An Assessment of Arms Proliferation and Control Mechanisms in Nigeria, 2010-2020

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Abstract: At independence in 1960, the Nigerian State was faced with challenges bordering on national integration and development. Though endowed with abundant human and natural resources, the goal of achieving overall national development through unity was truncated by consistent armed conflicts and criminality that has become part of the Nigerian State. Therefore, this study critically assessed arms proliferation and control in Nigeria from 2010-2020. The historical challenges and solutions of arms proliferation in Nigeria were reviewed and examined. The paper was guided by Radical Structural Conflict and Failed State Theories. The study was anchored on a qualitative method. The data were gathered through secondary sources, which were subjected to content analysis. The study identified porous borders, inefficient monitory mechanisms, saboteurs in the military, and poor working conditions of the security officials as the significant causes of arms proliferation in Nigeria. It was concluded that the accumulation of small arms and their diffusion into the larger society is both casual and symptomatic of the erosion of governance. Therefore, the study recommended, among other things, intensive policing and efficient monitoring mechanisms of the Nigerian borders; identifying the saboteurs in the military and other security agencies; engaging the services/supports of Nigerian citizens; improvement of employment and working conditions of law enforcement agencies would help in curtailing the proliferation of arms in Nigeria.

Keywords: Arms, Proliferation, Control.

INTRODUCTION

Leaders have desires to attain greatness in the eyes of the international community, which is one of their key goals in dealing with the external environment. That same desire motivates the acts and inactions of statesmen, political leaders, and policymakers in formulating policies that try to achieve domestic peace while also focusing on longer-term goals, such as reaching greatness on the world stage. A key indicator of national greatness is the development of capacity and capability to protect and care for citizens, defend territorial integrity, and maintain peaceful co-existing and relations across borders, among other things.

When Nigeria gained independence in 1960, it was presented with a number of issues relating to national integration as well as growth. The goal of achieving broad national development via unity has not yet been fully realised in this country despite the fact that it is blessed with abundant people and natural resources. This has been heavily influenced by the ongoing armed conflicts and criminality that have become entwined with the Nigerian state. The Adaka Boro revolt of 1966 signalled the beginning of the post-independence insurrections that culminated in the Nigerian Civil War in 1962. (1967-1970). Following this period of reckoning, the country has proceeded to add up its losses in terms of human resources, institutional harm, and economic
loss. The actions of these armed organisations are made possible by the free flow of potentially lethal weapons between different groups at different points in time. The majority of these dangers are exacerbated by the unfettered movement of small arms and light weapons throughout the country.

The Nigeria's legal system does not permit anybody other than security officers and individuals who have been granted permission by the police to own firearms, yet there have been instances of illegal firearms possession in the country. The Firearms Act of 1959 continues to serve as a significant framework for dealing with the challenges of guns proliferation in the United States. Despite the fact that the Act is woefully inadequate to cope with contemporary dangers in conformity with international standards, the Government has continued to rely on its provisions in dealing with these problems. The ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons makes a number of proposals to address the issues created by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa. For example, the creation of a National Convention on Small Arms for all member states is one of the recommendations. Nigeria has not yet established a National Commission, as of the time of this publication. There has been a Presidential Committee on Small Arms in place in the country, which required statutory authorization.

In October 2016, a cache of arms was discovered in Rivers State, after 22,430 militants, agitators, criminals, cultists, and other criminals accepted the state government's offer of amnesty and surrendered approximately 1,000 firearms, 7,661 rounds of ammunition, and 147 explosives, among other things (Egbuta, 2019). One thing that has taken many people by surprise is the fact that whenever the question of amnesty or disarmament comes up, there are always weapons to be surrendered to the right authorities by disgruntled members of the general populace. Armed non-state actors such as Boko Haram fighters, Fulani herdsmen, kidnappers, and other criminal elements are a cause of concern and a source of potential threat for the country's security. Thus, how these illegal firearms end up in the hands of unlicensed and unauthorised users, including non-state actors (Mohammed & Azar, 2017), as well as the complicity of security officials at the country's borders and ports, are called into doubt. As long as the unrestricted activities of arms dealers continue, combined with the presence of unmanned border crossings, the Government's attempts to combat asymmetric threats in the country will be dwarfed in the long run. As a result, it is on the basis of this premise that this article investigates the proliferation and control of armaments in Nigeria.

It is currently one of the most serious security concerns confronting Nigeria, Africa, and arguably the entire world, and it is caused by the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). Politics instability, communal clashes (such as Fulani/herdsmen clashes), terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, militancy, and other forms of crime are all fueled and exacerbated by the availability and trafficking of these weapons, which are detrimental not only to national security but also to Nigeria's long-term development prospects. Among other things, the United Nations (UN) has recently expressed concern over the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Nigeria, which is estimated to number more than 350 million as of 2015 (Soetan, 2017). As reported by the United Nations, Nigeria is home to 70 percent of the estimated 500 million small guns trafficking in West Africa, with 70 percent of those weapons purportedly being housed there (http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/topic/small arms in nigeria). Many people praised the Presidential Amnesty Program, which was established by the late President Musa Yar'Adua as part of the administration's efforts to curb insurgency activities in the Niger Delta, which threatened to disrupt oil exploration activity in the region. It was the massive amount of arms and ammunition that was snatched up from the region during the surrendering exercise that left the entire country, as well as the international community, in complete disbelief. The surrendering exercise was one of the requirements for the grant of presidential amnesty and was one of the necessary steps to accomplish this goal. A critical examination of the proliferation of arms and the control of their distribution in Nigeria is therefore required.
Theoretical Framework

The study is predicated within the confine of using an eclectic approach comprising; radical structural conflict and failed state theories, respectively.

Radical Structural Conflict Theory

The basic idea of radical structural conflict theory is that conflicts emanate out of the structures that characterize a society’s organizational framework. In like manner, such reactive practices as oppression, exclusion, marginalization, discrimination, inequity, injustice, just to mention a few, have been depicted as the foundation of conflicts and violence in any given society. The theory was made popular by the ideas co-authored by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the “Communist Manifesto” and “Historical Materialism” (Marx & Engel, 1977). The major points highlighted hinge on the fact that capitalism is an oppressive economic system which is to blame for conflicts in the society, as it has successfully enslaved the working class or proletariat through economic policies and control of the production of goods (Rawls, 1971)). Subsequently, capitalist-enunciated process of production and distribution has divided society into the bourgeoisie or elite and the proletariat or working class. In this way, conflicts in society have become a class struggle engendered by economic exploitation of the proletariat. Consequently, Marxists perceive every society to have a base and superstructure.

Failed State Theory

It is common to hear the phrase "failed state" used to characterise a state that has been judged to have failed in some of the most important functions of a sovereign government. A failed state is one in which social and political structures have been disrupted (Oji & Okeke, 2014). It is marked by failure on all levels: social, political, and economical. Failure to provide public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality, refugees and forced population movement are all characteristics of a failing state, as is a central government that is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory. A failing state also has a sharp economic decline (Oji & Okeke, 2014). The breakdown of the power structures that provide political support for law and order is invariably the result of anarchic forms of internal violence being triggered and accompanied by the collapse of the power structures that provide political support for law and order.

Literature Review

Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Africa

According to statistics, approximately 5,994,000 people have perished in Africa as a result of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the last 50 years (Renner, 2006). According to estimates, approximately 30,000 people have been murdered by small arms and light weapons (SALW) in West African fighting since the conclusion of the Cold War (Okoro, 2007). In Africa, the proliferation of small arms is on the rise. Those small arms, which are remnants of conflicts in Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, Liberia and Sudan, as well as stolen or lost licenced weapons, have played a significant role in the development of crime and armed violence in Nigeria, according to the United Nations Development Programme. In addition to having a population of more than one billion people, Africa serves as a major transshipment point for international trade.

There is evidence to show that illegal arms transfers are more likely to take place during politically charged periods such as presidential elections and transitional governments, which are frequently preceded by periods of violent conflict and instability (Akuul, & Shaibume, 2018; Best, 2006; Ninalowo, 2006). During an election rigging operation, politicians give over guns to a squad of political thugs who cooperate with them to win elections at all costs. Even after the elections are done and the new administration has taken office, the politicians have failed to return the weapons that have already been handed over to them. Political thugs and miscreants utilise the weapons they have in their possession to wreak havoc on the Government after that
In recent years, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) has resulted in a spike in violent crimes that jeopardise human security, such as rape, cultism, herdsmen's killings, armed robbery, and kidnapping, in virtually all regions of the country. While extending the duration of a conflict, small arms and light weapons (SALW) also reduce the likelihood of a peaceful resolution; as demonstrated in the Liberian Civil War and the Sierra Leone conflict, warring factions have been known to concede to peace negotiations only as a strategy to buy time to stockpile weapons in preparation for further attacks. In 2003, Weiss said that "the mere presence of guns hinders other conflict resolution options," which was supported by other researchers. At every level of violence, from criminal behaviour to full-fledged war, the availability of small arms has a role in perpetuating and making it more fatal. This is the case in both developed and developing countries (Weiss, 2003, p.4).

Finally, 80 percent of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in civilian possession were obtained illegally. According to estimates, Africa contains 100 million small arms out of the 640 million small arms in circulation worldwide, with around 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa alone (Oji, & Okeke, 2014). Approximately 59 percent of these small arms and light weapons (SALW) are in the possession of citizens, while 38 percent are in the possession of government armed forces, 2.8 percent by police, and 0.2 percent by armed organisations. The annual value of the gun trade is $4 billion, with up to $1 billion of that value being unauthorised or unlawful in nature. Every year, at least 1,249 companies in 92 nations produce eight million new firearms. This is a 5% increase from the previous year. Every year, between ten and fourteen billion units of ammunition are produced, which is enough to murder a million people (Oji, & Okeke, 2014). In the decade 1990-2005, African countries spent more than $300 billion on armed conflict, an amount that exceeds the whole amount of international aid that was provided to Africa during the same time period. Small guns in Africa are believed to be in the hands of civilians in a proportion of 79 percent (Ibrahim, 2005, p.122).

**Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria**

Small arms, guns and other weapons were introduced by the Europeans prior to colonialism during the illegitimate slave trade between them and African states. Subsequently, guns and other arms, ammunition and weapons were used by Europeans to realize their imperial ambitions when they used force to suppress Africa’s resistance to European incursion, conquest and colonialism. The gunboat diplomacy was popularly employed by the British to compel African chiefs to enter into various treaties with them (Soetan, 2017).

There was establishment of West African Frontier Force (WAFF) used by the British Government then, which was used to execute the British-Anglo War of (1901-1902), and other forms of resistance in Nigeria, West Africa, and Africa as a whole. The role of Royal Niger Company (RNC) later United African Company (UAC) backed by British Government in using force to suppress dissenting communities is imperative (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). These arms or guns possibly found their ways into the hands of Africans during the period of colonialism subsequently used in traditional hunting in the rural communities (Ter & Selumun, 2018).

In no time, guns and gun powder became symbols of strength and power, and were later transformed into ceremonial weapons displayed during funerals, burials, ceremonies and customary festivals among the natives. They also became symbols of individual and ethnic grandeur, and for deterring aggressors and invaders. Today, guns are no longer just ornaments of prestige, or just for hunting, safari and expedition. Guns have transformed in terms of functionality, lethality, sophistication, ubiquity and motive of ownership. They have become more weapons of criminality and instruments of the underworld (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). Ostensibly, the 1959 Firearms Act was enacted to check the increasingly rate of arms proliferation in Nigeria towards independence. The failure of the Nigerian Government to execute a comprehensive disarmament and arms destruction programme after the civil war (1967-1970) exacerbated the proliferation of guns and illicit arms trafficking (Ter & Selumun,
Nigeria later became a destination of SALW used in crimes, revolts, sabotage, religious crisis, communal conflicts, social agitations, internal insurrection, terrorism, insurgency, riots, militancy, electoral violence, political violence, social interest, ethnic tensions, cross-border smuggling, black marketeering, among others. Out of an estimated 640 million SALW in circulation world-wide, 100 million are estimated to be Africa, about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa alone and Over 70% of about eight to 10 million illegal weapons in West Africa are in Nigeria (Osman, 2010, p.155). Nigeria is in the same vein, bedeviled with porous borders as it shares common borders with Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger that are known as countries that transit illegal weapons into the country. Weapons are illegally procured through Cameroon, often as part of a shipment of machinery parts or smuggled inside petrol tankers. Other countries such as Gabon and Guinea-Bissau are also known to be countries through which illegal weapons transit to Nigeria (Ojudu, 2007). Other reported countries from which illegal weapons and ammunition are sourced include Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, South Africa, Turkey, and Ukraine, as well as Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Serbia (Davis et al, 2005). Other sources of illegal arms into Nigeria include:

(a) weapons captured from confrontations with the Nigerian military and police;
(b) weapons sold to militias and illegal arm dealers by the bad eggs in Nigerian military;
(c) weapons provided by political parties for electoral violence/intimidation purposes;
(d) weapons provided in exchange for stolen oil off-shore;
(e) weapons bought from ex-military men stationed in Bakassi and other places, and foreign/local arms dealers;
(f) weapons captured or bought from Cameroonian soldiers; and
(g) weapons directly supplied by Al-Qaeda links to Boko Haram fighters (Edeko, 2011; Abiodun, 2016).

A Critique on Arms Proliferation and Control in Nigeria

Perhaps gun ownership by Nigerian civilians is not a new phenomenon and stretches back to the country's colonial past (Saburi Biobaku, 1957). During the lawful and illegitimate (slave) trade that took place between Europeans and Africans prior to colonialism, Europeans introduced guns into the world. When Europeans employed force to subdue Africa's opposition to European incursion, conquest, and colonialism, guns and other weaponry, ammunition, and weapons were utilised to achieve their imperial ambitions as a result of the Second World War. The gunboat diplomacy was a popular strategy used by the British to persuade African leaders to sign numerous treaties with the country's Government. Resistance to British rule in Nigeria, West Africa, and Africa included the founding of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), which was used to carry out the British-Anglo War of 1901-1902, as well as other kinds of resistance in Nigeria, West Africa, and Africa. It is critical to understand the role of the Royal Niger Company (RNC), subsequently known as the United African Company (UAC), which was backed by the British Government in employing force to repress opposing populations (Chuma-Okoro, 2011; Ter & Selumun, 2018). During the period of colonialism, it is possible that these armaments or guns found their way into the hands of Africans, who then utilised them in traditional hunting and other activities in the rural community. In a short period of time, firearms and gun powder were transformed into symbols of strength and power, and were later used as ceremonial weapons at funerals, burials, rites, and traditional festivals among the indigenous peoples of the world. They also served as symbols of individual and ethnic greatness, as well as deterrents against aggressors and intruders, over time. Guns are no longer merely accessories of prestige, nor are they limited to hunting, safari, and expeditions anymore. Guns have evolved in terms of utility, lethality, sophistication, accessibility, and the motivation for possessing them. They have evolved into more sophisticated weapons of crime and instruments of the underworld (Soetan, 2018).
2017; Chuma-Okoro, 2011). The 1959 Firearms Act was enacted, ostensibly, to slow the increasing rate of guns proliferation in Nigeria as the country moved closer to independence. Nigeria’s failure to implement a comprehensive disarmament and arms destruction programme following the civil war (1967-1970) worsened the proliferation of firearms and illicit arms trafficking in the country. In 2002, several estimates and studies estimated the number of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Nigeria to be between 1 and 3 million, including those in the lawful possession of members of the armed forces and the police and those in the hands of civilians (the vast majority). Because of the stringent laws, an estimated 80 percent of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in civilian possession were obtained illegally. There is concern that a greater proportion of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in circulation in Nigeria is unlawful or illegal. Certain illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) were employed in armed conflict, such as ethnic-religious conflicts, communal confrontations, sectarian violence, cultism, political violence, electoral violence, vigilantism, militancy, and criminality, among other things. A total of 212 incidents of violent crime were reported between November 2006 and February 2007. 189 of these incidents were committed with weapons, 34 with other equipment, and two with the use of bombs (Chuma-Okoro, 2011).

Legal Frameworks for Combating SALWs Proliferations

A substantial part of the responsibility for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in Nigeria has been attributed to a lack of proper and robust legal and institutional frameworks to regulate and restrict the unimpeded movement of arms and ammunition. Notwithstanding that Nigeria has signed several nonproliferation frameworks, the majority of these frameworks have not been domesticated into the Nigerian legal system, as of May 2018. As a result of the report of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms and Light Weapons (WAAN) published in 2006, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a Convention to regulate the production, circulation, and civilian possession of SALWs in order to reduce insecurity and other transnational organised crime in the subregion. According to the WAANSA, the overall number of small weapons in circulation in the sub-region is approximately eight million (Ndiaye, 2008). However, while all member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons are encouraged to establish a National Commission for the Prohibition of Illegal Importation of Small Arms, Ammunition, and Light Weapons, Nigeria has not done so as of yet. Nigeria has relied on a Presidential Committee to deal with the issue of small arms for the past many years. A Presidential Committee as a national framework is, without a doubt, insufficient to cope with the growing issue of small arms and light weapons in the country.

The Nigerian parliament has taken attempts to close this gap in its services. As part of this effort, it has sponsored legislation that would establish a National Commission for the Prohibition of the Illegal Importation of Small Arms, Ammunition, and Light Weapons (David, 2018, p.30). When fully operational, the Commission would have complete authority over the regulation and prohibition of the spread of small arms, ammunition, and light weapons, as well as other related materials. When it comes to dealing with incidents of firearms infractions, the country looks to the Firearms Act of 1959 for guidance. (2015); (Osimen, 2015, p.11) The Nigerian Parliament has proposed a change to the Firearms Act to bring it into line with contemporary reality. A bill to amend the Firearms Act (Amendment) Act, 2018, was passed in November 2018. The bill provides for an increase in the amount of fines and more severe jail sentences for offenders, as well as the destruction of illegally imported firearms, as outlined in Sections 27 (1) (c) (i-v), 28 and 35 (2) of the Act, among other things. Criminal penalties of up to ten years in jail are recommended in the Amendment for anyone who illegally possess, import, or manufacture guns in the country. It also mandated a fine of one million naira against violators, as well as the stamping of all firearms sold or transferred in the country, as appropriate. If the Amendment is passed and becomes a legal document, it will be used to rectify the shortcomings of the Firearms Act of 1959.

Firearms legislation was enacted 49 years ago, long before the ECOWAS and other United
Nations Conventions were adopted. Because it no longer represents contemporary world dynamics and benchmarks, this study's opinion that the Firearms Act has become obsolete. Examples include the fact that the dynamics of threats have changed, particularly after the conclusion of the Cold War, and that this has necessitated a shift in approach in dealing with current challenges. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the Act to ensure that it remains relevant in light of current issues. For example, Article 18 of the ECOWAS Convention specifies that products must be marked with a unique serial number, the manufacturer's identity, the country of origin, and the year of manufacture. While Sections 13 (1), 7, and 42 of the Firearms Act do not require all of the information stated above to be included on firearms markings, they do need some of it. Tracing SALWs with international routing becomes more difficult as a result of this.

On the regional and international stage, there is a widespread belief that neighbouring West African nations such as Mali, Chad, and Niger operate a lax system that favours the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In fact, this is due to their long history of political instability, violence, and, at times, conflict, which has demystified state authorities and challenged the perception of states as having the exclusive right to use force, creating an environment in which arms traffickers can operate unhindered with little or no regulations restricting their activities (Malam, 2014). Arms traffickers due to reduction of national borders as a result of globalisation, finding it increasingly easy to cross borders into Nigeria, often with the assistance of local syndicates involved in illegal activity. In addition, the presence of numerous unguarded borders and circumstances like as the BH insurgency in the North East have resulted in a continual influx of guns into the nation, which has been cited as contributing to the escalation of the wars.

**Arms Proliferation as an Enabler to Internal Conflicts in Nigeria**

Some elements are increasingly being blamed for the protracted BH issue in Nigeria, according to recent developments. Aside from the regularly patrolled borders, Nigeria has a number of other access sites. Government officials have also revealed that there are hundreds of kilometres of trails connecting numerous neighbouring countries. For example, nine local government units in Borno state have a shared border with neighbouring nations such as Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, making up a total of 27 local government regions. Armed small arms and light weapons (SALW) are easily trafficked into and out of Nigeria through these unmanned channels. The result is that as of December 2018, Boko Haram rebels hold all ten local government districts in Borno North, according to the most recent available information (TVC Journalist Hangout programme, 3 December, 2018).

Additionally, the waterways and ports give dealers with the chance to smuggle guns into the country through the use of ships and speedboats, as well as the use of canoes in the creeks and other water bodies. Crude oil has been a commodity traded for weaponry in Nigeria's South-South sub-region, which is the hub of the country's oil sector, particularly during the height of the Niger-Delta conflict (2006-2008). Countries with lax arms control policies are believed to be complicit in the shipping of weapons through seaports in exchange for crude oil, with the assistance of officials from the affected areas in some instances. According to Lt Col. Musa, the spokesperson for Operation Restore Order in Maiduguri, Borno State noticed that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons was gradually becoming a transnational organised crime in Nigeria, and that it was becoming a threat to national security (Sagir, 2013, p.1). BH insurgency, Niger Delta crisis, rising abduction, ethnic disputes, and armed robbery in the South East all provide a favourable environment for arms trafficking and proliferation, according to the United Nations Development Programme. A number of border towns, notably in the North Eastern flank, serve as a crossroads for the trafficking of arms, as well as for the trafficking of stolen items, illegal substances, and hostage-taking by criminals, terrorists, and their allies (Sagir 2013).

Beyond all of this, and as horrible as it appears, there has been an allegation that some of the IEDs used by BH are built locally and utilised by members of the organisation. The gang is also
taking use of any and all opportunities that present themselves, including the uncontrolled actions of local blacksmiths who make some of the weapons, as well as the increase in arms trafficking and proliferation. The Boko Haram insurgency has maintained its grip on Borno state, killing dozens of soldiers in a series of attacks in Buuni Gari and Metele, among other places.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Indisputable evidence exists that the accumulation of small guns and their dissemination into larger society are both a result of and an indication that Government is failing. The promotion of sustainable security, which is based on the provision of basic needs and infrastructural facilities, is the opportunity cost of weaponry accumulation.

The complex difficulties of weapons proliferation and illicit trafficking require a coordinated and comprehensive response, yet current approaches are fragmented and under-resourced, making it difficult to confront the challenges head-on. There is no coordinated set of sub-regional programmes in place to combat illicit arms trafficking at the present time. Programmes to establish effective controls over lawful arms possession and transfers, both among civilians and within state security services, continue to be woefully underfunded. Programs to disarm ex-combatants, remove unlicensed firearms from civilians, and destroy or properly dispose of "surplus" stockpiles of weapons or captured illicit weapons are all examples of such efforts. Transparency, information exchange, and dialogue between governments on these issues continue to be lacking in many cases.

In Nigeria, the number of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the hands of criminals and even innocent civilians is worrying. An obvious link exists between increased and unmanaged armaments proliferation and the persistence of asymmetric threats in the country. However, in order to win the battle on terror, it is necessary to first win the war on weaponry proliferation. This is due to the fact that the unrestricted flow of weaponry empowers criminals and instils confidence in their ability to commit crimes. Apart from that, the Government must acquire the support and confidence of the population in order to be victorious in the struggle against proliferation of armaments and the threats it poses to national security. To do this, powerful institutions must be established, which must be supported by a strong legal framework that criminalises every breach and punishes those who violate it. It is necessary to take a comprehensive approach in order to reduce widespread socio-economic and political instability, which is caused by unemployment, poverty, and corruption, among other factors, and which produces and promotes a culture of violence.

If the Nigerian Government and other African countries strictly adhere to the measures outlined above, it is reasonable to expect that the proliferation of small arms and weapons, as well as other security challenges, will be significantly reduced, and their effects on both individuals and the state will be reduced.

According to a recent study, 500 million small arms and light weapons exist in the globe, with 100 million of them being located in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 857 million small arms and light weapons in the world, 500 million are illegal. Nigeria accounts for approximately 7.5 percent of the total. According to the outcomes of a National Consultation on Physical Security and Stockpile Management that took place in Abuja, this alarming figure was reaffirmed. According to a study conducted by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament and the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Nigeria is home to 350 million of the 500 million small arms and light weapons in West Africa. With a whopping 7.5 percent of Africa's illegal arms and 70 percent of the West African sub-SALWs, region's 90 percent of which are in the hands of non-state actors, is it any wonder that the country is in such turmoil? However, with the flood of weapons from the aftermath of the battles in Libya and Mali, the situation is only expected to deteriorate further. Nigerian Customs Services recently announced that it had confiscated weaponry and ammunition imported into the country from countries such as America and Europe on 17 different times between 2012 and 2016, at various points of entry.
This has plainly demonstrated that there is a growing market for small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in the country, and the Government should intervene more firmly to stem the ominous tide. Despite the fact that they demonstrate a tangible negative impact on national efforts at integration and development, the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta, the threat of herdsmen in the North-Central and the rising wave of violent crimes, including armed robbery and kidnappings, particularly in the South-East and South-West of the country are all directly linked to the increase in small arms and light weapons (SALWs).

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are highlighted to strengthen arms control in Nigeria:

- Nigerian security agencies should carry out intensive Policing and efficient monitoring mechanisms of the Nigerian Borders. This would help in reducing the rate of arms proliferation in Nigeria.
- The Nigerian Government should set up a mechanism to identify the saboteurs in the military and other security agencies. These saboteurs should be used as an example to others to deter them from engaging in this illicit proliferation of arms.
- The Nigerian Government should engage the services/support of Nigerian citizens. The citizens should be enlightened on the danger inherent in arms proliferation in the community.
- The Nigerian Government should increase the salary of security agencies patrolling the borders. The security personnel should be adequately paid to dissuade them from engaging in the illicit proliferation of arms.
- Adoption of national arms control strategy (NACS) and implementation of national policy on SALW
- Robust funding and procurement of modern equipment, arms and ammunition

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