



- Committee:** Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)
- Issue:** Mitigating the impact of unregulated or illicit arms transfers and diversion of arms in Africa
- Student Officer:** Duru Yünek - Deputy Chair

Introduction to the Issue

The question of uncontrolled arms, their illicit acquisition and their transfer is a recurring security dilemma in Africa. The concentration of most of Africa's estimated 100 million uncontrolled small arms and light weapons (SALW) in crisis zones and other security-challenged environments usually exacerbates and elongates conflicts. Structural governance weaknesses in most African countries encourage the proliferation of uncontrolled SALW, through the diversion of state stockpiles, illicit sales, and trafficking of local and foreign arms. This brings devastating costs to people, families, and communities who experience displacement, erosion of social cohesion and trust, gender-based violence (GBV), injuries and fatalities. François Oubida, Burkina Faso's representative, stated that in order to successfully implement the Programme of Action, international cooperation would be needed. African countries have taken every possible measure within their powers to prevent the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons; however, their limited resources are a huge obstacle in accomplishing such a task. Furthermore, The Programme of Action has recognized that international cooperation and assistance by all stakeholders is imperative. Most conflicts in Africa involve non-state actors who use uncontrolled arms. Since non-state actors (such as militias, warlords and extremist groups) have no legal authority to get or bear arms, they resort to illicit means of arms acquisition – chiefly through diversion from state stockpiles, black markets and trafficking, as well as locally made arms.

Involved Countries & Organizations

Country/Organization:

South Sudan: Despite various international sanctions put in place by the U.N and other supranational bodies including the E.U, the Sudanese Government has been able to engage in armed conflict with anti-government groups and terrorise its own people using weapons sourced from abroad. In selling arms



to Al-Bashir, these countries are effectively supporting a militarist regime as it contravenes international law and carries out crimes against humanity

Boko Haram: Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist organization based in Northeastern Nigeria, also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon. Boko Haram's primary objective is the establishment of an Islamic State under Sharia law in Nigeria. Its secondary objective is to widen the imposition of Islamic rule beyond Nigeria. Given the porosity of borders, Boko Haram fighters have devised methods of concealing and successfully trafficking SALWs across and within Nigeria's borders. Such trafficking operations could be examined through two broad dimensions: transnational and national trafficking. National trafficking refers to the smuggling of arms from one location to another within the Nigerian territory. Similar to their methods of transnational arms importing, Boko Haram has equally adopted stocking in goods, loading in specially-adapted vehicles, hiding underneath the cloths of couriers, and tunnelling for arms smuggling. Transnational trafficking refers to the movement of arms and weapons across borders of sovereign States. During the Libyan uprising, for instance, state armoury were either ordered opened in February 2011 by Muammar Gaddafi or looted by rebel forces and mercenaries, and the majority of these weapons were never recovered.

Libya: On July 9, Libya became the 78th country to sign the Arms Trade Treaty and the first in North Africa. Handicap International, which has been working in Libya since 2011, welcomes this strong commitment, which will help tackle the serious problems caused by the arms trade in this challenging region. With the fall of the Mouammar Kadhafi regime in Libya in 2011, weapons stockpiles formerly used by forces loyal to Kadhafi were opened, leading to a massive proliferation of small arms among the civilian population. Under the conditions of the treaty, Libya has agreed to set up a national weapons transfer control mechanism and to ban the export of arms which risk being used in attacks on civilians or civilian buildings. Before any future arms sales, Libya must assess whether the weapons violate international embargoes or promote acts of genocide, terrorism, or other "serious violations" of human rights laws. For the last two years Handicap International has been educating the public in Libya about the risks posed by these weapons and how to handle guns correctly to limit the number of accidents. This includes keeping weapons out of the reach of children, not firing into the air during demonstrations or celebrations, and engaging the safety when weapons are not in use.



African Union: The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of 55 member states located on the continent of Africa. The AU was announced in the Sirte Declaration in Sirte, Libya, calling for the establishment of the African Union. On a continental level, the AU Assembly adopted the 2013 AU Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as a corresponding Action Plan. This plan aims to coordinate, harmonize and strengthen the sub-regional arrangements by designating national focal points and establishing a Steering Committee on SALW convened by the AUC and composed of the RECs. This Committee meets twice a year to coordinate and support SALW initiatives on the continent. The African Union (AU) Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020 was adopted in January 2017 and sets out practical steps to address the underlying drivers of conflict as well as the tools and enablers of violence. Preventing the illicit flows of weapons within Africa, including to conflict zones, is a vital component of the AU Roadmap

Liberia: Liberia was one of the countries best placed to testify to the devastating breadth of the small arms scourge, as their 14-year-long civil war was fuelled by illicitly trafficked guns and light artillery. Furthermore, Liberia has long been suffering from high amounts of HIV/AIDS cases as well as dramatically low levels of education and poor employment. Despite the numerous hardships that the country has faced, Liberia has nevertheless persevered in tackling the issue of the illicit small arms trade. The new Government has actively erected barriers to prevent the flow of small arms and to promote the aims of the United Nations Programme of Action.



Detailed Analysis of the Issue

Injuries and Fatalities

Data on conflict fatalities in Africa are scarce and inconsistent, although most deaths recorded in conflict and security-challenged environments in the continent are caused by uncontrolled arms. It is safe to state that in the last two decades, millions of lives were lost as a direct result of wars in Africa. For instance, during the period 1983–2005 in DRC, Sudan and Rwanda combined, between 4.3m–8.4m people lost their lives due to armed conflict.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) and Refugees:

Forced population movements within and across borders are typically intended by the need to avoid injuries and deaths from uncontrolled arms. Although the information on refugees and IDPs are fluid and variegated, they point to huge displacements of individuals due to the increased lethality of armed groups and conflicts. Countries and regions affected by violence, such as CAR, DRC, Lake Chad Basin, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, generally record the highest numbers of IDPs and refugees in Africa.

Gender-based violence (GBV) :

The risk of gender-based violence heightens in conflict situations and it is estimated that about 45.6 per cent of African women have experienced gender-based violence as a result of armed conflict, compared to 35 per cent globally. It is estimated that most African women and girls will experience a form of gender-based violence in their lifetime. In conflict contexts, gender-based violence is generally associated with armed groups and combatants who use SALW to humiliate, intimidate, displace and traumatize individuals and communities.

Erosion of Social Cohesion and Communal Trust:

Uncontrolled arms do not necessarily cause conflict, but they do exacerbate tensions and tip the balance towards violent confrontations. Illicit arms reduce the use and effectiveness of dialogue and negotiated settlement of disputes; uncontrolled arms contribute to the selection of violence to settle disputes. The



spread of uncontrolled arms will increase mutual suspicion and mistrust, encourages retaliatory measures, and worsens social divides and disagreements among different groups. In South Sudan and CAR, to name just two, targeted killings with uncontrolled arms have fragmented communities and countries along ethnic, religious and political lines.

Black markets and illicit trafficking

The number of conflicts in Africa illustrates the thriving scope of the illicit arms trade in the continent. Locally-made arms and diverted stocks are traded in parallel arms markets. In 2013, Cameroonian security forces arrested a man who was transporting 655 guns to Nigeria, and another 5,400 AK-47 rifles were intercepted in Maroua, in the northern region of Cameroon.²⁶ Based on the Small Arms Survey assessment of Libya's illicit arms market, SALW such as heavy machine guns, shoulder-fired recoilless weapons, rocket launchers, anti-tank guided missiles, man-portable air defence systems, grenade launchers, and different types of rifles can be bought online

External sources:

Although most of the proliferated uncontrolled arms in circulation in Africa are being trafficked and transferred within the continent, weapons are initially shipped into conflict zones from outside the continent. For example, the UN Panel of Experts on Sudan identified certain countries, including Ukraine, China, Canada, Israel, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Iran and Russia as major suppliers of large stockpiles of arms and other material to South Sudan. The UN-mandated Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) also noted that one of al-Shabaab's supply lines originates in Yemen, with weapons delivered through multiple receiving points on the Somali coast.

Radicalization and violent extremism

The growth and activities of religious groups that espouse radical extremist ideologies have contributed to the spread and use of illicit arms in Africa. The existence and possession of SALW by violent extremist groups have negatively impacted security in West, Horn and North Africa. The open display of SALW is a requisite element in the identity of violent extremist groups, and extremist groups appear deadlier as their access to and quantity of SALW increases. For instance, radical Tuareg militias and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in northern Mali have initiated and sustained armed insurgencies because of



their access to and use of SALW. Islamist militancy has garnered the most attention as a consequence of the violent attacks of Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Al-Shabaab and other similar groups operating across Africa

List of Important Events

In this section, summarize **the most important events** regarding the issue in **chronological order**. You can include the events you mentioned in the previous section, as well as small but important ones you didn't get a chance to explain in detail.

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
18/06/1991	Enactment of the "Firearms Directive"
30/11/2000	"Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons"
20/06/2001	2001 "Programme of Action" to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons
10/02/2002	Boko Haram was established.
02/04/2013	"Arms Trade Treaty" to establish controls on international transfers of conventional weapons and ammunition
30/12/2019	Security Council's updated resolution on Small Arms and Light Weapons



Past Attempts to Solve the Issue

Arms Trade Treaty

The Arms Trade Treaty is a multilateral treaty that regulates international trade in conventional weapons. African countries have for the most part shown hefty support for ATT. Many existing SALW-control agreements on the continent either encompass components of the proposed pact or express the want for such an agreement. The guidelines aim to prohibit transfers that can be used to, suppress peoples rights and freedoms, threatening National Security or threatening international law. The development of an ATT could have many benefits for African countries. These embody a reduction in excess weapons being dumped in Africa. Another major benefit would be the promotion of better decision making at the national level to make sure that choices on arms procurements reflect the interests of a country by taking into consideration developmental needs.

United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects

In 2001, the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA), the subsequent adoption of the International Tracing Instrument,¹ and the Firearms Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,² have established an overall framework within which Member States and regional organizations have, both individually and collectively, enacted numerous legislative and administrative measures to combat the proliferation of these weapons. Of these, only the Firearms Protocol, which entered into force in 2005, is legally binding.



Related Documents

[1046088 UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects \(2001: New York\)](#)

["Examining international responses to illicit arms trafficking"](#)

[Full text of the Bamako Declaration](#)

[A/HRC/44/29 - Impact of the diversion of arms and ... - OHCHR](#)

[The Human Cost of Uncontrolled Arms in Africa - Oxfam ...](#)

Possible Solutions

1. States that are members of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) should put in place appropriate measures (such as but not limited to legislation, local unions, increased border surveillance etc.) required to domesticate and start implementing the ATT.
2. Non-signatory states, especially arms-producing countries, should consider acceding to the treaty and ensure that arms procurement and transfer within their jurisdiction are vetted in accordance with global norms.
3. African states should address and aim to rectify the root causes of conflict, which are further exacerbated by uncontrolled arms: poverty, social and economic gender inequality, governance and development deficit, and lack of citizenship rights.
4. Provide technical assistance needed to monitor and control the borders and seaports. This may attract more collaboration from neighbouring states, such as for instance the EU and NATO monitoring operation in the Mediterranean in the case of Libya or the AU, LAS, USA, Egypt.
5. The AU should provide a continent-wide platform for the monitoring of uncontrolled arms transfer in Africa. The African Union Peace and Security Roadmap 2016–2020 is a good strategy



to influence uncontrolled arms across the continent. Putting the roadmap in action can alter the current situation of uncontrolled arms.

6. There is under-utilized knowledge among the victims/survivors of uncontrolled and illicit arms across Africa, which is key to addressing the various angles of the problem. Commitment to arms control will be enhanced if people's knowledge and experiences are brought to the attention of policymakers, through consultations with and briefings by local civil society and women's rights organizations.
7. In some regions of Africa, mineral resource extraction and uncontrolled arms have been found to be extremely closely linked. Mineral resource extraction facilities must be closely supervised and properly regulated. Illicit financial flows and their exchange for arms need to be further explored to inform policy formulation to control the exchange phenomenon.



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