

**BOKO-HARAM, SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS PROLIFERATION AND
ITS POTENTIAL THREAT TO NIGERIA SECURITY; WHICH WAY FORWARD?**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the origin and purpose of Boko-Haram in Nigeria and finds that Small Arms and Light Weapons constitute a serious threat to Nigerian Security, it also finds that there is also a strong connection between Boko-Haram and their Proliferations. This was carried out using expository/descriptive, analytical and critical methods generated from primary and secondary data. The study posits that the existing structures of border control should be enhanced and government should utilize and share intelligence with Interpol and other sub-regional agencies to effectively mitigate the problem of insurgency and other emerging threats. This paper concludes that giving the current security situation caused by Boko-Haram and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALM), Nigerians should stand and speak with one voice by imploring the Government to make sure that surplus, obsolete and potentially destabilized weapons are removed from circulation and strengthen Anti-terrorism legislature among others, if the impasse must be resolved.

Keywords: Boko-haram, Nigeria, Small Arms and Light Weapons, Security, Proliferation

INTRODUCTION

In the words of Lodguard and Fund (1998) “weapons are man-portable or transportable by light vehicles and that do not require much in terms of service, logistical back up training”. Light weapons in its wider category comprise small-Calibre canons, light support weapons, combat grenades, anti-personnel mines, mortars, anti-tank weapons, anti-tank mines, etc.

The proliferation of these weapons has posed a threat to international community, thus the need to curb the menace: the essence of curbing this is to foster conflict-prevention. Conflict prevention guarantees human security. But an environment that ensures human security cannot be flowing with Arms, especially those coming in from conflict regions, thus the need for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Also, to cut the flow and effects of light weapons there is also need for repatriation and reintegration of refugees and several other measures must be put in place to check this negative development.

The Sierra-Leone and Liberia civil wars was further encouraged by Arm Proliferation. In a survey assessing the distribution of arm in Sierra-Leone, common types of weapons at the time of collection as they were used in the war, were shot guns, locally made rifles, automatic assault rifle. Before the war, illicit trafficking routes were rich, structured and highly regular affairs.

The African Union (AU) has continued to make progress in the fight against illicit trafficking and circulations of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) on the continent. AU’s common passion on the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons was adopted in December 2000 by the Council of Ministers of the O.A.U as African’s input to the negotiations on the United Nations Progamme of Action (UNPOA) to prevent combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspect (UNPOA) member States under the declaration agreed to identified seize and destroy illicit weapons. It was also provided in the declaration for the establishment of measures to control the circulation, transfer and use of Small Arm and Light Weapons. Small/light arms are cheap and profitable, and are used by all combatants, state militaries, militias and insurgents. It is the

prevalence – that is the widespread proliferation of the arms combined with their indiscriminate use that renders them responsible for so much of the killings. In addition, small and Light Arms Terrorist act around the world perceived imbalance within the Nigeria political structure contributed fundamentally to the atmosphere of hostility and mutual suspicion among the various components religious, tribal, class etc which make up the federation.

The situation in the Niger Delta is symptomatic of what has been referred to as criminal social neglect and ecological degradation. The end result in the region of the country is responsible for seventy (70) percent of the country's income displays a degree of poverty which stands in sharp contradiction to the wealth it produces. This has led to a militarized youth population with access to Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

Ethno-religious animosities have led to the phenomenon of armed ethnic militias in virtually all parts of the country. While ethnic militias did exist under military rule, they were by and large kept under check. However, with the return to civil rule and the consequent expansion of political space, these groups blossomed to the extent of representing and causing threats and alternatives to state security structures (Edomwonyi, 2007).

In addition, corruption within the legal system has meant the criminal often escape justice and this has promoted a mentality “self-help” among the populace, contributing to the acquisition of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) by individuals and groups who have come to view the state as a failure (Edomwonyi, 2007). Armed robbers and other criminals have also contributed to the proliferation of these groups of weapons. In some instances, they capture the weapons belonging to security agencies and these weapons are often put into criminal uses. Local fabricate commonly referred to as blacksmiths ‘ports’ have traditionally been a source of supply for (SALW) for hunters and local security men.

However, with the downturn in the economy of the country, it has become extremely difficult to cushion the proliferation of these weapons. However, the problems of availability of these weapons lay mainly on the manufacturing and its accumulation.

It is observed that over eighty-five (85) percent of States in the world produce various arms and ammunitions. The major source of supply of arms are said to have come directly from the manufacturers to private groups and government (Addo 2006).

Historical Background of Boko-Haram in Nigeria

The Islamic State in West Africa or Islamic State's West Africa Province (abbreviated as ISWA or ISWAP), formerly known as Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād (Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad) and commonly known as Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist organization based in northeastern Nigeria. It is also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon. The further decline of Boko Haram and the loss of much of the territories it once reportedly controlled. Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, the group has been led by Abubakar Shekau since 2009. Initially Boko-haram intention was not to be violent. According to them one of their goals was to reform Islam in the Northern Nigeria. It is on record that from 2009 that Boko-Haram has claim Tens of thousands of Lives and display about 2.3million citizens from their homes and was at one time tagged as the world's most Terrorist group according to Global Terrorism Index.

After its founding in 2002, Boko Haram's increasing radicalisation led to the suppression operation by the Nigerian military forces and the summary execution of its leader Mohammed Yusuf in July 2009. Its unexpected resurgence, following a mass prison break in September 2010, was accompanied by increasingly sophisticated attacks, initially against soft targets, but progressing in 2011 to include suicide bombings of police buildings and the United Nations office in Abuja. The government's establishment of a state of emergency at the beginning of 2012, extended in the following year to cover the entire northeast of Nigeria, led to an increase in both security force abuses and militant attacks.

Before colonization and subsequent annexation into the British Empire in 1900 as Colonial Nigeria, the Bornu Empire ruled the territory where Boko Haram is currently active. It was a sovereign sultanate run according to the principles of the Constitution of Medina, with a majority Kanuri Muslim population. In 1903, both the Borno

Emirate and Sokoto Caliphate came under the control of the British. Christian missionaries at this time spread the Christian message in the region and had many converts. British occupation ended with Nigerian independence in 1960. Except for a brief period of civilian rule between 1979 and 1983, Nigeria was governed by a series of military dictatorships from 1966 until the advent of democracy in 1999. Ethnic militancy is thought to have been one of the causes of the 1967–1970 civil war; religious violence reached a new height in 1980 in Kano, the largest city in the north of the country, where the Muslim fundamentalist sect Yan Tatsine ("followers of Maitatsine") instigated riots that resulted in four or five thousand deaths. In the ensuing military crackdown, Maitatsine was killed, fuelling a backlash of increased violence that spread across other northern cities over the next twenty years. Social inequality and poverty contributed both to the Maitatsine and Boko Haram uprisings.

In the decades since the end of British occupation, most or some politicians and academics from the mainly Islamic North have expressed their fundamental opposition to Western education. Political ethno-religious interest groups, whose membership includes influential political, military and religious leaders, have thrived in Nigeria, though they were largely suppressed under military rule. Their paramilitary wings, formed since the country's return to civilian rule, have been implicated in much of the sectarian violence in the years following. The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) Formed in (2000), is a political and cultural Association of Leaders in Northern Nigerian which has considerable influence in the Political Scene. (Arewa means 'Northerns' in Hausa, the primary Language of the region. The forum is a successor to the Northern People's Congress (NPC), a militant group set up to protect the interests of the Hausa-Fulani people in the North.

Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

One of the dominant features of the global community in the 1990s has been the violent breakdown of civil society in dozens of countries throughout the world. From the specialist states of formal bloc to Africa and Asia, we have witnessed the outbreak of ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic and other forms communal strife and the melting away of social norms and

government structures would otherwise contain the violence (Alex, 2011). Another defining characteristic of such conflict is that fact that widespread death and suffering result not only from the major conventional weapons traditionally associated with war-tanks, aircraft and warship, for example – but from small arms and light weapons. The global proliferation of assault rifles, machine guns, mortars, rocket – propelled grenades and other “man – portable” weapons has increased both the frequency and intensity of modern conflict and greatly complicated that task of restoring peace. Such weapons are readily obtainable on international markets both legal and illicit, and are easily mastered by untrained and unprofessional soldiers, even children. Of the 49 major conflict that have broken out since 1990, light weapons were the only arms used in 46, only one conflict (the 1909 Gulf war) was dominated by heavy weapons.

The proliferation of small arms has been the trouble of most national, regional and international organizations even the United Nations. The proliferation of arms particularly the small arms have tripled since the end of the Cold War. They have become more accessible than ever. Virtually all conflicts in recent times that were dealt with by regional or international organizations have small arms as the primary or sole tool of violence. Dhanapala (1998) points out that most of the countries where these weapons were used in recent times to wreak havoc do not manufacture them. He adds that in most cases neither the manufacturer, nor the exporter nor even the buyer knows the purposes for which the weapons will ultimately be used because unlike the trade in any other category of weapons will ultimately be used because unlike the trade in any other category of weapons, nearly 40% of the trade in small arms is carried out through illicit means. Included in these accumulations of arms especially in Africa and its sub-regions are those supplied during the Cold War. These massive quantities of weapons are part of those that still go around.

Dhanapala (1998) asserts that about 2 million small arms and light weapons are still circulating in Central America, 7 million in West Africa and an estimated 10 million in Afghanistan. It must be added that several of these weapons have been used in places far

removed from their original places of regular supply. The illicit means of transfer of arms at the international level are believed to involve multi-party deals involving false documentation, concealment, and smuggling and coded bank accounts. War has proved to be profitable for some in recent times. The increasing spate of conflicts around the world has multiplied small arms as they are more readily available. There are several campaigns in theory to restrict the trade of small arms that is simply defined as light, portable weapon.

Most governments claim to oppose the illicit trade of small arms which is responsible “for arming criminals and insurgent groups, and many governments also favour a code of conduct regulating which countries are deemed responsible enough to buy weapons on the open market. On the other hand, the United Nation has already implemented a number of measures designed to restrict the flow of arms, but these has merely illustrated the difficulty of monitoring such flows (Rupesinghe, 1998). The provision of monitor and control of arms in reality seem to be only a theory. For instance, a 1955 ordinance on the import and export of arms and ammunition except under import license...shall be guilty of arm offence. The same ordinance also provided that “any person who possesses any small arm unless he is a holder of a current license...shall be guilty of an offence” (Bayraytay, 2006).

Bayraytay (2006) argues that these provisions were fairly applied during the 1960s and 1970s. He quickly added that in Sierra Leone gun contract largely disappeared. Thus, the one-party constitution of Sierra Leone was silent over the availability, possession and use of small arms. Under normal circumstances, this will lead to proliferation of arms, especially small arms as their usage would become overt among citizens especially privatization of security. In Sierra Leone, the regular military and paramilitary forces found themselves faced with parallel privately owned forces (Bayraytay, 2006). At this period in Sierra Leone, several arms trafficking took place, sometimes with the connivance of well-placed officers within the state security apparatus.

The need for cutting off the supply of small arms and light weapon (SALW) cannot be overestimated. The proliferation of small arms account for much of the killing around the

world and “their availability ensures that society is plagued by violence” long after conflicts have ended in conflict areas. Women and children have always been the victims of small arms especially in conflict times. The case in Sierra Leone was not different as women were the main victims of wanton violence. However, women also became aggressors. Binta Mansaray (2006) points out, “the hidden truth is that in many instances, women played a significant, “active” role in violence.” Mansaray adds that the easy use of small arms and light weapons facilitated women’s role as aggressors. It has been noted that small arms require very little training and operation. Mansaray also lists three key reasons why women during the conflict in Sierra Leone became actors in the offensive.

The reasons are:

1. Some women voluntarily joined the movement sometimes to escape from daily life as second-class citizens and to demonstrate in a violent way that they are capable of doing whatever men could do... they wanted to identify with a movement that they thought would liberate them and fulfil their fundamental human need for recognition...
2. Some of those who were adopted, according to testimonies of some aggressors, subsequently chose to stay in the movement and they were trained as combatants.
3. Other women became perpetrators of violence because they were trapped in the movement and just could not get out.

Measures taken by the Government of Nigeria to tackle Boko-Haram

From the analysis of the root causes of the insurgency, it emerges that finding a durable solution requires a comprehensive, coherent, and well-coordinated response from both local and international actors. Meanwhile, the complex nature of the causes further reveals several challenges that need to be overcome in order to deal with the crisis successfully. In addressing the crisis and finding a durable solution the response of the government is key. From this perspective, it is clear that the time is ripe for the government to adopt policy changes to alleviate the grievances advanced by the group as their driving force. This would bring

significant issues to the negotiating table which is critical in the quest for a sustainable solution. The introduction of curfews and crackdowns has had no real impact as they previously had, in that the group appears to be gaining the upper hand. After the killing of over 200 people in January 2015, the government's response appeared to be succeeding, as the number of attacks decreased, became less complex and less deadly. However, by relying solely on force, the government is in all likelihood making a mistake (albeit an understandable one) – its heavy-handed reactions of the past have exacerbated the situation and may even have pushed Boko Haram to intensify its actions.

Further, as we saw above, the sympathies of the local populations tend to shift to the insurgents when the government reacts harshly. This is critical as sympathy may translate into additional manpower and resources. In opposing this view, Campbell argues that the government should rather go the route of amnesty and negotiation as it did in the past when it co-opted the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta by agreeing to an amnesty deal and equitable distribution of resources for the people in the region. In the meantime, the government's attempts at negotiation appear somewhat half-hearted and without agreement on a middle-ground essential to agreement between the parties, and cannot be regarded as propitious. This impasse may be attributed to the vast 'gap' between the demands of Boko Haram that the entire country be brought under Shari'a law – and what the government is willing to offer.

As a former US ambassador to Nigeria, Campbell (2006) forcefully advances that whether the government likes it or not, it may be forced to consider some review of the basic political and economic issues at stake and pursue significant changes in policy and approach. Against this backdrop, the continued decline in the quality of life in northern Nigeria weakens the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry. The literature shows that the 'Islamisation' agenda aside, poverty and corruption play key roles in the crisis. Furthermore, the fact that the security and law enforcement agencies have committed atrocious human rights abuses in their effort to tackle the crisis, have led some civilians to sympathize with the insurgents –

especially among the local Muslim population. All of this poses a major challenge to the government's response to the crisis.

The American officials are wary of the corruption and human rights violations by the Nigerian military which makes them hesitant to share intelligence with the Nigerian military with the notion that it has been infiltrated by Boko Haram. Amnesty International has reported that many civilians affected by the church bombing in Kano in 2012 were quick to blame the security forces rather than Boko Haram and described the Federal Government as a shared enemy. An incident like this is a major stumbling block as it fuels mistrust and makes the civilians uncooperative in the fight against the insurgents.

Finally, according to Clifford Ndujihe (2017), Deputy Political Editor of vanguard Newspaper said that the Nigerian government spends some US\$6 billion of its annual budget on security within an economy of approximately half a trillion dollars. Also, the military is made up of 90 000 active duty, and 25 000 reserve components, for a country of 180 million people. This is woefully inadequate in light of the complex security threats and challenges facing the country. It has been argued that the budget deficits are as a result of chronic corruption on the part of Nigerian commanders. This inadequate budgetary allocation to the security sector at a time of challenging and sophisticated security threats has led many experts to accuse the Nigerian government of lacking the goodwill to tackle this menace. These events broaden the implications for the fight against a complicated insurgency system such as that of Boko Haram and also deter other international partners who might wish to join the fight.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion so far, it could be inferred that the inability of the law enforcement agencies to check the supply factors of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) worsened security situation in Nigeria. That the inability of law enforcement agencies to check the supply factors of SALW worsened security situation in Nigeria.

That the inability of the Nigeria borders to deal with the demand factors heightened the proliferation of SALW. Small arms and light weapon have never been subject to any

systematic and traceable transfer regime or even considered to be strategic in ensuring Global Security. This was the case until the end of the cold war, then asymmetric warfare in the world's weaker states, terrorism, drug trafficking, and banditry threatened to tear states apart.

There is no doubt that the accumulation of small arms and their diffusion into society are both causal and symptomatic of the governance. The opportunity cost of arms accumulation is the promotion of sustainable security, based on the provision of basic needs and rights. Finding a common solution to the SALW pandemic, however, is not easy, given the specific status of this category of weapons. SALW may facilitate and exacerbate conflicts and promote banditry, but they do not cause them. Quite unlike the successful campaign to anti-personnel landmines, which are also most unanimously acknowledged as inhumane. More so, it is practically impossible to ban the production and transfer of SALW.

They perform legitimate functions in the governance process and widely used by the rural community in hunting to supplement the unusually starch based diet in the sub-region. Besides, discourse about SALW invariably touches on state security and national sovereignty. Consequently, in the end, only governments can make and implement agreement on arms transfers. With this in mind, it is imperative that the growing anti-proliferation campaign adopts strategies would be capable of producing results without alienating government a delicate balancing act. Indeed.

Whatever tactics are adopted; however, the objectives should be two-fold. Firstly, the operators of the SALM pipelines in the subregions, as well as the recyclers and Trans-shippers within the sub-region itself must be exposed as sanctioned in order to diffuse societal tensions caused by Proliferations of Arms and Weapons. Secondly, there is a need to combine weapons elimination from society with effective measures to diffuse societal tensions.

Because of this issues effect on development, sustainable security and programming need to confront the challenge of small arms proliferation head on. Limiting illicit arms proliferation and removing excess and potentially destabilizing Arms from circulation should be both a security and development priority for the present administration. Small Arms

initiatives should also be built into security assistance and development programs. Programs that focus on security sector and judicial sector reform must address small arms proliferation and misuse. The United Nations should also support programs that address the demand for weapons.

Such reforms would build public confidence in security, reduce the incentive for people to obtain and keep weapons, and would also help governments and international agencies to incorporate weapons collection programs into peace-building strategies – both as post – conflict disarmament programs as well as long – term projects aiming to remove as many surplus and illegal weapons and ammunition from circulation as possible.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations appear very necessary:

- Existing structures of border control should be enhanced.
- Government should utilize Interpol sub-regional offices to share information.
- They should improve resources for data gathering and dissemination.
- The law enforcement agencies should be strengthened in order to enable them to check the supply factors of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) that worsen security situation in Nigeria border.
- Government should deploy military operations and civilian vigilantes.
- Government should declare a state of emergency on illegal possession of arms by civilians.
- The security council of the United Nations should sanction any erring nations of state in the proliferations of arms.
- The security architecture should be restructured by the government.

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