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Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria: Causes and Sources

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Abstract

This article determined the remote and immediate causes, sources, routes, end-users of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria; examined the nature and extent of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria; x-rayed the linkage between small arms proliferation and conflicts; assessed the impact on Nigerian national security. The article using secondary data and content analysis of the data identified the Nigerian governments' actions and inactions as the main cause and source of arms proliferation in the country; established that availability of small arms, though not the causes of conflicts, intensifies, exacerbates and thwarts every effort of peaceful resolution of conflicts. It concluded that the availability of small arms and light weapons is having significant negative impact on Nigerian national security pointing out the need to act swiftly and begin to take practical actions to address the problem as it exists. The problems of proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria have gained an ever-higher profile and the harmful impact, their widespread diffusion are having within communities is widely recognized. The article is underpinned by the Social Contract Theory. Thus, it calls on the government to rise to their responsibility of protection of lives and properties of the citizens and address the glaring inequalities among Nigerians as a panacea to the problems of arms proliferations in Nigeria.

Keywords: Proliferation, Conflicts, Sources, Weapons and Exacerbates

Introduction

In contrast to the conventional view inherited from the Cold War era, emerging violence attest to the role of small arms as stimulus to conflict and a harbinger of massive human rights violation and humanitarian crisis particularly in developing nations like Nigeria. In many cases, the availability of arms has engendered violent conflicts, which otherwise may not have occurred. Given advancing globalization and the new private order, the trafficking of small arms has become cheap and robust. The accessibility of small arms has also made them a weapon of choice. Illicit arms transfer is not a particular country's problem, nor does the spread of deadly weapons stop at national borders. Guns and small arms are no longer the preserves of militias and police but have fallen into the hands of ordinary criminals, terrorists, ethnic militias and death squads around the world (Klace, 1995 in Ikedinma 2010).

It is noteworthy that while leaders and nations, given the experience of the two world wars, had concentrated on placing restrictions on the sale and transfer

of big and conventional weapons, small arms proliferations were tragically ignored. Most researches over the past decades have focused on the transfer of conventional weapons like tanks, heavy artillery, aircraft, warships and missiles. Although the international system including the UN machinery, has succeeded in preventing major outbreak of war on a global scale, the proliferation of small arms has significantly endangered national peace and security. Nigeria is experiencing many serious conflicts ranging from farmer's/herds' men clashes to communal clashes, kidnapping, robbery, ethnic cleansing, religious clashes to an established terrorist group with international link which is threatening the very existence of Nigeria as country. All these are due to availability of small arms and light weapons (Dokubo 2000).

In Nigeria, the sources and causes of small arms and light weapons proliferation are many and varied. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons through clandestine networks involving rogue arms brokers, private military companies and local smugglers, weapons have found their way into Nigeria to exacerbate on-going conflicts and facilitate the commencement of new ones. Proliferation in Nigeria is related not just to the clandestine network but also to influx of refugees from neighboring countries that enters the country with their fighting weapons. The President, Muhammadu Buhari recently on visit to the United States stated that the present herds' men killings in the country is being carried out by the Libyan militias that were recruited and trained by late Muhamed Gadaffi (Channels Television News).

Another contributory factor is the presence of private security agencies and private armies who generate huge demand for small arms and light weapons. Interfering as peacekeepers and peace enforcers in most of the sub-regional conflicts, has not helped matters as most soldiers in such duties return with small arms that are unaccounted for. Internally, the inabilities of police officers to account for arms under their control are sources where legal arms had gone into wrong hands.

In Nigeria small arms have found their way into civilian hands from official sources due to a combination of factors, including the breakdown of state structures, lax controls over national armories, do or die elections and poor service conditions for security personnel. These weapons have helped to prolong wars in conflict clusters around the country. Nowhere has the relation between the accessibility of small arms and the outbreak and severity of conflicts been more dramatically evident than in Nigeria. Thus, there is urgent need to curb both the spread and illegal use of these weapons, which have led to the deaths of millions of Nigerians, posed serious threats to the national security and stability, and hinders post conflict peace building in communities emerging from protracted conflicts around the country. Thus, this article examined the causes and sources of small arms proliferation in Nigeria assessing their roles in the recent conflicts in Nigeria's fourth republic, and how it threatens its national security.

Social Contract Theory

This article is underpinned by the Social Contract Theory under which the state is supposed to maintain a monopoly of the instrument of violence on behalf of the citizens and to guarantee security to the citizens in return. The theory posits that citizens accepted to give up their rights to protect themselves to the state on the understanding that the state will provide adequate physical and social security for the citizens. Ironically, small arms proliferations consequent upon insecurity challenges in Nigeria present the picture of a situation in which the state has generally failed to honour its part of this contract, thus creating an environment under which the state has forfeited the trust and allegiance of vast sections of the people, so much so that the premises and term upon which the social contract was based are widely contested.

Thus, many have defiled the state's monopoly of instrument of violence by acquiring and arming themselves with small arms and light weapons. These illegally acquired weapons are used either to commit violent crimes against the state or to intimidate other citizens (as adapted from Sesay and Simbine (eds.) Small arms and light weapons proliferation and collection in the Niger Delta Nigeria).

Placing Small Arms Proliferation in Context in Nigeria

These classes of weapons encompass such item as pistol and revolvers, rifles and assault rifles, hand grenade, machineguns, light mortars and light anti-tank, weapons like grenade launchers and recoils. Because they are portable, shoulder-fired face-to-air missiles are also included, even though they are far more high tech and complex than most other small arms. The term therefore, covers a broad spectrum, from weapons with exclusive military application, to firearms used by police forces, to handguns or hunting rifles in the legitimate possession of civilians. These weapons are typically used in the most common contemporary zones of conflict; ethnic conflict within rather than between countries; and not necessarily involving regular government troops; ethnic militias, insurgent guerrilla groups, paramilitary forces, organized criminal bands, warlord armies and vigilante hit squads are end users of small arms and light weapons (Renner, 1998 in Ikedinma 2017).

On the other hand, the ease with which small arms and light weapons are procured in many societies in Africa and in many parts of Nigeria, has led to the emergence of a new generation of youths whose penchant for carnage is unprecedented in the history of contemporary world. The untold misery and human suffering that small arms and light weapons inflict on innocent victims attract attention for search of effective ways of ridding the country of these weapons of death. It is no exaggeration to say that small arms and light weapons have significantly changed the world.

First, is in terms of the unprecedented number of victims; mainly women and children. Second, is that these weapons have made it almost impossible for many communities to effectively control the violence that is associated with their

illegal possession and use. Moreover, small arms and light weapons present the affected communities and governments with lots of challenges ranging from the socio-cultural to economic and political. Such challenges seem particularly acute in conflict prone areas like Niger Delta, North East and other flash points thus constituting a threat that weaken Nigerian toddling democratic government (Ikedinma, 2010).

The Nigerian State as the Primary Cause and Source of Arms Proliferation

Many factors, both internal and external, have contributed to the culture of violence that is tearing Nigeria apart. (Dukubo) 2000 noted that the spread of weapons and intractable violence across Nigeria should be conceptualized within the post-colonial state building project. According to him, it has been observed that in Africa, the post colonial state has mainly carried on the repressive tradition of the colonial state instead of reinventing it to create citizens in place of subjects. On the other hand, Late Claude Ake rightly observed;

when elites succeeded the colonial regime, they chose to inherit the colonial system rather than transform it in accordance with the democratic aspiration of the nationalist movement. Invariably, the elites fell out with their followers and became repressive (*The Constitution*, 2004).

The history of the Nigerian state is one of repressive activities. Examples are the suppression of the Isaac Boro-led resistance in the Niger-Delta. The Tiv riots, the genocide against the Igbos, so called Civil War, the Bakolori Massacre, Alli must go crises, ABU massacre, Anti-SAP killings, Annulment of June 12 Presidential election, the wasting operation in Ogoni-land including the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and others, the Odi and Zaki-Biam massacres, the unilateral declaration of MOSB as a terrorist organization and silence over the present Fulani herdsmen menace. In its overarching repressiveness, the state has also inflicted on itself what I call “state militarism”. In its repressive mission, the Nigerian states created structures in civil institutions for the realization of its repressive objectives. It would be recalled that in the eighties, vigilantes were created in high institutions of learning to deal with the radical activities of progressive movement which were thought to be anti-state such as the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). Similarly, state operatives were enrolled as perpetual students to monitor students and carry arms with impunity. The domino effect of this development is the violent cult wars which ravaged university campuses (Ikedinma 2010).

The judiciary is consciously undermined and the logical consequence is the resort to self-help by people in absence of fair hearing. The state which ought to be the ultimate protector of life and other associated rights has been its worst violator. Indeed, there is a general decay of social institutions like the Police and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which has virtually left the citizens with no choice but to defend themselves. The police have also not

lived up to its statutory function of defending and protecting the people. Therefore, many citizens in Lagos for instance would prefer to ask the OPC to stand sentry over their communities rather than call the police (Ikedinma, 2014).

The INEC has not proved its worth in terms of organizing a credible election. The votes are largely subverted and the people are no longer trustful of using the electoral process to change a bad leadership. It is said that one of the reasons why the political elites behave with so much insensitivity and impunity on demands by the citizenry is because they hardly depend on the votes of the people to hang onto power. Thus the net effect of state violence is alienation, resentment, inefficiency and corruption (Chizea & Iyare, 2016).

These repressive activities of the Nigerian state are symptomatic of nation-building crises. Centrifugal sentiments continue to run high in the body politic because of the inability of the Nigerian state to face the federal imperatives of a multinational state. For this reason, the state in spite of its overdeveloped nature in terms of its capacity to deploy violence has been unable to fulfill the judicial task of statehood with negative sovereignty and without effective control over its people. In so far as the Nigerian governing class continues to shy away from this reality of the Nigerian condition, it will for sure, remain mired in its crises of nation-hood, de-legitimized and despised. The overriding rationale for the modern state is its capacity to dispense wellbeing to its people but not its repressive profile (Poopola, 2004). Thus, the state is a major cause and source of arms proliferation in Nigeria.

The Army and Military Coups

Government is a laded concept and is both about creating and assuring public goods and responsible management of instruments of coercion, among which are small arms and light weapons. Unable or unwilling to lead in societal transformation that guarantee security to the majority, and fearful of societal backlash, the post-independence leadership yielded to the instinct of self-preservation (Young, 1992). Consequently, the preoccupation with assuring personal power and regime security blocked any moves towards democratic institution building. The state building project was effectively replaced by rent seeking arrangements based on personal loyalty and the denial of human security to the majority (Boot, 1991). Thus, the democratic experiment going in Nigeria since 1999 is characterized by military maneuvers and dominated by militarized self acclaimed democratic retired generals.

The obsession with regime security and the need to suppress the populations' aspiration for economic well-being and democratic protection led to the conversion of the Nigerian state into a "security racket". The ruler became obliged to rely on a clique of sectional/regional political heavy weights, usually selected on the basis of personal loyalty and ethnic affiliations, to ensure their security (Abdel, 2001). Often, the ruler became beholden to these powerbrokers i.e. powerful military commanders and party stalwarts who also had political and economic ambitions of their own, and thus confronted the ruler with a security

dilemma. The ruler who organized the security racket became liable then replaced by those who actually executed it (Hutchful, 2000). This dynamics led to increased politicization of military thereby making the army becoming the prime arbiter in the struggle between the civilian elites and the masses, and the result was the military coups that spread across Africa from the late 1960s through to the end of the 1980s. The advent of coups d'état gradually emphasized the decisive role of weapons as the surest rout to power and personal enrichment. Moreover, proliferation of the small arms and light weapons increased with the entry military officers into the political arena.

As a rule, the advent of coups further exacerbated arms diffusion, introduced arms possession to the civilian youths, radical students, workers' leaders and the marginalized sections of the urban population and increased gun-related civilian causality rates. From the advent of junior military coups and the diffusion of arms into the civil society, the stage was set for the entry of the civilian warlords and their ill-trained combatants into the conflict vortex. This is also the result of state failure to protect and provide for the citizens (Ikedinma, 2014).

This scenario of the ruler relying on a clique of sectional/regional political heavy weights selected on the basis of personal loyalty and ethnic affiliations is seriously threatening Nigerian democracy under President Buhari's where all the Security Chiefs is from his ethnic group. Notwithstanding, the call on the President to rectify the anomaly, even the arrogant disobedient of some his appointees to constituted authority, he has remained adamant. Our suggestion to him is to learn from experience. "The Khaki Boys are watching with interest".

Nigerian Civil War

Another cause and also source of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria was the Nigerian civil war. The civil is the after effect of the 1966 military coup which interrupted Nigerian first republic and introduced military interference in governance of the country. The war lasted for thirty months -July 1967-January 1970- and ended with the formal surrender of Biafra. However, so long afterwards, the war has continued to be a point of reference in political and security discourse for the legacies of the war visa-vise proliferation of small arms and light weapons; what has emerged as the "Igbo Question", which some people argue can only be fully resolved when the Igbos are allowed to have their own independent state; and other issues such as fiscal federalism, resource control, minority emancipation and true federalism (Poopola, 2004).

More importantly, the topicality and relevance of the war have been awakened by the rash of self- determination and separatist's nationalism by aggrieved ethnic groups in Nigeria, which have multiplied by the heightening of political contestations particularly since the return of the nation to democratic governance 1999. Indeed, the milieus of turbulence and uncertainty that attended the struggle for democratization and have continued on national elections have

been conducive to the aggravation of what is euphemistically referred to as the 'National Question' and the call for restructuring.

Nigeria's illicit light weapons trade can be traced back to the failure, to execute a comprehensive arms collection programme after the 1967-70 Civil War. It has subsequently been fuelled by growing crime, endemic corruption, ethno religious conflicts and flirtations of foreigners in the form of herders. There have also been widespread leakages from government armories. Due to the failure to execute a comprehensive arms collection programme after the Nigerian civil war, the demobilized soldiers from both federal and more especially soldiers from the Biafran side who found themselves poorly equipped to make a living in the civilian world, turned to the tools and skills they acquired during years of the war. This led to banditry in several parts of the country especially within the cities. This can be regarded as the genesis of armed robbery and other social evils committed in the country with small arms and ammunitions (Dukubo, 2010).

It is also right to assert that the period marked the introduction of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria. Those demobilized soldiers who did not engage in perpetuation of criminal activities with their arms, sold such to civilians in order to make a living as there was also no re-integration programme after the civil war. In some areas, the soldiers on hearing that the war had ended abandoned their weapons at their duty posts. This was the case at Neke in Isi-Uzo LGA of Enugu state formerly in old Anambra state, where cartons of ammunitions and few unused guns were found in the house where the Federal Troops used as their barracks. The civilians scrambled for the guns and they became their private properties (Ikedinma 2010).

Thus, the Nigerian civil war is also a source and cause of arms proliferation. This is because the war ended abruptly and the government failed or neglected to carry out arms collection and re-integration programme of ex-soldiers after the war. Downsizing of armies without any proper alternative training and re-integration of demobilized soldiers creates a huge labour pool of potential security entrepreneurs, mercenaries and arms merchants (Ikedinma 2014).

Exacerbating External Influences and Porous Borders

The weapon industries in South Africa, Eastern and Central Europe became these states' main competitive enterprises in the global post- Cold War economy. It is worthy to note that most of these weapons are transferred to private hands that indiscriminately supply new and surplus weapons (especially light weapons and small arms) into conflicts zones through rogue brokers. Most of these weapons and their proliferators- rogue merchants and mercenaries have now become the tools used by foreign powers and extracting companies in conjunction with the corrupt elite in the Nigeria for illegitimate exploitation of resources, exacerbating violence and speeding up state decay in the process (Dokubo, 2010).

Consequently, the case of Nigeria sources of small arms and light weapons could be seen as both locally and externally. The elites of the warring communities are deeply involved either in direct procurement of arms or underwriting the bills of their local militia. This is more so far in communities with a preponderance of service men. The gradual involvement of private military companies either for individuals and cooperate guard duty has also raised the arms level in the country (Dokubo 2001).

The largely porous South Western and North Eastern borders of Nigeria which have also been fingered for the uprising in smuggling and banditry is perceived as the regular routes for entry of a large cache of these weapons of death. The rise and transformation of the Boko haram group into a dreaded terrorist insurgency; now threatening the very foundation of the nation was censured by the free flow of arms from the North Eastern border of the country. Some unscrupulous members of the armed forces and the police have also been indicted for their role in arms trade in the West African sub-region. Ex-president Obasanjo once openly accused the Nigerian police of trading in arms with criminals (UNIDIR, 2012 in Ikedinma, 2014). The Fulani herdsmen source of arms is also traceable to these routes. The security men stand sentry at the airports and sea ports while the illegal bush part through the east Africa down to West Africa into Nigeria is free for importation of illegal goods in the name of cattle rearing routes. The activities of present Fulani herds' men and utterances of the Miyetti Allah Association attestation is a confirmation of the activities going on along this route. It is also confirmed by the President when confirmed that armed herdsmen are from Libya trained by Gadafi (Channels News).

Private Military Companies PMCs

During the administration of ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo, the Professionals Resources Initiatives (MPRI) worked closely with the Nigerian government. Their involvement in primary military matters led to the easing out of the then Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Victor Malu who was stridently piqued by the arrangement. Presently, it has become convenient for both combatants and government to engage the services of PMCs. The present administration is romancing seriously with many countries and companies in the name fighting against insurgency. The PMCs also provide security services to rich individuals and corporate clients and international organizations. Unable to rely on the effectiveness of the Nigerian security forces, the multinational oil companies have also contracted PMCs in their anxiety to curtail popular agitation against the degradation of the environment in oil rich Niger Delta (Chizea and Iyare, 2006).

The US which patronizes the PMCs for its growing military effort may be hard pressed in recommending same for many countries in the world particularly, in Africa against the backdrop of the soaring cost of peace keeping and the growing rate of conflicts and terrorist attacks in the continent. But this is simplistic, as the rising role for soldiers of fortune in global conflicts is likely to evoke moral and ethical questions, imperiling the national security. Moreover, it

should be noted that the rise in the use of mercenaries who are now edified as Private Military Companies (PMCs) turns even a civil conflict into a huge theatre of war.

For the PMCs which include prominently, Sandline International and Military Professionals Retired Initiative, the American base agency which worked on a programme aimed supposedly at re-professionalizing the Nigerian Army, promoting Africa's war was a big business. It is therefore necessary for Nigerian leaders to be more circumspect of the unguarded intrusion of PMCs in the guise of re-professionalizing Nigerian security forces. The task of rescuing Nigeria from a state of miasma is for the people themselves to take up the gauntlet and rid the country of war mongering miscreants. There is the need to do away with PMCs who may see Nigerian crisis as pawn to fester their business enterprise. Writing on the evil effect of mercenary armies in *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli said;

mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous. If a prince bases his defense of his state on mercenaries, he will never achieve stability or security. For mercenaries are disunited, thirsty for power, undisciplined, and disloyal, they are brave among their friends and cowards before the enemy, they have no fear of God, they do not keep faith with their fellow men, they avoid battle, defeat, just so long as they avoid battle, in peace time you are despoiled by them, and in war time by the enemy..... (Adopted from the Constitution)

Although Machiavelli died in 1527, his very incisive thought on mercenary army is still relevant even more today. The rise in the use of mercenaries who are now edified as Private Military Companies (PMCs) turns even a civil conflict into a huge theatre of war (Ikedinma 2014). The armies of these companies come into the country at-times with personal arms that are not accounted for, as they were not recorded on entrance into the country. They can exchange the weapons with other goods within the country at the time of their departure.

Illegal Oil Bunkering

Due to the secrecy that surrounds the arms trade at the global and national levels, it is difficult to be specific the exact sources of the small arms and light weapons that are now freely available in Nigerian Niger Delta. What cannot be denied however is that the proliferation is tied closely to the lucrative but illegal oil bunkering activities taking place in that region. Illegal weapons and oil bunkering thrive on each other; oil bunkering makes cash readily available for the purchase of sophisticated weapons, while access to firearms facilitates brazen oil activities. As commodities with high cash values, crude oil and sophisticated weapons also have trade-by-barter and exchange values (Simbine, 2016).

In this rather complex equation, there are endless actors: the gangsters who have perfected the technology of opening high pressure pipelines to siphon oil into barges and transport them to the open waters for sale; influential government officials and politicians who provide cover and political insurance in the event of the perpetrators being caught; notable business men who provide the funding and contacts for the sale of the crude; 'rogue' foreign merchants looking for cheap oil and willing to provide arms and currency in exchange (Amnesty International 2012).

Furthermore, illegal oil bunkering and its attendant arms proliferation is sustained in the Niger delta by the pool of unemployed youths and armed ethnic militias who know the terrain well. It is also characterized by a corrupt or ineffective law enforcement effort, coupled with a weak judicial process. The criminal networks also enjoy patronage from senior government officials and politicians, who use bunkering as a source of funds for political campaigning. These local groups are also linked into international network (Dokubo 2011).

The illegal importation and free circulation of light weapons as well as the incubation of a regime of violence and social disorder in the Niger delta region started from the period of slave trade. During the era of slave trade and afterwards, delta traders and middlemen bought little more than guns and liquor; articles that in turn, bred violence and drunkenness. In understanding the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Niger delta region, it should be born in mind that guns and ammunitions were historically major articles of trade in exchange for slaves; and much later palm oil. This evidently strong interplay between the demand and supply of slaves and firearms ensured the easy availability of small arms and light weapons, aided by the porous nature of the coastal region with its many unmarked creeks and rivers (Ukeje, 2006).

It is therefore correct to posit that a key stimulant of small arms proliferation in Nigeria is illegal oil bunkering. Such illicit bunkering is fostered by the sense of poverty and inequality among youth in the Delta; in a situation where many communities feel they do not legitimately benefit from the oil industry, it is easy for criminal groups to make illegal oil bunkering appeal (Simbine, 2016).

Peacekeeping

Interfering as peacekeepers and peace enforcers in most of the sub-regional conflicts has been identified as a major source of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. This is because most soldiers in such duties return with small arms that are unaccounted for. At the end of a conflict there is no firm or reliable inventory of the total number of weapons in the possession of combatants and peacekeepers alike. Thus, these soldiers that participated in peacekeeping in troubled areas of the continent come back to the country with their arms and ammunition. In most cases the weapons are not accounted for as they were not recorded on entrance into the country. These weapons were either sold by the soldiers to civilians or they use it by themselves to terrorize the environment.

Moreover, in course civil wars, government and insurgent forces alike often pass out large amounts of small arms to the civilian population.

Peacekeeping in the trouble spots of Africa also produces reverse proliferation- from zones of active conflict into zones of tension. Some of the weapons used in communal violence in Nigeria have been traced to soldiers returning from peacekeeping duties. Weapons not sold in the illicit market are dumped carelessly in armories, worsening insecurity situation in the state due to armed robbery and banditry (Ikedinma 2010).

Usually, some of the civilians who were armed either by the government troops or dissident soldier find their ways into the country as refugees or disguise as herd' men. In the refugee camp, they use these weapons to terrorize the environment or at-times sell them to criminal gangs within the country. This was the case when many Liberian refugees surged into the country at the peak of Liberian civil war. Some of the refugees became thorn in the flesh of the community hosting them. Sierra Leone civil war was also sparked off by Liberian refugees who had political interest and were easy to mobilize through the help of Charles Taylor to instigate Sgt. Franko to destabilize Sierra Leone government (Dokubo 2006). The President recently claimed that the weapons with which the herds' men are using to destabilize the country is from Libya militias. Although, the President has failed to substantiate his claim the mission of the Libyan militias in the country killing and maiming the citizens unabated under his watch.

Cultural Practices and Local Arms Production

In some parts of Nigeria, some types of weapons are used for traditional rites and ceremonies. Others form part of various costumes. While the Fulanis and certain other communities in the North carry swords, sticks and arrows, the communities of traditional hunters who live in the West and East of Nigeria carry cutlasses and short guns. Sometimes, cannons are fired during official ceremonies. Some communities use dynamite and other explosive on these occasions. Examples are practices of receiving a corpse into the ancestral homes or an important government official to a community on official visit with "24 gun salute" (Ikedinma 2010).

This cultural attachment to weapons has encouraged the proliferation of small arms and light weapons specially the locally manufactured ones, notably in rural communities where such culture and tradition still enjoy respect. Experience shows that it is extremely difficult for the armed forces and security agent to combat this sort of proliferation effectively. In the 1970s and early 1980s, local arms production did not receive enough attention in Nigeria. Arms manufactured locally were mostly used for hunting and for traditional rites. However, the rise in the use of firearms for violent crime suggests that locally produced arms have become a sound and cheap alternative to imported weapons.

Presently, in Nigeria coercive protection and vigilante justice are replacing the incapacitated state security rackets. It is worthy to note, that as long as these identified sources of small arms and light weapons pipeline remains

open, the prospects for peaceful conflict management, promoting human rights will continue to be greatly undermined. The effects is a most insecure social environment, spiraling violence, the mounting death toll and floods of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) which constitute a major developmental and human rights challenge. Where wars have officially come to an end, the presence of small arms makes sure that physical insecurity persists through banditry and violent settlement of scores.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Nigeria, the causes and sources of small arms and light weapons proliferation are many and varied. However, the Nigerian state is the major cause and source of arms proliferation in the country. Small arms and light weapons have found their way into civilian hands from official sources due to a combination of factors, including the breakdown of state structures, lax controls over national armories and poor service conditions for security personnel. Others are participation in peacekeeping, theft of official or private legal small arms, oil bunkering and cultural practices.

These weapons have helped regionalize and prolong wars in conflict clusters around the country. The effects is a most insecure social environment, spiraling violence, the mounting death toll and floods of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) which constitute a major developmental and human rights challenge. Where conflicts have officially come to an end, the presence of small arms makes sure that physical insecurity persists through banditry and violent settlement of scores.

Consequently, it has become vital for the Nigerian states to curb the proliferation of small arms. The way in which the armed forces and security forces organize, cooperate and conduct themselves will prompt the local population to comply with the law in general and in particular the law on the monitoring and regulation of small arms and light weapons

Laudable as they are, efforts to remove weapons from society should be seen only as a means to an end. Unless this is linked to effective measures to tackle the social causes of demand, the efforts will be meaningless. True disarmament programmes supported by multilateral agencies are premised on the twin strategy of security and development. However, most of these initiatives are targeted at relief and quick impact micro-project designed to alleviate immediate humanitarian suffering.

Human security does not supplant national security. A human security perspective asserts that the security of the state is not end in itself. Rather, it is a means of ensuing security for its people. In this context, state security and human security are mutually supportive. Building an effective, democratic state that values its own people and protects minorities is a central strategy for controlling arms proliferation. At the same time, improving the human security of its people strengthens the legitimacy, stability and security of a state.

Therefore, citizen's security provides an enabling environment for arms control. Enhancing safety for people is a prerequisite for bringing arms proliferation under control. Promoting human development is also an important strategy for changing violent behaviours of the populace. This ultimately strengthens national security.

Finally, addressing inequalities which are often root causes of violent conflicts, strengthening governance structures and providing humanitarian and development assistance are vital complements to political, legal and military initiatives which will ultimately stop arms proliferation in Nigeria.

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