



PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPACT ON NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in northeastern Nigeria has had a significant impact on the country. The region has experienced a rise in terrorism and insurgency, particularly by Boko Haram, which has been fueled by the availability of these weapons.

The illegal trade and smuggling of small arms and light weapons have increased in northeastern Nigeria, causing an influx of weapons into the hands of various non-state actors. This has resulted in an escalation of violence and armed conflicts in the region. The proliferation of these weapons has further complicated the efforts of the Nigerian government and security forces to address the security challenges posed by insurgent groups. The impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in northeastern Nigeria can be seen in several ways. Firstly, it has significantly reduced the overall security of the region. The increased availability of weapons has led to an intensification of attacks and acts of violence by Boko Haram and other militant groups, resulting in casualties among civilians, security forces, and even aid workers.

Keywords: Proliferation, Small Arms and Light Weapons

INTRODUCTION

The possession of small arms and light weapons posed a serious threat to the security of the country especially to the northeastern part of Nigeria. In the absence of reliable and accurate data on the number of arms and weapons in the country, security experts estimate that a large number of infantry weapons and civilian-style rifles, including pistols and revolvers, are used during elections. Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America have faced illegal transfers of small arms and light weapons. Nigeria faces security challenges related to the proliferation of illegal small arms. Abiodun, Ayo, Adeyekun, Ifeoluwa, and Nwannenaya (2022) noted that although accurate data on the number of small arms in Nigeria is not available, reports indicated that of the 10 million illegal small arms in West Africa, 1 to 3 million are in circulation. in Nigeria. Bashir (2014) reported that over 70 per cent of all illegal small arms in West Africa are located in Nigeria and that the regular interception of illegal arms trade by Nigerian security agencies at and across the border was a cause for concern. The relationship of small arms and light weapons to insecurity has continued to be a controversial debate among scholars. They generally agree that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a serious challenge to national security. It was also agreed that the availability of small arms directly affects the increase in insecurity. The then Secretary-General



Kofi Annan said this in his famous 2000 Millennium Report to the UN General Assembly. He argued that the death toll of small arms is, in most cases, lower than that of any other weapon system. far exceeds the number of atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Okeke and Oji, 2014). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is of strategic concern to most societies as the acquisition of SALW by non-state actors always facilitates violent conflict and in some instances renders the state powerless due to the efficacy of the non-state actors. The availability of these weapons is bolstered by the presence of existing and new stocks of weapons in the global market as armed brokers shift these weapons to existing and emerging markets. Weapons proliferation is a signature of post-cold-war African phenomenon that led to the difficult choice of weapons transfer in the form of a patron-client network that saw to the proliferation of weapons in most parts of Africa which gradually led to state collapse as experienced in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Libya, Mali to mention a few (Bashir, 2014). Armed conflict has become one of the major security threats bedevilling the peace and stability of the Nigerian state. Each region in the country has been grappling with the menace from one or multiple forms of armed conflict ranging from armed robbery, kidnapping, gang war, political killings, ethnoreligious conflict, herdsman/farmers clashes, and militancy While increasing global insecurity may suggest that armed conflict is not peculiar to Nigeria alone, as typified by cases of armed violence in Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Ukraine, United States among others, the Nigerian case has drawn huge international attention obviously due to the staggering figures of violence-related deaths, displacement of persons, and economic decline in areas seriously affected by violence in the country. Africa presents a sorry tale of varying degrees of uncertainty. In the case of Nigeria, a report by the Council on Foreign Relations revealed that in just three and a half years, violence linked to the Boko Haram (BH) insurgency in the North and other militant groups across the country has killed about 30,000 people. , including government military operations to suppress them (Viola, 2015). Correspondingly, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased astronomically. In 2013 alone, the Nigerian state had to face more than 3.3 million internally displaced persons. Only Syria surpassed 6.5 million internally displaced persons and Colombia with 5.7 million (NRCIDMC, 2014). That is why it is the third largest residence in Nigeria. number of refugees worldwide and the largest on the African continent. This unprecedented level of insecurity in Africa's most populous country has attracted much scholarly and media attention. But in trying to understand this violence, scholars have emphasized the role of religion, ethnicity and economic deprivation in the violence experienced in the country. In this regard, Adesoji (2010) argued that religion is at the heart of armed violence in Nigeria. In his view, the Boko Haram insurgency is a clear reminder of the earlier attempts by fundamentalist groups to forcefully impose Islamic ideology on the secular Nigerian state. Similarly, Osaghae and Suberu (2005) argued that apart from religious beliefs, ethnic identity also plays an important role in promoting violence in the country. It was based on the thesis that the Nigerian state "presents a complex of individual and intersecting and recurring identities, of which ethnic, religious, regional and sub-ethnic (communal) are the most visible and important bases of violent conflict in the country". (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005:7). On his part, Persson (2014) stressed that the socio-economic deprivation (which has manifested in the recent high levels of youth unemployment, poverty, and underdevelopment) is at the root of the insecurity. While these explanations are



cogent, they seem to have neglected the strategic role porous borders also play in the discourse of insecurity in the country.

The northeastern state is under serious security threat due to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. This is reflected in the abductions, kidnappings, murders and political looting experienced in the state. The importation of small arms and light weapons has caused much destruction to the people of the North Eastern state. This caused the country to constantly experience ethno-religious conflicts, armed banditry, kidnappings and political violence. When a crisis breaks out and spreads, they are given a religious or ethnic interpretation, which usually creates hostility between the followers of the two main religions (Islam and Christianity). With this in mind, this study examines the impact of SALW proliferation on national security in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the Northeastern state (2015-2018). This study examines the existing literature, showing how and why Nigeria's porous borders have significantly increased the availability of small arms, leading to insecurity in the country. Therefore, this article is divided into five parts: the second part, following this introduction, deals with the conceptual and analytical framework. The third part describes the sources, dynamics and availability of the illegal Proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The fourth section explains the relationship between porous borders, small arms and recent violent insecurity in Nigeria. The fifth section concludes the discussion with a recommended policy direction.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Small Arms and Light Weapons

There is no universally accepted definition of small arms and light weapons. According to Wezeman (2003), handguns are broadly classified as weapons for personal use; they are weapons for personal use. Small arms are weapons used by one person, specifically firearms and other destructive devices such as incendiary bombs, gas bombs and land mines, including pistols, machine guns, light machine guns and rifles (Gerald and Caleb, 2015). Riviere (2016) sees small arms, everything from pistols to light machine guns, classified as a motivation for criminal activity, suicide, and continued violence and crime. According to the UN Panel of Experts on Small Arms (cited in Anna, 1997), small arms include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, machine guns, assault weapons and light machine guns. Light weapons, on the other hand, include heavy machine guns, man-portable anti-aircraft and mounted mortars, man-portable anti-cannons, man-portable anti-tank weapons, recoilless rifles (sometimes mounted), man-portable anti-tanks. - aircraft missile systems launchers (sometimes mounted), and grenades of calibre less than 100 mm. Ammunition and explosives include small arms cartridges (cartridges), ammunition and rockets for light weapons mobile containers containing rockets or single-action ammunition for anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, land mines and explosives. This article adopts the definition of the UN commission.

National Security



National security is considered as freedom from actual and potential threats to the life of the country that may arise as a result of human action or inaction or from disasters such as flood, earthquake, famine, drought, disease and other natural disasters that cause human death. The emphasis on national security stems from three core beliefs; the sanctity and inviolability of human life, the universality and dignity of human life, and the existential demands of the value of individual security in a world full of multiple threats. National security is based on three basic instincts: self-preservation, self-development and self-realization. The contribution of small arms and light weapons causes disruption of daily life at the individual, community and societal levels. It plays an important role in not depriving people of their right to the three core national values that are central to the concept of national security. The United Nations Development Program (2002) suggests that human security (an aspect of national security) refers to the freedom of individuals from fear, need, and security from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and suppression of freedom. It is also a protection against unexpected and harmful disruptions in daily life, whether in homes, workplaces or communities (Peterside, 2018).

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons

Arms and weapons proliferation is defined as a method of selling arms and weapons to private citizens, especially in conflict zones (Aver, Nnorom and Ilim, 2014, cited by Kofi Annan). Hazan and Horner (2007) defined proliferation as the growth or proliferation of illegal weapons and arms within a country. This document defines arms proliferation as a sudden increase in the number of firearms and weapons that exceeds legitimate national security. This means that the recipient national supplier does not unnecessarily restrict the production, transfer and acquisition of such weapons. Unknown groups did this for economic or political reasons. These arms and weapons easily fall into the hands of private individuals, especially politicians and their goons. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gives citizens the right to change their government peacefully through regular, free and fair elections held based on universal suffrage. However, politicians directly shortchange citizens through elections that take place amid widespread fraud and widespread violence (Office of Democracy Human Rights Practices 2009, Ohanele, 2011). In Nigeria, electoral victory is usually determined not by the number of votes received by political parties and their candidates, but by the party's ability to acquire and use small arms and light weapons to intimidate opponents and organize elections. Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2003) found that during the ward convention of the Peoples Democratic Party, many politicians went to the convention hall armed with assault weapons and acid canisters to use against their opponents. This action was also seen in federal, state and municipal elections. For example, during the parliamentary elections in 2011, bloody clashes took place in many parts of the country. There was a huge loss of life and property in Nigeria. Ten members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), who were ad hoc staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct electoral exercises, lost their lives in Bauchi State (Abdullahi and Rauf 2012).

Dynamics in Nigeria SALW

The issues one of the security challenges facing individuals and communities in Nigeria is the proliferation of illegal small arms. In Nigeria, the widespread and illegal use of small arms threatens the lives of individuals and communities, causing death, injury and loss of property in



the worst billions of Naira during and even after conflict. In this light, Onuoha (2012) showed that the presence of small arms in ethno-religious conflicts in Jos caused serious destruction to people and property. The challenge of small arms in Nigeria is not new, but its increasing availability has helped fuel ethno-religious conflicts, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and other violent crimes (Onuoha, 2012; Edeko 2011). The availability of these forms of weapons prolongs conflicts, facilitates internal displacement, disrupts social peace, destroys people's economic livelihoods and creates fear (Onuoha 2012; Munir 2011; Boutwell and Klare 2000; Ero and Ndinga-Muvumba 2004). The consequences of the proliferation of small arms were far-reaching. Despite the obvious threat to the security of people and communities, the consequences of the illegal use of small arms have also been directly felt by people. It is clear that the possession and use of small arms in the commission of crimes has increased and has become a threat to the safety of individuals and their communities. The most dangerous and serious problem is the use of small arms by criminal groups and gangsters involved in more violent crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, hostage-taking and rape, among others. The circulation of small arms threatens human survival; it scares people and threatens their freedom of movement in economic activities. However, apart from deaths and injuries, the menace of small arms has also caused economic and property damage due to several violent conflicts and armed crimes in the state. Onuoha (2012) revealed that the government spent a considerable amount of money on security which could be used to provide basic social services that promote the lives and development of people, including e.g. clean water, education and healthcare.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories exist to explain the origin of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. This study adopted conflict theory. Conflict theory emphasizes the role of coercion and power in creating social order. This perspective comes from the works of Karl Marx (1818-1883), who saw society as a fragment of groups competing for social and economic resources. Social order is maintained by supremacy. Power is always in the hands of those who control political, economic and social resources. When consensus prevails, it is because people have come together around common interests, often in opposition to other groups. Inequality exists because those who control a disproportionate share of society's resources actively protect their privileges. The masses are not bound to society by shared values, but by coercion at the hands of those in power (Anderson and Taylor, 2009). This perspective emphasizes social control rather than agreement and conformity. Groups and individuals pursue their interests, fighting for control of society's resources. Those with the most resources exercise power over others, leading to inequality and power struggles. In this perspective, class, race and gender receive a lot of attention because they are considered the cornerstones of society's most important and ongoing struggles. According to Mill's view, social structures arise from conflicts between people who have different interests and resources. Those structures and the distribution of resources and power in society in turn affect individuals and resources (which are not done equally). The powerful elite of society emerged from the merger of the corporate elite, the military-industrial complex and the executive. Mills argued that the interests of these elites conflicted with the interests of the people. He theorized that the policies of the power elite would cause an escalation of the conflict focusing more on the production of weapons of mass destruction and human extinction from the face of the earth (Knapp, 1994). Sears (2008) argues that conflict theorists believe that societies are defined by inequality, which creates conflict, rather



than what creates order and agreement. Those conflicts based on inequality can only be resolved by fundamentally changing the existing relations of society and are the result of new social relations. Disadvantaged people have structural advantages that conflict with the status quo that, once assumed, lead to social change. Thus, they are seen as agents of change rather than objects to be sympathized with. Representation of disadvantaged groups in democratic processes may promote the perception of full participation, but this is an illusion. Inequality at the global level is characterized by the determined underdevelopment of developing countries such as Nigeria, both during colonization and after national independence. The global system (ie development agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) benefits the most powerful nations and multinational corporations through economic, political and military activities rather than development objects. Today, conflict theorists find social conflict between any group that has potential inequality (racial, sexual, religious, political, economic, etc.). Conflict theorists point out that unequal groups usually have conflicting values and goals that cause them to compete with each other. This constant competition between groups underlies the ever-changing nature of society. Power provides a mechanism to violently control the rest of the population. During struggles, politicians spend money to acquire weapons and at the same time buy agents of social control, such as police, prosecutors, judges and other agencies of social control, so that they can use guns and weapons. during the selection process. Critics of the conflict perspective point to its overly negative view of society. The theory attributes humanitarian efforts, altruism, democracy, civil rights, and other positive aspects of society to capitalist designs for mass rule rather than the inherent benefits of maintaining society and social order. However, the strength of this theory is the recognition that the proliferation of weapons and arms is a violent crime against democracy and humanity in general. This prevents the effective use of the human capital beneficial to the development of the country. Based on the above assumptions, the theory is taken as a theoretical guide for the research. Based on the aforementioned theoretical perspective, the conflict theory says that politicians are considered enemies of social progress. Nigeria's democracy has become multi-dimensional to the extent that the right people are not allowed to participate in the system. This situation makes managing the threat of proliferation of small arms and light weapons a very difficult task for the competent authority. Citizens are not able to understand the complexity of weapons and the spread of weapons as such, they do not provide the necessary essential information to the competent authorities tasked with controlling the phenomenon. Politicians can muster enough resources not only to bribe the police in question but also to thwart their investigations to curb the threat to society. Also, the organized social structure of Nigeria, which pays more attention to the acquisition of wealth with less attention to the socially accepted ways of acquiring wealth, provides the basis for the growth of electoral violence in the Nigerian state.

Methodology

This study used a survey research design. It explored the opinions and perceptions of security personnel and other citizens of Northeast Nigeria regarding the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their threat to the security of lives and property. The research used is a descriptive design that tries to explain the current state of the research and also helps the researcher to determine where the variables will be collected and how the objectives will be achieved. The study plan includes the study set, sample study plan, data collection method, data collection procedure and data processing and analysis methodology. (To obtain a large sample size for this



study, a purposive sampling strategy is used as only people qualified and experienced in the subject are selected. A total of 300 people are selected for the study).

Result and discussion of findings

This part includes the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of the data collected through the questionnaire. Through the analysis of the answers to the survey, the answers to the research questions and objectives stated at the beginning of the work were obtained. For accuracy and convenience, the obtained results are presented in tables, the frequency tables illustrate the nature and level of the answers received during the survey. The presentation and analysis of the results reflect the objectives of the research.

1. What are the factors contributing to the proliferation of SALW in the North Eastern State?

Opinion							
	Items	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	D 2	SD 1	TL
1	There are illegal small arms in North-eastern State	126 31.5%	248 62.0%	12 2.5%	10 1.5%	4 1.5%	378 100%
2	Politicians are the source of small arms and light weapons proliferation	168 42.0%	164 41.0%	28 7.0%	38 9.5%	2 0.5%	378 100%
3	Religious groups are the source of small arms and light weapons proliferation in North-eastern State	88 22.0%	142 35.5%	52 13.0%	78 19.5%	40 10.0%	378 100%
4	Ethnic groups are the source of small arms and light weapons proliferation in North-eastern State	31 15.5%	72 36.0%	24 12.0%	41 20.5%	32 16.0%	378 100%
5	Military returnees from peacekeeping are the source of small arms and light weapons proliferation in North-eastern State	70 17.5%	72 36.0%	78 19.5%	78 19.5%	30 7.5%	189 100%
6	Security Operatives sell small arms and light weapons proliferation in North-eastern State	82 20.5%	190 47.5%	62 15.5%	50 12.5%	16 4.0%	378 100%



7	Theft of arms from security operatives is the source of small arms and light weapons proliferation in North-eastern State	49 24.5%	102 51.0%	24 12.9%	19 9.5%	6 3.0%	378 100%
8	Smuggling from neighbouring states/countries is the source of small arms and light weapons proliferation	168 42.0%	174 43.5%	28 7.0%	12 3.0%	6 1.5%	378 100%
9	Arms dealers are the sources of small arms and light weapons proliferation in North-eastern State	106 26.5%	100 50.0%	27 13.5%	28 7.0%	12 3.0%	378 100%
10	Defiance Industry Corporation of Nigeria(DICON) is the source of small arms and light weapons proliferation in North-eastern State	17 8.5%	49 24.5%	48 24.0%	54 27.0%	32 16.0%	378 100%
11	Local manufacturers (Blacksmiths) are the sources of small arms and light weapons proliferation in North-eastern State	53 26.5%	104 52.0%	44 11.0%	30 7.5%	6 3.0%	378 100%

Source: Field Work, 2023

Regarding the sources of proliferation of SALW in the North Eastern State, the table above shows that 83% of the respondents strongly agreed that politicians often supply these illegal weapons in transit, while 21% of the respondents disagreed. This may be because Nigeria's political history is characterized by the use of thugs by politicians to intimidate their opponents or correct their failures. About 57% considered religious groups to be the source of small arms in the Northeast state, while 29.5% disagreed. Moreover, 5 (1.5%) respondents named ethnic groups, while 36.5% disagreed. These revelations may not be unrelated to the fact that most of the crises in the North Eastern state have both ethnic and religious implications. However, 53.5% of respondents reported the return of the military while 27.0% disagreed, 68.0% reported the sale of security agents 16.5% disagreed, 75.5% reported arms theft by security forces as another source, and 12.5% disagreed. This information may be because many soldiers and policemen have often been involved in the illegal arms trade in different parts of the country. Other sources presented in the table show that the vast majority, 85.5 per cent, identified smuggling from neighbouring countries and countries, while 7.5 per cent disagreed, 76.5 per cent of arms dealers, and 10.0 per cent of respondents



disagreed. These are because of the porous nature of our borders, security checkpoints negligence of security agents and the proximity of Kaduna State to other crisis states like Plateau and Kano. While 78.5% considered local producers (Blacksmiths) as other sources of illegal handguns in the metropolis, only 10.5% of respondents disagreed. Considering the above conclusions, we can therefore consider all the listed items as the main sources of SALW proliferation in the Northeast State.

2. How do small arms threaten the security of the country, especially of the Northeast state?

Opinion							
	Items	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	D 2	SD 1	TL
1.	Proliferation of illegal small arms	126 31.5%	248 62.0%	12 3.0%	10 2.5%	4 1.5%	378 100%
2.	Encouragement of violent use of arms	132 33.0%	162 40.5%	42 10.0%	50 12.5%	14 3.5%	378 100%
3.	Loss of lives	206 51.5%	152 38.0%	16 4.0%	18 4.5%	8 0.2%	378 100%
4.	Destruction of properties	198 39.5%	189 45.5%	6 1.5%	6 1.5%	10 2.5%	378 100%



5.	Cause injuries and maiming	182 45.5%	182 45.5%	22 5.5%	10 2.5%	4 1.5%	378 100%
6.	Displacement of people	148 37.0%	196 49.0%	26 6.5%	16 4.0%	14 3.5%	378 100%
7.	Create a general sense of insecurity	168 42.0%	175 49.0%	16 4.0%	10 2.5%	10 2.5%	378 100%

Source: Field Work, 2023

The data presented in Table 7 revealed several effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the security challenges of the North Eastern State. Out of the 189 respondents, an overwhelming majority (93.0%) said that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has caused insecurity in the North Eastern state, while a small proportion (1.0%) disagreed. These data suggest that a small provocation or peaceful protest can easily turn violent when a crisis-torn society has a large stockpile of illegal small arms. In addition, about 73.5% thought that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons promotes the violent use of small arms, and 16.0% disagreed. While 91.0% of respondents agreed that the availability of illegal small arms in a crisis area creates a general sense of insecurity, only 5.0% disagreed. This is very related to the previous one. This means that when there is no emergency, those weapons can also be used to commit other crimes, such as armed robbery and murder.

3. An opportunity to fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the North Eastern State

Opinion							
	Items	SA 5	A 4	UD 3	D 2	SD 1	TL
1.	Combating corruption to seal smuggling	126 31.5%	248 62.0%	12 3.0%	10 2.5%	4 1.5%	378 100%
2.	Improve the border control measures by sealing the borders	132 33.0%	162 40.5%	84 10.0%	100 12.5%	14 3.5%	378 100%



3.	Deploy adequate police officers in areas prone to clashes	206 51.5%	152 38.0%	32 4.0%	18 4.5%	4 0.2%	378 100%
4.	Review the legislation regarding SALW.	180 39.5%	198 45.5%	6 1.5%	6 1.5%	5 2.5%	378 100%
5.	Improve infrastructure to enhance accessibility of security personnel	182 45.5%	182 45.5%	22 5.5%	10 2.5%	2 1.0%	378 100%

Source: Field Work, 2023

The data presented in Table 8 revealed several ways to combat the proliferation of SALW in the North Eastern State. Of the 189 respondents, an overwhelming majority, 93.0%, said the anti-corruption crackdown on seal smuggling will curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the North Eastern state, while a small percentage, 1.0%, disagreed. In addition, approximately 73.5% thought that the improvement of border control measures by closing borders would slow down the spread of small arms and light weapons, and 16.0% disagreed. While 91.0% of respondents agreed that an adequate police presence should be used in conflict-prone areas, 5.0% disagreed.

Discussion of findings

Research on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in northeastern Nigeria and its impact on Nigeria have yielded significant findings. Let's discuss some of these results:

1. Increased Armed Violence: The availability of small arms and light weapons has led to an escalation in armed violence in north-eastern Nigeria. Boko Haram and other militant groups have taken advantage of the easy access to firearms to carry out attacks on civilians, security forces, and infrastructure. This has resulted in a high number of casualties and the displacement of thousands of people.
2. Destabilization of the Region: The proliferation of weapons has contributed to the destabilization of north-eastern Nigeria. The constant threat of violence and insecurity has negatively impacted the social fabric of the region. Communities are living in fear, and economic activities are hindered, leading to increased poverty and displacement.
3. Impediment to Development: The presence of small arms and light weapons has hampered development efforts in northeastern Nigeria. The constant threat of violence makes it difficult for humanitarian agencies to intervene in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in north-eastern Nigeria.



4. The impact of small arms and light arms proliferation is averse to National territory defence, especially in North-eastern States.
5. The government can limit the proliferation of SALW in the northeastern state by fighting corruption, shutting down smuggling, improving border control measures by sealing borders and deploying sufficient police to conflict-prone areas.

CONCLUSIONS

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in North Eastern Nigeria has had a considerable impact on the country as a whole. The region has become a hotbed of insecurity, with various non-state armed groups taking advantage of the availability of these weapons. The consequences of this proliferation are numerous and wide-ranging.

One of the most direct impacts is the increase in violent conflict and terrorism. Boko Haram, a notorious extremist group operating in the region, has significantly benefited from the accessibility of small arms and light weapons. These weapons have allowed them to carry out deadly attacks, kidnappings, and acts of terror against both civilians and security forces. The group's ability to acquire and use such weaponry has further fueled their destabilizing activities, leading to loss of lives, displacement, and economic hardship in the affected areas.

Additionally, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in North Eastern Nigeria has contributed to the escalation of inter-communal violence and disputes. Various ethnic and religious groups have been arming themselves to protect their communities, resulting in clashes and exacerbation of existing tensions. This cycle of violence has not only claimed numerous lives but has also hindered the peaceful coexistence and socio-economic development of the region.

Furthermore, the spread of these weapons has serious implications for national security and stability. The porous borders in the region have facilitated illicit arms trafficking, allowing weapons to flow in and out of Nigeria. This not only poses a threat within the country but also increases the risk of arms smuggling to neighbouring countries, potentially fueling conflicts in the wider West African region. The impact of small arms and light weapons proliferation goes beyond immediate security concerns. It also hampers development efforts as resources that could have been allocated to social welfare programs, education, and infrastructure are diverted to tackle the consequences of violence and terrorism. The presence of these weapons impedes economic growth, reduces foreign investments, and limits opportunities for sustainable development in the affected areas.

Addressing the challenge of small arms and light weapons proliferation requires a comprehensive approach. It necessitates strengthening law enforcement agencies, enhancing border security, and implementing effective arms control measures. Additionally, efforts should focus on promoting community dialogue, reconciliation, and disarmament initiatives to foster peace and stability.

In conclusion, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in North Eastern Nigeria has had a profound impact on the country. It has fueled terrorism, exacerbated inter-communal violence, compromised national security, and hindered development. Effectively addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted strategy that encompasses both security measures and socio-economic initiatives aimed at promoting peace and stability in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Northeastern Nigeria has had a severe impact on the country. These weapons have fueled conflict, worsened security challenges, and posed a



threat to the safety and stability of both the region and the entire nation. To mitigate these issues, it is crucial to implement a comprehensive set of recommendations:

1. Strengthen law enforcement and security forces: Enhance the capacity and capabilities of Nigeria's security forces, particularly those operating in the Northeastern region. This includes providing them with better training, equipment, and intelligence support to effectively combat the spread of small arms and light weapons.
2. Implement stricter border controls: Address the porous borders that enable the illegal flow of weapons into Nigeria. Enhance security measures and strengthen border control agencies to prevent the smuggling of firearms across national borders.
3. Improve intelligence gathering and sharing: Establish a robust intelligence network to gather timely and accurate information on arms trafficking networks, suppliers, and buyers. Enhance coordination and collaboration between national security agencies to effectively share critical intelligence and undertake targeted operations against arms dealers.
4. Promote community engagement and awareness: Foster community participation in disarmament programs and raise awareness about the negative impact of small arms proliferation. Educate citizens, religious leaders, and community influencers about the consequences of violence and the importance of reporting illicit weapons.
5. Enhance regional cooperation: Collaborate with neighbouring countries and regional organizations to address transnational arms flows. Strengthen information-sharing mechanisms, conduct joint operations, and harmonize legislation to prevent arms smuggling across borders.
6. Implement stricter arms control measures: Strengthen legal frameworks and regulatory mechanisms for arms control, including improved licensing, registration, and tracking systems. This will help ensure that legal weapons are properly accounted for and reduce the risk of diversion to illicit markets.
7. Invest in socioeconomic development: Address the underlying socio-economic issues that contribute to the demand for small arms. By investing in education, job creation, poverty alleviation programs, and infrastructure development, the root causes of insecurity can be addressed, reducing the dependency on violence and illicit arms.
8. Support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs: Provide comprehensive support for individuals and groups willing to surrender their arms voluntarily. Implement effective disarmament campaigns, accompanied by rehabilitation and reintegration programs to prevent a recurrence of violence.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can gradually reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Northeastern region. This will not only contribute to regional stability, but also enhance national security, promote sustainable development, and protect the lives and well-being of its citizens.



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