

The Cross-Border Flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Security Challenges in the North-Eastern Nigeria: 1999-2009

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the North-Eastern region of Nigeria has been rocked by security challenges emanating from the cross-border flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). The availability of such weapons have fuelled ethno-religious crisis, electoral and post-electoral violence, armed robbery, politically-inclined assassinations, rampant use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) on strategic places (offices, institutions, markets, schools), incessant kidnappings and cultism in institutions of higher learning which necessitated the need for governmental intervention. There is a need to find a solution to this seemingly unending problem which necessitated the conduct of this research. For the purpose of this research, Conflict theory and Contiguity theory would be used and in the end to see how the two theories relate well in addressing the problem of cross-border flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) into the North-Eastern Nigeria from the neighbouring countries of Cameroun, Chad and Niger borders.

INTRODUCTION

North-Eastern Nigeria was created in 1967 by the General Yakubu Gowon administration with headquarters in Maiduguri. The region was then subdivided into Gongola, Bauchi and Borno states in 1976 which was later subdivided into Yobe and Borno States in 1991 and then in 1996 Gombe and Taraba were carved out of Bauchi and Gongola. These states share 1,700km border with the Republic of Cameroun from the east; 90km with the Republic of Chad from the north-east, and 1,500 km with the Republic of Niger from the north. According to the 2006 population census the population of the states stood at 18,971,965 (NPC, 2006).

In recent years the region has been rocked by security challenges emanating from the cross-border flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). The easy accessibility of weapons has armed groups which hitherto could not have been armed, beyond the state constellations thereby making it difficult to stem the tide of violent conflicts across the region. Most notable of these conflicts are the Tiv-Jukun crisis in Taraba State, Sayawa (Zaar)-Hausa/Fulani crisis in Bauchi State, Bachama-Hausa/Fulani crisis in Adamawa

State, and most recently the Boko Haram crisis across the entire North-Eastern sub-region and beyond. Political thuggery has equally assumed a dangerous dimension by engaging the use of SALW, notable among which are the '*Yan Kalare*' (Fulfulde word meaning 'hunters' but they turned to a political vanguard) in Gombe State, the '*Sara-suka*' (Hausa word meaning 'matchetting and piercing') in Bauchi State, the ECOMOG Boys in Borno and Yobe States; in Adamawa State they are called '*Yan Shinko*' while in Taraba State they are called '*Bani Halal*' (intimidate, cajole). Politicians used these groups to rig elections, silence oppositions, settle political scores and dump them until their services are needed again during another round of electioneering campaign. Having been exposed to easy money during elections and later abandoned to cater for themselves, they could go to any length to make ends meet and the masses would be the victim of such consequences. These security challenges posed strategic threats to regional cohesion as the contours of conflict have gradually polarized the region along many cleavages.

This polarization is so pronounced as in the case of Muslims versus Christians; People Democratic Party (PDP) vanguard and opposition parties i.e. where PDP controls the government; All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) vanguard and opposition parties in the case of ANPP-controlled states; and/or one ethnic group against the other(s). These tensions and seeming sense of mistrust as well as deeply-rooted animosity among these diversities have facilitated the demand for SALW hence its flow with its devastating consequences. The North-Eastern Nigeria-hitherto the most peaceful enclave throughout the nation-is now the flash point of armed insurrections considering the waves of bombings and attacks on innocent unarmed civilians, security personnel especially, the military, police, prisons and their offices/residences. Banks, schools, telecommunication masts, motorists, passengers, foreigners and markets too were not left out. Provocative attacks on places of worships also created tensions among the two predominant religions.

Statement of Research Problem

North-Eastern Nigeria borders Niger, Chad and Cameroon and is currently experiencing security challenges as a result of cross-border flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) into the region from the neighbouring countries and states of the Nigerian federation. On the northern border from Niger down to the Mediterranean Sea and on the eastern border from Chad down to the Nile have been theatres of wars, skirmishes, rebellion and conflicts. Arms are freely and uncontrollably traded in an around these borders. People from these two axes have historic trade relations with the North-East since the time of Trans-Sahara trade as a result of which goods, services and ideas were exchanged. This is because, as posited by (Umara 2011), Nigeria's cross border parallel activities with the Central African Subregion is connected to the pre colonial socio

economic and cultural affinities that have developed among the people before colonial incursion and subsequent balkanization of the region along European spheres of influence (Fage 2002, Tijjani 1993, Dunoma 1998 in Umara 2011).

However, the availability and cross-border flow of SALW from the neighbouring countries through the porous borders is due largely to geographical contiguity between the North-Eastern Nigeria and these countries. Various dissident groups from Nigeria have benefited from this free influx of SALW through direct buying of arms and ammunitions and or training. Conversely, dissident groups from these countries drifted into the North-East with concealed weapons, mostly AK47 which is durable, maneuverable and easy to use. Ethno-religious and socio-cultural affiliations between these dissident groups and members of the border region communities helped in making the weapons flow easier as a result of which the emigrants were able to meet with members of the underworld and other dissident groups in Nigeria making a partnership for arms deal.

The availability of such weapons have fuelled ethno-religious crisis, electoral and post-electoral violence, armed robbery, politically-inclined assassinations, rampant use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) on strategic places (offices, institutions, markets, schools), incessant kidnappings and cultism in institutions of higher learning which necessitated the need for governmental intervention. In an attempt to stem the tide, the Federal Government deployed Joint Task Force (JTF) yet the problem keeps persisting. The Stop and Search Strategy (SSS) employed by the security agencies has only succeeded in further compounding the security challenge because they do collect money as bribe from commuters on the road thereby facilitating the movement of Small Arms and Light Weapons across their check points with ease. Complicity of security personnel guarding the armoury with insurgents has also helped greatly in the arming of insurgents. There is therefore the need to find a solution to this seemingly unending problem which necessitated the conduct of this research.

Method of Data Collection

This work relied on secondary sources of data. Materials typical of books and related periodicals were obtained from the Lake-Chad Basin Commission, Chad; the Nigeria Police Force Headquarters, Abuja; Defence Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, Abuja; Nigeria Defence Industrial Corporation (NDIC), Kaduna; Nigeria Customs Service Headquarters, Abuja; Nigeria Immigration Service Headquarters, Abuja; Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru; State Security Service (SSS) Headquarters, Abuja; Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA), Abuja; Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), Baga; newspapers, seminars, workshops, journals, conference papers, textbooks, reports of Panels and Commissions of Enquiry

into various crises, the internet and other relevant records and materials (both published and unpublished). The method employed is an analysis of the documents obtained on the subject matter.

Proliferations of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

The term weapon proliferation was first widely used in relation to arms in the context of fears of the spread of nuclear weapons during the 1960s. It has since applied to numerous other types of weapons such that the term has progressively become used as a generic term applied to any process of weapons spread that is deemed of having security implications. Proliferation is a constructed spread from a single source, or small number of sources, to a limited numbers of recipients usually all states. "Diffusion" on the other hand, has been used in contrast to narrowly structured state centric, techno-centric proliferation; it is referred to a more broadly structured process of spread drawing on a more diffuse system spread of weapons or technology from multiple sources to multiple recipients. It has been used primarily in relation to the spread of technology and more recently, to the spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). In his attempt to distinguish the two, Klare (1998) observed that:

While proliferation suggest an increase in number of weapons possessed by certain governments, or in the number of states possessing a particular weapon systems, "diffusion suggest the dispersion of arms within societies, extending not only to governments and state entities but also to private armies and militias, insurgent groups, criminal organizations and other non-state actors (Klare,1995).

Conclusively, proliferation of SALW is therefore seen as the means through which manufactured SALW flow from the points of production to the points of utilization or use by the end users. The rate at which such flow takes place depends on demand creation for such weapons due to conflicts, crisis and skirmishes between communities, politicians, insurgents or criminals. Such supplies depend on the global availability of such weapons.

Global Availability of SALW

Global accumulation of new and surplus SALW lead to broad and substantial availability through diverse channels. Large numbers are part of the equation that implies easy access. The phrase "awash with arms" has been applied to many states and regions. Small arms are so ubiquitous that regions of the world find themselves awash in them... acquiring them is as easy as buying fish in the market.

However, the vast global stock of SALW is often asserted and used as a premise for further emphasis on the distinctiveness and complexity of SALW proliferation. A core aspect of this premise is that global accumulation lead almost inevitably to availability at all levels (both state and non-state actors).

According to Klare (1999:16) "the emergence of internal arms races and the outbreak of conflicts in weak and divided societies is fostered by an immense worldwide abundance of SALW channeled to conflicts through a global black market by nefarious actors coexist to facilitate the flow making it regional and national problem because accumulation, availability and flow always jump between levels without reference to the existence of structures and dynamics at each level" Klare, (1999:16). According to Small Arms Survey (SAS 2001:170), their accessibility is linked to the liberalization of markets and emergence of new brokering activities (Small Arms Survey 2001:170). Be that as it may, by emphasizing difference, particularly the crossing of non-state threshold because SALW flow in a world without barriers between local armed actors and international markets, the leap from the local to the global, and the flow back down again, is portrayed as a world of globalized illicit, or less than legal, trade populated by a new race of private profiteers: Arm brokers and transport agents.

Statistically, illicit trade in SALW in terms of dollar value, account for a small proportion of the global trade of these weapons: a loosely estimated ten (10) to twenty (20) percent (Small Arms Survey 2001:167) and up to fifty-five percent (55%) of the trade was illicit. Yet they are seen as disproportionately contributing to conflict and crime. Their small size and low weight creates propensity for illicit transfer since they are easily concealed (Klare, 1999:14). This in combination with the globalization of all forms of trade, and the ever increasing volume of goods flowing around the world placing greater strain on customs service, create an environment of impunity for those engaged in arms trafficking (Klare, 1998:39).

More convincingly, according to Small Arms Survey 2001, most character of this illicit market is distinguished as either global black market or a global grey market. The Small Arms Survey claims that the grey market is larger than the black market and is more important to conflict. While it is difficult to distinguish grey and black market transfers, the grey market is generally much larger, both in terms of volumes; its covert transfers tend to supply arms to non-state actors (eg rebel groups) in countries or regions in war or conflict. The black market is usually much smaller than the grey market; its illegal transfers tend to supply arms to individuals and criminal organizations (Small Arms Survey 2001:190).

These transactions are conducted under cover thus making the activity shadowy. More so, because of the widespread poverty in developing economies, the level of unemployment is high as a result of which such arms brokers easily recruit middlemen/middle women members who do the real deal as their foot soldiers.

Process of Weapons Flow into Nigeria

However, there are divergent views as to how weapons flow in a generic terms, of which our case at hand is inclusive. To Stemmet, (2001), "the process of globalization (a post-Cold War phenomenon) also contributed to the proliferation

of SALW. The advent of the era of global interconnectedness in terms of trade, international finance and commerce, and developments in the aviation and shipping industries have enabled arms dealers to procure and transport SALW illicitly across international borders, to weak states with porous borders and weak or absent state control systems. This arms trade is often financed with resources from conflict-ridden but resource rich states" (Stemmet, 2001). For instance, Nigerian security agencies say remnants of rebel wars in both Chad and Niger have drifted southwards with their weapons into Nigeria over the past decade. Operating in large bands of 30 – 50 armed men, they engage in banditry on highways in Northeastern and Central Nigeria.

In line with the findings of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) "the excessive and uncontrolled accumulation of small arms has led to the emergence of groups of armed individuals operating across and beyond state borders: rebel movements, private militias, terrorists, drug traffickers, arms dealers, ethno-religious fanatics, criminals etc. In some cases, this proliferation of armed groups undermines the authority of the state and its ability to guarantee the safety of its citizens" Yacubu (2005).

IRIN In-Depth, (2006) reported that the Niger Delta has long and easy access to small weapons, but growing violence and militarization in the region has been a boost to the trade in recent years. Smugglers operating out of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon and Nigeria have always coordinated the trade. Using fast boats, these smugglers cruise to ships in the high seas and obtain guns, the origin of which may be as far afield as Eastern Europe and Asia (IRIN In-Depth, 2006:18)

Moreover, from the 1960s up to the early 1980 virtually most of the goods, arms and heavier equipment procured by Niger, Cameroun, Chad, the Central African Republic and other landlocked states closer to Nigeria transport such items from Lagos/Portharcourt through the North-East via railways. As a tradition, terminals of railways have markets allover as a result of which trading and exchanges take place. Some arms meant to be transported might have been exchanged for some other needs or sold at the terminal leading to gradual piling up of arms. There are terminals in Bauchi, Gombe, Nguru, Maiduguri and host of other small terminals. Possession of arms naturally makes one to feel more secured and determined for self-defence and may, out of feeling of superiority, make one to indulge in acts that will make that person prove his/her worth. At the slightest provocation, avoidable conflicts do assume magnified proportion recording high casualties. This, no doubt, is a serious threat harmonious relationships and peaceful coexistence among the people and by implication, to the national security.

National Security

According to Adamu (1990), "national security is the sum total of a nation's efforts to protect and preserve the state, its institutions and the well-being of its citizens. It connotes deliberate measures to identify and ward-off perceived, potential and real threats to the nation-state. In other words, national security must derive from the composite of all internal and external security measures, both administrative and operational, taken in the pursuit and defence of the national interest. It necessarily includes the neutralization of obstacles to the achievement of national goals and objectives" Adamu (1990); "a nation which provides physical external security and neglects the development of its economic base, does so at its own peril" Gusau (1999:6).

Put differently, "national security...has a more extensive meaning than protection from physical harm; it implies protection, through a variety of means, of vital economic and political interests, the loss of which could threaten the fundamental values and vitality of the state" Jordan et al, (n.y.).

Suffice it to emphasize here that effective national security demands the continual monitoring of the domestic and external scenes, thorough evaluation of threats whether expressed or implied by the deeds of pronouncements of elements within or outside the geographical confines of the national territory. It must be noted that in the larger world of political ambitions and conflicting national interests, surrogate or proxy elements may conceal the real source of a threat. A proxy element may, in the pay of external interests be used to propagate an ideology, instigate combative trade unionism or even suborn the press to sustain socio-political tensions within the territory of a sovereign state.

Threats to National Security

In just a decade of democratic rule, Nigeria's internal security landscape had deteriorated in fundamental ways. Old security threats have remained or even assumed worrisome dimensions while new threats have emerged. Some of the old threats that assumed new dimensions include Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation, sea piracy, armed robbery, assassination, human trafficking, kidnapping, and ethno-religious conflicts. Threats considered to be relatively new in Nigeria, though not without precedent, is the outbreak of violent extremism evidenced in the growing audacity of the Boko Haram sect and the spate of bomb blasts across the country, which have now assumed a terrorist dimension (This Day Editorial, 10th November, 2010, p. 18). The state of insecurity in Nigeria has become a prominent source of concern for the hapless citizens, the government, and indeed the international community, (Onuoha, 2011).

According to the National Security Adviser to the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, 1999, "the defense of national interests compels a comprehensive appraisal of all indicators of potential, actual or possible

developments which could impact negatively on government, governance and the people. Such potential or real developments which, in any way, compromise the security of government or state constitute threats; threats call for proper analysis and assessment with a view to determining appropriate response measures. For a threat to be credible, its source must be seen to have the requisite capability to deliver on the threat. In theory, most threats arise from conflict of interests, competition for resources and irritations arising from territorial contiguity" (Gusau 1999). In an attempt to neutralize and or stop illegal possession of SALW the British colonial administration enacted the Firearms Act at the eve of independence in 1959, being conscious of the fact that if they allow people to possess arms at will, the in-coming baby government at independence may find it difficult to handle the new emerging governmental structure of self-rule and as well concentrate on good forecast of security implication of possessing arms without official restriction hence the Firearms Act.

Strategies Adopted by Government in Combating Cross Border Flow of Weapons from North-Eastern Borders

The Federal Government, in its effort to combat cross-border flow of SALW into the country, had adopted series of measures as follows:

1) Fines/Jail Terms:

This is a legal instrument whereby an offender is fined and/or jailed for a term if found guilty of illegal possession and/or manufacture, importation or exportation of SALW. According to Firearms Act, any person who contravenes any of the provisions 1966 No 31 of this Act specified in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this section, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction under any of the following:

- a) i) Section 3 of this Act, (which prohibits the possession or control of firearms or certain categories),
 - ii) Section 18 of this Act, (which prohibits the importation or exportation of firearms or ammunition other than through prescribed ports),
 - iii) Section 19 of this Act, (which restricts the importation or exportation of certain firearms or ammunition), and
 - iv) Section 23 of this Act, (which prohibits the manufacture, assembly, or repair of firearms or ammunition), to a minimum sentence of ten (10) years;
- a) i) Section 4 of this Act, (which restricts the possession or control of personal firearms),
 - ii) Section 9 of this Act, (which restricts the possession or control of ammunition in respect of certain firearms),
 - iii) Section 10 (1) of this Act, (which prohibits any dealing in arms or ammunition),
- i) Section 20 of this Act 9 (which restricts the importation of personal firearms or ammunition), and

- ii) Section 27 of this Act, (which, among other things, prohibits the shortening of smoothbore firearms), to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years;
- b) And to any offences under the following:
- i) Section 5 (3) of this Act, (which restricts the possession or control of a muzzle-loading firearm within a special area),
 - ii) Section 6 of this Act, (which prohibits possession or control of a muzzle-loading firearm in Lagos-when it was the headquarter, that automatically applies to Abuja being the present capital),
 - iii) Section 8 (2) of this Act, (which requires notification of loss, theft or destruction of certain other things with respect to firearms),
 - iv) Section 11 of this Act, (which relates to a registered dealers's armoury),
 - v) Section 12 of this Act, (which deals with the sale or transfer of firearms or ammunition to license holders), and
 - vi) Section 13 of the Act, (which relates to the stamping of all firearms sold or transferred) to a fine of one thousand naira or imprisonment for a term of two years or to both such fine and imprisonment (Firearms Act, 1959).

Even though the punishments are so mild, at least, there is a basis for consideration that government has not left the issue unattended to.

2) Deployment of Security Patrol Team:

In an effort to stem the tide of the flow of SALW through the North-Eastern border, the Federal Government deployed paramilitary agencies such as the Immigration, Customs and the Police at the borders in order to ensure seizure and denial of accessibility of contraband and other illegal items from the neighbouring countries, including influx of SALW and foreigners who are the facilitators of the movement of the goods through the porous borders of the North-East in connivance with unscrupulous security agencies and border region inhabitants.

3) Joint Task Force (JTF):

It has become a tradition in the Nigerian security realm that when a security situation is deteriorating in any part of the country, the last resort is the deployment of a Joint Task Force (JTF). Unlike the conventional military functions, JTF is a combination of the Police, the Military and Para-Military drafted to handle emergency insecurity situations and saddled with the responsibility of quenching crisis and restoring peace and harmonious coexistence in an area or state. The JTF seldom employ the technique of random house-to-house search in order to get SALW in possession of the people who are assumed to be parties to the crisis.

However, the Federal Government deployed Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to help complement the efforts of other security personnel in manning the borders who mount road blocks, engage in stop-and-search operations and do house-to-house search for illegal SALW even before the deployment of the JTF when there was no major security challenge.

4) Stop and Search Strategy (SSS):

This is a strategy whereby security check-points and road blocks are mounted on major access roads whereby motorists are stopped and searched in order to uncover and confiscate illegal SALW usually concealed in loaded goods or inside car. This is borne out of the expectations that one of the means through which SALW are smuggled and/or distributed is through concealment in parts of cars, lorries, trailers or inside goods that may not be easily unbundled. Even pedestrians suspected to be potentially injurious are searched in the process.

5) Licensing:

This is a situation whereby the licensing authority grants or gives license to individuals who officially registered and sought permission to possess SALW. In Nigeria, the Firearms Act, enacted in 1959, and last reviewed in 1995, regulates the production, import and export of small arms and light weapons. Section 3 of the Act prohibits the possession or control of firearms of certain categories except in accordance with a license granted by the President. Section 10 (1) of the Act prohibits any dealing in arms and ammunitions except by registered firearms dealers. Section 18 of the Act prohibits the importation or exportation of firearms or ammunitions other than through prescribed seaports, airports or towns adjacent to the land frontier (Firearms Act, 1959). With that as a means of control, unlicensed SALW could be confiscated and its owner(s) traced and punished accordingly.

6) Notice/Ultimatum for return of SALW:

Government, upon suspicion of SALW in circulation, do give ultimatum or notice to the citizens that all licensed and registered arms in their possession should be tendered at the Police Headquarters of the respective state for safe-keep with a definite date for closure after which anybody found with SALW is considered an offender. For instance, in Maiduguri, authorities announced that those in possession of licensed/registered SALW should surrender same to authority on or before 31st October, 2012.

7) Destruction of retrieved SALW:

SALW retrieved from the public are destroyed in a professional way to avoid the incidence of recycling. The Defence Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) is an expert corporation specialized in the destroying of arms and is expected to produce and maintain arms when situation normalizes. It is the only facility authorized to produce arms and ammunitions in Nigeria. It was created in 1964 to supply arms and ammunitions to the police and military in order to meet the needs of the newly independent state. In July 2000, the Federal

Government set up a twelve-member National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCPTAW) aimed at gathering information on the proliferation of illicit trafficking in SALW. Although the committee has not published its findings, it did by July 2001 publicly destroyed 428 rifles, 494 imported pistols, 287 locally made pistols and 48 Dane guns seized by security agencies (Namdi 2002:81). The exercise was repeated in 2004.

In 2006 Obasanjo authorized funding of NGN 1 billion (USD 8 million) for DICON to refurbish the company's production facilities and begin the processes of designing an AK-47-type assault rifle for production in Nigeria. The refurbishment has reportedly brought the factory to nearly 70 percent of its normal production levels (Buhari, 2007). DICON has reported that it has finished the prototypes of the Nigerian-made AK-47 rifle, dubbed the OBJ-006 after President Obasanjo, and is now ready to commence mass production.

Maybe it was because Obasanjo was a military General who knows the value of DICON to the security investment of Nigeria as preceding administrations never paid attention to the company. Probably because of traditional political envy that the AK-47-Nigerian prototypes were dubbed OBJ-006 and cannot be changed to reflect their name(s).

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this research, Conflict theory and Contiguity theory would be used and in the end see how the two theories relate well in addressing the problem of cross-border flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) into the North-Eastern Nigeria from the neighbouring countries of Cameroun, Chad and Niger borders.

The proponents of the conflict theory includes, among others, Marx, K. (1859), Hanks, P. 1986, Stagner, R. 1967, Young, O. 1976, Ogunyannwo, O. (2008), Eghosa, E. O. (2008). The proponents of contiguity theory are Ormrod, 1999, Guthrie, 1946, Cooper, 1946, Kearsley, 1946 and Sills, 1968.

The Relevance of Conflict Theory to the Flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons into the North-eastern Nigeria

The relevance of Conflict Theory to the understanding of the reasons behind the flow of SALW into the North-Eastern Nigeria vis-à-vis the security challenges of such arms can be situated within the broader perspective of demand creation from, as well as the supply of the SALW into the North-Eastern Nigeria. Without demand, there can hardly be supply. Internal conflicts (religious, ethnic and political) as well as criminal activities have created the demand side due to persistence of the conflicts vis-à-vis the need for revenge and vendetta from the aggrieved sides or parties. This scenario sets in a vicious circle of conflict in which all parties want to remain the victors irrespective of the

damaging consequences cum security implication such acts create for the region. The Tiv-Jukun crises in Taraba state, the Sayawa (Zaar)-Hausa/Fulani crisis in Bauchi, the Bachama-Hausa/Fulani crisis in Adamawa and the recent Boko Haram insurgency that ravaged the entire North-Eastern region and beyond is a good example.

Accordingly, the Nigerian state superstructure has over time created endemic systemic irregularities through the instrumentalities of corruption and corrupt practices, the cult of mediocrity, fierce struggle for scarce resources, social injustice, class hostility, disequilibrium in power relations, differences in values and interests, rigging elections, diminishing resources, contradictions of economic and political reforms all of which culminated in the emergence of a generation of frustrated and unemployed youth desperate to make ends meet in a depressed and drained economy. Coupled with a long unmanned border along the borders of Nigeria and the neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroun and the corruption taking place at the border region, SALW; contraband goods and other illegal items easily find their ways through the porous borders and ended in the hands of various conflicting parties for either attack or defense.

Even though we cannot limit the flow of SALW into the North-East to only the neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroun, it is quite true that handful of SALW also come up to the North-East from coastal axis through Jos and Kaduna secondary distribution points.

Although the North-Eastern Nigeria's former headquarter, Maiduguri was known for peace, recent security challenges have turned the famous and historic city into an epicenter of conflict defined by massacre and mass murder by both rebellious group (Jama'atu Ahlu Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad popularly known as the Boko Haram) and the security personnel and the conflict has been extended to the other parts of the North-East and Nigeria in general. Such conflicts are fuelled by the availability of SALW in the hands of religious fanatics, ethnic warlords, political thugs and criminals.

Deducing from the above theory, it can conveniently fit into offering explanations as to why numerous conflicts are taking place in the North-Eastern states of Nigeria. This is because the relationship between the leaders and the led has assumed antagonistic dimension as the leaders have carved a niche for themselves with which they control and distribute state-owned resources at will, mostly to their families and cronies. The subjugation of the masses and the entrenchment of a neo-patrimonial relationship in which life was made much more difficult for the masses has succeeded in further compounding the circle of exploitation. The basic necessities of life like good and decent housing accommodation, basic health care, education, infrastructural facilities and above all, security, are all turned into conduit-pipes for stealing government fund instead of delivering the campaign promises made to the public.

Moreover, the exacerbation of this exploitative condition has succeeded in making the masses see as if they do not have a stake in the system and as such, with little provocation, violence can occur with seemingly unending vendetta. It is the occurrence of frequent violence that normally necessitated the increasing demand for SALW from the neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroon borders in order to arm themselves against further attacks or vendetta. Therefore, there is a significant link between the cross-border flow of SALW and conflicts in the North-Eastern Nigeria.

Consequent upon the above asseverations, it could be deduced that conflict theory has a direct relevance with the flow of SALW into the North-Eastern Nigeria from the neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad, Cameroun as well as the neighbouring states of Plateau and Kaduna who are known for serial religious crisis since the early 1990s. As could be said, the more the conflict, the higher the demand for SALW for use in the conflict and consequently, the higher the supply of SALW to meet the growing demand and the more the conflicts again.

Weaponisation of the North-eastern Nigeria

In recent years the region has been rocked by security challenges emanating from the cross-border flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). The easy accessibility to weapons has armed groups which hitherto could not have been armed, beyond the state constellations thereby making it difficult to stem the tide of violent conflicts across the region. Most notable of these conflicts are the Tiv-Jukun crisis in Taraba State, Sayawa (Zaar)-Hausa/Fulani crisis in Bauchi State, Bachama-Hausa/Fulani crisis in Adamawa State, and most recently the Boko Haram crisis across the entire North-Eastern sub-region and beyond. Political thuggery has equally assumed a dangerous dimension by engaging the use of SALW, notable among which are the '*Yan Kalare*' (Fulfulde word meaning 'hunters' but they turned to a political vanguard) in Gombe State, the '*Sara-suka*' (Hausa word meaning 'matchetting and piercing') in Bauchi State, the ECOMOG Boys in Borno and Yobe States; in Adamawa State they are called '*Yan Shinko*' while in Taraba State they are called '*Bani Halal*' (intimidate, cajole). Politicians used these groups to rig elections, silence oppositions, settle political scores and dump them until their services are needed again during another round of electioneering campaign. Having been exposed to easy money during elections and later abandoned to cater for themselves, they could go to any length to make ends meet and the masses would be the victim of such consequences. These security challenges posed strategic threats to regional cohesion as the contours of conflict have gradually polarized the region along many cleavages.

This polarization is so pronounced as in the case of Muslims versus Christians; People Democratic Party (PDP) vanguard and opposition parties i.e.

where PDP controls the government; All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) vanguard and opposition parties in the case of ANPP-controlled states; and/or one ethnic group against the other(s). These tensions and seeming sense of mistrust as well as deeply-rooted animosity among these diversities have facilitated the demand for SALW hence its flow with its devastating consequences. The North-Eastern Nigeria-hitherto was the most peaceful enclave throughout the nation-is now the flash point of armed insurrections considering the waves of bombings and attacks on security personnel especially, the military, police, prisons and their offices/residences. Banks and markets too were not left out. Provocative attacks on places of worships also created tensions among the two predominant religions.

The Factors Responsible for Cross-border Flow of SALW into the North-eastern Nigeria via Neighbouring Countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroun Borders

It is a fact that weapons flow into Nigeria and the aftermath of such flows have been catastrophic to both the populace and the government. But there have been divergent views among scholars as to why and how weapons flow in general and, in our own case, into Nigeria. For instance, the Final Report of the UN Panel of Experts on Violations of Security Council Sanctions Against UNITA (S/2000/203), 10 March, 2000:13 states that the arms reduction brought about by the implementation of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and the general downscaling of military forces and inventories fuelled the supply forces while the proliferation of interstate and especially intrastate conflicts resulting from the termination of the relative global stability of the cold war era fuelled demand.

However, Stemmet (2001) concurred by believing it to be the impact of post-cold war hostilities. To Stemmet, "the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is essentially a post-Cold War problem. While large quantities of Small Arms and Light Weapons were transferred into the developing world during the Cold War, it is ironic that the problem of proliferation intensified as a result of its termination. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the weakening and even collapse of state structures in the former Warsaw Pact states, and the resulting lack of control systems in some of these states, created the force of supply. A similar tendency was evident in many post-colonial states in the developing world, as a result of inadequate state-building and the failure by many states to build proper security systems and accountable democratic political system. This has created the vacuum to be filled by new, non-state actors, fomenting and participating especially in intrastate conflicts and creating a demand for Small Arms and Light Weapons"(Stemmet 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

This research, The Cross-Border Flow of SALW and Security

Challenges in North-Eastern Nigeria has been able to explore the reason behind the flow of SALW from Niger, Chad and Cameroon borders into the North-East. The nature of such flow, the forces behind it as well as the security implications of such acts to the growth and development of the North-East in particular and Nigeria in general. It is a fact that poverty is very central in making people lose confidence in the government due to the inability of the government to alleviate their sufferings (the provision of minimum basic requirements of life for existence as human beings) due to corruption hence the loss of legitimacy and the springing up of parallel security apparatus because government cannot guarantee their safety. When the government becomes all-inclusive in terms of the distribution of resources and the siting of specific projects of importance, the populace would be the ones that would help security agencies in facing any security challenge that may come up.

To the scientific mind, every phenomenon is a fact that has a cause and it is wise to seek that cause when attempting to change the fact. It is crystal clear that politicians armed their thugs to maneuver elections for their success after which they abandoned such thugs to fend for themselves with the masses at the receiving end.

It is my conclusion that if the government will be both responsive and responsible in addressing the plight of the populace through the provision of the basic minimum requirements for a decent living to Nigerians, nobody will carry arms against it and vice-versa. From the way the current security challenge taking different dimension day-by-day and the manner the challenge is being handled by politicians who sit in Abuja and take decisions without actually coming to terms with the victims of such security challenge, there is no peace in sight from the government's angle in the near future because of its insincerity except prayers from the masses and calls for the dissident groups to see reasons on why they should reconsider their demands for the collective good of all, not the politicians who are the prime cause of all these problems.

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