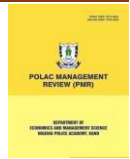




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ILLICIT ARMS PROLIFERATION AND SECURITY IMPLICATION IN BASSA LGA, PLATEAU STATE (2014-2024)

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Abstract

The proliferation of illicit arms in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State has emerged as a critical security challenge from 2014 to 2024. This period is marked by escalating violence, ethnic tensions, and communal conflicts, often driven by the availability of illegal firearms. This study investigates the dynamics of illicit arms proliferation in Bassa, examining its impact on local security, governance, and community relations. Drawing on qualitative data, including interviews with community leaders, law enforcement, and civil society organizations among others. The analysis reveals that several drivers contribute to the proliferation of illicit arms in Bassa; these include smuggling, politicians, youths, local manufacturers, arms dealers and theft of security forces arms constitute the major drivers. The influx of arms has not only exacerbated existing tensions between ethnic groups but has also empowered non-state actors who exploit local grievances for political and economic gain. In addition, the research explores the impacts of proliferation of illicit arms on security of lives and property to include; frequent crises, violent crimes, insecurity of inhabitants, loss of confidence in the ability of the state to provide security. The study pointed out that, addressing the root causes, strengthen border control, enforcing law regulating the possession of arms, disarmament campaigns and weapons collection programs, are efforts put in place to curb arms proliferation. Ultimately, this study underscores the need for the revisiting and implementation of recommendations of white paper reports of past commissions of inquiry into ethno-religious conflicts. The findings have contributed to ongoing discussions on arms control and security.

Keywords: Illicit Arms, Security, Proliferation, Bassa LGA

1. Introduction

There are plethora of challenges facing the world in recent times, one of the main issues that states and governments around the world are presently grappling with but without a sustainable solution is the illegal and indiscriminate proliferation of illicit arms in the hands of non-state actors which has effect on world peace, security and engendered violent conflicts. The United Nations (2020) has revealed that there are over one billion illegal arms in circulation globally which is acclaimed to be responsible for over 200,000 deaths annually. According to research conducted by the Africa Union and the Small Arms Survey in the year 2018, there

are roughly 100 million small and light weapons in Africa, of which 80% are in the hands of civilians or non-state actors, primarily rebel, militia, and terrorist groups (African Union, 2018). These weapons are the main causes of the militarization of civil life and the growth of a violent culture.

The spread of illicit arms in Nigeria has been hazardous. Unchecked and uncontrolled movements of arms have caused devastation, poverty, underdevelopment, and heightened conflict in many parts of Nigeria (Amos, 2023). The effects of Nigeria's rising weaponry proliferation rate are worrisome for the country's fragility of security. From the onset of the

fourth republic, Nigeria has been in and out of different conflicts, which have spurred the unregulated spread of weaponry. According to Omitola and Awotayo (2016), Nigeria has been caught in a web of recurrent incidents of armed conflict and criminal anarchy from the ethnic militias, Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen, and recently kidnapping as a result of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons since the country's democratic transition in 1999. The persistent threat to human security from the savage mass murders, organized and carried out by Fulani Herdsmen across the whole country, is now the clearest and most dangerous explanation of the uncontrollable and limitless access to tiny and light weapons in Nigeria. These illicit arms are consistently being held by non-state actors who use them for various criminal activities. The proliferation of illicit arms has become one of the major security challenges facing Bassa Local Government of Plateau state, attacks that featured killings, raping, abductions, tortures, suicides, cruelty and other arm related crimes are being carried out by non-state actors wielding illegal arms, this has made many individuals to deserted their communities for neighbouring towns in fear of being killed while others continue to live in constant fear. The security situation in Bassa Local Government, has a catastrophic effect on human security. It is a reality that insecurity and crime associated with illicit arms are a worldwide event.

2. Empirical Review

There are rarely any geopolitical zones of Nigeria without its major share of arms related threats to peace, security, and development that is either ongoing or recently resolved. Okafor (2017) and Theophilus (2020) acknowledged the view that several works contain relevant information on the origin, causes, sources, transit, and destination of SALWs in Nigeria in general, and the North-Eastern states, in particular, have been consulted. Onwuka (2010) has argued that trafficking by migrants is not entirely new in the global discourse. He however argued further that, the focus on it took an unprecedented turn at the end of the Cold War when the iron curtain across Europe was dismantled. Therefore, with the triumph of free markets and the enthronement of unipolar political and economic world view, arms

trade experienced phenomenal deregulation. This deregulation process promoted exponentially the availability of SALWs in Africa at costs that were suddenly affordable to those who hitherto stood no chance of procuring the weapons. In 2017, approximately 857 million civilian-held firearms were estimated, which is an increase of 32% compared to 2006 (Karp 2018).

The estimated stocks of SALW in sub-Saharan Africa, one of the regions facing the most serious problems due to illicit SALW proliferation, are 11 million state-owned SALW and 40 million SALW in the hands of civilians (Machakanja & Shollah 2021). While not every civilian-held firearm enters the illicit market, civilian possession is one of the main sources of the illicit proliferation of small arms. Legal arms exports between states remain another source as Karp (2018) states: "With the world's factories delivering millions of newly manufactured firearms annually and with far fewer being destroyed, civilian ownership appears to be growing globally." It is common knowledge that legal SALW exports often end up as unaccounted for stocks and turn into illicit proliferation. Moreover, state-held weapons also frequently enter the illegal market. There are other causes of illicit proliferation, such as stockpiles of SALW that remain unaccounted for in post-conflict situations. In the power vacuum of post-war Libya, a large share of the enormous stockpiles of SALW held by Gaddafi's army proliferated into neighboring countries. Tuareg mercenaries, among others, pursued a vast influx of weapons into Mali, which turned an existing conflict in the northern territories into a violent uprising (Marsh 2017).

There are both external and internal causes for the crisis of unaccounted for SALW, which this article seeks to decipher. The dramatic increase in proliferation of SALW in the last 20 years has led many to refer to a crisis of SALW control at the global level (Wisotzki 2020). The external causes of illicit SALW proliferation are supply- and demand-driven and are often beyond the reach of any measures of arms control and disarmament if the sources of proliferation are rooted in crisis in the public governance sector, corruption, porous borders, or other structural causes of conflict, such as poverty, deprivation, or unemployment.

Abagen and Tyona (2018) conducted a study on the impact of arms proliferation on Nigeria's National security. The major objective of the study was to investigate the rapid increase of arms and ammunition in Nigeria. The paper relied on secondary materials and data was analysed using qualitative method of data. Findings from the study real that Nigeria since independence in 1960 has witnessed a lot of internally-generated crisis, beginning with the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970, the battle for political offices through elections, ethno-religious crisis, the Boko Haram menace, Fulani herdsmen attacks, militancy in the Niger-Delta region and armed robbery among others has greatly contributed to the proliferation of illegal weapons in the nation, which entails that Nigeria's national security is under serious threat. The paper recommends the use of modern technologies by security operatives at our porous borders and seaports as well as adequate provision of security manpower and other logistics to help curtail the flow of dangerous illegal arms, and ammunition into the Nigerian nation-state.

Omitola and Awotayo (2016) investigated arms proliferation and challenges of national security and sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper made use of secondary materials and data was analysed qualitatively. Findings from the study revealed that Nigeria porous border; money laundering among other factors are major causes of arms flow into the country. The paper contends that all control initiatives have not worked effectively as illegal arms flow is still on the rise. The paper reveals that the proliferation of arms has created an ever-expanding circle of violent conflicts and hampered sustainable development of the country as all areas of socio-economic development are affected (Alobo & Nabiebu, 2022).

Olayiwola (2017) evaluated proliferation of arms and security challenges in Nigeria. The paper relied on secondary sources and content analysis was utilized. The trend has continued despite the illegality of the trade. The proliferation has taken a serious dimension since the beginning of the current political dispensation. As a result of this, Nigeria has faced serious security challenges. They include the Maitatsine religious riots in Kano and Bauchi; religious riots in Kaduna; conflicts in Jos, the Zango-Kataf, Yoruba- Hausa/Fulani, Ife-

Modakeke, Aguleri-Umuleri, TivJunkun, Ijaw-Ilaje, Ijaw-Itsekiri, Urhobo-Itsekiri and Ijaw-Urhobo; Niger Delta crisis and of recent the Boko Haram insurgency. The perceived attack from the Fulani herdsmen in certain parts of the country are various crisis faced as a result of the proliferation. This development calls for serious attention from the states as it poses serious security challenges. The increased number of internal crises or conflicts has been subsequent to the proliferation of arms in the state, and has engendered the further proliferation of arms.

Alimba, (2017) conducted a study which deals with controlling the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria: Emerging issues and challenges. The measures often adopted to regulate small arms overtime have yielded little or no result because of increased demand for and supply of small arms and light weapons are readily induced more speedily than envisaged worldwide. Recent accounts revealed that Nigeria is awash with small arms, and that large quantities of these weapons are found in illegal hands in nooks and crannies of the country. These weapons are used to commit crimes and fuel violent conflicts, thereby thwarting the achievement of peace and its sustainability in the country. Poor security network, corruption, border leakages and politics have played dominant roles in the excessive availability of arms in Nigeria.

Brown, (2018) examined the impact of proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the quest for national security in Nigeria. The thrust of this paper is on the impact of uncontrolled proliferation, stockpiling, trafficking, availability and usage of these arms on Nigeria's national security as it is believed to fuel alarming levels of armed crime, communal conflict, political instability, social unrest as well as making all the geo-political zones of the country to be flooded with small arms. The paper further argues that the inability of the Nigerian government and its law enforcement agencies to check the menace has led to a major challenge of security, as it was revealed that previous and current efforts at tackling the issue has not yielded much efforts as only a few numbers of seizures of illegal arms has been made hence the proliferation continues to sustain and exacerbates armed conflicts within the country. The study is anchored on the realist and failed

state theories using secondary data, literature evidence, descriptive and historical methodology. Findings reveal that the impact of small arms and light weapons on the society is too grave and devastating to be treated with kid's glove as it leads to massive loss of lives and properties, erodes social capital, facilitate corruption and climate of impunity.

Wonah, (2016) examines the proliferation of small arms in the Niger Delta and is of the opinion that the proliferation of small arms in the Niger Delta is a consequence of the existential realities of the people of Niger Delta. This opinion is made more concrete with the adoption of political economy approach with takes a holistic analysis of the subject matter. It took into consideration the inherent contradictions of a capitalist mode of production which finds expression in economic determinism as the underlying factor in determining the material existence of the people of Niger Delta as occasioned by the actors of the state. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons is acclaimed to be the major security challenge to people, societies and states globally, fuelling insurgency, human trafficking and drugs, terrorism, organized crimes, internal insurrections and civil wars, posing obstacles to sustenance of stable peace, security, health care services and economic development (Abiodun, Ayo-Adeyekun, Onafowora, & Nwannenaya, 2018). The undeniable reality to make reference to that the reasonable ascent in outfitted brutality across the Nigerian state is no question the consequence of the accessibility of little arms and light weapons assuming an unequivocal part in sustaining savagery from criminal related exercises to all-out battle in Nigeria (Moses & Ngomba, 2017).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study intends to applied descriptive survey because it is a method which allowed the use of various data collection methods such as observation, questionnaires, guided interview and documentation which were used in collecting the data of this study. Descriptive research design helps in the establishment of key factors associated with an occurrence, possible outcome, as well as their behaviours and condition.

3.2 Population and sample

This consist of the sum of elements collected by a researcher in order to draw a conclusion in a research work. The targeted population for this research combined some of the stakeholders involve in the field and aspect of conflict, victims of violence, Security agents, Peace practitioners, Traditional, Religious, ethnic and Youth leaders, Policy makers, parent and youths in Bassa LGA. The targeted population for this research will be 350 respondents.

3.3 Sampling Technique

In this study purposive sampling was applied especially when selecting the key informants especially the heads of departments of security, Religious and Ethnic leaders, Conflict Managers whose knowledge are important to this study. Therefore, due to their relevance to the study, this technique is applied to select sample of twenty (20) respondents to be interviewed. This research study also uses random sampling to gather Two hundred and Thirty persons to be administered questionnaire for individual (Security agents, peace practitioners' traditional leaders, religious leaders, ethnic leaders, victims of arm violence, youth, policy makers, men and women) to have equal opportunity of inclusion in the sample given.

3.3 Instruments For Data Collection

Interview: Interview methodology was employed for data collection in this study. Interviews are a personalized data collection method and are often conducted by persons trained for the purpose, using research protocols such as questionnaires (Yusuf, 2019).

Questionnaires: In this study the researcher uses both close ended and open-ended questions. Close ended questions were used as a method of collecting quantitative data whereas the open-ended questions were used to gather qualitative data.

Documentary Review: The researcher will review documents available and relevant within the context of the research topic. The researcher will review several documents to get information concerning to illicit arms proliferation and security implication from the internets and other sources.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Distribution of Respondents

While every effort was made to ensure the return of the copies of questionnaire by respondents on the spot, some respondents failed to return their copies in spite of repeated calls. In such circumstances, the researcher

went back to such field in order to distribute more copies of the questionnaire so as to make up for the quota allocated to each area. In sum, a total of 260 of the 350 copies of the questionnaire distributed were returned indicating 74.3% of returned questionnaire.

Table 1: Showing Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	140	53.8
Female	120	46.2
Total	260	100
Age		
26-35	102	39.2
36-45	68	26.2
46-65	46	17.7
66 above	44	16.9
Total	120	100
Educational status		
SSCE/ NECO	71	27.3
OND/NCE	104	40
HND/BA and BSc.	60	23.1
PGD, MSc and Ph.D.	25	9.6
Total	260	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From Table 1 above, 140 (53.8%) respondents are male while 120 (46.2%) respondents are female. Further to this, the age distribution of respondents shows that age 26-35 equal 39.2%, 36-45 equal 26.2%, 46-65 equal 17.7% and 66- above equal 16.9% of the total population of 260 respectively. From the table above, 27.3% of the

respondents are SSCE/ WAEC holders, 40% are OND/NCE holders, 23.1% are holders of HND/BA and BSc and 9.6% are PGD, MSc and Ph.D. holders.

4.2 Extent of proliferation of illicit arms and insecurity

Table 2: Extent of proliferation of illicit arms and insecurity

Item	Statement	Degree of Satisfaction			
		Strongly agree N %	Agree N %	Disagree N %	Strongly disagree N %
1	Very serious and destructive	163 62.7	75 28.9	12 4.6	10 3.8

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From Table 2 above, item 1 shows that 62.7% and 28.9 making a total of 91.6% (238) of the respondents agreed that the extent of proliferation of illicit arms and insecurity in Bassa is very serious and destructive, while 4.6% and 3.8% making a total of 8.4% (22) of the respondents are having a contrary view. This appears to be consistent with the interview response a respondent in an interview who state that: As a traditional leader, I

have engaged in a public relations campaign to reduce the number of illicit arms in the community, I periodically hold joint discussions with various ethnic leaders on the danger of illicit arms in our community, we engaged beyond just talking. We are working to manage the issue through information, education, and friendship. In this instance, a respondent during an interview observed: I have lived in Plateau nearly all my

life, am filled with sadness when I look how arms are use nowadays to perpetrate evil in the state by killing, stealing and attacking each other. This has further damage relationship of most especially Christians and Muslim in Bassa and environs. In the same vein, during an interview session, a respondent commented: The government has never done better than to say they are hunting individuals that are in position of illicit arms. They never manage to get to the root of the problem. People have lost hope in government. Government is not able to prevent or manage the problem. A contribution from another respondent points out that: Every person whether young or old, male or female, Christian or Muslim must contribute their quota in making sure that illicit arms use in fueling criminality are no more in the

state, we cannot live in an insecure environment and expect peace or progress. We must all join hands in the fight against illicit arms in the state.

In spite efforts to discourage people from possessing illicit arms. However, ethno-religious polarization, linguistic fragmentation and suspicions that sometime bring about hate and threat to the parties in conflict lead to more individuals to rush for arms to protect and provide security to their immediate community due to the inability of the government to do same this has further led to proliferation of illicit arms in Plateau state.

4.3 Drivers Contributing to the Proliferation of Illicit Arms

Table 3: Drivers contributing to the Proliferation of Illicit Arms in Bassa LGA of Plateau state

Item		Degree of Satisfaction			
		Strongly agree N %	Agree N %	Disagree N %	Strongly disagree N %
	Drivers of Proliferation of Illicit Arms				
1	Growth of cult groups, armed robbers, and Ethno-religious militias	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9
2	Indigene/settler dichotomy	163 62.7	75 28.9	12 4.6	10 3.8
3	Profitability and Socio-Economic Utility of Small Arms	186 71.5	67 25.8	4 1.5	3 1.2
4	Unemployment and Poverty	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In response to the statement from item 1 of the Table 3, one of the drivers of proliferation of illicit arms in Bassa is the growth of cult groups, armed robbers, and Ethno-religious militias, fair majority of the respondents 95.7% (249) agreed with the statement while 4.2% (11) were of contrary view. This is an indication that the growth of cult groups, armed robbers, and Ethno-religious militias has serious influence in the proliferation of illicit arms. This is consistence with response from a respondent in an interview who states that: The rate at which criminal groups in the state are on the increase, has increase the number of illicit arms in various communities of Bassa. Possession of such weapons, has been instrumental in fueling conflict and criminality.

Furthermore, item 2 in the above table, the results of the investigation showed that only majority; 91.6% (238) believed that indigene/settler dichotomy is a driver of proliferation of illicit arm in Bassa, while 8.4% (22) thought otherwise. The problem of settler-host community dichotomy has led this group to possess arms for use in an event of any conflict. Exploring respondent comments from an interview, the respondent observed that: In Bassa, the Hausa/Fulani as pointed by a respondent are regarded as settlers and thereby have no right to any form of control either political, or traditional power, which has led to lot of contestations between the indigenous ethnic groups and therefore resulted in taking of illicit arms to fight. These violent conflict in the local government have increase the number of illicit arms in

various communities. Closely related to the above is the item 3. In this vein, results in the table above showed that a lean majority, 97.3% (253) believe that that profitability and socio-economic utility of small arms has resulted to proliferation of illicit arms in Bassa, minority of 2.7% (7) have an opposing view. According to a respondent, criminalities ranging from phone collect, kidnapping, assassination, killing of rivalry cult group members among others utilizes arms to carry out such acts, these has resulted to number of illicit arms in circulation in the state.

Furthermore, in item 4, a fairly high percentage of 95.7% (249) agreed that unemployment and poverty while 4.2% (11) disagreed. To another respondent, the driver responsible for proliferation of illicit arms in Plateau State is the number of poor, vulnerable and unemployed youths who make lots of money criminal acts continue to procure arms and engage themselves in this illicit profitable venture leading to the proliferation of arms in the area.

4.4 Actors of illicit arms Proliferation

Table 4: Showing the Actors of illicit arms Proliferation in Bassa Local Government

Item	Statement	Degree of Satisfaction			
		Strongly agree N %	Agree N %	Disagree N %	Strongly disagree N %
1	Smugglers of Arms	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9
2	Politicians	163 62.7	75 28.9	12 4.6	10 3.8
3	Blacksmiths	186 71.5	67 25.8	4 1.5	3 1.2
4	Youth	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In response to the statement from item 1 of the Table 4, one of the actors of illicit arms proliferation in Bassa Local Government consequences of conflict in Bassa is the smugglers of arms, fair majority of the respondents 95.7% (249) agreed with the statement while 4.2% (11) were of contrary view. This has shown that those that have seen the selling of illicit arm as trade will always find a means of making sure the make available arm to their clients at all cost further increasing the flow of such weapons to the state. This is also confirmed by a respondent who said: the porous border of plateau state and Nigeria at large make it easier for smugglers to successfully bring in illicit arms to the state without being apprehended, this has led to many illegal arms in the hands of individuals.

Furthermore, item 2 in the above table, the results of the investigation showed that majority; 91.6% (238) believed that one of the actors of proliferation of arms are the politicians, while 8.4% (22) thought otherwise. Politics is one of the bases of contestations for inclusions in opportunities and rights as are available to

others. Many of these contestations result in violence which various arms are used to carry out such acts. A respondent state that, politicians during elections provides their thugs with various arms to intimidate, attack and kill their opponents, these arms at the end of elections are not collected which result in these thugs using them for criminal activities. Similarly, some respondent accused politicians for been responsible for arms being in the hands of unauthorized persons. He maintained that in attempt to win elections, politicians acquire weapons and give to some selected youths to help them rig elections with the hope that if elected, the interest of those youth will be prioritized. But most often, after winning elections these politicians abandoned these youths hence the need for them to create other alternative to earn a living whether the society frowns at such is inconsequential to them. This has scenario has place us on this unfortunate situation.

Item 3. In this vein, results in the table above showed that a lean majority, 97.3% (253) believe that another actor of proliferation of arms is blacksmiths,

minority of 2.7% (7) have an opposing view. During an interview session, a respondent commented: The activities of Blacksmiths in the state have increase the number of illicit arms, they produce such arms on demand and others are readily available for sale whenever a customer wants. The unchecked production of local illegal arms in the state has increase illicit arms. People have lost hope in government to provide security. Government is not able to prevent such activities in the state. Another respondent states that, the business that fetched quick money to blacksmith is the production of guns and other weapons as these are easily used by criminals to carry out their criminalities, until these blacksmiths are apprehended and punished, the continue flow of illicit arms in the state may not be control or stopped. Stated by a respondent during an interview, proliferation of arms in the hands of criminals has created an incalculable number of security challenges, and thus affecting the people's social, political and economic accomplishments. More importantly, fueling ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State affecting the security of not only plateau State, but Nigeria at large. Furthermore, in item 4, a fairly high percentage of 95.7% (249) of the respondent agreed to the fact that youths in Bassa are actors in proliferation of arms, while 4.2% (11) disagreed. As pointed out by respondents includes: Unemployed youths are always the once that carrying

arms for criminal acts in the state, during elections they are the once using arms to intimidate voters, during conflicts they are also involved in using these illicit arms to create havoc to people in communities. People are forced to abandon their houses threatened by insecurity. Another respondent in an interview stress that, it is unfortunate that illicit arms have become rampant in the hands of youths who used it for criminality in even their immediate communities. These weapons have further promoted division among persons contributing to insecurity in state. There are instances were militia gangs mostly youth exchange fire with military personnel even killing some in the process. The professionalism exhibited by these gangs as well as the kind of weapons used is worrisome.

This means that there are so many actors that engage in arms proliferation in the study area. This implies so many arms in the hands of unauthorized persons thereby causing security breaches in the local government and its environs. This shows that even though politicians, smugglers and those blacksmiths producing arms the role of youth gangs is at the center of criminal activities in the study area.

4.5 Impact of proliferation illicit arms on security of lives and property

Table 5: Showing the impact of proliferation illicit arms on security of lives and property

Item	Types of Information	Degree of Satisfaction			
		Strongly agree N %	Agree N %	Disagree N %	Strongly disagree N %
1	Impact of proliferation illicit arms on security of lives and property				
	Tools of Death and Destruction	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9
2	Abuse of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law	163 62.7	75 28.9	12 4.6	10 3.8
3	Promotion of Culture of Violence	4 1.5	3 1.2	186 71.5	67 25.8
4	Armed Crime	174 66.9	76 29.2	6 2.3	4 1.5

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In response to the statement on from Item 1 of Table 5, a fair majority of the respondents 95.7% (249) agreed that illicit arms are tools of death and destruction in Bassa, while 4.2% (11) have a contrary view. In a response from an interview, one of the respondent stresses that illicit

arms are used for committing murder, in our community many youths use arms to kill each other must especially those that are in gangs and cult. Unchecked proliferation of illicit arms like small arms and light weapons has led to untimely death of thousands of people since the

emergence of democracy. It has also contributed to psychosocial trauma, which takes much longer than physical wounds to heal, and which may eventually lead to death.

Furthermore, item 2 in the above table, the results of the investigation showed that majority; 91.6% (238) agreed that illicit arms are used to abuse of human rights and humanitarian in Bassa LGA, while 8.4% (22) thought otherwise. An interviewer state that, the continued use of arms to attack, kill, injure or forceful collection of items by criminals is against the fundamental human right, individual have right to life and any attempt to destroy the life is against human right. Availability and misuse of small arms in Nigeria has account for many serious human rights abuses. The coercive potential of these weapons, when exploited enable human rights abuses such as torture, rape and intimidation. The proliferation of SALW has also largely responsible for the violation of humanitarian laws, which by extension lead to forced displacement of populations. There is no doubt that the recurring clashes, criminal acts between and among groups in the state have affected the right of citizenry.

Item 3 of the above table. In this vein, results in the table above showed that a minority of 2.7% (7) believe that that proliferation of arms promotes the culture of violence in Bassa, majority of the respondent, 97.3% (253) have an opposing view. A respondent state that, the indigene/ settler dichotomy and issues of citizenship that is rooted in the nebulous national constitutional misconstruction and discriminatory tendencies of elitist politics have been the reinforcing

factors for the use of arms to violently attack ethnic or religious group on the plateau.

A culture of violence and impunity may develop with the availability of arms. SALW has contributed to a culture of violence characterized by gun dependency and glorification, and this can lead to Circle of violence (Laurence cited in Adededeji, 2022). This circle of violence serves as a threat to democratic political system. It also fosters increase use of state violence and repression and where there is no alternative to this, the people take up arms to restrict such repressive system.

Furthermore, in item 4, a fairly high percentage of 95.7% (249) agreed that armed crime is one of the impacts of illicit proliferation of arms while 4.2% (11) disagreed. The proliferation of illicit arms has far-reaching implications for human security, undermining various dimensions of security and exacerbating vulnerabilities for civilian populations. The availability of illicit arms has enabled criminal and arms groups to perpetrate indiscriminate violence against civilians, resulting in loss of life, displacement, and disruption of essential services. This directly undermines personal security and the fundamental right to life. The widespread possession of illicit arms among civilian populations and armed groups has complicated disarmament efforts, perpetuating the cycle of insecurity. This reinforces the need for comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of armed violence and promote sustainable reintegration initiatives.

4.5 Challenges of combating proliferation illicit arms

Table 6: Challenges of combating proliferation illicit arms in Bassa LGA

Item	Types of Information	Degree of Satisfaction			
		Strongly agree N %	Agree N %	Disagree N %	Strongly disagree N %
	Challenges of combating proliferation illicit arms				
1	Nature of arms	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9
2	Poor governance	163 62.7	75 28.9	12 4.6	10 3.8
3	Porous borders	186 71.5	67 25.8	4 1.5	3 1.2
4	Insecurity	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In response to the statement from item 1 of the Table 6 shows that fair majority of the respondents 95.7% (249) agreed with the statement while 4.2% (11) were of contrary view that one of the challenges of combating the proliferation of illicit arms is the nature of arms. A respondent in an interview state, many illicit arms are small and easy to carry without even the security noticing them, this makes illicit arms readily available in the society. The portability of certain small arms and light weapon make it easier for it to be carried unnoticed; their simplicity makes them easy to operate even by people who have had very little or no military training. This explains their use by untrained combatants and even child soldiers as it was the case in many armed conflicts.

Furthermore, item 2 in the above showed that only majority; 91.6% (238) believed that Poor governance is one of the factor constraint the control of illicit arms, while 8.4% (22) thought otherwise. One of the respondent stresses that failure of governance to provide the needed security of lives and property is a

factor that compelled citizens to acquire illicit arms to as an alternative means of providing security. Closely related to the above is the item 3. In this vein, results in the table above showed that a lean majority, 97.3% (253) agreed that porous borders paused a challenge in combating illicit arms in the local government with a minority of 2.7% (7) having an opposing view. This is stressed by a respondent who state that, porous borders make it easy for weapons to be smuggled inflaming and protracting violence in the state.

Furthermore, in item 4 respondents indicates that a high percentage of 95.7% (249) agreed that insecurity is a factor that contribute to the inability of controlling the proliferation of illicit arms, while 4.2% (11) have a contrary view. A respondent pointed out that, Insecurity in Plateau state makes it easy for small arms to enter illicit circulation through theft, leakage or re-sale. Customs officers are bribed by weapons dealers, while soldiers, police officers and security forces are known to have sold government weapons to criminals.

Table 7: Strategies and interventions towards curbing proliferation illicit arms and enhancing security in Bassa LGA

Item	strategies and interventions towards curbing proliferation illicit arms	Degree of Satisfaction			
		Strongly agree N %	Agree N %	Disagree N %	Strongly disagree N %
1	Addressing the root causes	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9
2	Strengthen border control	163 62.7	75 28.9	12 4.6	10 3.8
3	Enforcing law regulating the possession of arms	186 71.5	67 25.8	4 1.5	3 1.2
4	Disarmament campaigns and weapons collection programs	167 64.2	82 31.5	6 2.3	5 1.9

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In response to the statement from item 1 of the Table 7, one of the actors of illicit arms proliferation in Bassa Local Government consequences of conflict in Bassa is addressing the root causes, fair majority of the respondents 95.7% (249) agreed with the statement while 4.2% (11) were of contrary view. This is also confirmed by a respondent who said: when issues of

conflict, poverty unemployment etc. are addressed in the state it will help in reducing the illicit possession of arms, if youths are fully employed, they will not involve in criminal acts that involve the use of arms. Furthermore, item 2 in the above table, the results of the investigation showed that majority; 91.6% (238) believed that strengthen border control will aide in the control of illicit

arms, while 8.4% (22) thought otherwise. A respondent state that, when there is increase in patrol and border security, it will checkmate the inflow of illicit arms in the state. Similarly, a respondent emphasized that if the security will be sincere in performing their functions at various borders of the state and within the state, proliferation of illicit arms will have reduced, because in many instance the security men are accused of selling arms to criminals.

Item 3. In this vein, results in the table above showed that a lean majority, 97.3% (253) believe that effort towards enforcing law regulating the possession of arms will address the illicit proliferation of arms, minority of 2.7% (7) have an opposing view. During an interview session, a respondent commented: The activities of blacksmiths, cults and criminals in the state have increase the number of illicit arms, the need for enforcement of law that prohibits the illegal production or usage of such arms in the state is key to reducing proliferation arms in the state. It will also check production of local illegal arms and reduce circulation of illicit arms. Furthermore, in item 4, a fairly high percentage of 95.7% (249) of the respondent agreed to the fact that introducing disarmament campaigns and weapons collection programs in Bassa will regulate proliferation of arms, while 4.2% (11) disagreed. As pointed out by respondents: implementation of program that will disarm combatant and criminals that possess illicit arms, payment for illicit arms, skill acquisition, free education for youths, may go a long way in making criminal youths to surrender their illicit arms for skill or pursuit for education.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is no doubt that the accumulation of illicit arms and their diffusion into society by various drivers have continue to create security challenge looking at how they are used for criminal acts in the state, its accumulation led to the promotion and sustainability of insecurity in Bassa LGA. Consequently, in the end, only governments

can make and implement policies that will avert the proliferation of illicit arms. With this in mind, it is imperative that the growing anti-proliferation campaign adopts strategies that are capable of producing results without alienating governments a delicate balancing act. The sources of illicit arms in Nigeria cannot be completely detached from the sources in various countries. During conflicts, the availability and use of arms increase cases of violence, resulting in destruction of lives and properties. It is therefore imperative to quickly bring the spate of conflicts and arm crimes under control, else in the nearest future, Nigeria as a whole, will become a country of street gangs, lawlessness and anarchy, where organized and unorganized groups will erode and undermine government monopoly of arms, and even the relevance of security forces. Given the fact that incessant conflicts is one of the major factors precipitating the demand for small arms and light weapon proliferation, the government should take proactive measures to resolve conflicting issues. To this end, white paper reports of past commissions of inquiry into ethno-religious conflicts (like that of Plateau State), be visited and reviewed by the government with the view to implementing the recommendations. There are legislations to control the acquisition and use of fire-arms. These laws have become obsolete and insufficient to ensure deterrence in relation to penalties for breaching them. Therefore, punishment for those who breach the laws prohibiting illegal importation, acquisition and use of illegal and illicit arms should be made more stringent. Offenders should be made to face life jail terms without option of fine. In addition, government should develop proper programmes for raising public awareness and control of small arms and arms production and transportation. It should use its media organizations and other informal measures to educate the public on the dangers of use of small arms. To achieve this, engaging civil society organizations and other relevant bodies and agencies to sensitize the public on the implications of imbibing culture of violence is imperative.

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