

**APPRAISING THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF ARMS  
PROLIFERATION ON INTERNAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

The paper is underscored by the concerns on the proliferation of arms on Nigeria's internal security environment which has been a fundamental insecurity challenges since the return to civil rule in 1999. It argues that Nigeria's internal security is under serious threat occasioned by prevalence of conflict and violence, kidnapping, banditry, killing, internal population disarticulation, and destruction of lives and property in the country. This development can be attributed to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). The paper adopts qualitative research method by utilizing materials from secondary sources of data collection such as books, journal articles, and other sources. The discourse on arms proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria is particularly significant in that it helps to contribute to the ranging crisis of insecurity and its attendant consequences on the lives of the people, and the socioeconomic development of the country by suggesting solutions to the problem. In doing this, the paper noted that the reason why there is insurgency, terrorism, secessionist agitation, electoral violence, illegal mining, rural banditry, and porous borders is because of the ease of getting arms and ammunition. Conclusively, the paper recommends effective border policing through the use artificial intelligence in manning the borders. It is also suggested sufficient regulations for the proliferation of virtual money across the country.

**Keywords: Small Arms, Proliferation, Internal Security, Nigeria, Light Weapons.**

## MAP OF NIGERIA AND ITS GEOPOLITICAL-ZONES

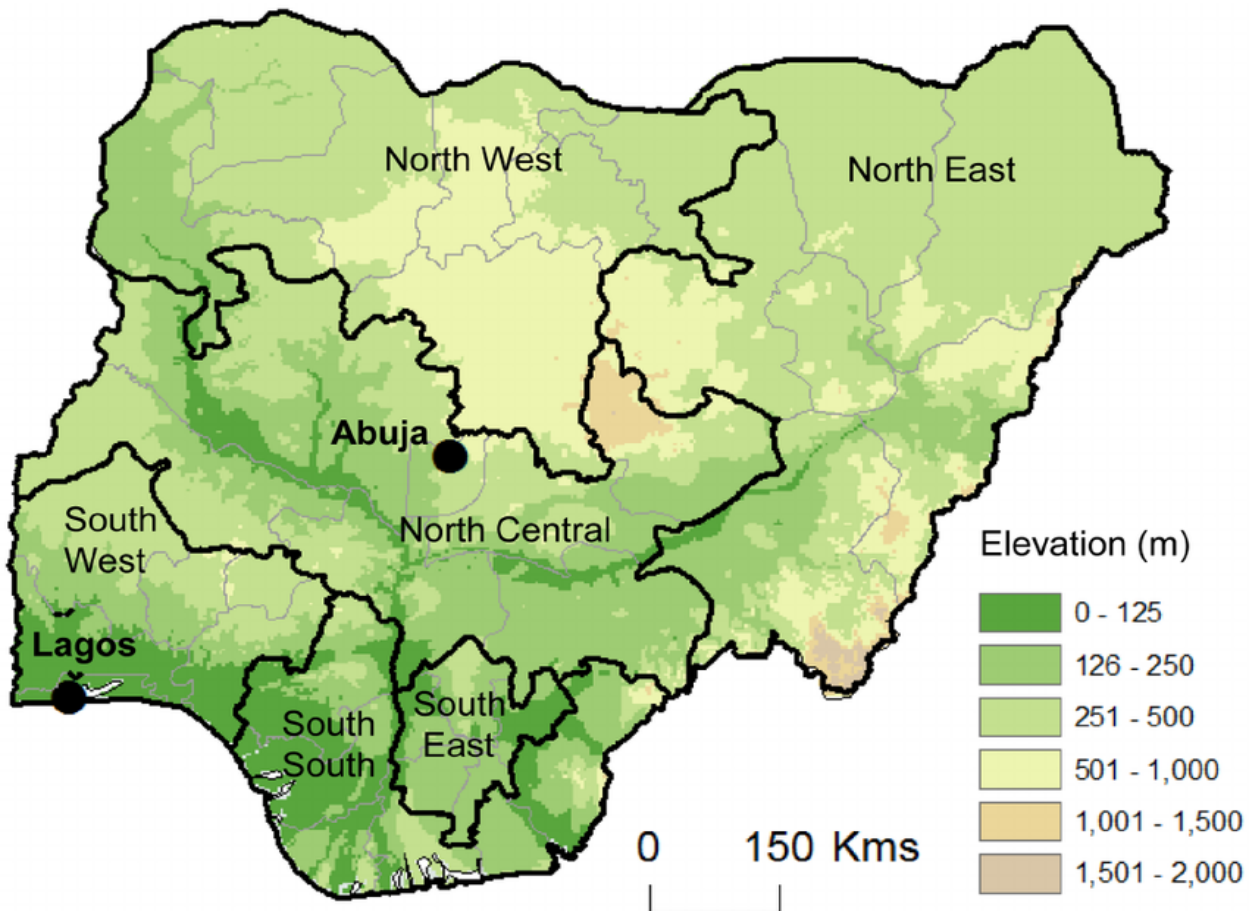


Figure 1. Map of Nigeria and its geopolitical zones.

**Northcentral** - Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau.

**Northeast** - Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe.

**Northwest** - Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa, Zamfara.

**Southeast** - Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo.

**South south** - Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, Rivers.

**Southwest** - Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo.

### Introduction

The proliferation and use of small arms in Nigeria have continued to impact negatively on the country's social, economic, and political environment, having serious long and short-term consequences for the stability and security of the nation. Despite its continued relative stability, Nigeria is hampered by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). If this is not urgently addressed, the country has every tendency of losing its long-standing reputation as the pillar of stability in West Africa. Omitola and Awotayo (2016), Aliba (2017) and Awotayo and Akinrinde (2022) agreed that Nigeria's efforts to reduce the threat of small arms have both strengths and weaknesses, with the former needing to be strengthened to prevent the country's image of peace and stability in West Africa from becoming a mirage.<sup>1</sup>

The numerous issues in Nigeria have a dimension related to the proliferation of SALW. The country is experiencing serious security threats as manifested in the high incidence of mayhem, kidnapping, banditry, killing, internal population displacement, and destruction of lives and property.<sup>2</sup> This security threats is because of unfettered access to SALW. Virtually all the six geo-political zones of the country namely, South-South, South-East, South-West, North-West, North-Central, and North-East are faced with one insecurity challenge or the other<sup>3</sup>. For instance, while the North-West is faced with banditry and kidnapping, the North-East is being confronted with the problem of insurgency and terrorism and the South-East is being confronted with secessionist agitation, the South-South is faced with the issue of ethnic militancy. In other geo-political zone of the country such as the north central, southwest and other states in the south-south regions have also been faced with concurrent issues of kidnapping and violence.<sup>4</sup>

Onuoha (2011) noted the deteriorated in Nigeria's internal security in the last 10 years.<sup>5</sup> He further explains that while new security threats have surfaced, the old security threats have not only persisted but also grown alarmingly large. These new and old security threats tormenting Nigeria since her return to democratic rule in 1999. These threats include: SALW proliferation, armed robberies, ethnic and religious conflicts, militancy, assassinations, human trafficking, insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping and so on.

Muoemenam and Okafor (2022) assert that SALW related crimes are more prevalent in the Northeast, Northwest, and Southeast. While Boko Haram's activities are raging in the Northeast, the actions of Fulani militias and invaders in the Northwest have led to killings, kidnappings, abductions, and the displacement of people in the region.<sup>6</sup> The state of the country and the accompanying insecurity that has caused the loss of lives and property has brought about great danger, difficulties and confusion and in a situation where the confidence about yourself and the relationship with other people is not guaranteed. The state of the nation now is that of hunger, unemployment, many people are now killed every day, and the government is not doing much to protect the citizens.<sup>7</sup> This is because individuals now take laws into their hands due to the inability of the government to render essential support where it is needed to the citizen. The feelings of marginalization are major reasons for insecurity and the growing of non- state actors across the geo-political zones.

Alimba (2017) noted that small arms have become a serious security concern as a result of its indiscriminate use to start, escalate violent conflict, commit crimes and carry out terrorist acts carelessly and recklessly, leading to high mortality rates and undermining efforts to maintain peace on a global scale.<sup>8</sup> As a result of the increased in demand and supply of SALW, which are readily induced violence more quickly than anticipated globally. The measures frequently adopted to regulate small arms over time have produced little or no results. Some of these measures includes firearm registration and licence to regulate those who are in possession of arms.

According to recent BM Intelligence reports (2020) and Omilana (2020) there are tons of small arms in Nigeria, and many of them are illegally possessed in various parts of the nation.<sup>9</sup> These weapons are used to commit crimes and escalate violent conflicts, undermining the establishment and maintenance of peace in the nation. Inadequate border security, politics and a corrupt security system have all contributed significantly to Nigeria's excessive access to SALW. Also, Awotayo, Akinrinde, and Oyebade (2022) noted that the various arms control mechanisms employed by the government over time to regulate arms to foster national peace

had not produced the desired results.<sup>10</sup> This is because of the weak implementation of policies, illicit trade which involves smuggling across borders and corruption of officials. In the same vein, Okeke-Uzodike (2016) agreed that protests in Warri over the trade in SALW in Nigeria had fuelled interethnic tensions in the Niger Delta, particularly amongst the Ijaw and their near neighbours, the Itsekiri and Urhobos.<sup>11</sup> This relatively recent development worsens the Niger Delta's security problem as the state tries to end the ongoing violence in the oil-rich region.

### **Insurgency, Terrorism and Arms Proliferation in Nigeria**

Okibe (2016) opines that the world is currently experiencing a range of crises requiring the use of variously sophisticated weapons, many of which are still illegally possessed despite laws against the trade in illegal weapons.<sup>12</sup> The availability of firearms and the use of force in hostile situations are common factors in the rise of terrorism and insurgency. As a result of these activities, crimes using weapons, such as gang shootings, kidnappings, terrorism, armed robberies, and inter communal confrontations, are on the rise. Illegal persons or groups with access to and use of guns usually enable these activities. The majority of third-world nations, as observed by Adisa (2019) noted that lack transparency when it comes to armed conflict, but the fanaticism of Boko Haram adds a new level of security dangers to the peace and stability of Africa.<sup>13</sup> Although there are many causes influencing the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, it is recognized that the illegal trade in SALW is significantly responsible for the intensity and expansion of terrorist. He further noted that one can trace the political economy of this arms proliferation in Africa to when many African leaders started to ask for foreign military aid to put an end to armed uprisings in their countries. The economy of arm proliferation deals with the consequences that is associated with the spread of weapons which is related to trade which encompasses the production, use of arms trade and the implications it has on the society.<sup>14</sup> Countries that manufacture trade tends to benefit from it through job creation, revenue generation and technological advancement. Also, it must be noted that arm proliferation is driven by profit motives which has brought about high purchase of arms from both legal and illegal groups.<sup>15</sup> Boko Haram exploited criminal networks in the Islamic Maghreb to obtain weapons and ammunition for its uprising against the Nigerian state.<sup>16</sup> An efficient border control system is crucial for Nigeria's counterinsurgency activities and reducing arms supply to armed groups operating within the country. The interconnectivity of international boundaries and inter-state crimes, as described by Mashi and Mohammed (2021), indicates that modern nation states are required to fight inexorably to secure the enforcement of control measures to halt the smuggling of illicit products.<sup>17</sup> Nigeria Customs manages cross-border movements of people, products, and transportation equipment, reducing contraband entry. Despite corruption by law enforcement, illicit smuggling continues due to powerful interests and the openness of African borders. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and Economic Community for West African States' (ECOWAS) Convention on SALW, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, and Bamako Declaration on Africa's Common Position on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are all crucial tools in combating transnational crime. However, Idris and Tutumlu (2022) argue that transnational arm trafficking is worsened by the fictitious border between Nigeria and the Niger Republic, but they overlook the importance of transitioning from monitoring to whistleblowing.<sup>18</sup> They also argue that the exclusion of border communities from border security governance leads to information asymmetry, benefiting arms traffickers and undermines surveillance methods in border security management.

According to Okunade (2017), the Nigeria Immigration Service is a paramilitary group established to monitor everyone entering and leaving Nigeria. The organization's officers posted in these locations are therefore intended to patrol the nation's broad network of permeable borders.<sup>19</sup> He added that Nigeria's borders are porous, which has allowed the proliferation of illegal routes to be used to promote illegal activities like transnational organized crime and the smuggling of weapons and ammunition along the borders, which hinders economic growth.

Dion-Schwarz et al., (2019) noted that “The strategic shift of Boko Haram’s armed militants to seize and hold territories areas in its self-described caliphate in northeastern Nigeria explains why it increasingly requires forcible recruits and financiers in its membership network.<sup>20</sup>” Mugarura (2016) highlights the devastating effects of corruption and money laundering on societies, destroying social fabric, making states incapable of pursuing development goals, and triggering other crimes like terrorism financing, trafficking, and drug trafficking.<sup>21</sup> No state can afford to ignore these crimes, as no state can claim immunity from their detrimental impacts.

According to Leuprecht et. al (2022), cryptocurrency being exploited for bad purposes throughout the whole global financial system. It establishes how the nature of domestic and international money laundering has changed because of crypto currencies. For criminal intelligence, crypto currencies like Bitcoin and altcoins present a significant challenge.<sup>22</sup> Although it has been shown that these restrictions alone are unable to prevent the use of cryptocurrencies in illegal activities, they are making a significant dent in the amount of money being laundered through the use of cryptocurrencies. Currency, which is not recognized as legal tender in any nation and is not produced or backed by any government, has grown to be a significant component of international money transfers.

Dion-Schwarz (2019) assert that because of transaction anonymity and irreversibility of payments, the use of crypto currencies have become appealing to cybercriminals, drug dealers, money launderers, and those involved in funding international terrorism.<sup>23</sup> Aljufaili (2019) asserted that the emergency of crypto currencies has given terrorist groups and criminal organization a new way to conduct their illicit financial activities.<sup>24</sup> Legislators throughout the world are taking measures to control the sale, purchase, and exchange mechanisms of virtual currencies as a result of the rising usage of these currencies for terrorism financing, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and corruption. According to Lee and Choi (2021) a new type of cyber-extortion known as ransom ware is confusing everyone and has been linked to terrorist activities.<sup>25</sup> Bitcoin has also entered this rumour since cybercriminals frequently use it to demand their ransom. Sadly, every single one of the stories is supported by hearsay. Terrorists' involvement in unlawful trade, as noted by Romaniuk et al., (2023) is about more than just making money. It achieves a few objectives, such as the erasing of history, the depletion of neighbourhood spirit, the deterioration of social cohesiveness, and the harm to people's health and wellness.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, it supports the social services provided by terrorist organizations. The role of the drug trade in supporting terrorist organizations has diminished over time. For them to survive, diversifying their illicit product has been essential. This is a component of the rational business practices of terrorists, who are now involved in less strictly regulated illegal trade than the drug trade, where they can generate steady profits with less risk to their supply chains. Terrorist groups are technically proficient and have recently become more dependent on technology and virtual

currencies to run their illegal trade in drugs and weapons, maintain their secrecy, and minimize exposure.

### **Border Security, Trans-Border Crimes and Arms Smuggling in Nigeria**

Several writers among whom are Yakubu, (2005); Stohl and Tuttle (2009); Nte (2011); Awotayo et. al (2022) argue that Nigeria, a diverse nation with a land area of 923,768 square miles, sharing borders with 36,450 other countries on land and sea. It shares land borders with the Republic of Benin, Niger, Cameroon, and the Atlantic Ocean especially that these borders and loose is prone to smuggling of light weapons. Nigeria is surrounded by 4,910 kilometres of external borders which makes it possible for trade in arms. This is captured by Nte (2011) when he posited that the widespread use of SALW in Nigeria is attributed to porous borders, excessive police use, corruption, sales of weapons to civilians, poverty, unemployment, resistance movements, political desperation, and an absence of effective arms control measures.

Over the past ten years, there had been a major surge in the proliferation of armaments in the West African sub-region. The belief was that the weapons were used to achieve specific socio-political goals, many of which frequently devolved into violence.<sup>27</sup> To achieve those goals, the level of violence required the smuggling of arms, Ola (2012) also argued that some countries were able to quickly join full-scale war because of the accessibility of this small weaponry, and that it is normal for people to act as though there is perpetual conflict in societies when there is no practical alternative.<sup>28</sup> The perception of trans-border communities toward the smuggling of arms, particularly alongside the Nigeria-Benin Republic border, is a barrier to addressing the issue. The formation and expression of the nation's diplomatic and foreign policy have been troubled by the issue of international migration between Nigeria and her neighbours.<sup>29</sup> Nigeria's porous borders have allowed an unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring States, including the Republic of Niger, Republic of Chad, and Republic of Benin, to enter the country illegally.<sup>30</sup> The direction of the State's foreign policy has been established using the migration process between Nigeria and her neighbours. Such a policy's political and diplomatic repercussions and impact should be directed at combating the intractable global issues of terrorism, crime, and smuggling. Abegunde and Fabiyi (2020) highlight that the Nigeria-Benin border is still used for legitimate commercial activities, but it is also a hub for cross-border crime, including banditry, kidnapping, trafficking, contraband goods, illegal weapons, ammunition, drugs, and diverted petroleum products. These illegal activities pose a significant threat to Nigeria's national security and economy.<sup>31</sup> The federal government of Nigeria closed the border in August 2019 because of the illegal activities across various borders. According to Abegunde & Fabiyi, (2020), West Africa has a bad reputation for instability, armed conflict, and transnational criminal networks.<sup>32</sup> As a result of unfettered cross-border mobility, the sub-region faces security challenges. Armed robbers, terrorists, traffickers, and people smugglers can easily cross sub-regional boundaries. Border crimes are more common in the northern section of Nigeria, especially the Northwest and Northeast.

## **Secessionist Agitation and Arms Proliferation in Nigeria**

Awotayo et al, (2013) argue that the imbalanced political structures in Nigeria, both before and after independence, are the root cause of current political conflict and underdevelopment. To achieve true federalism, various ethnic nationalities have been agitating for a sovereign national conference.<sup>33</sup> Omemma (2019) noted that this constant battle for supremacy has led to calls for resource control, restructuring, secession, rotating presidency, and Islamization.<sup>34</sup> As agitators focus on acquiring weapons of mass destruction, these agitations have become complex, leading to increased violence and secessions, often becoming a show of violence.

Onwudiwe and Raufu (2022) noticed the proliferation in gun violence in Nigeria, which has led to the gruesome murder of Nigerian civilians in recent decades.<sup>35</sup> Despite having stringent gun control legislation, Onwudiwe and Raufu (2022) further noticed that Nigeria has allowed the importation of illicit firearms from China, Turkey, Iran, Libya, Ukraine, and other nations due to racial and religious violence that is motivated by a desire to Islamize the country as well as the country's severe economic straits.<sup>36</sup> Awotayo et al, (2022) noted that Nigeria's state structures have been sufficiently rearranged by its pervasive and ongoing misuse of arms in light of the rising number of terrorist groups, ethnic militants, secessionists, and other bandits.<sup>37</sup> Threats to Nigeria's quest for ongoing peace and security include issues with violent power struggles, unequal political power distribution, and secessionist agitation, including the spread of small arms. Nigeria's problems have caused it to experience continuous instability. The agenda for disintegration is maintained by the emergence of armed separatist movements with economic and strategic goals that expose the marginalization lamented by Nigerian secessionist groups. Kingsbury and Costas Laoutides (2015) stated that since the start of the Fourth Republic in 1999, separatist agitations have been concentrated in Nigeria's South East geopolitical zone.<sup>38</sup> They further stated that the Indigenous People of Biafra, which is one of the main separatist groups in the zone and is led by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, has been proscribed and made illegal, and security agencies have conducted a few military operations in the area, but the agitations have not subsided despite their efforts. Instead, they have intensified.

## **The Niger Delta Militancy and Proliferation of Arms in Nigeria**

The oil-rich Niger Delta has been a site of conflict between state and local communities, but the violence in the 1990s alarmed the international community. Militant groups, including the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, Niger Delta Vigilante, and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, have increased hostage-taking, bombing, and violence in the region.<sup>39</sup> Their goals are to increase local control over resources and redistribute oil wealth. As a result, some oil services firms have been forced to leave Nigeria due to their reputation for kidnapping oil workers, particularly foreign expatriates, for ransom. According to Hazen and Horner's (2007) noted that armed groups and gunmen have planned reprehensible activities, including the use of violent methods like kidnappings, clashes with law enforcement, and car bombs.<sup>40</sup> Such groups are increasingly using advanced strategies and weapons, which raises questions about potential future violence. Onuoha (2008) put it that oil installations have frequently been attacked, and oil pipelines have frequently been sabotaged.<sup>41</sup> These attacks on oil installations had become widespread by 2008, forcing the closure of an estimated 25 to 40 percent of Nigeria's oil exports and production. This resulted in a significant loss of revenue and profits for the state-oil transnational alliance. Thus, by late 2008, the daily oil production

had decreased from 2.5 million barrels in 2005 owing to the disruption in production and supply, had fallen to between 1.9 and 2.1 million barrels. Onuoha (2008) asserted that due to the complex network of creeks and rivers that facilitate the flow of small arms into their region, militants in the Niger Delta have unrestricted and unlimited access to stockpiles of high-tech weapons.<sup>42</sup> To put an end to the insurgency in the Niger Delta, the Yar'adua administration (2007–2010) had to reach an unqualified amnesty agreement with the militants, who were required to surrender their weapons. Nigerians couldn't help but wonder if the country was engaged in a new civil war given the quantity and quality of the weapons that were provided.<sup>43</sup>

Awotayo et. Al. (2013) noted that the Niger-Delta conflict poses a significant domestic threat to Nigerian security, despite pledges to address the region's instability.<sup>44</sup> Akpan (2003) observed that the region is experiencing social unrest due to political exclusion, economic destitution, and environmental degradation caused by multinational oil companies and federal government neglect.<sup>45</sup> Idehen and Subair (2021) opined that the Niger Delta epileptic crisis creates an arms race between militant groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Coalition for Militant Action in the Niger Delta, Joint Revolutionary Council, and Niger Delta People Volunteer Force, leading to violence, increased kidnapping, decreased national oil production, and loss of revenue.<sup>46</sup>

### **Illegal Mining and Rural Banditry and Proliferation of Arms in Nigeria**

The unrecognized mineral deposits in Zamfara State pose a threat to the peace and security of the state, like the oil mystery. The artisanal and small-scale gold mining industry in Nigeria has significant development potential, but criminal consortia profit from illegal mining at the expense of vulnerable host communities (Hunter, 2019). This undermines the state's legal revenue and fuels violent local conflicts and banditry in rural areas. The Nigerian government must address illegal mining networks that support rural banditry and violence, ensuring peace and security in the region (Akinyetun, 2021).

Illegal mining operations in Nigeria's Northwest region have led to thousands of deaths and conflict over minefield control. This displacement has led to locals turning to banditry as a means of subsistence. The rise in illegal activity is linked to subpar governance, service delivery, poverty, and unemployment, leaving youth vulnerable to crime. Inwalomhe (2019) posits that the Zamfara gold still serves as a significant barrier to peace and fuels the state's black-market economy. Armed actors from the North-West who kill, and abuse women and children sexually profit greatly from it. These armed groups exchange gold for weapons and ammunition. Illegal mining of Gold provides funding for armed groups in the Northwest despite efforts to reduce armed conflict arising from illegal mining of minerals in the area (Hilson and Maconachie, 2020). In a concordance tune, Bello Matawalle, the governor of Zamfara State, has expressed concern about the spread of weapons in the region, a development that has increased local insecurity. He revealed that illegal mineral resource miners and foreigners had a "trade by barter" arrangement where the latter would provide arms in exchange for Gold (Warren, 2002). In turn, the illegal miners will serve as a supply route for the robbers, kidnapers, and other criminals terrorizing the state and beyond. Criminal collaborations in the illegal mining of gold between some "Nigerians in high places" in the Northwest, North Central, and, to some extent, Southern regions in addition to other multinational corporations, positions of authority and Chinese corporations are responsible for violent local conflicts and rural banditry.



## **Electoral Violence and Proliferation of Arms in Nigeria**

The increasing rate of arms proliferation in Nigeria has led to a significant security challenge for the people and government, resulting in the loss of lives and destruction of valuable national assets. Rosenje (2020) observed that this has led to various security issues, such as assault, maiming, intimidation, assassination, harassment, and militarization of the political environment.<sup>47</sup> The proliferation of arms has also impeded the electoral process, violated fundamental human rights, and prevented people from having a voice in decision-making. Emmanuel and Daisy Onyige (2019) pointed out that root causes of electoral violence in Nigeria include social and political exclusion, poverty, unemployment, and underemployment. Some argue that small arms are just triggers or precipitating factors, while others claim they are a direct cause of insecurity. Between 1999 and 2019, several cases of electoral violence in different parts of Nigeria were caused by the proliferation of arms.<sup>48</sup>

Barely few months to the 2019 elections, Ojoye (2018) notes that arms caches are routinely discovered at Nigerian ports, land borders, and highways. Early in the previous year, after being successfully cleared from Apapa Port in Lagos, 661 firearms overall were purportedly imported from Turkey.<sup>49</sup> He notes further that the evidence gotten from the suspects' confessions, officials were compromised, including those from the State Security Service, who received one million Nigerian Dollar. It's frightening. If these dealers in weapons of violence could readily purchase these state agents, then one can only speculate as to the severity of the nation's problems. Arms caches are routinely discovered at Nigerian ports, land borders, and highways. Customs officers allegedly discovered 661 firearms that were being imported from Turkey.<sup>50</sup> It must be noted also that Politicians that sponsor armed groups during elections engage in unethical activity by providing funds to these organizations in exchange for their allegiance and support. They manipulate power relationships, utilize intimidation and violence, and exploit societal divides to win elections. This stifles peace attempts, stifles democratic processes, and perpetuates conflict. Arms entrepreneurs, on the other hand, make a living by producing, trading, and selling guns for a profit. They operate in a profit-driven industry, and their primary motive is money gain. However, because weapons are likely to be used in conflicts, breaches of human rights, and terrorist attacks, their activities raise ethical concerns. Arms dealers are regularly criticized for contributing to global unrest and for bending the rules governing the arms trade to their own advantage.<sup>51</sup> The crises in infectious countries like Libya and the Maghreb have massive domino effects, particularly in terms of the spread of arms and their effects on neighbouring states like Nigeria (Aver, 2020).<sup>52</sup> They noted further that the ease with which these other nations' weapons reach Nigeria, sparking clashes and deepening instability, has regularly frightened the Nigerian government and security officials. For example, the 2011 Libyan rebellion resulted in the robbery of weapon depots, which increased the number of guns in the area. These weapons were illegally transported into Nigeria, compounding the country's already dire security situation. A number of armed groups, including rebel groups like Boko Haram, have utilized them to carry out attacks and destabilize the area. The availability of weaponry from infected states facilitates cross-border criminal activities. Criminal groups, for example, employ porous borders to transport people, drugs, and weapons. This exacerbates social discontent and leads to the collapse of law and order in affected communities. Furthermore, Bruce and Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. International Development Committee (2008) observed that contagious country crises cause regional instability and weaponry proliferation, which has far-reaching consequences. It has the potential to stymie regional cooperation, hinder economic progress, and undermine the

stability of the whole Maghreb region.<sup>53</sup> To address these challenges, affected governments, regional organizations, and the international community must collaborate. To lessen the domino effects and promote peace, stability, and prosperity, border security must be strengthened; weapons control programs supported, and the fundamental causes of the crises addressed. Politicians who assist armed organizations during elections, as well as arms dealers who sell weapons, have the capacity to disturb peace, stability, and security on a local, regional, and global scale.<sup>54</sup> It is crucial that they critically review their activities and take measures to increase the weapons trade's supervision, compliance, and transparency.

### **Effect of Arms Proliferation on Human Security in Nigeria**

It is crucial to keep in mind those different African countries and regions face different levels of human security issues. With an emphasis on conflict avoidance, weapons control, sustainable development, good governance, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability, proper attention and comprehensive approaches are required to address these issues. It is possible to enhance human security outcomes and increase African well-being by tackling these challenges. According to Adeyemi-Suenu (2014), several development-related factors and narratives have led to a particularly serious human security issue in Africa.<sup>55</sup> These components include wars and conflicts, proliferation of small arms, economic challenges and slow development area. Aver (2012) argued that the widespread availability and use of small SALW around the world is linked to insecurity and is the main cause of casualties in wars and internal conflicts.<sup>56</sup> He further argued that large stockpiles and unrestricted movement of SALW in Nigeria have weakened political systems, fuelled and prolonged insurgency, and fuelled banditry, crime, and violence. They are more readily available for every kind of violent conflict, inter communal hostilities, criminal activity, and violence because they are more widely traded and held by non-state groups, bandits, criminals, and regular citizens, both legally and illegally.

Its accessibility has undoubtedly turned into a threat to the socio-political and economic development mechanisms. According to Jibrin and Yandaki (2021), the availability and use of SALW both at the outset and throughout protracted conflicts have given African countries cheap ways to commit mass atrocities, displace people, and destabilize their states.<sup>57</sup> Small arms facilitate human destruction through bloody ethnic, political, and religious disputes, kidnappings, armed robberies, assassinations, and cultism in tertiary institutions. It is within this premise that according to Annan (2014), the emergence of intra-state conflicts or "new wars" in West Africa has put most of its economies in danger of collapsing, leading to casualties and worries for the humanitarian community. Countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea-Bissau were ravaged by civil wars and conflicts for decades, which were characterised by violence and ceaseless killings.<sup>58</sup> Annan (2014) further stated that recent insurgencies in the Sahel region, affecting West African nations like Mali, Niger, and Mauritania, and low-intensity conflicts in stable nations like Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, indicate a potential resurgence of violent conflicts both domestically and regionally. These conflicts frequently revolve around a number of factors, such as poverty, violations of human rights, poor governance and corruption, racial and ethnic marginalization, and the proliferation of small arms.<sup>59</sup> Although numerous parties, including the Economic Community for West African States' (ECOWAS), civil society, and the international community, have been working to resolve these conflicts, they frequently take a long time. According to Awotayo and Akinrinde (2022) almost all

conflicts and criminal activities in Nigeria have used SALW as their only means of violence. Women and children have suffered the greatest number of fatalities because of these weapons.<sup>60</sup> The impact of religious disputes on the growth of illicit small guns is concerning since weapons used in ethno-religious conflicts cause hurt and maiming, promote a sense of disquiet among the public, ruin lives and property, and displace people. Additionally, thousands of people are injured every year and hundreds of thousands of people die because of small arms.

## **Conclusion**

SALW proliferation is one of the most pressing threats to international states and, by extension, human security. This is as result of the fact that the global proliferation of arms has supported organized crime it has also fuelled civil wars and has the ability to turn small-scale insurgents into internationally renowned terrorist organizations, as in the cases of Boko Haram in the Northeast Niger Delta militancy, rural illegal miners and rural banditry. To address arms proliferation, Nigeria has enacted measures to bolster security and foster peace, including stricter firearm laws and the establishment of the Nigeria Customs Service. Disarmament programs incentive weapon surrender and support ex-combatants' societal reintegration. Community policing has been enhanced to improve local security and intelligence. Efforts to secure borders and regional cooperation, such as the ECOWAS Convention, aim to curb arms trafficking. Public campaigns raise awareness of the risks of arms proliferation. Security forces conduct operations to intercept illegal arms and disrupt trafficking networks. International collaboration with entities like UNODC and the EU strengthens arms control. Despite progress, challenges like law enforcement, corruption, and armed groups persist, necessitating ongoing commitment to ensure lasting peace. Therefore, this study suggests that effective border policing and surveillance in Nigeria be given top priority, the government should ensure the adequate welfare and general well being of security personnel. The paper makes several recommendations, including the necessity of an efficient regional Customs Union that will supervise a regional protocol and with cutting-edge technology such as artificial intelligence to control small arms in Nigeria and her immediate neighbors. The paper recommends further that community-focused confiscation of illegal weapons in circulation through the assistance of the traditional rulers: discouraging the arms supply by dismantles the network, and dealers of illegal weapons and also passing deterrent law to prevent further Proliferation of arms.

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## Notes

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