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The Delicate Heightened Conflicts, Instability, and Human Right Violation: Understanding SALW, Porous Borders, and Weak Governance

Ajang Atem Joseph

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Juba, South Sudan.

E-mail. Aatem417@gmail.com

Abstract: The study sought to examine arms proliferation and the shaping of statecraft in South Sudan as a state in Sub-Saharan Africa. The objectives of the study were to examine the delicate heightened conflicts, instability, and human right violation. The study used the case study design which is one of the qualitative designs where the researcher employed varied but interconnected interpretive methods. Expert sampling was used to select those experts on the themes of study. Purposive sampling was used to select the officials from the different institutions. The study used qualitative methods in the collection of data. this study found that SALW proliferation is a big problem not only in sub-Saharan region but also in South Sudan and the factors facilitating include porous borders, corruption, failure to have transparency in the procurement of arms culture of violence and the ongoing conflict in South Sudan imply that there is a problem with statecraft in South Sudan. This study also found the institutions in South Sudan are impacted by SALW proliferation. The institutions like the ministry of internal affairs and the agencies below have not been given the capacity to do its oversight role. The study further found out that the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in South Sudan has severe implications for human security, exacerbating conflict, violence, and hindering development. There was a finding that South Sudan currently has no surplus management policy. The study found that South Sudan's legal framework on small arms is primarily governed by the Firearms Act, 2016, which addresses the licensing, possession, and control of firearms. The study also found out that implementing small arms control mechanisms in South Sudan is challenging due to a confluence of factors including a legacy of armed conflict, the proliferation of weapons among various groups, and weak state capacity. The study recommends that addressing the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is crucial for statecraft, the government should involve civil society organizations and local communities in the design and implementation of SALW control programs, government should invest in research to better understand the dynamics of SALW proliferation and its impact on South Sudan, government should implement robust measures to prevent the illegal flow of weapons across borders, including enhanced surveillance and cooperation with neighboring countries, government of South Sudan should collaborate with neighboring countries and international organizations to

address the cross-border dimensions of SALW proliferation and share best practices and government should support initiatives that encourage voluntary disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of individuals and groups, particularly those involved in conflict.

Keywords: Conflict, Instability, Human Rights, SALW, and Governance

1. Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa has a history of numerous internal conflicts, often fueled by ethnic tensions, resource competition, and political instability. Many countries in the region suffer from weak governance, corruption, and a lack of capacity to effectively control their borders and territories. The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) significantly impacts human security, contributing to increased violence, displacement, and limited access to basic services. SALW are readily available and easily transported, making them a major factor in fueling conflicts and criminal activities. The presence of these weapons exacerbates existing tensions and allows for the escalation of violence, hindering peacebuilding efforts. The uncontrolled flow of arms can undermine state authority, making it difficult to maintain law and order and protect citizens. The spread of violence and instability in one country can easily spill over into neighboring countries, creating regional insecurity. South Sudan's history of civil wars and armed violence has created a high demand for weapons, contributing to the proliferation of SALW. The newly formed state of South Sudan faces significant challenges in building effective governance and security institutions, making it difficult to control the flow of arms and address the root causes of insecurity. Various armed groups, including ethnic militias and local self-defense groups, operate in South Sudan, often possessing and using SALW, further complicating the security situation. Addressing the challenges of arms proliferation in South Sudan requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that includes strengthening state institutions, promoting good governance, addressing socioeconomic factors, and engaging with civil society organizations. International partners play a crucial role in supporting South Sudan's efforts to build peace and security, including providing assistance in arms control, border security, and development. Arms proliferation is a major obstacle to regional security and state-building in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in South Sudan. Addressing this challenge requires a multifaceted approach that tackles the root causes of conflict, strengthens state institutions, and promotes regional cooperation.

2. Literature

2.1 Main Factors Facilitating the Illegal Proliferation of SALW

In spite of multiple efforts introduced to control arms, the continued illicit flow of SALW is an indicator of security gaps that are exploited by sophisticated criminal networks. Several authors like Adewoyin, (2019), and Okechukwu, (2024) have contributed to enhancing understanding of the illicit proliferation of the SALW phenomenon in this Sub-Saharan region by pointing out the factors that cause the illegal proliferation of SALW. Among these factors authors have mentioned the vast but porous borders.

2.2 Vast and Porous Borders in Sub-Saharan Africa

Several sub-Saharan African states have unsecured and porous borders making it easy for illicit traffickers to smuggle arms (Adewoyin, 2019). Transnational criminal organizations and armed groups are very mobile in uncontrolled border regions, especially in conflict zones, ungoverned

spaces, and fragile states (James, 2020). Also, traffickers use sea routes to ship their illicit arms and ammunition between states. Furthermore, several states lack sufficient resources to ensure effective security and law enforcement presence (Afuzie, 2025). All these imply that Porous and vast borders in Sub-Saharan Africa significantly contribute to the illicit proliferation of arms, creating challenges for regional security and stability. These poorly policed borders allow for the easy movement of weapons, both into and within the region, fueling conflicts, crime, and instability. The example of the Cameroon-Nigeria maritime border near the town of Akwaya is one illustration among many others of the determination of the Cameroonian police and customs in the fight against the violation of borders (Mahoula, 2023). The proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria has been fueled by a combination of internal and external factors. Domestically, issues such as porous borders, weak law enforcement mechanisms, corruption, and political instability have created an environment conducive to the smuggling and illegal trade of weapons. For instance, Nigeria's borders with countries like Niger, Chad, and Cameroon span thousands of kilometers, making them challenging to monitor effectively. Reports indicate that over 1,400 illegal routes exist along these borders, providing ample opportunities for arms traffickers to operate with impunity (Eze & Abubakar, 2023). Externally, the spillover effects of conflicts in neighboring countries, such as the Libyan crisis and the Sahel insurgencies, have further exacerbated the influx of SALWs into Nigeria.

2.3 Armed Conflict in Proliferation of SALW

Armed conflicts act as a significant source of small arms and light weapons (SALW) through several mechanisms, including the capture and theft of weapons from opposing forces, the proliferation of weapons from state stockpiles due to corruption or weak controls, and the increased demand for weapons by civilians for self-defense during conflicts. Proxy wars rely on the use of local actors, such as rebel groups, militias, or state-sponsored armed forces, to fight on behalf of external powers (Pfaff, 2017). These powers provide material support, such as weapons, funding, and training, to local actors or militias that align with their interests (Byman, 2023). Examples is the recent large-scale proxy war waged against Islamic State (henceforth 'ISIS') inside Syria and Iraq which created a DDR dilemma given the significant amounts of weaponry that flooded the battle space (Mumford, 2021).

2.4 The Proliferation of SALW and the Military Institution

The influence of SALW on military institutions is complex and multifaceted. While they can play a positive role in certain contexts, their proliferation can also have serious negative consequences, undermining state authority, prolonging conflicts, and contributing to human rights abuses. Addressing the proliferation of SALW is therefore crucial for strengthening security, promoting development, and ensuring respect for human rights. Violence does not necessarily begin with a weapon, but it increases dramatically when weapons are present, particularly in already volatile environments rife with poverty, mistrust or injustice. The fear and uncertainty increase the violence with which the military acts. In some instances, most of the illegal smuggling of weapons into the Niger Delta region is done by poorly paid Nigerian soldiers who have served in peace keeping missions in other African countries, such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, often return home and sell their weapons to non-state combatants or gun dealers (Florquin and Berman, 2005; Nte, 2011). Security operatives are also responsible for the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the region. Armed proliferation has increased criminality, youth violence, hostage taking, militancy, communal conflict, drug abuse and drug related violence, oil bunkering and threat to peace and security in states like Nigeria. These prevailing situations posed severe security challenges to the national security, especially in least developed countries, to the extent that states are losing their traditional control of protecting lives and property. The weapons may be used for power tussle (Olu-Adeyemi, 2020). This may increase insecurity and violence by the military in trying to enforce the laws concerning SALW.

2.5 Community Security

Conflicts in Africa are fueled and prolonged by the availability of small guns, which also adds to a rise in criminal activity, out-migration, epidemics, and humanitarian disasters. Northern Ghana and Nigeria are among the regions that are latently experiencing conflict, and they are particularly vulnerable to the threat of weapons proliferation (Yankey, 2005). Research on small guns in pastoralist communities in East Africa sheds light on the vulnerabilities that contribute to the devastation, loss of life, and cultural erasure that these groups experience (Mulugeta, 2017). The issue of small arms dominance in internal conflicts is receiving increased attention, with a growing discussion on the role of ethnicity and nationalism as factors contributing to warfare. According to Bankale (2016), the widespread availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) across Africa plays a crucial role in exacerbating conflicts, thereby undermining human security and hindering development efforts. According to Cochrane et al., (2021), illegal weapons trade in Ethiopia is a growing concern due to its expansion alongside ethnic, religious, and political conflicts. This includes inter communal clashes, violence. For Kenaw (2020), Ethiopia is part of the Eastern African region, grappling with internal armed conflicts and illegal arms proliferation. Small arms are valued in various cultural and pragmatic contexts, with many in highland areas identifying as "heroic men" and in lowlands as "warrior race" for livestock protection and access to resources. According to Nega (2021), over a million people in Ethiopia illegally owned guns, resulting in numerous casualties across the country. Small arms have led to violence due to racism and crime, as they have diverse cultural and pragmatic uses among different regions. For Aemro (2017), small arms in Ethiopia pose a substantial danger to conflict and peace, inflicting widespread damage and undermining sustainable development. Their simplicity in operation, durability, and ability to remain hidden contribute to their potential for misuse, impacting many individuals.

2.6 Mechanisms Used in the Mitigation of the Effects of SALW Proliferation

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) continues to pose major security challenges a number of regions and states. It undermines governance structures, fuels criminal activities and exacerbates conflicts. This could be addressed through a multi-faceted approach by strengthening international collaborations, enhancing local law enforcement, tackling socio-economic drivers of illicit arms trade, and curbing corruption within security agencies. With the implementation of practical and evidence-based strategies, governments and stakeholders can substantially reduce the circulation and misuse of SALWs, especially in rural and border regions where enforcement seems to be largely weak.

2.6.1 Strengthening Border Controls and Customs Enforcement

SALW often enter countries through porous borders. Strengthening border security, improving customs procedures, and enhancing cooperation between neighboring countries are crucial for preventing the influx of illicit weapons. Several states like Iraq (Miller, 2019) have involved increased border patrols, better training for customs officials, and the use of technology to detect smuggled weapons (Minnaar, 2022). To ensure an inclusive border control and security, the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) was established. It also prevents unlawful importation of harmful goods such as drugs, contraband and SALWs. It also helps in preserving Nigeria's National security. The agency is involved in border control as it regulates and monitors movements of goods and people across Nigerian borders. Recently, the NCS intercepted huge number of arms that were illegally imported into the country. Thus, it can be concluded that the NCS plays a very important role in promotion of public safety, economic growth as well as National security. In addition, the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) is also a government owned agency which monitors legitimate and illegitimate entries and exits of Nigeria. This implies that the agency is involved in border control, which is through regulation of persons and movement goods across Nigerian borders. It has the sole responsibility of enforcing immigration

laws, regulating and ensuring these policies are maintained. This alone helps in preserving Nigeria's national security. Another national response to stopping illicit arms proliferation legislation has been enacted is for African countries to strengthen their border security. As highlighted earlier in this paper, one of the reasons for the growth and success of SALW proliferation on the African continent is due to their open and porous borders. Most African countries have three or four neighbors, making it difficult for effective border patrol. To achieve this objective, the Nairobi Protocol was signed between the East African countries which stipulated small arms registration to foster better tracing of weapons in cases of diversion. Even though a level of success have been recorded in the EAC, the borders are still open and arms traffickers still find it easy to move weapons into and out of the conflict areas (Mulama 2013). Similar to the East African situation, the South African Development Community in response to the flow of SALW and their illicit trafficking established a Protocol on Firearms, Ammunition, and Related materials in 2001 but entered into force in November 2004. A notable feature of the Southern African region initiative was the establishment of standards for the marking of small arms to facilitate the tracing of such weapons in order to uncover illicit trafficking. (Stohl et al, 2018).

2.6.2 Promoting International Cooperation and Information Sharing

SALW proliferation is a transnational issue, requiring international cooperation to address (Klare, 2019). This includes sharing information on arms trafficking routes, coordinating efforts to trace weapons, and developing joint strategies for combating the illicit trade. International organizations like the UN and regional bodies play a crucial role in facilitating this cooperation. In 2001, countries adopted the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA). In the instrument, governments agreed to improve national small arms regulations, to strengthen stockpile management, to ensure that weapons are properly and reliably marked, to improve cooperation in weapons tracing, and to engage in regional and international cooperation and assistance (Lantis, & Wunderlich, 2018). Within the PoA framework, the General Assembly adopted the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) in 2005, a global instrument for cooperation in weapons tracing. Improving weapons tracing is also part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Together, both instruments constitute the normative framework on small arms and light weapons, which all UN Member States have agreed upon (United Nations, 2022). In 2019, a resolution dedicated to the African Union's flagship initiative *"Silencing the Guns in Africa"* was adopted. The effective implementation of relevant arms control instruments and regimes, in particular those related to small arms and light weapons, are referenced in several parts of the resolution, thus illustrating the criticality of tackling illicit arms to achieving a conflict-free Africa. In the framework of the African Union's Silencing the Guns flagship initiative, African countries have committed to declare the month of September until 2030 the Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illegally owned weapons, which the United Nations fully supports through UN Security Council resolution 2457 (S/RES/2457).

In 2020, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the African Union Commission (AUC) initiated a joint project to support the implementation of the Africa Amnesty Month in interested African States. Funded by the Governments of Japan and Germany, the project supported a total of 13 States: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Kenya in 2020; Madagascar, Niger and Uganda in 2021 and Liberia, Tanzania and Togo in 2022. As a result of this project, more than 22 000 weapons have been collected and destroyed across these 13 countries. The Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) continues to serve as an implementing partner to foster regional and national ownership. As such, National Focal Points and National Commissions on small arms control lead the project at the country level. In addition to States'

commitment to ending unlawful gun ownership, the Africa Amnesty Month also creates a key opportunity for civilians to contribute directly and practically to "*Silencing the Guns*" while coming forward and surrendering to their national authorities the firearms illegally in their possession. Under the joint UN-AU project, beneficiary States organized broad sensitization campaigns to raise awareness on the dangers and risks of illegal gun ownership and illicit flows of small arms and light weapons; enhance their capacities in stockpile management and community-based policing and collect and publicly destroy the weapons voluntarily surrendered by civilians. While the project's core activities are similar across the countries, each beneficiary State develops and implements activities that are specifically designed to address national and regional contexts.

2.6.3 Implementation of Robust National Legislation

Effective control of small arms and large weapons proliferation will therefore depend largely upon states capacity and the willingness to design and implement appropriate legislation, regulatory procedures and policies (Small Arms Survey, 2013). The widespread threat to the stability and security posed to the sub-region by SALW led ECOWAS, in 1998, to adopt a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa as an important step towards addressing small arms proliferation in the region (Dinshak, 2020). The Convention entered into force on 29th September, 2009 with the deposit of the 9th instrument of ratification by the Government of the Republic of Benin on that day. Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Sierra Leone are the eight other states that have ratified it earlier

National laws facilitate the regulation, the manufacture, sale, transfer, and possession of SALW. This has included establishing licensing and registration systems for civilian gun ownership, creating effective end-user certification mechanisms, and setting penalties for illegal activities. Legislation should also address the destruction of surplus weapons and ammunition (Danwanka, 2021).

2.6.4 Improving Stockpile Management and Security

According to Danssaert, & Wood (2017), careful management of stockpiles of small arms, light weapons and their ammunition as well as the destruction of surpluses undoubtedly helps to reduce the risk of the diversion of such weapons to crime, terrorism and armed conflict. Military and specialist policing weapons and ammunition are considered surplus when they exceed the requirements of the State defence and security forces. Surpluses should include obsolete and illegally manufactured items as well as unlawfully held and confiscated weapons and ammunition, including by civilians. Many governments around the world have been working diligently to secure their stockpiles of weapons and to dispose of surpluses. Secure storage of weapons and ammunition is essential to prevent theft and diversion to unauthorized users. This includes implementing physical security measures like fencing, lighting, and alarm systems, as well as establishing clear procedures for inventory management, accounting, and access control. Regular audits and inspections are also necessary to ensure compliance (Alley, 2019).

2.6.5. Enhancement of Community Engagement and Awareness

It has been asserted by Nyamohangah (2023) that communities can do more in the control and management of SALW. This can be supported by whether they are aware of their contribution to the strengthening of the efforts to control of SALW. This can be well done with the increased inclusion of youth representation in small arms and light weapons. This has been found to be a critical issue. Youth exclusion and its impact on global peace and security, focusing on the inordinate effects of armed violence on youth and the challenges hindering their integration into decision-making spheres are important issues that need youth participation (Zuba et al, 2024).

Community participation and engagement in small arms among local communities are often most affected by the proliferation of SALW. Community-based programs that promote conflict resolution, provide vocational training for ex-combatants, and raise awareness about the dangers of SALW can be effective in reducing violence and crime. These programs should be tailored to the specific needs and context of each community (Nyamohangah, 2023). In some instances like in Tajikstan, with a high level of illegal personal SALW possession suspected in Tajikistan, the country faced the dilemma of how to deal with the problem. The difficulties apparent with collection programs have led others to suggest alternative approaches aimed at harm reduction. The only small arms project planned in Tajikistan was a UNICEF initiative focused on youth, modeled on similar work undertaken by UNICEF in Kosovo. Given the sensitivity of small arms issues and the lack of an established point of contact in government the project was slow getting off the ground, requiring a green light from the government and the close involvement of officials. Rather than attempting to collect weapons, the project sought to tackle youth violence and support local social capital through raising awareness of the problem of small arms (Heathershaw, 2020). While research on small arms and light weapons (SALW) has grown, significant gaps remain in understanding the complexities of their proliferation and impact. A primary gap lies in the limited focus on the demand side of SALW, with most studies concentrating on supply-side issues like arms trafficking and regulation. Furthermore, there's a need for more research on the gendered impacts of SALW proliferation from the human security paradigm, particularly how they exacerbate gender-based violence, ethnic violence mainly in emerging states like South Sudan and reinforce harmful social norms. Finally, more data is needed on the illicit trade, including the role of local production, government stockpiles, and the "grey market. In several cases, sub-Saharan region has several authors who have written about the region but not on South Sudan. It is also important to mention the fact that some literature is slightly beyond ten years. Additionally, some existing research relied on a single method or a limited set of methods, missing opportunities to gain a more comprehensive understanding by employing different approaches. A good amount of literature focuses on specific demographics or contexts; therefore, this developed a methodological gap and subsequently the findings could not easily be generalized to other populations or situations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Research design is defined as a framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various components of research in a reasonably logical manner so that the research problem is efficiently handled. It provides insights about "how" to conduct research using a particular methodology (Khanday, & Khanam, 2019). This study however used the case study design which is one of the qualitative designs where the researcher employed varied but interconnected interpretive methods often looking for better means to make more comprehensible the worlds of events like those under SALW in the Sub-Saharan region focusing on South Sudan which have been studied. The case study, it is important to note, is an intensive concentrated one studying a specific case like the one is this study covering South Sudan, the case study design was chosen since it perceives the respondents as knowledgeable and not just a source of data which the researcher is intending to collect. (Hartsfield, 1982).

1.2 Study Area

The study was carried out in Juba, South Sudan. Some Ministries and agencies were selected. These ministries and agencies were connected with small arms and light weapons, including internal affairs, security, foreign affairs ministry of trade. The target study population included officials in the security sector, internal affairs, foreign affairs, academicians from universities who are experts.

3.3 Sources and Measures of Data Collection

Data collection methods refer to the ways by which an investigator collects data from the selected respondents in any given study. These methods may include quantitative data collection methods and qualitative data collection methods which include; focus group discussions, interviews, archival method, and documentary review methods. The quantitative methods include surveys. This section presents the different methods that was used in the collection of data. The study employed the following quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data. The study used qualitative methods in the collection of data. This involved the use of interviews that was conducted with key informants from the selected institutions.

3.4 The Study Population

The target study population included officials in the security sector, internal affairs, foreign affairs, academicians from universities who are experts on international and regional legal instruments over SALW and citizens, the legislature and local government. These were conveniently selected and the conveniently selected was also purposively chosen since many of these targeted population are thought to be with knowledge on the subject of study.; 6 officials from the security sector, 4 Ministry of internal affairs, these are responsible for streamlining the military, 2 members from foreign affairs, 10 officials of local government; 2 officials from legislature; 4 officials of judiciary and 284 citizens of South Sudan who have been affected by SALW.

3.5 Sampling Types and Determination of Sampling

The sample size representative of the categories of respondents in this study was 302. It was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan's sample size calculation which is the same as using the Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination matrix. The sample size determination matrix 1 is a derivative from the size calculation which is expressed below. The Krejcie and Morgan sample size calculation is below.

The formula used for the calculation is;

s= X^2NP (1-P) +d^2 (N-1) +X^2 P (1-P)

s= requires sample size

X^2=Table Value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level 3.841

N= Population size

P= the population proportion assumed to be .50 since this would provide maximum sample size

d= is the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05)

Table 1: Sample Size Determination Matrix

Category of respondent	Population	Sample size	sampling technique
Security sector		6	Purposive
Ministry of internal affairs		2	Purposive
Foreign affairs		2	Purposive
Academicians		2	Purposive
Legislature		3	Purposive
Judiciary		3	Purposive
South Sudan citizens affected by SALW	1100	284	Random

3.6 Piloting of Research

The data collection instruments such as questionnaires and interview guides were piloted to ensure their correctness and compatibility in the study. A 10% sample size (200), which consisted of 284 questionnaires and interview guides, was distributed to respondents (Citizens of South Sudan). Piloting resulted in the immediate correction of poorly set questions, paving the way for successful data collection during the study.

3.7 Quality Control

The study arranged quality and error control during data collection of the study. Faults were subsequently avoided. Reliability and validity mechanisms of data collection were administered, and 308 sample size was collected without any problem.

3.8 Reliability

The study ensured reliability by constructing thorough conceptual framework in which the terms that were used in data collection instruments were explained and analyzed. The Cronbach Alpha method (foster, 1998) was provided by Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. A Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient (CARC) of 0.801 was obtained, which is above 0.7. Thus, the research instruments, such as questionnaires and interview guides, were found to be reliable. The Cronbach method of testing the reliability was used because it was the most suitable for questionnaires with Likert type items. The formula that was used was $\propto = kr/ (1+ (k-1) r)$. It made use of the number of variables or question items in the instrument (k) and the average correlation between pairs of items (r). Cronbach's Alpha is, therefore, calculated by correlating the score of each scale item with the total score for each determination (normally surveyed respondents or test takers) and then comparing that to the variance for all respondents' item scores.

3.9 Validity

The validity of research instruments was evaluated using expert judgments, such as professional views from academic peers. Three experts were contacted, and they critically assessed the validity of the instruments. The experts were asked to rate questions depending on their relevancy. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was established by dividing the number of items rated relevant by and total number of items. It is clear that CVI was 0.775, which was above 0.7, and thus, research instruments were considered valid.

3.10 Data Analysis

The study was examined and analyzed using applications such as SPSS Statistics V. 21, charts, Excel, and, above all, descriptive analysis where data was interpreted and presented. Data cleaning was steered, and analyses were presented and rigorously discussed appropriately.

3.11 Research Ethics

The study was conducted beneath the highest ethical standards in any scientific research. The researcher study abided with the research norms including honesty, confidentiality, accurate handling of information and employed objectivity in the application of the data collection methods to arrive at the desired results. All respondents who were randomly surveyed, clustered, and interviewed were carefully treated with confidentiality. Therefore, there were no ethical problems encountered during this study.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1 Availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons in South Sudan as a state in sub-Saharan Region

The study show that the majority (97%) of the respondents were aware of small arms and light weapons in South Sudan as a state in sub-Saharan region and the minority (3 %) reported that they had not heard about the same but they thought that all the arms are in the hands of government and its security organizations. The findings reveal that the highest majority have ever heard about small arms and light weapons proliferation in South Sudan, the few were confused about whether the arms and light weapons can be in hands of people not authorized by government. This revelation seems to suggest that that South Sudan's security and small arms control ministries face significant weaknesses stemming from a combination of institutional limitations, political instability, and the pervasive influence of armed groups. These weaknesses contribute to the ongoing proliferation of small arms and light weapons, hindering efforts to establish lasting peace and security. This is an indicator of statecraft failure. It can also be deduced that the ministries responsible for security and small arms control often lack the necessary infrastructure, resources, and skilled personnel to effectively implement policies and enforce regulations. Since there are several institutions known for being responsible for SALW there is a view that there is poor coordination between different government agencies, as well as with international and non-governmental organizations, weakens overall efforts. Some of these weaknesses have been referred to as internal as discussed by Eze & Abubakar, (2023). Afuzie, (2025) has also gone ahead to recognize that resources and effective security and law enforcement are some of the internal factors which are also similar in the sub-Saharan region. Though both authors have not broken down the internal factor's others have. Internal factors like; weak rule of law, corruption mentioned by Adedeji (2023) political instability, political will and influence of armed groups like what Green (2011) asserted when he mentioned the Tutsis in Rwanda are some of those factors facilitating SALW proliferation.

Availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons in South Sudan as a State in Sub-Saharan Region
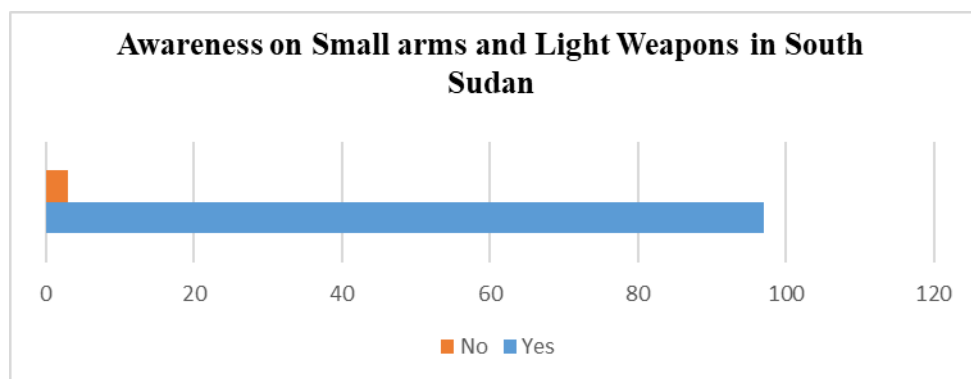

4.2 General Security Situation in South Sudan

The study indicates that the majority of the respondents (48 %) who were asked to give the general security situation in South Sudan mentioned that it was very bad while the minority (6%) mentioned it was good. Another (36 %) stated that it was bad and another (10%) mentioned that it was slightly good. The findings reveals that the general security situation in South Sudan was not positive and this partly explains why it is easy for people to get engaged in SALW proliferation. The expressions above are a reflection of how the status of security in South Sudan has been seen to be more of a negative environment which is used by several actors in the facilitation of SALW. This situation has been a feature in several states. This is in line with what Marsh, (2017) revealed when he showed what was happening in states like Libya and Mali where there was existing insecurity. It is critical in showing that with the insecurity as a result of the civil war, some places remain with no clear security institutions to control the flow of SALWs. This insecurity is similar to what happens in Sub-Saharan region where insecurity is common (Kazzah, Zakka, & Gajere,

2022). All this is a manifestation of statecraft failure in South Sudan as there is failure to control and manage insecurity.

General Security Situation in South Sudan
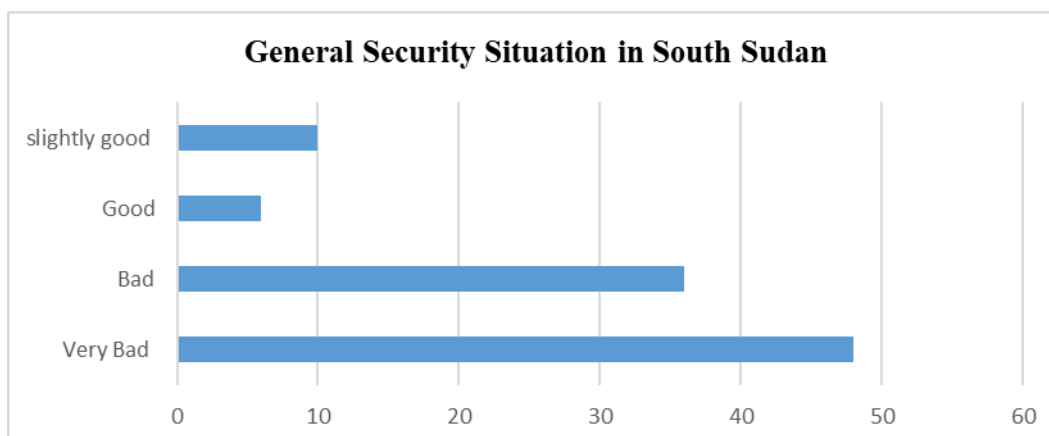
4.3 The Violent Ethnic Groups in South Sudan Facilitates SALW

Majority of the respondents 72% mentioned that they strongly agree that their presence has affected the spread of SALW while the minority 1% disagreed, 16 % agreed and 11% disagreed. The results reveal the spread of SALW has been facilitated by the continued presence of ethnic groups and the emergence of new one depending on different contexts like the lack of protection and the unemployment and protection of land. It can also be interpreted that those who mentioned that the presence of ethnic groups facilitated SALW proliferation had seen failure of governance and weakness to reign in on the ethnic groups. The results from the interviews that were conducted, it was shown that the existence of violent ethnic groups and the power struggles between these groups has had tremendous effect on the proliferation of SALW. The revelations from these responses indicates that there is a real problem of violent ethnic groups that have facilitated the proliferation of SALW. This further implies that the state in its weak state cannot control such groups which shows issues on state craft which is important in securing the citizens and managing conflict. This is not different from what Omemma (2017) revealed when he stated that ethnographical dissimilarities amongst the component parts of the country have become a threat rather than an asset to its corporate existence. The threats are through stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction which they use in unleashing terror and mayhem despite several measures taken to stem the tide. The situation in South Sudan is not so different from what happens in sub-Saharan region (Kłosowicz, 2020) but the presence of armed groups like the white army in South Sudan (Stringham, & Forney, 2017) and the failure to deal with such groups is a clear failure of statecraft in South Sudan.

Violent Ethnic Groups Facilitates Small Arms Proliferation
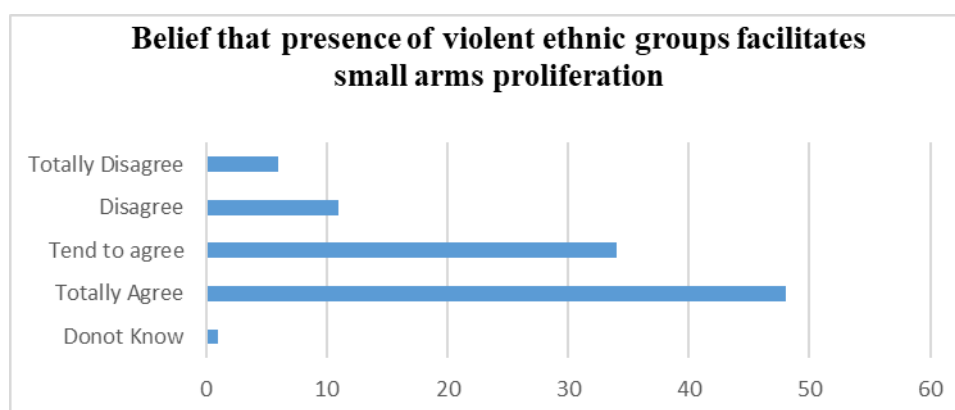
4.4 Export of Small Arms from other States to South Sudan

The results reveal that the biggest number of small arms and light weapons are as a result of export from other states. This also implies that states export arms to South Sudan and therefore there is a mechanism of keeping inventory of the arms. The institutions that are responsible for such arms must be in full control but if such arms do not get well kept then it confirms that statecraft in South Sudan has failed. The above argument suggests that South Sudan's diplomatic capacity is limited, hindering its ability to effectively engage in international forums and address its foreign policy challenges. This implies a weakness in statecraft. It is interesting to note that a state like South Sudan, though under embargo, it has failed to deal with the complicity of small arms and light weapons exporters. This is an issue thoroughly discussed by Alley, (2019) who argued that internal governmental actors make it very difficult to track and prosecute arms dealers in Sub-Saharan Africa. South Sudan's statecraft and foreign policy have faced significant failures, contributing to internal conflict and regional instability. The country's leadership has struggled to establish effective governance, manage resources, and foster national unity, leading to persistent instability and dependence on external actors. These internal issues have also impacted South Sudan's foreign relations, hindering its ability to assert itself on the international stage. This is what happens even with the procurement of arms. This is a view held by Danczuk (2015) when he states that, it is unusual for states to demonstrate the capacity, audacity, and will to trace and prosecute suspicious arms actors, especially when senior officials of the government are involved in such transactions. While several authors have talked about different factors facilitating SALW proliferation It has also been observed by Joseph, (2025) that the spread of arms in South Sudan is partly influenced by foreign liberation movements and regional conflicts. Armed groups from neighboring countries often cross porous borders, using South Sudan as a regrouping and asylum base, thus importing both their conflicts and weaponry. A notable example is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Uganda, which utilized Southern Sudan as an operational base in its fight against the Ugandan government, stockpiling a large arsenal of weapons, many of which eventually fell into civilian hands.

**Export of small arms from other states to South Sudan**
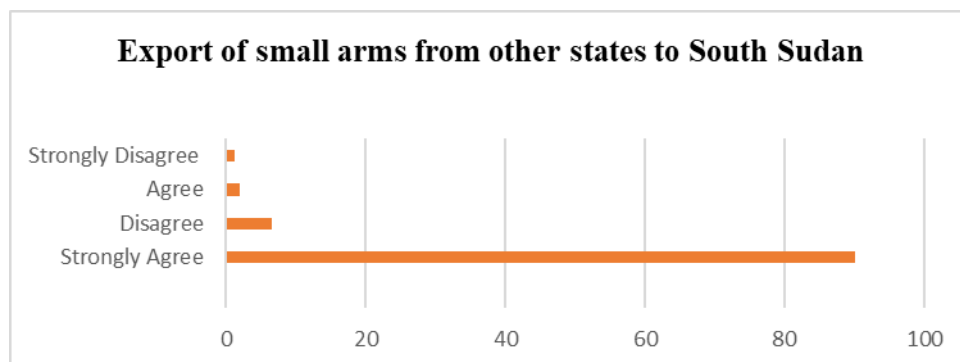
4.5 The Features of Weakened Institutions that Allow SALW Proliferation

The study indicated that the majority (17 %) of respondents argued that corruption and lack of transparency was the most prominent feature of weakened institutions while the minority reported that low legitimacy and public trust was a feature. Lack of capacity was (15%) mentioned by respondents as another notable feature, after corruption, limited accountability was also another prominent feature at (14%), inability to adapt to change followed with (9 %) dependence on informal systems and political instability were both with (8%) and exacerbation of social problems with (10%). The above revelations suggest that weakened institutions are characterized by a decline in their ability to fulfill their intended functions effectively. This can manifest as a lack of capacity to establish and enforce rules, provide public services, collect revenue, or maintain order. Furthermore, weakened institutions may struggle with legitimacy, experience high

levels of corruption, and face challenges in adapting to changing circumstances. The finding on the weakened institutions and the features mentioned by the respondents implies that the institutions have not followed the principal objectives of the security forces, both stated and implicit, which involve such aspects as defending and controlling territory, protecting citizens, keeping criminals off the streets. All these cannot be executed with corruption, lack of public trust, inability to adapt to change, dependence on informal systems, inability to establish and enforce rules. It is also possible that poor pay and delayed pay (Sudans Post, 2025) can make institutions weak in enforcement of rules. This is in conformity with what Florquin and Berman, (2005) and Nte (2011) discussed when they argued that the illegal smuggling of small arms is done by poorly paid soldiers and further stated that security operatives are also responsible for the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the region. The failure to address both the supply and demand for small arms, and by the fact that there is the absence of strengthened institutions and governance, it is not possible to break the cycle of violence and instability and create a more secure and prosperous future in South Sudan. This implies that statecraft in South Sudan is doubted as there is a failure in the responsibility of the state.

Features of weakened Institutions that allow SALW proliferation
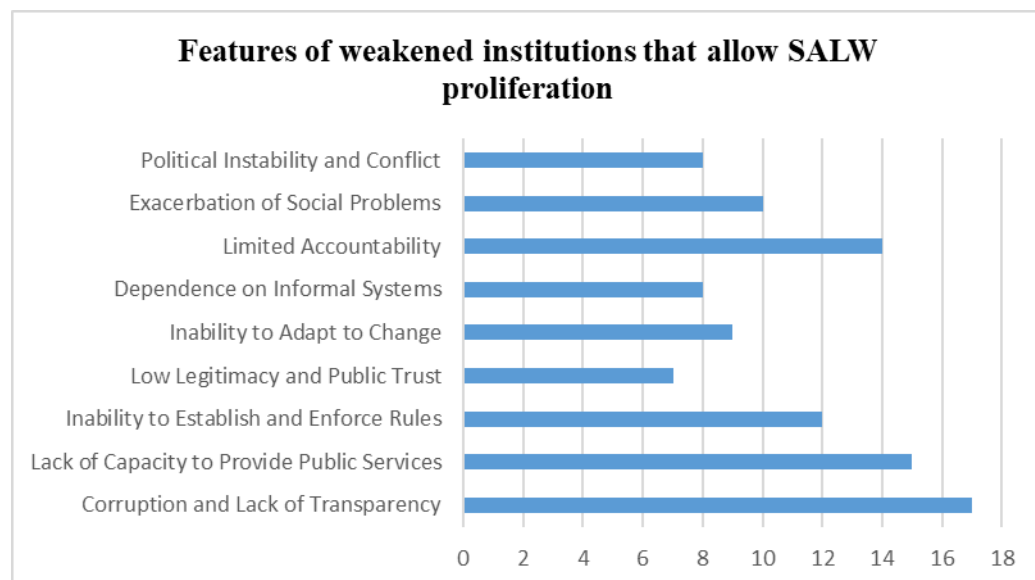

4.6 Military Institution and SALW

The results reveal that there is widely supported view that the military institution has been influenced by SALW proliferation. The reason could be reasons like corruption, the failure to have serious mechanisms, paying the officers well and having a strong army which is not divided along ethnic lines. These could be some of the factors that lead SALW actors to influence the military institution. On the other hand, the proliferation of SALW in South Sudan this would mean that the country would experience a devastating impact on the military institution, contributing to instability, violence, and hindering the development of a unified and effective national army. The worry is that the statecraft in South Sudan is not up to the task of addressing this issue since it requires comprehensive efforts to control the flow of weapons, disarm armed groups, and promote a culture of peace and non-violence. This was soundly reported when the respondents who were interviewed reported that the country has several weaknesses in relation to SALW. This also suggests that the people running state affairs have failed to handle the problem. This is where statecraft failure has been observed. The finding that SALW proliferation has widely affected the military institution in South Sudan has been a very significant effect on not only the military but also on the institution that is supposed to protect the boundaries and the people of South Sudan. This could also be very instrumental in influencing the decisions made by

the leaders in South Sudan as seen in the outbreak of the armed conflict in 2013. For example, the military institution has been affected in a complex and multifaceted way Olu-Adeyemi, (2020), has, on this issue argued that SALW have been used for power tussle. This is what has happened in South Sudan between SPLM (IO) and SPLM (IG) and the leaders in the two factions of SPLM. Further, this has increased insecurity and violence by the military in trying to enforce the laws concerning SALW. When Kamwesiga, (2016) discussed the collapse of the state as a result of SALW and argued that it can also lead to the collapse of the state and opposition, it implies that such a situation can be applied to what is happening in South Sudan where SPLM (IG) is considered to the government running the state though members of SPLM (IO) are also serving. Important to note is that SPLM (IG) is showing signs of failure the same way SPLM (IO) is showing by not giving a true picture of statecraft in South Sudan state. The failure to curb small arms proliferation in South Sudan, which significantly impacts the military institution, can be considered a failure of statecraft. This is because the unchecked spread of weapons undermines the state's monopoly on the use of force, a core function of any sovereign nation. The proliferation of arms, particularly small arms and light weapons (SALW), fuels conflict, exacerbates insecurity, and weakens the state's ability to maintain order and provide security for its citizen.
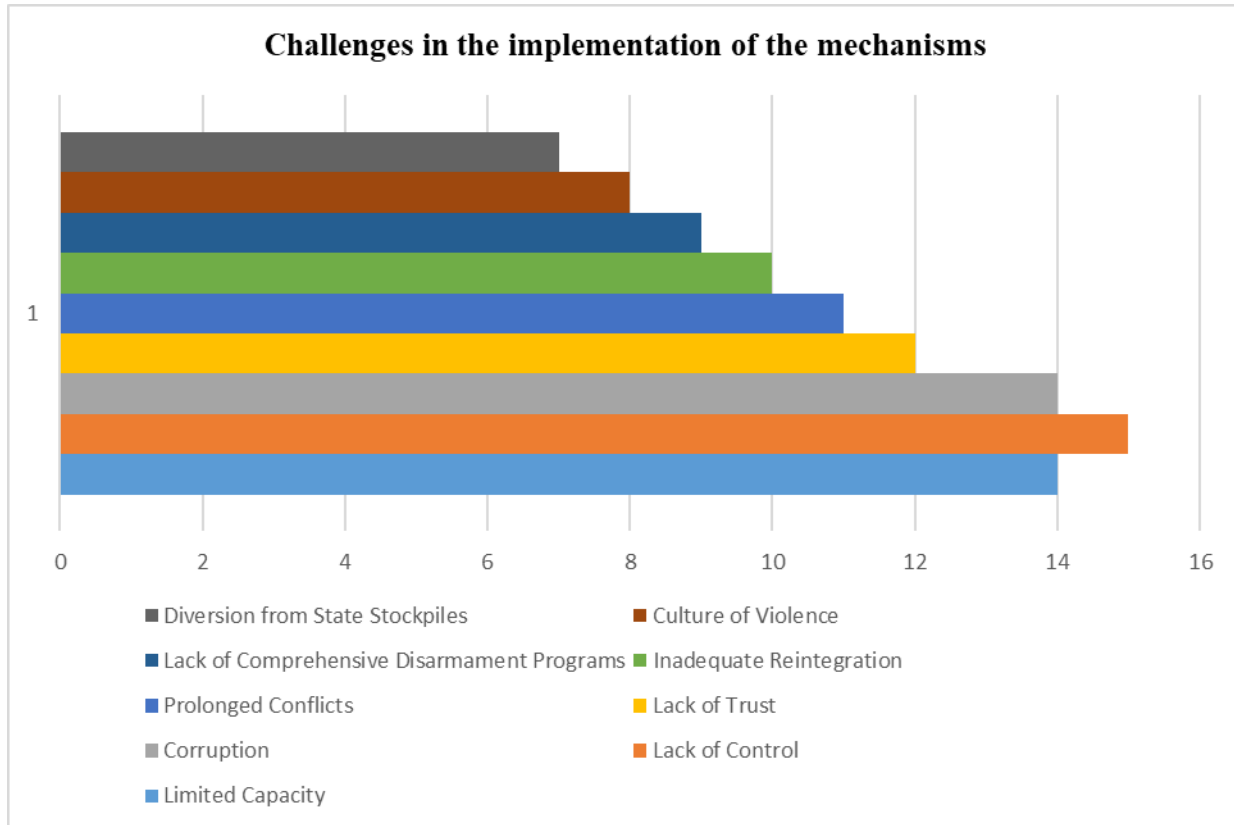
The Military institution has been Influenced by SALW Proliferation
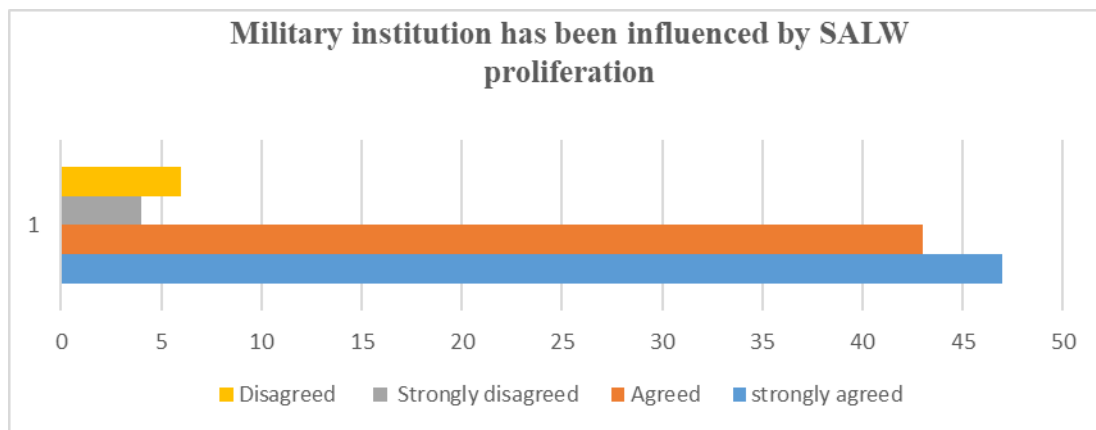
4.7 Challenges in the Implementation of the Mechanisms Developed by States

The study shows that the majority (15 %) of the respondents reported that the lack of control was a major hindrance while the minority (7%) mentioned diversion from state stockpiles, while (14 %) of the respondents mentioned corruption which tied up with limited capacity also was at (14%), The results further indicated that (12 %) of the respondents mentioned lack of trust, additionally (11%) of the respondents mentioned prolonged conflicts as a major hindrance, others (9 %) mentioned lack of comprehensive disarmament programs, another (8%) of the respondents mentioned a culture of violence and the rest (10%) mentioned inadequate reintegration. The results reveal that almost every challenge is related to statecraft weakness as seen in several other states in the sub-Saharan region like South Sudan. It is only imperative to say that South Sudan is at the extreme end of the continuum. This may have implications when it comes to the aspect of failing to have political and constitutional reforms which will be respected by all in government and outside. Whether this is between SPLM/IG and SPLM (IO) or any other structures, it is important to observe that statecraft in South Sudan is a major obstacle to executing state responsibility. The revelation also suggests that careful management of stockpiles of small arms curriculum may never be completed if the tools are not enough and are shared. What south Sudan has failed to do is what many governments around the world have been working diligently to secure their stockpiles of weapons and to dispose of surpluses as argued by Alley, (2019). This can also be because of the problems of statecraft which have befallen South Sudan as a young state in a troubled sub-Saharan region.

Challenges in the Implementation of the Mechanisms Developed by the State

Challenges in the implementation of the mechanisms

Legend:
- ■ Diversion from State Stockpiles
- ■ Culture of Violence
- ■ Lack of Comprehensive Disarmament Programs
- ■ Inadequate Reintegration
- ■ Prolonged Conflicts
- ■ Lack of Trust
- ■ Corruption
- ■ Lack of Control
- ■ Limited Capacity

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, the following conclusions have been arrived at the study concluded that the small arms proliferation in South Sudan is facilitated by a complex interplay of factors including prolonged conflict, weak governance, porous borders, and the prevalence of cattle raiding and inter-communal violence. The country's history of conflict has led to the widespread availability of weapons, which are then used to fuel further violence and insecurity. Lack of effective disarmament policies and border controls, combined with the high demand for weapons for self-defense and cattle raiding, contribute to the ongoing problem. This indicated a clear statecraft problem. On the second objective of the study, the study concludes that small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation has severely undermined South Sudan's institutions by exacerbating conflict, weakening the state's monopoly on the use of force, and fostering a culture of violence. The widespread availability of these weapons has intensified inter-communal violence, hindered development, and undermined efforts to establish a stable and secure nation. The study has concluded that the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in South Sudan has severe and multifaceted implications for human security, exacerbating existing conflicts, hindering development, and undermining state legitimacy. This proliferation fuels violence, disrupts livelihoods, and impedes the delivery of essential services, creating a vicious cycle of insecurity and instability. This study has concluded that South Sudan employs various mechanisms to address the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW), including legislative measures, community-based initiatives, and international cooperation. These efforts aim to reduce the availability and misuse of these weapons, promote peace, and enhance community security. However, there is no capacity to use these mechanisms, the institutions are weak, and the ongoing conflict have all made these mechanisms less effective.

6. Recommendation for further research

In South Sudan, addressing the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is crucial for statecraft, as these weapons fuel conflict, undermine security, and hinder development. The government should involve civil society organizations and local communities in the design and implementation of SALW control programs, ensuring that they are tailored to local contexts and needs. The government should invest in research to better understand the dynamics of SALW proliferation and its impact on South Sudan, and to monitor the effectiveness of interventions. The government should strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies to manage and control SALW, including training, equipment, and institutional reforms. The government should implement robust measures to prevent the illegal flow of weapons across borders, including enhanced surveillance and cooperation with neighboring countries. The government of South Sudan should collaborate with neighboring countries and international organizations to address the cross-border dimensions of SALW proliferation and share best practices. This calls for the government to improve and build capacity of foreign affairs including having competent officials to negotiate using research findings on SALW proliferation. The government should support initiatives that encourage voluntary disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of individuals and groups, particularly those involved in conflict. And The government should pass and implement clear and effective laws that regulate the possession, transfer, and use of small arms, including provisions for registration, licensing, and penalties for violations.

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