Party (CPP) assumed the upper echelons of this hierarchy, personalised in the long-term strongman Prime Minister Hun Sen at the very top. By absorbing the traditional sources of legitimacy found in Buddhism and in the monarchy,

and by framing the role of society as victims of external aggression, and as benevolent and compliant, the politico-economic elites around the CPP successfully evoked emotive concepts linked to past grandeur and enduring patrimonial social representations. This conception of society enabled, but also limited, the EU-ASAC: they were able to inform civilians that the state was the new legitimate bearer of force by tapping into these discourses already propagated by the government. However, they also reinforced the existing power structures, and were able to influence weapons practices on terms only consistent with a semi-authoritarian political model.

First, Cambodian elites propagated a narrative in which *absolutism* and *elitism* are seen as fundamental pillars of the nation, and used historical references to reinforce this narrative (Roberts 2009: 154). Absolutism here means the unrestrained rule by one ruler, who constitutes the fusion of both political and moral authority. Most instrumental in this process of propagating the idea of absolutism during the post-war period was the way in which the CPP sought to manifest itself at both state and society levels through a number of face-lift moves intended to appeal to both elites and grassroots. It actively sought to subsume the two main sources of moral authority in Cambodian society: Buddhism and the monarchy. The government's fascination with all things Buddhist seemed to have enhanced Hun Sen's popularity, and weakened popular support to other political parties (Harris 2005: 200). The CPP calibrated narratives of state-society relations based, to a large extent, on Buddhism as a basis of legitimacy. Most obvious is the motto of the Kingdom of Cambodia enshrined in the 1993 Constitution: 'Nation, Religion, King'. This manifests the link between a flourishing Buddhism, a viable state and the nation of Khmers. The CPP's ability to propose a 'package' of symbolic configurations based on popular grassroots-based institutions enabled the message of disarmament. In particular, it enabled the creation of systems of representation based on legitimate and illegitimate owners of weapons. After militarily suppressing its rivals in FUNCINPEC in Phnom Penh in 1997; giving amnesty to the Khmer Rouge in 1998; and subsuming the two most revered institutions in Cambodia – Buddhism and the monarchy – under its leadership, the CPP (aided by the EU-ASAC and other international actors eager to ensure stability) effectively created a model

of state-society relations in which the monopoly on legitimate use of force rested with the CPP itself. SALW control standards therefore got a thick paint of absolutism and elitism in Cambodia. An example of this is the way the EU-ASAC provided training in the Arms Law to law enforcement officers, and handed out thousands of copies of the law. But, as is often observed in Cambodia, powerful people can act with impunity (Kimchoeun *et al.* 2007). A member of a local organisation of lawyers that assisted in the drafting of the 2005 Arms Law explained in an interview that the main problem of weapons misuse is related to those that own weapons legally, notably high ranking officials, and – illegally but arguably not illegitimately – their children, as well as bodyguards of the Members of Parliament or high ranking officials.[20] These persons, however, constitute the political and economic elite in Cambodia, and are considered untouchable by law – as one informant sums up: 'in Cambodia, only the poor are afraid of the law'.[21]

A second key narrative that enveloped the EU-ASAC was that of *natural authority* (and the lack of it), and its framing as an indisputable condition that is not plausibly subject to change in this life. The philosophical genealogy of this conceptualisation of authority can be traced to two main religious principles: the idea of 'merit' in Buddhism, and 'hierarchy' or 'Brahmanism' in Hinduism. Buddhism has dominated Cambodian religious life from the 13th century onward, and social and societal relations are substantially guided by Buddhist social doctrine. A key concept here is 'merit', which in Buddhist philosophy translates into accumulating good deeds, to improve one's karma – the sum of one's good and bad doings in this life and the previous. A good karma is needed to ensure better life conditions in the next life, and eventually this cycle will lead to nirvana, in which one is elevated to eternal life and transgresses the cycle of reincarnation. Belief in karma as the sole earthly merit impacts social relations in that it legitimises the relative power imbalance between members of a community, as it is perceived as 'natural': people with more wealth or a higher social ranking are believed to enjoy these circumstances due to good karma stemming from previous lives. Along the same logic, the poor or people of low social standing perceive of their situation as 'given'; the only hope for improvement is to be found in accumulating a better karma through earthly merits or good

deeds for the next life. Upward social mobility, as it were, does not exist as a perceived attainable concept in the traditional Khmer society. As observed by others, preaching this philosophy as meaning accepting one's lot in life serves the wishes of the authorities well (Marston 2009: 246). However, blending with this idea that authority or power (material or social) is a predestined given, and that one shall not challenge inequality because it is tied to the eternal cycle of karma, is also the Hindu-inspired belief in social hierarchy, or Brahmanism. Hinduism as a source of social norms stems from the time of Indianisation predating the Angkorian period, but was substantially adapted to Khmer conditions (Chandler 2008). Hence, a social stratification system was to some extent accepted, while not in the rigid Indian form of a caste system. Hindu beliefs in principles of hierarchy have, however, generated tendencies towards personalisation of power in the form of supreme leaders, and the result is a fairly stable system of patrimonial inter-personal relations, in which those in power are seen to naturally possess power, while people on other social levels have been born to take orders (Kimchoeun *et al.* 2007: 34). This narrative is critical to understanding parts of the Cambodian post-war developments, including aspects of the micro-disarmament process. Specifically, this natural hierarchy can be witnessed in the state-society model envisaged by Cambodian elites, for whom 'a harmonious relationship between a centralized and hierarchical government apparatus, and Cambodian citizens, sharing a mutual respect and rightful conduct, is viewed as the appropriate goal' (Hughes 1998: 306). This narrative aided the EU-ASAC, which, with the help of the CPP and central institutions as well as locally based Buddhist institutions, could tap into reverence for authority to further its message: the Khmer society was framed in the post-war state-society narratives as 'born to take orders', and as fundamentally a peaceful farming society that ought to return to these roots after decades of war and uprooting. Research has shown that the government saw an opportunity to use weapons collection as a means to strengthen the position of the CPP, the ruling party, and that disarmament meant less potential for armed resistance to government policy (Zwijnenburg 2007: 29). Subsequently, a small and powerful set of elites forms a politico-military network of individuals that extracts individual wealth through their control of state institutions (Roberts 2009; Richmond and

Franks 2007; Brinkley 2011; Global Witness 2009). While the EU-ASAC did seek to introduce accountability of the military and the police in rural Cambodia, its success must ultimately be seen as a function of the overall CPP attempt to disarm (militarily and politically) society and assume the 'natural' position of absorbing all political and economic means of influence.

Conclusion: two-step norm localisation in international SALW control

Interpretation of SALW control, and the role of weapons in society more broadly, does matter. In fact, it is essential to any successful disarmament campaign, because it its deeply linked to constitutive ideas of the nation emerging out of the ashes of war. Narratives of authority, nationhood, and the state persona create systems of representation that match claims by certain political agents. Competitions over dominant narratives are fierce and exclusionary: emerging political elites will go to great length to ensure that 'their' selected set of narratives constitutes the nation's identity marker.

Hence, as this article has demonstrated, analysing the interaction between emerging and contestatory narratives of state-society relations and international efforts to introduce SALW control programmes in a given country makes it apparent how crucial *interpretation of disarmament* is. This goes much beyond a simple focus on gun cultures: it involves a view to the construction of those crucial symbolic configurations that make up societies and structure the relationship between nations and states. For the purpose of SALW control, it has proven important to understand which political actors have vested interest in promoting certain interpretations of history, religion, authority, core-periphery relations, and national belonging. Elites emerging out of armed conflict have one primary goal: to stick identification markers commensurate with their goals and interest onto the state. This, as the title indicates, amounts to an effort aimed at 'winning the post-war'. These legitimisation strategies, in turn, shape the space available to international practitioners working on SALW control programmes, whose capacity to adapt and engage with local political conditions and political actors is of essence when it comes to introducing localised 'global SALW standards' to post-war societies.

The findings from this article beg the question of how purposeful norm diffusion approaches are to explore the modalities and effects of global-local linkages. It is apparent that conventional constructivist approaches do not quite capture how norms move in non-linear ways in contexts of hybrid political order. A critical norm approach is better apt to frame the interpretative aspect of norms, and give importance to the constitution of norms through enactment. This article has contributed to the latter strand of norm research by honing in on how narratives shape the interpretation of global norms, and act as transmission belts to political legitimacy. What this article has also exposed, however, is how tracing norms and their effects is an increasingly challenging undertaking: global-local linkages are multidirectional, fluid and un-scripted, and such a naturalised part of political practices that it is increasingly difficult to establish how the global 'enters into' the local. Narrative analyses, in the way interrogated in this article, serve this purpose. Narratives do not start or end with the 'global' norm, but rather cast the net in concentric circles, forming overlapping areas of densely woven social fabric, without which even such things as weapons – the materiality of coercive power – have no meaning.

Notes

[1] Among the most often referred to countries are Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, EL Salvador, Georgia, Haiti, Liberia, Macedonia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan and Uganda. These are the cases where either the UNDP or the EU has been involved. A host of other programmes with an arms component might be found elsewhere. See UNDP, UNIDIR, UNDDR support centre and the EU websites for more information on the 'universe of cases'.

[2] The Arms Trade Treaty was sealed in 2013, and singed by 138 states and ratified by 89 (per November 2016).

³ Available at http://www.smallarmsstandards.org/.

⁴ UNDP KOSSAC Programme Manager (personal interview by author, 22 September, 2009).

⁵ NGO KCIC senior staff member (personal interview by author, 11 June, 2010).

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ Advisor on International Cooperation, NATO Advisory Team to Ministry For the Kosovo Security Force (personal interview by author, 29 May, 2010).

⁸ Head of SEESAC (personal interview by author, 5 December, 2009).

⁹ Head of Department of Training, Kosovo Police (personal interview by author, 2 June, 2010); Nënkoloner Kosovo Security Forces (personal interview by author, 9 June, 2010); Member of Parliamentary Committee for International Affairs And Security (personal interview by author, 11 June, 2010).

¹⁰ Member of Parliamentary Committee for International Affairs And Security (personal interview by author, 11 June, 2010).

¹¹ 'LDK was born and grown in this land, from this people, and protects its permanent interests in the future as well. […] LDK bears traditional values, and grows modern values. […] LDK do not wish harden and militant words, its members are worker of freedom. […] LDK is originally of Kosova, an alive source, beating violence with democracy.' (LDK Party Programme 2007, translated and by referred to in Çelnaja 2008).

¹² 'PDK is identified on values and goals of patriotic organizations of the post World War II, successor of KLA war and bearer of its goals fulfilment in peace. […] It will remember in its memory all those who fell heroically in battle, those who were killed and massacred, and those who died in tortures.' (PDK Party Programme 2007, translated by and referred to in Çelnaja 2008).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Former EU-ASAC staff, Responsible for Weapons Destruction and Stockpile Management (personal interview by author, 25 January, 2010).

[15] Former EU-ASAC staff, Responsible for Weapons Destruction and Stockpile Management (personal interview by author, 25 January, 2010); former interpreter and assistant to EU-ASAC (personal interview by author, 2 September, 2011). Examples from interviews include: aiding financially the other's children's education; meddling between husband and wife with respect to extra-marital affairs; intervening in legal issues, for instance, when one interviewee was accused by the police of being the perpetrator in a traffic incident and was 'rescued' by one of his high ranking 'brothers'.

[16] Former EU-ASAC staff, Responsible for Weapons Destruction and Stockpile Management (personal interview by author, 25 January, 2010).

[17] Staff member at NGO Buddhism for Development (personal interview by author, 4 February, 2010); confirmed also in former EU ASAC staff, Responsible for Weapons for Development (personal interview by author, 19 January, 2010).

[18] Former Director of NGO Working Group for Weapons Reduction (personal interview by author, 21 January, 2010).

[19] Police Brigadier-General in the Cambodian Ministry of Interior and EU-ASAC Liaison (personal interview by author, 1 February, 2010).

[20] Member of Cambodia Defender Group (personal interview by author, 19 January, 2010).

[21] Former EU-ASAC local staff (personal interview by author, 25 January, 2010).

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