

## CONSEQUENCES OF PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

The increasing and frightening rate of proliferation of small arms is the definite cause of communal conflict in Nigeria. Small arms are a major source of total destruction to human lives and property and worsen inter-communal clashes, resulting to serious violence. Most of the Nigerian borders are porous, therefore, giving room for easy influx, movement and exit of arms, human trafficking and drugs. However, high level of corruption in Nigeria constitutes the various security risks bedeviling the state. This study examines the Consequences of Proliferation of Small Arms and Communal conflict in Nigeria. The major objective is to assess the concerted efforts of the Nigerian government in combating the threat with a plan to proffer solutions on how to resolve the frightening occurrence. The study adopted the Radical Structural Conflict and Failed State Theories respectively. The study recommends that, the Government should have an intensive Policing and efficient monitoring mechanisms of Nigeria borders, the government of Nigeria should also endeavour to enlist the support of her citizens in the fight against the small arms and light weapons proliferation in the country. The imperative role of security agencies for sustenance of the nation's peace and security.

**Keywords:** Small Arms, Communal Conflict.

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### **Introduction**

A discussion or study on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration will be inadequate without a proper understanding of the reasons for the proliferation of small arms; their use by war parties and the effect on the communal conflicts in Africa. In the post-Cold War era, in which the profit motive has replaced East- West concerns as the main stimulus behind weapons sales, ex-Warsaw Pact and NATO nations are dumping their arsenals on the open market. Prices for some weapons, such as Soviet-designed Kalashnikov AKM automatic

rifles (commonly known as AK-47s), have fallen below cost. Many Third World countries, such as China, Egypt, and South Africa, have also stepped up sales of light weapons and small arms. More than a dozen nations that were importers of small arms 15 years ago now manufacture and export them.

As a result of this proliferation of small arms and fallen prices, local war lords across Africa who ordinarily should not have access to these deadly weapons are getting them at their finger-tips. This has

been one of the major reasons for upsurge in violent crimes and communal conflicts in many African countries. As a result, it has become imperative for peace and conflict experts to look for more technical ways to stop this ugly trend. This is why this unit will expose you to the dangers that the use of small arms are posing to peace and stability of the affected African countries (NOUN PCR 373).

Ordinarily, the thought that arms would play any damaging or instrumental role in intra-national conflicts years back would have been ignored with a sleight of hand. However, recent events now reveal an urgent need to focus on ways of addressing the challenges of surplus arms that constitute sources of danger in many post-conflict communities. This is against the background of intense inter and intra-ethnic conflicts that have become characterized with deadly weapons. This is why this unit introduces you to the basics of arms. The essence of this is to broaden your view of the issues that make the processes of DDR imperative with the hope that this would enhance your understanding and handling of the processes when you come across them (NOUN PCR 373). Subsequently, differences and disputes that should ordinarily not lead to violence degenerate into spontaneous violence due to the availability, accessibility and affordability of weapons. This has also produced positive and negative effects on global peace and security because of the increase in human mobility, the proliferation and the emergence of a global black market that deals in the sales of weapons.

Consequently, communal conflicts that were hitherto characterized by unsophisticated weapons have now become deadlier and lethal because of the availability of arms.

Therefore, a lot of countries have so many illegally possessed arms in circulation within their borders most especially in the possession of militants and rebel groups.

So, in the pre and post-conflict communities, the challenge of weapons and arms is a stark reality that cannot be wished away. However, it must be noted that these weapons are of various types. This unit acquaints you with some of the common types.

According to Albert Einstein (1939) the splitting of the atom has changed everything but our way of thinking, and hence we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe. From this saying, we are faced with the reality of the catastrophe that weapons constitute to the human race. Albert Einstein once noted that as a child, he had been taught that modern times began with the fall of the Roman Empire. But everything changed with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Now, Einstein observed, we must say that modern times began in 1945. The use of weapons and its effects during the 2nd World War have made imperative the need to address the possession, proliferation and use of arms in order to save humanity from self-extinction.

Although Nigeria's problem with SALWs is not new, its increasing availability in the last decade has helped stoke a wave of insurgencies, ethno-religious conflicts, cross-border banditry, kidnapping, terrorism, human trafficking and drugs, armed robbery and other violent crimes. Arms build-up has fueled violence in various parts of Nigeria – especially communal clashes and ethno-religious conflicts. Between 1999 and April 2010, Nigeria recorded at least 187 ethno-religious conflicts, leading to the death of several thousands of people (Osman, 2010). These weapons helped to prolong conflicts, induced huge internal population displacement, undermined social peace and devastated the economic livelihoods of individuals and communities. As a result of recurrent violent conflicts, Nigeria is faced with the herculean task of responding to a fluctuating but always sizeable number of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Between 2000 and 2002, for instance, an estimated 1,713,306 persons were displaced by ethno-religious conflicts and, by June 2013, some 1.6 million Nigerians are estimated to have been internally displaced. The January 2010 crisis in Jos, Plateau State displaced over 40,000 persons. Situations of internal displacement undermine human security at individual and community levels. IDPs are usually vulnerable to violent crimes like robbery and rape, and are prone to contracting contagious diseases, due to poor sanitary conditions at the settlement Centers (Nte, 2011).

The impact of Nigeria's SALWs problem on human security is also evident in financial losses induced by conflicts. About 10 major ethno-religious conflicts between 1999 and 2004 cost the Nigerian government over 400 million naira (US\$2.86 million). Besides, the amount of money that governments spend on security during such crises and their aftermath are huge. In the aftermath of the Jos crisis in early 2010, the federal government assisted the Bauchi State government with ₦135 million (US\$900 000) to help resettle or integrate about 30,000 IDPs from neighbouring Plateau State seeking refuge in Bauchi State (Christopher, 2011).

Today, guns are no longer just ornaments of prestige, or just for hunting, safari and expedition. Guns have transformed in terms of functionality, lethality, sophistication, ubiquity and motive of ownership. They have become more weapons of criminality and instruments of the underworld (Chuma-Okoro,). Ostensibly, the 1959 Firearms Act was enacted to check the increasingly rate of arms proliferation in Nigeria towards independence. The failure of the Nigerian government to execute a comprehensive disarmament and arms destruction programme after the civil war (1967-1970) exacerbated the proliferation of guns and illicit arms trafficking.

Nigeria later became a destination of SALW used in crimes, revolts, sabotage, religious crisis, communal conflicts, social agitations, internal insurrection, terrorism, insurgency, riots, militancy, electoral violence, political violence, social interest, ethnic tensions, cross-border smuggling, black marketeering, among others. Out of an estimated 640 million SALW in circulation world-wide, 100 million are estimated to be Africa, about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa alone and Over 70% of about eight to 10 million illegal weapons in West Africa are in Nigeria.

Osman (2010). Nigeria is in the same vein, bedeviled with porous borders as it shares common borders with Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger that are known as countries that transit illegal weapons into the country. Weapons are illegally procured through Cameroon, often as part of a shipment of machinery parts or smuggled inside petrol tankers. Other countries such as Gabon and Guinea-Bissau are also known to be countries through which illegal weapons transit to Nigeria (Ojudu, 2007). Other reported countries from which illegal weapons and ammunition are sourced include Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, South Africa, Turkey, and Ukraine, as well as Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Serbia (Davis et al, 2005).

This paper posits that there is indeed something special about nuclear weapons. This is because they represent a dramatic discontinuity in human history especially in the conduct of warfares and they offer the option of an even more dramatic break: an easing of the past, an end to the present, and a negating of the future. There is no gainsaying that no matter how destructive and bestial conventional forms of warfare can be; they can never be as destructive as nuclear war.

According to Barash and Webel (2003), some of these weapons and necessary things to know about them are listed below:

- (1) The weapons (bombs and warheads) themselves, and their effects;
- (2) "Delivery systems" (the means by which nuclear weapons are to be fired at their targets);
- (3) "Strategic doctrine," which is concerned with the plans and strategies for the use of nuclear weapons;
- (4) The problem of nuclear proliferation.

The Federal Government of Nigeria needs an urgent solution to examine the Effect of Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and its threats to national security.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Small Arms**

Before going into the details of our discussion, it is important to define Small arms. While there is no universally accepted definition of small arms, the term is commonly viewed as encompassing man-portable firearms and their ammunition primarily designed for individual use by military forces as lethal weapons. Small arms in this context refer to weapons designed for personal use, (Okpeyi Jnr, 2008). These are self-loading guns and revolvers, pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifle and light machine guns. He describes light weapons as; heavy machine-guns, hand-held under barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-air craft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missiles and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-air craft missile systems and mortars of calibers of less than 100mm.

A typical list of small arms includes revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, and light machine-guns. Compared to complex major weapon systems, small arms are more widely produced and available, relatively easy to conceal, and require little maintenance, logistic support, and training to operate. This explains why they are the commonest

weapons for war parties especially during communal violent conflicts across Africa.

#### **Responses by Nigerian Government in fighting the Proliferation of Small Arms:**

- i. The Nigerian state has made several efforts to check the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) but not from the demand side, or the root causes. Thus, most of these efforts had been superficial or superfluous. For example, the Nigerian government established National Commissions for the Control of the Proliferation and Unlawful Circulation of Light Weapons (NATCOM) for the implementation of the ECOWAS moratorium in July 2000 less than two years after the agreement on the moratorium which was politically-binding moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms, later legally binding in 2006 (Osman, 2010). A year later in July, 2001, the NATCOM publicly destroyed a stockpile of arms and ammunition seized by the security forces in which a total of 1,257 weapons worth 50 million Naira were destroyed. Among the weapons destroyed were 428 rifles, 494 imported pistols and 287 locally -made pistols. These unlawful weapons were seized by the security forces between 1998 and 2011. In September 2001, a request by the NATCOM for the suspension of granting the 6 licenses to carry weapons by police a representative was accepted (Ocheche, 2005).
- ii. Nigerian government played a prominent role in the adoption of the Declaration of a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa signed on October 31, 1998 in Abuja, Nigeria renewable for a period of three years later extended in 2001. On December 1999, the ECOWAS member states adopted a

- code of conduct for implementation of the Moratorium. The Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) was established with assistance from UNDP (Ndime, 2005).
- iii. The Nigerian government has also entered into bilateral cooperation with its neighbours, Benin Republic, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. They have taken a number of measures to boost cross-border cooperation and enhance security at the borders. These measures include the establishment of joint commissions like Chad-Nigeria Joint Commission, Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission, Benin-Nigeria Joint Commission, Cameroon-Nigeria Joint Commission, Lake Chad Basin Commission and joint border patrols between Nigeria and Republic of Benin (Adejo, 2005).
- iv. Nigeria is a signatory to a number of international measures to curb SALW proliferation. It supported the adoption in 2005 of the international instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, and has argued that political document needs to be transformed into a legally binding instrument in order to control effectively and criminalize the illicit movement of SALW (Diarra, 2005). At the regional level, Nigeria has supported ECOWAS measures aimed at reducing the proliferation of SALW. At the global level, Nigeria is a signatory to the United Nations (UN) Firearms Protocol on November 13, 2001; which it ratified on July 15, 2004 (Hazen and Horner, 2007). Nigeria supported the extension of ECOWAS Moratorium in October 2004 for the second time and the agreement to strengthen it by transforming it into a legally binding convention (Garcia, 2006 and ECOWAS Reports).
- v. At the national level, Nigeria continues to rely on the National Firearms Act of 1959 as the legal instrument governing small arms possession, manufacture and the use in the country as amended even though the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree No.5 was promulgated in 1984 and later the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Act (Badmus, 2009).
- vi. In July 2000, the Nigerian government proposed and established a National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons the purpose of which was to determine the sourcing illegal small arms and collect information on small arms proliferation in Nigeria (Badmus, 2009).
- vii. In May 2001, the government established a second committee aimed at implementing the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium.
- More fundamentally, the Nigerian state is yet to deal with the demand factors of SALW proliferation preferring to dwell on the symptoms rather than the root causes. The demand factors are the root causes of SALW proliferation, because if there is no demand, there will not be supply. For instance, the Amnesty initiative saw over 15 000 militants surrender arms at the expiration of the DD phase of the Amnesty. Weapons recovered during the disarmament process included two 760 assorted guns, two hundred and eighty-seven 287 ammunitions of different calibres, 18 gun-boats, 763 dynamite sticks, one 090 dynamite caps, three 155 magazines and several other military accessories, such as dynamite cables, bulletproof jackets and jack-knives.
- It is widely believed that militants only surrendered a small fraction of their arms, as most of them doubted the government's genuine commitment to the amnesty. The regular interception of illegal

arms trafficking within and across the borders by security agencies also reveals the worrisome dimension that arms proliferation has recently assumed in the country. The media is awash with frightening reports of sophisticated SALWs being seized by security operatives either at ports, borders, highways or crime and conflict scenes (Bestman, 2006).

On July 9, 2007, about 4.30pm, a Delta State Police team arrested a Warrant Officer (WO2) serving with the Nigerian Air Force 33 Logistic Section in Makurdi, Benue State, while transferring arms to a location in the Niger Delta in his Toyota Corolla car with Registration No. AJ 41 MKD. There were 5 assault rifles, 449 rounds of AK47 live ammunition, 4 brand new live jackets and 5 empty magazines. When the Police interrogated the Air Force officer turned arms dealer, he mentioned the name of a senator as being the owner of the weapons and that the arms are from the Republic of Chad (Reports from NTA News).

In August, 2010, security agents in Maiduguri also arrested a commercial driver carrying 25 AK-47 rifles, 16 Kalashnikovs and hundreds of rounds of ammunition in a Peugeot 504 vehicle. These arms, allegedly smuggled into the country from Cameroon, were destined for Jos where cascading ethno-religious violence has caused serious devastation in human and material terms.

In November 2010, a woman identified as Lucy Danagana was intercepted at Dabar Masara, Borno State, trying to smuggle 10 AK-47 rifles from Chad Republic into Nigeria. She entered Nigeria from Chad through Kofia in Cameroon via a boat. Around the same period, the police in Ibadan, Oyo State, intercepted a large cache of arms and ammunition from a suspected bank robbery squad (The Vanguard news, retrieved 11 August, 2015). The seized arms and ammunitions included 47 rifles, 103 AK-47 rifle magazines, one assault rifle

magazine, 2,540 AK-47 rounds of ammunition, 727 general purpose machine gun (GPMG) rounds of ammunition, three chain bullets, explosive materials, two GPMGs and one chisel.

A high-profile embargo was recorded in October 2010 when a combined team of security agents impounded 13 containers loaded with various sizes of grenades, rocket launchers, explosives, assault rifles, heavy machine guns and ammunition at Apapa Wharf in Lagos, Nigeria. The containers were aboard a vessel – MV CMA-CGM Everest – from Iran and were destined for the Gambia in West Africa. This discovery came a few weeks after the National Task Force to Combat Illegal Importation of Goods, Small Arms, Ammunition and Light Weapons (NATFORCE) had, on 18 October 2010, impounded a lorry load of arms and ammunition in Onitsha, Anambra State (Badmus, 2009).

In 2002, the Nigerian Customs Service reportedly intercepted small arms and ammunition worth more than N4.3 billion (US\$30 million) at border posts during the first six months of the year. Nigeria's problem with SALWs is also traceable to the civil war (1967–1970), during which the South-East made a failed attempt to secede. Deminers Concept Nigeria Limited – a company involved in the enumeration of mine victims, identification and marking of unexploded ordinances and demining exercises in the south-east of Nigeria – has revealed that it recovered over 17 000 unexploded bombs from the zone. An estimated 300 unexploded bombs and improvised explosive devices are still believed to be buried in the region (Osimen et al, 2015). These unrecovered explosive remnants of war still pose a threat to human security, especially for women and children that farm in the area. For example, a major and five other soldiers of the Nigerian Army were convicted in November 2008 of selling over 7,000 arms (valued at over 100 million Nigerian naira) – including AK-47 rifles, rocket launchers and

machine guns – to Niger Delta militants between January 2000 and December 2006 (Osimen et al, 2015). These arms were stolen from the depots of the Nigerian Army at the Command and Staff College, Jaji, and the One Base Ordnance, Kaduna.

Finally in September 2003 the federal government announced an „arms surrender“ policy to recover weapons being used by ethnic militias in the Niger Delta. Although it recorded a modest success, no real long-term strategy for recovering SALW seems to be in place. Conversely, on the civil society platform, a coalition of non-governmental organizations in the Niger Delta launched a mop-up the arms“ campaign in June 2003 (Onuoha, 2006).

### **Consequences of Small Arms on Communal Conflict**

- i. The eruption of communal conflicts usually results in massive loss of lives and destruction of properties.
- ii. It also hinders main power growth, labour strength, social-economic development, social cohesion and political stability.
- iii. Communal conflicts have the proclivity or tendency to undermine the health of society.
- iv. Since the end of the Cold War, interest has turned to small arms primarily as a result of the dramatic increase in the number, duration and destructiveness of intrastate and communal conflicts, many of which called for costly United Nations peacekeeping missions.
- v. The change in the international security landscape from a few large-scale interstate wars to frequent small-scale intrastate conflicts, has occurred at a time when international norms, export controls regimes, and treaties to control or eliminate weapons of mass destruction are making substantial progress.
- vi. At the same time, the proliferation and criminal misuse of small arms and light weapons are posing increasing threats to national and regional security.
- vii. These weapons have fueled dozens of intrastate and communal conflicts around the globe, killing, injuring, and displacing millions of people, primarily women and children, from Albania to the former Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). From Niger to Nigeria.
- viii. They are today's real weapons of mass destruction. Between 20 and 30 million deaths have occurred in the 85 wars since 1945 (as reported in Patrick Brogan, World Conflicts, The Scarecrow Press, 1998). Africa alone has suffered 5,994,000 fatalities in the last 50 years due mostly to small arms and light weapons, according to the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa. The U.S. Committee for Refugees calculates that in 1997 there were more than 14 million refugees in foreign lands, and more than 19 million "internal refugees," a number rivaling the mass movement of peoples after World War II. In short, the regulation of small arms and light weapons, compared to weapons of mass destruction, remains a relatively underdeveloped area.
- ix. The negative effect of the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons have been far-reaching and diverse. Although most important are the increased threats to international and regional security, direct effects are also felt through dramatic increases in peacekeeping costs resulting from the increased number and intensity of intrastate conflicts.
- x. Other negative effect of these weapons includes their increased use by terrorists, the heightened threats to UN peacekeepers and humanitarian relief workers, and the undermining of the implementation of peace agreements. The urgent need to stem the proliferation and misuse of these weapons, which has been urged by

two UN Secretaries-General, has raised a number of humanitarian, law enforcement, developmental, and security challenges for the international community.

### Sources of Arms in Africa

- i. In Africa, as in other regions, flow of arms can be divided into legal and illegal components. No international instrument currently regulates the international arms trade. Therefore, the legality of arms transfers is determined by relevant national legislation of the export, transit and recipient states, as well as international arms embargoes. The legal trade typically entails government-to-government transfers where the required import and export documentation is provided and neither the importer nor the exporter is subject to an arms embargo.
- ii. The illicit trade generally involves arms transactions where one or more of the parties have an arms embargo imposed against it or operates in violation of arms control legislation. These parties can include non-state actors such as rebel groups, militias and criminal gangs.
- iii. The illegal arms trade is also characterized by members of the security forces and licensed civilian firearm holders selling their personal arms and ammunition in violation of national law.
- iv. The unauthorized informal production of firearms by gunsmiths is a significant source of illicit firearms in some areas in Africa, particularly in West Africa.
- v. Both aspects of the arms trade can include transport agents, middlemen or brokers, transporting the arms by land, water or air. Those who facilitate illegal transactions often attempt to disguise them as legitimate trade by means of forged documentation or to conceal arms in consignments of innocuous goods. On

some occasions, arms are disassembled, and the different components are transported separately to the final destination.

### Communal Conflict

Communal Conflict can be seen as violent conflict between non-state groups that are organized along a shared communal identity, and how such conflicts relate to state-based violence. Communal conflicts in Nigeria can be divided into two categories:

**Ethno-religious conflicts**, attributed to actors primarily divided by cultural, ethnic, or religious communities and identities, such as instances of religious violence between Christian and Muslim communities.

**Herder-farmer conflicts**, typically involving disputes over land and/ or cattle between herders (in particular the Fulani and Hausa) and farmers (in particular the Adara, Berom, Miango, Tiv and Tarok etc).

### How to solve communal conflict:

- i. Understand the conflict.
- ii. Communicate with the opposition.
- iii. Brainstorm possible resolutions.
- iv. Choose the best resolution.
- v. Use a third party mediator.
- vi. Explore alternatives.
- vii. Cope with stressful situations and pressure tactics.

### Main causes of conflict in the community:

- i. Threats of violence or actual violence.
- ii. Overcrowding or lack of privacy.
- iii. Verbal abuse.
- iv. Dirty or untidy work space.
- v. Noise.
- vi. Harassment.
- vii. Continual crises.
- viii. Lack of ability to influence the working environment.

### Theoretical Framework

The study adopted within the confine of using an eclectic approach comprising;



Radical Structural Conflict and Failed State Theories respectively.

### **Radical Structural Conflict Theory**

The basic idea of radical structural conflict theory is that conflicts emanate out of the structures that characterize a society's organizational framework. In like manner, such reactive practices as oppression, exclusion, marginalization, discrimination, inequity, injustice, just to mention a few, have been depicted as the foundation of conflicts and violence in any given society. The theory was made popular by the ideas co-authored by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the "Communist Manifesto" and "Historical Materialism" (Marx and Engel, 1977). The major points highlighted hinge on the fact that capitalism is an oppressive economic system which is to blame for conflicts in the society, as it has successfully enslaved the working class or proletariat through economic policies and control of the production of goods (Rawls, 1971)). Subsequently, capitalist-enunciated process of production and distribution has divided society into the bourgeoisie or elite and the proletariat or working class. In this way, conflicts in society have become a class struggle engendered by economic exploitation of the proletariat.

Consequently, Marxists perceive every society to have a base and superstructure. Thus the base which refers to economic foundation (capitalism, communism) etc modifies and is modified by the superstructure which include art, politics and psychological prospects of both individuals and classes in the society. Since the elites hold the monopoly of power in society, they control the base, superstructure and ideology. In this manner, exclusion, oppression and exploitation is initiated in the society (Rawls, op.cit). The remedy according to Marx is to strip the bourgeoisie of both economic and political power through an action that may lead to social change and revolution.

### **Failed State Theory**

The term "failed state" is often used to describe a state perceived as having failed at some of essential responsibilities of a sovereign government. A Failed State is one that has shattered social and political structures (Anyanwu, 2005). It is characterized by social, political and economic failure. Common characteristics of a failing state is when a central government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory, non-provision of public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations, and sharp economic decline(ibid).

Anyanwu (2005) notes that failing states are invariably the product of a collapse of the power structures providing political supports for law and order, a process generally triggered accompanied by anarchic forms of internal violence. It is the collapse of state institutions, especially the police and judiciary with resulting paralysis of governance, a breakdown of law and order, and general banditry and chaos. Not only are the functions of government suspended, but its assets are destroyed or looted; and experienced officials are killed or flee the country.

### **Literature Review**

According to Herbert L. Calhoun (1998) estimates of the number of small arms in circulation range from 100 to 500 million, with 50-80 million being AK-47 assault rifles. An increasing number of countries are becoming self-sufficient in the manufacturing of small arms and related ammunition either through indigenous or licensed production. It has been reported that an AK-47 assault rifle can be purchased on the streets of some developing countries for as little as 10 U.S. dollars, or in exchange for a chicken or a goat. International transfers are also a major source of small arms and light weapons supply, through channels, both legal and illegal.

Small arms in this context refer to weapons designed for personal use, (Okpeyi Jnr, 2008). These are self-loading guns and revolvers, pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifle and light machine guns. He describes light weapons as ; heavy machine-guns, hand-held under barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-air craft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missiles and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-air craft missile systems and mortars of calibers of less than 100mm 15

Legal and illegal transfers are often so closely intertwined that it is difficult to establish a clear basis for distinguishing them. Many weapons originating as legal production or exports eventually fall into illegal circulation. It is impossible to know with certainty what percentage of small arms and light weapons transfers are illegal, or when and how weapons that were originally transferred legally become illegal at some point in their history.

In the eighties, the Maitatsine crisis resulted in the death of thousands, which the government conservatively estimated to be over four thousand. The crisis also led to internal displacements in the region. Many southerners, mostly Christians, fled the area to other peaceful Northern cities or to Southern towns or cities, (Akinwunmi 2008).

The late nineties witnessed the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and instrumentalisation of Shari'ah as a political weapon. This resulted in violent conflicts in most of the cities in the North, especially in Kaduna. During this period, there was free use of SALW by both Muslim and Christian groups. The involvement of SALW led to the death of many Nigerians and another massive internal displacement in the country. There were influxes of people to the Central zone and to the Southern region. While religious conflicts are prevalent in the core North, the crises in the North

Central zone is of another dimension. These crises took the form of ethno religious tensions and indene – settler upheavals. The Azara crisis in Nasarawa State, the Jos crisis in Plateau State and the Jukun/Tiv crisis in Taraba State are examples of conflicts with ethnic coloration, (Akinwunmi, 2008). These crises witnessed the use of SALW in high proportion, to the extent that some settlements were virtually destroyed as witnessed in Jukun/Tiv crisis in 2001. It was in the same crisis that Tiv ethnic militias allegedly killed 16 soldiers. This led to the reprisal operations by the military leading to the destruction of several villages bordering Taraba state.

This is why combat zones are very often confined to one part of the country. It is perfectly possible for reporters, politicians, researchers, businessmen, diplomats, World Bank experts and other outsiders to visit the capital of a war-torn country and yet not to know that a war is going on. Because many armed conflicts are localised and remain relatively low-level for several years on end, they do not make good stories for the international news media. These conflicts rarely produce clear cut events such as victories, triumphs and disasters; they simply linger on as a slow torture for the participants. However, this should not create the illusion of their capacity to escalate suddenly and viciously. When that escalation occurs, it often seems to international observers to have come out of a clear blue sky. Such was the initial reaction to the massacres in Rwanda in 1994. Regardless of this, not only did those massacres take place against a historical background of repetitive cycles of mass killings, but also it is now known that there were many signs of imminent tragedy that were ignored until after it was too late (Adelman and Suhrke 1996).

### **Methodology**

The method adopted in this study is content analysis, using mainly secondary data. The secondary data employed include existing literature on the topic such as books,

journals, newspapers, magazines, conference papers, UN and ECOWAS publications, periodicals and other related documents. In the course of the research, the researcher consulted the internet, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti Main Library, Law Library of the Faculty of Law of same university; the University of Lagos Main Library, and the Library of the Centre for Strategic and Development Studies, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.

### **Discussions and Findings**

In the discussions and findings, the increasing and frightening rate of proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is the definite cause of security threat to national security in Nigeria. Small arms and light weapons as a threat to national security is a major source of total destruction to human lives and property and worsen inter-communal clashes, resulting to serious violence. Most of the Nigerian borders are porous, therefore, giving room for easy influx, movement and exit of arms, human trafficking and drugs. However, high level of corruption in Nigeria constitutes the various security risks bedeviling the state.

### **Conclusion**

The study discussed extensively the consequences of Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons Discourse and national security. The gruesome effect of the usage of Small arms and Light Weapon were also analyzed. While small arms play a significant role in escalating communal conflicts that exact enormous human and socioeconomic costs, the roots of such conflicts lie in political, economic, ethnic and religious differences and disparities. These are often aggravated by governance-related deficiencies, such as exclusionary and repressive policies, and lack of, or weaknesses in, democratic institutions, respect for the rule of law, and human rights observance. Conditions of endemic insecurity and weak national and interstate regulatory and law enforcement structures,

together with the fact that these weapons are cheap, widely available, easily concealed and transportable across porous borders, and require little maintenance and training, further compound the problems of widespread proliferation, illicit trafficking and possession, and criminal misuse.

The use of weapons in communal conflict and hitherto conventional wars can be described as a consequence of the increment in domestic conflicts that have made blacks markets of weapons to thrive. These weapons have become instruments of handling and settling conflicts in many instances. It has also encouraged the proliferation of both stationary and roaming guerrilla movements on the continent.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations will be useful:

- i. The Government should have an intensive Policing and efficient monitoring mechanisms of Nigeria borders.
- ii. The government of Nigeria should also endeavour to enlist the support of her citizens in the fight against the small arms and light weapons proliferation in the country.
- iii. There is need for notable improvement in the employment and working conditions of Nigerian law enforcement agencies in order to boost their professionalism and motivation in the fight against proliferation of arms and corrupt practices.
- iv. Adoption of National Arms Control Strategy (NACS) and Implementation of National Policy on SALW should be strictly adhered to

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