

## **Security Challenges and the Proliferation of Small & Light Arms in Nigeria: Implication for National Development**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It is apt to note that the central impediment to sustainable peace and security is the constant and continued proliferation of small and light weapons (SALW). The escalation of these arms contributed/became a threat to peace and tranquillity in Nigeria and precipitated inter-ethnic conflicts leading to an insurgency on a light scale. The paper aims to examine the continued proliferation of small and light arms and the challenges to national security with particular reference to Nigeria and the sources. The study employed descriptive as its methodology anchored on the frustration framework within the secondary data source. The study unveils that arms proliferation is centred on the porosity of the Nigerian borders. This development contributes in no small measures precipitated security challenges. The paper concludes as part of its recommendations that governments should strengthen the security activities at the Nigerian border and train personnel on border-related issues. The paper concludes as a matter of urgency government should embark on the gainful employment of youths to subdue the activities of insurgents and terrorist attacks in the six (6) geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

Key Words: Security Challenges, Small arms, Implication and National Development

### **ABSTRAK**

Sangat tepat untuk dicatat bahwa hambatan utama untuk perdamaian dan keamanan yang berkelanjutan adalah proliferasi senjata kecil dan ringan (SALW) yang konstan dan berkelanjutan. Meningkatnya senjata ini berkontribusi/menjadi ancaman bagi perdamaian dan ketenangan di Nigeria dan memicu konflik antaretnis yang berujung pada pemberontakan dalam skala ringan. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk memeriksa proliferasi senjata kecil dan ringan yang berkelanjutan dan tantangan terhadap keamanan nasional dengan referensi khusus ke Nigeria dan sumbernya. Studi ini menggunakan deskriptif sebagai metodologi yang berlabuh pada kerangka frustrasi dalam sumber data sekunder. Studi tersebut mengungkap bahwa proliferasi senjata berpusat pada porositas perbatasan Nigeria. Perkembangan ini memberikan kontribusi yang tidak kecil dalam memicu tantangan keamanan. Makalah ini menyimpulkan sebagai bagian dari rekomendasinya bahwa pemerintah harus memperkuat kegiatan keamanan di perbatasan Nigeria dan melatih personel tentang masalah terkait perbatasan. Makalah ini menyimpulkan sebagai masalah urgensi pemerintah harus memulai pekerjaan menguntungkan pemuda untuk menundukkan kegiatan pemberontak dan serangan teroris di enam (6) zona geopolitik Nigeria.

Kata Kunci: Tantangan Keamanan, Senjata Ringan, Implikasi dan Pembangunan Nasional

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The proliferation of small and light weapons constitutes a concomitant security challenge in Nigeria. Such vices include terrorism and human trafficking on a global scale. This poses an obstacle to stable peace and security. No doubt, little internal crisis tends to escalate to larger civil wars and could destabilize the entire state (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021). Nigeria is a significant example of such a development, which is attributable to the state's fragility and weakness and the ensuing failure to provide effective governance. This opened the door for small and light weaponry to forcibly evict residents and hinder development

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efforts, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts in all their manifestations. Small and light weaponry has taken over when a fight has ended, which may lead to more violence because a crisis or conflict could flare up in nearby states or regions. Similarly to this, small guns can be used in criminal violence, accidents, killings, suicides, and other crimes in non-conflict areas, and they are occasionally the primary tools used by terrorists to obliterate entire societies (Ojo, Anuhu, & Binkur, 2022).

Scholars of repute, especially Omoyiho (2013), posit that security is before the state, and the state exists to provide that concept. Therefore, security is the sole responsibility of the state. It is on this note, and equally pertinent, to reiterate that the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria enshrined that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government". But this vital function of the government has failed, equivalent to the social contract, where the people's lives and properties are expected to be secure and safe. According to historical experience, electoral unfairness has been present in Nigeria for the past ten years, which has led to an ongoing outbreak of violence and a rise in the distribution of small guns. Ethnic bigotry, religious violence, poverty, and unemployment (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021). These strong variables were adjudged as the foundation upon which conflict erupted. However, it invariably affects national development. North-West, Northeastern region in Nigeria is a celebrated example.

The activities are largely causing security threats because the volume of small arms reaching and circulating in these regions has adversely affected Nigeria's national security in both human and economic terms. No wonder This Day Newspaper (September 18 2003) highlighted that the escalation of small and light arms turned Nigeria into total hopelessness. It adds that Nigeria customs impounded a cargo from the United States, which smuggled arms concealed in household cargo. Similarly, Daily Trust News (April 13, 2013) reported that Police detectives from Anambra and Delta states had uncovered arms factories in three communities in Delta state. Police acknowledge 1 million illegal firearms and ammunition were given to the Nigerian Army in Enugu, according to the Daily News Watch (Nigeria, May 9 2013). The 82 division of the Nigerian Army has received the 39,880 various firearms and rounds of ammunition that the interagency task group that the Federal Government established collected from former insurgents in the Niger Delta. There were 16971 locally built firearms, 482 automatic weapons, 20,132 rounds of ammunition, and 295 magazines among the weapons given to the Nigerian Army (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021).

According to the Geneva International Arms Survey (2017), of the one billion firearms in circulation worldwide, 857 million (85%) are in the hands of civilians, 133 million (13%) are housed in military arsenals, and 23 million (2%), are the property of law enforcement organizations. Scholars also agreed that the civilian holdings, which expanded from 650 million in 2006 to 857 million in 2017, were a major factor in the stockpile's growth over the past ten years. This has fueled crisis as these weapons have most ethnic militia as is taking place in most parts of Nigeria, a notable among includes Boko Haram in the North-East and Avengers in the South-South, herdsmen in the North Central and armed banditries in North-West and another belt of the Nigeria six (6) geopolitical zones. Most academics have concluded that these phenomena represent the biggest threat to global security for individuals, societies, and states. They include rising civil wars, organized crime, insurgency, and terrorist operations. In this sense, Richmond & Visoka (2022) reiterates that Nigeria is a notable example or a better still a state in which failure to deliver good governance is attributed to bad governance. The author continues that small and light weapons are frequently used to forcibly evict residents, obstruct humanitarian aid, obstruct or postpone development prospects, and obstruct peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. Small and light weapons are always

in the hands of public and private individuals following hostilities. More than 1,200 businesses produce small guns in 90 different nations.

Geneva Declaration (2011) revealed that SALW kills between 500,000 and 750,000 people annually and are a "contributory factor to armed conflict, the displacement of people, organized crime and terrorism, thereby undermining peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable social and economic development". Fundamentally, the issue raised are threats to security with attendant consequences on national development, with particular reference to the Nigerian state (Auwal & Aluaigba, 2021).

The study's general objective is to examine the security challenges and proliferation of small and light arms in Nigeria. The specific objectives include: To examine the nature of security challenges in Nigeria, identifying the root causes of the proliferation of small and light arms in the Nigerian state, describing the implication of the proliferation of small and light arms for national development and Identifying the pathways to avert the future recurrence of small and light arms in Nigeria. The deficiencies in this study are still very high, so this research can cover them. The proliferation of small and light weapons constitutes a concomitant security challenge in Nigeria. Such vices include terrorism and human trafficking on a global scale. This poses an obstacle to stable peace and security. No doubt, little internal crisis tends to escalate to larger civil wars and could destabilize the entire state (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021). Nigeria is a significant example of such a development, which is attributable to the state's fragility and weakness and the ensuing failure to provide effective governance. This opened the door for small and light weaponry to forcibly evict residents and hinder development efforts, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts in all their manifestations. Small and light weaponry has taken over when a fight has ended, which may lead to more violence because a crisis or conflict could flare up in nearby states or regions. Similarly to this, small guns can be used in criminal violence, accidents, killings, suicides, and other crimes in non-conflict areas, and they are occasionally the primary tools used by terrorists to obliterate entire societies (Ojo et al., 2022).

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## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The work used a qualitative analysis method (Denzin, 2009). The article critically analyzed the literature from a conceptual, empirical, and thematic perspective. Its approach, which is classified as qualitative, relies on secondary sources of data and the analysis of official documents. The work used a qualitative analysis method. The article critically analyzed the literature from a conceptual, empirical, and thematic perspective. Its approach, which is classified as qualitative, relies on secondary sources of data and the analysis of official documents.

### ***Operalization Of Key Concepts***

**Security Challenges:** Security challenges connote exposing the lives and properties of the people to different forms of risks in the state, which metamorphoses to a form of criminal activity that negatively affects human lives. In this sense, Olajide, Quadri, & Ojajorotu (2018), posits that a security challenge is a form of government failure to develop appropriate strategic plans to protect citizens against any security threat. It is a feeling of uncertainty linked to identity and social position experienced in the society concerning anxiety, phobia, and threats to people's lives. It is a failure of the government to guarantee absolute protection against any uncertainty in their daily engagements.

Olajide et al (2018), in his part, collaborates security challenges with the displacement of the people, destruction of property, and kidnapping in the country. Echoing this view, one can conclude that security challenges are synonymous with a failed state where the government's basic needs, survival, and constitutional role is at stake. Thus, the fear of rejection by others is fundamentally worthless and becomes endangered. This stems from fear of abandonment caused by terrorists or social ills. Chibuikwe & Eme (2019), maintained that many reasons facilitate security challenges in the country include religious sensitivity, economic dislocation, party politics, religious sentiments, the desperation of political actors to remain in power.

In a similar view, Agaptus (Nwozor, 2013) maintained that one of the major shortcomings of security issues is its pro-realist orientation accords the deployment of force. As Bill (2013) posited, intractable security challenges can be attributed to government apathy if not exterminating groups in the country. This has to do with inefficiency on the part of the security agencies to be more diplomatic in their approach to curtail the menace.

Therefore, security challenges are a form of government's inability to allay the people's fears against any form of criminality threatening their lives and properties. Reiterates that security threats and challenges are actions or events that put at risk the materials or identify the basis upon which individuals, societies and states (Conca, 2019). It is a general phenomenon that affects countries globally. For the African states, it has become a major issue preventing foreign investors from investing in the continent's economy. This is so because no investors will be inspired to invest in an economy where the government cannot fully guarantee the security of life and property. However, attaining developmental objectives may be difficult in Nigeria, especially when people lose confidence in the ability of their governments to guarantee their protection.

**Small Arms:** These are arms that are mostly of low range and available during communal and religious crises. These include, but are not limited to, revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles, carbines assault rifles, sub-marine guns, and light machine guns (Yahaya, Linman, & Adadu, 2018). From Yahaya et.al view, the proliferation of small and light arms is a threat to Nigeria's socioeconomic and political development.

**Light Arms:** A report by the panel of government experts on Small Arms (1997) revealed the nature and types of light arms to include heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank aircraft guns, recoiled rifles and anti-craft missile systems and mortars of calibres of less than 100mm. These light arms contributed in no small measures in affecting national development, with attendant consequences on the lives and properties of the Nigerian citizens.

### ***Theoretical Framework for Analysis***

This paper employed the "Frustration and Aggression Theory for analyzing our work (Ifah & Idris, 2021), and the theory was later developed and scientifically modified by scholars like Gade, Gabbay, Hafez, & Kelly (2019). This theory's main argument centres on the idea that violence is a byproduct of frustration, which develops when there is a discrepancy between what one desires and what one ultimately obtains. In this regard, Davis (2019) asserts that the discrepancy between predicted and actual need fulfilment levels brings dissatisfaction. This implies that frustration is a reality and an inevitable result of the gap between one's present situation and their objectives. The important thing to remember is that, contrary to what the realist and biological schools of thought would have you believe, the frustration-aggression theory is not simply worked out as a natural reaction or instinct. Rather, it results from frustration when an individual's legitimate desires are denied, either directly or indirectly. Frustration results from political exclusion, by indirect consequences (widening socioeconomic and political disparities between the rich and poor), or by the way society is structured (economic and political elites and masses). The feeling of dissatisfaction (which may cause such a person(s) to vent his/her/its resentment through violence by committing crimes) that will be directed at those he/she/they hold(s) responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them, causing them to resort to all manner of criminalities throughout Nigeria (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021).

The relevance of this theory is justified in the current insurgents in Nigeria where feelings of frustration result from corrupt leadership, marginalization, widespread poverty among the people and the situation they found themselves in. The communities and the villages in Nigeria are endowed with natural resources. Still, the people living in such environments continue to suffer untold hardship due to their poverty-driven political and non-state actors fighting the government.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Causes of Small and Light Arms on National Development**

The unhealthy thirst for political posts by hook or crook by some greedy and unpatriotic politicians in Nigeria sometimes takes undemocratic approaches where the use of arms became order of the day, mostly carried out by the youth. In this process, inclusion or exclusion of individuals, communities, groups, religions or regions was in force. Those excluded use extreme measures, such as violent protests or armed rebellion with illicit arms. 2003, 2007, 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria are cases. These can be ex-rayed as follows:

#### ***Extreme bad governance as a bend of development:***

Scholars like Agudiegwu, Aroh, & Ezeani (2019), believe that the dependent nature of Nigeria's economy for over 23 years affects the capacity of the country to overcome developmental issues such as poverty, unemployment and poor infrastructure. No wonder World Bank (2016), in its annual report on African poverty, reveals that poverty levels among Africans are higher than in the 1990s. They reiterated that employment opportunities and infrastructure are mainly concentrated in urban centres or constituencies loyal to ruling political parties. Thus, leading to inequality. As such, those who felt deprived or marginalized express grievance through using illicit arms against the system or state. In this regard, Boko Haram insurgents exploited the widespread poverty and limited economic opportunities in Nigeria's North-East region to recruit and radicalize poor, uneducated and vulnerable young people. The insurgent

group strategies involved the provision of cash loans to potential recruits, which is why scholars of repute maintained that the underdevelopment of Nigeria's North-East region, relative to the South, has been identified as a major reason why the Boko Haram and armed bandits decided to bear arm against the region. All these vices are associated with bad governance in the Nigerian state.

***Resource control Issue:***

The ongoing competition, land ownership, claim for true federalism or quest for control, access and distribution of natural resources, particularly oil. This has escalated and sustained violence in many resource-rich parts of Nigeria. This development precipitated the escalation and deadliness of such violence in recent years. Resource crises include violence over hydrocarbons, mineral deposits or grazing lands. A notable of such are illicit arms, a central factor in the military and insecurity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, and farmers/herders conflicts in North-Central and other belts of Nigeria. This is a serious threat to insecurity and national development.

***The emergence of violent extremism:***

The proliferation and usage of illegal weapons in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the activities and rise of fundamentalist groups that respond to radical extremist ideology. Security in Nigeria's northeast, north-central, and other regions has been significantly impacted by violent extremist organizations' continuous access to and possession of SALW. The obvious usage of SALW is a glaring or necessary component in the identity of violent extremist groups. These groups appear deadlier due to their access to and use of SALW in North-East Nigeria, which led to prolonged armed insurgencies. According to UNDP (2017), between 2011 and 2015, there were 24,771 fatalities and 5,507 injuries, most of which occurred in Nigeria's northeast, northwest, and north-central regions, which has an impact on the country's development.

***The activities of organic crime:***

The incessant or rampant circulation of arms at the uncontrolled level plays a fundamental role in organized crime networks across Nigeria; they form the basis of illicit trafficking, thereby protecting the infrastructures used for criminal activities (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021). According to reports, the Niger Delta region, the Northeast, North-West, and North Central regions of Nigeria are examples of areas where violent extremism, organized crime, and the availability of SALW coexist. Studies also showed that pirates in the Gulf of Guinea and the Niger Delta used illegal weapons to attack, grab, and kidnap sailors for ransom. These actions started to pose a severe risk to Nigeria's national security and development initiatives.

***Islamic fundamentalism in the North-East belt:***

Radical Islamic teachings from the Arabian coast and even older tensions that pitted Muslims and Christians, as well as various Islamic sects, against one another in Nigeria have had a significant impact on the high magnitude of Islamic militant groups and operations in Nigeria (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021). Some militant Islamist organizations have been calling for establishing an Islamic theocracy and returning to the genuine teachings and practice of Islam in Northern Nigeria since the late 1990s. The "Maitatsine" was one such organization (the one that caused it). In various Northern Nigerian states, the Maitatsine led an insurgency for five years (1980–1985) before the Nigerian military put it down in 1985. Following this,

Northern Nigeria continued to face ethnic and religious clashes, which did not end as many had thought when democracy was restored in 1999. Soon after, several governors of northern states moved to impose Sharia law in their states. Non-Muslims reacted to this with trepidation. Ultimately, it resulted in deadly battles between Muslims and Christians in several localized cities, mainly in Kaduna state. Since 2002, Boko Haram has grown significantly in the Northeastern states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, partly due to Nigeria's historical processes of religious radicalization, politicization, and sectarian violence. Mohammed Yusuf established the group in 2002 based on Khawarji's Sharia law advocacy ideals. In 2009, it evolved into a brutal extremist organization that has caused fatalities in most of North-East Nigeria. The construction of an Islamic state with strict Sharia law, particularly in the Northern region of Nigeria, where the majority of the population is Muslim, is one of the goals of the Boko Haram organization.

Similarly, Onapajo & Ozden (2020) asserts that Boko Haram thought democracy was too tolerant and went against Islam. It also opposes the westernization of Nigerian society and the concentration of the nation's riches among a small political elite, primarily in the country's predominantly Christian South. Furthermore, according to Adesoji (2010), after carrying out a jailbreak in which 700 captives were allegedly liberated, Boko Haram resumed its operations.

According to Carson (2019), targeted killings are the most telling. These include prominent political figures like Modu Fanami, Godio, who was killed in January 2011, and secular opposition figures like Abba bin Umar, the brother of the Shehu of Borno, who was killed in May 2011. They also include prominent clerics like Bashir Kashara, a well-known Wahabi figure who was killed in October 2010, Ibrahim Ahmad Abdullahi, a non-violent preacher who was killed (Killed in June 2011). These famous clerics' assassinations appear to align with Boko Haram's efforts to purge Islam (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021). Suicide bombings were another crucial strategy that Boko Haram used in its conflict with the government.

It's important to remember that the Boko Haram offshoot Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) has also abducted and killed foreign nationals. Ansaru orchestrated the abduction of two construction engineers in Kebbi state on March 13, 2011. (Christopher McManus and Franco Lemolinara). On May 7, 2012, both were slain in Sokoto during a failed rescue attempt by British and Nigerian special troops (International Crisis Group, 2014). The organization also claimed responsibility for kidnapping seven foreign nationals from the Lebanese construction firm Setraco in Bauchi state in northern Nigeria on February 13, 2013. Similarly, seven foreigners were murdered in retaliation for what the group perceived to be Western atrocities against Islam in nations including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Mali (Adejumo, Adams, & Abumbe, 2022). They pose severe obstacles to the country's development, particularly the threat to national security and the stumbling block to educational progress.

### **Issues in the Southeast Geopolitical Zone**

Nigeria had increased tension due to the indigenous people of Biafra's (IPOB) rise in the Igbo of South geopolitical zone. These were made up of the five Igbo states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, which are all exclusive. This development resulted from the hostilities and military warfare that took place between the Nigerian government and the Biafra forces when the republic of Biafra was declared out of the now-defunct eastern region between May 30, 1967, and January 15, 1970. The Igbo have long protested and yearned for justice and equity in recognition and resource distribution. Some people have openly demanded the revival of former Biafra and hoped to achieve their goal of peaceful self-determination in this way. The Igbo leaders' forum, Igbo Renaissance Movement, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and others are among the organizations listed by Henry, Obiora, & David (2020).



The Nigerian government has generally overlooked some of the groups above depending on the nature and character of their actions. In contrast, MASSOB, BZM, and IPOB have drawn far more attention than is necessary. According to Ekpo and Agorye (2019), the Nigerian military branded the IPOB separatist group a terrorist organization on September 15, 2017, in the sense that the group is a militant terrorist organization "from all" intent, plan, and purpose. The operations of IPOB Radio Biafra have been compared to those of Thousand Hills Free Radio and Television in Rwanda, whose recent comments, among other things, led to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Henry, Obiora, & David (2020), provide the following summary of IPOB's belittling radio propaganda and brazenness:

In some of its radio announcements, the IPOB, which uses radio as its primary medium, is believed to have referred to the Federal Republic of Nigeria as a zoo and President Buhari as a terrorist, a terrible person, and a child molester. While speaking to some Igbo in the diaspora at the world Igbo congress in the US, Kanu was seen on camera asking the audience for guns and bragging that major nations had recognized Biafran passports and sovereign status. He warned the audience to keep an eye out for certain facts as he headed to Nigeria to regroup. He also said that the Nigerian state only spoke the language of war and that he was prepared for them.

As a result, the resentment among those who felt wronged increased, and IPOB leadership implicitly and overtly encouraged aggression. According to current data, 146 persons perished in battles between IPOB/MASSOB and security forces in 2016, with 76 of those fatalities occurring in Anambra, 61 in Abia, and 9 in Delta (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021). In light of the aforementioned, Ekpo and Agorye (2019) underlined that 127 people were killed during the conflict between separatist groups and security officers at the Onitsha/Nkpor axis of Anambra state on May 30, 2016, 32 of whom were security personnel according to Chime-Nganya, Ezeji, and Ezegwu (2017). IPOB suffered major losses in terms of life and property due to the protests between May 30 and May 31, 2016. The IPOB-led propaganda persisted in portraying Hausa-Fulani Muslims as the cause of their plight and exploitation (Oketokun, Ayomola, & Adesiyani, 2022). On December 2, 2015, the main mosque in the commercial metropolis of Onitsha, South-East Nigeria, was set on fire because of this. And burned trucks thought to belong to a well-known Muslim business person in Nigeria. According to Tobi-Aiyemo (2020), there were skirmishes between IPOB members and Hausa communities between September 9 and September 15, 2017, as well as sporadic clashes with security personnel, which resulted in the deaths of 27 IPOB members. According to Ekpo & Agorye (2019), IPOB members were even named as suspects in the fire that destroyed the police station at Ariaria Market in Aba, Abia State, on September 14, 2017. He also complained that in 2017, IPOB established a secret intelligence service called Biafran Security Service (BSS), which was later renamed Eastern Security Network (ESN). IPOB collects information and protects Igbos from attacks in any state. They control the nonexistent in the southeast by unknown shooters, who are wreaking havoc across the zone by killing security personnel and setting fire to public property in the area. The actions pose a serious risk or obstacle to national growth.

### **South-South Belt/Niger Delta Militancy**

The challenges to national security greatly threaten the Nigerian state's belt. Particularly, inter-communal violence remains a matter of attention. Since Nigeria attained its fourth republic in 1999, a crisis of different dimensions affected several regions of the state, claiming thousands of lives and properties worth millions destroyed. Scholars concur that the Niger Delta region, which comprises oil-producing nations, has been identified as a crisis-prone region. The area or set was rife with persistent conflict

between militia and security groups and between members of various ethnic groups vying for political and ethnic dominance. The theft of crude oil, often known as illicit bunkering, and the accessibility of light firearms have worsened the situation. The crisis has had an impact on and, at times, been a cause of oil firms themselves. In this battle, which has seen an increase in the use of firearms, hundreds of people have died, and others have been displaced (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021).

Nigeria's illicit light weapon trade can be linked to the country's failure to implement a thorough program for collecting guns following the 1967–1970 civil wars. Following then, it has been fueled by rising crime, pervasive corruption, and ethnic and religious strife. The broad accessibility of light weapons in Nigeria's Delta area is a significant obstacle to the country's growth. Increased, persistent, and entrenched violence in the area has a real foundation in the criminalization of disputes and the political economy of the area. Illegal oil bunkering, easy access to guns, pervasive corruption, high youth unemployment, and societal disintegration are key elements that contribute to the balkanization of the region.

To put it another way, they provided the materials, weaponry, and foot soldiers needed to keep the crisis in the area going. It is also clear that the micro-level conflicts in the Niger Delta are a component of a larger, multifaceted conflict that is ethnically, geographically, and issue-based. There are now hundreds of criminal and political gangs, many of which have catchy names like Block Suckers, Gentlemen's Club, and the Royal House of Peace. These are generally connected to well-known politicians. Due to their 2004 public profile and threat to disrupt the foreign oil business or the worldwide oil price market, the Niger Delta volunteer force and the Niger Delta vigilante organization have garnered attention on a global scale.

### **Northwest Armed Banditry**

A major issue in the North-West is the high level of armed banditry prevalent throughout the region's geopolitical zone. Since the 2011 general elections, this activity has been more frequent. It has increased the likelihood of violent conflict between farmers and the Fulanis and their allies inside and outside the nation. Thousands of lives have been lost due to this violence, and the state has lost property worth billions of naira (Okafor & Chinonyelum, 2021). According to Anyalemechi (2018) argument, it makes sense that no state or region has escaped the effects of armed banditry. In the Gusau local government region, he continues, 1,500 herds of cattle were stolen at various times between 2014 and 2016 in over 12 different bandit raids that claimed the lives of over 20 individuals in the Mada district. However, the state registered other violent crimes during that time, including rape, kidnapping, abduction, and causing great harm.

Therefore, incidents of this sort are frequent and can be found in almost all the villages in the state, with little to no effort made by the security services to stop them or even to combat them (Okoli & Abubakar, 2021). Other regions have had other security issues, such as herders assaults in the north-central region and racial conflicts between Fulani and the host populations in Yoruba land in the southwest. Hence, resulting in the current Amotekun (State Local Security).

### **Implication of Security Challenges of Socioeconomic Indices on National Development**

The rampant activities and the proliferation of small and light arms in the six (6) geopolitical zones of Nigeria has impact negatively on social, economic and political development of Nigeria. These implications can be ex-rayed as follows:

***There has been a low inflow of direct foreign investment into the country, even with the introduction of a cashless policy and e-banking for business transactions:***

This problem has been attributed to the continued circulation of the small and light arms in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The report of the National Communication Commission (2019) can attest to that. On this note, Njoku (2019) observed that investment activities of the nation's economy are no more attractive to potential investors. This is because of the high cost of maintaining security protection of investments in the country. The cost of doing business, including the cost of taking risks against any security challenges, has gone beyond the imaginary level and has been negatively impacting business development in Nigeria.

***Increase in the cost of security precautions:***

In the word of Ekhomu (2019), the cost of arranging security details for the protection of investors has been limiting the funding of business activities in Nigeria. The cases of kidnapping and the huge resources required to rescue kidnapped people from their abductions are making some business organizations in the country request extra security protections for their employees and investments. The extra cost incurred on the business has been increasing the operational costs of business owners with little profit margin available for the investors. This actually reflected negatively on some of the investments made in Nigeria due to the proliferation of small and light weapons in all the belts of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

***Impact on human capital development:***

This means it destroys human capital development. It is a fact that any government aims to enhance its human capital development towards the realization of its socioeconomic goals for the country. However, attaining these golden objectives depends on the nature of its security situation. This is observed Dibua (2017) that the actualization of this objective in Nigeria is difficult due to security challenges. This has been preventing a peaceful environment needed for the attainment of the economic objectives of the government. This has also negated the acceptable way of formulating an appropriate policy for economic growth and development in Nigeria. Particularly, the spread of small and light arms in all the country's regions.

***The atmosphere of political instability:***

The security challenge in Nigeria has facilitated political instability with declining trust in the ability of political leaders to address the issue. As noted by Njoku (2019), governance insecurity has also been regarded as a form of security challenge in Nigeria. Because of corruption cases and diversion of public funds for personal use by some government officials under the change administration, which has deepened hunger and poverty among Nigerians and has aided the ability of some youths in Nigeria to engage in criminal activities, violence, terrorism, and banditry. This has formed the basis of security issues hampering youth development in the country.

***Social displacement of the People:***

Supporting this issue, Alao (2022), maintained that the hostility and tensions that follow the insecurity in Nigeria have resulted in the displacement of many Nigerians from their original homes. So

many Nigerians are currently living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps across the country. Some have migrated from their location because of hostilities between them and other settlers in their areas. Consequently, it has bred mistrust, fear, and anxiety among the people. The effect of the displacement of persons has resulted in social disintegration among different nationalities in the country. By and large, these security implications ex-rayed above are sowed by the within comprador elites of the foreign state actors and executed by the unconscious-minded Nigerian youths.

## **CONCLUSION**

As discussed earlier, it is empirically glaring that arms proliferation has precipitated on endemic security threats/challenges to Nigeria. It was also established that the fundamental causes of high-scale arms proliferation include unhealthy thirst/struggle for power, ethnic and religious conflicts, and resource control, among other things. The paper also spotlights the implication of security challenges on national development, including low direct investment, an increase in the cost of security impact on human capital development, political instability, and social displacement of people. The paper concludes that the invisible hands of the compradors class colluding with foreign state actors is a strong source for the escalation of the conflicts in all the belts of the Nigerian state. They should face the wrath of the law, or the issue continues threatening Nigeria's peaceful co-existence.

Judging from the previous qualitative research and major findings, we made the following recommendations to avert the future recurrence of the socioeconomic and political albatross on national development: The government should find out the root causes of arms proliferation in Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. There should be gainful employment for the unemployed youths of Nigeria. A level playground should be provided for all political competitors. This will reduce, if not eradicate, ethnic and religious politics in Nigeria. There should be broader consultation for dialogue with groups with different viewpoints to find solutions to such conflicts. As a matter of urgency, the government should find out the sources of these arms and immediately block them or acquire them to produce for the various security agents in the country. Enlightenment and advocacy for peace education should be encouraged with vigour in collaboration with civil society organizations will go a long way in addressing the menace of the proliferation of small and light arms in Nigeria. Finally, the government should change the naira note of high denomination to checkmate the millions of naira in possession of kidnappers, militants and other insurgent groups. This should be in no distant future to tame the menace and weaken the sponsors. Importantly, anybody coming or wishing to open an account in fear of the new changes on the Naira note should be charged higher. This is to trace the origin of the money in possession.

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