



POLAC INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECONS & MGT SCIENCE (PIJEMS)
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT SCIENCE
NIGERIA POLICE ACADEMY, WUDIL-KANO



FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria is going through serious cases of insecurity across its territory. This state of insecurity which is mainly orchestrated by the use of small arms and light weapons has resulted in mayhem, deaths, displacement, and destruction of lives and property in the country. The study examined the factors responsible for the proliferation of small arm and light weapons in Nigeria. The study is anchored on the combination of the theory of relative autonomy of the state and failed state theory. Methodologically, it utilized causal design relying on secondary sources of data collection and documentary evidence which was also analyzed qualitatively. Findings have shown that small arms and light weapons are maximally utilized to perpetrate crimes by various individuals and groups in all areas of the country. The study further showed that there is currently intensity of the phenomenon of small arms and light weapons related criminalities in the country. As such, the study recommends that issues of mass unemployment, marginalization, ethnic and religious chauvinism, bad government, poverty, political exclusion, corruption, uneven distribution of state revenue, absence of a true federal structure, prevailing culture of hate, etc should be adequately treated with the view to create an atmosphere that all Nigerians will see that they do have stake in the country. Also, there should be a properly coordinated sustained and integrated policy by the Federal Government to curb and contain the easy flow of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

Keywords: Factors, Proliferation, Small Arms, Light Weapons, North East

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a particular one that essentially came to the attention of global society in the end of the Cold War. This is so, due to realization of the threat it poses to human society. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has manifested during the Cold War and become so extensive across regions and states after the war. Consequently, significant distribution of arms was made by the contending powers during the war to their allies in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Chelule, 2023). These circulated weapons have not been controlled by states thereby become spread and found not only in the

hands of security personnel but also in the hands of non-state actors. The illegal circulation of small arms and light weapons does not in any manner positive to peace and security in various countries especially in Africa and other developing parts of the world. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons across various regions and countries has become highly instrumental to conflict and criminal activities especially in developing nations. Illicit transfer of these weapons is a challenge to global peace and security. It is on this context that the United Nations took a responding step thereby urging for global, regional and national responses towards addressing the menace of illicit circulation of small arms and light

weapons. This is given to the fact that the threat of small arms and light weapons is greater than that of weapons of mass destruction that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Annan, 2010).

However, the pattern, trend, factors and consequences have been a major concern to the global community. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons became an enormous concern especially since after the Cold War and rivalry between the superpowers, when the left-over arms from that war were shipped to other countries of the world subsequently making their way to parts of Africa, to fuel proxy inter-state conflicts (Salihu & Ozden, 2020). The small arms and light weapons, now in the hands of illegal arms dealers, security entrepreneurs, ethnic militia groups, private military companies, and local smugglers, are being employed for various old armed conflicts and to facilitate the emergence of new ones in Africa, leading to general insecurity and increased criminal violence (Mallam, 2014; Agbiboa, 2013). These small arms are the weapons being used today by various non-state actors in ethno-religious conflicts, insurgency, militancy, kidnapping, armed banditry, cattle rustling and arm robbery in many parts of Nigeria, especially in the south-south, north-west, northeast and central geopolitical zones (Onuoha, 2012). Technological breakthroughs in recent times have brought about advancements in arms and weaponry technology resulting in smaller, more portable, and easy to operate systems which are capable of causing measured and graduated large-scale loss of lives (Small Arms Survey, 2011). These portable, easy to carry weapons and arms are generally referred to as small arms and light weapons (United Nations, 1997). Small Arms Survey (2021) statistics showed that globally, there are approximately 875 million small arms in circulation, stockpile and private possession, produced by more than 1,000 companies from nearly 100 countries, and authorized trade exceeds 8.5 Million US Dollars (as cited in Chelule, 2023). 200 million belong to the government and State militaries, 26 million are in the hands of law enforcement agencies. However, the bulk of global small arms and light weapons, which is estimated at two third are held by civilians and non-state actors, and 100

million are reported to be in Africa (Chelule, 2023). This being the case, it is little wonder that Ali Mazrui, stated unequivocally, that in a technologically underdeveloped society, in the twentieth century, ultimate power resides not in those who control means of production (as postulated by Marx), but in those who control the means of destruction (captured by the soldier/bandit with an AK47) (Chelule, 2023). The United Nations Security Council acknowledges the devastating consequences of small arms and light weapons when it stated in its 2015 resolution that illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation, and misuse of small arms and light weapons in many regions of the world, continue to pose threats to international peace and security, cause significant loss of life, and contribute to instability and insecurity (as cited in Iloani & Sunday, 2016).

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria is a fallout of not just the armed conflicts in the global arena, including Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, but also a result of poor governance and the failure of governments in this regions to genuinely and holistically address the continuous issues of underdevelopment and low standard of living of the people (Ayuba & Okafor, 2015, *Small Arms and Light Weapons: Africa*, n.d). This is because arms trade is usually carried out by idle minds and hands - who of course need to survive by either hook or crook - who serve as either middle-men or carriers of these arms to the desired destinations. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that small arms and light weapons would always have ready markets since the very conditions poverty, joblessness, hunger and starvation, greed, and general lack that triggered the previous conflicts or wars are still with humanity, and will continue to remain so if arms and legs remain folded and crossed, and nothing concrete is done to reverse the trend. Nigeria in particular, is a highly militarized country, characterize by myriad acts of criminality, which includes kidnapping, armed robbery and insurgency which are perpetrated with the aid of small arms and light weapons, thus, the continuing demands for them. Besides daily occurrences of robbery attacks in various parts of Nigeria, the activities of the terrorist group (Boko Haram Sect) in the north eastern part of the

country have also become an issue of concern over human security in the country. The most recently intensified one is the farmers /herders clashes, the situation has led to the loss of hundreds of human lives and unquantifiable number of properties.

The destructive effects brought by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons led to a flurry of activities, at global, regional and national level to curb the problem. Efforts to contend with the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons globally have since then been on the increase and national governments, regional and the United Nations bodies have launched a number of programmes in response to small arms and light weapons crisis through conferences, lobbying and treaties aimed at curbing arms trafficking and trade. Hence, regional and global efforts were increased to deal with small arms proliferation. At the first Conference of United Nations on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons held in New York from 9th to 20th July 2001, States were reminded of the devastating implications of small arms proliferation in human terms and through a programme of action, called on governments to take urgent measures to strengthen the regulation and monitoring of small arms and light weapons, mainly, at the national level. The UN's Firearms Protocol which is the first major intervention made illegal arms transfers a crime; it was directed to addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in a holistic manner. It was established to control and regulate the production and supply of firearms, their components and parts as well as ammunition (Bamako Declaration, 2000).

Meanwhile, in spite of all the effort to combat the illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons, these kinds of weapons are persistently circulating across the world especially in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Bashir, 2014). In Africa, it is more, due to certain political, security and economic factors. Socio-cultural factors are in some parts of the continent also pertinent in the widespread of small arms and light weapons. It obviously gets its ways by the poor economic condition, corruption, ineffective security

measures and weak political commitments in most African countries. The continuing circulation of SALW poses a serious threat and challenge to the continent; exacerbating human suffering, threatens peace, security, and sustainable development. It has been described as one of the current security challenges in North East and Nigeria in particular. The country has become a source, transit, recipient and destination of illegal small arms and light weapons (Okeke & Oji, 2014; Malam, 2014). Hence, the study interrogates factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria to ascertain the following:

- i. What are the variables affecting the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria?
- ii. Who are the main actors in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

Small Arms

A variety of attempts at defining small arms which were encountered in works of literature reviewed show that small arms are defined either by configuration, size or user perspective. Small arms as defined by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention (2006) refers to arms used by an individual, person such as firearms and other arms which are destructive such as exploding bombs, rocket launchers, incendiary bombs or gas bombs, grenades, missile systems or landmines, missiles, revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbines; machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns.

Small arms are easy to transport, easy to use, easy to buy and easy to conceal. Their continued proliferation exacerbates conflict, subdues rule of law, sparks refugee flows, and spawns a culture of violence and impunity.' UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (2000).

Small arms have also been defined by the Royal Military College of Science (RMCS) Handbook (1993) on weapons and vehicles as any Man portable largely shoulder controlled weapon of up to 12.7millimeter (0.5inches) calibre; generally, such weapons have a flat trajectory and an effective operational range of 0 to 800

meters although this varies considerably with calibre and weapon type, certain weapons can also provide neutralizing fire up to 1800meters.” United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research highlighted small arms to include: revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine-guns; assault rifles; light machine-gun; heavy machine-guns; hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers; portable anti-aircraft guns; portable anti-tank guns; recoilless rifles; portable launchers of antitank missiles and rockets system; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missiles systems; and mortars of calibres less than 100mm (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR, 2006). For the purpose of this study, small arms refer to arms used by an individual, person such as firearms and other arms which are destructive such as exploding bombs, rocket launchers, incendiary bombs or gas bombs, grenades, missile systems or landmines, missiles, revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbines; machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns

Light Weapon

There seems to be a lack of agreement in the literature with regard to identifying a small arm as opposed to a standard conventional weapon. This has led to the formulation of an alternative concept ‘light weapons’ which emphasizes a more technologically sophisticated category. However, despite the emergence of the light weapons concept, defining small arms still lacks clarity and even the distinction between ‘small arms’ and ‘light weapons’ is a matter of debate. There seems to be a certain amount of uncertainty as to where small arms end and light weapons begin or whether there is an overlap between the two. Despite the diverse views held by scholars there remains a commonality of characteristics that permeates the various definitions. Light Weapons according to the ECOWAS Convention are portable arms designed to be used by two to ten persons working together as a team and which notably include: portable grenade launchers, heavy machine guns, mobile or mounted; portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns; portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; portable anti-aircraft cannons, portable anti-aircraft

missile launchers; mortars with a caliber of less than 100 millimeters. Light weapons are weapons that are portable, designed for use by several persons which are serving as a crew: howitzers, heavy machine guns, mortars of less than 100mm calibre, grenade launchers, automatic cannons, anti-tank weapons and launchers, recoilless guns, anti-aircraft weapons and launchers, shoulder fired rockets, and air defence weapons (SADC Firearms Protocol, 2003: Article 1.2). The study adopts the ECOWAS convention’s conceptualization of light weapons because it is a consolidation of other definitions and therefore adopts it for the purpose of the study and analysis.

Proliferation

The concept of proliferation in relations to arms, describes generally, the spread of weapons, from one place to another. Arms proliferation is facilitated by certain intermediaries based on illegal and legal demands which come particularly from highly restricted or lawless environments. Small Arms Survey, maintains, that Small arms and light weapons do not proliferate themselves but rather, they are sold, resold perhaps stolen, diverted and maybe illegally or legally transferred several times. It has been acknowledged by the UN that massive accumulation and acquisition of arms could enhance proliferation. It however, qualifies the accumulation with such terms as destabilizing and excessive under certain conditions.

Small arms and light weapons end up being misused in many ways in the environments where the state is unable to control fully its accessibility and illegal possession. In general, transformations within countries be it political, economic and social, tend to increase arms availability. Unlike heavy arms, Small arms and light weapons, circulate in both civilian and military markets. Military markets involve legal transfers from the manufacturer and approved states to the purchasing state while civilian markets on the other hand are flooded with excess arms that might result from either military budget cuts or manufacturers’ surplus production.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the combination of the theory of relative autonomy of the state and failed state theory. The state relative autonomy theory is situated within the ambit of the neo-Marxist political economy paradigm. The theory of relative state autonomy depicts the level or degree of detachment or aloofness of the state in the discharge of its duties such as mediating inter-class and intra-class struggles. Thus, this theory presupposes that in any state or political society, there are two levels of contradiction, namely primary contradiction and secondary contradiction. Primary contradiction is inter-class struggle or depicts class struggle between two antagonistic classes such as the ruling class and the ruled class or the bourgeois class and the proletariat (i.e. the working class). Whilst, secondary contradiction is the intra-class struggle, denoting class conflicts within the ruling-class or between different segments of the ruling-class.

Marx and Engels demonstrate this intractable phenomenon of class struggle when they declare in the preface of their book, *The Communist Manifesto* that “the history of all the hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx & Engels, 1977). The exponents of the theory hold that a state can exhibit either low or high relative autonomy. A state exhibits high autonomy when there is high commodification of capital or excessive penetration of capital into the economy such that the bourgeois class indulges in accumulation of capital through direct exploitation of the working class or appropriation of surplus value when they enter into social relationships of production (i.e. private capitalism). Here, the state is not interventionist, in other words, it does not intervene in the domestic economy like participating in the productive activities (i.e. public/state enterprises) or controlling or nationalizing means of production. The role of state here, therefore, is to regulate. As such, the state is relatively an impartial umpire mediating inter-class and intra-class struggles through harmonization and reconciliation of class interests. The developed capitalist states of the West are, therefore, considered to exemplify this high relative autonomy, and as a result, exhibit high level of human rights observance and protection (Ake, 1976).

Conversely, a state exhibits low autonomy when there is low commodification of capital or low penetration of (private) capital into the economy in such a way that the ruling class is constantly engaged in primitive accumulation of capital through embezzlement of public fund. The state becomes the only avenue for capital accumulation. The state is thus, interventionist for engaging in productive activities of means of productive activities (i.e. public corporation) by nationalization of major means of production. This state does not limit itself to regulatory rule and is hence compromised, such that instead of rising above class struggle it is deeply immersed in it (Ake, 1981). The Nigerian state like other developing state exhibits a low level of the autonomy of the state as a result of low commodification of capital.

Under the electric mixture of mixed economy, Nigeria experiences the phenomenon of lack of penetration of (private) capital into the economy creating a parasitic petty bourgeois class whose major source of accumulation of capital is the state. Hence, the Nigerian state becomes the only avenue for (primitive) accumulation of capital through which the governing class (i.e. petty bourgeoisie) produce and reproduce their dominance. The implication of the low autonomy of the Nigerian state is that it is immersed in the class struggle rather than rising above it leading to intense struggle for the control of the state for primitive accumulation and marginalization of everything (Ake, 2001). According to Anyanwu (2005) the term “failed state” is often used to describe a state perceived as having failed at some of basic conditions and responsibilities of a sovereign government. A failed state is one that has shattered social and political structures. It is characterized by social, political and economic failure. Common characteristics of a failing state is when a central government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory, non-provision of public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations, and sharp economic decline. Anyanwu (2005) notes that failing states are invariably the product of a collapse of the power structures providing political supports for law and order, a process generally triggered and accompanied

by anarchic forms of internal violence. It is the collapse of state institutions, especially the police and judiciary with resulting paralysis of governance, a breakdown of law and order, and general banditry and chaos. Not only are the functions of government suspended, but its assets are destroyed or looted; and experienced officials are killed or flee the country.

2.3 Empirical Review

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

Regulations and supply regarding arms proliferation, production and marking have for so many years been discussed. The demand side of small arms has just moved into focus recently with the realization that sustainable and successful disarmament must address the underlying causes for arms acquisition. Small arms are attractive tools of violence for so many of reasons which includes their wide availability, inexpensive, durable, extremely lethal, simple to use, highly portable (even by children), and easily concealed. As a result of these, they are available virtually everywhere in the society. There are complex and overlapping motivations by those seeking to acquire arms for and a constantly shifting set of means that constrain or facilitate the acquisition of these weapons. It is interesting to note that state-level demand for weapons is also influenced by a range of internal and external political, economic, social and security conditions. Evolving technology and routine modernization programs as well as internal political conditions and changing regional security dynamics, all contribute to persistent but changing.

Poverty and Criminality

Poverty and criminality as stated by Musa (1999) is the base of small arms proliferation in Nigeria. Despite the status of Nigeria as a major exporting oil country, there is a sharp contradiction between the fact that Nigeria is one of the world's largest exporters of crude oil, and the fact that Nigerians standard of living is the 36th lowest in terms of the world human development indicators. The situation in the Niger Delta region is a point in case of what has been referred to as ecological degradation and criminal social neglect. The implications of this is that

the region which is responsible for some 70% of the country's income displays a degree of poverty and penury which stands in great contradiction to the wealth it produces. This has led to a militant youth population, which have been well known to kidnapping oil workers and defy security agencies, using their knowledge of the localities and their access to small arms.

Culture, Attitudes and Tradition

The display of weapons is seen as important in some cultures. This most at times is referred to as a gun culture. 'Macho' cultural norms may prevail, in which social value is placed in armed male by both male and female as a source of security and status. Instruments can also be played by women motivating and encouraging the young men to perpetrate acts with weapons, for example, to go out on cattle raids. Weapons are used for traditional rites and ceremonies in many cultures across the African continent. While the Fulani's in northern Nigeria make use of swords, arrows and sticks, the communities of traditional hunters of the west and east carry shotguns (Ayissi & Sall, 2005).

In the North-West Province of Cameroon, there is a traditional rite of gun-firing at events such as at the traditional burial of local dignitaries. These are mostly locally-made so called dane guns, operating with gunpowder. Projectiles like metal pellets can be inserted into their muzzles making them very lethal. For the sake of prestige, many have now turned to the use of a wide range of more modern equipment like shotguns, revolvers, semi-automatic pistols and even high calibre rifles. Of course there are gun laws limiting such open use but they are hardly respected and can be easily circumvented. This cultural attachment to weapons is particularly rife in rural communities, where conservative cultural practices and traditional rituals still enjoy plenty of respect. Women in many pastoralist or semi-pastoralist areas, such as Eastern Equatorial State in South Sudan, compose songs to shame those who have not yet gone raiding or who have come back empty-handed. This behaviour increases the pressure on young men to secure the necessary heads of cattle for a dowry. Beyond these practices, for youth in some contexts,

weapons and violence are related to rites of passage into adulthood.

The Prevalence of Internecine Conflicts and Criminality

Civil conflict often stems from state's failed policies to protect its citizens and recognize their basic rights, leading the citizens to seek liberation or power through weapons. The demand for arms is not limited to the armed groups. There is usually a growing demand for small arms among civilians, whenever groups engage in violent conflicts or internal conflicts, due to fears of continuing or resurgent conflict. The unlawful use and desire to small arms in Nigeria is also attributed to the increasing culture of violence and the prevalence of organised armed conflicts which is seen as a defining character of the socio-political scene since 1999. Except for other lawful purposes and self-defence, the premeditation of mayhem, violence or criminal act are usually the outcome of the possession of illicit firearms. (Howden, 2010) This correlation between the demands for arms on one hand and crime and conflicts on the other hand, others have caused the criminality and multiplicity of conflicts to significantly increase the demand for illegal arms by non- state actors and civilians. (Jegade, 2010) While hoodlums, criminals and militants require them to perform their nefarious acts, their activities create an arms race between rival gangs wanting to maintain an edge over each other; and also between the state security forces and the criminals. The conflicts in the Niger Delta and the emergence of the Niger Delta militias are very important dynamics in the small arms situation in Nigeria because of the amount of weapons they have at their disposal and their active involvement in gun running. The government recognised this fact when it initiated a number of disarmament programmes in the region in 1999 and 2004, and recently extended amnesty to the militants in the region in 2009. (Xan, 2009)

Insecurity and the Privatization of Security

The failure of the Nigerian government to guarantee human security and freedom from fear has transformed security from a public service and necessity to be

provided by the government to a private necessity which individuals and groups have to provide for themselves (Agekame,2001) and (Alemika, 1993). The government's inability to prosecute persons arrested in respect of the various religious and ethnic crises fans violence and its continuity; while the weakness of law enforcement exacerbates the culture of impunity and robs the criminal justice system of the deterrence role. The Nigeria Police Force suffers from poor training, lack of equipment, corruption and other inherent and extraneous handicaps (Human Rights Watch,2015). Criminals and dissidents are often better equipped than the police thereby making the police incapable of repelling their attacks and unable to defend the public from criminals. Most recorded incidents of armed violence occur without the intervention of the police, a situation which the public perceive as a lack of willingness on the part of the former to engage armed crime and wilfully putting their lives in danger. (Hazen & Horner, 2008) Entities therefore rely on private security companies and vigilantes, possession of guns and installation of security gadgets, thereby increasing the demand for small arms (Alemika, 1993). Public office holders, thus protected, they commit flagrant and gross human rights violations against persons including extra-judicial executions of perceived criminals without been called to account for their actions.(Human Rights Watch ,2012) The scenario equally develops into a vicious circle where civilians and various armed groups and criminals acquire more arms to outweigh each other.(Ginifer & Ismail,2012) This development represents failure on the part of the Nigerian State to fulfil the legal and due diligence obligation imposed by international human rights laws requiring her to maximise human rights protection for the greater number of people. It depicts failure in the obligation to reduce small arms violence by private actors and consequently reduce the demand for small arms and the need for people to arm themselves. (Agekameh, 2001).

This largely explains the proliferation of private security companies, vigilante groups, amongst others. It is commonplace for security forces not to report to crime scenes on time due to lack of personnel or for logistical

reasons. Civilians are therefore left with no choice but to arm themselves. A research conducted in Nigeria in 2010 shows that, contrary to common assumptions, state security providers do not perform much better than the vigilante across the country, the people lack confidence in its security forces. The report indicates that, the deficiencies of the security forces combined with the level of insecurity have encouraged the emergence of a wide range of coping mechanisms, including community self-defence and vigilante groups, which in turn create new forms of insecurity (Small Arms Survey, 2011). In Nigeria as observed Onuaha, (2011), the failure to provide basics of life, effective and justly sharing of resources ensuring human security were also responsible for the explosion of small arms and escalation of violence. The mismanagement of public resources, as well as abuse of public trust resulted in far reaching and devastating impact ensuing rising poverty level, high unemployment and poor/failed delivery of basic services, not least security. Due to frustration and deprivation, many have taken to criminal activities such as piracy, armed robbery, kidnapping and militancy, which contribute to the demand side of arms penetration and circulation. Generally, the proliferation of small arms is a correlation of two major and mutually supportive factors – the demand for small arms (motivating factors) and the supply or sources. (Smart, 2003).

Weak Security Sectors

A 1997 UN Panel of Experts Report noted that when the state fails to maintain the security of its citizens and loses control over its security functions, the subsequent growth of banditry, armed violence and organized crime increases the demand for weapons required for self-defence by citizens seeking to protect themselves and their property from the security sector, criminals, former enemies or vengeful community members. More than half the world's small arms are in the hands of civilians who see them as valuable means for protection and security. Weak and unaccountable security sectors often lead to privatized security arrangements such as security firms and body guards. Private security companies, according to IANSA, increase demand for legal small

arms, when authorized by the state. It can also increase the supply of the illegal market if there is internal corruption or if stockpile management is weak. Private security guards, who are poorly trained, can also be responsible for small arms misuse and in some cases have been involved in human rights violations and criminal activity. Regulating private security companies are difficult for government authorities and international control over private security stockpile management is weak, most especially in the practical application of policy.

Regions or countries with weak security sectors are also highly politicized, which leads to increased corruption, lack of accountability, lack of co-ordination, interagency rivalries and limited professional competence. This in turn can lead to a vacuum in the security that may be filled by organized criminal groups or warring factions, resulting in greater insecurity and increased demand for the use of weapons by the community. As noted above, states who have weak governments sometimes supply small arms to selected groups of their own citizens to use against traditional rivals who are also threat to the state. However, weapons supplied to one group can generate new demand from others for instance the weapons might also be used for other purposes, like cattle raiding, which as well prompt other neighbouring groups to arm as well. Similar pressures in respect to arm occur when political insurgent groups in neighbouring states supply arms as part of destabilization tactics related to regional dynamics and competition. In both of these instances, surplus weapons inevitably find their way into economically depressed and socially unstable environments.

Misuse Military or Police Forces by Government

Individuals issued with arms by government sometimes misuse their weapons for example, police officers sometimes rent out their official police weapons to relatives and friends when they are off-duty to boost low incomes, as for instance was the case in Cambodia in the late 1990s. During the conflict in Aceh, meanwhile, members of the Indonesian military at times actually sold weapons to gain income on the side. Human Rights

Watch reported that the Indonesian security forces represented the largest source of weapons for rebel forces, arming of civilians or militias by governments. Governments sometimes provide arms to groups loyal to them in order to help fight another armed group. A large portion of illicit firearms consist of leakages from members of the armed forces and the police both serving and retired. This includes the remnants from the Nigerian civil war and leakages from returnees of peace keeping operations. (Hazen & Horner, 2016). According to the UN, private arms brokers play a particularly negative role in supplying weapons to areas of actual or potential conflict. Arms brokers include negotiators, financiers, exporters, importers, and transport agents, and are used to arrange every aspect of an arms deal between the supplier and an intended client. They trade most heavily in small arms and landmines. These intermediaries seldom own or even possess the arms supplies outright, and typically live neither in the country where the weapons are supplied nor the one in which they are received.

Arms brokerage is still fairly weakly regulated and the strongest mechanisms that exist are regional ones, for instance the EU Common position on regulating arms brokering. This is a legally binding agreement that obliges all EU Member States to develop controls over brokering based on the licensing of all individual brokering transactions. The Nairobi Protocol, to which the Republic of Sudan is a signatory, also requires both the registration of small arms brokers and the licensing of individual transactions. However, despite these agreements, many national legal systems still do not prohibit or clearly regulate the activities of arms brokers or when they have measures in place, do not enforce these effectively. This leaves a lot of opportunity for brokers to exploit the gaps and continue with their activities. Other factors that allow arms brokers to continue operating include deficits in the national capacity of many countries to control and monitor their airspace. Air cargo firms play an essential role in arranging the actual delivery of arms shipments, particularly in Africa, where the size of the continent and lack of road and rail infrastructure make air transport

more convenient. Studies have indicated that some air transport agents even have expertise in the falsification of documentation and circumvention of inspection to conceal cargoes.

Two UN Panels of Experts on Sierra Leone and Liberia that examined illegal arms transfer to the respective countries identified a number of ways in which the brokers managed to obtain ship and deliver weapons despite international sanctions. These included using false aircraft registration certificates, false flight plans and using end-user certificates that indicate Nigeria as the final recipient of the arms shipment while the arms were going to Liberia instead and Nigeria had no knowledge of the transaction. Illegal arms brokering is further enabled by corrupt government officials, especially at points of entry and exit and a lack of border control. This situation also makes it possible for certain governments to use brokers in order to conceal their small arms exports or procurement if they wish to do so.

Porous Borders

Another factor is that Africa by virtue of its size, the second largest continent in the world and population, the second most populated and given the level of its development experience persistent problem of border control. Also, due to the sheer size of some of its countries, for instance, Nigeria, has 770 km of shared land border with the Republic of Benin to the west, about 1500 km with Niger to the north, 1700 km with Cameroon to the east, 90 km with the Republic of Chad to the north-east and 850 km maritime border on the Atlantic Ocean. Out-stretched, these tally up to 4910 km of borders which have to be controlled. Each of these entry points, along with the airports, has been used to smuggle arms into the country. One can imagine how tasking it is to effectively control these borders. It is also interesting to observe that all three largest sub-Saharan countries, namely Sudan (the continent's overall largest), the Congo DRC (3rd overall largest) and Chad (5th overall largest) have been experiencing instability and armed conflict for long. It may well be that their size and their porous borders make it easy for weapons to be smuggled inflaming and protracting violence (Ngang,

2007). Ayissi and Sall (2005) argue that it will be very hard to find any country in the world capable of effectively controlling such extensive borders. Arms traffickers exploit this situation to smuggle SALW into the country.

Globalization

The forces of globalization bring with it opportunities and challenges, the elimination of state enforced restrictions on exchanges across borders and the increasingly integrated and complex global system of production and exchange that has emerge as a result further complicate the challenge of containing small arms proliferation. The idea of globalization and its advocate for free market forces with minimum economic barriers and open trade for world development provides ground for illicit trade in arms by minimizing custom regulations and border control, trafficking of small arms becomes easier. (Malhotra, 2011) stressed that, a miniscule percent of container ships have cargo checks, therefore making the arms movement smooth, faking documents bribing officials and concealing arms as humanitarian aids are common practices.

Cross-Border Smuggling

Nigeria procures arms from other countries for her legitimate use in connection with state security obligations (DICN, 2009). This constitutes a significant source of small arms proliferation. Additionally, Nigeria is vulnerable to illicit small arms infiltration from abroad because of her geographical location. She shares a long stretch of land border with the Republic of Niger and Chad in the North, Benin Republic in the West, and Cameroon in the East; in addition to a long stretch of Atlantic coastline. Each of these frontiers provides entry points for systematic smuggling of arms into the country.(Johnson,2009) Reportedly, the three most notorious arms smuggling frontiers are Idi-Iroko and Seme in the South-Western States of Lagos and Ogun; the Niger Delta Region; and the border posts in the north-eastern region.(Hazen & Horner,2006) Smuggling is also aided by the increased number of potential suppliers as a result of the end of the Cold War and weak international controls of armament flows (Weidache,

2005). These factors have created opportunities for militant groups and other private actors to access sophisticated small arms previously accessible only by members of the armed forces (Ngang, 2001).

Local Manufacturing

Home-made weapons, these usually circulate in small quantities, used by militia groups that do not have resources to acquire proper weapons and ammunition. An example is the case of the 200-plus Obo scouts of the Central Africa Republic (CAR), who have grouped together since 2008 to fight the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Too poor for military-grade weapons or even the kind of firearms American hunters take for granted, these ad hoc groupings have set about building an arsenal of homemade, single-barrel shotguns loaded. Nigeria also has a significant local supply of legitimate and illicit small arms through local manufactures (Wali, 2005). Section 22 of the *Firearms Act* prohibits the manufacture of firearms. However, the government established Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) set up in 1964 via the *Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria Act*, is legally empowered to produce arms and ammunitions in the country mainly for use by the military and the police. Given the legal status of its mandate, this does not constitute a significant source of illicit small arms. However, this is not the case with the cluster of unlicensed local craftsmen located in different parts of the country, who produce on the aggregate, a substantial quantity of illicit guns in contravention of section 22 of the *Firearms Act*. The clandestine nature of their activities negates due diligence, transparency and regulation as required by international standards. It also makes their products difficult to trace and makes the small arms position of Nigeria opaque.

Protracted Military Rule

Corruption adds to small arms proliferation, however, a major dynamic in the proliferation of illicit small arms in Nigeria is the legacy of protracted military rule. Until the return to civilian rule in May 1999, the country had been under military rule during 75% of its existence. This led to the entrenchment of a militarised national psyche and a culture of violence. The widespread use of small arms

to take over and maintain a grip on power had its own effects on the attitude and perception of Nigerians regarding the role of violence in the society in general, and the use of small arms in particular. Following years of protracted transition programmes and worsening civil-military relations, the military lost control of their monopoly over the means of coercion, as various groups within the society increasingly sought military responses to military oppression. This created the impression that political power flowed from the barrel of the gun. Many civilians sought power either by being allies of the military or by acquiring their own weapons.

3. Methodology

This study is anchored within a qualitative approach of inquiry and it engages the use of secondary sources of data for the information. Secondary data in general, connote information that is already documented both published and unpublished. In this respect, the information for the paper is generated from the books, journal articles, Newspapers, magazines and other related documents. It is a case study inquiry because it concerns the factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapon in Nigeria. In terms of analysis, the paper employed interpretive approach and presented issues on themes and sub-themes.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study focused on the factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. The study established that factors such as poverty, corruption, porous borders, prevalence of internecine conflicts and criminality, insecurity and the privatization of security, weak security sectors, misuse military or police forces by government, globalization and cross-border smuggling are responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. The dangers posed by these factors responsible for the proliferation of

small arms and light weapons in Nigeria have shown to be huge. There is hardly any day in the country that incidents that connect to the use of small arms and light weapons do not take place in Nigeria. While some of these incidents are widely reported, some are under reported. It is commonplace in Nigeria in this period for reports of insurgency, terrorism, kidnappings, militancy, banditry, pipeline vandalism and oil theft and illegal bunkering, illegal gold mining, ethnic and religious conflicts, Fulani herders' militia activities, communal land and boundary disputes, etc to hit the various news outlet. These crimes and occurrences happen with the aid and utilization of small arms and light weapons. To this end, the study recommends as follows:

- i. The issues of mass unemployment, marginalization, ethnic and religious chauvinism, bad government, poverty, political exclusion, corruption, uneven distribution of state revenue, absence of a true federal structure, prevailing culture of hate, etc should be adequately treated with the view to create an atmosphere that all Nigerians will see that they do have stake in the country. And thus, prefers to safeguard the country instead trying to destroy it with the use of small arms and light weapons (SALW).
- ii. There should be a properly coordinated sustained and integrated policy by the Federal Government to curb and contain the easy flow of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. By way of ensuring effective and comprehensive offensive measures on criminals and violent activities of non-state actors who thrives in the business of bearing illicit small arms to dispense terror to Nigerians.
- iii. There is the need for the Federal Government to mend the internal rift among members of the military on one hand to enable and enhance effective tactical, intelligence, operational and strategic coordination of the battle against insecurity in Nigeria.

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