

FROM SEA TO SOIL: INLAND IMPACTS OF MARITIME PIRACY AND ARMS TRAFFICKING ON EAST AFRICA

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Abstract

Maritime piracy and illicit arms trafficking in the Gulf of Aden (GOA) are often addressed as maritime security issues, but their implications have far-reaching inland impacts on the governance, political stability, and security dynamics. This article sets out to examine how these sea-based criminal activities shift and become agents of mainland insecurity within the East African region. Using Regional Security Complex Theory (RSC) and Securitisation Theory, this research explores the processes through which piracy and arms trafficking penetrate regional security, escalate local conflicts, and impact political, social, and economic instability. It highlights the sources and trade routes of illicit arms flow in the East African region. The analysis demonstrates that arms trafficked across the sea are frequently deployed to land-based insurgent groups, with the ransom of pirates funding criminal and political groups in war-torn, unstable East African nations. Knowing the relationship between sea and land security, this paper suggests a more unified method of regional security that focusses on coastal and inshore vulnerabilities.

KEYWORDS: *Maritime Piracy, East Africa, Security, Securitization Theory, RCT.*

INTRODUCTION

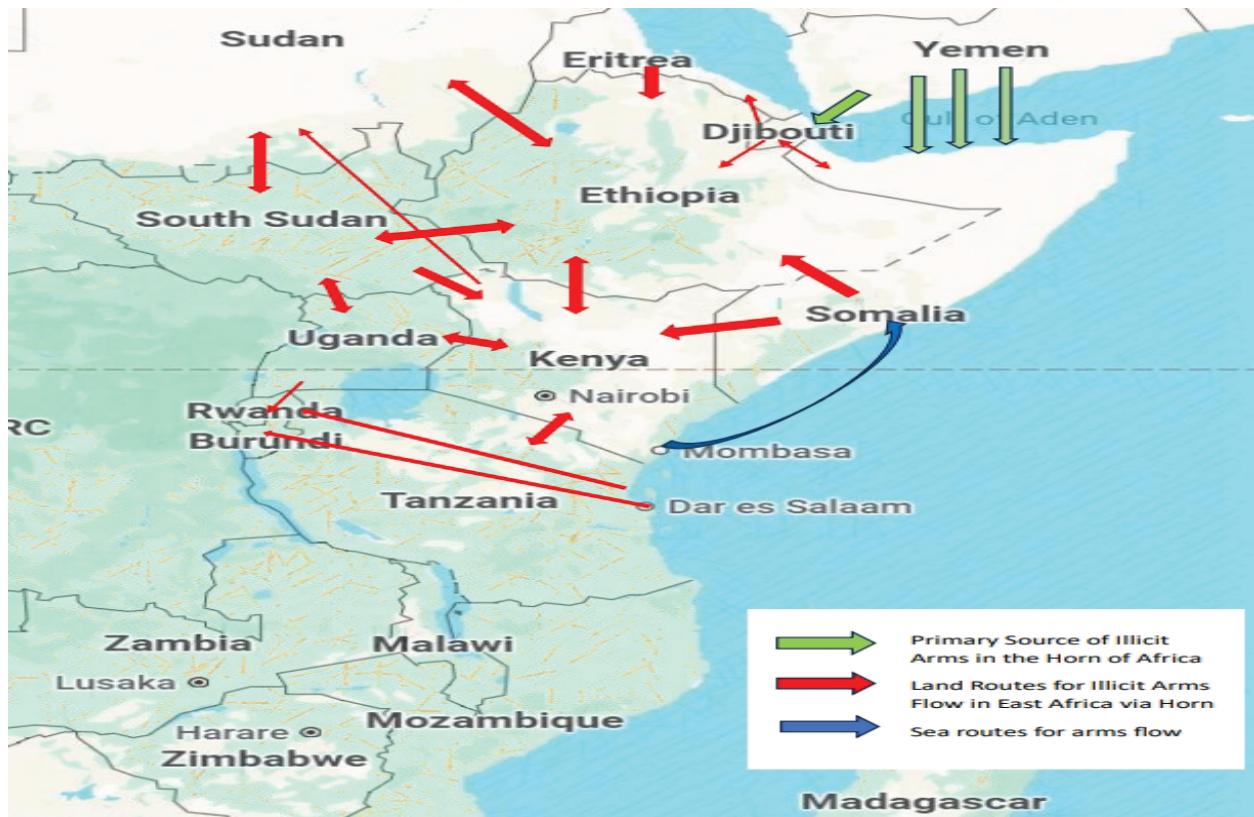
“Pirate's Playground,” in the Horn of Africa (HOA), became a key area of arms trafficking and pirate activities that had a negative influence on the socio-economic stability and security of the East African region. It has also become a hot spot for international crimes, as it is full of maritime piracy and illegal arms trafficking. In light of the association between the two calamities, one feeds the other, thus forming a complex web of security apparatus that stretches across borders. The effects caused by such unlawful actions are far-reaching for East African countries (Horton, Michael, 2020). The East African criminality index has been leading all of Africa since the year 2019. The criminality index has grown substantially in 2021–2023, showing the police that there is a higher possibility of organised crime. Ethnic and violent wars, as well as the availability of militias and armed groups in an area, are the drivers of criminality. In addition, there is organised crime of human trafficking, drug smuggling, trade in illegal weapons, extortion, racketeering, protection, and so on. Criminal networks and their participants have become deeply rooted in all nine East African countries, and their power continues to grow because of the constant political instability and as a result of sustained conflicts.

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Human trafficking and illegal arms trafficking remain the most lucrative and widespread black markets in East Africa (African Organised Crime Index, 2023). Illegal arms proliferation has a dire impact on the countries in the East African region since they are being used by these states to perpetrate organised crimes such as smuggling and maritime piracy. There has been a massive growth in the quality and quantity of weapons being smuggled out of Yemen into the HOA in recent times, as the regional instability has been growing rapidly. The region is experiencing illicit arms flow from Yemen to Somalia because it borders Ethiopia and Kenya, which extend to Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda, and other countries of eastern Africa (Olouch, 2020). Small boats anchored in Somalia and the Puntland region are used for weapons trafficking, to the point where they are transported by road or camel caravan. The two large markets of such weapons are Ethiopia and South Sudan. South Sudan is in civil war, and in Ethiopia, there is an escalation of the ethnic conflict.

Arms smugglers find numerous opportunities in both Ethiopia and South Sudan. Ethiopia has been controlling its border with Somalia through border patrols, but the security has reduced considerably over the past few years. The weapons and their ammunition meant to reach South Sudan normally pass-through northern Kenya, where the government holds less power. When it comes to control, there is a high chance of the wealthy and well-connected brokers bribing the military and the officials in the government. South Sudan serves as both a destination and a staging point for arms trafficking. The weapons and supplies manufactured in South Sudan and Yemen are trafficked to brokers and militant groups in other countries, like Uganda and the Central African Republic. The famous smuggling pathways transport weapons produced in Yemen into Tanzania and Mozambique, both of which have a history of weapon production and sales through these routes (Horton, Michael, 2020).

The research paper targets the linkage between the transfer of illegal weapons in Somalia and East Africa and how the same illegally transferred weapons threaten the safety and economic and political provisions of the Ethiopian, Sudanese, South Sudanese, Kenyan, Ugandan, Eritrean, and Tanzanian states. It uses case studies of these countries to demonstrate not only direct and indirect impacts of such transnational threats but also the relevance of a concerted action that is supposed to be taken at both regional and international fronts. The security dynamics of transnational crime and its implications on the region have been explained by the use of the RSCT and the securitisation theory framework. This securitised response also tends to dominate more sustainable ones that focus on addressing underlying causes like poverty, poor governance, and state fragility. With the help of the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), the paper points out the transboundary nature of these threats, where interdependence within the region implies that local conflicts may transform into regional ones. It concludes that the current military-focused strategies have failed to address the underlying causes of insecurity and necessitate more comprehensive and enduring approaches. The subsequent parts of this study explore the particular effects on the major East African states, their vulnerabilities, and various measures adopted to address the threats.



Source: Image Generated by Author

ARMS TRAFFICKING IN EAST AFRICA VIA THE HORN OF AFRICA

➤ ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia, being the centre of the Horn of Africa, is also a place of origin and a destination for trafficked weapons. Across the porous borders with Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Sudan, the weapons flow freely either way. The government of Ethiopia has repeatedly ruptured the weapons embargo on Somalia by providing proxy forces as well as using arms transfers to further regional interests. The power struggle between Tigray and Ethiopia has also increased the trade of SALW. Political rhetoric, ethnic violence, and conflicts in other parts of the world have boosted the need for weapons. Ethiopia also receives a significant supply of small arms from Yemen and Turkey. These weapons circulate freely from conflict areas to other regions. The Moyale crossing at the Kenya-Ethiopia border is notorious, where local traders fund and supply both human and arms trafficking; one is financing the other. Corruption and illegitimate power structures fuel such a criminal economy (African Organised Crime Index, 2023).

Ethiopia is also a major destination point on trafficking routes, as a landlocked state. One of the routes goes through the state of East Equatoria in South Sudan, far eastwards to the Ilemi Triangle in southern Ethiopia. Another important channel is Sudan, where trafficking heavy arms into neighbouring countries is possible. Unconfirmed sources also indicate that Ethiopia is selling arms to Sudanese militias (UNODC, 2024). Weapons destined for Somalia tend to have ammunition smuggled out of Yemen. Traffickers more

often are using Ethiopia as a transit point, moving weapons into Kenya and further into the Great Lakes region. Al-Shabaab fighters are estimated to have left some of these firearms behind, which were picked up by the AMISOM troops and sold to armed groups in the area. They are trafficked into Ethiopia and resold to the other nations (Mohamed, 2013). No credible sources are available to report how many weapons are in circulation within Ethiopia. In addition to domestic supplies via leaked military inventories and contacts through kinship structures among civilians, overland trafficking of arms by the surrounding states is considered one of the significant sources of the supplies. The combination of domestic and international smuggling leaves many questions unanswered. The demand for the weapons and the ammunition will not reduce as long as things remain violent.

➤ **ERITREA**

Although it has been isolated for more than 20 years, Eritrea serves as a major hub of arms trafficking to sanctioned countries, including Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. It is the second most armed country in the Horn of Africa. The economy is dominated by the ruling party, and the imports are under its monopoly, and the ruling party is alleged to have been involved in the arms trafficking that is state-sponsored (Africa Organised Crime Index, 2023). Migrant smuggling has also been an important source of income, especially for the criminal networks and the terrorist groups to purchase arms. According to the UN SEMG, arms trafficking has been intertwined with the migrant smuggling in Eritrea. The UN approved lifting its arms embargo on Eritrea in 2018 because the group has not found any signs of an unexplained movement of arms between Somali militant groups and Eritrea.

➤ **KENYA**

Kenya serves as a transit point of the arms that are smuggled to the conflict zones. People on the Kenya-Uganda border, like the Pokot and Turkana and the Borana people on the Kenya-Ethiopia border are particularly well armed, since they participate in stock theft. The arms-dealing business in Kenya has been promoted by the prolonged war in neighbouring Somalia. The insecurity in Ethiopia rose in 2021, hence escalating the gun circulation into the nation. South Sudan is reported as having some major political and governmental players who partake in trafficking weapons to parties of conflicts. Furthermore, there are reports that Al-Shabaab members collaborate with corrupt police officers in Kenya to smuggle illegal firearms into and out of Somalia and Kenya. Criminal groups use children, teens and females to smuggle illegal firearms (Index, 2023). Kenya has failed to regulate the demand and supply of illicit weapons due to a number of factors, such as insecure borders, inter-communal tensions and conflicts, cattle rustling and the pastoralist communities' economic marginalisation. The illicit firearms end up in Kenya by passing through the various seaports and all the member states surrounding it, which are among the countries that include Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Lokichogio, a trading town situated at a major trading point across the borders of South Sudan and Ethiopia, has been reported as a trafficking capital where the sale and resale of the guns is carried out at the local black market. The primary clients, who buy cross-border firearms, are the local pastoralists, and they trade their cattle in order to acquire their guns for cash. The purchases are said to have been smuggled by the non-local

traders into the black markets of Nairobi and other destinations in Kenya (UNODC, 2024). Some of the rifles smuggled out of Somalia are standard G3 and AK-pattern rifles used by pastoralists and pistols used by urban criminals due to their easy-to-conceal feature. Traffickers in Kenya and Somalia employ commercial trucks, vehicles, and even on-foot methods to facilitate trafficking. In 2018, AK56 rifles retrieved by the al-Shabaab members in Kenya have been traced to the lifelines of the FGS. This was the first time when FGS weapons to be used in terrorist attacks were discovered outside of Somalia.

➤ **UGANDA**

The smuggling of illegal firearms in and out of Uganda has gone down in recent years. But since 2021, cross-border arms trafficking in Kenya and South Sudan with pastoralists has further persisted and intensified. Armed robbery has been a major issue in the other parts of Uganda, where criminals have resorted to the unlawful acquisition of firearms, boosting the crimes committed in the city. Uganda has a record of more gun-related crimes than the other neighbouring countries, such as Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. Most of the illegal weapons used in the streets today originally came in arms that were leaked to the state armouries several decades earlier (Mkutu, 2007). The most common mode of arms smuggling in Uganda is the small-scale or ant trade, which includes pistols and the rifles AK-pattern, G3, etc. It is still difficult to control such a trade in remote areas that pastoralists live in because traffickers tend to use low-profile ways such as the use of public transport, motorbikes, walking, and even using women in the case of not being caught by the authorities. Uganda has emerged as the arms-selling hub in Eastern, Western and Central Africa because of the armed conflicts it has had with other countries in the region, such as Tanzania, the DRC, South Sudan and Kenya, amid a lot of left-over arms stock in the hands of the civilians.

In Uganda, legal ownership of personal guns does involve a form of licensing, but illegal possession is common, and the government is increasingly struggling to maintain control over its stock of weapons. Trafficking is also perpetuated by inter-ethnic cattle rustling across borders and by farmer-pastoralist inter-ethnic violence in northern Uganda, which blocks any effort at disarmament. Arms smuggling is also aided by cross-border ethnic relationships between pastoralist communities. Other weapons that are trafficked are home-produced ammunition, some of which is imported through Somalia and Congo militias. Nevertheless, a significant number of illegal weapons are purchased from the United States, Russia, and Ukraine. Although Uganda is a trafficking hotspot, the country has introduced various efforts to control the trade, including an amnesty programme, voluntary gun give-up programmes, and sensitisation programmes through the media. However, the renewed threat of the Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) in recent years has been used to intensify arms trafficking (African Organised Crime Index, 2023).

SOURCES OF ILLICIT ARMS

Various sources supply the illegal arms trade in Africa, which includes the diversion of weapons that were originally in the legal stocks of the government and battlefields, as well as external suppliers who cooperate with the internal players. Arms trafficking is by nature anonymous and therefore, it is extremely difficult to detect the perpetrators without engaging in these networks. The effects of trafficking are much easier to notice than the traffickers and illegal networks.

➤ CROSS-BORDER TRAFFICKING

The majority of uncontrolled weapons on the African continent are en route to other destinations; most of them end up in conflict areas beyond Africa. Large amounts of weapons can be obtained by armed groups and insurgents; it is not only because of small-scale cross-border smuggling or marine incursions, but also because certain weapons would be taken during the conflict. These arms have numerous origins: there are those already available in the market and those that are bought and sold in the black market. Another possible event is that people can obtain weapons belonging to the state either by attacking state troops or stealing weapons dumps. The Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) of the UN reported that al-Shabaab obtains a large part of its provisions in Yemen. The flow of ammunition is through several access points along the northern coast of Somalia. According to reports, dhows conduct a minimum of 4 loads a month in the Gulf of Aden, unloading at predetermined points along the northern coast.

The weapons mostly find their way into the hands of al-Shabaab or IS associates in Somalia. It has also been reported that Yemen uses speedboats to smuggle the small arms to Somalia. Then, weapons are smuggled to the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Kenya, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. The supply chain is associated with increased prices as weapons are sold to third parties, with the price increasing quite considerably at the final destination. The illegal migrants are also transported across the Red Sea through the same routes. Most boats that carry migrants between Bosaso and Yemen frequently bring back smuggled cargo such as guns that are auctioned to either local militants or weapon traders, or perhaps radical groups such as al-Shabab and Daesh. Weapons go much higher in the Horn of Africa when compared to Yemen. An example is when a Saudi G3 rifle sold in Yemen for 500 dollars can be sold for several thousand dollars in Ethiopia. The rocket-propelled grenades can sell for up to ten times their original prices. This price difference has been allowing long-distance trafficking in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Mozambique (Horton, Michael, 2020).

➤ BATTLEFIELD LOSSES

Arms in the possession of the state are at risk of being smuggled, stolen, or even given to the other side of the conflict. Some instances when military equipment was looted or taken during or after fights between the state forces and non-state armed groups have been recorded in various UN and NGO reports on arms flows in conflict-prone territories. This is regarded as one of the major suppliers of arms to rebel groups in most regions. Al-Shabaab, in particular, is also reported to keep stockpiles of massive amounts of weapons and ammunition in East Africa. Another well-known example is the media linked to the

organisation showing pictures of the weapons they took, which include big machine guns, AK-type rifles, anti-aircraft guns, and ammunition, captured during the February 19, 2020, attack on Somali National Army (SNA) bases in the Lower Shabelle region (Kirkham, 2022).

➤ DIVERSION FROM STATE STOCKPILES

The majority of the illegal weapons used in Africa are from legal stockpiles. Although the arms may have been manufactured legally, most of them end up being used unlawfully, re-exported without authorisation of the person who produced them, or sold on the black market. Diversion in Africa is of various forms. The most likely one is an armed militia or rebel force raiding government stores (including armouries), as in northern Mali. In other cases, underpaid military personnel or corrupt administrators sell weapons to insurgents. As an example, Ethiopian and Ugandan forces serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) were reported to be selling their stocks of weapons to Somali arms dealers (MAG International, 2015).

The 2011 conflict in Libya also witnessed the diversion of major stockpiles. Similarly, the looting of government arsenals in the Karamoja region of Uganda has facilitated cross-border trafficking. Tens of thousands of assault rifles, portable air defence systems, etc., were allegedly shipped by Libyan forces to Sudan and possibly Somalia via the Sahel and North Africa. Diversion may also come about in legitimate transfers – where arms licensed to a particular end-user are diverted to unauthorised players. The result can be deliberate theft or mismanagement of security. Some of the Eastern African nations, such as Uganda, produce weapons themselves; however, diversion of the locally manufactured firearms is not high. Domestic production of arms began in Kenya in April 2021, which is a concern for the future with the possibility of diversion during production or in stockpiles. Locally manufactured ammunition is diverted more often than locally manufactured guns. In Eastern Africa more than 50 percent of ammunition used by military and authorised people is manufactured locally, and some of the ammunition finds its way into civilian and insurgents' hands (Wepundi, Manasseh ; Nthiga, Eliud; Kabuu, Eliud; Murray, Ryan; del Frate, A A, 2012).

Another study conducted in 2018 found that 40 per cent of all ammunition on the black market in Northern Kenya was made by Kenya Ordnance Factories Corporation (KOFC), which is a state-owned ammo factory (Holtom & Pavesi, 2018). Monitoring the categories of ammunition being deployed by the pastoral community would assist in tracing intra-state and cross-border arm movements among the Karamoja Cluster (Bevan). Peacekeeping operations also have diversion problems. In at least 22 incidents between 2002 and 2014, the study by the Small Arms Survey recorded arms and ammunition misbalance among AU and UN peacekeepers in Sudan and South Sudan. In almost half of them, 50-99 firearms or 2,500-4,999 rounds of bullets were missing (Diversion of Arms and Ammunition in Peace Operations, 2015). In summary, improper stockpile management and inadequate transparency and accountability in the arms procurement process facilitate the illicit diversion and subsequent sale of weapons possessed by the relevant authorities.

➤ **CRAFT-MADE ARMS**

Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique are some of the countries on the continent that make handcrafted weapons. Small-scale production of these handcrafted weapons typically involves simple designs and the use of local materials. This type of weapon production is not usually regulated due to its low-profile nature and therefore makes it hard to regulate with the legislature and the range of usage of its distribution is quite unknown. Craft guns often lack typical markings, making their detection at crime scenes challenging. According to reports, the second primary cause of gun trafficking in Tanzania is the production of locally crafted weapons. Long-barrel rifles and shotguns are also common in rural settings, where they are employed for hunting, poaching, and self-defence, as well as in situations where livestock protection is involved. On the other hand, muggings and robberies commonly involve the use of pistols in cities. Although craft weapons are mostly used on a personal basis and are cheaper compared to factory-made guns, they in most cases do not play any significant role in assisting armed groups. In other cases, however, armed gangs produce handguns for use in criminal activities (Hays & Jenzen-Jones, 2018).

IMPACT OF TRANSNATIONAL CRIME AND SALW IN EAST AFRICA

Illegal arms and transnational crime have impacted the socio-economic and political development of Africa. The discussion will evaluate the extent to which transnational crime has jeopardised the growth and development of the three social, economic, and political sectors of Africa.

➤ **SALW IN CONFLICT**

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) trafficking is a transnational crime; its impacts have immensely influenced the length of conflicts, their intensity and their nature in Africa. Although SALW has never been the root cause of conflict, its presence has been very important in igniting, fuelling, and escalating violence and derailing any efforts of reconciliation. An estimate of 46 armed conflicts out of the 49-armed conflicts taking place in the world since the year 1990 were fought mostly using SALW. There are a number of reasons why these weapons proliferate widely: their cheapness, usage simplicity, effectiveness, simple maintenance, and high availability. The arrival of guns in most of the war zones has vastly overshadowed the existing ones, which had been the result of years of war. In some cases, these guns come through brokers, and in others, through invading foreign armies.

People perceive small arms as a crucial factor in internal conflicts. In the Somali civil war, an estimated quarter of all Somali men armed themselves, making SALW a key part of the fighting. The proliferation of the readily available weapons leads to instability, especially in regions where there is unregulated cross-border trade in arms. There were numerous ex-combatants that had gone through military training and engaged in armed violence more or less, which continued to promote insecurity in Rwanda. The availability of guns is strongly associated with the increase in violent crimes, inter-communal violence, and a culture of violence in which conflicts are increasingly resolved through violent means. The increased use of small arms in cities across the Horn of Africa puts the population's

safety at risk. In addition to the proliferation of armed violence and armed conflict, SALW are also closely interconnected to other complex development and social problems, which further aggravate other conditions of peace and security in the region (Oxfam GB, 2001).

➤ **SECURITY**

Proliferation and movement of small arms and light weapons (SALW) have posed severe human security issues on the African continent. This leads to the maintenance of easy access to these weapons, which motivates state and non-state actors to solve conflicts by using force and blackmail, as opposed to conversation, diplomacy, and negotiation. The absence of control over SALW is a factor contributing to continued international humanitarian law and human rights violations, typically with few accountabilities and concerns. In addition, the lack of efficient disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) initiatives after the significant conflicts in most African countries has enabled former combatants to keep their weapons. These weapons are often utilised to execute transnational crimes, including piracy, human trafficking, arms smuggling and hijacking. Proliferation of small arms is also presenting itself at an alarming rate in urban centres across the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. The spread of light weapons has strong associations with a number of complicated social and development issues. Their existence not only fuels insecurity but also compromises long-term peace, stability, and sustainable development endeavours (UN, 2006).

➤ **IMPACT ON GOVERNMENT**

The problem of transnational crime is a serious threat to African governance and state legitimacy. Small arms and light weapons (SALW), like other weapons, have been available extensively, ensuring the emergence and growth of transnational criminal networks, especially in the unregulated or poorly controlled international boundaries. In these regions, where central governments normally overlook proper governance, the lack of oversight has turned them into major routes for human, weapons, and drug trafficking. In most scenarios, such criminal businesses have succeeded in offering economic opportunities and livelihoods to the marginalised section of the population, particularly in remote areas. This situation tends to influence local people to become loyal to those on whom they depend for their livelihoods, thereby developing an allegiance to the criminal operators at the expense of the state. Such a realignment of transnational loyalties challenges the control of the state and it builds parallel power networks. As the transnational criminal organisation increases in power and size, the normal relationship between people and state in border regions is destroyed. This undermines the power of government to exert its control and manage its whole territorial domain, which has long-term consequences for the national stability and sovereignty of that country. West African states such as Nigeria, Chad, Mali, and Niger, as well as East Africa, particularly Somalia, demonstrate these dynamics (Bruinsma, 2015).

➤ SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

One of the key factors of the socio-economic underdevelopment in Africa is transnational crime. Underdevelopment in the development literature offers a breeding ground to some of the problems on the continent. Transnational crime prospers in the environment of poverty, inequality and economic injustice, especially in those communities that are weak and marginalised, where the affected people are that much more vulnerable to being used by criminal gangs. Violent crimes significantly impact state institutions and stability. Among the most devastating impacts, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is relevant, as not only is violence promoted due to this, but it is also used as the means to carry out other transnational crimes, including human trafficking, drug smuggling, piracy, and arms trade. The proliferation of SALW further amplifies the cycle of violence or insecurity. There are significant financial and social impacts of SALW in the long term. Armed violence causes low investment, high rates of poverty, and diverts funds out of other necessities for the state, like health, education, and infrastructure. This chronic turmoil interferes with human progress in terms of reduced standards of living, access to education, income generation and civic engagement – eventually leading to suffering in the magnitude and complexity of humankind (BICC, 2005).

CONCLUSION

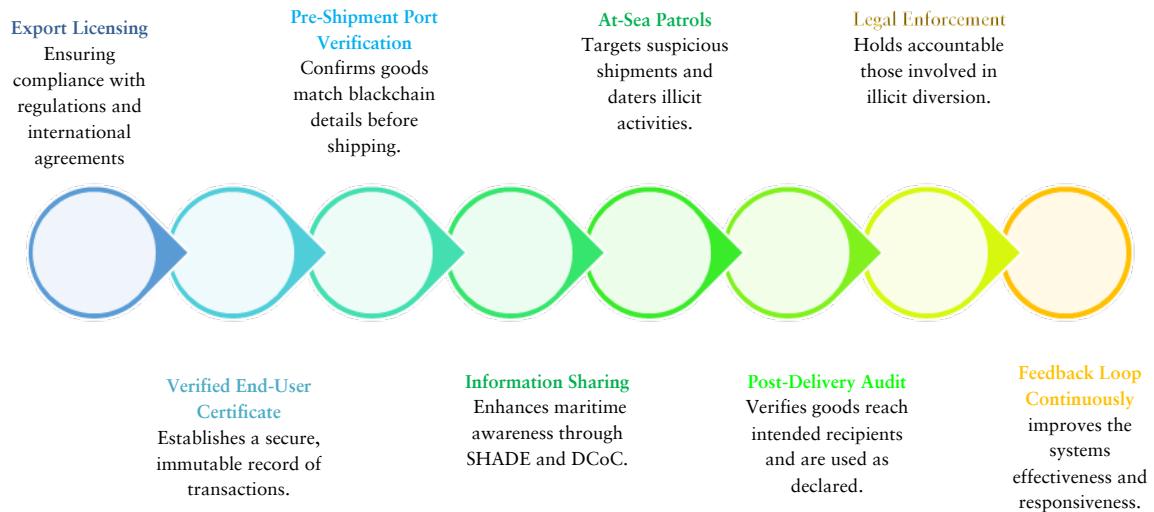
Gulf of Aden (GOA) transnational security issues are much broader than the littoral states and arms trafficking and piracy are major destabilisation factors in East Africa. Such illegal operations have also undermined the governance systems, contributed to the insurgencies, and increased local conflicts, with illegal weapons reaching neighbouring countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda. Some of the implications are increased transnational crimes, which are a significant threat to the security in the regions, such as terrorism, banditry, and human trafficking. The uncontrolled spread of small arms has aggravated ethnic wars and communal violence, especially in the case of Sudan, and compromised Kenya's ability to counter terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab. The ripple effects are not spared even in Ethiopia, which is the regional economic powerhouse. Piracy has increased the cost of maritime trade, discouraged foreign direct investment and burdened the affected states financially.

The failure of the regional players to exercise maximum control over their maritime areas and boundaries adds to the problem, as it creates a state of power vacuum usually filled by foreign powers and overseas security treaties. Criminal networks have been permitted to thrive through weak governance, marginalisation in the economy and the lack of capacity among institutions. Initially, localised cases of piracy against socioeconomic injustice soon became a very organised enterprise that was highly profitable and deeply entangled in the illegal trade of arms. With porous borders, poor maritime surveillance and corrupt enforcement mechanisms, weapons of a variety of models, including the AK-pattern rifles, PK machine guns and anti-tank missiles, are moved by pirates and smugglers to bring into the country, in many cases being used in conjunction with illicit substances and counterfeit products. They are regularly smuggled in fishing dhows as well as other unregistered boats; hence, detection is hard. The transnational crime, in whatever form, poses a complicated issue to governance, security, and development in the continent. Illegal

trafficking of arms and piracy are interdependent: money gained by conducting hijackings is used to purchase more advanced weapons, thus creating a loop of violence. These criminal economies feed into the wider informal economy, which sustains a shadow system based on multinational crime networks, corrupt officials, local militias and even the terror group Al-Shabaab, dependent on this source of income. These relationships show how deeply rooted illegal activity is in the socio-economic fabric of the East African region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adoption of the framework as a means of regulating the illicit diversion of arms through the use of blockchain technology, which will focus on accountability, transparency and efficiency in tracking sensitive commodities between the point of delivery and post-delivery verification.
- The Nairobi Declaration has made a lot of milestones to establish mechanisms of controlling SALW in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn. To sustain this impetus, NGOs and the government should continue to enhance such initiatives, build legal processes, enhance weapons collection and storage, demobilise former combatants, educate the community and reduce the inclination to get a weapon. NFPs and national plans of implementation should be established. The governments are required to exercise political dedication and scrutinise their procedures since allegations that they illegally supplied weapons to the opponents of the government and weapons to civilians are still intact.
- Regional states should make more secure arrangements, which will reduce the deployment of foreign troops through regional maritime security architecture, naval forces and intelligence information. The African continent should act proactively and harmonise regional defence through the AU and IGAD to control maritime security threats such as arms trafficking and maritime piracy by establishing the East African navy.
- The diplomatic option of resolving a conflict should be given priority over the military alternatives because the majority of the regional security threats, such as piracy, illegal arms movement and terrorism, were previously based on failure of governance, economic deprivation, and institutional deficiencies. To address the conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia, African-led mediation involving the AU, IGAD, and regional states should be implemented to reduce the justification for prolonged foreign military interventions.
- The economic diplomacy of the economic giants of the world and the Gulf States should aim for trade, infrastructure building, and investment rather than military aid. Having regional priorities in terms of defence autonomy, peacebuilding and legal regulations instead of foreign military priorities will help HOA to provide a sustainable and self-sufficient-oriented security system instead of internationally governed security procedures. In the future, the region might achieve stability and reduce excessive militarisation by fully implementing security reforms and establishing governance in the security sector that prioritises socio-economic development.



Source: Image Generated by Author

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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