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Exploring Routes and Consequences of Small Arms and Light Weapons Trafficking in Selected Areas of Ethiopia, by Abdo Beshir¹, Abdulfetah Endriss², Sisay Tessema³, and Melaku Tefera⁴

Abstract

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) trafficking became a great threat to the peace and security of Ethiopia. Throughout the whole year of 2020, in all parts of the country, the seizure of illicit firearm is the agenda of many Medias, security organs, and the people. Thus, this study aims to examine the routes, and consequences of illicit firearms trafficking. It covered purposively selected areas of Ethiopia. The study used qualitative research approach and exploratory design. The study samples were 19 inmates detained due to the firearm trafficking, 32 police officers, 9 militias, and 9 community leaders who were selected through purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through interview and FGD, and then thematically analyzed. The finding of the study showed that the major routes of firearm trafficking linked to and followed the course from border areas to the central areas of Ethiopia, specifically from neighbor countries like Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, and Somalia to Addis Ababa. The traffickers or brokers used central areas like Addis Ababa and its surrounding cities as depository spaces to recirculate illicit SALW to areas where there are high needs in the country. Study also revealed that illicit SALW trafficking leads to increment of armed groups and number of conflicts to break out. As a result, many people were injured, and lost lives and millions were displaced from their homes. It also triggered the impediment of peace and security; psychological impact and threat; socioeconomic obstruction; political instability and fueled the commission of firearms supported crimes like homicide, robbery and kidnapping in the study populations. Therefore, the study recommends that the security sectors should aware the illicit SALW traffickers on the updated modus operandi used by them through continues training; subject porous and wide border of the country should to regular control and inspections through advanced technology products; employ regulation that governs antisocial behaviors (i.e. harmful networks and corruptions) of law enforcement organs used to permit inflow of illicit SALW to the country; and create awareness to all concerned law enforcement agents and stakeholders on the consequences of illicit SALW trafficking to the country.

Keywords: Small Arms and Light Weapons. Trafficking, Routes, and Consequence, Ethiopia.

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Introduction

Out of all global firearms holdings, roughly two-thirds of the estimated total is in the hands of non-state actors and civilians out of which 100 million are reported to be in Africa (Arsovska & Zabyelina, 2014). Due to armed conflicts, nowadays, states are failing through confronting with economic downturns, increased globalization, and maladministration. Sometimes, they become threats to their citizens or cannot restrain violators from attacking innocent civilians (Axworthy, 2001). These have led to the drive for human-centered security (Solovyeva &



Hynek, 2022). Armed violence mainly involves firearms that increasingly impact on the welfare and stability of communities at the grass root level, and the state architecture at broader senses. It is responsible for causing increased human insecurity, which in turn negatively impacts development (Muggah & Batchelor, 2002). According to Efrat (2012) and the UK Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department (2003), the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) increases the risk of armed violence and can obstruct and raise the costs of development and humanitarian aid in areas where these are greatly needed. Virtually all sectors of society can be severely affected, but the impact on the poor and the marginalized tends to be most traumatic.

This paper adopts the definition of ‘Small Arms and Light Weapons’ (SALW) used in the Nairobi Protocol for the prevention, control and reduction of small arms and light weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Thus, ‘small arms’ are weapons designed for personal use and shall include: light machine guns, sub-machine guns, including machine pistols, fully automatic rifles and assault rifles, and semi-automatic rifles (all can be operated by one person), whereas ‘Tight weapons’ shall include portable weapons designed for use by several persons serving as a crew: heavy machine guns, automatic cannons, howitzers, mortars of less than 100 mm caliber, grenade launchers, anti-tank weapons and launchers, recoilless guns, shoulder-fired rockets, anti-aircraft weapons and launchers, and air defense weapons. They can be carried by two people or a team, transported in a small vehicle or on a pack animal and must be operated by a team (2004:3).

According to Lichbach (2003), rational choice theory (RCT) is often associated with the concepts of rational actors, self-interest, and the invisible hand. It is predominantly suitable when dealing with criminal markets and organized crime in general (Savona & Mancuso, 2017). In this theory, criminals are considered as rational, evaluating their choice of actions regarding both potential risks like getting caught and benefit (Langlois, *et al.*, 2022). In the case of firearms trafficking as Organized crimes, often conceptualized as a business enterprise formed by actors motivated by profits. As per the theory firearms trafficking are profit-oriented and trafficking it for different purposes like arming terrorist and economic incentives (Arsovska & Kostakos, 2008).

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is regarded as the most serious challenge worldwide affecting states and societies by increasing the chances of civil wars, insurgencies, fuelling organized criminal violence, terrorist activities that hamper the development and security (Bashir, 2014). The small arms survey (2014) indicated that the global estimates of ownership of firearms have shown an increase of 15.7% from the estimates of 2006 due to an increase of 32% in the estimation of civilian held firearms total. However, the estimation varies from one country to another. For instance, the USA has the highest private ownership of 393,300,000 guns, which means there are 120.5 guns for every 100 people there. Following the USA, Yemen and Montenegro have 52.8 and 39.1 firearms per 100 residents, respectively (Small Arms Survey, 2014). Also, Bashir (2014) stated that with the enormity of the challenge faced, governments are fighting to manage the illicit and indiscriminate proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Different studies have shown that illicit trafficking of SALW affects almost every region of the world. The increasing availability of firearms goes against the very foundation of international humanitarian law as they are the primary weapons of choice during wars. Civilians are, mainly, prime targets in any armed conflict (Muggah & Berman, 2001). When illegal arms are available in conflict-prone regions, they are exacting heavy price in terms of the cost to develop, and the lives lost. Firearms have killed approximately 560,000 people violently in 2016 alone, implying the world have lost a single soul every minute of every day

of the year. Of the total amount, about 99,000 deaths are attributed to direct conflict deaths, and the 385,000 died from intentional homicide. Of these many deaths, many others suffered devastating consequences (Me Evoy & Hideg, 2017).

African states expended over \$300 billion dollar on arms conflict from 1990 to 2005 to the point of equating the amount of foreign aid that was given to Africa in the same period, with an estimation of 79% of small arms in the hands of civilians across Africa states (Stohl & Tuttle, 2009). It is estimated that more than 500,000 people are killed each year with SALW. Violence and conflict fueled by illicitly trafficked SALW impedes economic development, good governance, and human rights (Cukier, & Bandeira, 2001). In Africa, illicit SALW trafficking facilitated and persisted by the existence of large stockpiles of arms from previous conflicts, weak arms control mechanisms, long and porous national borders, established smuggling roads, inadequate cooperation among national border security officials, the informal modes of trades, and easy movement of cash across borders that exacerbates armed conflict, and endangers peace and development (Stohl & Tuttle, 2009). Chelule (2014) stated that, in Africa, illicit firearm trafficking provides a platform for non-state actors to further their interests through violence. It also presents in the forms of violent crimes and increase the power of organized criminal groups and causes economic problems (Small Arms Survey, 2014). The capacity of African states of the Sahel region to control their borders is quite limited: the rarefied and hostile desert environment is traditionally a space of circulation where the few official border-crossing points are easily bypassed by traditional smugglers and new types of illicit firearms traffickers (Strazzari & Zampagni, 2018).

The circulation of illicit SALW in Ethiopia at this point has reached a critical stage that has made the federal government take the bold step of promulgating a law dealing with its regulation. Ethiopia is one of the countries which are greatly affected by the illicit trafficking of firearms (Greene, 2000). According to Regional Center for Small Arms (RECSA) report (2006), despite the different arms control measures, Ethiopia is ranked high in terms of easily access to illicit firearms. In Ethiopia, it is estimated that there are more than one million weapons which illegally possessed by civilians (Thusi, 2003). Study showed that, between 2003 and 2004, Ethiopian Federal Police reported that there were 9,531 arrests and prosecutions for illegal arms circulation (Dube, 2008). Illicit firearm trafficking has reached an alarming rate in Ethiopia which scored the highest 6.5/10 among the identified criminal markets mainly due to the trafficking of arms across the border with Sudan (Tibebu, 2019).

Problems related to firearms in Ethiopia have attracted the attention of some researchers and few studies have been conducted. However, the number of studies and the knowledge obtained from those studies are not enough to explain the extent of the problem related to illicit SALW trafficking in the country particularly the major routes and its consequences. For instance, Nega (2021) in his study on small arms proliferation and its impact on human security and sustainable peace in Fogera Woreda, Woreta City Administration, Ethiopia, portrayed the existence of high level of small arms and its negative effects on social, economic, and cultural aspects which ultimately affecting development and fueling security problems. However, it overlooked the issue related major routes, and the consequences of illicit SALW trafficking in Ethiopia. Birara (2017) conducted his study on ‘Societal derivations for the illegal gun trafficking in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’. It revealed that illegal gun exchange created fear in the residents, limited the right of people to movement and diminished trust on police for security purposes. Beside the constricted scope to thoroughly express its magnitude, it missed to discuss its major routes and consequences which related to illicit firearm trafficking in Ethiopia. Cochrane and Hadis (2021) in their study conducted on ‘Farmers buying guns: the impact of uncertainty and insecurity in

rural Ethiopia' revealed that the illegal weapons trade has expanded in scale and geography following the historic change of leadership in 2018 in the country. The reform was unable to reduce the risk of uncertainty and insecurity, and the potential for even more deadly violence with more people purchasing weapons in the country. However, it missed discussing the routes and consequences of illicit firearms trafficking in Ethiopia. Aemro (2017) conducted a study on the factors for misuse of small arms and its impact in the Eastern Gojjam Zone of Amhara Regional State and revealed that the magnitude or number of small arms possessed and circulated in East Gojjam Zone was high. However, it missed to address issues related to illicit firearm trafficking in Ethiopia.

Therefore, as the earlier discussion has shown, the studies so far conducted did not adequately address the issue of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) trafficking, particularly major routes, and its consequences in Ethiopia. Hence, the main aim of this study is to explore the major routes, and consequences of illicit SALW trafficking in Ethiopia. Thereof, the paper sets out to achieve the following specific objectives: to identify the major routes of illicit SALW trafficking in the study area, and to explore the consequences of illicit SALW trafficking in the study area.

Research Methods

The study areas covered purposively selected parts of Ethiopia. Depending on the data from Federal Police Commission Firearm Control, Licensing and Consultancy Directorate (2019), certain areas are identified as major routes for firearms trafficking throughout the country. Based on the direction of the routes or geographical proximity, the areas identified as hotspots for illicit SALW trafficking was categorized into five clusters. These are *Northern cluster'*. Gonder, Dessie, Debre-birhan, Shewa-robit, Kemisie, and Ataye; *Eastern cluster'*. Adama, Harar city, Dire Dawa, Jigjiga, Togo-chalie, and Semera; *Western cluster'*: Nekemte, Gimbi, Assosa, Gambella, Bedele and Jimma city; *Southern cluster'*. Shashemane, Aje, Moyale, Hawasa, Konso (Karat) and Arba Minch, and *Central cluster'*. Addis Ababa and its surrounding areas (i.e., Burayu and Sebata). Based on the different police reports, most of the selected areas are traced for their prior seized history or are typically suspected of illicit SALW circulation in the country. This is due to the nature of the areas/routes and the link it has with other neighbor countries; gun culture of the surrounding community; and everlasting weapons-assisted conflict areas were selected.

This study relied on qualitative research approaches. Because it was used to understand the major routes and consequences of illicit SALW in Ethiopia from the perspectives of the local population, it would also involve and help researchers to gain a rich and exhaustive understanding of the issue. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) revealed that the qualitative approach is used to discover the quality of the issue under the study, the meanings that participants or informants attach to their actions, how to interpret situations, and what their perspectives which was also applied in this study that used to investigate major routes and consequences of illicit firearms trafficking in Ethiopia. Due to its least studied area in Ethiopia and the novelty of the issue, the study employed an exploratory design. According to Stebbins (2001), exploratory research is usually conducted when there are few or no earlier studies to which references can be made for information. In terms of time, the study used a cross-sectional design. Babbie (2008) portrayed that a cross-sectional design is used to study a social phenomenon by taking a cross-section of it at one time and analyzing carefully. Therefore, it lets this study to explore the issue at a single time interval.

The study populations were convicted inmates detained due to firearm trafficking, police officers, militias, and community leaders in the selected areas. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select in-depth interview informants, key informants, and focus group discussion (FGD) participants. In this study, both in-depth and key informant interviews were used to collect data. Convicted inmates detained due to firearms trafficking were addressed through in-depth interviews regarding their lived experience of illicit SALW trafficking. They were selected based on their key roles played as brokers, receivers, and merchants that were reordered by the authority during their history of illicit firearm trafficking. Key informants' interview was conducted with experts from police officers, militias, and experienced community leaders/elders based on their expertise knowledge, and exposure to illicit firearms trafficking in the study areas. Accordingly, 19 convicted inmates of firearms trafficking were addressed through in-depth interviews, and 32 police officers, 9 militias, and 9 community elders and leaders were addressed through key informant interviews. It aimed to understand participants' feelings, and experiences concerning major routes and consequences of illicit SALW trafficking in Ethiopia. To address the participants, a set of semi-structured interview questions were prepared for both in-depth and key informant interviews. Also, focus group discussion (FGD) was used as a data collection method. Two FGDs were held at each cluster and thus the groups were organized based on their similarity of status: one FGD group was composed of police officers and militias while the other group included community leaders and elders. In each group, 8-12 participants took part, and a total of 10 focus group discussions were conducted. The process was facilitated by an FGD guide that was used to keep discussions in the intended way.

Regarding sources of data, in this study, the primary data source was used. The first had data obtained directly from the respondents through interviews and FGD. To ensure the trustworthiness, data triangulation of multiple data sources (i.e., in-depth interview, key informant interview, and FGD) was used. Using multiple data collection methods was to get a shared understanding from multi perspectives and to draw upon participants' beliefs, experiences, and reactions in different ways regarding illicit SALW trafficking in the study areas. Thus, it is used to increase the credibility of the data being collected.

Since the data were gathered through qualitative methods of interview and FGD, they were transcribed after translations were made to English from Amharic and Afan Oromo; the languages used for data collection. Then, codifying and determining its common was carried out to structure them as per their common themes. Therefore, thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data of this study.

During the study, ethical principles were carefully considered. The participants were well-informed about the purpose of the study, and its procedures. They were involved by their consent and then the issue of confidentiality and privacy were well respected.

Results and Discussion

This part of the study mainly focused on the major routes that mostly used for circulation of illicit SALW and its consequences in the study areas. Thus, they are profoundly discussed as follows.

Major Routes of Illicit Firearms Trafficking

The study identified numerous routes of illicit firearms trafficking in Ethiopia. Based on inflow direction of firearms from border to the center of the country; western, northern, eastern, and southern routes were identified as the main tributary track for illicit SALW trafficking. Additionally, central areas were also used as depository and then serve reverse or backward

trafficking to the peripheral areas of the country or borders of neighbor countries. The details are presented as follows.

Western Routes

This route covers some parts of Western Oromia, Benshangul-gumuz and Gambella regional states which make its initial point at border of Sudan and South Sudan. An interviewed informant who was crime prevention heads of Gimbi city police showed that Zones in Western Oromia are sources and routes for illicit SALW trafficking which categorized as external and internal sources. Externally, illicit firearms directly come from Sudan and South Sudan through border of neighboring regional states i.e., the Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz. Also, an interviewed police officer at Nekemte City explained as: *“the route from Amhara regional state through Bure town connected with eastern Wellega zone via which illicit firearms are moved to central areas of the country and to near areas, ” (M, 45, KII).* Furthermore, an inmate interviewed at Nekemte city prison administration briefed that:

I was working as trader of formal business and occasionally trade illicit firearms from the neighboring regional states; Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz to Nekemte city. Then, I was suddenly apprehended by the security officers at the custom checkpoints while I was transporting illicit firearms to the rural area for sale.

Data obtained from both police interview and FGD at Benishangul Gumuz regional state indicates as a huge number of varieties of illicit firearms' circulation exist in the region. The border *kebeles* such as Kurmuk, Sherkole and Abramo, and Tongo desert district are well known for its entrance gates. From these border areas firearms also trafficked to Assosa city and other near areas. Locally, there are also illegal firearms being smuggled from Assosa city to Kemashe zone and vise-versa. Mostly, Turkish-made pistols, Kalashnikovs, and their ammunitions were imported from Sudan through this route.

Furthermore, the interview made with police officer at Gambella city indicated that firearms were trafficked from South Sudan to Gambella regional state illicitly. There are about three major entrance gates of illicit firearms trafficking routes which used to circulate it from South Sudan to Gambella city: these are Ethang, Abubu and Maj a. Sometimes it used other entrances gates of Gambella border such as Akobo, Lare, Jorna, Shalab, and Wantabo. The trafficking of firearms had reached its peak in this route due to the civil conflict in South Sudan at the time of this study. Sometime, the soldiers of the South Sudan those who were working around the border area of Ethiopia sold the firearms for the Ethiopian traffickers, brokers, and other community members.

Therefore, in this route firearms were trafficked from Sudan and South Sudan via borders areas of Benshangul-gumuz and Gambella regional states to some parts of western Oromia through which they were circulated within the areas. And then transported to central areas like Sebata and Burayu cities surround Addis Ababa to accumulate and transported back to high demand areas.

Northern Routes

In this route data showed that illicit firearms traffickers use different branch of routes to conceal it's the initial and destination places. Both FGD and interview with police officers and militias at Gonder city indicated that illegal firearms were imported from the Sudan border and then circulated through Armachio to Gondar as it was one route. Its trafficking also takes place from the same source to Metema then to Chilga and finally it reaches Gondar city. In this area, illegal firearms were also locally trafficked from one kebele to another. The other route was from

Sudan to Tach-armacho and move to Gonder city. Also, from the same source, firearms were trafficked through Quara and Alefa to reach their final destination of Gondar City. Nevertheless, the interviewed participant who was head of Gondar city police department stated that: *“the variations have been noted in number of illegal firearms and ammunition seized in Humera via Wolega, and from Metema via Azezo entry to Gondar at Tseda ” (M, 50, KII).* In general, the source and routes of all illicit firearms in this area is from Sudan and the traffickers at each destination point used various routes to transfer illicit firearms to the Gondar city and then to other central areas of the country.

On another side, according to the police informants who participated in an interview at Dessie town, the main routes of illicit SALW trafficking for Dessie town were sourced from western woredas of the city, north Wollo through Woldya. Kemissie, the dessert of Afar and Gondar are also the sources for this area. Then after, the traffickers also transit it from Dessie town to western Woredas of Amhara regional state and other areas. Also, there are practices of firearms trafficking from Afar to Bati and Shewa-robit then to Dessie town though the traffickers frequently used Kemissse as hub in this route.

Eastern and Southern Routes

The eastern and south routes are among the major paths through which massive of illicit weapons are entered into the country. Among the eastern route, Togo-chalie and its surrounding areas are the famous places of market for illicit firearms. They are the border areas between Ethiopia and Somalia which are considered as the main gate of illicit weapons to the country. An FGD conducted with police and militia at Harar city portrayed that in terms of the weapons seized so far, the most active gate ways for illicit firearm was Togo-chalie, from Somaliland. The types of firearms mostly circulated in this route are some types of pistols, Kalashnikovs, and their ammunitions. Among pistols are: Smith & Wesson, point 45, Beretta, and made in turkey pistols. For example, at the end of 2019 in Harari city around the area called 'dire-tiyara', 26 Turkey pistols were controlled by Harar police officers while the traffickers attempted to escape.

During an interview held with the police officers at Dire-Dewa city, an interviewee said that most of illicit firearms were smuggled from other country's border to Ethiopia. The illicit firearms were brought from the different borders of the country by traffickers to the Centre and areas of need. Also, most of the marketing took place at border area like Togo-chalie, Djibouti's desert, etc., and then were trafficked to the different parts of Ethiopia. One interviewee from the Harar police department said:

The potential sources for the illicit firearms trafficking to our country are a vanished state of Somaliland specifically the area called Togo-chaile. Because, Somaliland has a direct linkage with Berbera port through which the firearms flow into their country. Also, Djibouti is another outer source from which firearms are inflow to Dire-Dewa, and Afar region which then were trafficked to Harar city, northern parts, and other central area of Ethiopia. Thus, the city of Harar is the path-route of illicit firearm trafficking for some central parts of the country like Adama, Bishoftu, Addis Ababa, etc.

The southern route basically makes its primarily source Ganbo and Moyale the towns at border of Ethiopia and Kenya. Police officer interviewed at Arba-minch city stated that through some illicit firearms start their travel from this border area and use some cities like Yabello, Negele Borana, Bule-hora, Dilla, Arba-minch and other towns as passing track to central areas like Hawasa, Shashemane, Addis Ababa and others. Also, a head of crime investigation interviewed

at Shashemane city draw a southern route of illicit firearm trafficking. Sometimes it comes from Somaliland through Bale zone then to Shashemane, and from Kenya it transported to Moyale then to Shashemane for transit to other central areas of the country. However, an official interviewed at federal police investigation bureau discussed that relatively this route was better than others regarding inflow problem of illicit SALWs.

Central Routes

Based on interview held with police official at federal bureau of investigation (FBI), all the modes of the trafficking of illicit firearms across the country initiated from the border areas to the center in different extents. One of the main routes for the trafficking of illegal firearms and sources for central route in the past was South Sudan through the Gambella and Benshangul-gumuz regional states. The traffickers smuggle it to the central part of the country by crossing Zones in Western Oromia; Illubabur, Jimma, southeast Shewa and lastly stored at Addis Ababa and its surround cities. On the other hand, it trafficked from Sudan to Metema and arrive different destination in Amhara regional state to transit to Addis Ababa. Also, FBI official witnessed during an interview, most of the times illicit firearms sourced to the central route were smuggled from Somaliland via Togo-chalie by crossing Jigjiga city in different dimensions to make their final destination central areas like Addis Ababa. The other entry gate is the Moyale route; however, this line is not as sensitive as the other routes, only a few illegal firearms were handled after its arrival at Addis Ababa or surrounding cities. Thus, the items either from Moyale to Akaki Kaliti or Sebeta which directly smuggled through Moyale - Konso - Arba Minch - Sebeta or Moyale - Hawasa - Shashemane to Akaki Kaliti.

In general, the identified major routes followed the line of illicit firearms trafficking sourced from border country of Ethiopia. From northern it made its base the Sudan border and then moved to Metema - Chilga/Armachio - Gonder - Bahirdar - central of the country. The western route made its origin Sudan or South Sudan border then moved to Asosa - Gimbi - Nekemte - central areas or from Sudan or South Sudan - Gambella - Jimma/Bedele - center of the country. Southern route movements began from Kenya border at Gambo and Moyale - Yaabelo - Bulehora - Hawasa - Shashemane or Konso - Arbaminch - central areas. Eastern route made its initial point from the Somaliland border then moved to Togo-chalie - Jigjiga - Harar or from Djibouti - Dire-Dawa/ Semera - central areas of the country.

In this case, informant from Federal police investigation bureau discussed that surprisingly the illicit firearms accumulated in the central areas in different times like Addis Ababa city are inversely transported back to some peripheral or conflict zone and gun valued or culturally armed areas of Ethiopia and to transfer to other border countries. This route provides two different services for traffickers: accumulating illicit SALW collected from other routes and to make it convenient for inverse transportation to area of need. Interviewed police officer at FBI furthered that this area is unique in nature regarding illicit SALW trafficking. It is the area where high amount of illicit SALW was deposited and made ready for area where conflict would breakout. Even the direction of transportation is reverse of all other routes which are from center to peripheral areas or other areas of high demand like conflict zone and gun cultural areas.

Consequences of Illicit SALW Trafficking in Ethiopia

Development studies have identified the indirect effects of firearms by pointing to the link between illicit trafficking of firearms and instability which, in turn, are seen as responsible for several socio-economic effects (reduced productive economic activities, limited possibilities for education, malfunctioning health structures) that hinder a nation's or community's development (Frank, 2012). Ethiopia is not immune from it. The detailed problems are

discussed as follows.

Impede Peace and Security

The head of crime prevention department at Eastern Wollega zone police expressed about the existence of illicit SALW trafficking in the region. He confirmed as it resulted in different attacks from known or unknown various armed groups on the formally equipped governmental force like defense force, police, militia, and other innocent community. Enduring of the situation minimizes the trust of people towards the government for their protection and increased sense of insecurity. Indirectly, it affects the confidence of government's formal force to control over the issues. The other in-depth interview made with head of Shashemane city crime investigation department revealed that.

There is high rate of illicit SALW trafficking in the country. This situation promoted several people get a chance to easily hold illicit firearms. This is creating a good occasion to several SALWs as to remain unregistered. Thus, it is complicating the investigation process of crime committed by use of unrecorded firearms which affects justice for victims. As a result, the community losing its trust from police efforts of crime deterrence which resulting in feeling of insecurity. Therefore, the inflows of illicit firearms are resulting in the disturbance of our societal peace and tranquility at country level and thus it is a great threat for community in their day-to-day life as well as for government itself (M, 43, KII).

Injury, Loss of Life and Displacement

According to the informants interviewed in different areas, in Ethiopia, the problem of illicit SALW trafficking ranges from injuries to deaths. The informants gave their witness as the problem of illicit SALW trafficking has increased the number of armed groups operating in various places and has fueled the broke out of more conflicts in the country. This has challenged people to safely run their day-to-day routine activities for survival and has increased social crisis like displacements. For instance, an interview made with police office at Harar city revealed that the 2016 and 2017 border conflict between Oromo and Somali regions states was supported by firearms which resulted from highly accumulated illicit firearms in the areas. In this case a hundred of people were killed and more than 1.5 million people were displaced from their homes. Similar crisis was also escalating internal displacement in different parties of Ethiopia. An informant (M, 50, KII) who was the head of Gonder city police department provides that around one million people were displaced as result of the conflict between Amhara and Qimant. Furthermore, in an FGD made in Ataye elaborated that because of illicit armed violence many civilians, civil servants, investors, and merchants were killed, injured and displaced.

Psychological Impact and Threat

Another effect of illicit SALW trafficking is threat and its psychological impact on the community. An informant (M, 47, KII) who is a head of Ataye city police administration raised the psychological effect of death, injuries and internal displacement caused by armed groups' attack which was intensified by illicitly trafficked SALW in the area. It highly traumatized victims and family of victims which lastly their modes of life changed from the usual. This leads the community to threat for their future life and questioning sustainable peace and security. An informant who is a head of Gonder city police department stated the problem as follows.

... due to different gun related consequences caused in the area, the children's, elders, students, girls, women's, and other part of community facing psychological suffering. In this area, there is exhibition of many shootings and sound disturbance in day and night. This is to test functioning of the guns sold by traffickers or brokers during the handover to buyers. It also resulted in high

psychological impact on the law enforcement organs working in these areas and challenging policing activities (M, 50, KII).

Socioeconomic Obstruction

Based on the interview made with informants in different areas, they conclude that social disintegration linked to attacks of armed groups that catalyzed by illicit SALW trafficking was most clearly reflected in areas severely affected by civil wars and internal conflicts in different times. It finds out that widespread social trauma is, therefore, the result of illicit firearms trafficking in an instable environment which affects social cohesions. Thus, illicit SALW trafficking seriously affected the social life of many families and communities in Ethiopia. This was also confirmed in almost all the study areas. It was also clearly expressed in an assessment made by the federal police commission crime investigation Bureau; information storage and post analysis division in 2018. The document revealed as one of the social impacts of the illicit firearms trafficking was creating quarrel between groups and individuals for different reason which also led for further social consequences.

On the other hand, informants reflected that as result of armed conflict that intensified by illicit SALW trafficking, economic loss and crises had happened on many families in Ethiopia, particularly on victims or family of victims. For instance, from the interview made with an inmate who was a farmer at Debre Birhan prison, illicit SALW trafficking had caused economic loss to buy firearms. It can be done through selling their property which, for instance, one needs to have about 120,000 Ethiopian Birr to buy one Kalashnikov. To afford this, the user should have to sell other capitals that can serve them for other purposes like land, oxen, etc. Mostly, this is due to lack of security in the area or gun culture.

Political Instability

An interview informant (M, 40, KII) who was an expert of crime investigation department in Jigjiga city discussed political instability due to illicit SALW in the country. He expressed more as it instigated conflicts which resulted in political instability of the government and threatens and hurt of the community as well as individuals which also undermine the development of the country. Likewise, an elder informant (M, 80, KII) who was from the Gonder city stated that in the Amhara region illicit trafficking of firearms and its effect resulted for the absence of peace and security in different zones and woredas. Also, illicit SALW trafficking increased armed which accelerated, conflicts, crime and violence, and a threat to community resilience and democracy that affects country's instability.

Intensify the Commission of Crime

Illicit SALW trafficking highly increased armed groups which resulted in increase of different crime commission in the study areas. The study found out and discussed some crime problems related to illicit firearms as follows.

Homicide: the accumulation of illicit firearms in different highly demanded areas increased unlawful killing of persons in the country. The head of crime prevention sector of the Amhara region, in Bahir Dar city confirms this issue as follows: The prevalence of illicit trafficking of firearms increases the commission of crime of homicide. When we assessed the annual crime commission, most of the homicide crimes were committed by use of firearms. From this murder almost 65 per cent were committed through illicit firearms (M, 52, KII).

The crime investigation police officer (M, 35, KII) at Oromo nationality zone of the Amhara region (Kemisse), stated that *“due to simple and silly case an individual killed seven persons by using illicit firearms in Dawa-Chefa areal”* This informant also added about *“the intentional homicide of his six brothers in a single household which was committed by armed group of*

illicit firearms.

Robbery: In a FGD made with police and militia in the Ataye town, participants depicted that by using illicit firearms properties of different individuals were robbed in different times. For instance, in this area, an individual's Generator, Camels, Cattles were robbed, and even government firearms were looted from police station by group who illicitly armed. In addition, an interview informant who was a head of crime investigation in the Ethiopian federal police stated that *“in Addis Ababa city numerous robberies were committed by using illicit SALWs on Cars and in Houses ”* (M, 47, KII).

Kidnapping. An informant who was from Gonder city police official discussed how illicit firearms trafficking escalating the crime of kidnapping and hostage taking as follows.

The traffickers use the firearms to kidnap youths, child, and individuals and in return to receive money from individuals and family of the hostage taken person. For instance, in the rural areas of Gonder the traffickers kidnaped a child to receive money from kidnapped families. However, his family refused to pay the money required by the illicit firearm traffickers, as a result they removed/blinded the eyes of the kidnapped child and then sent him away as his family refused the money they were asked to pay (M, 50, KII).

Similarly, FGD conducted in Gonder city revealed that kidnapping of drivers in this area had become the common practice and resulted in different crises. For instance, a heavy vehicle driver, the resident of Maksegnit town driving from Metema/Shinfa to Genda-wuha, was kidnapped in area called Lemlem Terara with his assistant. To release the driver and his assistant from the kidnappers, their families paid around 350 thousand Ethiopian Birr. However, unfortunately the driver died after he joined his family due to severe injury on his forehead beaten by the bandits (FGD, 2020).

Discussion

Savona and Mancuso (2017) stated that numerous illicit firearms entered the European Union (EU) market after the end of the Cold War from stockpiles in neighboring regions, particularly former Soviet and Yugoslavian states. Also, firearms trafficking in Ethiopia has been driven internally by the waves of ethnic-based violence, armed conflicts, and insurgencies in several parts of the country (ENACT Africa Organized Crime Index, 2021). Thus, this study revealed that there are several routes that are used for movement of illicit SALW in Ethiopia. They are broadly dived into five major routes: northern, eastern, southern, western, and central routes. It is also confirmed by other study discussed that illicit firearms traffickers use a multitude of routes, making it more relevant to focus on key towns that serve as trafficking hubs (Mangan & Nowak, 2019).

The current study found out as the routes for illicit SALW flows main country's roads which link Central parts of Ethiopia to the borders. Duquet (2018) stated that the trafficking routes of illicit firearms do not necessarily represent linear movements from point one point to the other, but rather follow more complex and fragmented courses that can only be partially traced by law enforcement. As to this study's finding, in Western route, SALWs were trafficked by making its initial point Ethiopian borders of Sudan and South Sudan to different parts of the country through some specific areas of Gambella, and Benishangul Gumuz regional states which then transferred to and circulated in Western Oromia region state, which then pass to central parts of the country like Addis Ababa and surrounding cities.

The Northern route trafficking of illicit SALW began from the Sudan border of Metema and other sub routes which then transported to and circulated in Amhara regional state through

which also transfer to other Central areas of the country. In this case, it also comes through Eastern route from Djibouti border through Afar Regional state which then divert to northern part through area like Bati of Ethiopia. Regarding the Eastern route, mostly the initial black market of illicit SALW is made at the border of Ethiopia with Djibouti and Somalia which then transported to other parts of the country. Southern route includes trafficking paths starting from border of Ethiopia and Kenya. Lastly, Central route is the very dangerous path of all the others. Because illicit SALW that have entered the center from the different borders at various times and accumulated are unexpectedly trafficked back to the conflict zone, and other areas where there is high need in the country and to other neighbor countries.

Additionally, illicit SALW which were obtained through diversion takes this path to circulate in or outside the country. Most of the time this route is also difficult for the security sector to control. Because the very expectable and usual movement is from peripheral to Central, but this course is reverse. Thus, other study also confirm that Ethiopia is both a source and transit route for illicit SALW trafficking (ENACT Africa Organized Crime Index, 2021). As to rational choice theory (RCT), since the criminal act committed by calculating the gain and benefit by rational actors with unseen hand (Lichbach (2003), it was also the reason why government challenged to control firearms trafficking in the case of Ethiopia. So, the findings of this study have consistency with the existing theory.

Regarding the consequences, the study found out that direct effects of illicit SALW trafficking or misuse caused more than death and injuries; it also caused psychological traumas, damage to property, social disorganization like displacement, political instability, problem of peace and security, and intensified the commission of crimes in the study areas. The damage sustained by these direct effects can be seen in terms of short and long-term consequences. The short-term consequences include disruption of ordinary life, communal uprooting, and disorder in social and political spheres. In the long run, it may lead to an overall change in lifestyle where governments may choose to concentrate on the delivery of peace and security while private individuals may abstain from their normal productive life and stay home or divert their meager resources away from productive activity and into self-protection.

This vast and unchecked availability of small arms, with its imminent danger, posed towards the rights of people to live, have liberty and security, constitutes a grave threat to fundamental human rights. According to Muggah and Berman (2001), people are directly affected by uses of small arms before, during and after conflicts. It directly kills over 300,000 people in conflict each year with at least three times that many injured and affect millions more through terror and suffering. Also, outside conflicts, firearm-related killings are also increasingly occurring as rising of banditry, armed assault, and violence. Me Evoy & Hideg (2017) discussed that in 2016 only there were 7.50 deaths per 100,000 populations. Of all the deaths, most happened outside of war zones, namely 385,000 (68%) are intentional homicides. The rest are 18 per cent (99,000) were direct conflict deaths, while the 10% accounts for unintentional homicide and approximately 3% happened because of legal interventions.

Chelule (2014) stated that the SALW has positioned Africa as a field of warfare, insecurity conflict and destruction. It has led to underdevelopment of Africa's economy, rendered people homeless and refugees and loss of millions of lives. The rational choice theory (RCT) specified that firearms trafficking is profit-oriented and has a drives like arming terrorist and economic incentives (Arsovska & Kostakos, 2008) and as the result of this study SALW trafficking caused numerous consequence which comprised in the notion of the theory. Thus, the finding of the study directly confirms with the intent of RCT.

Conclusion

In Ethiopia, mostly the illicit SALW are transported from border or peripheral areas to the Centre for accumulation, and then to be circulated back to conflict threatened areas of the country or high demand parts. Even though there are no official figures to substantiate the claim, data sources showed that there are more firearms accumulated in the hands of civilians than the law enforcement organs. It is impending and ever presents threat to the country as a whole. Inability to regulate trafficking of illicit SALWs increased impact on human and socioeconomic costs. It has far reached impacts from psychological, economic, political, and social to that of displacement and instability for the country.

The end products are multifarious ranging from the ultimate injuries, death to that of the intractable impact on long-term development. Therefore, illicit SALW trafficking negatively effects on security and development of the country because armed violence is caustic to socioeconomic health. Since it escalates conflicts, the illicit firearms movement is a threat to sustainable development, peace, and security of the country in general.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following major recommendations are provided. To overcome the fleeing techniques that used by traffickers of illicit SALW, the government should update its personnels' mental readiness through different regular advanced training as to exceed traffickers by know-how of the *modus operandi* they use in operation of illicit weapons and ammunitions circulation. The Ethiopian borders should be subjected to regular control and inspections by considering the huge and porous borders that country have at all direction. Proper inspections should be conducted by concerned security sectors focusing on neighboring borders to prevent illicit SALW trafficking to the central area at its very beginning. As much as possible it is also better if border managing system is supported by technologies used to detect and control illicit firearms circulations.

Responding the core causes of illicit SALW trafficking requires good governance, because the problem of good governance results in poverty and other socioeconomic illness. The socioeconomic failure on the part of the state to deliver the necessities of life amounts to the instinct for survival, including engaging in illegal trades such as the trafficking of illicit SALW. For instance, in some cases security sectors and regulatory bodies like revenue and customs authority agents have compromised their duty and engaged in antisocial behaviors like corruption and other related activities that endanger countrywide security issues. Thus, corruption as a trouble to Ethiopia's development and national security should be addressed by structural patterns and practicable legislation without partiality. Accordingly, the corrupted individuals/groups and other failed government officials and their networks should be responsible for the feat of illicit SALW circulation which should be followed by proportional measures from the government.

It is better to create awareness for community, security agents, regulatory agents, and other concerned bodies concerning how illicit SALW trafficking (uncontrolled SALW) exacerbating poverty, internal/external conflicts, social ill, depraved governance, development deficit, lack of citizenship rights, gender inequality, etc. Having the above mental setup all concerned bodies like security agencies (i.e., defense forces, federal & regional police force, and militia), custom authority and community should cooperate to handle the issue. It should be regulated through well designed regulation that is inspected by licensing and firearm controlling office of the federal police commission with other concerned institution of regional and federal governments.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Author Contributions

Abdo Beshir Guta: conceived and designed the study, contributed in data collection, analysis, and discussion, wrote the paper, and manuscript preparation and feedback provision. Corresponding Author; email: abdobeshir6@gmail.com; Abdulfetah Endriss Kelifa: conceived and designed the study, contributed in data collection, analysis, and wrote the paper; Sisay Tessema Abebe: conceived and designed the study, contributed in data collection, analysis, and wrote the paper; Melaku Tefera Tsoge: conceived and designed the study, contributed in data collection, analysis, and wrote the pap