

PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

AbdulAziz Sani Zango

Department of Political Science, Bayero University, Kano
Corresponding Author's Email: abdulazizsanizango@gmail.com



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ABSTRACT

The escalation of violent and brutal attacks mainly perpetrated through the use of small arms and light weapons (SALW) largely against the people, the security personnel and formations, government facilities and buildings, as well as those of the foreign governments and international organizations by various armed groups have undermined Nigeria's national security thereby posing a greater danger and reign of terror in the minds of Nigerian populace. This also poses a direct threat to the national unity and integration, as well as the survival of Nigeria as a single geopolitical entity. This paper specifically examines the challenges of the attacks mainly perpetrated with small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, and assesses the extent of damages to both human and material resourced as well as general development process. The paper argues that security failure in terms of incompetency, lack of modern weapons and poor training among security personnel coupled with corruption and lack of serious political will and commitments from the government are the major factors responsible for the continuous attack and its persistence in the country. Hence, it recommends the review of the security approach-style and peaceful approach to the resolution of the crisis, the political and administrative leadership should demonstrate sufficient commitment, dedication and political will in the administration of peace and security. Government should also engage in an urgent capacity building and resource augmentation for security agencies in Nigeria in view of the glaring deficiencies in training, weapons and in information acquisition and management.

Keywords: Small Arms and Light Weapons, National Security, Insecurity, Armed Violence

Introduction

The decade preceding 1990s had witnessed a lot of security challenges that poses a great threat to national and international security. One of the major security challenges is the continuous proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their misuse across national boundaries. This generated serious security concerns throughout the world. Small arms and light weapons proliferation have become

major source of insecurity in today's world. Their unregulated spread has caused widespread devastation, leading to the increasing virulence of international conflicts and has seriously affected law and order, which in turn has destabilized many countries and regions. Aside from their direct role in armed conflicts and violence, small arms and light weapons are also widely used in

peacetime situations to terrorize individuals, to control or subdue groups and communities in order to capture or maintain political power.

Throughout the world socially marginalized or desperately impoverished people have been resorting to violence in order to survive or to gain a tenuous foothold in society. Over time, the result is a pervasive sense of social danger, insecurity, anxiety and violence.

In Nigeria, despite laws banning any form of unauthorized possession of arms and ammunitions, and border control from the influx of smuggle goods and illegal weapons, yet they still find their way into the hands of the militias, kidnappers, drug barons, criminal gangs, religious extremists, armed robbers as well as the community of people at various localities. Thus, Nigerian state has for the past two decades witnessed a lot of contradictions and negative developments in terms of new waves of armed violence, which has swept across the country. The intensification of which poses a great threat to Nigerian national security and renders the environment unfavourable and precarious characterised by bloodshed, perpetual killings, raid of one community by another and anarchy. The frequency at which the armed violence have been occurring in Nigeria particularly since the inception of the civilian administration in May 1999 on one hand, and the failure of the state to contain the situation expose the people into a state of extreme dangers. The objectives of this study are: To examine the pattern of arms proliferation in Nigeria and its challenges on Nigerian National Security. Library research is utilized as a method for data generation in the paper.

National Security: A Conceptual Clarification

The concept of national security could only be meaningful if the concept of security is

properly conceived. Security is seen as absence of attacks or threats, from any direction, to the social, economic, political, technological or military targets that may be vital for the protection of the territorial integrity, sovereignty, influence and prestige of a state in the world. It also includes strong capability of the state to dominate and control all social forces within its territory; to provide and guarantee a secure; orderly and peaceful environment for their citizens; to develop and continually expand the capacity to provide an ever increasing range of services and opportunities for their citizens through deliberate conception and implementation of policies that satisfy their economic, cultural and political needs. Despite the absence of consensus in the operational clarification of the term by different scholars, there is still a mutual agreement in the basic meaning of security among them, simply denoting the protection of lives and property.

According to Tickner (1994:180) security is the protection of a person, property or organization from an attack. This type of protection include: prevention, response and pre-emptive attacks.

In contrast, Galtung (1965:348) proposes alternative security doctrine in contrast to conventional doctrine (which emphasises military and strategic concerns as an essential element of national security), this emphasises on such imperatives as domestic social solidarity, functional social cohesion and equitable distribution of resources, in addition to civil and civilian strategy.

In a similar vein, Terriff et al (cited in Bakut, 2004:237) opined that security is generally accepted as a contested concept, it is however, about the condition of safety, or feeling safe from harm or danger. It has to do with the defence, protection and preservation of core values, and the absence of threat to acquired values. Hence, security is about the absence of warfare or negative peace.

In addition, Nnoli (cited in Fwa, 2005:32) observed that security is the cherished value associated with confidence in the physical safety of individuals, groups and state, together with a similar confidence in the safety of their cherished values. In this sense, security connotes freedom from, or elimination of threat, not only to the physical existence of the state, but also to ability for self-protection and development, and the enhancement of the general wellbeing of all the people, (Fwa, 2005:32).

Further, Cassese (in Onoja, 1996:29) stated that security means not only military security, but also freedom from fear and want, i.e. the realization of economic and social conditions that can render life in the international community less intolerable than it is at present. Therefore, security means the elimination or at least the reduction of armaments, the solution of regional conflicts and also the solution of that extremely serious problem represented by North-South conflict (in the world arena).

According to Yibaikwal (1988:282) Security can only be defined with reference to specific cases. Security is the quality or condition of being secured, freedom from exposure to danger; protection, safety of a place; feeling or assurance of safety or certainty; freedom from anxiety or doubt; that which secure the means of protection, defence among others (Hartman, 1978:251).

Security is generally accepted as a contested concept, but is generally about the condition or feeling safe from harm or danger, the defence, protection and preservation of core values, and the absence of threats to acquire values.

In essence, security is about survival and the conditions of human existence. Basically the conception of security comes through two perspectives:- the first is the conventional which focuses on the threat and the use of force in the protection of territorial integrity

of the state. It is largely military conception of security which emphasizes on the state as the primary object of reference. It has been criticized as failing to account for or explain the emerging non-military sources of threat to security at the individual, societal, state, regional and global level. This led to the debate which necessitated re-definition of security in a second perspective which is a broader conception that embraces non-military dimensions such as environment, migration, ethno-religious and nationalist identities, poverty, human insecurity, and diseases (Francis, 2004: 22-23).

National Security: generally, there have been two broad definitions of national security which have been developed over the years. The first is the military strategic concept of security and the second is non-strategic socio-economic concept. Traditionally, the issue of security is the unilateral function of the state to guarantee the security of lives and property and ensure law and order through its political sovereignty and monopoly of violence. This idea has made security issue a function of effective monopoly of violence, which the state applies to engender strict conformity and compliance to state laws by the people for effective security. This strategic conception of security emphasises military power as the main instrument for the preservation of national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Thus, this notion of national security is militaristic, statist, conventional and hard-line; and it engenders a fortress mentality, high defence costs, military competition, arms race and combat readiness. National security requires a state to acquire the material wherewithal and cultivate the legitimacy that would enable it to claim and maintain her sovereignty.

An important component of national security is political security which is greatly dependent on the patriotism and loyalty of the citizen of a state. This means that the

extent to which they identify with or are committed to their state- its *raison d'être* and goals in the broadest sense of the term and are ready to defend its institutions and processes. Patriotism and loyalty of people tend to be facilitated by, among other things citizens perception of their states as: embodying their individual and collective aspirations; protecting and expanding their political rights and freedom; increasing their material wellbeing by creating and sustaining the conditions and infrastructures necessary for developing and processing a wide range of resources into valued goods that continue to meet their desire for improvements in their welfare conditions; maintaining law and order, and pursuing fair and just policies (Ayeeni-Akeke, 2008:344-345).

Al-Mashat (1985:14) argued that national security should address “the physical, social and psychological quality of life of a society and its members both in domestic setting and within the larger regional and global system.” Thus, national security is concerned solely with the military aspects of the nation state goals, competition between satisfied and dissatisfied powers, strategic issues of the super powers, alliance building processes, independence and sovereignty, civil military relations, economic basis for strategic forces, conflict spots in international structural system maintenance. In addition, he observed that, national security is more than territorial defence and should focus on “the physical, social, and psychological quality of life of a society and its members, both in the domestic setting and within the larger regional and global setting” (Al-Marshat,1985:14).

There is one fundamental tendency that is identifiable in the conception of national security: this is the state-centred conception which views national security in terms of defence and survival of the state. It equates “defence” with “security” and bestows its protection to the military as the custodians of

national security, and equates national security with the security of the state. However, the most recent development incorporates non-military that is human side of defence.

Small Arms And Light Weapons (SALW)

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. The UN definition puts forth a list of weapons within each category to identify those weapons that are considered to be SALW.

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are cheap, light and easy to handle, transport and conceal. However, their wide availability aggravates the tension and grows insecurity. Most of today's conflicts are fought with SALW and the civilian populations bear the brunt of these armed conflicts more than ever. They facilitate a vast spectrum of human rights violations, including killing, maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, enforced disappearance, torture and enforced recruitment of children by armed groups, and all forms of human right abuses (UNODA, 2013).

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.

In a similar vein, The Report of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms by UNGA (1997) sees Small arms as involving revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, submachine guns, and light machine guns. While, Light weapons: heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of less than 100mm caliber. They are easy to use; with minimal training, even a child can wield one. They are easy to conceal and transport, they require little maintenance, and they can last for decades, (Nigeria Review, 2004:17).

The Small Arms Survey's (2001) definitions of small arms and light weapons provide an idea of the extent and diversity of weapons production. The products can be divided into several categories. The most important distinction is to be made between civilian and military products. Small arms and ammunition products are often developed for military use, and then adapted to the civilian market.

In view of the discourses above Small Arms and Light Weapons represent 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). For the purposes of this study, small arms and light weapons include everything from light arms to heavy artillery, handguns, revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, submachine guns, and light machine guns, heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of less than 100mm calibre, Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), the rocket-propelled grenade RPG-7 etc.

They are often developed for military use and then adapted to the civilian market. They are exceptionally inexpensive, user-friendly, and easy to upgrade; and there is relatively little regulation at the international level, and as a result, many weapons fall into the hands of rebel forces, terrorists, or regimes under sanctions, and other dissident elements across the world.

Several other important distinctions can be made to classify the range of products. Ammunition, for instance, is categorized as cartridge-based or non-cartridge-based. Light weapons can be designed as either direct- or indirect-fire weapons. While the mortar is an example of indirect-fire weapons, developments in air-busting ammunition will progressively blur this notion. Anti-tank, anti-aircraft, and bunker-busting weapons can be either guided, unguided, crew-served, or fire-and-forget weapons firing high-technology projectiles. Rudimentary weapon systems still feature predominantly in arsenals around the world, confirming an ongoing demand for low-cost, low-tech weapons. With an estimated

nine million or more units produced, the rocket-propelled grenade RPG-7 is exceptionally inexpensive, user-friendly, and easy to upgrade; it has become a weapon of choice for armies of the developing world and non-state actors alike, (Small Arms Survey, 2001).

In essence, there is no universally accepted definition of small arms or of light weapons. However, their portability and commonality have become defining characteristics. They include both civilian, private, and military weapons that fire a projectile with the condition that the unit or system may be carried by an individual, a small number of people, or transported by a pack animal or a light vehicle. But, yet, Small arms and light weapons, are easy to operate, and obviously lethal. They generally include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, sub-machine guns and light machine guns, heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems (MANPAD); and mortars of calibres of less than 100 mm, single-rail-launched rockets and 120 mm mortars as long as they can be transported and operated as intended by a light vehicle, the Makarov 9mm pistol, the 9mm Browning Series pistol, produced by FN Herstal (Belgium), and Sub-machine guns (SMG).

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and National Security in Nigeria

Nigeria is confronted by security dilemma because of its internal security threats posed by the prevailing arms and ammunitions proliferation and their misuse in the state. This resulted in endemic communal and sectarian conflicts, widespread armed robbery and banditry politically sponsored violence,

murder and assassinations. This is further compounded by the lack of institutional capacity for the enforcement of law and order and further eroded by poor security infrastructure, inadequately trained and ill-motivated security personnel, an entrenched culture of corruption and materialism which have resulted in the cheapening of human life (Fwa, 2005:28).

[A]ccording to Egwu (2000: 4) the security of the Nigerian nation-state was reduced to that of the ruler and his immediate supporters. The country's rulers failed in their attempts to maintain security within the Nigerian society due to their ill conceived notions of security. The security calculus of the Nigerian state failed because it did not include vital aspects of social and national development, such as the provision of basic social amenities. Thus, the Nigerian state could not meet the social, economic, or even the military conditions for national security.

The Nigerian Voice (March 8, 2013) disclosed that out of the estimated 875 million SALW in the world, 500 million are illegal, with 100 million found in sub-Saharan Africa, and that 7.5% are in Nigeria. Consequently, this resulted in worsening security challenges as evident from the activities and militants in Niger Delta and Boko Haram insurgents. Similarly, in 2013 against the backdrop of mounting security challenges in the country, the Nigerian police force has estimated that there were about 1 million illegally held guns in the country in civilian hands [International Gun Control Advocacy Group, cited in Daily News Watching July 8, 2013]. The market price for the most popular of them all, the AK-47 pattern assault rifle goes for \$180 about ₦63,180=00k according to the current exchange rate of 354 Naira per \$1. But, while, the total number of guns in the hands of civilians is put at 2million, only half of these numbers are registered. The remainders are reportedly held by criminals and people who

need to protect themselves from violent crimes, but could not go through the whole hog of arms registration. This 2 million guns in civilian possession put Nigeria at 34th position in a comparison of privately owned guns among 178 countries across the globe (International Gun Control Advocacy Group, cited in *Daily News Watching* July 8, 2013).

Nigeria is both a producer and consumer of SALWs in the West African sub-region. And it was estimated that over 70% of about eight to 10 million illegal weapons in West Africa are in Nigeria (Onuaha, 2013:50). In addition, analysts allay their fears that there may be close to five millions small arms in Nigeria, (Nigeria Review, 2004:17). In essence, given the figures above there is high numbers of small arms and light weapons circulating, particularly in the wrong hand in the country.

Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria

There is no specifically established way(s) through which Small arms and light weapons proliferate in Nigeria, hence, various ways exist. According to Small Arms Survey (2007:16) sources of small arms and light weapons include purchases from international and national arms dealers, sales and rentals by serving and retired security personnel, sale by returning peacekeepers, sales of recycled weapons from decommissioning exercises, oil-for-arms exchanges in the Delta region, and purchases of locally produced craft weapons. Illegal weapons are also obtained through thefts from dealers, armouries, and residences; seizures from security officials during robberies; and in clashes with other armed groups.

In a similar vein, Onuaha (2013,52) argued that weapons in circulation in Nigeria came from local fabrication, residue of guns used during the civil war, thefts from government armouries, smuggling, dishonest government-accredited importers, ethnic militias,

insurgents from neighbouring countries and some multinational oil corporations operating in the oil-rich but crisis-plagued Niger Delta.

This indicates that the sources of the small arms and light weapons in Nigeria are mainly through the following ways:

Smuggling and Trafficking: Trafficking and smuggling are factors substantially contributing to the proliferation of SALW in Nigeria. This is facilitated by the country's long and porous borders with inadequate resources and expertise to effectively patrol and secure them. Nigeria has 770 kilometres of shared land border with the Republic of Benin, around 1,500 kilometres with the Republic of the Niger, 1,700 kilometres with Cameroon and 90 kilometres with Chad, as well as 850 kilometres of maritime border in the Atlantic coastline (Asiwaju, 1990:112). Each of these entry points, along with the airports, have been used to smuggle arms into the country. The three most notorious entry points for illicit SALW are the South-West (Idi-Iroko and Seme in Ogun state), the port city of Warri in Delta state, and the north-eastern border with Niger and Cameroon (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states) (Agboton-Johnson, et'al 2004). The recent disclosure by Nigeria's Minister of Interior, Abba Moro, (cited in Onuoha, 2013) that there are over 1,499 irregular (illegal) and 84 regular (legal) officially identified entry routes into Nigeria, confirms the very porous state of these borders which permits illicit transnational arms trafficking. He (ibid) further noted that In Adamawa State, there are about 25 illegal routes into Nigeria from neighbouring countries. Terrorists and smugglers take advantage of this leakage to smuggle small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into Nigeria.

There are no available official aggregated data on the number of weapons smuggled into Nigeria. Nigeria Customs Service data confirm illicit weapons and ammunition are routinely

seized and that illicit weapons enter the countries through land, air and sea (Agboton-Johnson, et'al 2004:22). Owing to a vicious and growing sense of insecurity and prevalent criminality in the country since the early 1990s, Nigeria has been plagued by a massive proliferation of guns through uncontrollable smuggling. The Nigerian Immigration Service reported that gun running has become very lucrative. Smuggling constitutes the greatest source of illegal arms in Nigeria. There are

about 1000 illegal smuggling routes, which form a network of roads around Idi- Iroko in the Egbado area of Ogun State. Therefore, patrolling the area effectively is difficult. The exact number of weapons smuggled into Nigeria is impossible to estimate. However, some examples of seizures and recoveries made by the Customs Service and the Police since 1998 may cast some light on the enormity of the proliferation of arms and light weapons (SALW).

Some examples of Arms Seizure by the Nigerian Custom Service

Year	Place	Arms seized
July 26,1999	Lagos Bar Beach	96 sacks containing smuggled guns and 72,500 live ammunition
March 2006 and December 2007,	Lagos	40,000 AK47 assault rifles, 30,000 rifles and 10,000 9mm pistols and 32 million rounds of ammunition
October 26, 2010	Apapa Ports	13 cargo containers carrying 107mm artillery rockets, rifle rounds and arms.
October 22, 2012	Lagos sea port	14 assorted Kalashnikov (AK 47) rifles, and 22 Banelli MRI rifles with 3,643 and 4,955 rounds of ammunition

Source: *Thisday* 1999, *Thomas and Kujenya* 2011, *Daily Trust* 2013 and *The Sun* 2012.

From the table above it can be noted that On 26 July 1999, six Ghanaians were arrested at Lagos Bar Beach by Nigeria Customs Service men in possession of 96 sacks containing smuggled guns and 72,500 live ammunition (This Day, 1999:5).

Similarly, a New York gun dealer, Gary Hyde, a specialist in illegal arms importation to Nigeria, was charged by a Westminster Magistrate's Court with shipping 80,000 rifles and pistols, 32 million rounds of ammunition, to Nigeria. The shipment reportedly included supplying and delivering 40,000 AK47 assault rifles, 30,000 rifles and 10,000 9mm pistols between March 2006 and December 2007, with the intention of evading a prohibition within the Trade in Goods Control Order 2003 (*Thomas and Kujenya*, 2011).

In another development the artillery rockets and other weapons, loaded in 13 shipping containers that were labelled as building supplies, were seized on October 26, 2010 at the Apapa Ports. (Daily Trust, 26/07/2013). The arms were imported from Iran, by Iranian citizens named as Azimi Agajany and Sayed Akbar Tahmaesebi. Inside the 13 cargo containers inspectors found 107mm artillery rockets, rifle rounds and arms. The rockets can accurately hit targets more than 5 miles (8.5 kilometers) away with a 40-foot (12-meter) killing radius. Insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq have used similar rockets against U.S. troops (ibid).

In addition, in October 2012 a Russian vessel identified as MV MYRE SEADIVER was arrested by operatives of the Nigerian Navy in Lagos sea port, carrying more than 14 assorted

Kalashnikov (AK 47) rifles, and 22 Banelli MRI rifles with 3,643 and 4,955 rounds of ammunition respectively. The vessel was flying a Dutch Island Flag and belongs to the Moran Security Group of Moscow (www.thesunnewsonline.com, October 23, 2012).

Local Manufacturers: Local arms manufacturers constitute another source of small arms in Nigeria. These local manufacturers whose workshops are located in remote areas produce single and double barrel guns for hunters and night watchmen and local pistols and revolvers of various kinds for armed robbers, assassins, vigilante groups, militias and those seeking self protection from anticipated threats. Locally produced small arms, or craft weapons, are widely available in Nigeria. They are inexpensive and easy to acquire compared to more expensive and sophisticated models. Onuaha (2013:54) argued that there are a number of well-known craft production markets in Nigeria, including Katsina, Kaduna, and Calabar. In November 2010, the police uncovered arms fabrication outfits in Barkin Ladi and Kuru in the Jos South local government area of Plateau State. In the south-eastern zone of Nigeria, a locally manufactured firearm known as 'Awka-made' enjoys patronage from hunters, armed robbers, cultists and kidnappers, assassins among others (Onuaha, 2013:54).

In a similar vein, Bauchi state Commissioner of Police Mr Ikechukwu Aduba disclosed that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) arrested Alhassan Mohammed for suspicion of being a notorious firearms dealer resident in Bauchi Township. Upon his arrest, he voluntarily confessed to having sold numerous locally made pistols at the rate of N60, 000 per piece. His confession led the team of detectives to arrest Gambo Mohammed who also confessed to establishing and operating a functional illegal firearms and ammunition enterprise, through

which he supplied Alhassan Mohammed these lethal weapons for financial gain. The SARS also recovered from the suspects two firearms, ammunition fabricating apparatus, one oxygen gas cylinder, corrugated local implements for firearms/ammunition manufacture, three locally made berretta pistols and 27 rounds, 10 cartridges from suspects (*Thomas and Kujenya*, 2010).

Corrupt Security Agents: Another source of small arms and light weapons in the arsenal of illegal owners, and the most worrisome, is the sale, renting or loss of such arms to men of underworld and various ethnic militias in the country by both serving and retired security agents. On several occasions, security agents have been found aiding arms trafficking in Nigeria.

For instance, on July 9, 2007, a Delta state police team arrested a Warrant Officer (WO₂) serving with the Nigerian Air Force 33 Logistic section in Makurdi, Benue State, while transferring arms to a location in the Niger Delta. In his Toyota Corolla car with registration No. AJ 41 MKD, there were 5 assault rifles, 449 rounds of AK47 live ammunition, 4 brand new live jackets and 5 empty magazines. When the police interrogated the air force officer turned arms dealer, he mentioned the name of a senator as being the owner of the weapons and that the arms are from the Republic of Chad (CEHRD, 2007).

Similarly, in another incident Omonobi (2008) 15 army officers, 3 of them Colonels, 2 Lieutenant Colonels, 1 major and 9 non-commissioned officers are facing a court martial in Kaduna over the sudden disappearance of arms and ammunition from the armoury. The weapons were allegedly removed from the Nigerian Army Central Ordinance Depot in Kaduna and were subsequently traced to militants in the Niger Delta. The weapons are AK-47 rifles, General

Purpose Machine Guns (GPMGs) and boxes of ammunition and grenades.

In addition, Onuaha (2013:53-54) revealed that a major and five other soldiers of the Nigerian Army were convicted in November 2008 of selling over 7000 arms valued at over 100 million Nigerian naira (₦) including AK-47 rifles, rocket launchers and machine guns to Niger Delta militants between January 2000 and December 2006. These arms were stolen from the depots of the Nigerian Army at the Command and Staff College, Jaji, Kaduna.

Armed Robbers and Armed Militias and Insurgents:

Small arms and light weapons in Nigeria are also recovered from armed robbers, Insurgents as well as militias. The Joint Task Force (JTF) through its commanding officer Lt. Colonel Hassan Mohammed showed the pile of arms and ammunitions recovered in Borno state which include: 8 AK 47 assault rifles; 457 rounds of ammunitions; 1 hand grenade (size 36); 3 magazine carriers, 18 magazines and 1 Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) cord; others include two bags of IED's materials and .9mm blank ammunition (Weekly Trust, 2012). Similarly, it has been noted that the quantity of arms surrendered during the disarmament and demobilization (DD) phase of the Amnesty programme for the Niger Delta militants in 2009 gave an idea of the quantum of Small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation in the country. The Amnesty initiative saw over 15, 000 militants surrender arms at the expiration of the DD phase of the Amnesty. Weapons recovered during the disarmament process included 2,760 assorted guns, 287, 445 ammunitions of different calibre, 18 gun-boats, 763 dynamite sticks, 1, 090 dynamite caps, 3,155 magazines and several other military accessories, such as dynamite cables, bulletproof jackets and jack knives. It is widely believed that militants only surrendered a small fraction of their arms, as most of them doubted the government's

genuine commitment to the amnesty valued at US\$280,000,000. In another development, in 2010 the Nigerian police in Ibadan, Oyo State, intercepted a large cache of arms and ammunition from a suspected bank robbery squad. The seized arms and ammunitions included 47 rifles, 103 AK-47 rifle magazines, one assault rifle magazine, 2 540 AK-47 rounds of ammunition, 727 general purpose machine gun (GPMG) rounds of ammunition, three chain bullets, explosive materials, two GPMGs and one chisel (Onuaha,2013:52).

In addition, there has been a case of emerging campus or street cults in Nigeria as another major of arms proliferation. The cultist groups engage in violent struggle for supremacy and territorial control, by means of SALW they acquire and misuse them with its attendant high human costs (Naagbantun, 2008). Closely related to the issue of campus cultism there is widespread communal cultism which give rise to secret cultist organizations across Nigeria like Ombatse secret cult among the Eggon tribe, in Assakio community in Nassarawa state. This cult group on May 7, 2013 ambushed and brutally killed over 100 security personnel, which included men of State Security Services and the Nigerian Mobile Police force, by the virtue of highly sophisticated small arms and light weapons they possessed (Vanguard online 2013, Sahara Reporters.com 2013, The Sun News online 27/08/2013).

War-torn countries in the West African sub-region:

Nigeria is virtually surrounded by countries with large-scale internal armed conflicts where there has been a wide proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Also, Nigeria has played host to refugees from such countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone and has sent the police and military personnel on peacekeeping mission in some of the countries. Consequently, some illegal small arms force their way into the country.

through the refugees who later sold them for an equivalent of US100 dollars. Hence, Obasi (cited in Okiro, 2004) stated that Nigeria's involvement in the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone has provided the Nigeria black market with a ready source of assault weapons. Similarly, the Arab Spring of 2011 which led to the collapsed of the regime of the Late Colonel Muammar Gaddafi has intensified the proliferation of small arms and light weapons into Niger and Chad and later found their destination in Nigeria. In a similar vein, Onuoha (2013:) argued that

“during the Libyan uprising, for instance, state armoury were either ordered opened in February 2011 by Muammar Gaddafi or looted by rebel forces and mercenaries, and majority of these weapons were never recovered. Terrorist groups like AQIM acquired heavy weapons such as SAM-7 anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, transporting them back to the Sahel region. They were either surreptitiously obtained by posing as Gaddafi's supporters or indirectly purchased from mercenaries who had acquired these arms from Libyan depositories. The AQIM transferred to groups such as Ansar Dine, Boko Haram and MUJAO, emboldening and enabling them to mount more deadly and audacious attacks. Thus, the audacity of Boko Haram grew with the proliferation of weapons in the Sahara-Sahel region. The porous borders in Borno and Yobe States, which are the strongholds of the sect, made it possible for Boko Haram to smuggle arms into Nigeria (Onuoha, 2013)”.

Factors Responsible for The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria

Various factors explain the trend of the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria. These factors are: the quest for easy profits,

relatively mild punishments, the self-defence reflex and cultural practices.

The quest for easy profits: One of the major causes of the growth in the arms market in Nigeria is the unrestrained quest for profits. In recent years, those engaged in producing local weapons have made large profits from the very lucrative trade in traditional weapons. In price terms, in Nigeria, a double-barrelled shotgun costs between ₦50,000 and ₦65,000, a single-barrelled shotgun between ₦25,000 and ₦30,000; the price of pistols ranges between ₦3,000 and ₦7,000, depending on the model, the seller and the place of sale (Yacubu, 2005). A suspect arrested in September 2001 by the Plateau State police for unlawful possession of firearms admitted that two of the weapons in his possession had been purchased two years previously for ₦55,000 and ₦75,000. Bearing in mind the enormous profits recorded in arms trafficking, one may expect it to continue to be attractive.

The self-defence reflex: This represents the failure of the state security in effectively guaranteeing the safety of life and property. Thus, vigilantes and individuals have been arming themselves for self protection especially in the north-eastern state of Nigeria. It appears that the Nigerian government lack of adequate capacity to effectively respond to growing attacks of the Boko haram insurgents. As violent attacks by the sect have increased in frequency and destruction, almost on a daily basis in the northern part of the country, people are left with no option than to armed and defend themselves. In spite of the increasing deterioration of security, no effective counter-strategy and enabling legislations have been put in place by government to address the situation. The most visible response to date has been a massive deployment of the security forces, which has further created a feeling of

fear among the local population. The belief that the presence of security forces is sufficient to guarantee national security seems to be deeply rooted in the psychology of those saddled with national security decisions. In some cases, to demonstrate that government is capable of ensuring peace and security, military and police units are deployed to violent flashpoints. They use excessive force to arrest, detain and possibly even kill anyone who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, thereby exacerbating a situation which they are meant to alleviate (Agekameh, 2001:33).

Rise in Militancy and Insurgency: the growing insurgency prompts the desire by the Boko Haram insurgents for arms procurement in order to engage and contain the state security personnel. In this attempt, these movements resort to attacking various security formations and personnel, resulting in the confiscation of arms and weapons from security arsenals and formations. This explains the spate of suicide attacks, runaway shooting, as well as various bombs and IED's attacks in various places in the state. In most cases innocent civilians are the major victims in these confrontations.

Similarly, the rise in the crime wave in Nigeria fuels demand for small arms and weapons of mass destruction. In response to the determination of the police to combat offences involving weapons more effectively, criminals acquire ever more sophisticated weapons. Consequently, the rise in crime leads to an increase in demand for increasingly powerful weapons. In order to operate more effectively. One of the consequences of easy access to firearms in Nigeria is the proliferation of ethnic militias, such as the Odua Peoples Congress, the Bakassi Boys, the Tiv and Jukun militias, Boko haram insurgents in northern Nigeria among others.

Corruption among the security personnel:

This manifested mainly as a result of the corrupt nature of the Nigerian police and their general attitude at checkpoints throughout the country. For instance, it has been reported by Nigerian Masterweb (2011) that in the eighteen month between January 2009 to June 2010 the Nigerian Police Force illegally raked in ₦ 20.5 Billion from road blocks nationwide. Similarly, in North-West zone in which Kano state is included the sum of ₦810 Million was illegally realized by the extortionist police between January 2009 to June 2010 and in addition also the sum of ₦500 million between June 2010-December 2011. In sum therefore ₦1.21 Billion had been illegally realized in the zone." In essence, road blocks extortion is the easiest and yet most lucrative means of corrupt enrichment by the Nigerian security personnel. Consequently, arms easily found their ways to their safest destinations. Thus, despite the rampant road blockades and security check points all around the flash point of [armed] violence, these arms still crept in and the spate of attacks continue. This trend of security negligence allow for mass inflow of especially illegal arms and ammunitions as well as weapons in the state.

Poverty: growing poverty coupled with culture of complacency especially among the teeming youth which has prompted the unprecedented increase in crimes ranging from kidnapping, armed robbery and high killing. These crimes generally motivate procurement of arms for personal reasons and financial gains. The most readily available of these arms, through which almost all of these crimes are perpetrated, are mainly SALW. It is obvious that armed violence is often exacerbated by the deteriorating socio-economic crisis typified by unemployment, inflation and poverty. The correlation between poverty and general socioeconomic crisis on one hand and armed conflict on the other hand is succinctly

captured by Paquet-Sevigny (1990) when he argued that deepening poverty is already leading to mounting instability. Widespread unrest, turmoil and violence which is now afflicting an unprecedented number of countries particularly in Africa.

Challenges of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons on the Nigerian National Security

While, arms do not cause violence, however, their continuing supply and misuse of easily available arms and ammunition fuels their continuation, and makes them more deadly, leading to the commitment of serious violations of human rights, such as extrajudicial executions, torture, rape and sexual violence, and enforced displacement. These violations often occur widely where small arms are readily available. It is not just men who are the victims. Large numbers of women and girls suffer directly and indirectly from armed violence.

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (2006) argues that:

armed violence destroys lives and livelihoods, breeds insecurity, fear and terror, closes schools, empties markets, burdens health services, destroys families, weakens the rule of law, and prevents humanitarian assistance from reaching people in need. It threatens permanently the respect of human rights.

For the past one decade Nigeria's internal security environment has deteriorated with new waves of security threats and challenges. What appeared to be termed as old security threats have remained or even assumed worrisome dimensions, while new threats have emerged. Some of the old threats that assumed new dimensions include armed robbery, ethno-religious conflicts, militancy, assassinations, human trafficking and

kidnapping. All resulting from the widest availability and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

According to Onuaha (2013:55) The challenges of Nigeria's small arms and light weapons (SALW) on national security is evident in financial losses induced by conflicts. About 10 major ethno-religious conflicts between 1999 and 2004 cost the Nigerian government over ₦400 million (US\$2.86 million) (ibid). Besides, the amount of money that governments spend on security during such crises and their aftermath are huge. In recent times, small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation has led to an increase in violent crimes that undermine human security, such as rape, cultism, armed robbery and kidnapping, in most parts of the country.

It fuels civil violence and religious disturbances. It is estimated that close to one million people have died from the ethnic based war through the used of small arms in the last ten years (1994-2004).

Indeed, the former Vice president Atiku Abubakar put the figure of death from internecine wars in Nigeria at five hundred thousand by 2001, (Nigeria Review, 2004:17). Furthermore, it has been noted that between 1999 and 2010, Nigeria recorded at least 187 ethno-religious conflicts leading to several thousand deaths and displacement of 1.6 million Nigerians, (Onuaha, 2013). Thus, it is the availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW) that fuel intrastate conflicts, ethno-religious violence, cause instability and undermine development.

Similarly, Helen Chuma-Okoro (2013) argued that the proliferation of SALW and the misuse of same by State and non-state actors have created room for the infringement of these rights. The killing of people by use of firearms clearly deprives them of their life whether at the hands of State agents through extra-judicial killings or excessive use of force, or at the hands of members of vigilante

groups. The use of military tactics to quell civil disturbances, state-sponsored or state-sanctioned violence against civilians as evident in Odi, Bayelsa State, in 1999 and replicated against the Tivs of Zaki Biam in Benue in October 2001.

According to the Nigeria's Finance Minister, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Federal government key allocation of funds in the 2013 budget were: Critical infrastructure (including power, works, transport, aviation, gas pipelines, and Federal Capital Territory) – N497 billion; human capital development (i.e. education and health) – N705 billion; and agriculture/water resources – N175 billion. Also over N950 billion was allocated for national security purposes, which comprised of N320 billion for the Police, N364 billion for the Armed Forces, N115 billion for the Office of the NSA, and N154 billion for the Ministry of the Interior (ThisDay, 2013). In view of this Adebayo (2013) argued that in a situation where the funds allocated to security alone is almost equal to funds allocated to education, health and critical infrastructure combined in a fiscal year, as is the case with Nigeria, is detrimental to national development. The development of a society largely depends on the rate of crime. If the crime rate is high, it could scare away or discourage investors and the vis-visa.

Implications of SALW on National Security

1. Continuous proliferations of arms with security consequences, as evident in various seaport and airport especially in Lagos and Kano.
2. Escalation security situations informs of armed violence, insurgency and related criminal offences such as cattle rustling, militancy, armed robbery among others.
3. The death of security operatives in the battle fronts and in the security formations. This weakens the security agencies and affects their capacity to

protect life and properties as well as defend the sovereignty of the Nigerian state.

4. Increased defence budget at the cost of other development projects such as health, education and agriculture.
5. High sense of human insecurity especially among the civilian population in form of sense of constant fear, death and injuries as well as destruction of properties.
- 7- Displacement of people with attendant consequences

Conclusion

Obviously, the proliferations of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) have been posing serious security threats to the Nigerian state especially under the current democratic dispensation. The gravity of the security challenges which have been posed by Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is enormous and catastrophic to the extent that it breeds insurgency and armed violence, that weakened the capacity of the state's security apparatus who are ill-equipped, ill-motivated and inadequately trained especially in the face of the new security challenges, to preserve the territorial integrity of the state, to protect people from threats, as well guarantee the peaceful coexistence and national development, and the continuity of Nigeria as a single geopolitical entity.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed which will help to address some of the issues raised in the course of the research undertaking:

- To address the current state of insecurity, the political and administrative leadership should demonstrate sufficient commitment, dedication and political will in the pursuit of lasting peace. This should

involved combination of political, economic and security strategies that can produce realistic and timely improvement in the welfare of the citizenry.

- Crucial national issues such as widespread corruption, poverty, unemployment and all forms of socio-political and economic exclusions should be addressed through effective poverty alleviation and human development programmes.
- Government should embarked upon capacity building and resource augmentation for security agencies in Nigeria in view of the glaring deficiencies in training, weapons and in information acquisition and management.
- Establishment of technical support programmes for a professional conversion of blacksmiths would help in reducing the

production lines, and a strategy should be put in place to discourage the local production of arms and ammunitions.

- The apparent lapses in the security apparatuses in the nation largely due to inadequate trainings, obsolete working materials and low morale, hence federal government to take the necessary steps to correct the anomalies.
- Border patrol should be intensified in order to control illegal immigration and to curb the alarming problem of smuggling of small arms and light weapons through the porous borders of Nigeria, especially in the bush paths.

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