



Regional Dynamics of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in North Africa

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Abstract— The prolong nature of the authoritarian regimes in nation-states of North African region and their violent nature in repressing opposition and political movements have resulted in the breed of waves of religious extremism, violent political unrest and mass protest throughout the region for several decades. Consequently, this resulted in yet another waves of security challenges and humanitarian crises characterized armed violence perpetrated mainly through the use of SALW. This chapter examines the dynamics SALW proliferation in North Africa and assesses the security and humanitarian implications of the proliferation of these types of arms and weapons (SALW) in the region. Library research is used as methodology, while relative deprivation theory is used as theoretical frame. The chapter argues that the current security challenges and humanitarian crises bedeviling the North Africa is a direct result of the proliferation of SALW particularly during Arab spring in 2011, thereby creating stateless disorder and atmosphere of security risk and uncertainties in the region. It concludes that the armed violence and crises in North Africa resulting from armed violence are enormous hence the need for collective actions through regional measure and continental regimes to control the menace of small arms and light weapons proliferation to prevent continuous spread of these weapons to other part of Africa continent where tension has already escalated such as central Africa, East Africa and West African region.

Keywords— SALW, Region, North Africa, Arms, Regional Security, Arms Proliferation.

1. INTRODUCTION

North African region has a complex history as reflects in the contemporary political challenging and realities of the region. For more than five decades, most of the nation-states in the region had been under authoritarian regimes, who by their conservative nature and tendency had used violent and brutal measures to repress any form of opposition and political or democratic movements, throughout their prolong period of dictatorial rule. This trend breeds violent political activism culminating in serious upheavals, Islamic extremism, growing insurgency and terrorism as well as criminal activities in which small arms and light weapons have become weapons of choice by the various armed groups operating in the region, either as a way of challenging the powers of the ruling class or as a collective strategy for regime change. This manifests more vividly in the decade of the late 1990's with the rise of Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria and how it was repressed by the military. Consequently, this tendency drifted the members of the political movement to take up against the state, leading to serious security crisis.

In addition, the oppressive and corrupt manners by which most of the regimes in North Africa had run their government at that point in time, led to serious economic problems in forms of high rate of unemployment especially among youth and a growing poverty in the major segment of the population. Later, this resulted in



serious frustration and growing aggression especially among the youth population, that explode in political upheaval and violent democratic protest known popularly as 'Arab Spring' starting in 2010 seeking for regime changes in almost all the countries in the region. The ways by which these regimes attempted to contain this political upheaval and crises through organised state violence and military suppression proved abortive and consequently led to the abrupt collapse of most of these regimes.

This trend was captured by Amnesty International (2011, p5) as observed in their report that all across the region, government authorities responded to protests seen as heralding an "Arab Spring" by using excessive, often lethal force even against peaceful demonstrators while deploying a wide range of weaponry, munitions, armaments and related material much of it imported from abroad. In Egypt in particular riot police and internal security forces used firearms, shotguns and shotgun cartridges, live ammunition, rubber bullets, tear gas, water cannons and armoured vehicles to suppress and disperse protesters. Similarly in Libya, as the country slid into armed conflict, Colonel Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi's forces launched rockets, mortars and fired artillery into densely-populated civilian residential areas.

The report further added that more than 6,000 people were injured during the protests in Egypt, some of them permanently, and at least 840 were killed. Many protesters died as a result of shots fired to the upper body, including the head or chest. In most of the cases documented by Amnesty International where security forces fired live ammunition, there was no threat to the lives of members of the security forces or others. In some cases, bystanders and passers-by were killed as a result of reckless shooting by security forces (Amnesty International, 2011, p25).

With the collapse of most of these regimes, the region has plunged into a state of armed violence especially through small arms and light weapons, this creates serious security vacuum resulting in the spread of an atmosphere of lawlessness, which serves as fertile ground for Islamic insurgency, International terrorism, human trafficking and modern slave trade, illegal migration and arms deals especially in small arms and light weapons. This renders the region a safe haven for all forms of criminal activities posing new waves of serious security challenges and humanitarian crises in the region in particular, and Africa as well as other members of the international community in general.

It is against this backdrop this chapter examines the dynamics of SALW proliferation in North Africa and assesses the security and humanitarian implications of the proliferation of these types of arms and weapons (SALW) in the region. Library research is used as methodology, while relative deprivation theory is used as theoretical frame.

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES: SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AND ARMS PROLIFERATION

The term SALW has no single universally accepted definition. The most common definition is the one used in the United Nations Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (UNGA, 1997) which makes a distinction between small arms and light weapons. Broadly speaking, small arms are defined as those weapons designed for personal use and light weapons as those weapons designed for use by several persons serving as a



crew. ECOWAS Convention (2006) gives two specific definitions of SALW as follow: Firstly, Small Arms are the types of arms used by one person and which include notably: firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as an exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb or a gas bomb, a grenade, a rocket launcher, a missile, a missile system or landmine; revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbines; machine guns; assault rifles; light machine guns. And, secondly, Light Weapons are portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team and which include notably: heavy machine guns; portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted; portable anti-aircraft cannons; portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns; portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; portable anti-aircraft missile launchers; mortars with a calibre of less than 100 millimetres. In addition, they gave definition of Ammunition as devices destined to be shot or projected through the means of firearms including among others: cartridges; projectiles and missiles for light weapons; mobile containers with missiles or projectiles for anti-aircraft or antitank single action systems.

According to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (2006) Small arms are easy to buy, easy to use, easy to transport and easy to conceal. Their continued proliferation exacerbated conflict, sparks refugee flows, undermines the rule of law and spawns a culture of violence and impunity. They involve all lethal conventional arms that can be carried by an individual combatant, a team of people, or a light vehicle that also do not require a substantial logistic and maintenance capability (Bevan, 2008). Small arms and light weapons (SALW) have become the most salient source of human insecurity and suffering in the contemporary world. In almost every continent across national boundaries, uncontrolled Small arms and light weapons (SALW) form a persistent problem through their excessive availability and accumulation. They have been sources of firepower to insurgents, armed gang members, pirates, drug barons and terrorists, through which they destabilize communities, unleash terror and wreak havoc (UNODA, 2013).

According to Mehta (2006) more than 500 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation around the world one for about every 12 people. They were the weapons of choice in 46 out of 49 major conflicts since 1990, causing four million deaths about 90 per cent of them civilians, and 80 per cent women and children. National security is under increasing threat from the spread of small arms and light weapons and their illegal trade. They have devastated many societies and caused incalculable human suffering. They continue to pose an enormous humanitarian challenge, particularly in internal conflicts where insurgent militias fight against government forces. In these conflicts, a high proportion of the casualties are civilians who are the deliberate targets of violence a gross violation of international humanitarian law. This has led to millions of deaths and injuries, the displacement of populations, and suffering and insecurity around the world.

In a similar vein, Banerjee and Muggah (2002, p5) argued that at least 500,000 people are killed each year by small arms and light weapons. They die in an astonishingly diverse number of ways: as combatants in internal and inter-state wars; as participants in gang fights and criminal battles; as casualties of government-sponsored or condoned violence and terror; as innocent civilians trapped in deadly wars and social conflicts; and as victims of suicide, homicide, or random acts of violence.



Klare's (1995, p174) have identified many reasons why small arms figure so prominently in intra-state conflicts, one such reason is that small arms require limited resources to buy and are more accessible in the arms market, the low cost and wide availability, lethality, simplicity and durability, portability and concealability, make small arms attractive for irregular forces in internal conflict. Logistically, the use of small arms by is favoured over heavy weapons because of their simplicity to operate. They are suitable in internal conflict as the goal of ethnic warfare, is not so much victory on the battlefield but rather intimidation by members of another group. Conflicts involving small arms often persist for a long period of time and usually result in a stalemate between the various parties. The characteristics of small arms make them the perfect weapon for criminals and insurgent groups as principal weapon of choice for use against government forces.

Furthermore, supply of small arms contributes to global violence even after their initial role in internal conflicts. This occurs with the ending of violent conflict, and the subsequent lack of employment opportunities insurgents find in their new environment. Instead, insurgents may turn to banditry, drug trafficking and arms smuggling to supplement their income, often using guns acquired from foreign patrons during the earlier fighting (Klare, 1995, p14).

In addition, the Small Arms Survey (2003:27) argued that demand for small arms and light weapons can be a result of internal conflict where a non-state actor, such as an insurgent group, has limited access to an external arms supplier. Most a protracted armed conflict in which there is recurring cycle of violence, an erosion of political legitimacy and a loss of economic viability thereby constraining the capacity of state to cope with, is consequences of an excessive accumulation, proliferation and use of small arms. The major factors contributing to the availability of small arms and light weapons is the increase in the number of legitimate producers of such weapons combined with continuing illegitimate arms manufacturing, at the same time, a large proportion of the accumulation and flow of small arms and light weapons is constituted by recirculated weapons or arms from existing stockpiles. Furthermore, high prices of imported small arms can also encourage the production of illicit small arms within the state boundaries.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The relative deprivation theory was expounded in 1970 by Ted Robert Gurr. And it is concerned with the question of conditions under which various forms of violence against political institutions, such as riots, conspiracies, revolutions, occur. It describes the rise of expectations and the consequential disappointment in a given society as a trigger for conflicts. The major assumption behind the theory of relative deprivations is that personal disappointment and angers in those individuals who feel their expectation has proven to be unsubstantial or unrealized can eventually lead to violent conflicts, and this is much more pronounce where SALW are readily available and can be used as weapons of choice among the various armed groups and individuals. This can especially be observed when the respective state suffers low social and economic development. In such states, people hope for employment, poverty reduction, better infrastructure, and higher incomes. This explains the major trigger of armed violence resulting from the armed proliferation in North Africa.



According to Gurr (1970, p 13) relative deprivation is a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining, given the social means available to them. Further, Gurr (1970, p24) argues that violent behaviour is seen as a direct result of deep-seated indignation and that "the greater the discrepancy, however, marginal, between what is sought and what seems attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result." This is to say the greater the discrepancy between expectations and capabilities, the greater the dissatisfaction hence the potentiality for violence.

Thus, it sees conflict as the direct response to accumulated frustration and anger, particularly in societies where scarce resources hardly or is unable to satisfy human wants. Thus, violent behaviour especially where SALW are readily available is seen as the last resort. In view of this theory violence is not a natural reaction, but a direct result of anger and frustration, resulting from inability or denial to have access to basic rights, necessities of life, justice or access to other values. Hence, Aggressive behaviour in form of armed violence is the outcome of frustration and in a situation where legitimate desires of an individual is denied either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way society is structured, the feeling of disappointment may lead such a person to express his anger through violence that will be directed at those he holds responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them. This is much more pronounced where SALW become readily available like in the North African states particularly in Libya, Algeria and Egypt.

4. AN OVERVIEW OF NORTH AFRICAN REGION

North Africa is home to some of the most economically and militarily powerful states in Africa. These include Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. They lie on the northern part of the African continent, between the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Sahara to the south. The population of the region as of 2015 were: Morocco 34.4 million expected to reach 39.8 million by 2030; Algeria 39.7 million expected to reach 48.3 million by 2030; Tunisia 11.3 million expected to reach 12.7 million by 2030; Libya 6.3 million expected to reach 7.4 million by 2030; and Egypt 91.5 million expected to reach 117.1 million by 2030; (UNDP Human Development Report, 2016). Meaning the region has been grappling with serious demographic growth and pressures.

In general, the North African population according to UN projections shows that between 2015 and 2050 the workforce of the five North African economies is poised to increase by more than 60 million people (cited in Cooke and Sanderson, 2016). It has been noted that out of the North African states' eighty million persons, over 50 percent are under the age of 30, and the growth rates of their economies cannot meet the demands placed upon it. The countries suffer from corruption, poverty, and unemployment; the overwhelming concentration of wealth in the hands of a small stratum of elite families intertwined with the authorities; the absence of real democracy; and closed horizons for its large, youthful population, suffering from disproportionately high rates of unemployment, and underemployment. Consequently, these large-scale demographic and economic pressures, particularly the youth bulge, lead to a high level of alienation, pessimism, and a desire to emigrate to Europe (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011).



In a similar vein, the economic problems have also been increasing in the region, for example in Egypt, 95 percent of the population lives on 5 percent of the land, barely five kilometres to either side of the River Nile. With population levels due to rise to around 106 million by 2030, the longer-term stresses this places on Africa's largest city, Cairo, are already evident. In Morocco, less than 50 percent of the population survives by subsistence farming. In Algeria, domestic industrial and agricultural productions still languish from underinvestment. The majority of North Africa's population is still employed, or underemployed, in the traditional economy, namely subsistence farming, large-scale and uncompetitive state industries, and overstuffed public sectors and at the lower-end, poverty remains endemic, especially in rural areas (Spencer, 2008, p 4). In addition, according to a household survey of 2004-2005, 40 percent of Egyptians (28 million people) live in poverty, and 19.6 percent (13.6 million people) live in absolute poverty, unable to satisfy their basic needs.

Since early 2008 North African region has witnessed riots and demonstrations over the rising cost of bread, where domestic wheat production barely meets 50 percent of local needs (Spencer, 2008, p4). The region is very different from what it was thirty years ago. Autocratic governance has gone or is in retreat but so have many of the hopes of rapid and positive economic change. Such as the challenge of providing employment to millions of jobless youth, who now tuned into the Internet and social media to influence the course of public policies (Joffé, 2014, p23).

Since after the fall of the long-serving autocratic leaders in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in 2011, regional security has since taken a serious turn for the worse. Not only has the region seen the outbreak of civil war in Libya, a military coup and emerging insurgency in Egypt, but the problem of terrorism has also worsened to unprecedented heights with the regional expansion of the Islamic State (De Albuquerque, 2015, p1). From diplomatic angle, there is unresolved status of the Western Sahara which Morocco claims as its territory (because it controls more than 80 percent of it) but which is also contested by the Polisario independence movement, which is backed by Algeria. The territory's juridical status remains unresolved, the only such ex-colony anywhere in the world. While there has not been any fighting for decades, negotiations remain deadlocked (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011).

5. THE TREND OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS' PROLIFERATION IN NORTH AFRICA

Since the political upheaval of the Arab Spring in January 2011, North Africa has experienced events which resulted in the change of leadership in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. Subsequently, these events have plunged these countries into a period of great security risk and uncertainty. Violence has become a growing fact of life as their security systems have been seriously weakened. Terrorism remains a major threat as effective territorial control proves difficult in the region. Certain local strongmen, who mix contraband, kidnapping, and terrorism, have considerable capacity to outfox the security forces of nearly every country in the region. The risk of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb once again achieving its goal of taking over a state or a state sized area and creating a haven that attracted so many recruits and been so well funded have gotten more ground in the region (Ghilès, 2014, p90). These resulted in escalation of armed violence that has worsened the security situation of the region and its inhabitants into the state of vulnerability and uncertainty. These intensify the demand for small arms and light weapons which



has become the weapons of choice among various armed groups operating across the region with attending consequences.

Given the security laxity in the region, many of the extremist groups affiliated to Al Qaeda and similar armed groups have gained roots in North Africa since the 1990s and are operating with impunity particularly in Libya and other parts of the region. In view of this, General Rodriguez (cited in The New York Times, 2016) warned that there is an increasingly cohesive network of Al Qaeda affiliates and adherents as well as terrorists with allegiances to multiple groups that continues to exploit North Africa's undergoverned region and porous borders to train and conduct attacks. These groups are expanding their collaboration in recruitment, financing, training and operations, both within Africa and transregionally.

After the fall of Muammar Gaddafi regime, the Libyan military armouries were looted and also seized by non-state armed groups during raids and battles with state forces. This led to the proliferation of an estimated 1,700 armed groups, organized along regional, tribal, ethnic and ideological lines. More importantly, the flow of uncontrolled arms in and out of Libya creates security challenges for neighbouring countries and the wider Sahel region. Thus, small arms and light weapons flood Libya's illicit arms market, to the extent that SALW such as heavy machine guns, shoulder-fired recoilless weapons, rocket launchers, anti-tank guided missiles, man-portable air defence systems, grenade launchers, and different types of rifles can be bought online (Adeniyi, 2017, p27). Although, most of the proliferated uncontrolled small arms and light weapons in circulation in Africa are being trafficked and transferred within the continent, but, they are initially shipped into conflict zones from outside the continent. For example, the UN Panel of Experts on Sudan identified certain countries, including Ukraine, China, Canada, Israel, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Iran and Russia as major suppliers of large stockpiles of arms and other materiel to South Sudan (Adeniyi, 2017, p12-13).

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in North Africa has been influenced by several factors thereby making it not difficult, trafficking the weapons across their borders. Many sensitive border areas are arid and sparsely inhabited and monitoring them proves extremely difficult. Such sites include: Sahara and West Sahel regions; the operational area of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) that delineates Algeria, Morocco, and certain sub-Saharan countries; the Egyptian-Libyan border through which Libyan weapons are smuggled into Egypt; and the Sinai, linking Egypt and the rest of Africa. Maritime borders are difficult to control, too (SAS, 2015, p4). Armed conflicts compound regional matters and drive up the demand for additional weapons and thereby fuelling their proliferation; they cripple the authorities' capacities to manage state-owned weapons or to control their borders, which may result in them becoming porous. Since the rampant political upheaval across the North African region, jihadist groups from Algeria, Libya, Mali, and North Sinai have obtained weapons leaked from the Libyan army arsenals, including rockets and portable land-to-air missiles, machine guns, stockpiles of plastic explosives, and anti-aircraft systems, during the 2011 civil war and thereafter (SAS, 2015, p4).

Indeed, North Africa is flooded with small arms and light weapons and this can be illustrated comparatively between the state ownership and private ownership in the table below: -



Table 1: State-owned and privately owned firearms in North African Region.

Country	Military-owned Firearms	Law Enforcement owned Firearm	Total State-owned fire arms	Privately owned firearms	Privately owned firearms (per 100 population)
Algeria	797,500	71,400	868,900	1,900,000	7.6
Egypt	2,682,500	455,000*	3,137,500	1,900,000	3.5
Libya	535,200	22,022	557,222	900,000	15.5
Morocco	555,750	58,800	614,550	1,500,000	5.0
Tunisia	76,570	182,000	258,570	9,000	0.1
Total	4, 647520	789, 222	5,436,742	6, 209,000	

Source; Small Arms Survey Policy Brief November (2015, p 5)

As the table illustrates, it is evident that in North Africa especially in Algeria, Libya and Morocco there is high number of small arms and light weapons in the private hands than in the hands of security agencies. However, Libya is the flashpoint of the armed proliferation and of course armed violence in the region.

The Libyan war has also produced an influx of large numbers of heavy weapons: such as Kalashnikov assault rifles, rockets, mines, artillery shells, chemical weapons, SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles and SA-24 Russian-issued missiles with the capability of downing fighter planes (Ammour, 2016).

Illegal arms sales also represent a threat to law and order to the extent that the arms are used by terrorist groups and traffickers. The phenomenon has grown substantially in the Sahel-Sahara region since the crisis in Libya, which has become a tremendous open-air arsenal used by militias and terrorist groups. No less than 20 million small arms are in circulation in the Sahel, such as Kalashnikovs, but there are also heavy machine guns, rocket launchers and surface-to-air missiles (SAM).

In Libya alone, 800,000 to a million small arms are thought to be circulating freely, as well as 80,000 Kalashnikovs and in addition there are 100 militias comprising 125,000 combatants.

Many of the arms from the Libyan military arsenal have ended up in the hands of terrorist groups operating in the Maghreb and Sahel region and the Algerian press has reported numerous weapons seizures by government security forces following the discovery of terrorist arms caches, notably on the Saharan borders (Iratni, 2017, p8-9).

Given that the region is currently one of the most unstable in the world, the threat posed by illicit trafficking in arms is heightened, especially given the rise of terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida and ISIS and other violent non-state actors. The availability of arms and the violent conflicts within the region are key drivers to the flourishing of illicit trade in weapons.



5. REGIONAL DYNAMICS OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS PROLIFERATION IN NORTH AFRICA

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the North African region is affected by local political, social and cultural factors. In conflict-stricken or in unstable countries, when state law is likely to be overruled by the interests of local warlords, self-defence becomes critical (SAS, 2015, p4). Since the mid-20th century, North African countries have been prone to internal political instability. This may be attributable to their specific state-building experiences, which have frequently been characterized by authoritarian rule, inadequate development policies, corruption, and what is referred to as 'tribalism' here understood to be networks based on blood ties and common interests, which may be more or less organized, and the parallel systems of justice and conflict resolution which prevail among them (SAS, 2015, p2). Various factors combine to explain the dynamics of SALW in North Africa. These have been rooted in the cultural and security situation experienced in the region and can be itemized as follows:

a. Cultural Heritage and Tradition of the Inhabitants of the North African Countries: This factor is rooted in what can be described as 'gun mentality' firmly entrenched in North African Arab countries, where gun is seen as sign cultural prestige and self-defence and hence is displayed during celebrations (such as commemorations, births, and weddings), inter-community feuds, vigilante justice, or in 'honour crimes' committed against girls and women. Long condoned by authorities as tradition and a hallmark of local tribal identity, this mentality has been sustained by the associations linking gun ownership, prestige, and notions of male honour. It is further endorsed by two coexisting systems of criminal law: tribal justice and state judiciary (SAS, 2015, p4).

b. Governance Failure: The World Governance Indicators, April, 2014 <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#home>. Places countries in North Africa within the range of Governance effectiveness 0-100 points. Accordingly, there scores were as follow: Algeria (34 points), Egypt (25 points), Libya (05 points), Morocco (53 points) and Tunisia (56 points). This clearly indicates governance failure especially in Libya, Egypt and Algeria. Consequently, this resulted in growing dissatisfaction and restiveness among youth triggering the demands for arms leading to armed violence.

Similarly, Transparency International 2014 corruption perception index <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/>. North African countries were ranked as follows;

Algeria (94), Egypt (114), Libya (172), Morocco (91) and Tunisia (77). Given the ranking above it is evident that corruption is prevalent and indeed high in North Africa, with serious implications. Corruption hinders economic development and frustrates economic aspirations and security of millions of people across the region. One of the main catalysts of the recent events in the Arab region was widespread discontent with the level of corruption, along with other grievances, such as entrenched inequality, high unemployment, weakened rule of law and political repression. Peoples of several countries in the region expressed discontent with corruption in the public sector, and the lack of governmental response to it. Although several former leaders and high-level officials were charged with corruption and money laundering, corruption is still prevalent at all levels and in all sectors in the



region, particularly in the public sector. Corruption in this sector could be attributed to the relatively weak formal systems of checks and balances as well as limited disclosure and access to public information. (UNODC, 2016, p11-12).

c. Population Explosion: According to the United States Census Bureau, International Database, <http://www.census.gov/population/international/data/idb/informationGateway.php>.

Some North African countries' population will explode between 1950 to 2050 in a century to as follows: Egypt (21.2 million to 137.87 million), Libya (0.96 million to 8.97million) and Tunisia (3.52 million to 12.18 million). In addition, Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (2014) <http://www.cia.gov/library/publication/the-world-factbook/> categorizes North African countries according to young population as follows: Algeria 0-14yrs(28.4%) and 15-24yrs (17.4%), Egypt 0-14yrs (32.1%) and 15-24yrs (17.8%), Libya 0-14yrs (26.9%) and 15-24yrs (16.2%), Morocco 0-14yrs (26.7%) and 15-24yrs (17.7%), while, Tunisia 0-14yrs (23yrs) and 15-24yrs(16%).

Demographic development and the labour market are extremely important determinants for understanding the current economic and political situation and assessing North Africa's future prospects. The high population growth since 1990 has already been the feature of the region. And as has been mentioned by the year 2050, the population will double from 120 million to 241 million people compared with 1990 (UN estimate). The population of the five North African countries is thus growing considerably faster than the global population. The employment situation of young people is particularly precarious, with youth unemployment at a very high level of 30 %. The problem is further exacerbated by the inadequate labour participation rate (people of working age who are economically active), which stands at 5 1% on average in the five countries. Finally, the skills mismatch is another unsatisfactory characteristic of North Africa. A very large number of people with tertiary qualifications work for the government where they are overqualified for their positions and poorly paid. At the same time, however, many jobs are performed by under-qualified workers who fail to meet the job requirements, compromising businesses in their productivity and reducing their competitiveness (Advisory Council on International Affairs, 2016, p3-4). This tendency creates an ample opportunity for the Jihadist groups claiming their affiliation to al-Qaeda and its creed the establishment of an Islamic caliphate through holy war against modern states and their protagonists to have taken the advantage of social and political crises, the extremely high proportion of unemployed youth in countries with burgeoning young populations to further their causes. This is also coupled by the socio-economic and political discrimination targeting certain communities, such as the Bedouin tribes in North Sinai. For example, members of 20 Bedouin tribes about 300,000 Bedouins forming more than half of the total Sinai population were reported to have been marginalized by Egypt's uneven development and employment policies. This also provides violent extremist groups with fresh operational opportunities (SAS, 2015, p7-8).

Jihadist movements have a strong attraction for young people who are politically, socially and economically marginalised and are wrestling with their identities. The collapse of society makes it easier for these movements to recruit young people. The disintegration of social networks and the lack of jobs and prospects make young people susceptible to the messages of jihadist groups. These groups are very violent and undermine the



foundations of clan elders' power. Weak states enable these groups to make big money smuggling people, drugs and other goods, often by working with criminal networks (Advisory Council On International Affairs, 2016, p16-17). The direct result is increased desire for arms to further their mainly perpetrated through the use of armed violence with security implication for the region and the Africa in general.

d. Terrorism, Insurgency and Armed Groups: The deteriorating security situation in North Africa has created a safe haven for terrorism and insurgency to grow and gather more momentum leading to the escalation of armed violence. Militant extremist organizations, in particular the ISIS/Daesh and other violent non-State actors are gaining strength in the region. Power vacuums and unstable and turbulent environment has been created in some states, who could no longer be able to control their borders and this provides fertile grounds for transnational organized criminal and terrorist organizations, where the demands for SALW prove higher (Small Arms and Light Weapons, 2018, p7-8).

The anarchy in Libya has evolved into a full-scale civil war, with two main factions, both referring to themselves as the government, fighting for control of the country. The faction based in Misrata and with a provisional government in Tripoli comprises Islamists and local militias, whereas the faction based in the east and led by General Khalifa Hiftir comprises anti-Islamists. In addition, another group has now emerged in the Libyan civil war, namely the Islamic State (IS), affiliates of which have expanded their territory in the country, targeting security forces and civilians. IS appears to be establishing branches across North Africa, with local groups throughout the region, but especially in Egypt and Libya, pledging fealty and their willingness to employ deadly violence (De Albuquerque, 2015).

Similarly, Algeria is the home of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, it was born out of the Algerian civil war in the 1990's and since then it perpetrated series of coordinated attacks in Algiers particularly in 2007. The circulation of jihadists between Algeria and Southern Libya nevertheless continues to complicate efforts to contain North African terrorism (Chivvis, 2017, p2). Soon after the fall of Qaddafi's regime, jihadist groups capitalized on the breakdown of Libya's security apparatus to establish safe havens and training camps in southern Libya. The Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN), which is connected to al-Qaeda. MJN has operated camps in Libya that include training for suicide missions, and has been able to smuggle fighters into other countries through al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's established networks (Gartenstein-Ross et'al, 2015).

Terrorism, cross-border crime and large-scale migration are not new in Northern Africa, but the current period of instability has led to them increasing sharply in scale and severity. The security situation in the various countries is complex and conflicts are therefore increasingly diffuse in nature. There are of course considerable differences between the regions, but they share a number of common features. Armed conflict not only arises from political disagreement, but is also driven by criminal motives and agitation by extremist ideological movements and violent militias. The number of rebel movements, militias and terrorist organisations is growing (Advisory Council On International Affairs, 2016, p16).



Terrorism is currently perceived as the biggest threat to national security to countries both inside and outside the region. Power vacuums in some States in the region, porous borders and an expansion of under-governed territories due to the political changes have created fertile grounds for extremist organizations and other violent non-State actors. These include ISIL/Daesh, al-Qaeda, Ansar al-Sharia or Jabhat al- Nusra, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) an organization led by Abdelmalek Droukdel, and the “Those Who Sign in Blood” battalion led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, which are the principal armed threats within the borders of southern Algeria as well as Jund Al Khalifa (soldiers of the Caliphate) which claims allegiance to the aforementioned terrorist organization (Iratni, 2017). Other jihadists who have reportedly found shelter in Libya include Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia leader Abu Iyadh al-Tunisi and al-Murabitun leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Sometimes these groups use the ungoverned space in southern and western Libya as a staging ground for attacks outside Libya’s borders. For example, jihadist groups relied on Libyan territory to mount their counteroffensive in Mali and elsewhere in the Sahel against French and African forces (Gartenstein-Ross et’al, 2015).

These groups were further reinforced after the dismantling of terrorist cells in Europe and the return of the Jihadists from Iraq and Afghanistan. They have benefited from an influx of young recruits from countries in the Sahel and the Sub-Saharan region due to unemployment, drought, social dislocation, poor governance, social injustice, and religious indoctrination and financial support provided by smuggling rings and traffickers in drugs, arms and human beings (Iratni, 2017, p16-17).

e. Prolong Authoritarian Rule and Democracy deficits: Tunisia is the only country that has successfully managed to transition from autocracy following the Arab Spring, making it the region’s only democracy. Algeria started on the path of political liberalization before its neighbours, following a series of nationwide riots provoked by shortages of basic goods and a sharp rise in prices in 1988. The democratic experiment of the first multiparty elections held from 1990 to early 1991 was short-lived when the spectre of an elected government led by the main Islamist opposition movement, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), precipitated the intervention of the Algerian army. The remainder of the 1990s was beset with violence, as Algeria’s security forces engaged in an underground battle with armed Islamist militias which came to replace the outlawed FIS. Over ten years, between 100,000 and 200,000 Algerians died in the violence, many of whom have yet to be accounted for (Spencer, 2008, p5).

In contrast, Egypt’s Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, the president elected in the country’s first free parliamentary election since the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak, was himself ousted in a military coup d’état backed by popular protests in 2013.

The coup leader, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, was subsequently elected president following an election widely considered by international observers to be flawed. The new government’s heavy-handed repression of political dissident suggests the country has, alas, returned to its autocratic ways. The violent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization considered a terrorist group by the government, has caused young leaders within this traditionally non-violent national branch of the Islamic movement to take up arms against the government (De Albuquerque, 2015).



Moreover, as seen most notably in Libya, rival regional and external powers have sought to expand their political influence and control by backing local non-state and hybrid actors. ISIS militants have exploited the demise of state structures to spread to Libya, Egypt, the Maghreb and the Gulf states and directly impact their affiliates in North Africa (Makdisi, et'al 2017, p8). Thus, the principal factors that pave way for armed conflict escalation in North Africa are authoritarian regime structures and the long-term economic and bureaucratic underperformance come to the fore, offering favourable ground for security threats. This is coupled by constant poverty leading to the establishment of armed Islamist groups in the region.

f. Drug Trafficking: North African region has become busier as a trade route for drug barons keen to link South American coca terraces to European customers. The growing drugs trade is putting increasing pressure on governments in the region. Algeria seized 73 tons of cannabis in 2012 and then 50 tons in the first half of 2013. That is partly the result of a crackdown by authorities, but drug networks have proliferated throughout the country and traders have refined their methods thanks to closer collaboration with international criminals (Economist cited in Makdisi et'al 2017, p15).

Illicit cultivation of cannabis continues in most North African countries. A significant increase in heroin seizures was recorded in several countries in the region over the past years. In 2014, for example, heroin seizures in Egypt almost tripled compared to the year before. Furthermore, cocaine seizures indicate transit from the North African region to West Africa, which points to a shift in trafficking routes as North Africa used to function as transit for cocaine going through West Africa en route from South America to Europe. The abuse of Tramadol, a synthetic opioid not under international control or regulation, has become an increasingly alarming problem in a number of states in the region over the past years.

In view of this, Iratni (2017, p10) noted that most of the drug trafficking affecting Algeria comes from Morocco, which is considered the biggest exporter of soft drugs. In addition, according to the annual report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in June 2016, 157 tonnes of cannabis, or 12.37% of the total captured in the world, were seized by Algerian security forces in 2012, and 173 tonnes of cannabis and more than one million psychotropic drugs were seized in the first eleven months of 2014. While Algeria is still not a consumer of hard drugs, it remains that it is a hub for cocaine transiting from Latin America to the Gulf of Guinea on its way to the markets of Europe.

In addition, available information suggests that drug consumption has been increasing in North African region since 2012. Egypt records the highest demand for cannabis. and Algeria indicates an increase in the use of cocaine, cannabis, tranquilizers and sedatives, while Morocco shows an increase in the consumption of cocaine and opiates. Also, Tramadol (a prescription opioid) raises major concerns in North African countries, notably Egypt and Libya. In addition, NPS, such as the synthetic cannabinoid known as 'Voodoo' or 'Spice' on the market, and psychoactive medication and medications used for opioid substitution therapy, such as Subutex, are reportedly increasing in North African countries (Iratni, 2017). The overall implications of these drugs are that they trigger the demand of arms in order to maintain the deal or as substances that stimulate and influence armed violence in the region.



g. Smuggling: When a state loses control, organized crime groups typically engage increasingly in activities tied to arms trafficking and armed violence. For example, the implosion of the Libyan state, arms smuggling has offered criminal networks lucrative opportunities (SAS, 2015, p10). The Algerian-Moroccan border has been closed for years but at least \$3 billion worth of petroleum products, hashish, and other goods are traded illegally between the two countries. Traditional smuggling rings have been prised open by newcomers exploiting the opportunities of the Arab awakening, thereby allowing violence to increase. Smuggling has long been a traditional means for poor border populations to earn a meagre living. Smuggled goods flooding Tunisia pose a serious threat to the viability of well-established companies. Tunisia is estimated to lose half its tax take as a result, Libya even more. No state is immune (Ghilès, 2014, p 87-88). These intensify the smuggling of arms and light weapons across the North African region. For example, on Libya's eastern borders, Egyptian armed forces are said to have successfully thwarted the trafficking of dozens of machine guns (SAS, 2015, p13). However, despite the tight security the smuggling ring find their ways to supply Small arms and light weapons to various armed groups in the North African region with attendant security consequences.

6. THE SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROLIFERATION OF SALW IN NORTH AFRICA

North African region has since the Arab uprisal been in turmoil resulting in interminable suffering and untold damage to human lives and physical infrastructure. Fifteen million people have fled their homes, many to fragile or economically strapped countries such as Libya and Tunisia, giving rise to serious refugee crisis (World Bank, 2018).

Small arms and light weapons are responsible for the majority of battle-related conflict deaths. Large numbers of men, women, older people and children die indirectly from the effects of armed conflict on the economy, ruined health and security infrastructures, disease and famine. In addition, many more people are made refugees or are internally displaced, injured or abused. Arms fuel conflict. Conflict fuels instability and poverty. 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 (Small Arms and Light Weapons, 2018, p4).

In Libya the armed violence predominantly takes place in the urban centre around major cities such as Benghazi, Tripoli, Misrata, Sirte, Sabha and Derna. Consequently, there is a serious humanitarian crisis all across the country as of 2016 there were estimated 2.44 million people in dire need, 450,000 Internally displaced persons (IDP's) and more than 250,000 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (Cordesman and Burke, 2016, p28). Hence, the situation takes a more severe form in countries such as Libya.

Similarly, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2016) revealed that there are about 400,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Libya, who generally have sought shelter in other parts of Libya or crossed into Tunisia. The possibility remains that Libyan IDPs migrate to Europe in greater numbers, posing an additional challenge for European countries. In addition, the trend resulted in gross human abuses and violations against the migrants in forms of detention in Libya Camps control by various armed groups operating



in the area as well as rape, starvations, and murder. The gravity of the migrant crisis is illustrated by the fact that in 2016, over 5,000 individuals, including women, children, and elderly, died on numerous small vessels from suffocating in overloaded holds, as well as from drowning in capsized boats. Despite this very high human cost, during the same year, a total of 181,436 successfully arrived in Italy via this Mediterranean route. Nevertheless, as of early 2017, the EU has been considering a proposal that advocates greater funding for programs returning migrants from Libya to their countries of origin (Alexander, 2017, p10). In the wrong hands, particularly in the region in serious security risk like North Africa small arms and light weapons can be tools of oppression, used to commit violations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL); they can exacerbate situations of national and regional instability and armed conflict; and they can hinder post-conflict reconstruction. Guns and explosives are used to commit a range of human rights violations, from intentional killings to torture, rape, kidnapping and hostage-taking, to name a few. They are also instrumental in creating conditions that lead to violations of other human rights, such as rights to education, healthcare development and participation in government (Frey, 2003, p3).

According to 2016 data from the Global Slavery Index, (cited in Makdisi et'al 2017, p 15) There are nearly 3 million enslaved people in the region. In addition to instances where forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation are observed, the victims are also to be found among forced recruits in state and non-state armed groups, a number which has risen notably following the escalation of conflicts in the region.

According to (SAS, 2015:5) between 2004 and 2009, the MENA region ranked 9th and 10th out of 19 regions worldwide, in terms of the average rate of (conflict and non-conflict related) violent deaths. The events of the Arab Spring in 2011 have worsened the overall situation in the region. In Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, the post-revolutionary period has been marked by disorganization of the state, political factionalism, armed violence, and the rise of radical Islamism. In Algerian political discourse, there is a focus on terrorism, perceived as the most dangerous threat in the light of the painful experience that followed the army insurgency that took place after the cancellation of the legislative elections of January 1991 that the Islamic Front was poised to win. This violent episode lasted more than a decade, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths, more than 7,000 disappearances and more than \$20 billion in material damage which heightened the severe economic crisis suffered by the country due to the drastic drop in the price of oil, a vital resource for the national economy (Iratni, 2017, p6-7).

In North Africa, the rampant spread of Libyan weapons released during the demise of the Qaddafi government, together with deteriorating living conditions, contribute to a rise in gun crime, to such an extent that between 2011 and 2013, gun crime escalated by 250 per cent in Egypt (SAS, 2015, p5).

In line with increased gun crime and violence, on February 15, 2015, a Libyan IS affiliate released a disgusting video that shows IS militants marching a group of twenty-one prisoners whose only crime was being Coptic Christians, and simultaneously they were all beheaded. In another incidence, in Tripoli on January 27, the same group struck the country's most prominent hotel, the Corinthia Hotel, killing nine. They also targeted the Algerian



and Iranian embassies in Tripoli; and claimed credit for a suicide attack in the Dignity-controlled town of Qubba that killed at least forty people (Iratni, 2017, p15-16).

The trend of terrorism is equally the same in Egypt as in other North African countries, for instance, in 1997, Gama'a al-Islamiyya slaughtered 62 people mainly foreign tourists at the Temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor. The first significant post-9/11 terrorist incident in the Sinai Peninsula occurred in October 2004, when a series of car bomb blasts struck Sinai resorts, killing 34 people, including 13 Israeli tourists. The Abdullah Azzam Brigades (AAB) claimed responsibility. There were other significant attacks as well, including a July 2005 incident in which car bombs detonated in Sharm El-Sheikh, a major Sinai tourist area, killing at least 88 people and wounding over 110. AAB claimed credit for this attack as well. Similarly, in October 2013 there were cases of suicide bombing targeting the South Sinai Security Directorate in al-Tor and also the January 2014 downing of an Egyptian military helicopter. Continuously, these armed groups have been targeting government officials, including the attempted assassination of Egypt's interior minister in September 2013. Consequently, Egypt's economy has felt the impact, because Tourism, which remains one of the major drivers of Egypt's economic growth, has declined resulting from these armed violence (Gartenstein-Ross et al, 2015, p20).

There is a wide spread of campaign of dangerous ideology and by the various terrorist groups especially IS, which has been explicitly attempting to lure a wide variety of al-Qaeda affiliates to leave al-Qaeda's orbit, and instead take an oath of bayat (loyalty) to IS. This strategy paid off in March 2015, when the Nigerian jihadist group Boko Haram announced that it had decided to pledge bayat to IS (Iratni, 2017, p15-16).

In September 2014, an armed group known as Jund al-Khalifa (Soldiers of the Caliphate) released a video of the beheading of a French hiker whom it had kidnapped in Algeria's Djurdjura National Park. In addition, Morocco's deadliest encounter with terrorism came in May 2003, when a dozen suicide bombers conducted synchronized attacks against soft targets in Casablanca, including a hotel, a club, and a Jewish community centre. These attacks killed 33 civilians and wounded more than a hundred (Gartenstein-Ross et al, 2015, p30-33).

In general armed groups in North Africa resort to a wide-range of attacks, including kidnappings, hijackings, arson, shootings, bombings, shellings, assaults, assassinations, and summary executions. The attacks targeted military camps, checkpoints, ammunition depots, oil fields and facilities, and hospitals. These incidents killed and maimed a cross-section of Libyan society, such as politicians, police, military personnel, clergymen, educators, journalists, and other civilians. Another target of choice was foreigners residing, working, or visiting in Libya. Nationals from Canada, Egypt, Eritrea, Italy, the Netherlands, the Sudan and Turkey were among the victims. In Tunisia, in particular, AQIM and Daesh and its affiliates are responsible for numerous security challenges in the country and beyond. During 2016, attackers targeted police, military servicemen, politicians, civilians, and visiting foreigners (Alexander, 2017:11). In 2003, the Algeria-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which has openly gained al-Qaida support, kidnapped thirty-two German tourists in the Sahara for an alleged ransom of \$5 million, an action an apparently related group repeated with the kidnap of two Austrian tourists in early 2008, who were released in October 2008 with apparently no ransom paid (Spencer, 2008, p9).



In North Africa, the eruption of civil conflict and degradation of security in Libya have fostered a fertile environment for jihadist groups to take a more hands-on approach by directly planning and orchestrating operations, and infiltrating militants into Europe to conduct attacks in southern European cities and target Mediterranean shipping routes. Such as the role al-Qaeda played in the attack that struck London on July 7, 2005. Similarly, Jihadist groups also try to carry out attacks against European interests in North Africa. The January 2013 attack on the Tigantourine oil facility, located near the southeastern Algerian town of In Amenas, provides a profile of potential attacks against Western facilities and interests. In that attack, a group of around 30 al-Murabitun militants, operating under the command of Mokhtar Belmokhtar, seized control of the oil facility which was jointly operated by Algerian state oil company Sonatrach, British company BP, and Norwegian company Statoil and took dozens of non-Algerian oil workers hostage. The Algerian military launched an offensive and eventually retook the facility, but 37 foreigners died during the multi-day ordeal, including four hostages whom militants executed as the Algerian military began its assault (Gartenstein-Ross, et al, 2015).

Another, worrisome humanitarian disaster bedeviling North Africa is the emergence of modern slavery and slave trade, especially in Libya. Al Jazeera (2018) and BBC World Online (2018) reported that hundreds of people are being auctioned in modern day slave markets in Libya for as little as \$300 to \$400.

The world's most vulnerable, fleeing war and poverty back home are being abused and auctioned off as slaves. Libya is the main transit hub for refugees and migrants attempting to reach southern Europe by sea. They are coming from countries like Nigeria, Eritrea, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Senegal, Sudan and Somalia. The power vacuum in Libya after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi has made human trafficking and people smuggling a booming trade.

The North Africa region is characterised as an area of origin, transit and final destination for mixed migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa, West Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, with some countries of these regions affected by on-going instability and conflict. It represents one of the largest destination regions for foreign labour and is a region of origin for migrants, albeit to a lesser extent. The instability still affecting some parts of the region, in particular Libya, continues to generate irregular movements to Europe, as well as an increase in the number of persons seeking international protection (EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa-en11/05/2018).

Trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling are of concern to all countries in Africa, either as countries of origin, transit or destination. The volatile political turmoil in particular the conflicts in Libya has generated flows of refugees and population displacements not witnessed since the end of World War II.

More than 53 per cent of the world's refugees are in the Arab region, which hosts only 5 per cent of the global population. In 2015 alone, 1,014,836 asylum seekers and irregular migrants arrived in Europe by sea, while 3,772 are believed to have perished at sea.¹⁵ Migrants from the Horn of Africa move northwards through North African countries to reach Europe.



Finally, for over a decade, North African jihadists have relied on the kidnapping of Europeans as a means of generating revenue through ransoms. In 2013 alone, jihadists reportedly made at least \$66 million in ransom money, with almost all of it coming from European governments (Gartenstein-Ross, et al, 2015).

7. CONCLUSION

Since the popular democratic uprisings in the name of Arab Spring; the states of North Africa Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya have been struggling to contain the destabilising effects of that political upheaval. The crisis in Libya feeds this climate of regional instability through the activities of numerous transnational armed groups operating along the southern borders of Tunisia and Algeria in the Sahara Desert. The cross-border traffic of goods and small arms and weapons facilitated by these illicit networks has increased to concerning levels. Also these states witness the infiltration of jihadi sub-groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaida among others, working independent of one another and in some cases in collaborative effort thereby weakening national security apparatus and their capacity to respond effectively to the rising waves of armed violence. This reinforces fears of increased regional instability and insecurity in North Africa. In view of this, the crises in North Africa resulting from the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their misuse in perpetrating violence are enormous hence the need for collective actions through regional measure and continental regimes to control the menace of the proliferation of these arms, in order to prevent continuous spread of these weapons to other part of Africa continent where tension has already escalated such as central Africa, East Africa and West African region. In doing this there should be a regional initiative which involves collective efforts aims at containing the growing strength and influence of armed groups in the region. This should also go along way with deradicalization of the youth from the harmful ideas resulting from the prolong brainwashing of the insurgents and terrorists' campaigns. In addition, sound economic recovery and social welfare initiative aiming at social welfares, economic, youth empowerments, job creations should be directly adopted and this should relates to the effort targeting poverty reductions especially among the most vulnerable segments of the population in the region. The efforts should also be geared toward demobilization and reintegration of the armed groups through granting amnesty to the repenting insurgents and terrorists. Lastly, there should be concerted efforts by the members of international community especially through United Nations to multilaterally combat human trafficking and slave trade in North Africa because this clearly breaches the humanitarian international law.

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