Journal of Political Discourse

Academic Journal domiciled in the Department of Political Science, Federal University Gusau- Nigeria.

ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618

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JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618 | Vol. 2, Issue 3, No. 1 / September 2024
https://www.jopd.com.ng

EXTERNAL FORCES AND PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN AFRICA: A STUDY OF SUDAN CRISIS IN 2023

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Abstract

The paper examines the role of external forces in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons during the Sudan Crisis of 2023. Sudan has experienced protracted conflicts and political turmoil throughout its history. The Sudan crisis of 2023 represents a culmination of these underlying issues, leading to widespread violence, displacement, and a deteriorating security situation. However, Sudanese conflict was fueled by the involvement ranges from arms transfers and smuggling to direct support for armed groups operating within Sudan. The crisis has also had a devastating impact on Sudan's economy. Inflation, unemployment, and dwindling resources have created an environment of economic hardship for citizens and economic instability exacerbates grievances and can contribute to the perpetuation of conflict. Against this backdrop, the paper investigates the influence of external actors through political, economic, and military support to different factions involved in the conflict. The paper adopted structural conflict theory as its theoretical underpinning. The paper relied on secondary data-gathering techniques. The paper unraveled that the involvement of voilent external forces escalated the crisis. The paper recommends international bodies to tighten regulations on arms sales and transfers. Implement stricter monitoring mechanisms to curb illicit arms flows and ensure that legitimate sales do not exacerbate conflicts.

Keywords: actors, arms, crisis, civilians, Sudan, weapons.

Introduction

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) has long been recognized as a significant contributor to conflicts and instability worldwide. The Sudan crisis 2023 serves as a compelling case study to examine the role of external forces in exacerbating the proliferation of SALW and its impact on the country's security landscape (Anaukwu and Onwuekwe, 2024). Sudan, located in Northeast Africa, has experienced protracted conflicts and political turmoil throughout its history. The country was plagued by internal conflicts, ethnic tensions, and competition for power and resources. The Sudan crisis of 2023 represents a culmination of these underlying issues, leading to widespread violence, displacement, and a deteriorating security situation. Sudan's history is marked by internal divisions and external influences. The protracted civil war between the North and the South culminated in the secession of South Sudan in 2011. While this resolved some conflicts, it left the remaining Sudanese territory grappling with unresolved issues, including the distribution of resources, political representation, and ethnic and regional complexities. Different ethnic groups, each with distinct cultural identities, inhabit various parts of the country. These groups often vie for control over resources and political power, resulting in tensions that have periodically erupted into violence. In 2019, mass protests led to the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir, who had ruled for nearly three decades (Al Jazeera, 2019). This

shift in leadership promised a transition to democracy, but internal disagreements and challenges to governance persisted.

The proliferation of SALW plays a pivotal role in exacerbating the Sudan crisis. Small arms, including rifles, handguns, and light weapons such as machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, are easily accessible, relatively cheap, and simple to operate. Their widespread availability perpetuates violence, hampers post-conflict recovery, and poses significant challenges to peacebuilding efforts. External forces, both state and non-state actors, have played vital roles in fueling the proliferation of SALW in Sudan (Carlson, 2023). Neighbouring conflicts, such as those in Libya and South Sudan, have spilt over, contributing to the proliferation of arms and the influx of refugees (UNHCR, 2023). International actors, including neighbouring countries and global powers, may have divergent motivations, including geopolitical interests, regional rivalries, economic considerations, and ideological agendas which further complicate efforts to resolve the crises. Their involvement ranges from arms transfers and smuggling to direct support for armed groups operating within Sudan (Carlson, 2023). Understanding the role of external actors is crucial for developing effective strategies to mitigate the proliferation of SALW and foster sustainable peace in Sudan.

The crisis has taken a severe toll on civilians. Widespread violence has led to displacement, with millions forced to flee their homes. Humanitarian organizations struggle to assist those affected by the conflict, and access to basic services such as food, clean water, and healthcare is compromised. The crisis has also had a devastating impact on Sudan's economy. Inflation, unemployment, and dwindling resources have created an environment of economic hardship for citizens and economic instability exacerbates grievances and can contribute to the perpetuation of conflict.

Given the above, the paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the external forces contributing to the proliferation of SALW in Sudan during the crisis of 2023. It draws upon a range of secondary sources, including academic literature, reports from international organizations, government documents, and media coverage. The paper employs qualitative methods of historical and contextual factors with current data on arms flows and conflict dynamics. By shedding light on the external dimensions of the SALW proliferation in Sudan, it will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that perpetuate conflicts and hinder peace processes.

Conceptual Review

The category of "small arms, light weapons" (SALW) lacks a universally accepted definition. However, most experts, policymakers, and practitioners rely on the comprehensive definition provided in the 1997 UN Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (United Nations, 1997). This definition categorizes military-style weapons into subgroups based on their design and intended use. Earlier classifications of SALW also included some non-military firearms, encompassing a broad range of weapons from clubs and machetes to those just below major conventional weapons systems tracked by the UN Register of Conventional Arms.

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALW) has been one of the demanding situations that confront countries and nearby groups in maximum growing international locations after the death of the Cold War. The mission has propelled global, Supranational, nearby and sub-nearby corporation to govern the proliferation of SALW through Proclamation, Treaties, Conventions, Protocol, and tacit agreements, however, one of the

impediments is the lack of ability of member states to cultivate and correctly implement those agreements at their domains (Ogele, Egobueze and Owabie, 2021).

The term "proliferation" was first used in the 1960s in the context of the spread of nuclear weapons. However, it has that been carried out to explain various forms of guns and technology, considerably predominantly traditional guns. Proliferation version is commonly involved with country-to-country transfers of SALW (UN General Assembly, 1997). Adams and Jason (2022) posit that weapons proliferation is the spread of both weapons and the components required to manufacture them. Small arms proliferation, including the spread of guns, grenades, and rifles, is typically carried out by non-state entities. It is more common in areas with high rates of gang warfare, as well as ethnic conflict.

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) refer to a broad category of firearms and related equipment that are designed primarily for individual or crew-served use. They are generally characterized by their relatively small size, portability, and ease of operation. Small arms are typically designed to be held and operated by a single person, while light weapons may require a small crew to operate effectively. Small arms encompass a wide range of firearms, including handguns (such as pistols and revolvers), rifles (such as bolt-action rifles and semi-automatic rifles), and shotguns. These weapons are designed to be carried and operated by an individual soldier and are commonly used by military personnel, law enforcement officers, and civilians for self-defence, hunting, and sport shooting. Light weapons include heavier firearms that are typically crew-served or man-portable, such as light machine guns, submachine guns, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank weapons, and portable rocket launchers. These weapons are often employed by military units and armed groups and can provide enhanced firepower and versatility in combat situations.

The origin of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa can be traced back to the colonial period, when firearms were introduced by European powers for various purposes, including controlling local populations and facilitating trade. After gaining independence, many African countries inherited a legacy of armed conflict and political instability, which further fueled the demand for weapons. Cold War dynamics also played a role, with both Western and Eastern bloc countries often arming various factions in proxy wars. Small arms and light weapons pose significant challenges in terms of illicit proliferation, armed violence, and human rights abuses. The uncontrolled spread of SALW can contribute to conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, and the violation of international humanitarian law. Efforts to regulate and control the transfer, possession, and use of small arms and light weapons are important to promote peace, security, and stability at national and international levels.

The involvement of external force in conflict intensifies the campaign. External forces refer to influences, factors, or actors that originate from external and impose their will specific political entity or system, impacting its dynamics, decisions, or policies. External forces typically denote factors beyond a conflict's immediate participants that can affect its intensity, resolution, or duration. These forces might include international organizations, neighbouring countries, or global power dynamics that play a role in shaping the conflict environment. It encompasses elements from outside a nation or region that can impact its security landscape. This could involve transnational threats, military alliances, economic dependencies, and other external factors that influence a country's security policies and vulnerabilities. Hence, Ogele and Adamu (2021, p.4) posit that “external forces perform on a structure from the outside. It

is capable of changing or influencing internal forces, or stresses, within the materials from which the structure is made."

Maitre (2009) asserts that external forces are factors outside the conflict zone that help to promote and sustain the conflict. Hence, Murshed (2002) argued that civil wars are prompted by the aid of inner forces by external elements. He indicates that inner elements trigger activities that truly push capacity belligerents over the threshold into warfare and compel the external elements that make the possibility of combating or secession more attractive. His model assumes that the initiation and promotion of the conflict are pushed with the aid of using inner elements, whilst the external elements contribute to maintaining the conflict. Corbetta and Dixon (2005) buttressed that external forces could be economic, political, diplomatic, military or humanitarian and are usually implemented either through or in cooperation with internal bodies and apparatuses.

There are reports by the United Nations that revealed the involvement of external actors in conflicts in Africa or other places, including protracted battles in South Sudan. For instance, in January 2016, Haaretz newspaper reported that the state of Israel concluded an arms deal with South Sudan's Army. The record revealed that Israel has offered military devices, which include rifles and wiretapping devices (Cohen, 2016). External help is an important variable in conflict dynamics. It protracts the war and increases impediments to a negotiated settlement.

Pattern of SALW transfer

Klare (1999, p.22) identified four types of small arms and light weapons (SALW) transfers, which include:

- "Government-to-government transfers: When one government sells or gives arms to another government through legal channels. For instance, during the Cold War, the two superpowers and their allies would give large quantities of SALW to Third World countries.
- Government-sanctioned commercial sales: Commercial sale of arms by private firms in accordance with government approval and supervised import and export procedures. These kinds of sales require an end-user certificate proving that the intended recipient is a government agency or government approved commercial entity in an allowable destination. The majority of arms transfers are conducted this way.
- Covert or "gray-market" operations: These types of transfers involve the covert sale or delivery of arms to illicit recipients in another country by a government agency or private agency backed by a government, pursuing political or strategic advantage.
- Black-market transaction and theft: These types of transfers entail the covert sale of illicitly procured arms by private entities in violation of government laws and policies."

Theoretical Underpinning

The paper adopted structural conflict theory as its theoretical underpinning. The foremost is the radical structural theory represented by Marxian dialectical school proponents such as Marx and Engels (1870); V.I Lenin (1937), among others. The structural theory addresses the reactions of individuals, groups, cultures, institutions and societies to change. Furthermore, Collier (2003) viewed the structural conflict based on incompatibility of interests anchored on the competition for resources, which in most cases are assumed to be scarce, as being responsible for social conflicts. The structural conflict theory argued that conflict is built into ways various societies are structured and organized. The theory viewed social problems like

economic and political exclusion, injustice, exploitation, inequality, poverty, diseases, among others as sources of conflicts. The "structural conflict buttressed that conflicts occur because of the degree of exploitation and unjust nature of human societies, the domination of one class by another, among others"(Ogele, 2022,p.94). The case of class conflicts inherent in the social relation is made know by radicals like Karl Marx, Friedrich Engel, V.I. Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, faulted capitalist exploitative system based on its social relation in the production and the division of society into the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The exploitation of those who do not have (proletariat) or control the means of production (lower class) creates conflict in society. The capitalist conflict, according to Marx can only be resolved through a revolution when the working class shall rise against the bourgeoisie class and overthrown them in a social revolution, leading to the establishment of a socialist order led by the working people. The emphasis of the structural theory is anchored on how the interest of groups tangles with the economic, social and political organization of the society, social network within and between community groups. Hence, Ross (1993, p.4) noted that "in situations where economic and political discrimination and weak kinship ties are the defining characteristics of a society, the chances that the negative forms of conflict will result are higher than in situations where the conditions are the exact opposite." The import of the above statement is that when a social, economic and cultural process is dominated by a group, it gave birth to a situation that compels people to adopt a negative approach to conflict. Similarly, Scarborough (1998) argued that conflict is emanating "in situations where existing structures are tilted in favour of one group while putting the other(s) at a disadvantage." In this situation, the holder of power or privilege may be unwilling to acknowledge the rights of others or people may find it difficult to identify with the policies of the political regime, then there is likelihood that conflict might emerge and escalate if proper measures are put in place.

Linking this paper to the theory is premised on the fact that the economy of the country was structured unequal. The country's wealth and resources were concentrated in the hands of a few elites, leaving many citizens in poverty. The government was dominated by a single party, marginalizing opposition groups and restricting political participation. The resources and development were concentrated in the capital city, Khartoum, neglecting other regions. These inequalities contributed to the Sudan crisis by fueling discontent, marginalization, and exclusion, ultimately leading to conflict and instability. To consodiate their power base and commercial interest, alliance with foreign patrons was established.

Methodology

The paper adopted a secondary method of data gathering technique. The paper relied on the use of journals newspaper publications, and books on recent conflict in Sudan. The paper employed content analysis in analyzing the data.

Origin of Sudan Conflict

The current crises in Sudan can be traced back to the colonial period when Sudan was under British and Egyptian rule. The colonial powers often exploited ethnic and regional differences, leading to the creation of administrative divisions that persist today. This sowed the seeds for later conflicts by leaving behind a legacy of unequal development and deep-seated ethnic tensions. Sudan is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups and religious beliefs. After independence, the Arabs dominated the government of Sudan; the Arab-dominated government's historical neglect and marginalization of non-Arab ethnic groups, particularly in the south and western regions, contributed to resentment and separatist

movements (Johnson, 2003). The resulting conflicts, such as the decades-long Sudanese Civil War (1955-2005), have played a role in the overall instability in the nation of Sudan.

Economic disparities have long been a driving factor behind the Sudanese crises. The uneven distribution of wealth and resources, combined with corruption and mismanagement, has contributed to economic instability. High inflation, unemployment, and poverty have also fueled public discontent and frustration with the government. The frequent changes in government and political leadership have prevented the establishment of stable governance structures. Military coups, authoritarian rule, and the absence of strong democratic institutions have greatly hindered the country's ability to address its challenges effectively.

The unresolved conflicts between the central government and various regions created ongoing tensions and the southern region's struggle for autonomy and eventual secession which lead to the creation of South Sudan in 2011, was a result of years of conflict driven by political, ethnic, and economic grievances.

Competition over key resources, such as oil, has contributed to regional tensions. The oil-rich areas along the border between Sudan and South Sudan have been a focal point of disputes and conflicts, exacerbating broader national instability. Similarly Sudan's geopolitical position in the Horn of Africa has made it vulnerable to external influences. Regional powers and international actors have often been involved in the country's conflicts, either directly or indirectly, further complicating efforts to find lasting solutions.

Weak infrastructure and services with decades of conflict and neglect have left Sudan's infrastructure and basic services in disarray. Poor healthcare, education, and public services have exacerbated the population's grievances against the government. Environmental challenges, such as desertification and water scarcity, have also exacerbated existing tensions. Competition over limited resources has sometimes fueled conflicts between communities and since Sudan's governments have struggled to be inclusive and adequately represent the country's diverse population, this has resulted in feelings of exclusion and alienation among various ethnic and regional groups who sometimes resort to aggression.

The remote causes of the Sudan crises are deeply rooted in historical, political, economic, and social factors. The complex interplay of these elements has led to the ongoing instability and conflicts seen in the country. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive efforts that encompass political reforms, economic development, social inclusion, and conflict resolution strategies (Johnson, 2003).

Immediate Cause of the Sudan Crises

On 25th October 2021, Sudan's military toppled a democratically elected government and arrested leading politicians including the Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdok, afterwards declared a state of emergency. The initial coup on the September 2021 failed and this attempt created unchecked recriminations and ineffective between the military juntas and the civil component in the government. However, General Abdelfatah El-Burhan was justifying the attempted coup by his claim that the power struggle among the political elements of the transition endangered the stability of the country. Furthermore, Abdelfatah El-Burhan claimed that the SAF is the protector of the state and a supporter of the transition. Though this assertion was considered incorrect. Nevertheless, the leaders insisted that it was not a military coup but 'course correction' or 'tasheehalmasar'. Consistent with this false propaganda, Abdelfatah El-Burhan was obligated to retain the articles that promotes the outwards form of the Constitutional Declaration whereas suspended only those articles that protected the existing civilian positions (Assal, 2023a).

Retrospectively, the unilateral power grab by the juntas was predicated on the warped incentive structures during the al-Bashir's era. During the transition, they resisted the imposition of civilian oversight, and focused on accountability discussions on the past atrocities and maintenance of broad commercial interests and relationships with foreign patrons (Jean-Baptiste, 2020a; 2020b). By seizing power, Sudan's security services were hijacking the state and preserving the violent kleptocratic system (Baldo, 2017). Ultimately, manipulation over the country presents the safety offerings endured possibilities to accrue wealth even as defensive themselves from responsibility for beyond and destiny abuses (Baldo and Mailey 2021).

Sudan Military Campaign and Its Impact

When the fighting between SAF and RSF forces started in Khartoum on 15 April 2023, the Sudanese were already divided along multiple lines, including political and ethnic ones (Assal 2023b). It is yet to be established who fired the first bullet in this devastating war and each party accuses the other of starting it. The SAF narrative is that the RSF mounted a mutiny as a vehicle to topple the government and seize power, while the RSF accuse Islamist officers in the SAF of attacking the RSF in certainly considered one among their barracks south of Khartoum. The Islamists were accused of amplifying the differences between the two sides. No matter who the culprit is, the war has devastated the country and created a serious humanitarian crisis. The SAF and RSF are the two known warring opponents but the battle continued with other actors, inside and outside Sudan, are being drawn into the conflict. In a dangerous new turn, evidence is mounting of Islamic extremists fighting alongside the SAF in Khartoum against the RSF(Assal 2023b).

This undermines the narrative consistent with which General El-Burhan became main leading regular military protecting the authority of the country towards a renegade military sponsored through mercenaries (Arab Weekly, 2023).The war has further polarized society along ethnic and political lines. Clashes on social and traditional media are three-cornered, as among SAF and RSF supporters, and people who see the battle as an affair among criminals neither of whom should be supported. The UN Secretary-General views the continuation of preventing dangers descending into an outright civil battle fought alongside tribal and ethnic lines (UN 2023).In West Darfur, there are signs of war crimes and ethnic cleansing; the governor of West Darfur was killed. The SAF and RSF are the two effortlessly seen fighters but the battle maintains different actors, inside and out of doors Sudan, are being drawn into the conflict.

According to a report by CNN on 24th April, 2023, fierce fighting across Sudan has left hopes for a peaceful transition to civilian rule in tatters. Forces loyal to two rival generals are vying for control, and as is so often the case, civilians have suffered the most (Elbagir, Qiblawi and Orie, 2023). About 10,000 people had been killed, 8,000 others injured, 4 million were internally displaced and more than a million others had fled the country as refugees as of 15th August, 2023. According to the World Health Organization, while parts of the capital Khartoum have become a war zone.

The clashes began on 15th April, 2023, between two men: the head of Sudanese armed forces (SAF) Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (widely known as Hemedti), the country's deputy and head of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group. Two men had been allies who laboured collectively to topple ousted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in 2019 and performed a pivotal function in the army coup in 2021. However, tensions arose at some point in negotiations to combine the RSF into the United States of America's army as a part of plans to restore civilian rule. It is tough to overstate how seismic Bashir's overthrow was. He had led the United States of America for almost

three decades when popular protests that commenced over hovering bread costs toppled him from power. During his rule, South Sudan break up from the north even as the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Bashir alleged conflict crimes in Darfur, a separatist Western region (Elbagir, Qiblawi and Orie, 2023).

After Bashir's removal, Sudan was ruled by an uneasy alliance between the military and civilian groups. That all ended in 2021, when the power-sharing government was dissolved by armed forces, and the clashes between the two factions began. On 16th April 2023, The Sudan Civil Aviation Authority closed the country's airspace, telecommunications provider MTN shut down Internet services and the SAF claimed control of the headquarters of Sudan TV and state radio in Khartoum. While in June 2023, the RSF took control of the National Museum of Sudan, Yarmouk munitions factory, and the Police Central Reserve Forces headquarters in Khartoum, adding to the instability. The 72-hour ceasefire which started on 27 April faced challenges as fighting persisted in Khartoum therefore the Peace talks between the warring sides were suspended. The The SAF and RSF engaged in mutual blame for the crisis (Elbagir, Qiblawi and Orie, 2023).

External involvement and sanctions

During the Sudan Crisis of 2023, several international organizations were involved in providing humanitarian aid and diplomatic support to address the conflict's impact. Additionally, various countries were reported to have supplied arms to the war zone.The United States imposed sanctions on firms associated with the SAF and RSF, along with visa restrictions on individuals involved in the conflict after the Saudi embassy in Khartoum was attacked. Sudan confronted diplomatic lines with Egypt, main to demanding situations for Sudanese refugees looking for entry.The International Committee of the Red Cross facilitated the discharge of personnel held through the RSF(Minges,2023).

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, demanded a "prompt, thorough and independent investigation in the cases of rape and mass burial in Geneina, Khartoum, Nyala and Dafur while In response to the violence, the United Kingdom imposed sanctions on firms linked to the SAF and RSF for their involvement in funding and providing weapons, seeking to curtail their action (United Nations, 2024).

Wall Street Journal reported that, Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar, who is backed by United Arab Emirates and the Russian paramilitary Wagner Group, dispatched at least one plane to fly military supplies to the RSF but the Libyan National Army denied providing support to any warring groups in Sudan and said it was ready to play a mediating role (Malsin and Faucon, 2023).

.In response to these allegations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov defended the possible involvement of the Wagner Group, saying that Sudan had the right to use its services.The head of the Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, denied assisting the RSF, pronouncing that the agency has now no longer had a presence in Sudan for greater than years. Sudan's neighbours friends Egypt and South Sudan have presented to mediate, however withinside the interim all this is sure is greater distress for the Sudanese people (Elbagir, Qiblawi and Orie, 2023).

The United States on 30th May, imposed sanctions on companies it accused of fueling the conflict in Sudan, stepping up pressure on the army and a rival paramilitary force to bring an end to the fighting as ceasefire talks are at risk of collapse (VOA, 2023).

The U.S.Treasury Department stated in a assertion it centered groups affiliated with Sudan's navy and groups affiliated with the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), accusing them ofaccusing them of generating income from the crisi and contributing to the fighting (Psaledakis and Eltahir, 2023). Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in the statement, "Through sanctions, we are cutting off key financial flows to both the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, depriving them of resources needed to pay soldiers, rearm, resupply, and wage war in Sudan"(U.S Department of the Treasury, 2023,p.1)

The African Union Peace and Security (PSC) Council suspended the participation of the Republic of Sudan in all AU sports till the effective establishmentof a civilian-led Transitional Authority, because the best manner to permit Sudan to go out from its cutting-edge crisis (AU, 2024). The Security Council extended for twelve months the sanctions regime imposed on South Sudan, along with belongings freezes, journey bans and an fingers embargo, severa contributors confused that instead of sanctions, the country needs a carefully managed support system to facilitate its transitional journey and overcome its security issues (UN,2023).

Conclusion

The Sudan crisis of 2023 serves as a stark reminder of how external forces can exacerbate conflicts through arms proliferation. By implementing a combination of diplomatic, regulatory, developmental, and accountability measures, the international community can work towards minimizing the role of external actors and fostering conditions for lasting peace in Sudan and other conflict-affected regions. To address the proliferation of arms and light weapons, it is crucial to disrupt illicit networks, strengthen governance structures, and enhance border security. Combating corruption and promoting responsible arms transfers are also essential. Furthermore, implementing effective arms control measures, such as marking and tracing weapons, improving stockpile management, and promoting regional cooperation, will play a significant role. International support through technical assistance, capacity building, and financial resources is vital to tackle the root causes of arms trafficking and create a stable and peaceful environment in the region.

Recommendation

1. Strengthen Diplomacy and Mediation: Engage neighboring countries and international actors in diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating the conflict. Encourage dialogue to address regional concerns and prevent the further inflow of arms.

2. Enhance Arms Regulation and Monitoring: Collaborate with international bodies to tighten regulations on arms sales and transfers. Implement stricter monitoring mechanisms to curb illicit arms flows and ensure that legitimate sales do not exacerbate conflicts.

3. Address Socio-Economic Drivers of Conflict: Invest in development initiatives that target the root causes of the conflict, including poverty, inequality, and lack of access to basic services. By addressing these drivers, the appeal of armed groups may diminish.

4. Regional Cooperation and Intelligence Sharing: Facilitate cooperation among neighboring countries to address cross-border arms trafficking. Enhance intelligence sharing to identify and disrupt the activities of transnational criminal networks involved in arms smuggling.

5. Peacebuilding and Reconciliation: Support local and grassroots efforts for peacebuilding and reconciliation. Engage with community leaders, civil society organizations, and religious institutions to foster dialogue and healing.

6. Sanctions and Accountability: Impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities involved in arms trafficking and supporting armed groups. Promote accountability for those responsible for perpetuating the conflict and arms proliferation.

7. Engagement of Civil Society and Media: Foster a vibrant civil society and media environment that advocates for peace, transparency, and accountability. Amplify the voices of those affected by the conflict to pressure external actors to de-escalate their involvement.

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