

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Proliferation and Problem of National Security in Nigeria

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Abstract

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the major security challenges currently facing Nigeria, Africa and indeed the world in general. The trafficking and wide availability of these weapons fuel communal conflict, political instability and pose a threat, not only to national security, but also to sustainable development. The widespread proliferation of small arms is contributing to alarming levels of armed crime, and militancy. Therefore, the trust of this paper dwell on scanning the role of government and policy makers, in checking SALW in Nigeria and to ascertain the level of insecurity this menace had incurred in the Nigerian state. It was revealed that inability of the Nigeria government and the law enforcement agencies to check the supply and the demand factors of the proliferation of SALW in Nigeria has heightened and worsened the security situations in the country. The paper further asserts that availability of small arms have direct influence on the escalation and sustenance of insecurity and therefore, drew a conclusion on the basis of which the recommendations were made.

Keywords: Small Arms, Light Weapons, Proliferation, National Security, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between small arms and insecurity has been the object of contentious debates among scholars. While some scholars argue that small arms are the direct cause of insecurity, others maintain that small arms are merely trigger of insecurity or precipitating factor. Despite this seeming apparent disagreement, both scholars commonly agree that the proliferation of small arms poses serious challenges to the sustenance of peace and stability of any society. They further assert that availability of small arms have direct influence on the escalation and sustenance of insecurity. In his famous year 2000 millennium report to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the then Secretary General, Kofi Anan, brought the phenomenon of small arms proliferation to the forefront of UN's agenda by noting as follows; The death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems -and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of the carnage they cause small arms, indeed, could well be described as Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD). Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue: it is also an issue of human right and development. The proliferation of small arms sustains and exacerbates armed conflicts. It endangers peace keepers and workers. It undermines respect for international humanitarian laws. It threatens legitimate but weak, governments and it benefits terrorists as well as the perpetrators of organized crime (Kofi, 2010). Some of the old threats that assumed new dimensions include small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation, armed robbery, ethno-religious conflicts, militancy, assassinations, cultism, human trafficking, terrorism and kidnapping. Threats considered to be relatively new in Nigeria – though not without precedent, in the strict sense of it – are the outbreak of Islamic extremism and domestic terrorism, evident in the growing audacity of the “Boko Haram” sect including the 50th Independence Day (1 October 2010) twin bomb blasts in Abuja that killed 12 people, the recent (14 April 2014) Nyanya motor park bombing that claimed more than 75 lives and injured several dozen others and the abduction of over 200 girls of GGSS in Chibok, Borno State the next day living the country in a state of insecurity. A common denominator in the manifestation of both old and new threats is the use of SALWs. Thus, Nigeria now features prominently in the three-spot cline of transnational organised trafficking of SALWs in West Africa: origin, transit route and destination. Weapons in circulation in Nigeria come from local fabrication, residue of guns used during the civil war, thefts from government armouries, smuggling, dishonest government-accredited importers, ethnic militias, insurgents from neighbouring countries and some multinational oil corporations operating in the oil-rich but crisis-plagued Niger Delta. When and where these SALWs are deployed, human security has been the main victim. Studies indicate that guns are the weapons of choice for common crimes of insecurity. In Nigeria, small arms are predominant weapons of aggression. The most disturbing development that remains a source of worry to both academic and policy Analysts is the quality and quantity of weapons used in the execution of these crimes coupled with the attendant wanton destruction of life and property. There is the urgent need to re-examine the issue of small arms and light weapons proliferation and its implications on the national security of Nigeria. It was hoped that, at the end of the cold war, there will be a guaranteed worldwide optimism for international peace and security. A shift from super power proxy conflicts in the third world to socio-economic development appeared a viable project. It is disheartening to rediscover that, actual events in recent years have disastrously shattered those expectations. In place of enhanced security,

virulent internal insecurity accompanied by unprecedented civilian casualties and gross violation of human rights have emerged at an alarming rate. The local roots and causes of insecurity are numerous and diverse. However, in nearly all these cases, the diffusion of small arms has played a decisive role in the escalation, intensification and resolution of insecurity.

In contrast to the conventional view inherited from the cold war era, emerging violence attest to the role of weapons as stimulus to insecurity and a harbinger of massive human rights violation and humanitarian crisis. In many cases, the availability of weapons has engendered national insecurity, which otherwise may not have occurred. The accessibility of small arms has been made an issue of choice. Illicit arms transfer is not a particular country's problem, nor does the spread of deadly weapons stop at national borders. Guns and small arms are no longer the preserves of militias and police force but have fallen into the hands of ordinary criminals, terrorists, ethnic militias and death squads around the world. What is noteworthy is that while leaders and nations, given the experience of two world wars had concentrated on placing restrictions on the sale and transfer of big and conventional weapons, small arms proliferation was tragically ignored.

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

According to Obasi (1999) a review of literature offers an opportunity to identify gaps in existing work and through identification of such limitations of new research problem worth investigating can be discovered. This work adopts the definition of SALWs provided by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention. 'Small arms' refers to arms used by one person, and which include firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as exploding bombs, incendiary bombs or gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missiles, missile systems or landmines; revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbines; machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns. 'Light weapons' are portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team, and which include heavy machine guns, portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted portable anti-aircraft cannons; portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns; portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; portable anti-aircraft missile launchers; and mortars with a calibre of less than 100 millimetres. Although the concept of human security has gained currency recently, the idea is not fundamentally new. The ontological and epistemological assumptions that have underpinned previous orthodox security and policy formation simply did not recognize, include or value it. The word security emanated from the Greek word *Se-Cura*, meaning "to be in a state of no fear". This state of being free from any threat within or without underscores the importance of putting in place actions and structures that can ensure the shelving of a people away from any harm. There is no doubt that security has been a subject that has attracted a rapidly growing interest and concern among the scholars in social sciences whereby a wide spectrum of issues on the subject – security has nevertheless been studied and new breakthroughs and findings have been made. The experience of the world in recent times emphasise a paradigm shift in security discourse. The specific term 'national security' was first officially introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report. The report captured seven dimensions of the national security concept: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. Two main aspects of national security are identified in the report: safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression; and protection from sudden disruptions in the pattern of daily life, whether in homes, jobs or communities. The conceptualization of security from the national security perspective represents a paradigmatic shift from orthodox security thinking, which privileges the protection of state power over an approach that accounts for the complex social and economic relations of its citizens.

National security is defined here as freedom from actual and potential threats to national life that may arise either as a result of human actions or inactions, or from natural disaster such as flood, earthquake, famine, drought, disease and other natural calamitous events resulting in death, human suffering and material damage. The emphasis on national security derives essentially from three fundamental convictions – namely the sanctity and inviolability of human life, the universality and dignity of human rights, and the existential imperatives of and value for individual safety in a world full of multifarious threats. National security is, therefore, rooted in three basic instincts: self-preservation, self-extension and self-fulfilment. By contributing to the disruption of the pattern of daily life at the individual, community and societal levels, the proliferation of SALWs plays a key role in denying people entitlement to these three core national values, central to the notion of national security. The word security according to BBC dictionary of English Language refers to all the precautions that are taken to protect a given location or place from danger...security is also a legal protection against possible harm or loss (BBC Dictionary, 1992, p.1048). The United Nations Development Programme (1994) posits that human security (an aspect of national security) refers to "freedom from fear and freedom from want"... "safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life –whether in homes, in jobs or in communities."

Christopher (2011) however defines security as activities that ensure protection of a country, persons, and properties of the community against future threats, danger, mishaps and all other forms of perils. However,

Babangida (2011) views national security “as the physical protection and defence of our citizens and our territorial integrity, of which it is a part, but also the promotion of the economic wellbeing and prosperity of Nigerians in a safe and secure environment that promotes the attainment of our national interests and those of our foreign partners. Furthermore, Ngang (2012) asserts that “security means protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life in homes, offices or communities... security must be related to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis, threats to human injury among others.”

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Most research is founded on a question that borders on a specific subject matter. Therefore, the researchers of this paper not only questions, but ponders and develops thoughts or theories on what the possible answers could be. These thoughts and theories are then grouped together into themes that frame the subject. This is what is known as a theoretical framework. It’s a process of identifying a core set of connectors within a topic and showing how they fit together or are related in some way to the subject in question. This 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 and 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 meditating 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 engage 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.

PROLIFERATION OF SALW IN NIGERIA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The first small arms came into general use at the end of the 14th century. Initially they were nothing more than small cannon held in the hands, fired by placing a lighted match at the touch hole. Later a stock was added- the match lock and the first real handgun. Perhaps, gun possession by civilians in Nigeria today, is not a new and predates colonialism. Guns were introduced by the Europeans prior to colonialism during legitimate and illegitimate (slave) trade between them and Africans. 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. There was establishment of West African Frontier Force (WAFF) used by the British which was used to execute the British-Aro War of (1901-1902), and other forms of resistance in Nigeria, West Africa, and Africa. 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 to the hands of Africans during the period of colonialism subsequently used in tradition and hunting in the rural community. 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.

THE PROLIFERATION OF SALW IN NIGERIA: ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Nigeria is a transit and destination of SALW. The proliferation of SALW is well documented in the literature, for examples, crime, revolts, subversion, sabotage, religious crisis, communal conflicts, social agitations, micro-nationalism, insurrection, terrorism, insurgency, riots, militancy, electoral violence, political violence, social interest, ethnic tensions, cross border smuggling, porous borders, black marketeering, local manufacturing, privatization of security, insecurity, poverty, economic crisis, mass unemployment, 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. As at 2002, the number of SALW in Nigeria was estimated by various reports and studies at between 1 and 3 million including arms in lawful possession of members of the armed forces and the police and those (majority) in the hands of civilians. The 80% of SALW in civilian possession were illegally acquired because of the strict regulations. It is instructive to mention at this junction that SALW does not just move everywhere, but where they are demanded. Therefore, there are demand factors in the proliferation of SALW. Some of the scholars focus on the supply side or push factors of proliferation of SALW like willing sellers, lucrateness, and porous borders while others concentrate on demand or pull factors like crime, violence, conflicts, riots and unrests (Ayissi and Sall (eds), 2005; Florquin and Berman (eds), 2005; Vines, 2005; Hazen and Horner (eds), 2007; Chuma-Okoro, 2011; Nte, 2011). Out of the 640 million small arms circulating globally, it is estimated that 100 million are found in Africa about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa, alone. The majority of these SALW about 59% are in the hands of civilians, 38% are owned by government armed forces, 2.8 % by police and 0.2% by armed groups. The gun trade is worth \$ 4 billion annually, of which up to \$ 1 billion may be unauthorized or illicit. Eight million new guns are manufactured every year by at least 1, 249 companies in 92 countries. Ten to 14 billion units of ammunition are manufactured every year enough to kill every person in the world twice over. African countries spent over 300 billion dollars on armed conflict between 1990 and 2005 equalling the sum of international aid that was granted to Africa within the same period. An estimated 79% of small arms in Africa are in the hands of civilians (Ibrahim, 2003; Nte, 2011). Between 1999 and 2003, there were over 30 communal clashes, sectarian violence and ethno-religious conflicts with each claiming hundreds of lives and properties, and internal displacement of women and children.

The proliferation and use of SALW in ethno-religious clashes and armed robbery have killed more than 10,000 Nigerians, an average of 1000 people per year since 1999. The majority of casualties about 66% in Kano riot of 2004 were SALW victims sustaining permanent disabilities. Injuries due to SALW have increased

as much as ten-fold in urban Nigeria because most homicides are committed using SALW (John, Mohammed, Pinto and Nkanta, 2007; Nte, 2011). The problems of national security and proliferation of SALW are worsened by the inability of the police to reduce violent crime, ensure law and order and provide adequate security to the populace. None of the security agent currently possesses the training, resources or personnel to perform their duties effectively due to lengthy and porous nature of Nigerian borders (Hazen and Horner, 2007). Nte (2011) posits that there is a direct link between the acquisition of weapons like SALW and escalation conflicts into a full-brown war. The Nigerian state has made several efforts to check the proliferation of SALW but not from the demand side, or the root causes. Thus, most of these efforts had been superficial or superfluous. For example, the Nigerian government established National Commissions for the Control of the Proliferation and Unlawful Circulation of Light Weapons (NATCOM) for the implementation of the ECOWAS moratorium in July 2000 less than two years after the agreement on the moratorium which was politically-binding moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms, later legally binding in 2006. A year later in July 2001, the NATCOM publicly destroyed a stockpile of arms and ammunition seized by the security forces in which a total of 1,257 weapons worth 50 million Naira were destroyed. Among the weapons destroyed were 428 rifles, 494 imported pistols and 287 locally made pistols. These unlawful weapons were seized by the security forces between 1998 and 2011. In September 2001, a request by the NATCOM for the suspension of the granting of licences to carry weapons by police representatives was accepted (Aderinwale, 2005; Ocheche, 2005). Nigerian government played a prominent role in the adoption of the Declaration of a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa signed on October 31, 1998 in Abuja, Nigeria renewable for a period of three years later extended in 2001. On December 1999, the ECOWAS member states adopted a code of conduct for implementation of the Moratorium. The Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) was established with assistance from UNDP (Ndime, 2005). The Nigerian government has also entered into bilateral cooperation with its neighbours, Benin Republic, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. They have taken a number of measures to boost cross-border cooperation and enhance security at the borders. These measures include the establishment of joint commissions like Chad-Nigeria Joint Commission, Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission, Benin-Nigeria Joint Commission, Cameroon-Nigeria Joint Commission, Lake Chad Basin Commission and joint border patrols between Nigeria and Republic of Benin (Adejo, 2005). Nigeria is a signatory to a number of international measures to curb SALW proliferation. It supported the adoption in 2005 of the international instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and has argued that political document needs to be transformed into a legally binding instrument in order to control effectively and criminalize the illicit movement of SALW. At the regional level, Nigeria has supported ECOWAS measures aimed at reducing the proliferation of SALW. At the global level, Nigeria is a signatory to the United Nations (UN) Firearms Protocol on November 13, 2001; which it ratified on July 15, 2004 (Vines, 2005; Hazen and Horner, 2007). Nigeria supported the extension of ECOWAS Moratorium in October 2004 for the second time and the agreement to strengthen it by transforming it into a legally binding convention.

At the national level, Nigeria continues to rely on the National Firearms Act of 1959 as the legal instrument governing small arms possession, manufacture and the use in the country as amended even though the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree No.5 was promulgated in 1984 and later the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Act. In July 2000, the Nigerian government proposed and established a National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons the purpose of which was to determine the sourcing illegal small arms and collect information on small arms proliferation in Nigeria. In May 2001, the government established a second committee aimed at implementing the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium. These two committees were later merged into a single committee. The committee has accomplished very little in the past five years in large part due to lack of political will, financial support, technical expertise, and institutional capacity. In other words, NATCOM was incapacitated by underfunding, corruption on the part of law enforcement agencies. There were renewed efforts in 2007 to revive the activities of the Committee and legislation is being written to convert the Committee into a national commission. It requested support from the ECOWAS Small Arms Programme to conduct the survey and to undertake other activities in support of the implementation of the 2006 ECOWAS Convention (Hazen and Horner, 2007). Inaugurated in 2001, the NATCOM is responsible for the registration and control of SALW, and granting of permits for exemptions under the ECOWAS Moratorium (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). Despite these national-efforts, the rate of accumulation of SALW is increasing and becoming endemic as various forms of violence and casualties are in the recent times recorded in the Northern part of Nigeria. There is lack of capacity and strong legal or effective institutional frameworks to regulate SALW and combat the phenomenon of SALW proliferation in Nigeria, particularly Northern part of Nigeria (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). More fundamentally, the Nigerian state is yet to deal with the demand factors of SALW proliferation preferring to dwell on the symptoms rather than the root causes. The demand factors are the root causes of SALW proliferation, because if there is no demand, there will not be supply. For instance, the Amnesty initiative saw over 15 000 militants surrender arms at the expiration of the DD

phase of the Amnesty. Weapons recovered during the disarmament process included 2 760 assorted guns, 287 445 ammunitions of different calibre, 18 gun-boats, 763 dynamite sticks, 1 090 dynamite caps, 3 155 magazines and several other military accessories, such as dynamite cables, bulletproof jackets and jack-knives. It is widely believed that militants only surrendered a small fraction of their arms, as most of them doubted the government's genuine commitment to the amnesty.

The regular interception of illegal arms trafficking within and across the borders by security agencies also reveals the worrisome dimension that arms proliferation has recently assumed in the country. The media is awash with frightening reports of sophisticated SALWs being seized by security operatives either at ports, borders, highways or crime and conflict scenes. ". On July 9, 2007, about 4.30pm, a Delta state police team arrested a Warrant Officer (WO₂) serving with the Nigerian Air Force 33 Logistic section in Makurdi, Benue State, while transferring arms to a location in the Niger Delta. In his Toyota Corolla car with registration No. AJ41 MKD, there were 5 assault rifles, 449 rounds of AK47 live ammunition, 4 brand new live jackets and 5 empty magazines. When the police interrogated the air force officer turned arms dealer, he mentioned the name of a senator as being the owner of the weapons and that the arms are from the Republic of Chad .(Bestman Wellington, 2006.) In August 2010, security agents in Maiduguri also arrested a commercial driver carrying 25 AK-47 rifles and hundreds of rounds of ammunition in a Peugeot 504 vehicle. These arms, allegedly smuggled into the country from Cameroon, were destined for Jos – where cascading ethno-religious violence has caused serious devastation in human and material terms. In November 2010, a woman identified as Lucy Danagana was intercepted at Dabar Masara, Borno State, trying to smuggle 10 AK-47 rifles from Chad Republic into Nigeria. She entered Nigeria from Chad through Kofia in Cameroon via a boat. Around the same period, the police in Ibadan, Oyo State, intercepted a large cache of arms and ammunition from a suspected bank robbery squad. The seized arms and ammunitions included 47 rifles, 103 AK-47 rifle magazines, one assault rifle magazine, 2,540 AK-47 rounds of ammunition, 727 general purpose machine gun (GPMG) rounds of ammunition, three chain bullets, explosive materials, two GPMGs and one chisel (a tool with a characteristically shaped cutting edge).

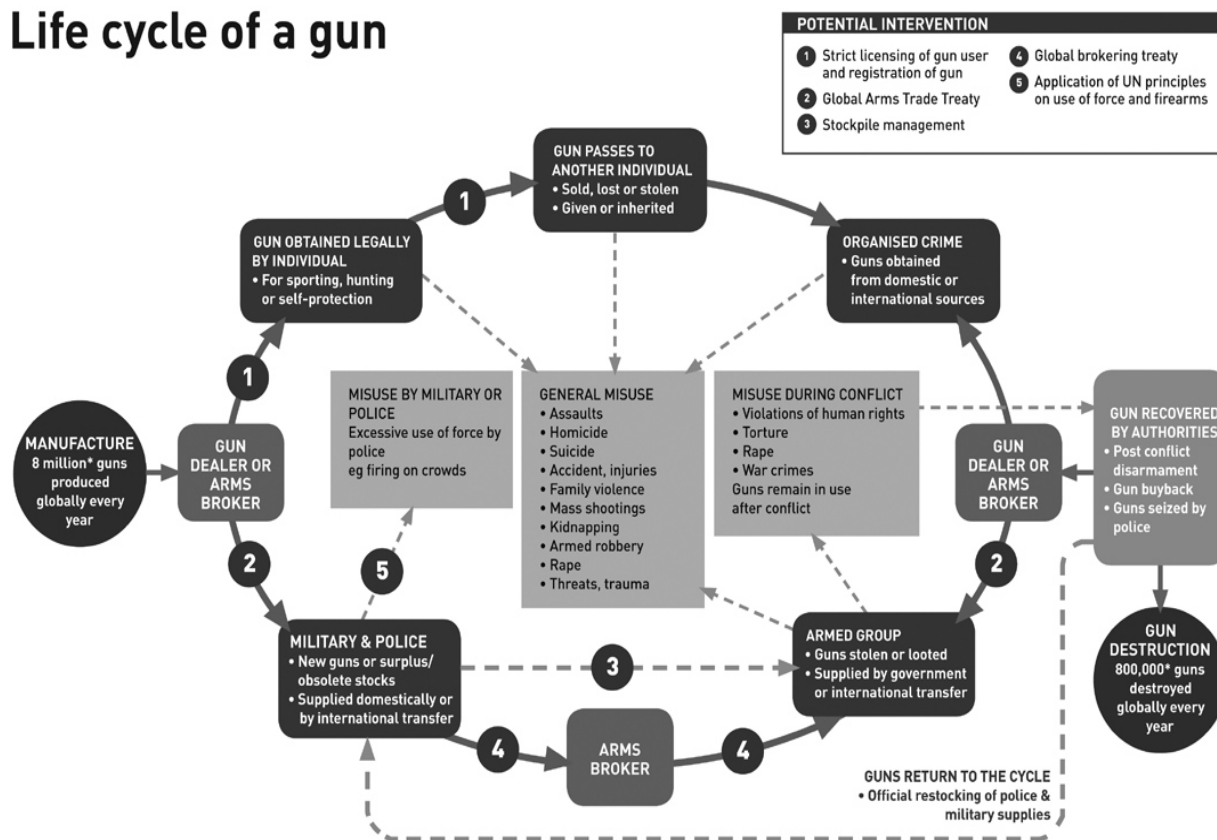
A high-profile interdict was recorded in October 2010 when a combined team of security agents impounded 13 containers loaded with various sizes of grenades, rocket launchers, explosives, assault rifles, heavy machine guns and ammunition at Apapa Wharf in Lagos, Nigeria. The containers were aboard a vessel – MV CMA-CGM Everest – from Iran and were destined for The Gambia in West Africa. This discovery came a few weeks after the National Task Force to Combat Illegal Importation of Goods, Small Arms, Ammunition and Light Weapons (NATFORCE) had, on 18 October 2010, impounded a lorry load of arms and ammunition in Onitsha, Anambra State. Nigeria's problem with SALWs is also traceable to the civil war (1967–1970), during which the south-east made a failed attempt to secede. Deminers Concept Nigeria Limited – a company involved in the enumeration of mine victims, identification and marking of unexploded ordinances and demining exercises in the south-east of Nigeria – has revealed that it recovered over 17 000 unexploded bombs from the zone. An estimated 300 unexploded bombs and improvised explosive devices are still believed to be buried in the region. These unrecovered explosive remnants of war still pose a threat to human security, especially for women and children that farm in the area. For example, a major and five other soldiers of the Nigerian Army were convicted in November 2008 of selling over 7,000 arms [valued at over 100 million Nigerian naira] – including AK-47 rifles, rocket launchers and machine guns – to Niger Delta militants between January 2000 and December 2006. These arms were stolen from the depots of the Nigerian Army at the Command and Staff College, Jaji, and the One Base Ordnance, Kaduna.

SALW PROLIFERATION VESUS NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

Although Nigeria's problem with SALWs is not new, its increasing availability in the last decade has helped stoke a wave of insurgencies, ethno-religious conflicts, cross-border banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and other violent crimes. Arms build-up has fuelled violence in different parts of Nigeria – especially communal clashes and ethno-religious conflicts. Between 1999 and April 2010, Nigeria recorded at least 187 ethno-religious conflicts, leading to the death of several thousands of people. These weapons helped to prolong conflicts, induced huge internal population displacement, undermined social peace and devastated the economic livelihoods of individuals and communities. As a result of recurrent violent conflicts, Nigeria is faced with the Herculean task of responding to a fluctuating but always sizeable number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Between 2000 and 2002, for instance, an estimated 1,713,306 persons were displaced by ethno-religious conflicts and, by June 2013, some 1.6 million Nigerians are estimated to have been internally displaced. The January 2010 crisis in Jos displaced over 40,000 persons. Situations of internal displacement undermine human security at individual and community levels. IDPs are usually vulnerable to violent crimes like robbery and rape, and are prone to contracting contagious diseases, due to poor sanitary conditions at the (re)settlement centres. The impact of Nigeria's SALWs problem on human security is also evident in financial losses induced by conflicts. About 10 major ethno-religious conflicts between 1999 and 2004 cost the Nigerian government over 400 million naira (US\$2.86 million). Besides, the amount of money that governments spend on security during

such crises and their aftermath are huge. In the aftermath of the Jos crisis in early 2010, the federal government assisted the Bauchi State government with ₦135 million (US\$900 000) to help resettle or integrate about 30,000 IDPs from neighbouring Plateau State seeking refuge in Bauchi State. These scarce resources could otherwise be used in providing basic services that promote human security and development, such as clean water, education and healthcare, among others. Beyond the cost to government, individuals lose property and family members. The loss of property compounds the problem of poverty and deprivation of the affected population. Through the death of family members, arms induced conflicts lead to a deep fracturing of kinship and family structures – many children have been left without parents, husbands without wives, and vice versa. When a family unit is dismantled, children suffer and their future wellbeing is often bleak, as they are denied good parental care. Many end up as social miscreants who contribute to violent crimes. Thus, for every person killed or injured in conflict and crime involving the use of SALWs, there are many more who must cope with the psychological, physical and economic effects that endure in the aftermath. In this context, women and children are invariably the hardest hit. In recent times, SALWs proliferation has led to an increase in violent crimes that undermine human security, such as rape, cultism, armed robbery and kidnapping, in most parts of the country.

Life cycle of a gun



Source: International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and Arms Survey, Geneva.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A successful resolution of the SALW conundrum in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that addresses the underlying factors creating the demand for SALW and the sources of supply, rather than treating the SALW problem as an independent or a compartmentalized issue. Furthermore, because armed violence is also a socio-economic issue, there is a much larger group of stakeholders and appropriate responses beyond law makers and law enforcers.

As earlier noted, the demand and supply factors of SALW proliferation are mutually dependent. Therefore, addressing one without the other may not produce the desired results. For instance, addressing the supply factor without simultaneously addressing the demand end may create a situation where arms become more expensive to acquire without necessarily preventing their acquisition, since those acquiring it may still be able to afford it. An effective approach requires coordinated and sustained legislative, administrative and judicial strategies that address the factors encouraging demand for arms and concurrently dam the outlets through which illicit arms are proliferated. The strategies should go beyond the national level because of the cross-border implications of SALW. The proliferation of SALWs is posing a grave threat to security and development in

Nigeria. These arms should be cleaned up if the country is to achieve a measurable degree of security of life and property. There is, therefore, the need for the Nigerian government to pursue a robust strategy that could reduced if not eradicate the menace. The following intervention mechanisms are recommended to include:

- The Nigerian government should encapsulates, strengthen institutions and processes of governance to enhance social provisioning for its citizens, who are becoming increasingly frustrated over governance failure, thereby resorting to violent crimes that increase demand for SALW and it must also extends to an aggressive job creation programme for Nigeria's teeming and idle youths who are as a result become hopeless.
- There is a need for interventions at the national, state and local levels to be strengthened and promote peaceful coexistence amongst the diverse ethno-religious and political groups in Nigeria. This would help minimize the outbreak and persistence of violent conflicts that stoke arms proliferation.
- The National Orientation Agency should partner with credible civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media to mount enlightenment and orientation programmes on the practice of security situation awareness or security consciousness critical to crime prevention. This will enable people to appreciate the importance of monitoring developments around them and to report unwholesome activities (arms trafficking) to security agencies.
- Adoption of a national arms control strategy (NACS) to guide the clean-up and prevention of SALWs circulation. The proposed establishment of a National Commission on the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NATCOM) should be fast-tracked to lead this effort, involving collaboration with CSOs, NATFORCE and other stakeholders.
- Implementation of effective collaborative mechanisms between security agencies and border communities to enhance information sharing on activities along the borders.
- The strengthening of border security arrangements through enhanced intra- and inter-state collaboration among security and intelligence agencies in maritime and land border areas, to ensure effective tracking and interdiction of SALWs traffickers.
- Robust funding and provision of equipment for security agencies, including security posts at the nation's entry points: land, sea and airports.
- Conduct of regular and comprehensive verification exercises to ensure that government arms are not being stolen.

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