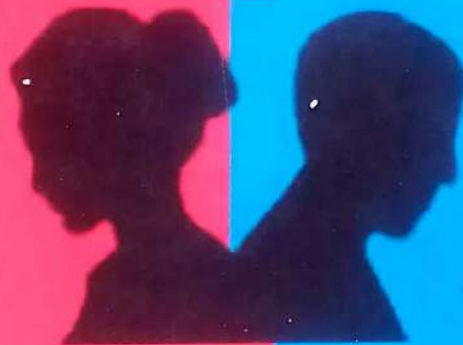




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ARMS PROLIFERATION, NATIONAL SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

John Tor Tsuwa

Abstract

One of the major obstacles to peace, security and sustainable development in Nigeria is the presence and continued proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. This study examines arms proliferation, national security and sustainable development in Nigeria. Methodically, the paper relied on secondary materials and the data was analysed descriptively. The study discovered that, economic regression, failure of states to deliver the basic necessities to its citizenry, ethno-religious segmentation, rising rates of unemployment and corruption are some of the major internal factors that serve as obstacles to meaningful efforts at combating insecurity in Nigeria. The paper also discovered that Nigeria's porous borders and lack of synergy between security agencies have also contributed greatly to arms proliferation and insecurity in Nigeria. The paper recommends that there is urgent need for inter -agency co-operation among the security agencies on intelligence and information gathering and sharing as this will help to improve security at our borders by reducing the ungoverned spaces. It also recommends revitalization and diversifiable of the economy to help accommodate the growing youth population and government should be accountable and responsible to the needs of the people.

Keywords: Small Arms Light Weapons, Disarmament, Insecurity, Proliferation, Development

Dr. John Tor Tsuwa, Department of Political Science, Benue State University
Makurdi-Nigeria.

Introduction

Arms proliferation is adjudged as one of the major challenges facing individuals, societies, and nations worldwide, Tsuwa (2021) argued that proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) especially in West Africa as a result of rising numbers of armed gang groups and porous borders have fuelled civil wars, organized criminal violence, insurgency and terrorist activities posing great obstacles to sustainable security and development.

SALW can be described in many ways particularly in respect of their availability and easy method of carriage, maintenance and usage. While The International Community of the Red Cross (2006) defines small arms as "major weapons which are quite light, extremely durable and require little upkeep, logistic support and above all, with minimal maintenance", Underwood (2009) as cited by Tsuwa (2021) on the other hand argues that, these arms are usually used by armed groups outside the official authority of the state. His argument is that, armed groups who use these arms fall into three basic categories along a spectrum, ranging from poorly organized, disjointed, and motivated by greed, to highly organized, coordinated, and motivated by ideology. The import of this is that, users of SALW have determined targets whom they wish to attack for specific goals and easily carry them around because of the nature.

From the above description of SALW, we can note that they can be produced locally, imported or smuggled into countries especially in highly divided societies or those that are already experiencing some elements of armed violence or criminal activities. According to Omitola and Awotayo, (2016) insecurity has become a global challenge which has been exacerbated by the circulation of SALW. They estimated that 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.

It is worthy to note that small insurgencies or criminalities carried out through the usage of SALW at a small scale have the capacity to developed into large scale dimension that can manifest in form of ethno- religious conflicts, terrorist activities, civil wars, banditry, kidnapping and possibly destabilize an entire region. Nigeria has had its fair share of the smuggled SALW as a result of the multiplicity of the insecurity challenges that have sharply divided the nation along ethno-religious, political, regional and economic lines, external interference as well as the local fabrication of same. This has made Nigeria to become one of the major hosts of SALW in West Africa.

Nigeria in recent times have witnessed high levels of insecurity ranging from banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, cultism, rape and other forms of criminality that have weaken state capacity towards resolution. Consequently, the insecurity challenge has made the Nigerian state weak and fragile which has again manifested in the failure of the state to deliver good governance through the provision of critical infrastructures. The multiplier effect of this is the emergency of more circuses of armed gangs questing to make "ends meet" through every means possible hence more levels of insecurity.

This paper therefore examines the menace of the proliferation of SALW in Nigeria and the manifest insecurity that this phenomenon has placed on the Nigerian state and its people particularly in the retardation of its developmental process.

Theoretical Framing

This study adopts Robert K. Merton's theory of Structural Strain which is a derivative of Durkheim's theory of anomie used to explain the subject matter. The idea of Structural Strain built on the assumption that most societies place much value on success and desire that people should become wealthy only through socially acceptable means particularly, by acquiring a good education and securing a high remuneration jobs (Hughes, Kroehler and Vander-Zanden, 2002).

Strain theory was first developed by Robert Merton in the 1940s to explain the rising crime rates experienced in the USA at

that time. Merton argued that the cultural system of the USA was built on the 'American Dream' a set of meritocratic principles which assured the American public that equality of opportunity was available to all, regardless of class, gender or ethnicity (Merton 1968). The 'American Dream' encouraged individuals to pursue a goal of success which was largely measured in terms of the acquisition of wealth and material possessions (Merton 1968). People were expected to pursue this goal through legitimate means such as education and work. The dominant cultural message was if you are ambitious, talented and work hard, then income and wealth should be your rewards (Merton 1968).

However, Merton pointed out that these goals were not attainable by all, that the structural organization of the USA means that the means to get on were not fairly distributed and it was difficult, if not impossible for some to compete and achieve financial success. Merton developed the concept of 'anomie' to describe this imbalance between cultural goals and institutionalized means. He argued that such an imbalanced society produces anomie there is a strain or tension between the goals and means which produce unsatisfied aspirations.

In other words, lack of such opportunities to acquire wealth and the emphasis being attached to materialism according to Merton (1968) may not result in strain but only structural restriction of a large number of people from becoming successful through honest means may produce anomie. Thus people can adapt to the situation of anomie in five different ways namely: *Conformist*, those who accept both the cultural goals and means institutionalized to achieve it; *Innovation*, accepting the goals but designing personal means of achieving the goal; *Ritualism*, forgoing the societal goal but continuing with the institutionalized means; *Retreatism*-rejecting both the cultural goal and the imposed means of attaining same; and *Rebellion*-abandoning both the cultural goals and societal approved means and substituting them with new norms unlike the retreatists (Merton 1968).

From this perspective, it is the heartbeat of every responsible government to provide for the needs of her citizenry. Over the years the Africa state has not been able to provide an enabling environment for people to achieve or discover their potentials that would have help them live a decent life. People who suddenly become wealthy without following the socially approved standard are celebrated in African society. To this end, those who felt marginalized, impoverished and manipulated rebelled against the system by designing their own means to achieve success in Africa where riches are over-celebrated yet with a very limited opportunity for every citizen to acquire wealth. To worsen the situation, even those who have followed the institutionalized means by acquiring good education are left with little paid jobs or none at all. Hence their interests are easily aroused to survive at all cost, including engaging in deviant behaviors which the society frowns at. This accumulated strain result to anomie where people sought to survive all means necessary by engaging their selves in unholy activities such as kidnaping, banditry to earn a living thereby unleashing terror on the people.

Many Social Science Scholars have relied on Merton's theory of structural strain to provide theoretical explanations for types of deviant behaviour and to provide a basis for research that illustrates the connections between social-structural conditions and the values and behaviour of people in society. In this regard, many find this theory valuable and useful. However, many scholars also critique the concept of deviance and argue that deviance itself is a social construct that unjustly characterizes a normative behaviour, and can lead to social policies that seek to control people instead of fixing problems within the social structure itself.

Also, Merton's theory could not explain why persons who are known to be very rich still engage in criminal activities especially in Nigeria and in the developed nations. Why is it that some other people cannot involve themselves in the trade no matter how bad their conditions of poverty might be? A lot of these questions could find their answers from the functionalist

perspectives as parts of the social system which helps to balance the societal equilibrium (Durkheim, 1964). Criminality in West Africa is clearly seen as structurally induced because it could be an indicator to policy makers that there are issues that need to be addressed in society, such as unemployment, improvement of the educational standard, reduction of corruption, eradication of poverty and starvation and attending to other needs of society.

Looking critically at the stock piles of literature as reviewed above and further explained by a theoretical underpinning, one could deduce that the political leadership in Africa has failed credibility test and further put the national security and development initiative to questioning.

Arms Proliferation, National Security and Sustainable Development

Many academics, analysts, and observers of the state of security in the world today are concerned about the existence of prohibited weapons and ammunition on a large scale in various conflict-prone parts of the world, especially African countries, and arms proliferation is both a cause and an effect of conflicts (Kelli, 2008; Giaba Report, 2013; Edeko, 2013). As a consequence, arms proliferation has a major effect on national security and sustainable development. National Security as a concept is initially predicated on the military force, whereby the state is militarily strong enough to declare war standing by itself. It has been observed that overwhelming military strength does not always result in security for the states with such strength. This can be seen in the cases of the United States of America and the former Soviet Union, now Russia, during the cold war in Vietnam and Afghanistan, respectively, as well as Israel's wars against the Arabs (Barash and Webel, 2009). While national security often has a valid military component, it must be stressed that national security cannot be determined solely by military criteria. Economic strength, political unity, social justice and inclusion, cultural outreach, racial peace, and environmental soundness are all factors. If the population is poorly housed or fed, as well as if medical treatment is inadequate, national security is in

jeopardy (Barash and Webel, 2009). The following observation is focused on the narrow perspective of national security has given way to a more expansive and broad meaning that represents the multi-dimensional nature of security and takes into account economic, cultural, technical, political, environmental, and military variables. (Onuoha, Gaya and Namri, 2010).

National security is described as “the freedom from danger or absence of threats to the multidimensional elements that may affect the nation’s ability to protect and grow itself, promote its cherished values and national interests, as well as promote and improve the well-being of its peoples (Onuoha, 2008). It is at this stage that weapons proliferation has an effect on the long-term development of any nation, including Nigeria. This is because, according to the World Commission on Environment and Sustainability, sustainable development is “a method of meeting current needs without jeopardizing future generations’ ability to meet their own needs. It’s a policy that promises to preserve our existing standard of living while recognizing that we can’t continue to manipulate the global environment like we have in the past. Three essential areas of sustainable development were described at the World Summit on Sustainable Development: economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Economic sustainability entails creating prosperity at various levels of society and addressing the cost effectiveness of all economic operation, with a focus on business and activity viability and long-term viability. Social sustainability encompasses not just the respect for human rights and equal opportunity for all members of society, but also a fair distribution of benefits with an emphasis on poverty alleviation. Local communities are emphasized, with a focus on preserving and improving their life support structures, as well as understanding and respecting various cultures and avoiding all forms of exploitation. It must be emphasized that weapons proliferation, as well as the conflicts and violence that they engender in every culture, have a significant impact on all of the above aspects of human existence.

Implications of Arms Proliferation on Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The proliferation of arms has made Nigeria to remains vulnerable to transnational crime that threatens her national security and sustainable development as well as the corporate existence. Nigeria border towns serve as hub for nefarious activities such as arms, human and drug trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, banditry and Boko haram which are perpetrated by criminal elements who crossover the borders after committing these crimes. Nigeria borders have various footpaths that are linked directly to Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin and most of these paths are not manned, protected or fenced, even because these arms are small and collapsible makes it very easy to move by nomadic herdsmen through donkeys, camels and cows unsuspected and undetected (Omotola and Awotayo, 2016). Ships and speedboats on the high seas, as well as the use of canon in the creeks, have created a safe haven for arm trafficking in Nigeria's waterways and ports. The porosity is exacerbated by a lack of manpower and other protection devices to control the waterways, all of which has resulted in an increase in the proliferation of small arms, especially in Nigeria's northern regions.

Nigeria like any other developing countries has no human intelligence capacity to guarantee the security of life and property of her citizen. Nigeria has approximately 350 ethnic groups, each of which, when feeling marginalized and underdeveloped, frequently resorts to violence, sending the wrong message to other ethnic groups, thus facilitating weapons trafficking. Effective border patrol and management is critical for the control of arms trafficking into the country. All these transnational crimes can be avoided if our borders are effectively managed by the security agencies in Nigeria. Due to a lack of both human and material machinery for tracking migration and other activities at the border region, Nigeria's porous borders have continued to fuel transnational crime and insecurity. Akinyemi (2013) stated that Nigeria lacks border security and that our national borders are not given enough attention, as evidenced by the vulnerability

of threats posed at our border, such as trans-border activities and terrorist attacks that can strike the country by unregistered migrants who access the country through these routes. Nigeria border security is porous and it continues to encourage various illegal transactions and transnational crimes. The use of dried tree, oil drum and rims of tyres to demarcate our border in this age of complexity of crime shows clearly that Nigeria's border is not properly manned and secured.

Many routes aren't well known; even the ones that are known are not properly manned. Nigeria's border is also permissible for all kinds of contraband and small arms and light guns due to corrupt nature of the security operatives, insufficient manpower, logistics, and a lack of motivation. Small and light weapon proliferation in Africa continues to be a systemic and widespread threat to peace, especially in Nigeria.

In 2004 the UN Secretary General Report advanced ways of combating sub-regional and cross border crime in West Africa and problems associated with it which include continued security sector weakness, proliferation of roadblocks, youth unemployment, environmental degradation, social isolation, explosive remnants of war (ERW), mass refugee movements, and forced displacement. Inequitable and illicit exploitation of natural resources, weak national institutions and civil society structures and violations of human rights, including the rights of women, were also identified as other serious problems afflicting the sub-region. Nigeria shares a porous border with West and Central African countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and others, some of which are politically unstable and have experienced numerous armed conflicts. These boundaries, which include both land and sea, are marked by a lack of manpower to police the land and waterways, which has aided the influx of arms to Nigeria's shores. As a result of the proliferation of weapons, ethnic crises, regional rivalries, local conflicts, human rights violations, and violence have increased in magnitude and severity, wreaking havoc on any genuine attempts towards development and good governance. In Nigeria, violence resulting from the proliferation and widespread use of

small arms poses a threat to human survival and existence. These weapons' widespread availability fuels insecurity, conflict, and poses a threat not only to defense, but also to long-term growth. As infrastructures such as health care and educational facilities provided to ease the challenges of people from accessing these facilities are often destroyed by terrorist thereby hampering development. The widespread availability of arms is leading to an unprecedented level of armed crime in both rural and urban areas, as well as Fulani herdsmen killings people in rural communities in Nigeria. This has created refugee crises where people are displaced from their homes without the federal government taking any decisive step to address the problem.

Challenges towards Curtailing Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria

Nigeria, as a failed state with poor and dysfunctional judicial systems and a high degree of corruption, among other pathologies, has played a significant role in undermining long-term regulation of the scourge of small arms proliferation. The battle against arms proliferation should be comprehensive, in the sense that all program restrictions should include combating money laundering, extremism, and the proliferation of light weapons and weapons of mass destruction, which would aid in the fight against funding arms proliferation. The difference between the proliferation of weapons and money laundering must be bridged as soon as possible. While Nigeria has anti-money laundering law, legislation does not always imply compliance. It is important to combat money laundering in order to reduce illegal arms trafficking. As clandestine companies and agents play crucial roles as middlemen between warlords in plundering resources, arms trafficking, money laundering, and smuggling, transnational organized crime is on the rise (Mair 2003). In recent decades, the rise of information and communication technology has aided major economic growth. Zerzan (2010) In recent decades, the rise of information and communication technology has aided major economic growth. A poorly controlled financial channel can put the economy in

jeopardy and be exploited by criminal elements. However, it is difficult to quantify the amount of money laundered by organized crime each year, which is estimated to be between 1 and 2 billion dollars in the United States. Since they are primarily fed by an unaccountable and predictable black market, illicit drugs are only one part of this revenue stream, which is also fed by tax evasion, arms smuggling, human trafficking, and other organized crime activities.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established with the goal of fostering economic cooperation and growth among West African countries. Since economic cooperation necessitated free movement of people, goods, and services, the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of People and Good Services was created. The protocol allows citizens to travel freely inside a subregion without requiring a visa; however, this has weakened the monitoring and regulation of cross-border activities, encouraging cross-border crime such as the smuggling of weapons and other contrabands. Kelly, (2008) "The conflict-torn west African sub-region is a showcase of unchecked weaponry and light weapons proliferation, with large quantities of arms flooding the region amid widespread misuse by state and non-state actors alike," he said. He went on to say that the widespread availability of small arms to abusive actors presents a danger to West Africa on a scale much greater than HIV and AIDS in terms of socioeconomic and human consequences. Thus, on October 31, 1998, ECOWAS heads of state declared a moratorium on the importation, exportation, and manufacture of light weapons in West Africa, with the aim of maintaining a regional approach to arm proliferation control in the region. The moratorium was followed by the Lome Summit Code of Conduct in December 1999, which allowed for the establishment of the National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NATCOMs). However, in 2003, at its meeting in Senegal, ECOWAS looked into the possibility of turning the moratorium into a convention, which was adopted and signed by the ECOWAS Heads of States in 2006. According to the above, weapons are not expected to be illegally smuggled into West

Africa because member countries signed an agreement not to import, sell, or produce arms. However, the moratorium's failure is evident in Nigeria and other West African countries as arms proliferation continues unabated.

In a similar way, Nigeria enforces local regulations on weapons proliferation and is a signatory to the UN Weapon Trade Treaty (ATT), which was introduced in 2013 to ensure that arms are not illegally smuggled into Nigeria. Sears (2012) observe that ATT has the ability to improve the international mechanism of control over SALW proliferation, reducing the extent and intensity with which these arms are used in conflict, armed aggression, crime, extremism, and repression, according to the study. However signing international treaty is one thing, domesticating the treaty to control proliferation of arms is another thing, though United Nation had used targeted sanctions on proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, this sanctions are employed to achieve major objectives which include; to induced a given target to change or modify its behavioural pattern that is considered a threat to humanity and unacceptable under the international law; to discontinue the situation from further harms that have bedevilled the sub region is to enable the sanction party to refrained from what is considered abhorrent.

However, in order to combat the proliferation of weapons in West Africa, the United Nations instituted a series of sanctions, the first of which was proposed against Sierra Leone in 1997. (see Security Council Resolution, 1132). Liberia and Cote d Voire were equally sanctioned. Transactional criminal groups have thrived in West Africa, according to Vines (2005), and neither the ECOWAS moratorium nor UN sanctions have had much of an effect on their trade. In the same vain Tostensen and Bull (2002), argues that the effectiveness of sanctions in West Africa is hampered by a porous border, a lack of appropriate manpower, facilities, and political constraints. Okereke (2008) observed that uneven implementation of regional agreements creates a loophole that weapons traffickers can exploit, and recent proliferation cases have highlighted the vital importance of successful domestic measures.

Also, disarmament programs have varied greatly by and the cultural context in which the small arms issue exists. It is the process of demilitarizing both official and unofficial armed groups by controlling and reducing the possession and use of arms, disbanding non-state armed groups, and reducing the size of state security services, and assisting former combatants to reintegrate into civilian life. However, in Nigeria, amnesty has been used as a tactic to mob-up all weapons, and the strategy has worked given the sophisticated nature of the arms brought out for submission by Niger Delta militants and Boko Haram insurgents, repentant bandits which are superior to those in the hands of security agents. However, considering the number of terrorists in possession of weapons, the truth of amnesty is that it involves costly and lengthy prosecution. Slye (2002) observed that amnesties have been granted both during periods of great social stability and during periods of great social unrest as result, we should examine amnesties based on their motives or morals.

Amnesty, on the other hand, is scrutinized the most in the realm of law, especially international law. Nigeria recently adopted an amnesty to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate Boko Haram members who are willing to give up terrorism and lay down their weapons. The Federal Government of Nigeria's declaration of amnesty was hailed as a necessary step in the fight against terrorism. It was hoped that it would attract insurgents for skill acquisition training and rehabilitation, put an end to the bombing, and pave the way for Nigeria's comprehensive growth. Awotayo (2013) has observed that "the federal government should not see amnesty deal as a quick win solution to the deal with the general insecurity not Niger Delta and North east but look beyond and avert the occurrence of the past". It is self-evident that some people trade in their old arms, gain a reward or profit for returning their weapon in the amnesty, but most citizens retain their newly acquired weapons.

One may accept that insurgents typically purchase newer small arms on the market and trade in older firearms that are no longer required for the amnesty's benefit. In light of the foregoing, a comprehensive and long-term legislative and

regulatory structure that will comprehensively address the issues of small arms and light weapons, including local manufacturing and illegal importation, distribution and brokering, mark and tracing, identification and licensing regimes, and criminalization of all illegal activities is required. However, having laws in place is not enough but presence of the political will to actually enforce it matters. The continued proliferation of weapons has been related to a lack of control policies and mechanisms to reduce the country's ever-increasing proliferation of arms, which has hindered all attempts towards social and economic development. Hence no responsible investor would want to do business in an environment that is characterized by kidnaping, banditry and bombing of government and private facilities thereby discouraging foreign direct investment.

Conclusion/ Recommendations

In recent years, the effect of weapons proliferation has continued to fuel an ever-widening circle of violent conflict in Nigeria, wreaking havoc on the country's socioeconomic well-being, growth, and stability. This no doubt has affected the peaceful co-existence among the people especially given the sharp political divide of the country along ethnic and religion lines. This is the more reason why the government should adopt local content in its control initiatives by thinking globally and act locally. The paper discovered that proliferation of arms is encouraged by unabated conflicts both intra and inter ethnics militancy and criminality, porous border, economic regression and lack of basic amenities occasioned by an irresponsive and accountable government.

As a result, given the high risk that the proliferation of weapons poses to Nigeria's coexistence, and the latent concern that the country could disintegrate, it could be said that the country's stability is threatened. To avert this, there is need for inter agencies co-operation among the security agencies on intelligence and information gathering and sharing, also there is the need to improve control through technology on our borders to reduce the ungoverned spaces.

There is urgent need to revisit the ECOWAS free trade and movement protocol in order to accommodate these emerging issues. Finally, there is the need to domesticate all international and regional treaties and protocols signed by Nigeria to control arm proliferation and include the local content for it to work effectively. It is by addressing all these concerns that human lives can become more meaningful in the country as all areas of human existence including economic, social and the environment can become more productive and sustainable. All the above can only be made possible within an enabling political environment that is devoid of political violence and conflicts which in some cases are linked to arms proliferation in the country.

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