



Article

Small Arms And Light Weapons Proliferation And Peace-Building In Sudan, 2017-2023

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Abstract

This paper investigated and analysed the pervasive issue of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) proliferation in Sudan, identifying its profound impact on peace-building efforts in the country. Utilizing secondary sources of data and guided by the Conflict Transformative Theory, which viewed conflict as an opportunity for positive change while emphasizing the importance of addressing the underlying societal and structural issues, the paper explored the challenges posed by the widespread availability of weapons and its profound implication in the peace-building initiatives in the region. By examining the nexus between small arms and light weapons and the peace process in the region, the paper found a direct correlation between the presence of arms and the escalation of conflict in Sudan. The ready availability of these weapons intensifies violence, hampers peacebuilding initiatives, perpetuating a cycle of instability, thereby hindering sustainable development in the region. Through a holistic understanding of the SALWs proliferation challenge, this paper provided actionable insights to policymakers, peacebuilding practitioners, and humanitarian organisations. Hence, the paper recommended potential strategies to address the challenges of arms proliferation in the region, such as disarmament initiatives, community engagement, and socio-economic development programmes that are geared towards paving the way for sustainable conflict resolution.

Keywords:

Arms Control, Arms Proliferation, Arms Trafficking, Conflict, Peacebuilding.

Introduction

The problems of small arms trafficking, proliferation and misuse have a long history. The end of the Cold War brought the issue to global attention, because of the security challenges it posed to the international security management. These included complex internal and transnational wars, the problems of armed opposition groups, warlord-ism, transnational crime and the challenges faced by the United Nations (UN) and other international peace support operations as conflicts came to an end (Bourne et al. 2006).

The issue of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) at global, regional and sub-regional levels poses serious challenges to peace and security, political stability and economic development. The implications of the accumulation of weapons are that it leads to pervasive regional instability such as escalating,

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intensifying or prolonging of conflicts; obstruction of post-conflict reconstruction and development; and contributes to organized crime and human trafficking. The long history of internal and regional armed conflicts in Africa, the tendency in many countries towards undemocratic political and security systems, weak government capacity and underdevelopment have all posed significant challenges at the efforts to establish effective control on small arms in the region. In the Northeast African region, the phenomenon of the spread of SALWs has attracted the attention of political leaders, statesmen and scholars (Ahorsu 2008; Oche 2008; Bourne 2007; Adebajo and Ismail, 2004).

Following the end of the Cold War in 1989, conflict actually became widespread on the continent. Even though inter-state conflicts had begun to sub-merge, there was an unprecedented increase of intrastate conflicts across regional, ethnic and religious divisions, and also along clan and even sub-clan lines within states (Sorbo and Vale, 1997). This was because of poor economic management and struggle to control the resources of the state. The capability of the state to manage group tension became weakened as it lacked the infrastructural power to maintain internal security.

By the beginning of the 2000s, many of these conflicts had ebbed. But the small arms and light weapons continued to be in the hands of a wide variety of persons in these countries. The basic challenge which the Sudan faces is not only how to effectively disarm, demobilize, reintegrate and reconcile the various groups and ex-combatants, but how to combat the spread of small arms and light weapons in the region. It is estimated that there are six hundred million SALWs in circulation around the world, out of which, about a hundred million are found in Africa. It is also estimated that about eight million are found in circulation in the Northeast Africa region (Ashkenazi et al 2008; and Florquin and Berman, ed. 2005).

In the tumultuous landscape of conflict and post-conflict societies, the pursuit of sustainable peace faces multifaceted adversaries including the small arms and light weapons proliferation. Nowhere is this challenge more starkly manifested than in Sudan. This country called Sudan is where the shadows cast by the widespread availability of such weaponry obscure the path towards lasting stability. This paper, titled "Small Arms and Light Weapons and Peacebuilding in Sudan 2017-2023", embarked on a comprehensive exploration of the intricate interplay between arms proliferation and the intricate process of peace-building in this war-torn nation. Sudan's historical context, marked by protracted conflicts and political upheaval, sets the stage for a nuanced examination of the impact of small arms proliferation on the delicate fabric of peace initiatives. The clandestine arsenals of small arms and light weapons fuel existing grievances and pose persistent threats to security, the imperative to understand and address this intricate challenge becomes increasingly urgent. Rooted in the theoretical framework of Conflict Transformation, this paper did not only dissect the manifestations of small arms proliferation in Sudan, but it unravelled the deeper layers that influence the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts. Through a synthesis of historical analysis and theoretical exploration, this paper provided a robust foundation for comprehending the complexities inherent in the intersection of arms proliferation and peacebuilding. By navigating the shadows that obscure the path to peace, this paper will contribute valuable insights that will inform policies and interventions aimed at fostering enduring stability in Sudan and serve as beacon for addressing similar challenges in other conflict-afflicted regions globally.

The accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons in Sudan has been seen to be responsible for the intensity and duration of armed conflict, undermining the sustenance of peace agreements, impeding peacebuilding and maintenance of international peace and security. As Sudan strives for peace, the international community's support becomes pivotal in ensuring the success of disarmament, dialogue and development initiatives. This paper underscores the significance of a holistic and sustained approach echoing the principles of conflict Transformation Theory, to not only mitigate the immediate consequences of weapons proliferation, but to lay the foundation for a stable and prosperous future in Sudan. It is against this background that this study is carried out.

Statement of the Problem

The Cold War era witnessed a lot of arms build-ups, particularly small arms, which were not intended for the direct use of the superpowers, but were generously supplied to their surrogates, particularly in Africa, to fight proxy wars. Covert transfer of arms to foreign insurgent groups and freedom fighters were also a frequent feature of the Cold War era. The problem of the destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALWs in Sudan gained prominence on the international agenda in the late 1990s and early 2000s particularly during the Second Sudanese Civil War, which lasted from 1983 to 2005. The Civil War was driven by a combination of complex factors, including marginalization and inequality, religious and cultural differences, resource competition, political instability and authoritarian rule, external interference and legacy of colonialism.

Proliferation and illicit trafficking of SALWs is a complex and multi-dimensional problem that affects people and communities in a range of ways (including the deterioration of physical security, the undermining of development prospects, the degradation of access to and availability of social services, etc.). Besides, SALWs contributes to the growing lethality of conflict owing to the proliferation of supply and its increasing demand. Its market is based on the willingness to pay. SALWs involves wide dispersion, as such, there are a far greater number of actions involved and in multiple dimensions: Illicit trafficking, which is difficult to control and monitor; legal arms trade is problematic owing to the fact that government-sanctioned transfers augment the flow of weapons; circulation and surplus, which lead to availability and uncontrolled circulation of stocks and not the production of new weapons that constitutes the central problem. Thus, supply and demand momentum is augmented by the longevity of arms produced. These weapons are used to abuse human rights and for the commission of crimes.

The drive to embark on this study was informed by several social and political problems prevalent in the country, which have impeded peacebuilding efforts. Some of these issues include armed conflict and violence, ethnic and tribal divisions, weak governance and rule of law, regional instability and disarmament challenges. Also, a simmering rivalry between the army led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, over the balance of power in Sudan has erupted in deadly violent clashes. Sudan woke up on the 15th of April, 2023 to violent clashes between the two military blocs that led to the death of more than one hundred people killed after three days of fighting (Ali, 2023). This political instability and internal power struggle have further created an environment conducive to the proliferation of arms, further exacerbating existing conflicts and fuelling violence.

The continual availability of huge numbers of SALWs constitutes internal security problem because Sudan lacks the capacity to regulate the influx of these weapons into the country. This poses serious challenge to legitimacy and authority of the state. The spread of SALWs across Sudan provides shadow market (i.e. an informal market for the sale of small arms) giving room for regional smuggling and networks of illicit economic activities. In Sudan, there are networks of criminal activities created by the war which has not been dismantled. An attempt to put a check on the nefarious economic activity through the imposition of embargoes on government resulted in a reorientation of arms networks. The problem associated with the regional networks of arms supply is that it serves as an alternative source for weapons circulation within the region. The most problematic of these networks of arms dealers is the unidentified nature of weapons. This illicit trade in arms in the region is promoted by the governments of these countries whose inability to acquire arms legally from the state-oriented global market has resorted to illicit arms supply and demand, smuggling of natural resources to generate revenue leading to criminal networks.

Hence, the persistent and widespread proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Sudan constitutes a formidable impediment to the achievement of sustained peace in the region. Despite numerous

peacebuilding efforts, (such as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005, Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) concluded in 2006, Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) signed in 2011, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) signed in 2018 and the Sudanese National Dialogue (SND), launched in 2004), the intricate nexus between the availability of these weapons and the fragile stability sought in post-conflict Sudan remains inadequately understood. Despite the government's commitment to protect civilians in Darfur after the departure of the United Nations-African Union hybrid peace-keeping operation (UNAMID) in December 2020, violence in Darfur continued, with a notable increase in West Darfur. There have been killings and widespread displacement of civilians, as well as destruction of civilian property (Human Rights Watch, 2022). In January 2020, armed Arab militias launched attacks against internally displaced people from the Massalit and other African ethnic groups in al-Genaina, the capital of west Darfur killing around one hundred and fifty people (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

The proliferation of SALWs in Sudan has emerged as a critical impediment to the sustainable peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts in the region. Despite numerous attempts by the international community and local authorities to address this issue, the uncontrolled spread of these weapons continues to fuel conflicts, undermine governance and threaten the prospects for lasting peace in Sudan. As Sudan grapples with the complexities of reconstructing a society ravaged by conflict, a comprehensive examination of the role played by small arms becomes imperative to formulate targeted and effective strategies for enduring peace. Hence, this paper comprehensively examined the multifaceted challenges arising from the proliferation of SALWs in Sudan, with a focus on understanding the root causes, impact on peace building initiatives, and efficacy of existing disarmament strategies. It also addressed the critical gaps in knowledge and discernment regarding the impact of small arms proliferation on peacebuilding initiatives, elucidating the specific challenges posed by these clandestine arsenals and their detrimental influence on the trajectory of peace in Sudan.

Literature Review

Proliferation is defined as the sudden increase in the number or amount of an entity. And in various contexts, it implies rapid expansion, abundance or multiplication. When used in relation to Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), it describes the spread of the weapons, generally, from one country to another or from one group or individual to another. This can be horizontal, which refers to the acquisition of weapons systems by states not previously possessing them, or vertical, which refers to increases in the arsenals of these states already possessing particular weapons (Obasi, 2001). Proliferation, as a mode of arms spread or multiplication is facilitated by certain intermediaries in response to both legal and illegal demands. The Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva (2001) observed that, SALW do not proliferate by themselves- They are sold, resold, perhaps stolen, diverted, and maybe legally or illegally transferred several more times. At each junction in this complex chain of legal and illicit transfer, people-brokers, insurgents, criminals, government officials and /or organized groups are active participants in the process.

The United Nations (UN) acknowledged that massive acquisition and accumulation of arms by a state could enhance proliferation. It however, qualifies the accumulation with such terms as "excessive" and "destabilizing" under certain conditions. It is noted in the report by the Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms (1997) that, the mere accumulation of weapons is not a sufficient criterion by which to define an accumulation of weapons as excessive or destabilizing, since large numbers of weapons that are under the strict and effective control of a responsible state do not necessarily lead to violence. Conversely, a small number of weapons can be destabilizing under certain conditions.

The Royal Military College of Science Handbook (1993) on weapons and vehicles in Bilal (2002) defines small arms as; "Man portable, largely shoulder controlled weapons of up to 12.7mm (0.5") caliber; such weapons generally have a flat trajectory and an effective operational range of 0-800m, although this

varies considerably with calibre and weapon type, where certain weapons also provide neutralizing fire out to 1800m.

The UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (1997) considers small arms are those weapons manufactured to military specification and designed for use by one person, whereas light weapons are those used by several persons working as a crew. Examples are those weapons ranging from knives, clubs and machetes to weapons particularly below the calibre of 100mm-small.

The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (2001) of the US Department of State describes small arms and light weapons “as encompassing man-portable firearms and their ammunitions primarily designed for individual use by military forces as lethal weapons.” It further explains that a typical list of small arms would include self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns.

On the other hand, scholarship on small arms and light weapons has attracted a great deal of scholarly contributions. Scholars like (Ogaba, 2005; Obasi, 2001, 2003; Ochoche, 2008; Jennifer and Jonas, 2007; Alhaji, 2004) have contributed considerably on this. There is no universally accepted definition of SALWs. This is because the understanding of what constitutes these categories of weapons has undergone some changes due to the dynamics of technological development. However, good working definitions abound. These tend to describe such arms and weapons either by their configuration, characteristics, size, user perspective or a combination of some of these.

According to Ogaba (2005) proliferation refers to the excessive accumulation and illegal spread of weapons which could have destabilizing effect on states. Those in government armouries meant for use by the security forces for the defence of the state and maintenance of security constitute legal holdings. He goes further to state that there are three established and conventional modes of arms transfer. The first involves the legal transfer of arms in conformity with all legal formalities, usually from one state actor to another or their accredited agents. The second involves what has been dubbed “gray channels” of transfer. Gray channels, in the words of Frederic Pearson (1994) as quoted in Ogaba (2005) are arrangements by which, government officials look the other way as their agencies arrange for arms to be sent to foreign groups and countries for profit, strategic calculations or both. The third mode is that of black-market transfers, involving “unlawful transfers by private arms dealers and smugglers.

Also, several attempts have been made to distinguish between licit and illicit arms. There is however, no universally accepted definition of what is licit and what is illicit in the context of arms transfers, particularly because both analysts and the governments of various nations interpret the relevant aspects of international law differently. According to Lumpe (1997),

Licit arms are legal sales of any arms transfers that are authorized by national government authorities; those that fully observe the national laws of the arms exporting, transit and importing countries as well as all applicable international laws, Illicit arms, on the other hand, are defined as all arms being procured, transferred or used in violation of national laws of the countries of export, transit and import, as well as, any “arms transfers that violate either national or international laws (Lumpe, 1997).

It can be deduced from the explication above that arms in themselves are, strictly speaking, not inherently licit or illicit and that the determining factor is the compliance of their status at a particular point in time, with relevant national and international laws. Lumpe (1997) observed that, the interaction between legal and illegal markets are manifold. Arms that are originally exported legally but are not properly tracked or secured often fall into illegal circulation – the diversion, theft and capture of state security forces’ arms are major sources of black-market supply around the world.

The complexities arising from these interactions between legal and illegal markets, and the transformation of arms from a licit to an illicit status or vice versa constitute a major difficulty in dealing with the problems associated with the proliferation of SALWs. According to Jennifer and Jonas (2007)

given the difficulty in legally owning a gun, the majority of small arms in Sudan are believed to be held illegally. Their illegality makes it difficult to track flows and possession. Weapons transit into the country across land borders and via seaports; and into the hands of armed groups, national dealers, political and community leaders, and individuals. Craft production also provides a domestic source of small arms. Demand is the key to understanding the trade: as long as insecurity persists, and economic and political opportunities for gain exist through the use of force, demand for small arms will continue.

To Ogaba (2005) while national security connotes the assurance of safety of life and property, and the freedom of citizens from pervasive forms of fear, the proliferation of SALW, on the other hand, has the potential to destroy the lives of citizens and constitute a veritable form of threat to the values that are cherished and protected. In states where appropriate national institutions are either not in place, or are weak, arms proliferation further undermines the authority of the state. The presence of guns is capable of affecting the behavior and attitudes of individuals and groups in a society. The easy availability and accessibility of arms could increase cases of homicide in a nation. According to Small Arms Survey (2012), availability and firearms-related deaths in industrialized countries shows that in 1998, the United States of America, with forty-one firearms per a hundred thousand citizens had 13.47 percent firearms deaths per a hundred thousand citizens; in contrast to Japan, which had 0.30 firearms per a hundred thousand citizens and reported 0.07 percent firearms deaths per a hundred thousand citizens.

In 1983, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in Obasi (2001), enlarged the original World War II definition of small arms as encompassing “all crew-portable direct fire weapons of a caliber less than 50mm and which include secondary capability to defeat light armour and helicopters.” The NATO definition brings most automatic assault rifles such as Ak-47 series, USM16, the Israeli Uzi rifle, as well as all types of rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), machine/sub-machine guns, shoulder fired surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) under the category of small arms. It has been argued that the ECOWAS Small Arms Moratorium adopted in October 1998 left out weapons such as knives, axes and clubs in its categorization of small arms. Although, these weapons which are traditionally made by local blacksmiths, are readily the first set of weapons used in escalating violent conflicts and crimes at the community level.

However, Michael (2001) views small arms as “weapons that can be carried by an individual. This includes everything from revolvers and pistols to machine guns, light anti-tank weapons and shoulder fired surface-to-air missiles”. Nonetheless, an inclusive definition of small arms and light weapons would embrace these categories of weapons even though there is an obvious lack of consensus in the above definitions with respect to identifying a small arm as opposed to a standard conventional weapon. This has led to the formulation of an alternative concept of “light weapons” which emphasizes a more technologically sophisticated category. However, despite the emergence of the light weapons concept, defining small arms still lacks clarity and even the distinction between “small arms” and “light weapons” is a matter of debate. There seems to be a certain amount of uncertainty as to where small arms end and light weapons begin, or whether there is an overlap between the two.

Despite the diverse views of scholars, there is a commonality of characteristics that permeates the various definitions. According to Ochoche (2008), it is from these characteristics that the concept of small arms and light weapons can be better understood. Citing Lodgard Sverre and Richard Ivor Fung, Ochoche (2008) identifies these common elements in all the definitions as follows:

First, the focus is on lethal equipment, that is, weapons and their ammunitions, generally used by military and paramilitary forces, excluding items such as knives and hunting rifles. Second, the emphasis is on weapons that are man-portable or transportable by light vehicles that is, on the weight and size of the equipment. Third, this equipment is easy to maintain, can function without much logistical back-up and requires light training for use. Fourth, to be militarily and politically relevant, the definition comprises weapons that are in frequent use, that is, weapons that really kill (Ochoche, 2008).

Bourne (2007) focuses on the acquisition methods of small arms and light weapons and its fire power contrary to the belief that they do not have destructive impact on the victims. He hypothesizes that armed groups with access to more and better suited acquisition methods, will have increased fire power and have the ability to over-power rival groups who have no access to weapons. This argument can be stretched further to different aspects of arms acquisition, which are related to different aspects of intra-state conflicts. It is equally true that weapons availability is often linked to the initiation, duration and intensity of armed conflict.

Weiss (2003) adopts a different approach to addressing the SALW phenomenon. He argues that the factors that drive the demand for SALW should be considered most critical in an attempt to address the problem. In his view, over-emphasis on supply does not really go to the root or heart of the problem. He argues that suppliers of arms are only eager to make a profit as long as there is a market, so it is immaterial whether the market is regulated or controlled. Even when the market is monitored the business continues through illegal channels. At times, it is even better the market is deregulated to avoid smuggling which will make arms trade more deadly. He argues that even without production and supply of arms, the circulating volume of illicit arms remains capable of posing significant threat to global peace and security.

Oche (2005) argued that the presence of arms has fuelled dozens of intra-state conflicts around the globe. He established a nexus between the decline of the economy and increased youth restiveness, deepening poverty levels leading to communal violence. He concluded that the only panacea to the continual spread of small arms and light weapons is the strategies of poverty reduction, the establishment of effective security systems, good governance, and leadership observance of regional and international protocols and conventions (legal instruments) governing illegal proliferation of SALWs.

Oche (2008) further maintained that the relationship between small arms and light weapons may increase or encourage the investment in private security services. To him, investment in private military companies is for the government, political figures, large multinational companies that operate in many parts of the world. In a comparative analysis of the global impacts of small arms on violent crime, he argued that the impact of small arms is mostly felt in developing countries. He identified the factors that promote small arms proliferation. These are ethnic disharmony, which often leads to violent conflicts; aggravate the urge to acquire small arms for protection and advancing a group's cause; and economic situation characterized by deprivation, persistent inequalities, poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment. This, in his view, will continually lead to grievances and conflicts. It is such conflicts that in turn sustain the demand for weapons, he concluded.

Marsh (2007) approached the issue from another perspective by examining the role of leadership control over acquisition processes and its impact on the nature of armed conflict. Marsh argued that leadership control over arms acquisition ("top-down" acquisition) could be a very important factor because it enables the leadership to impose discipline on its combatants and thus better coordinate the insurgency. However, he came to the conclusion that the more the leadership of armed groups controls the arms acquisition process, the more likely the insurgency will be unified. He argued that a situation where individual combatants have control over the acquisition process ("bottom-up" acquisition), it corresponds with a fractured insurgency with numerous armed bands. Besides leadership control, other varying factors within arms acquisition processes can be distinguished.

A report by the International Peace Academy Programme on Economic Agendas in Civil Wars as cited by Ballentine and Nitzschke (2003), focused on improving policies for conflict prevention and resolution. The authors are of the opinion that the debate on the economic causes of conflict has been polarized around the greed versus grievance dichotomy, juxtaposing "loot-seeking" with "justice-seeking" rebellions. The authors established the relationship between economics and conflict. The case studies of conflicts in South America (Columbia), Europe (Kosovo), South and East Asia (Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Burma), and the Pacific (Papua New Guinea), economic dimensions of separatist conflicts are linked up

to identity politics, group dynamics and state behaviour, rather than economic factors. Peace-keeping is to ensure that parties to the conflict keep to the terms of cease-fire agreement. Peace-keeping precedes peace-building activity. Peace-building, on the other hand, is the implementation of peace agreement and putting the necessary institutions that will ensure and guarantee sustainability of peace. Ballentine and Nitzschke (2003), concluded that peace-keeping missions are poor choice for peace-building given their limited mandates, their limited capacity in peace-building, and their limited leverages over national decision. In this regard, they maintained that international actors can only assist the peace-building process, and cannot create peace.

Paffenholz and Spurk (2006) offer a new perspective on peace-building by focusing on the role of civil society in conflict-affected countries or emerging from conflict and confronting the challenge of making peace sustainable. They took a more systematic look at the conditions under which civil society organizations, and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that they often claim to represent, can play constructive roles. They argued that civil society supports may not necessarily have positive effects. In other words, the mere existence of and support from civil societies does not automatically lead to peace-building. This argument is appraised based on the functionalist approach by the authors, which provides the proper nexus between the civil society and peace-building. They draw attention to the need to involve local actors in peace-building instead of external actors because the external actors are likely to be incapacitated in empowering the local actors in peace-building.

However, Wolpe and McDonald (2008) attempted a systemic analysis of the practical experiences of resolving African conflicts by drawing from the Iraqi experience where the international community tried unsuccessfully to advance peace and democracy. They were of the view that the underlying assumptions of traditional approaches to peace-building and promotion of democracy should be re-examined. This is against the background of the failure of the international community to build sustainable peace in Iraq. The traditional approaches are based on the signing of peace agreement by the belligerent parties to a conflict. This peace agreement is usually imposed by the international community. They further argued that the major challenge in peace-building and democracy lies not in abstract, sector-specific institutional "fixes", but, rather, in bringing key leaders together in a long-term process designed to resolve the tensions and mistrust that are the inevitable by-product of conflict and war, and to build (or rebuild) their capacity to work effectively together across the country's ethnic and political divides.

Wolpe and McDonald (2008) further noted that, there are common elements that are unique to national conflict and these poses challenges to the building of sustainable peace and democracy in divided societies. To them, for peace and democracy to be sustained, there must be the transformation of the pervasive zero-sum, winner-takes all syndromes that are both the cause and the product of conflict. There is also need to establish relationship and build trust among key leaders that have been fractured by conflict. Subsequently, the forging of new consensus among key leaders on the "rules of the game" (i.e., on how power will be shared and organized, and how decisions will be made is a common element). The former belligerent leaders must learn to hear each other's concerns and how to express their own views in ways that encourage a search for solutions, rather than invite further confrontation and buck passing.

De Conning (2008) analysed the coherence and coordination dilemma in peace building and post-conflict reconstruction nations, integrated approach concept. He focused on one of the aspects that contribute to the lack of sustainability of the peace process which is as a result of coherence. This has caused stress to international peace-building system. He argued that despite a growing awareness that the security, development, political, human rights, humanitarian and rule of law dimensions of peace-building are interlinked. Hence, the agencies that implement programmes in these dimensions are finding it extremely difficult to meaningfully integrate them. He further argued that all peace building agents are interdependent in that they cannot individually achieve the goal of the overall peace building system.

Lederach (1997) focused on the multilevel approach to peace-building that increases inter-connectedness between levels of intervention and cooperation between actors involved. The author points to Track Two leaders as key actors by virtue of their distance from the confrontational politics dominating the top echelons of conflict-ridden societies. According to the author, these societies have the potential to act as intermediaries between the top and grassroots levels. On the basis of this, he proposed an intervention structure as a pyramid with the apex representing the top military, political or religious leadership; the middle level representing a mid-range leadership including private sector, professional, leaders of ethnic or Inter-Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs); and the grassroots leadership placed at the pyramid's base.

Hazen (2007) analysed the role of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in relation to peace-building and to assess if the extent to which the UN Peacekeeping Missions have fared in peace-building in some countries that have gone through war. This was fallout of the debate by some scholars as regards the nexus between peacekeeping and peace-building. This debate can be seen from two stand-points. The first centres on the role of the liberal model for peace-building activities and questions the reliance on democratic institutions and a market economy to address the underlying causes of conflict and to build mechanisms for non-violent conflict resolution. Hazen (2007) argued that the liberal approach to post-conflict countries creates insecurities and threatens the political and economic power bases of groups and individuals, leading them to resist such changes. He was of the view that institutions need to be developed first, and then, the transition to democracy and a free-market economy should be an incremental one. Also, he agreed to the fact that a liberal model is appropriate, but it is unlikely to be sufficient if it simply rebuilds the status quo and that the liberal model is not only ineffective but also damaging to the non-western countries subject to international interventions. He went further to question the role of third-party actors in peace-building. This follows from lack of consensus on the extent to which international actors should control post-conflict peace-building or how much they can affect the underlying dynamics in post-conflict countries. He argued that even though peace-building remains largely third-party intervention, third party interventions cannot build peace alone, because peace-building lies with a national government and population. He suggested that the long-term solution to peace-building is to develop capacity for war-torn society.

For Neethling (2005), he opined that the exact concept of peace-building remains an issue of conceptual confusion, disagreement and discourse. He expressed the view that the role of peace-builders could be salient when civil wars have ended not in the conquest of one of the parties. The challenge for the United Nations (UN) has been on how to transform the short-term presence of peace-keepers into efforts aimed at societal transformation. Again, efforts aimed at building peace, as opposed to providing security, brought security thinking and practice into closer collaboration with development policy. Drawing from the experience of El Salvador, Mozambique, Angola and Cambodia, the UN was confronted with how to formulate policies and strategies that focused on the foundation necessary for the rebuilding and restoration of war-torn societies.

Some of the gaps observed after the review of related literature includes the limited exploration of the perspectives and experiences of local communities directly affected by small arms proliferation, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges they face in the peace-building process. Also, insufficient analysis of the long-term effects of small arms proliferation on societal structures, economic development and the potential for recurring violence even after the initial peace-building efforts. And most importantly, limited exploration of innovative solutions or interventions that go beyond traditional peace-building strategies, considering the evolving nature of conflicts.

Methodology

This paper is qualitative and employed historical research design. It was hinged on the evaluation of available secondary data and general information to establish facts, trends and drew conclusion based on the arguments and views of different authorities in the field of small arms and light weapons proliferation.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted the Conflict Transformation Theory. The theory was propounded by John Paul Lederach in the late 20th century. He developed and introduced the theory during the 1990s as a response to the limitations of traditional cum simplistic conflict resolution models. It is a framework for understanding and addressing conflict resolution approaches. The theory focuses on transforming the root causes and dynamics of conflict, aiming to create positive and lasting change. The theory places a strong emphasis on building relationships and trust among conflicting parties, which involves fostering open communication, empathy and understanding. It also emphasizes the importance of including all relevant stakeholders in the process. It emphasizes nonviolent approaches and seeks solutions that are sustainable over the long term. Instead of merely managing or suppressing conflict, the goal is to fundamentally transform the dynamics that led to the violence.

The fitness of Conflict Transformation Theory to this paper rests on the fact that the theory addresses the root causes of conflict rather than merely managing its symptoms. The theory can guide interventions at multiple levels. Firstly, addressing the accessibility of small arms involves not only disarmament initiatives but also, understanding the economic factors driving weapons trade. Furthermore, the theory encourages fostering dialogue between conflicting parties, acknowledging historical grievances and promoting inclusive governance structures. By involving local communities in decision-making processes, the theory aims to transform power dynamics and mitigate the potential for violence.

Additionally, the focus on socio-economic development aligns with conflict transformation theory-emphasizing that sustainable peace requires addressing underlying issues such as poverty and inequality. This can involve creating economic opportunities, rebuilding infrastructure, and investing in education, ultimately transforming the socio-economic landscape to contribute to lasting peace in Sudan despite the challenges posed by small arms proliferation. Hence, by focusing on transforming structural and cultural factors contributing to conflict, the theory provides a comprehensive approach to navigating peace in the shadows of weapon proliferation in Sudan.

Discussion/ and Findings

Understanding the Factors Fuelling the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Sudan

This illicit movement of weapons and in particular Small and Light Weapons (SALWs) has been prevalent and widespread within Sudan. There are a number of factors that have contributed to the trade and proliferation of SALWs in the study area, the most important of which are the continued conflicts in the region and lack of governmental controls. The biggest contributor to the continued need for weapons in the region has been the persistent conflicts that have occurred in the region particularly in Sudan over the past two decades. From genocide in Rwanda, to civil wars in Liberia and Sudan, to an almost non-existent government in Somalia, weapons have been in high demand in all areas of the continent. This has led to a rise in the black-market trading of weapons and in particular SALW within Sub-Saharan Africa. Acquisitions of SALW and major weapons from external suppliers, shipments of arms from the Sudanese government in support of opposition forces, and arms captured on the battlefield during the civil war. The wounds of Sudan's long and brutal civil war run deep, and the weapons used to inflict those wounds continue to cast a long shadow. The Darfur region, scarred by years of conflict, bears witness to the devastating consequences of these leftover weapons, with communities living in constant fear of their reappearance in the hands of opportunistic militia group.

The lack of government control and instability in the region has done much to facilitate the illicit trade and spread of weapons on the continent. The government of Sudan failed to control the proliferation of

SALWs during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005). During this conflict, various armed groups including government forces, rebel factions and tribal militias were heavily armed with SALW, leading to widespread violence and displacement of populations. The Sudanese government under President Omar al-Bashir, reportedly armed and supported militias such as the Janjaweed to suppress rebel movements in regions like Darfur. These militias (the Janjaweed, Popular Defence Forces and the Rapid Support Forces) were accused of widespread human rights abuses including ethnic cleansing and mass displacement, facilitated by the proliferation of SALW (Burns, 2023).

The inability of the majority of the governments to exercise control over their borders makes it difficult to stop the trafficking and smuggling of illicit arms. Sudan’s involvement in regional conflicts such as in neighbouring Chad, also contributed to arms proliferation. Cross-border smuggling and illicit arms trafficking facilitated the flow of weapons into and out of Sudan, undermining efforts to control the spread of SALW within the country (Nna, 2012).

With the majority of the countries in Africa having three to five neighbouring countries with relatively small security budgets, it becomes difficult to stop the flow of arms from one country to the next. SALW are well suited for illicit smuggling. They are easily portable, easy to conceal, and small shipments of SALW do not draw much attention as governments do not consider it strategic to devote large resources to stopping the flow of light weapons in comparison to heavy weapons. The porosity of the borders of Somalia and Rwanda have implications for arms proliferation in Sudan. Somalia has experienced decades of conflict, instability and weak governance, creating an environment conducive to arms trafficking and smuggling. The porous borders and lack of effective control mechanisms have facilitated the flow of weapons into and out of Somalia with arms often being trafficked through neighbouring countries including Sudan. Arms trafficked from Somalia may find their way into Sudan contributing to arms proliferation and fuelling conflicts within the country (Bilali, 2023).

Also, Rwanda, despite its relative stability in recent years, shares borders with conflict-affected countries in the Great Lakes region, such as, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. These neighbouring countries have witnessed arms flows and conflicts, and arms trafficking networks operating in the region could potentially smuggle weapons into Sudan from Rwanda. Additionally, Rwanda’s role as a transit hub for regional trade and commerce could inadvertently facilitate the movement of arms across borders (Ndawana, Hove & Ghuliku, 2018).

The legacy of conflict in Sudan extends far beyond the visible scars etched on its people (some of which are, physical injuries, psychological trauma, displacement, loss of loved ones, destruction of infrastructures and human rights abuses). It manifests in the form of clandestine workshops scattered across the nation, churning out rudimentary yet deadly SALWs. In addition to the lack of adequate structures, corruption is extremely prevalent in the region. The result of this is that even in countries where control structures have been put in place, corrupt government officials impede the integrity of the system in stopping the flow of arms. These issues in proliferation have hindered the efforts put in place for peacebuilding in most conflict countries particularly in Sudan.

Table 1: Highlight of several cases of human rights abuses orchestrated by the state in Sudan, splinter groups or criminal networks against the civilian populations in Sudan

S/N	PERPETRATOR	HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES	LOCATION	TIMEFRAME
1	Sudanese government	Mass killings, arbitrary detention, torture	Darfur	Early 2000s
2	Janjaweed militia	Ethnic cleansing, rape, pillage	Darfur	Early 2000s

3	Rapid Support Forces	Violent crackdown on protesters, human rights violations	Khartoum	2019
4	Inter-communal conflicts	Tribal conflicts, cattle raiding, displacement	Various regions	Ongoing
5	Criminal networks	Human trafficking, exploitation, violence	Across Sudan	Ongoing

International Efforts towards the Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Sudan

The United Nations, serves an overall purpose of supporting its member states in preventing and resolving armed conflicts in a peaceful manner and achieving lasting peace. Peace-building as such has always been a central component of the UN's work. Acknowledging that armed conflict and violence are increasingly complex, dynamic, and protracted, the 2015 review of the UN's peace-building architecture set out a new framework of 'sustaining peace' in order to strengthen the UN System in such a way that it can better serve its member states in their efforts to prevent armed conflict and lasting peace (Blackings, 2018). The frameworks are on, improving the peacebuilding capability of the UN system, closer strategic and operational partnerships for sustaining peace, more predictable peacebuilding financing and building national leadership in an integral part of a reconciliation and nation-building agenda (The United Nations, 2015).

The concept of sustaining peace was formally adopted by the Member States of the General Assembly and Security Council on April 27, 2016 (S/RES/2282) and translated in the Peace-building and Sustaining Peace Agenda. The agenda represents the organization's commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict and supporting countries in their efforts to build and sustain peace. The framework emphasizes a comprehensive and integrated approach, recognizing that peace is a complex process that goes beyond immediate post-conflict situations. (Blackings, 2018). The UN's commitment to peacebuilding and sustainable peace is embodied in various resolutions, reports and initiatives. The organisation's efforts aim to address the underlying causes of conflict, promote resilience and create conditions for lasting peace and development.

Also, the UN has sought to strengthen the capacity of its civil society partners in conflict affected Darfur by supporting them in accessing UN funding to implement peace-building programmes in the region. The Peace Building Fund's (PBF) encouragement of joint UN-civil society proposals has helped to further boost partnerships and joint impactful action. During the current political situation, civil society actors have become even more important partners to the international actors, who seek to leverage civil society access, legitimacy, and context awareness in order to promote long-term peace. In its engagement with civil society, the UN has devoted specific attention to youth and women. For example, the Sudan Peace-making, Peace-building and Stabilization Programme (SPPSP) articulates programme priorities of the UN in Sudan that support the transition, as requested by Security Council Resolution 2579 (2021) with a particular emphasis on delivering tangible improvements in the lives of Sudanese. It is structured as a modular roadmap of the UN support over the course of the transition- and is intended to facilitate programme design, fundraising and work-planning against the programme priorities (Sudan Peace-making, Peace-building and Stabilization Programme (SPPSP), 2022).

Also, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has collaborated with Khartoum University to establish a Conflict Risk Dashboard as part of the UNDP's Joint Conflict Reduction Programme. The Programme was initiated to strengthen government and civil society initiatives that promote social cohesion, peace consolidation and pluralism, and address community level conflicts contributing to long-term conflict resolution and peace-building in three areas, South and West Kordofan (South Kordofan is situated in the southern part of Sudan, while west Kordofan is located in the western part of Sudan,

adjacent to South Kordofan), Blue Nile State (located in the southeastern part of Sudan) and Abyei area (is a disputed region between Sudan and South Sudan), all located in Sudan. Conflict in these areas is due to a variety of sources, including competition over access to natural resources such as water and land, farm and state boundaries, presence of internally Displaced people (IDPs) and others (Joint Conflict Reduction programme, 2024). Key aspects of this collaboration include data collection and analysis, early warning system, stakeholder engagement, capacity building and policy recommendations which can guide evidence-based decision-making in conflict prevention and peace-building efforts.

UN Security Council Resolution 2205 (2015) established a sanctions regime on South Sudan, targeting individuals and entities undermining the transitional agreements, peace and stability and committing human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations. The scope of the sanction's regime was further expanded by UN Security Council Resolution 2428 (2018), which authorized an arms embargo on South Sudan. The resolution demands that all member states take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to the territory of South Sudan of arms, military equipment and related material of all types until 31st May, 2019. One of the main reasons for the arms embargo is a high risk of diversion from the South Sudanese authorities to non-state armed groups (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2018).

Despite these efforts, some civil society actors have reported that numerous programmes, projects, and initiatives supported or implemented by the UN have often failed to translate into a real impact on the ground. Further, the UN is reportedly unwilling to work on collaborative partnerships that invest in capacity building, and works instead with capacitated civil society actors, either international NGOs or national civil society actors, primarily headquartered in Khartoum. As a result, the UN tends to work with the same partners continuously, without diversifying its engagement.

Effects of Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Sudan

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) has had and continues to have devastating consequences not only in the Horn of Africa and the East Africa, but particularly in Sudan. Illicit smuggling of SALWs is prevalent in the Sudan where achievement of stability and peace remains elusive and a far-fetched reality to the country. Continued conflicts throughout the country over the past two decades have contributed to the ever-increasing requirement for the small arms and light weapons as the primary tool of violence, causing deaths and injuring thousands of people, among them are innocent civilians. The wake of insecurity in the country continues to threaten democracy and stability thereby impacting negatively on economic growth and peace in the country.

In spite of the endowment with many natural resources, Sudan is one of the poorest countries of the world. Poor governance and insecurity, coupled with corruption, has also contributed to inability of the country to deter the trading and spread of weapons in the region. Premised on this reality, Sudan, however, has acknowledged the need for initiatives and policies to arrest the problem of Proliferation of SALWs and its negative drawback on the economic development in the country. But even with efforts through regional trading blocks and initiatives of the international community, success is yet to be realized due to lack of government control in the country to deter the trading and spread of weapons. Hence, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has affected Sudan in various ways and they are;

1. **Conflict perpetuation:** The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons in Sudan has contributed to the prolongation of conflicts, making it challenging for peace-building efforts to gain traction. Armed groups often continue to engage in violence, thereby impeding stability and the general growth of the region, due to the never-ending cycle of conflict and violence. According to a report by the Small Arms Survey (2012), Sudan has been plagued by multiple armed conflicts, including the second Sudanese War (1983-2005) and the Darfur Conflict. Conflict zones such as Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile State have experienced prolonged

violence fuelled by the proliferation of SALWs. For example, in Darfur, various armed groups including government forces and rebel factions have been engaged in armed conflict, leading to widespread insecurity and displacement.

2. **Humanitarian impact:** The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has exacerbated humanitarian challenges by facilitating violence against civilians. This creates a volatile environment that hampers humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts in the affected regions due to the insecurity and danger it poses. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that Sudan hosts one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world, with eight million people displaced due to conflict and insecurity (OCHA Media Centre, 2023). Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps are scattered across Sudan, particularly in conflict-affected regions such as Darfur, where civilians have been forced to flee their homes to escape violence and insecurity caused by SALWs-related conflicts.
3. **Insecurity and displacement:** Communities living in areas with high level of proliferation of small arms and light weapons often experience heightened insecurities and displacement. The instability has undermined the establishment of secure conditions necessary for effective peace-building initiatives. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that prior to April 15, 2023, there were six million and thirty-six thousand, one hundred and seventy-six IDPs who were displaced between April 2023 and December, 2023 in Sudan due to conflict and violence (IOM, 2024). Displacement has occurred across various regions of Sudan, including Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile State, where communities have been uprooted from their homes and forced to seek refuge in IDP camps or neighbouring countries.
4. **Weak governance structure:** The presence of widespread small arms and light weapons have weakened governance structures, making it difficult for authorities to establish control and implement peace-building measures. This contributes to a cycle of instability. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Sudan among the most corrupt countries in the world, indicating challenges in governance and accountability (Transparency International, 2024). Weak governance and corruption have been pervasive throughout Sudan, exacerbating the impact of SALW proliferation by hindering efforts to regulate arms sales, control borders and address illicit trafficking.
5. **Inter-communal conflicts:** Small arms and light weapons proliferation has been linked to several inter-communal conflicts in Sudan such as the Darfur conflict, Abyei region dispute, South Kordofan and Blue Nile dispute. These conflicts fuelled by the easy access to weapons, pose a significant challenge to peace-building endeavours as they create complex social dynamics that need careful navigation. According to the UN Panel of Experts on Sudan, inter-communal conflicts over resources and cattle raiding have been fuelled by the availability of SALWs, contributing to cycles of violence and instability (UN Security Council, 2020). Inter-communal conflicts have been reported in various parts of Sudan, particularly in rural areas where ethnic and tribal tensions are high. For example, clashes between different ethnic groups have occurred in regions such as Darfur, West Kordofan and Eastern Sudan.

These examples illustrate how proliferation of SALWs in Sudan has had far-reaching and devastating effects, perpetuating conflict, exacerbating humanitarian crises, undermining governance structures and fuelling insecurity and displacement across the country.

Conclusion

Navigating peace in Sudan amidst the shadows cast by small arms and light weapons proliferation requires a multifaceted approach that extends beyond traditional disarmament measures. Understanding the intricate web of factors contributing to the issue is crucial for devising sustainable solutions. By implementing the recommendations in this paper, Sudan can move towards transforming the root causes of conflict, addressing the historical grievances and fostering conditions for lasting peace. It is imperative to recognize that the impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation extends beyond immediate

security concerns, influencing socio-economic dynamics and community relations. The success of peace-building efforts hinges on the collaboration of local, national and international stakeholders, highlighting the interconnectedness of global peace and security.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions/ and findings, the following recommendations when implemented effectively and in conjunction with one another, can contribute to reducing arms proliferation in Sudan and promoting peace, stability and development in the country. They are;

Enhanced border security and control measures: Implementing stricter border control measures, such as increased patrols, surveillance and checkpoints to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms across Sudan's porous borders. For instance, enhancing cooperation with neighbouring countries like Chad and South Sudan to establish joint border security initiatives could help disrupt arms smuggling routes.

Strengthen arms embargo enforcement: Strengthening enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with existing arms embargoes imposed on Sudan by the United Nations Security Council. This includes monitoring and interdicting illegal arms shipments, as well as imposing sanctions on individuals found to be violating arms embargoes. For instance, in 2014, the UN Panel of Experts on Sudan reported violations of arms embargoes, highlighting the need for enhanced enforcement efforts.

Implementing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes: By implementing DDR programmes aimed at disarming and demobilizing former combatants, including members of rebel groups and militias, and reintegrating them into civilian life. Providing vocational training, education and socio-economic support can help prevent rearmament and promote sustainable peace.

Promote community-based conflict resolution mechanisms: supporting community-based conflict resolution initiatives that address underlying grievances and promote dialogue and reconciliation at the grassroots level. Investing in local peacebuilding efforts such as traditional councils and peace committees, can help prevent and mitigate inter-communal conflicts fuelled by SALWs proliferation. For instance, initiatives like the Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Project work with local communities to resolve conflicts and build sustainable peace through dialogue and meditation.

Enhance oversight and accountability in arms transfers: strengthening oversight and accountability mechanisms to regulate arms transfers and prevent diversion to unauthorized end-users. This includes implementing robust export controls, conducting risk assessments and promoting transparency and accountability in arms sales and transfers. For instance, countries like Sweden have adopted strict arms export control policies and legislation to ensure that arms transfers comply with international norms and standards.

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