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Arms Proliferation and the Activities of Non-State Actors: Empirical Evidence from Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the connection between armed agitation in Nigeria and the spread of small arms and light weapons. This was motivated by the fact that non-state actors, who are typically armed with small arms as part of their measures, among other criminal and violent activities to attract the attention of the government and the entire society, have plagued the majority of the states in the West African subregion with relentless and occasionally absurd demands and agitation. Both a historical and a descriptive design were used in the investigation. The researcher was able to collect data from both primary and secondary sources as a result. The theory of transnationalism was used to explain this research. The study's conclusions demonstrated that the relationship between the two factors, arms proliferation and armed agitations results from the ease with which small arms may be used to commit crimes including abduction, robbery, arson, and violence. Additionally, there is a lack of a positive working connection between the host communities and security personnel, which may greatly hinder the exchange of critical information with the level of accuracy essential for border protection. Based on these conclusions, it was suggested that the government look for better strategies and tactics to reduce unlawful border crossings. The government should also take a closer look at the issues with governance and address the underlying challenges that lead to violent agitations, which are brought on by the political and/or economic exclusion of certain groups in the nation.

Keywords: Agitation, Arms, Border, Insecurity, Proliferation

Introduction

The issue of arms proliferation and the entrenchment of lasting peace and security in the West African sub-region remain crucial to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that it devotes to it an article (Article 51) which spells out measures aimed at preventing the illegal circulation of small arms in the region. Arms proliferation in West Africa has been fingered as by far the most visible symptom of a much deeper and destabilizing factor which has slowly but progressively affected the peace and security of most states in sub-Sahara Africa.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) have killed far more people than biological, chemical, or any other type of weapon of mass destruction. According to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/50/70, cited in Bolaji and Goke (2016), arms proliferation has contributed to armed agitations,

displacement of people, organised crimes, and acts of terrorism, thereby undermining peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability, and sustainable social and economic development.

According to the Small Arms Survey (2007) in Alimba (2017), small arms in Africa are distributed among their users as follows: 79% are in civilian hands, 16% are in the hands of the military, 3% are in the hands of the police, and 2% are in the hands of insurgents. This suggests that in Africa, arms are more in the hands of civilians than the real security agencies that are meant to bear arms. This idea is corroborated by an earlier view that over 378 million weapons (which amounts to 59% of the world's small arms and light weapons arsenal) are in the hands of civilians. The remaining 38% are owned by government armed forces, while 3% are owned by the police and 0.2% by armed opposition groups, totaling 638.9 million (Jacob *et al.*, 2019). The possession of guns has over time become synonymous with the people's cultural lives in West Africa; almost everyone carries a personal weapon (McCullum, 2016). The undue availability of small arms in illegal hands has continued to rob the continent of its peace and stability. In West Africa, out of the over 8 million small arms found, substantial proportions are found in Nigeria.

It is important to note that border security is critical and necessary for the protection of lives and properties within a given country. According to Spencer (2014), the border is the first line of defence against insecurity and the last line of a nation's territorial integrity. Nigeria's land borders have become free entry and exit points for smugglers of all manner of contraband goods who carry out their illicit activities with little or no reservations. Irrespective of where the border is located within the country and its geographic nature, porosity is a common feature shared by all borders in the country. While Nigeria's border problem is related to its colonial history, its porosity has been exacerbated by the failure of successive governments to properly administer the borders.

Okumu (2013) observed that the high level of insecurity on African borders is largely due to the way they are administered and managed, and less to do with how colonialists drew them. Nigerian borders are characterised by a limited presence of security and law enforcement officials. The former minister of Interior, Abba Moro, disclosed that there are over 1,499 irregular (illegal) and 84 regular (legal) officially identified entry routes into Nigeria, and this explains the very porous state of these borders and why they permit illicit transnational arms trafficking.

Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) noted that small arms and other lethal weapons are readily available in Nigeria markets because of the porosity of Nigeria's borders as well as the weak security system. The availability and accessibility of these weapons by non-state actors is responsible for the various forms of criminal activities and armed agitations witnessed across the country. Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa (Edeko, 2011). Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries such as Republic of Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Republic of Benin (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012).

Today, Nigeria has been enmeshed in recurrent incidents of armed conflict and anarchy from non-state actors like MASSOP, Niger Delta militants, kidnapping, terrorism, Fulani herdsman, and IPOB as a result of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. However, it is not only the transnational nature and ethno-religious coloration of the conflict that has made it multifaceted in terms of its patterns and impact, but the ability to easy access to SALWs, thereby making it difficult to tackle. As observed by the African Centre for Strategic Studies (2017), the wanton access to SALWs have become a global problem due to the fact that it has continued to be a motivating factor for the incessant attacks and other activities of extremist groups in countries like Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Sudan, etc.

Research has shown that the proliferation of Small Arms Light Weapons has the propensity of thriving due to the unique and strategic location of the region, leaky borders, weak governance, widespread poverty and corrupt elements in the police and military being exploited by criminals and insurgents. Accordingly, it will not be out of place to assert that beyond the activities of criminals, syndicates have leveraged on this loophole to get involved in organised crimes and other violent acts that has further escalated the level of tension and insecurity in the region. This is because the easy access to Small Arms Light Weapons have constantly embolden these syndicates to go haywire to the extent of even attacking security outfits at the border post and other parts of the society.

In Nigeria, several efforts have been made to regulate arms proliferation. One such effort was the amnesty programme initiated by the late President Yar Adua in 2009, which resulted in the demobilisation of 30,000 militants (Ebiede *et al.*, 2020). Similar steps were taken by the governments of Imo and Ondo States to reduce the number of arms in circulation in their domains, but failed to yield the desired result. It rather exacerbated the crisis of armed agitations in Nigeria, which has led to wanton killings and destruction of properties. Adeyeye (2020) asserted that over 300,000 lives have been lost between 2009 and 2018, while Ottah (2019:15) puts the money lost to insecurity as a result of trans-border arms proliferation at about \$35 billion dollars.

It is against the background of the foregoing that this study intends to beam its searchlight on arms proliferation and insecurity in West Africa with a focus on the activities of non-state actors in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning upon which this study is explained is the Theory of Transnationalism that was popularized in the early 20th century by Randolph Bourne, which grew out of the increased interconnectivity between people and receding economic and social significance of boundaries among nation-states (Transnationalism, 2016). The theory of transnationalism has the following assumptions: i. Persons are not bound to place, as much, as they are to space and technologies of place. ii. There is cultural connectivity and reproduction and human mobility. This implies that individuals or immigrants maintained cultural ties with their parent country and reproduce these cultural-related activities in their host country when the need arises. iii. Some immigrants stay abreast of and influence the political-related occurrences of both their home and host country. iv. The increased cross-border activities and interactions affect the capability of states (Rosemberg, Boutain & Mohammed, 2016).

Transnationalism talks about the process where immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and that of their host country (Rosemberg et al, 2016). It is based on increased functional integration and multiple interaction or links of people, states and institutions across borders or beyond state boundaries, which can affect the capability of states. This increased interaction is facilitated by globalization. This theory viewed that the increase in interaction between non-state actors (as a result of globalization) across borders has led to several impact on the capability of states. Therefore, the constant cross border activities or interactions affect the domestic policies of state actors (which can reduce the importance of states). This transnational interaction can take place in one country while the effects are seen in another country (Soehi & Waldinger, 2012). This theory “emphasizes the ways in which nations are no longer able to contain or control the disputes or negotiation through which social groups annex a global dimension to their meaningful practices, the notion of diaspora brings to the fore the racial dynamics underlying the international division of labour and the economic turmoil of global capital” (Transnationalism, 2016).

This theory is relevant and therefore can be applied to this study because there are several increased relations or interactions that exist between people or non-state actors beyond Nigerian borders. With the help of globalization, Nigerian citizens have maintained ties with citizens in other countries with ease. These interactions can be in form of economic, social, cultural and political interaction. The constant ties or interactions of people from different countries within and across Nigerian borders most times serves as a

problem to state's capability on how to ensure effective border security and national security in Nigeria. As people interact across borders by engaging in illegal or illicit trade activities and other organized crimes, they most times devise several means on how to sustain such relations across borders. This can lead to several challenges to state's capability to control and manage its borders from unnecessary infiltrations that can pose as a security threat and survival of the state.

Review of Related Literature

Arms Proliferation

The 1997 report of the United Nations Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms conceived arms as weapons designed for personal use and for use by several persons serving as a crew. The report further indicated that arms are revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine-guns; assault rifles; light machine-guns, heavy machine-guns; hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers; portable anti-aircraft guns; portable anti-tank guns; recoilless rifles; portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems; and mortars of calibers less than 100mm. Arms can, therefore, be defined as anything used by an individual to injure or cause the death of a person or persons other than sheer use of physical strength (1997 Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts, cited in Alimba, 2017).

Arms are thus weapons designed for personal use and include light machine guns, pistols, fully automatic and assault rifles such as the AK-47 and M16 series, and semiautomatic rifles (United Nations, 2001). These arms are small such that they are easy to move, hide, trade, and steal. They are equally durable, portable and light such that adults, children and security men can use them across the globe (Grip, 2017).

The phrase arms proliferation denotes the unregulated availability of small arms (Muggah, 2001 cited in Alimba, 2017). According to Ogaba (2005) cited in Jibrin (2019) arms proliferation refers to the excessive accumulation and illegal spread of weapons which could have destabilising effect on states. In other words, arms proliferation is the propensity at which individuals can easily get access to arms through illegal channels because of its excessive availability in a society (Alimba, 2017). In a nutshell, arms are defined as all sorts of weapons that are designed for the use of a single individual to inflict harm or any form of injury on another person. Thus, arms proliferation is the unabated rate of the illegal arms and weaponry within the society (Rosenje, Adeniyi and Peju-Rosenje, 2020).

The United Nations (UN) had in 2008 and 2010 stated that small arms are dominant tools of criminal violence; they are cheap, light and easy to handle, transport and conceal, and their excessive accumulation and wide availability aggravate tension, which undermines human security (Nwobueze and Okolie-Osemene, 2017). This has been the situation in Nigeria in this Fourth Republic (1999 till date). For more-than two decades, Nigeria as a country has witnessed high political and security tensions with wanton destruction of lives and properties, occasioned by arm robbery, banditry, cultism, police brutality, kidnapping, sea-piracy and other criminal activities like political thuggery and militancy.

Insecurity

Albert (2003) has posited that security involves the survival of the state and the protection of individuals and groups within the state. While Otto and Ukpere (2012) are of the opinion that security relates to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis. It is thus a situation whereby a conducive atmosphere is created within which people in the state can go about their normal daily activities without threat to either their lives or properties (Adeleke, 2013). This implies that security encompasses all approaches towards safeguarding human as well as material resources in the state against all forms of aggressions or violent conduct. On the other hand, the concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety (Ewetan & Ese, 2014).

Hasan (2005) went on to contend that insecurity is a fact of life for the poor urban citizens of many countries. According to him, it may arise from the lack of secure housing tenure, which means living with the constant fear of eviction or it may reflect high levels of personal insecurity stemming from police harassment, abuse in the hands of bureaucracies or the breakdown of public safety in the neighborhood. Insecurity is also defined as a breach of peace and security, whether historical, religious, ethno-regional, civil, social, economic, and political that contributes to recurring conflicts, and leads to loss of lives and wanton destruction of property (Ewetan & Ese, 2014).

Patterson (2021) maintained that lack of confidence or unassertiveness, apprehension, uncertainty, lack of protection, etc these and more are synonymous words to be used in expressing the state of insecurity, which is always a precarious state in life. A person feels insecure when there is less assurance caused by phobic feelings as well as anxiety based on the precarious state of things within the environment or state where one is staying at the material time. Whenever, there is no guarantee for safety in a particular place, the people residing or living in such area will always feel insecure. In this situation, violence of different degrees is capable of causing a place to be insecure at that moment when such violent actions are being carried out. Violence increases the risk of being safe, in the end, there is usually the danger of getting hurt when once anybody within the vicinity is exposed to such danger, and at that material time, such places are highly insecure.

Therefore, insecurity is a huge challenge for every individual as well as government. Insecurity has a series of negative implications that are capable of deterring one from accomplishing one's heart desires, as well as putting one in an uncertain and apprehensive situation that is counterproductive. Insecurity is multidimensional, because there is social insecurity that constraints potentialities of man, job insecurity which affects performance because of the precarious nature of it, basic needs insecurity which affects the human basic needs negatively, such as food, shelter, clothing, etc. All these degrees of insecurity can only be caused by violence or the advanced terrorism as Nigeria is currently facing it.

Empirical Literature

Writing on public perceptions of the proliferation of small arms in Abuja with implications for peace and security, Ola (2018) opined that small arms, having the attributes of being readily available and easy to use, have been the primary tool of terrorist attacks in every part of the world, including those in Abuja, Nigeria. Small guns have a tendency to exacerbate conflict, terrorism, and insecurity and obstruct development, social stability, and effective governance due to their widespread availability, accumulation, and illicit movement. The study's primary goal was to investigate how the general population views the spread of small guns and light weapons and how it has affected the safety and security of Abuja, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to examine the factors that stimulate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Abuja, Nigeria; examine the relationship between small arms, terrorism, and insecurity; assess the nature of the threat posed to peace and security in Abuja, Nigeria; and examine the strategic options that were utilised by the Nigerian security sector to enhance peace and security in Abuja, Nigeria. The study utilised a mixed-methods research strategy incorporating a descriptive survey methodology. A selection of 113 and 20 respondents was used statistically and qualitatively in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The findings of the study amongst others were that the ineffective control of small arms led to their proliferation, accessibility, and availability in the possession of unauthorised users in Abuja, Nigeria, causing various terrorist attacks and great havoc in the city.

Abiodun *et al.*, (2018) studied the challenges to Nigeria's internal security posed by the proliferation of small guns. The prevalence and worrisome pace of small weapons proliferation, according to these writers, is one of the real barriers to the maintenance of stable peace and security in Nigeria. Small arms and light weapons proliferation is the main cause of the destruction of property and people, and it exacerbates inter-communal conflicts that lead to major bloodshed. Most of Nigeria's borders are open, making it simple for weapons, people, and narcotics to enter, travel through, and leave. However, one of the several security dangers facing the country is the high amount of corruption in Nigeria. This paper examines the concerns that the proliferation of

small guns and light weapons poses to national security and evaluates the government of Nigeria's coordinated attempts to tackle the problem with a view to offering solutions to the depressing phenomena. The research comes to the conclusion that the country's failing economy, instability, high unemployment rate, poverty, inability of the government to provide basic requirements of life, and corruption act as brakes on commendable attempts and measures to quell the problem. Additionally, it argues that in order to tackle the issue, Nigeria's local, state, and federal governments must work together, in addition to the crucial role that security services play in maintaining the country's peace and security.

According to Suleiman and Abada (2019), who studied the ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna State, Nigeria, from 2012 to 2018, there are often reports in the media about deadly ethno-religious conflicts in different parts of Nigeria that result in the willful destruction of people's lives and property. Small guns usage has been variably blamed in public discourse as the starting point for recurrent ethno-religious confrontations. With a focus on Kaduna State, where the phenomenon was most prevalent from 2012 to 2018, this paper seeks to explain the phenomenally frequent occurrences of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria using evidence from primary and secondary sources that builds upon the fragile-state theoretical framework of analysis. The research design for the study was a time-series survey. Three hundred and thirty-seven (337) respondents were chosen using a multi-stage intentional sampling procedure from the research area's three local government regions. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to statistically assess the data that were acquired. However, the focus of this study was on whether or not the widespread use of small guns contributed to the ongoing ethno-religious clashes in Kaduna State from 2012 to 2019. However, the findings show that a number of co-linear factors, including youth drug abuse, poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, all simultaneously explain the behaviour of our dependent variable, which is the recurrent ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna state from 2012 to 2018.

Oghuvbu (2020) studied the spread of weapons and the trade in weaponry in Africa. The spread of small weapons in Africa and its effects on Nigeria are examined in this research. Due to its mobility and ability to provide defence, small guns are one of the most common types of weaponry. As a result, they are highly sought for and often manufactured. But these firearms are also illegally moved across state boundaries and traded. Since 100 million tiny guns are traded on the continent, Africa is hardly an exception. The failed state hypothesis is used in the research to explain the spread of weapons and its consequences. The study uses a case study research design and the qualitative research methodology. The research uses secondary sources to get its data, including books that have previously been published, book chapters, scholarly journals, newspapers, and online sites. The research uses thematic analysis as its technique of data analysis, grouping the information into categories that correspond to the study's goals. According to the study's results, insurgency, militancy, and criminality are all made easier in Nigeria by the widespread use of small guns. The report suggests that in order to deter the transit of illicit guns, tight monitoring and surveillance should be implemented in the nations and any unauthorised entry should be barred.

Salihu and Ozden's (2020) conducted a study on small guns proliferation. The study examined how the spread of small guns and light weapons affects human security on a worldwide scale. As a result, it looks at the agreements and guidelines the UN has established regarding the spread of light and small weaponry. The failing state argument was used to explain why the Nigerian government was unable to effectively address the problems related to the North East crisis. According to this study, a number of internal and external causes are to blame for Nigeria's high rate of small arms and light weapon proliferation. Additionally, governments, particularly developing ones, are mostly unable to change the pattern underlying their ongoing reliance on the UN given their capability. In light of the escalating violent conflict in the area, the research has looked at the UN's initiatives in the north-east of Nigeria. As a result, the UN has passed a number of treaties and agreements, but they are still completely inadequate and cannot fully solve the problem. It is suggested that the UN should work more to control armaments manufacture across the world.

Rosenje *et al.*, (2020) undertook a study of Arms proliferation, security issues, and electoral violence in the 2019 Rivers State gubernatorial election. The authors noted that Nigeria's people and government now face significant security issues as a result of the rising rate of weaponry proliferation, which has heightened the incidence of election violence. The 2019 gubernatorial election in Rivers State served as the focal point of this study on the proliferation of guns, security issues, and electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. This essay used the descriptive approach, gathered data from secondary sources, and used elite theory as its theoretical foundation. The paper made the case that a number of factors, including the do-or-die politics phenomenon, the practise of prebendal politics, marginalisation, the porousness of borders, and an insufficient security apparatus, among others, accentuated the worrying pace of arms the spread and electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The report also made the case that the proliferation of weaponry has played a significant role in the outbreak of election violence, which has posed a serious security threat to the nation and resulted in the loss of many lives and priceless property. The article argued that government attempts to stop the trend of increased weaponry production, which amplifies election violence, were insufficient and consequently had no effect.

Samuel (2021) conducted study on Nigeria's difficulties with national security and the spread of tiny guns. The author made the case that one of Nigeria's biggest challenges to national security is the spread of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). Insurgency, banditry, militancy, abduction, armed robbery, ethno-religious conflicts, and community disputes have all contributed to a worrying level of insecurity in Nigeria. Small guns and light weapons, which are simple to hide and are used to incite violence in society, are used to carry out all of this. There are often reports of an assault somewhere in Nigeria every single week. Both primary and secondary data sources were employed in the investigation. Interviews with stakeholders who have a thorough awareness of the problems at stake in the research region produced primary data. Purposive sampling was the method utilised in this research to choose the interview subjects. This was done on purpose since only informed community members who were aware of the problems involved were chosen for interviews. The results of this research showed that Adamawa State is not an exception, as security issues caused by small guns have resulted in the loss of life, destruction of property, and mass evictions of people, many of whom are farmers, endangering food security.

Methodology

Research Design

A research design describes what a researcher wants to achieve and how they plan to do it in a way that will satisfy experts in their field. In order to adequately address the research questions selected in the study, a plan of the actions to be carried out must be created (Bhattacharjee, 2012). To this end, both historical and descriptive methodologies were used for this investigation. This method examines and analyses written documents, which make up a class of social artefacts, in addition to other aspects of communication (Babbie, 2007). The historical approach is useful in many respects, especially in academics. Babbie (2007:21) states that "it blends well with the grounded theory approach." The historical technique allows for the standardisation of raw data based on the conceptual framework unique to the current problem. The historical approach is seen to be the most suitable because of the aforementioned, as well as the need for qualitative evaluation and analytical induction.

Population of the Study

The population of Nigeria was adopted as the research population for this study. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), the population of Nigeria for the year 2022 was estimated to be 216.7 million. This estimate by based on the 2006 population census where the population is growing at a 2.41% growth rate. For the purpose of this study, two states from the South-West (Oyo and Ogun states); one state from the South-South (Cross River); and two states from the North-West (Katsina and Kebbi states) were selected for this study. The reason for the selection of these state were because of the functional land borders that are located there.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The stratified and purposive sampling techniques were employed by the researcher to conduct the selection of research participants to be part of the study. This strategy entails selecting desired sample elements by hand to ensure that they are included in the study. All important strata are represented using this manner (Black and Champion, 1976).

The researcher used a sample frame that enabled data to be collected from community members as well as security personnel at the border post in order to make things simpler and gather the information that was required. After using the stratified sampling techniques to obtain a representative sample for the study, the purposive sampling was used to identify the target group that would help collect the pertinent information and data needed to complete the job.

Sample size is the process of choosing every item from the whole population. It speaks to the method used to choose the components from the overall population (Ndiyo, 2005). The sample size for this study was obtained through the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determination of sample size (See Appendix I for the table).

Methods of Data Collection

The primary and secondary sources of data for the research were surveys (primary source) and documentaries (secondary source). To gather information from locals and security organisations at the border post, key informant interviews (KII) was used as the survey strategy. Published and unpublished resources, such as text, articles, newspapers, magazines, journals, bulletins, official publications like the National Bureau of Statistics, etc., periodicals, and reliable internet sites, should be considered secondary sources of information.

Method of Data Analysis

When compared to the physical sciences, the method of analysis used for the data gathered for this research lacks sophisticated statistics and is instead scientific. The research used content- and theme-based approaches for analysing qualitative data. The analysis involved identifying and formulating all concepts and ideas pertinent to the study's goals, deciphering the concepts and ideas, and creating integrative memos to combine the concepts and ideas into a coherent data base for analysing the problems of transnational armament proliferation and armed unrest in Nigeria.

Textbooks, journals, articles, the official records of the Nigerian Customs Service, other official documents, etc. were used to gather information and data on trans-border weaponry proliferation and armed agitations in Nigeria. The goal was to arrive at the descriptive and explanatory findings that were required for the investigation. However, the researcher did not just stop at assessing the contents of the data but proceeded further to check and authenticate their contents, keeping in mind that written papers or secondary data must be utilised with care.

Data Presentation and Analysis

How has the proliferation of small arms aided the activities of non-state actors in Nigeria?

Participants in the KIIs asserted that the country's porous border has allowed for the importation of weapons and ammunition from the numerous communities that border other nations, facilitating armed uprisings, terrorism, and other criminal activities that foster insecurity. In a similar vein,

The Nigerian state as a whole previously believed that she had just 85 borders, but subsequent investigations into the legitimacy of the country's ongoing conflict and terrorist operations resulted in the revelation of more than 1,400 open entrance points into Nigerian territory.

The research participants observed that the Nigerian state lacks a clear grasp of its boundaries and lacks awareness of them. In addition, a KII participant said that:

People in Nigeria take advantage of the lack of strong legal controls on the transfer of guns to buy weapons. Nigeria's weapons laws are quite lax; for

instance, the arms control statute has remained unchanged since its enactment in 1959.

Because Nigeria still uses the 1959 Firearms Act to govern the control of guns, the study participants felt that the legislation to handle the problem of arms proliferation in Nigeria is poor. The fact that the primary weapons-producing nations are not in Africa but rather are found in Europe, the United States, and other nations led some study participants to assume that the international community aids in the smuggling of small guns. One or more of the participants said:

Given that there is a large market for small guns in African nations like Nigeria, manufacturers may feel compelled to dispense with or disregard international norms prohibiting the sale of weapons to non-state actors.

According to the respondents, the world community provides armaments without knowing who the final recipients would be. Additionally, the following remarks were made:

Small guns are mostly imported into Nigeria from the west (outside of Nigeria); the sole government agency that manufactures weapons in Nigeria is the Defence Industry, and the agency measures the weapons it makes.

The respondents also noted that the majority of the weapons and ammunition used in Nigeria are not indigenous to that nation.

Based on the effectiveness of security agencies, laws, and border controls, as well as the importation of weapons from nations closer to Nigeria, it is believed that all weapons used in crime, violence, and most importantly terrorism in Nigeria are exported to the nation.

The respondents stressed once again the fact that all illicit firearms used in criminal activity were imported into Nigeria. The participant mentioned above pointed out that some African nations were engaged in the spread of weaponry for both domestic and professional objectives. The participants made the following observations in an effort to address the problem of illegal weapons trafficking and importation:

Massive and illegal weaponry imports into the state of Nigeria from places like Central Africa, Mali, Libya, Chad, and Niger To control the spread of small guns to some degree, the international community should make sure that countries and businesses that produce weapons adhere to the international standard rules for restricting or forbidding the transfer of weapons and ammunition to non-state actors.

Participants in the study made the observation that the international community should ensure that countries and enterprises engaged in the production of weapons do not provide ammunition to non-state actors. According to the aforementioned statements, a significant portion of the participants believe that non-state actors are purchasing illegal weapons in Nigeria. The participants assert as well that nations that manufacture weapons do not adhere to international norms that restrict or prohibit the export of weapons to non-state entities. Some participants hold the opinion that the Nigerian border's porousness is a key factor in the expansion of SALW and, therefore, the escalation of instability due to the actions of armed agitators in the nation.

The availability of small guns and light weapons fuels violence, terrorism, and instability committed by armed agitators, posing a severe danger to Nigeria's national security, according to the interviews. The study subjects' views are listed below:

Small guns proliferation is the primary contributor to violent conflicts and instability, which have killed many individuals and damaged vast amounts of property.

The study participants demonstrated the serious danger that the availability of small guns poses to Nigerian national security, as well as the fact that many lives and assets have been lost as a result of individuals enforcing their own laws.

Small guns are a major factor in terrorism, bloodshed, and instability. People often employ little arms once they are available and easily accessible. Because tiny guns are readily available and accessible, individuals are resorting to violence to address problems that are meant to be settled peacefully.

The attendee also mentioned how the accessibility of small guns exacerbated problems that were meant to be resolved politely. Some study subjects who made the following statements in support with the theory:

One of the causes of violence and conflict is due to this. If civilians do not have access to small weaponry, they will often resolve their disputes peacefully. Due of their accessibility, however, the civilian populace frequently uses them to resolve conflicts and conduct crimes.

Other comments offered by the participant were:

Access to small guns and light weapons is the primary driver of terrorism in Abuja and violent unrest in other regions of the nation. Small guns and light weapons are a major danger to Nigeria's national security since they have contributed to terrorism and unrest.

Participants expressed their opinion that the availability and the illicit proliferation of small arms have the potential to escalate conflict, cause terrorism, violence and insecurity. Furthermore, another security personnel who also took part in the KII opined that:

People having access to weapons contributed to the extent of damage seen in various recent crises, particularly in the domain of armed agitation. There will be less death, injury, and property damage in emergencies without weapons. But as soon as weapons are used, things go horribly wrong. We are concerned because of this.

A traditional leader in his view observed that:

We all know that weapons are tools of violence. We will continue to live in peril if social crises are not regulated because when they happen, people will raise their guns. Regardless of how little the disagreement may seem, it will grow in scope.

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons contributes to culture of violence and a cycle that is difficult to break. Violence fuels insecurity, and insecurity fuels violence. One of the community leaders who took part in the research retorted that:

The availability of weaponry contributes to the escalation of disputes in every crisis-prone society when there is unresolved resentment, mistrust, and conflict. The severity of the damage—death, disfigurement, and population displacement—indicates the risky role that illicit small guns play in armed situations.

Another traditional leader also observed that;

You must be aware of the degree of the damage, deaths, and injuries even if you are not present in any of the violent crisis contexts. These weren't carried out with bare hands, but rather with various types of weaponry. These demonstrate the risk of weaponry in times of crisis; their availability amplifies or intensifies conflicts beyond all reasonable bounds.

Available information all points to the fact that illegal small arms play a destructive role during conflicts and criminal activities. For instance, according to a research participant:

There has been an increase of guns in the nation as a result of the frequent violent events. As a consequence, there have been fatalities, serious injuries, forced relocations, and property losses. It is difficult to estimate the number of fatalities or injuries since neither the government nor the combatants will be honest with you. While the government exaggerates data to keep tensions down, the opposing sides often refute these assertions to win support. But many have really perished.

Another research participant who is security personnel that took part in the KII was of the opinion that:

Arms may be deadly. When there are crimes and emergencies, they inflict deaths, injuries, and devastation. I am unable to estimate the number of fatalities or casualties that have occurred so far amid the country's difficulties. But I can confirm that tens of thousands of people lost their lives and their homes were devastated. Without weapons, I don't believe the reported numbers of deaths and destructions would have reached alarming levels. Once again, the majority of those participating in the different agitations would not have done so if they did not have access to firearms. This indicates that their willingness to participate in the conflict that has led to such a high level of insecurity in the country has been encouraged by the availability and ease of access to small arms and light weapons.

In line with the above opinion, a traditional leader who was part of the KII was of the view that:

Weapons pose a threat since they may be fatal. Therefore, the goal of deploying them in battles is, if at all possible, to kill the adversaries. The widespread usage of weapons in wars contributes to the high death and injury toll. We are concerned about the spread of deadly weapons because of this. Our civilization is vulnerable because the more individuals who have them, the more likely it is that they will be used. People are seeking for any chance to stir trouble.

These have very negative effects. The frequent use of force and abuse of weapons may obstruct democracy and good government, as well as economic growth and the delivery of health and education services. The security of the country will therefore be in jeopardy as long as there is conflict and substantial numbers of small guns and light weapons are in use or in the wrong hands.

The relationship between the two variables; arms proliferation and armed agitations, results from the ease with which SALWs may be used to commit crimes including abduction, robbery, arson, and violence. It encourages the agitators to strike and confront the state security forces fearlessly. Arguments that armaments proliferation is one factor in the nation's system of widespread insecurity and that it is also a factor in the success of agitation are not out of place.

The proliferation of small weapons in Southern Nigeria combined with already existing state corruption and mass unemployment has contributed to the rising criminality and violence in the region. Towards the end of the Abacha Regime in 1998, armed robbery had begun to stifle commercial activities in Aba, a commercial centre in South East Nigeria. This drove some traders to organise vigilante groups to protect themselves and their businesses. This initiative which later evolved into the Bakassi Boys eventually spread to other South Eastern states such as Anambra and Imo state which at the time had serious crime problems. South Eastern Nigeria is known for entrepreneurship and the general poor security situation facilitated a trade in small arms in major markets such as the Ariaria Market in Aba and the Onitsha Main Market in Anambra State. The relative lack of economic activity in South Western Nigeria outside Lagos has resulted in high youth unemployment and resultant violence and arms proliferation. This has helped fuel inter-ethnic violence and violent land disputes. Notable examples include; Arogbo-Ijaw and Ilaje in Ondo state, Ife and Modakeke in Osun state, Saki-Iseyin and Hausa-Fulani in Oyo state (SBM Report, 2020).

In Lagos State, Nigeria's economic capital, there have been frequent gang clashes and inter-ethnic clashes between indigenous Yoruba traders, and settler Hausa traders. Violence in the Niger Delta is compounded by a combination of grievances at a history of exploitation of crude oil and natural gas reserves, which denied host communities a fair share of their resources; militancy linked to the natural resource control struggle; a history of inter-ethnic and cult violence and small arms proliferation. The most far reaching effect of arms proliferation in the region is the rise of militancy which evolved to include destruction of oil pipelines and the kidnap of oil workers, at some points, threatening to bring Nigeria's economy to a standstill (SBM Report, 2020).

Arms proliferation enabled the rise of armed groups such as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), the Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and most recently, the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). All these contribute to continued insecurity in the Niger Delta. A 2019 SBM intelligence security report on Nigeria established that the Nigerian military was active in all of Nigeria's states but Kebbi. The small arms-enabled crimes being dealt by the military in those states, ranged from issues such as kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, illegal oil bunkering, to herder-farmer violence, and natural resource-driven militancy (SBM Report, 2020).

Discussion of Findings

The answer to the research question revealed that the relationship between the two variables (arms proliferation and armed agitations) is due to the ease with which SALWs can be used for crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, arson, and other forms of violence. It encourages the agitators to strike and confront the state security forces fearlessly. Arguments that armaments proliferation is one factor in the nation's system of widespread insecurity and that it is also a factor in the success of agitation are not out of place. This conclusion is supported by Paul and Achoba's (2023) argument that some consequences of this unpleasant situation include a threat to Nigeria's peace and security, a threat to Nigeria's territorial integrity, particularly from the eastern and northern borders,

the loss of lives and property of Nigerian citizens residing in the border areas, and ongoing harassment of Nigerians in these border areas. Nigeria's lack of capacities for conflict intervention poses the largest threat to its national security in the context of inter-security agency conflict near its borders. In reality, there is a resource and manpower difficulty in this area.

In light of this, Muoemenam and Okafor (2022) believe that small arms and light weapons (SALW) are evidently widespread in Nigeria, which is consistent with the aforementioned conclusion. It has developed into actual weapons of aggression and dominance by certain groups in Nigeria, going beyond the usage of assassins, armed robbers, and government security services. Small guns have without a doubt contributed significantly to Nigeria's increased insecurity. Its indiscriminate use has been made worse by its efficiency and ease of use with no training. This situation's accompanying effects include the fatalities, evictions, destruction, and harm it has done to the people and the country's economy. Alimba (2017), who once again reaffirmed the point that the proliferation of weapons in the nation has led to a rise in the firepower of ethnic militias like OPC, MEND, MASSOB, armed herders, and Boko Haram terrorists, supports the aforementioned viewpoints. Additionally, small arms have made a considerable macro-level contribution to the development of militarised conduct, attitude, and worldview, which has fostered the mindset of using weapons to settle disputes. He went on to say that using these pistols as a means of expressing complaints has apparently grown popular in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between armed agitation in Nigeria and the spread of small arms and light weapons. It was noted that non-state actors, who are typically armed with small arms and light weapons (SALWs) as part of their measures, have recently plagued most of the states in the West African sub-region with relentless and occasionally absurd demands and agitation in an effort to attract the attention of the government and the entire society. As a result of these armed organisations' tactics, the sub-region has seen increased insecurity and economic activity blockage.

The results of a thorough review of the KII showed that permeable borders are a contributing element but not the primary cause of the spread of weapons. This is due to the economic motivation behind engaging in the weapons trade. According to the data acquired from the study participants, the country's porous border only facilitates this kind of trade for those who participate in it. Some of the security professionals said that individuals who entered that industry did so because they discovered a ready market for such goods. This suggests that the country's weapons trade and transactions will be resolved by addressing the problem that gave rise to a market and the need for SALW.

As a result, it became clear that there is a connection between the two factors (arms proliferation and armed agitations) since the availability of SALWs makes it extremely simple to commit crimes like abduction, robbery, arson, and violence. It encourages the agitators to strike and confront the state security forces fearlessly. Arguments that armaments proliferation is one factor in the nation's system of widespread insecurity and that it is also a factor in the success of agitation are not out of place.

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been reached:

- i. Protecting her territorial integrity is a duty that the government owes to its people. To reduce illicit migration along the borders, the government should look for new strategies and policies. This will require the support of the host communities, who must be made to sense the government's presence through the provision of good governance, which should be evident through employment, access to public goods like schools, good roads, portable drinking water, and health facilities, among other social amenities and infrastructure that enhance their quality of life and wellbeing. This is due to the fact that it

is challenging, if not impossible, to live in utter poverty and forgo the chance to profit from the smuggling of illegal goods that enables financial support.

- ii. The rise and indiscriminate usage of SALWs in Nigeria are fed by armed agitation among other socioeconomic ills. We won't have a need for SALWs in the hands of people if that market for them disappears. It is time for the current administration to examine itself and address the underlying issues that lead to armed protests, which result from the ostracization of some groups within the nation on an economic and/or political level.
- iii. The current administration should also be prepared to make investments in cutting-edge technology so that it can supplement its reliance on community members for intelligence collection. This is due to the possibility that sometimes individuals may have compassion for their relatives and turn against the security personnel.

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APPENDIX

Krejcie and Morgan Table for determining Sample size

Table 3.1

Table for Determining Sample Size of a Known Population

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	1000000	384

*Note: N is Population Size; S is Sample Size**Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970*