

Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation: Implications for Sahel Regional Security

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ABSTRACT

The study examined small arms and light weapons proliferation and its implications for Sahel regional security. The study adopted institutional theory propounded by Meyer John and Rowen Brian. It adopted Ex-post facto research design, data for the study were sourced through secondary sources and analyzed using content analysis. The study discovered that the Sahel region's porous borders make it simple for illicit traffickers to smuggle small arms and light weapons because transnational criminal organisations and armed groups are very mobile in uncontrolled border regions. The study recommended among others that; states in the region should intensify efforts towards strict monitoring and management of local illicit manufacturing of firearms.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant security challenges currently facing the Sahel region and the rest of the world is the proliferation of small guns and light weapons. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) trafficking and widespread availability contribute to political and racial unrest, and they endanger not only national security but also sustainable development. Small arms are being widely distributed, which is causing a rise in armed crime and militancy that is frightening. At the end of the 14th century, the first small guns entered widespread use, claims Colombian Encyclopedia University Press. They started out as simple hand-held cannons that were fired by touching a lit match to the touch hole. Small arms are described as infantry weapons that can be carried by a single man, such as fire arms. Automatic weapons, rifle squad automatic weapons, light machine guns, general-purpose assault rifles, medium machine guns, hand grenades, and revolvers are typically the only weapons allowed.

Nevertheless, depending on the situation, it can also refer to large machine guns, smaller mortars, recoilless rifles, and some rocket launchers. Small arms do not include huge mortars, howitzers, cannons, vehicles, and other pieces of equipment. According to Amoa (2006), it is not an overstatement to say that small arms have been a major factor in every political conflict in the Sahel. Amoa continues by stating that, of the 640 million small arms in circulation worldwide, it is estimated that only the Sahel region has roughly 8 million small arms and light weapons. Small arms regulation is a matter of life and death. Niger, Burkina-Faso and Mali are Sahel-region countries with political unrest has been exacerbated by small guns. Many people in the region are affected by the spread of small guns. Niger, Burkina-Faso and Mali are Sahel nations that lack the population necessary to cultivate fertile land, so generations squander their lives in senseless battles. Children are deprived of their childhood and made to mature prior to puberty. In both industrialized and developing nations, the availability of small guns contributes to the continuation of violence and makes it more deadly at every level, from criminal behaviour to full-fledged war (Weiss, 2003).

The United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) 4362 meeting took the position that the destabilising accumulation and unchecked spread of small arms and light weapons in many parts of the world compromises the viability of peace agreements, hinders peacebuilding efforts, frustrates efforts to prevent armed conflict, and heightens their intensity and duration (United Nations, 2002). Beyond these additional effects of SALW on conflicts, its impact on the security environment following a conflict is equally important. Following conflicts, increased SALW availability has caused an exponential rise in crime rates in the area, maintaining an atmosphere of unease. Because they are readily available, extremely affordable, deadly, simple to use, simple to carry, and simple to smuggle, SALW are convenient and appealing to rebel groups and dissidents that make up the Sahel landscape.

Small arms cross the line among government forces, police, troops, and civilian populations, in contrast to big conventional weapons like artillery and tanks, which are normally acquired by government forces (Boutwell & Klare,

2000). Similar to this, obtaining the level of expertise deemed necessary for carrying out rebel warfare just requires a few hours of training. The prevalence of children engaging in violent rebellion in the Sahel region, as well as the severity and cruelty of such wars, may be explained more by this factor than by any other. The pain brought on by these never-ending wars is only paralleled by another that has already taken root: a dysfunctional economy. All but one of the governments in the subregion are listed among the 15 poorest countries in the world, with five of them occupying at least five slots in that list. In the Sahel, an area endowed with an abundance of natural resources, this situation continues to present a conundrum. It has been logically suggested that the ongoing unrest in the Sahel region is to blame for this prevalent level of poverty.

However, small arms proliferation has caused a variety of difficult and multifaceted issues. They are entangled with other major security and societal challenges like preventing and resolving conflicts, poverty, gender inequality, violent cultures, problems with government, criminal activity, and connections to terrorism. The Sahel region is home to a vast network of interrelated criminal marketplaces, which includes trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Trafficking of small guns and light weapons is made possible by simple access to arsenals and made easier by the region's state security agencies' ineffective responses and frequent capacity and resource shortages. However, this study analyzes factors responsible for small arms and light weapons proliferation in the Sahel region and its implications on the Sahel region.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The study adopted the institutional theory as propounded by Meyer John and Rowan Brian in 1977. They argued that institutional environments, perhaps more so than market forces, had a significant impact on the evolution of formal structures. Institutional theory focuses on the more complex and durable facets of social organisation. It takes into account the methods by which established structures, such as schemas, rules, norms, and routines, come to serve as authoritative standards for social conduct. Its investigations into how these elements are produced, disseminated, altered, and adopted over time and location, as well as how they deteriorate and become obsolete. Broad domestic political tendencies may be influenced by political institutional settings. Within a particular set of political authorities, the legislative, executive, judicial, law enforcement, and other governmental tasks may be dispersed throughout a number of organisations, each with its own autonomy and operational guidelines. Depending on the extent of a state's rulers' "despotic power," to use Mann's (1986) distinction or power "over," several types of *politicos* may exist (Lukes, 1974).

Different degrees and rates of democratization and political rights among subjects and citizens were applied to state political institutions. Politics that had undergone democratization were subject to new electoral laws that affected how officials were chosen. Additionally, varied levels and rates of bureaucratization and professionalization were applied to state executive

bodies. These processes could all have a major impact on political life. The second most significant main line of argument was that states mattered as actors. Organizationally, state actors were primarily understood in terms of resource dependence. Various regions of states can function more or less autonomously and with different capabilities as organisations. The capacity of states or portions thereof to establish independent courses of action was used to characterize their autonomy. According to Mann's (1986) "infrastructural power," state capacities were defined as the capacity to carry out lines of action (Skocpol 1985). Without ignoring "power over," which political scientists and sociologists had concentrated on, the concepts of state autonomy and capability brought into the discussion the "power to" accomplish something (Lukes, 1974).

It was suggested that these variations in state autonomy and executive bureaucracy were crucial in explaining political outcomes across periods and locations. Over the past ten or so years, the initial state-centered theoretical programme has transformed into a political-institutional one (Amenta, 2005). The Tocquevillian argument about states has typically been used as an explanation, and further justifications for the creation of other significant political institutions, such as political party systems, have been added. In the hands of certain theorists, the arguments took on a more structural and systemic nature, with enduring political institutions having a significant impact on outcomes of interest and influencing all groups. Political institutionalism has changed when it is in the hands of others, becoming more historical and process-oriented. The interaction of players at a medium-systemic, interorganizational level is the centre of theoretical attention, despite the fact that political institutions profoundly affect political life. These actors are thought to be attempting to change state policy while operating within institutional limits, as well as limitations on resources and other means of action.

The interests and strategies of the actors who will determine whether programmes will feed back in a way that enhances the programme or undermines it or leaves it open to adjustments later on are influenced by changes in state policies. The primary theoretical framework holds that politics and political players are shaped by macrolevel political institutions, who in turn reshape political institutions over time. Actors are subject to constraints that may limit their ability to affect governments and policies. Social policy is mostly researched by political scientists in political institutions (Amenta et al. 2001). The majority of sociologists examine revolutions (Goldstone 2003), the political ramifications of social movements (Amenta and Caren, 2004; Jenkins and Form, 2005), or the influence of political opportunity systems on movements (McAdam, 1982; Kriesi, 2004; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004).

Many comparative sociologists and political scientists, including Reinhard Bendix, Barrington Moore, Samuel Huntington, Seymour Martin Lipset, Stein Rokkan, Juan Linz, Shmuel Eisenstadt, and Charles Tilly, focused on state processes in the post-World War II era and provided analyses that could be considered state-centered today, but frequently viewed and referred to states through the conceptual tools of dominant perspectives, such as social

systems concepts (Huntington, 1968). Tilly (1975) made a notable point about "state-building" and questioned why "national states" rather than other state-like and prostatic political organisations came to predominate in Europe. He claimed that state-led processes of war-making resulted in the expansion of states and the victory of the form. According to Skocpol (1979), states, when understood in a Weberian fashion, are essential for explaining revolutions. Self-aware statist and state-centered analyses, on the other hand, were mostly created in US social science in the late 1970s and 1980s, largely in response to other conceptual structures and theoretical considerations.

Skocpol's introduction served as a sort of statist manifesto, merging and utilising contemporary concepts to develop a theoretical framework, research agenda, and call to action for academics that put states at the centre of political science. Skocpol criticised pluralist and Marxist viewpoints for primarily regarding states as biased or neutral grounds for political struggles. The majority of pluralists tended to view this field as neutral, allowing for participation and competition from a wide range of interest groups and individuals, however with certain advantages going to elected officials. Marxists tended to view the arena as a place where classes fought, giving capitalists a significant home-field advantage, or, alternatively, as the "capitalist state" serving to reproduce and legitimize capitalism, implying that there was little difference between them before and after the rise of capitalism. Skocpol (1985) urged academics to adopt a Weberian perspective on states as collections of political entities that exercised dominance over land and people and carried out legislative, executive, military, and law enforcement functions (Amenta, 2005).

States have exclusive use of legal violence to keep the peace while also taking resources from their citizens and frequently pursuing territorial expansion. States were collections of institutions with distinctive political duties, purposes, responsibilities, and activities that shaped social relationships between various groups of citizens or subjects as well as relationships with other states. State policy was the course of action taken by states. States have historically operated in economic environments other than industrial capitalist ones, been subject to democratic influences only sometimes, and have been formed differently than today's prominent nation-state. The relevance of the institutional theory to this study is obvious, given that the theory makes it attainable for us to analyze the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and regional stability in the Sahel region as the rules, norms, and routines, are established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior of the countries in the Sahel region as it regards to small arms and light weapons.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the study aimed to create a design that helped us to understand Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation taking cognizance of its implications on Sahel Regional Security. The Ex Post Facto research design (After the Fact) helped the study to organize, arrange, and carry out the investigation in order to optimize the validity of the findings. The nature of this

study is qualitative, along these lines, the information that the study gathered for this study was through secondary sources. These documents provide essential sources of information for qualitative political analysis, may be published. The study consulted authoritative books and materials related to the subject field.

RESULTS

At this point, tables were presented that help to address the two objectives raised at the introductory section. In other words, this section is aimed at establishing an empirical link of the analysis of small arms and light weapon and its implications on the Sahel region.

Table 1: Factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Sahel region

Factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Sahel region	Outcome of the factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Sahel region
Criminal organizations	Criminals who obtain weapons then use them to continue violating the rights of citizens.
Porous Borders	Borders with gaps make it simple for illegal traffickers to smuggle weapons.
Diversion of Governmental Stockpiles	The growth of illicit arms in the Sahel region is caused by the diversion of government stockpiles and weapons into the black market.
Lack of economic opportunities and social justice	Lack of economic prospects for the expanding population makes it difficult to produce jobs, which in turn fuels societal unhappiness that breeds violence and criminal activity.

Source: Compiled by author based on data from https://www.unrec.org/ged/download.php?itemId=161&language=en_GB

Table 1 showed the factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Sahel region which include; Criminal organizations who obtain weapons then use them to continue violating the rights of citizens. Porous borders make it simple for illegal traffickers to smuggle weapons. Diversion of governmental stockpiles has led to the growth of illicit arms in the Sahel region and these weapons are further moved into the black market. Lack of economic opportunities and social justice has led to the increase in

population which makes it difficult to produce jobs, which in turn fuels societal unhappiness that breeds violence and criminal activity.

Criminal Organizations

Even nations that have experienced extended periods of peace frequently see the effects of the growth of SALW in the Sahel region, where SALW are used to escalate violence in conflict zones. As was already mentioned, small-scale SALW trafficking happens as people move away from war zones. Most often, criminals who possess these weapons utilise them to continue violating the human rights of citizens. As a result of easy access to weapons and spillover from local conflicts, violence has grown. SALW are frequently used to violate the human rights of civilians in neighbouring nations. Additionally, the presence of SALW in camps for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) has been connected to increased militarization and intimidation, in some cases intimately linked with attempts to exploit these camps as hubs for armed group recruitment and training (Bourne, 2016). In situations where SALW are utilised to compel people to actively participate in hostilities, not only are their human rights violated, but as was already established, hostilities escalate and last longer.

Porous Borders

Many Sahel nations have open borders that make it simple for illegal traffickers to carry weapons across. Particularly in conflict zones, ungoverned areas, and unstable governments, transnational criminal organisations and armed groups are particularly mobile in uncontrolled border regions. Additionally, to transport their illegal weapons and ammunition across nations, traffickers employ the sea. Instead of drawing borders that honored population diversity in terms of ethnicity and culture, European colonialists split the Sahel countries into spheres of influence. The division of ethnic groupings has left these inherited borders very porous. Due to these enforced colonial borders, many African states struggle to govern and control their regions. In this regard, Onuoha (2013) believes that the instance of Nigeria, where the Boko Haram insurgency has gotten worse, is one of the most important examples of how difficult it is to govern across porous and heterogeneous territory. Large portions of Nigeria's borders with Cameroon, Niger, Benin, and Chad are porous. These border regions are either in the bush or the mountains. This area is used by traffickers and terrorists to carry SALW into the Sahel countries.

Diversion of Governmental Stockpiles

One of the primary causes of the growth of illegal armaments in the Sahel region is the diversion of government stockpiles and weapons into the black market. The two main methods of diverting weapons are rebels fighting government forces in order to seize their arsenals or poorly paid soldiers exchanging weapons with insurgents. Additionally, during African Union (AU) and UN peacekeeping missions, weaponry diversion has been noted (PKO). For instance, it is believed that there were at least 22 major occurrences in which peacekeeping forces lost weapons and ammunition between 2002 and 2014,

according to the Small Arms Survey (2015) study of 11 peace missions deployed in Sudan and South Sudan by the AU and the UN.

Lack of Economic Opportunities and Social Justice

Indirect contributing factors that support the use of SALW in the Sahel region include a lack of economic opportunity, social injustice, a culture of bad governance, and political corruption. Indirectly, the absence of economic prospects to increase employment for the expanding population fuels societal discontent, which can occasionally erupt into violent and criminal activity in the Sahel region

Table 2: Implications of small arms and light weapons in Sahel region

Countries of the Sahel	Impact of small arms and light weapons in the Sahel Region
Chad	For illegal firearms, Chad serves more as a transit than a final destination.
Cameroon	Currently, self-defense and hunting are the main motivations for arming oneself in Cameroon.
Central Africa Republic	The impression of unease among people in the Central African Republic is reinforced by a string of violent incidents and the lackadaisical nature of state responses, which keeps the market for illegal firearms high.
Burkina Faso	Due to an upsurge in armed crime during the past ten years, there is an increasing sense of fear among the general public in Burkina Faso.
Mauritania	There aren't any well-established, organised criminal networks in Mauritania, but there have been instances of internal crime, raids, cattle theft, and land conflicts when guns have been used.
Mali	The secessionist insurrection, which is armed with light weapons and small arms, is still being dealt with in Mali.
Niger	In addition to dealing with the effects of the fall of the Gaddafi dictatorship in 2011 and the presence of Boko Haram, Niger continues to be a regional hub for the trafficking and smuggling of small guns and light weapons.
Nigeria	Nigeria is rife with extreme violence, including clashes between communities in Plateau State and the Niger Delta and attacks by Boko Haram in the country's northern areas.
Senegal	Senegalese citizens go for firearms when they believe they need them for self-defense, while some do so out of cultural tradition.

Source: Compiled by author based on data from https://www.unrec.org/ged/download.php?itemId=161&language=en_GB

Table 2 showed the nations in the Sahel region and the effect of light weapons and small arms. The countries include: Chad which is more of a transit country for illegal firearms than an ultimate destination. In Cameroon it is for self-defense and hunting are the two main reasons people arm themselves right now while in Rep. of Central Africa a string of violent episodes and the lackadaisical character of state reactions, which maintains the market for illegal weaponry at a high level, serve to further the perception of disquiet among residents in the Central African Republic. In Burkina Faso the people are becoming more fearful as a result of an increase in violent crime over the previous ten years. In Mauritania, there are no well-established, organised criminal networks, but there have been cases of internal crime, raids, cattle theft, and land disputes when firearms have been used. In Mali is still dealing with the secessionist uprising, which is armed with light and small guns. Niger continues to be a regional hub for the trafficking and smuggling of small arms and light weapons, in addition to dealing with the impacts of the fall of the Gaddafi dictatorship in 2011 and the existence of Boko Haram. In Nigeria extreme violence is commonplace in Nigeria, with incidents including confrontations between communities in Plateau State and the Niger Delta and Boko Haram strikes in the northern regions of the country and some Senegalese people use firearms out of cultural heritage, while others do so because they feel they need them for self-defense.

Implication of small arms and light weapons proliferation on Sahel regional stability

Chad

For illegal weapons, such as AK-47s, rocket launchers, and automatic machine guns stolen from Libyan stockpiles and sent to specific terrorist organisations active in the Sahel-Sahara region, including Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Islamic State (IS), and Boko Haram, Chad serves more as a transit country than a final destination. Between members of the Chadian army and the Nigerian sect, via the northern region of Cameroon and the town of Kousseri, there is a lot of trafficking in arms. In general, understanding the phenomenon of the concept of proliferation has come to a standstill due to the lack of statistics and estimates of the number of weapons held by civilians, armed forces, and security, as well as the Presidency's monopoly on matters relating to the control of arms, which does not, for example, communicate on the weapon seizures made by the armed forces. Unlike those of the military and the police, registers of weapons owned by citizens would similarly be inadequately controlled and maintained.

Cameroon

In Cameroon, the population's primary motivations for arming oneself now are for self-defense and hunting. According to the Small Arms Survey from 2007, there are over 340,000 firearms in civilian hands in Cameroon, or 2.8 firearms for every 100 inhabitants. In 2007, it was estimated that there were 370,000 weapons in the country overall, of which 24,607 were used by the police

and 32,918 to 54,863 by the armed services. According to the data provided, voluntary manslaughter rates in 2012 were 7.8 per 100 000 persons (1654 voluntary manslaughter annually), one of the lowest rates in the sub-region (United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime, 2013). Both internal and external variables play a role in the spread of guns in the nation. In certain areas, handcrafted weapons are the most internal threat. These tools are employed for hunting and funerary rituals. However, because there are no laws governing the manufacture of weapons, it is impossible to track their custody histories when they are used in crimes. Furthermore, it's thought that handguns made by craftspeople are used in the majority of gun crimes.

Central Africa Republic

A significant and long-standing problem for the Central African Republic is the unchecked spread and illegal circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition (CAR). The impression of unease among civilians, exacerbated by a string of violent incidents and the ineffectiveness of state measures, keeps the demand for illegal firearms strong. In 2003, SAS calculated that there were 50,000 SALW in civilian hands and 8,872 weaponries in the hands of recent and active non-state armed groups (Berman, 2005). Governmental organisations possessed a stockpile of 11,381 SALW weapons. When the former Seleka alliance overthrew the government in 2013, the majority of defence and security force inventory were destroyed. According to the most recent estimates, the Armed Forces presently possess roughly 3,000 weapons, about 300 of which are operational. Before the 2013 crisis, the National Police stockpiles were thought to contain about 1,895 SALW.

The illegal weapons and ammunition that are in circulation in the Central African Republic have both domestic and external sources. An examination of the weapons and ammunition collected over the previous two years suggests that a sizeable fraction of these weapons are most likely coming from the State Defense and security forces' arsenals. The illegal weapons and ammunition that are in circulation in the Central African Republic have both domestic and external sources. An examination of the weapons and ammunition collected over the previous two years suggests that a sizeable fraction of these weapons are most likely coming from the State Defense and security forces' arsenals.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is thought to have a less difficult position with regard to the proliferation of illicit SALW than other nations in the region that experience high levels of armed conflict. However, a rise in armed crime over the past ten years has contributed to a growing sense of unease among the broader public. The most recent crisis the nation had occurred in 2011, and it was a factor in the spread of weaponry throughout the nation. Burkina Faso has both domestic and external sources for illicit firearms. Internally, illegal weapons are produced at local workshops, on the civilian market, or in military arsenals. Following a military and police mutiny in 2011, a sizable number of firearms were removed from government stocks (Luntumbue & Marc, 2012). Because of

poor management of government weaponry previous to the uprising, the total amount of weapons diverted in 2011 is uncertain. 20,520 military weapons are listed in the most current estimates of the government's stockpile (from 2006 and 2007), while 18,493 are listed with the police and gendarmerie. Burkina Faso asserts that in addition to restricting civilian possession, it also has authority over the production and sale of weapons.

The nation has 116 licensed local dealers and manufacturers, according to a 2014 census. The lack of proper documentation of illegal artisanal gun manufacturing enterprises is a concern. A recent UNODC research (2015) found that nearly half of the weapons collected in 2013 were handcrafted weapons, highlighting the importance of the sector in Burkina Faso. Additionally, little is known about civilian ownership. Between 2012 and 2014, 5,559 people received licences to purchase guns, according to government officials. SAS calculated that there were 148,000 SALW (both legal and illegal) in civilian hands in 2007 (Karp, 2007). In the past five years, the sub-security region's situation has substantially deteriorated on the outside. Along with the crises in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, the collapse of Libya and the following regional dispersion of its stockpiles all played a part in the smuggling of weapons into Burkina Faso. Since several recent instances suggest that Burkinabe citizens were involved in the theft of weapons trade, Burkina Faso is considered a key transit country for regional illicit weapons trafficking. Regarding its involvement in violations of the arms embargo in respect to Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso has been cited in various UN sanctions committee reports (Berghezan, 2013).

Mauritania

SALW are not produced on a commercial scale in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. The armed forces' weapons are imported. Even though Mauritanian warehouses have an inventory, a control method regarded as effective by foreign partners, theft and looting do happen periodically. For instance, in the attack on the Lemgheity military barracks, close to the Algerian border, in 2005, members of AQIM (then known as the GSPC) stole about 58 Kalashnikovs and 50,000 ammunition. Four Kalashnikovs were taken in 2013 from a 5th military region warehouse and later found by the Gendarmerie. However, the Army Staff is known to have sold and given away inferior weapons and ammunition to citizens and shooting associations. The main entrance locations for weapons into Mauritania are the borders with Mali in the south and east, Algeria in the north and northeast, and Western Sahara in the south and east.

Additionally, it appears that the nation has an illicit armaments market (particularly Kalashnikovs, Simonovs and G3). The Mauritanian government claims that weapons forged by blacksmiths in Mali are in use throughout the nation. Although Mauritania lacks organised and established criminal networks, there have been incidents of internal crime, raids, cattle theft, and land conflicts where firearms have occasionally been used. In contrast to other nations, if small-scale home-made weapon production occurs, it is for sacred ceremonies and not for criminal activity.

Mali

Early in 2016, Mali is dealing with a highly complicated security scenario. In addition to dealing with the secessionist insurgency in its northern regions, the nation is also increasingly coming under attack from regional and international extremist networks. This is demonstrated by the frequent attacks against the Malian armed forces and foreign peacekeeping forces, as well as more recently the attack against the Radisson Hotel in Bamako in November 2015. Political tensions persist despite the Algerian Agreements being made with the northern secessionist factions, and cease-fire breaches are frequently recorded. Meanwhile, rivalry for territory and smuggling routes among the many armed factions persists, highlighting the direct connections between the armed insurgency and international crime in northern Mali.

An analysis of the available data, however, provides some estimations that could serve as the foundation of a database on the use of SALW across the nation. For instance, according to the Small Arms Survey, there were roughly 143,000 weapons in civilian hands in 2007, either legally or illegally, or 1.1 firearms per 100 people. The Malian defence forces' stockpiles were assessed to include roughly 13,000 weapons according to data from the Small Arms Survey conducted in 2006, while police stocks were anticipated to hold 17,800 weapons. Even if, according to recent study, the majority of illicit weapons captured in Mali were found to have originated from national government stockpiles, these holdings have undoubtedly changed dramatically due to the profound change in the security situation there (Anders, 2015).

Niger

Significant security issues exist within and outside the borders of the Republic of Niger. While the peaceful manner in which the presidential election was conducted has heralded a new age of stability and growth in a nation notorious for frequently being the target of separatist violence and military coups. The recent deterioration in security in the Sahel and North African regions has had an adverse effect on security in Niger. In addition to dealing with the effects of the fall of the Gaddafi dictatorship in 2011 and the presence of Boko Haram, Niger continues to be a regional hub for the trafficking and smuggling of small guns and light weapons. According to estimates from the Worldwide Burden of Armed Violence in 2015, there are approximately 199 gun-related homicides per year in Niger, which is a low rate by global standards (1.6 per 100,000 inhabitants).

The 2007 Small Arms Survey estimated that national defence forces have 6,270 weapons in their arsenals, but we think the police have 18,035 weapons. Estimates place the number of civilians with weaponry in their possession, whether allowed or not, at 93,791. Although it is currently impossible to estimate, it is likely that the proliferation of SALW stolen from army stockpiles, the Libyan security forces, as well as - as it may seem- Malian forces, has led to a significant increase in the actual number of weapons in circulation in Niger over the past few years. SALW and ammo were taken from a number of armed convoys by the Nigerien police, according to information on illegal weapon seizures in Niger in 2011. In addition, heavy machine guns, AK-style assault

rifles, FN FAL automatic weapons, grenade launchers, and pistols were seized. The same year, 335 detonators and 640 kg of Semtex explosives were discovered on a van travelling from Libya to Mali.

Nigeria

The spread of illegal SALW poses a serious security risk to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The separatist claims in the Niger Delta, communal warfare in the Plateau State, and extreme violence committed by Boko Haram in the northern areas are all separate but potent dangers to the stability of Nigeria and the peace in the area. The spread of SALW is further aided by insufficient border control capabilities, while the growing issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the actions of criminal networks exacerbate an already dangerous security scenario. Despite the fact that small arms are freely accessible in Nigeria, there are few papers that list the precise number of firearms held by the government. The Nigerian armed services have reportedly retained 179,550 firearms in their stockpiles as of 2006, according to reports, which is the most recent year for which the public has access to information on the number of SALW held by the Nigerian military.

According to SIPRI data, Nigeria received 1 200 assault rifles, 192 machine guns, and 75 grenade launchers from Bulgaria between 2008 and 2009, in addition to purchasing 72,000 assault rifles from China and 30,000 from South Korea between 2006 and 2010. (Pieter, 2011). According to the only information on police stockpiles that is publicly available, the Nigerian Police Force has 360,000 weapons in 2012. Estimates of the number of illegal firearms in circulation in the nation range widely, from one million in 2006 to seven million in 2013. (Dowdney, 2006). According to a police report on weapons and ammo confiscated, 2,703 firearms were recovered from the state command, with the bulk being of "local production" (1791), while the remaining weapons included guns (475), pump-action shotguns (241) and pistols (196). Between 2009 and 2014, the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) reported 22 seizures of weapons and ammunition in total (NCS, 2014).

The Defense Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) was given the national SALW production capability, the company belonged to the defence industries. The mission of DICON, which was founded in 1964, is to manufacture SALW and ammunition for the armed forces. According to plans, DICON will create the OBJ-006 assault weapon and 7.62mm ammunition (SIPRI, 2011). President Buhari announced in August 2015 that DICON would enhance armaments production, however it was impossible to accurately analyse DICON's present manufacturing capacity during the field research. Beyond industrial weapons, this study showed that illegally made handcrafted weapons are a significant issue in Nigeria, with local weapon production seen as a source of relatively advanced weaponry at reasonable costs. Domestic production is still unregulated and not subject to state regulation, though. The Anambra State's Awka is regarded as a centre for the manufacture of weaponry. These weapons are made in the backyards or homes of the manufacturers.

Homemade weapons are typically used for hunting, neighborhood patrol, and self-defense.

Senegal

Before or until 2006, the Senegalese army had 18 430 weapons, while the police would have had 15 284 according to the Small Arms Survey. The estimates of the number of weapons owned by civilians, the armed forces, and the security forces were neither confirmed nor refuted by interlocutors from government institutions during the fact-finding expedition. Senegal lacks an infrastructure for the industrial production of weapons. The Senegalese Defense and Security Forces' (FDS) firearms are imported. The stocks of the armed and security forces' material appear to have been diverted to Malian armed groups, according to some evidence of illegal SALW trafficking from Senegal to Mali. The majority of these firearms are owned by regular people who either are not aware of the laws governing the carrying of weapons or have chosen not to follow them, such as by renewing their permits on time. In general, the interviewees think that Senegal's 'armed violence' is not primarily driven by firearms. The nation currently has a far lower homicide rate than other nations in the region (United Nations Office Against Drugs and Crime, 2014).

According to reports, using knives maliciously is at least as common. Senegalese citizens go for firearms when they believe they need them for self-defense, however some others do it out of cultural tradition. An automatic handgun apparently sells for between 50,000 and 100,000 CFA francs (75-150 euros) on the local black market for weapons, which is a significant discount from the price paid by civilians in the legal system, where similar weapons cost at least 500,000 CFA (Lambolez, 2014). The origins of weapons in the illicit market seem to be diverse. Some of the weapons appeared to have been initially legally imported by civilians before ending up in the hands of people who would misuse them. However, it appears that the majority of the firearms found in Senegalese crime scenes come from cross-border traffic, not necessarily from large-scale organised operations, but rather from the trading of a small number of weapons that are frequently used again and again following conflicts and uprisings in the Sahel.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of the study there are a number of factors that contribute to regional stability in the Sahel region as well as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, including criminal organisations that prey on conflict zones where people have fled and small-scale SALW trafficking that happens as people move. Most often, criminals who possess these weapons utilize them to continue violating the human rights of citizens. Transnational criminal organisations and armed groups are particularly mobile in uncontrolled border regions, especially in conflict zones, ungoverned spaces, and unstable governments. This makes it simple for them to transfer small arms and light weapons into the Sahel region. As a result of rebel attacks on government forces to seize their arsenals or poorly paid soldiers trading weapons with rebels, the study also discovered that the diversion of

government stockpiles into black markets is a significant factor behind the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Sahel region. The study also discovered that social injustice and a lack of economic possibilities have contributed to the spread and use of SALW in the Sahel region. Further, the absence of economic prospects to increase employment for the expanding population indirectly fuels the societal unrest that results in the purchase of SALW in the Sahel region.

Accordingly, the finding also showed that the Sahel region has been negatively impacted by small arms and light weapons. For example, Chad, which serves as a transit point rather than a final destination for illegal weapons, has received AK-47s, rocket launchers, and automatic machine guns from looted Libyan stockpiles. These weapons were intended for terrorist organisations active in the Sahel-Sahara region, including Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Islamic State. The study's results also demonstrated that the use of small guns had an effect on voluntary manslaughter, which in 2012 was projected to be 7.8% of every 100,000 people, or 1654 voluntary manslaughters annually. Because they are readily available and frequently used by militias or armed criminals, small arms and light weapons have directly contributed to the instability and armed bloodshed in the Central African Republic. The study's findings also demonstrated that Nigeria's dependence on small arms and light weapons has resulted in community fighting in Plateau State, separatist claims in the Niger Delta, and extremist violence carried out by Boko Haram in the country's northern regions. These developments have posed serious threats to the country's stability.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that transnational criminal organisations and armed groups are very mobile in uncontrolled border regions, especially in conflict zones, ungoverned spaces, and fragile states, making it simple for them to smuggle small arms and light weapons into the Sahel region. It was also concluded that all states must mark their weapons at the time of manufacture and possibly at the time of import, and that managing government stockpiles of small arms and light weapons and ammunition is a crucial first step in reducing the flow of illegal small arms and light weapons into the Sahel region. Finally, it was concluded that the spread of small arms and light weapons has had an effect on the Sahel region. For example, in Nigeria, Boko Haram's extremist violence in the north, community fighting in the Plateau State, and separatist claims in the Niger Delta are all results of this proliferation. However, based on the findings it was recommended that; Member States should step up their efforts to strictly monitor and manage local illicit firearm and SALW manufacturing within their borders as well as within their own nations, including protections for state control; Joint security operations should be conducted, and the Sahel region's government should support bilateral and multilateral collaboration as well as any efforts to eradicate small arms and light weapons; and, the Sahel states should address the underlying factors that

contribute to conflict, which are poverty, social, economic, and gender inequality, weak governance, and a lack of development.

FURTHER STUDY

Every study has limitations, and for future research it is recommended to analyze the factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Sahel region and the implications for the Sahel region.

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