

CROSS-BORDER TRANSPORTATION AND REGIONAL INSTABILITY IN NORTHERN CAMEROON: THE ARCHEOLOGY OF ILLICIT SMALL ARMS DISTRIBUTION (1990-2000)

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Abstract: *The objective of this article is to analyze how the mobility of men and goods in North Cameroon is accompanied by crime and the illicit circulation of arms and ammunition. This violence is related first to the defective road system, then to the jeepers responsible for accidents and kidnappings, which are orchestrated by the armed hordes that accentuate insecurity, grand banditry, crime, and the deterioration of the economic fabric and expose the region's herders and farmers. To this end, the diachronic method is favored in this analysis. It is based on an exploitation of both primary (archives) and secondary sources (theses, dissertations, articles, newspapers, electronic documents) to better highlight the criminalization of the population in this part of Cameroon between 1990 and 2000. It is clear that the decade of 1990 is marked by a resurgence of the economic crisis, which is responsible for the birth of hordes, which take hostage transporters, passengers and their goods. The smuggling and illegal circulation of arms and ammunition (automatic pistols, MAS-36, Kalashnikov AK-47, machine guns, homemade rifles) in the localities of Zigue-Zagué, Kousséri, Laindé, Meiganga, Ndjaména, to name but a few. To this end, it is urgent that the political authorities, the forces of law and order of Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic take measures for de-escalation, disarmament, reform of the security sector and especially good governance would be possible ways out of violence and crime.*

Keywords: *Cameroon, Lake Chad, small arms, ammunition, cross-border transport.*

1. Introduction

The mobility of people and goods is always accompanied by risks. These risks may relate to the state of the road infrastructure, as is the case in the northern part of Cameroon. Hostage-taking with ransom demands by armed gangs (Zarguinass, Coupeurs de route) (Fogué Tédom, 2007). This is a cross-border crime (Fogué Tédom, 2010) that goes from Lake Chad to the borders of the East Cameroon region, with an illicit circulation of arms and diamonds, sometimes with the complicity of political leaders (Ntuda Ebodé, 2011). This paper aims to analyze the causal factors of instability, even insecurity in northern Cameroon through transportation. Better yet, what are the different actors responsible for the illicit dissemination of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the Logone et Chari, Zigue-Zagué, Kousséri and Meiganga roads? There is a relationship between the mobility of people and goods and insecurity in North Cameroon (Far North-Adamaoua-North) to the borders of the Chadian basin. The smuggling and counterfeiting of SALW is a reality experienced by passengers and users on a daily basis. This is what justifies the convocation of the theory of collective security or "security complex" by Barry Buzan and Mvié Méka (Messe Mbega, 2015). According to Messe Mbega: collective security "Security complex" apprehended at the regional level is the security of groups of states whose primary security concerns bind them to each other in such a way that the security of none of them can really be separated from that of the others. This policy takes the form of an effective fight against threats common to the regions where the state cannot eradicate them alone. This analysis situates the problem of the management of crisis zones, of the high mobility of armed hordes that undermine insecurity and accentuate cross-border crime. It is a question of examining how regional services in North Cameroon accentuate transnational crime. Second, to analyze and evaluate the entrepreneurs of violence in the region, in the non-licit dissemination of SALW. Finally, the consequences of these cycles of

violence and some strategies for escaping the "long night" of insecurity. It is important to note that many previous scientific works have addressed this issue (Adamou Machou Paré, 2001; Saïbou Issa, 2000; Mouctar Bah, 1985). This historical analysis is intended to be complementary, or even to provide another reading grid, because in science one is the pioneer.

2. Cross-border trafficking as a vehicle of violence: the case of clandestine transport

Several factors are responsible for illicit transport as a violation of the sovereignty of the State of Cameroon in general and of North Cameroon in particular. Among others, we should mention: the disloyalty of the State (A. Fogué Tédóm, 2016), and the erection of grey zones, the result of the lack of control by the Forces de Maintien de l'Ordre (FMO).

2.1 The breakdown of the state: a breeding ground for transnational crime in northern Cameroon

Transnational crime is accompanied by a number of causal factors such as the disintegration of the central state vis-à-vis regions with eccentric positions (Saïbou Issa, 2010). This is the case of North Cameroon, which has long been subject to a plethora of crises. This is why the Cameroonian academic is partly responsible because for a long time left the Far North through the weakness of public investment, the industrial fabric of health infrastructure and the road network (Saïbou Issa, 2006). The State, in its regalian missions, is the guarantor of citizens' security. However, because of the economic crisis of the 1990s, the State of Cameroon had to abandon some territorial entities to their sad fate (A. Zozime Tamekamta, 2022), which was a mistake for its own security and even the isolation of some neighboring states such as Chad.

Saïbou Issa notes that several factors are responsible for insecurity and organised crime in the northern part of the country. The author places the facts at the end of the 1980s, an abundant labor force caused by the idle, a proliferation of ex-combatants or active and important logistics (Saïbou Issa, 2006A. Fogué Tédóm, 2007). The economic crisis is not the only cause of this transnational instability. It is also necessary to mention the ethnic alliances on both sides of the Logone et Chari border (Saïbou Issa, 2010).

It is therefore clear that the phenomenon of road cutters is fueled and caused by the multiplication of political and military crises, the porous borders that have plagued CAR and Chad for decades, and the idleness of youth, all of which are factors that revive criminality and accentuate the impoverishment of the population (Alain Fogué Tédóm, 2007). The economic crisis, followed by the political turmoil of the 1990s, have had harmful effects on the violation of the sovereignty of Cameroon. Insofar as there has been a proliferation of armed hordes (R. Guivanda 2010) in search of survival with weapons in hand (David Wenaï, 2021). It is important, however, that the central state take a set of measures to address these failures.

The disintegration of Cameroon's authority and the de-statization of the country are the seeds of social and economic destructuring in the localities of Zigue-Zagué, Mora du Logone et Chari and have opened the way to transnational crime (J.V. Ntuda Ebodé, 2007). This situation dates back to the historical period from 1980 to 1990: following the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) and the economic crisis which had considerable consequences on African states and Cameroon in particular. Crime will impose itself to the detriment of the security of citizens. Cross-border transportation will take a severe body. From then on, border porosity was exploited by the hordes to impose a crime economy.

2.2. Cross-border porosity: or the non-control of borders

Border porosity becomes a means of enabling the existence of any traffic. Ntuda Ebode points out that the transnational expansion of organized crime was initially based on the

phenomenon of diasporas, border porosity, and the circulation of capital (Joseph Vincent Ntuda Ebodé, 2010). The border became a free pass, a symbol of the illicit circulation of armed gangs in the Chadian basin. This is due to the weakness of the military and police authorities during entry and exit operations.

This is why the Cameroonian academic Saïbou Issa specifies that, on the whole, armed gangs use the border at three levels: in the sanctuary of their activities, then insularization and transhumance (Saïbou Issa, 2010). The porosity of the border becomes a strategy that increases insecurity and exposes transporters and passengers to the risk of being dispossessed of their goods. This poses the problem of control and surveillance of grey zones by States and their territorial divisions. Gaïd Minassian defines a grey zone as a lawless area, abandoned to the hordes, a pocket, a neighborhood, which is impenetrable by state institutions where the inhabitants are held to ransom (Gaïd Minassian, 2011). However, this situation is not limited to African states. Grey zones are a global reality: France during the attacks on the Stade de France in 2011, proves it sufficiently. The attacks on the New York Stock Exchange on September 11, 2009 by armed men situates the difficult and uncontrollable character of gray areas (Gaïd Minassian, 2011). Nevertheless, these spaces show the complexity of states to have an effective control of the movement of people and their goods. North Cameroon, on the border with Chad and the CAR, fits this sad picture.

Border porosity remains a fundamental problem for African states in general and those of the Sudano-Sahelian strip, which is plagued by terrorism (Ngarleji Yerongar, 2010). This has been an effective observation since 2006 in CAR, a fragile state (bordering Cameroon) in post-conflict is open with a view to pacifying the country and initiating its development. In addition, there is the porous border, the proliferation and illicit circulation of light weapons and ammunition (UNDP, 1991). This situation shows that the political and security instability in the northern part of Cameroon is partly due to the political instability of neighboring countries (Chad-RCA) (Ngarleji Yerongar, 2010), which are experiencing a succession of security crises. According to Guibaï Gaïtama, the weakening of the State from the periphery exposes populations who are afraid, riven by division and religious quarrels, because of the prevailing insecurity, or terrorists can find refuge (Guibaï Gaitama, 2022). This border porosity is therefore the pebble in the shoe of the state of Cameroon and its neighboring countries. It has immeasurable consequences for peace and security. It (porosity) creates new chrysogenic zones in this region. This is the case of the illicit circulation of SALW through various routes.

3. Resurgence of grey zones in North Cameroon: factors in the illicit circulation of small arms

Transnational insecurity is a reflection of several factors. These include smuggling, the routes used to smuggle goods, the different actors and their knowledge of geopolitics, but not forgetting the illicit circulation of SALW (Saïbou Issa, 2010, 2007).

3.1 Routes, actors and strategies for circumventing the state order

Several routes are criminogenic in Cameroon in general and in North Cameroon in particular. This is also the case for the actors who accentuate this transnational crime. Saïbou Issa, a Cameroonian academic, states that multi-ethnic armed gangs in their modes of action of trans-border banditry use techniques and weapons of war that suggest the military expertise of its perpetrators (Saïbou Issa, 2010). It is sometimes hours that break out in 1992 between Arab Shuwa and Kotoko (Saïbou Issa, 2010), by example and which poses the problem of ethnic clashes of community alliances, to attack and have murders with weapons. It is clear that several actors are responsible for cross-border crime in the northern part (Cameroon-Chad or Cameroon-Nigeria).

In the chapter on different criminogenic routes, it is important to note that there have been record attacks by coupeurs de route, Chadian-Central African rebel groups in the Ngaouhi district, near Djohong, followed by a flight of herders after a gendarme was killed (D. Ousman, 2005). These are scenes that must be denounced with the utmost energy to prevent them from happening again.

But then this insecurity is still experienced on the routes of the Far North and Adamaoua regions, with hostage taking, raids (David Wenaï, 2011). In the department of Mayo-Sava (Far North), countries without are attacked, bush travelers, vehicles stopped, motorcycles snatched in the localities of Vamé (Mora) - Amchidé-Banki-Bonderi-Doublé-Wildir-Tolkomari (Ernest Djonga, 2011). These populations have been abandoned to their sad fate, which raises the question of the protection of property and persons by the FMO. There has also been a weakening or even a loss of state authority in this part of the country. Those involved in cross-border crime operate with impunity, if they do not always benefit from the complicity of the gendarmes and police.

Also in the region, in the localities of Wilala, Blamédéri, Mangavé and Gouzou, road cutters raid the livestock of herders, seriously injure drivers and snatch two motorcyclists (Christian Tabouli, 2011). This insecurity is also experienced at the border between Gambaru in Nigeria and Fotokol in Cameroon, where police officers intercepted two Kalashnikovs coming from Chad and from Maiduguri in Nigeria. These traffickers, use Cameroonian territory as a rear base for the transit or routing of weapons (A. Alifa, 2012). The border becomes a place of contact and exchange of criminal activities. The border becomes a place of contact and exchange of criminal activities. The securing of grey zones is therefore a categorical imperative. This is why Elong Abanda specifies that one cannot place each individual under police surveillance. He calls for everyone's responsibility in the face of the poaching that is rampant in these areas of lawlessness and security (Elong Abanda, 2022). The population and users of the public highway are abandoned to razzias, the FMO are absent, and when they are present, they shine by acts of corruption (Bernard Ananfack, 2022).

In the Adamaoua region, Professor Saïbou Issa informs us that the Djohong and Ngaouhi areas have lost their livestock due to banditry. Thus, along the road leading from Meiganga to Garoua-Boulai between Adamaoua and the East, spontaneous villages have been established by Fulani herders, particularly Mbororo (Saïbou Issa, 2010). From pure cross-border criminality, there is reason to wonder about the frequency of regular attacks by road cutters (Zarguin) against herders. This cycle of violence against these peaceful, defenseless Fulani must be denounced. The economy of these territorial entities suffers.

These criminogenic areas (Zigue-Zagué, Mora, Kousséri-Meiganga-Figuil) are experiencing chronic instability, which must be contained. However, the unlawful circulation of SALW and ammunition has become a gaping wound that accentuates this political poaching. There is then a close relationship with the actors, the routes, the state bypass strategies and the anarchic mobility of SALW in the northern regions of Cameroon on the one hand and the Lake Chad basin on the other.

3.2. Northern Cameroon: a breeding ground for the illegal spread of small arms stocks and ammunition

Machou Paré defines grey zones as a gateway where international relations abound, a factor in the rapid proliferation and dissemination of SALW since the end of the Cold War (Machou Paré, 2001). Cross-border crime benefits from the high mobility of armed gangs, which make use of sophisticated war machines. This is the case of the coupeurs de route who rely on rural banditry, making theft a profession, a state raid in the Lake Chad Basin thanks to a good command of the handling of weapons of war (Saïbou Issa, 2010).

In her book, the French historian Débos shows that in Chad, weapons have become a profession, a tool of contestation and political intervention. She deduces that militiamen live off their weapons for years without firing a shot, based on a survey conducted in Chad between 2004 and 2010 (Saïbou Issa, 2010). The point for her is to understand the mechanisms linked to the possession and handling of weapons, even in the midst of demobilization. A regime of military predation, which totally pressures the poor civilian population. These men in arms parade between Sudan and Libya and between France, alternating between governments and the maquis (Marielle Débos, 2010). The fundamental criticism is that linked to the apology of war crimes by bandits in Chad, to the roles played by women in this historicization of conflicts and the profession of arms in Chad. She does not point out the impunity of these gangs, the recruitment of child soldiers, the trafficking of arms, drugs and precious stones (Marielle Débos, 2010).

Community confrontations between Arabs and Kotoko with SALW, bought at reduced prices, or even picked up on the banks of the Logone River in 1990 when Hissène Habré and his men left Ndjamena when the MPS took power. These community clashes through sophisticated weapons, cross-border solidarity, and the use of militias in illegal possession of weapons raise some astonishment (Saïbou Issa, 2012). Weapons caches are the result of lax control operations or sweeps of administrative border units in Chad. The second reading lays bare the lack of respect for the regulations on the carrying of arms in this part of the country and in Lake Chad in general.

Ngarlely Yorongar believes that state terrorism in Chad is sponsored by the pundits of the Chadian state, through the assassination of politicians and the abduction of deputies. These road cutters are supplied with arms and ammunition by senior officers who run military armories, not to mention sub-prefects arrested for theft (Ngarlely Yorongar, 2010). While Domo notes that lawless road blockers in Chad operate in a context of generalized insecurity, the possession of a symbol of violence has become child's play, so it is not surprising to see this equipment in the hands of everyone. They act in the middle of the road, force passengers to stop their vehicles on the side, and relieve passengers of their belongings (Joseph Domo, 2013). The result of a state with weak security structures subscribed to ethnic, religious cleavages and preoccupied with issues of survival and not defense and security of the people (J. Domo, 2013). To this end, rampant corruption becomes the rule, military violence the norm, moral integrity and the ethics of the profession of arms trampled underfoot.

Table 1: Seizure of weapons following clashes between Kotoko and Arabe Shuwa (1994)

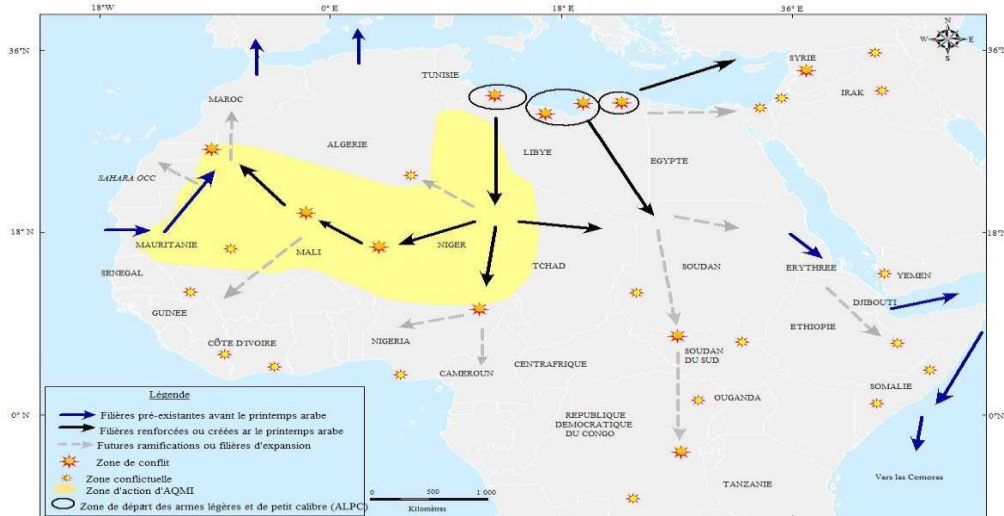
Order number	Nature of the weapons
1	Quantities of shotguns
2	7 armes (AK-47, PM, FAL, M14....)

Data compiled by Saïbou, Ethnicity, p.113.

An inter-ethnic confrontation that requires the use of SALW calls into question the sources of fraudulent endowments of these light weapons held by these white-collar criminals. The ease of access to weapons by herders on the shores of Lake Chad has something in common with the candid acceptance of the evidence of the illegal circulation of weapons that results in their recovery after conflicts (Saïbou Issa, 2012). But then, Ngarlely Yorongar believes that state terrorism in Chad is sponsored by the pundits of the Chadian state power, through the assassination of politicians and the abduction of deputies. These road cutters are supplied with arms and ammunition by senior officers who run military armories, not to mention sub-prefects arrested for theft (Ngarlely Yorongar, 2010). While Domo, makes the following observation: the lawless road cutters in Chad, act in a context of generalized precariousness, the possession of a symbol of violence has become a child's play, so it is not surprising to see these equipment in the hands of everyone (Joseph Domo, 2013). The following map traces on the one hand the

geography of SALW since the Arab Spring in 2012 and on the other hand the areas of dissemination of these SALW in sub-Saharan Africa.

Map 1: Mapping of small arms and light weapons trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa since the Arab Spring of 2012



Source: Messe Mbega, "La Communauté Economique des Etats",... p. 271.

It should be noted that there is a strong anarchic circulation of SALW between states that are prey to either civil wars or the violent extremism of Boko-Haram. Indeed, it presents the places of departure of SALW as Libya and Tunisia; the transit areas of Niger, Mauritania, Mali and Sudan of the gray areas located across the Sahara desert, where different drug channels, vehicles by armed gangs and terrorist groups prevail (Saïbou Issa, 2021). The main recipient countries (dumping grounds) of these SALW traffics are Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and CAR. These countries are subject to chronic and regular belligerence. As a result of the fall of the Libyan regime, Muammar Gaddafi, in 2011, the Sahel has become a dumping ground for small arms, due to the porous borders its neighbor Chad suffers from, as well as Cameroon, a country bordering Chad, the CAR and Nigeria. This cross-border crime has significant effects on the daily life of the population and the economic fabric, for example.

4. Cross-border crime: what are the challenges and prospects in North Cameroon?

Organized insecurity on the border corridors between Cameroon and neighboring countries by rebel groups has consequences for both the economic fabric and the peace and quiet of citizens. In the same vein, observers are witnessing the criminalization of political poaching on a large scale by politicians and law enforcement officials.

4.1. Criminalization and political poaching: two hydras with elusive contours?

Several facts contained in various literatures show these criminal acts, which affect the physical and moral integrity of citizens. This is the case of an armed robbery of a policeman in N'Gaoundéré (Adamaoua region) in a shop on February 5, 2004, followed by the assault of the shop owner (A. Dahirou, 2004). These facts are also similar to the release of a Chadian army captain who supplied arms and ammunition to highway robbers by the gendarmerie in Kousséri (D. Ousmane, 2003). When the police become the executioner and the people the victims. It is

pure brigandage, robbery of the FMO, and corruption that must be denounced. How can we understand that the public force puts pressure on the population through raids? The Cameroonian academic Saïbou Issa traces the picture of this crime in the following terms:

It is by militarizing that cross-border banditry leaves its traditional framework to become a polemological phenomenon...such conjecture has always favored the emergence of criminal networks in the form of insecurity entrepreneurship in regions such as the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region... On the borders of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan, bandit families are deployed who take advantage of the chronic instability in this region(Saïbou Issa, 2012).

It is necessary to understand the impunity that is said to exist in several border areas in Africa. The multiplication of armed bands is an important barometer for understanding the sociology of armed groups in Africa. These hordes live and survive by raiding, extorting the goods of farmers, herders and passengers. Marielle Débos, a French researcher, notes that: the profession of arms in wartime (on the side of the government army and its militias, as well as on the side of the rebels) is mainly concerned with its exercise in the inter-war period. Weapons are used to injure and kill, but also to intimidate, to impress, to bring about administration and, in general, to impose oneself in interactions. To practice extortion (Marielle Débos, 2012).The close relationship between political-military poaching and the non-legal possession of SALW and ammunition (Marie Julien Danga, 2021). This brings back to the table the question of the issuance and authorization of the purchase of death devices. Saïbou Issa, notes that the foundations of rural banditry that imbues the culture of theft, which has become a profession, a raid of a state in the Lake Chad basin. Theft has become a life insurance policy for marabouts and sometimes certain potentates (Saïbou Issa, 2012).The post-colonial nation-state is a shell set up to ensure living together. However, several entrepreneurs of crime and violence poach and pillage in the midst of peace. For the criminalization of the State is observed in all strata of power. The state and war criminals go hand in hand.

4.2. The breakdown of the forces of law and order and rampant corruption

Gendarmes are accustomed to beating up motorcyclists and herders for refusing to pay bribes in the Mayo-Dankali locality in the Far North region, in the Galim-Tignère district, purely as a result of FMO fraud (Yvonne Salamatou, 2010). One must question the need for the various roadblocks erected on the road, either checkpoints or sanctuaries of corruption. What is certain is that many military and administrative authorities are responsible for these acts of corruption and bribery. According to Saïbou Issa, this cross-border corridor is subject to several crises and challenges: regional instability, the deterioration of road assets, banditry and terrorism, incivism and corruption undermine transport in the north (Saïbou Issa, 2022). Added to this is the difficult and sometimes accident-prone state of the road network:

Table 2: Defective road assets in North Cameroon

Fotokol		Maltam	
Banki			Mora
Mokolo		Bourha	
Gashiga		Belel	
Banyo			Bonhari
Tignère		Kontcha	

Source: G. Gaïtama, *L'œil du Sahel*, Yaoundé, 18 avril 2022, 18h30.

There is reason to wonder about the dilapidated state of these various sections, which in principle should serve Chad, Nigeria and the entire region. However, it is not the object of any particular attention. This is unfortunate, to the detriment of the economy of this part of the country and the neighboring states, mainly the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Mora, Maiduguri;

Garoua-Yola; N'Gaoundéré-Jalingo). Road sections that are real cash cows of the various checkpoints of customs officers, gendarmes, and police. They erect mixed barriers, not always for traveler control operations, but for financial rents. This sometimes poses the problem of defending and protecting the territory of border areas, which are exposed to terrorist activities (Saïbou Issa, 2021). It is important that the reform of the sector is truly imposed within the law enforcement forces.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, cross-border transport is dependent on regional instability in northern Cameroon and the unlawful circulation of SALW in Africa and in the Lake Chad Basin in particular remains an issue of concern for the member states of the African Union (AU) and CEMAC. It is important that these states and institutions (CEMAC, UN) engage in genuine public policies of disarmament, demobilization and recovery of the increased stockpiles that accentuate rape, sow death and undermine economic development. These weapons and ammunition have become the seeds of chronic instability in the Sahelo-Sahelian band with the mobility of terrorist hordes: Boko-Haram, AQIM, Mujao, Islamic State (EI). Securing people and property is essential, as is Security Sector Reform (SSR). The Mixed Multinational Force (MMF) present or in operation in Lake Chad should disarm rebel groups and put an end to cross-border crime. It is important that the member states of the Sudano-Sahelian zone put in place adequate strategies to considerably reduce the increased stocks of arms and ammunition in circulation in the Chadian basin and the Sahel. Civil society actors and academics are called upon to reduce transnational crime to its simplest form. Good governance, equitable sharing of the fruits of growth, and the rule of law should be the pillars of a fight against violent extremism and the war economy, which accentuate impoverishment, frustration, and the increased mobility of large flows of SALW. The uncontrolled spread of the tools of war remains a central issue for states, international organizations in charge of peacekeeping and disarmament, and the reduction of weapons and ammunition responsible for crime and organized crime. The African Union (AU) and the UN Peace and Security Council are called upon to review the mechanisms for seizure, collection, recycling and destruction of SALW.

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