

Nigeria's Defense Regulative System and National Security: Implications of Arms Smuggling and Trafficking in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria as a nation is battling with threats to its internal security as a result of the pervasive state of insecurity ranging from arms smuggling, trafficking and proliferation across the country's porous borders, to insurgency, banditry, militancy, herdsman attacks, and succession threats, among others. This study critically accessed Nigeria's defence regulatory system and national security in curbing arms smuggling, proliferation and trafficking. The theoretical framework adopted for this study was Differential Association Theory (DAT) and Queer Ladder Theory (QLT). The paper adopted a descriptive research method and relied heavily on secondary sources of data from textbooks, journals, newspapers and the Internet. The study findings revealed that the factors responsible for arms smuggling, trafficking and proliferation are occasioned primarily by the weak institutional implementation of the legal provisions due to corruption, which also negatively influences other endogenous factors like porous borders, poverty, unemployment, huge illicit financial benefits that accrue to arms smuggling and traffickers and ethnic-religious clashes. The study therefore recommended among others, the need for the government to implement strategies to forestall insecurity in the country as well as the need for the promotion of social capital and welfare by actively engaging the nation's scarce resources in making the productive sectors of the economy more viable, which should form the core responsibility of government. The views contained therein contribute to knowledge, as well, serves as a catalyst to further studies, given the number of references made for further review.

Keywords: Defense regulative system, national security, arms smuggling and trafficking.

Introduction

There is a pressing need to modify Nigeria's defense regulatory structure and national security paradigm to adapt to the ever-changing nature and patterns of addressing the issues posed by the security environment of the 21st century. The matter at hand pertains to the illicit production and dissemination of weapons, together with their parts and ammunition. The most commonly smuggled firearms include small arms such as revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles, carbines, sub-machine guns, light machine guns, and assault rifles. Additionally, light weapons such as heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable anti-tank missile and rocket launchers, and mortars with a calibre of less than 100mm are also frequently smuggled (Mubarak & Aliyu, 2022; Aristotle, 2022; Aristotle & Okoyen, 2020).

Similarly, a research paper titled: “Revisiting Nigeria’s national defense policy for a secured cyber domain in the 21st Century”, indicates that the illicit trade and transportation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) has an annual financial worth of \$1 billion, surpassing the value of narcotics and other criminal activities, which are believed to range between \$170 million to \$320 million (Mubarak & Aliyu, 2022, p. 1219). The current shift in global politics involves the increasing influence of non-state actors who are now challenging the authority of the state, which previously had significant control over the use of force. This is accompanied by the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) at low prices in the black market, a trend largely driven by technological advancements and global interconnectedness, also known as globalization. These factors have worked together to change the focus of security, shifting from the state to people who are now more vulnerable to threats. This has caused a change in Nigeria's defense regulatory framework and national security worldview. The following references were cited: Mark & Iwebi (2019), Mustapha (2019), Abiodun, et al. (2018), Elemanya (2018), Ayegba & Yerima (2017), Adetiba (2012), and Chima-Okoro (2011).

The global phenomenon of arms smuggling and trafficking typically involves the transfer of weapons from industrialized nations that produce and trade firearms to buyers in less developed countries, particularly those with a pressing need for guns due to issues such as insecurity, civil and domestic conflicts, or low-intensity warfare and insurgency (Edwardo & Diana, 2018, p. 6).

John (2023, p. 12) and Usman (2023, p. 8), reported that: “It was a black Christmas in Plateau state, Nigeria, the strategic surprise started in the Mushu village of Bokkos local government area and spilled into neighbouring Barkin- Ladi local government. Sadly, this horrifying massacre took place on the 24th of December 2023 in the state where militarized gangs, locally known as ‘bandits’ launched a series of tactical surprises on villages, resulting in the death of sixteen (16) persons, according to social and print media reports, but eye-witness report accounted over a hundred (100) lives were lost in the ugly and unwarranted incidence.

Moreover, there have been reports of meticulously planned and synchronized assaults that took place in other communities, including Ruku, Hurum, Darwat, Mai Yanga Sabo, and Ntv villages, located in the Gashish and Ropp districts of the Barkin Ladi local government area in Plateau state. According to reports, more than three hundred individuals sustained injuries in the incident and were subsequently sent to hospitals in Bokkos, Jos, and Barkin Ladi. Amnesty International has censured the Nigerian government for its inability to halt the recurring and deadly assaults on rural communities in Plateau state. The assaults are a manifestation of a significant issue involving armed groups that function as bandits' militias. These groups operate from remote forest bases and carry out raids on communities with the intention of looting, committing acts of sexual violence, and kidnapping locals for ransom. Similarly, the Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang, also criticized the incident, denouncing it as "barbaric, brutal, and unjustified" (Usman, 2023, p. 8).

It is observed that one of the major issues confronting Nigeria today as a nation is sectarian crises manifesting in different ways and patterns. However, solutions proffered to the evident devastating consequences of the insurgency, herdsman attacks and banditry in the northern part of the country especially in the North-East, West and Central regions have not yielded results, hence successive administrations have had the distraction of religious crises characterized by mistrust, suspicion and destruction of lives and properties currently taking the forms of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The thesis statement of the study is that currently, the smuggling and trafficking of weapons is prevalent worldwide. However, this illegal activity is particularly concentrated in regions that are plagued by domestic conflicts, violence, insurgency, or the presence of organized crime and criminal networks. These areas experience a growing demand for illicit weapons. The majority of sales, around 75%, are focused on developing nations in Africa, including Libya, Sudan, Nigeria, and South Africa, as well as in the Middle East, namely Saudi Arabia and Syria, and in Latin America, principally Central America (Elemanya, 2018).

Eduardo & Diana (2018, p.7) observed that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (US, Russia, France, United Kingdom, and China), together with Germany and Italy, are responsible for around 85% of the armament sales between 2004 and 2011. This pattern has been consistent. Therefore, the significant involvement of these countries is important because although the illegal transportation of weapons is typically carried out by non-governmental entities, these governments contribute to the growth of criminal markets by supplying paramilitary organizations engaged in rebellions against opposing governments, often in violation of United Nations restrictions on arms.

The emergence of armed conflicts across the African continent can be attributed to various factors such as political and economic instability in forming states and democracies, persistent inequality in land property and income, widespread corruption, and a low level of human development. Before 2012, countries such as Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia, and South Africa were the primary locations for arms smuggling due to high levels of violence. However, the focus of this illegal activity has now shifted to Nigeria, Libya, Niger, and South Sudan (Eduardo & Diana, 2018, p. 14-15).

Mark & Iwebi, (2019); Chima- Okoro, (2011) noted that Nigeria is a destination of smuggled arms; the causes include criminal activities, secessionist agenda, subversion, sabotage, religious crises, communal conflicts, Fulani herdsmen-farmers clashes, insurrection, militancy, terrorism, ethnic unrest, cross border smuggling, porous borders, mass unemployment among others. They further noted that the reason Nigeria is rated high in arms smuggling/trafficking is as a result of the porous borders in the country, especially in the north. Nigeria shares boundary with five (5) African countries namely: Benin, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, thus, the wave of globalization has given rise to increased internationalization of economic activities, as well as open doors for global criminal and smugglers to flourish.

Across the nations and Nigeria in particular, arms smuggling/trafficking has resulted in steady and uncontrollable cases of killings, armed banditry, herdsmen attacks, militancy, ethnic and communal clashes and other violent conflicts.

In light of the foregoing, this paper interrogates Nigeria's defense regulative system and national security and its implication for arms smuggling and trafficking in Nigeria. The objective of the study is to access Nigeria's defense regulative system and national security in curbing arms smuggling, proliferation and trafficking. Specifically, to fill the knowledge gap, the study objectives aimed to achieve the following:

- i. To access Nigeria's defense regulative policy with regard to arms smuggling and trafficking.
- ii. To examine how arms in the hands of some non-state actors have resulted to insecurity in Nigeria.
- iii. To access the sources and availability of arms smuggling and trafficking in Nigeria.
- iv. To proffer solutions to the rising arms trafficking in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

1. Small Arms and Light Weapons

According to Elemanya (2018, p. 138), small guns are defined as portable weapons that may be carried by a single person. This encompasses a wide range of firearms, ranging from revolvers and pistols to machine guns, RPGs, light anti-tank weapons, and shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles. Furthermore, small arms, in a general sense, are weapons specifically created for personal use. The items include, among others, revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles, carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns. Conversely, light weapons, in general terms, are weapons specifically created to be operated by a crew of two or three people, but there are instances when a single person may carry and use them. The weapons encompass a variety of armaments such as heavy machine guns, handheld 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 with a calibre below 100 millimetres. While small arms and light

weapons are separate types of weaponry, the UNDP uses the phrase 'small arms' to include both small arms and light weapons (Oteng-Ababio & Martins, 2016; Harvard, 2011; Aning, 2010, 2003).

2. Arms Smuggling/Trafficking

Guns smuggling/trafficking refers to the unlawful trade of prohibited small guns and ammunition, which is often linked to transnational criminal groups (Eduardo & Diana, 2018, p. 6). The illicit trafficking of tiny firearms, in contrast to other forms of organized criminal activities, is primarily linked to the exertion of influence within communities rather than pursuing economic benefits. Research suggests that the illicit trade of firearms is estimated to exceed US\$1 billion every year.

3. National Security

Security pertains to the state of being protected or resistant to possible damage inflicted by external entities. The recipients of security might include individuals, societal collectives, physical entities, establishments, ecosystems, or any susceptible entity or occurrence that is prone to unrestricted alteration (Aristotle & Okoyen, 2020, p. 2). Security is a potent political instrument for drawing attention to important matters in the race for government focus. Additionally, it aids in cultivating an awareness of the significance of the designated concerns within the general population's mindset. (Williams, 2008:28; Buzan, 2003:370). Ken Booth views security as a benefit that provides a degree of protection against hazards that might influence one's life, allowing for more personal agency in decision-making (Booth, 2007).

The discussion of national security necessitates an examination of the definition of the term 'state'. A state is a comprehensive entity that has formal institutions to govern the most important contractual relationships among individuals under its jurisdiction. The state has a significant responsibility to ensure the security of its inhabitants since security is one of the primary functions of the state (Omimisi, 2014, p. 81). Hence, national security may be defined as the collective military capabilities of a country or the ongoing effort to counter both internal and foreign acts of aggression. The combination of political resilience, maturity, human resources, economic structure, technical competence, industrial foundation, natural resources, and military might be both suitable and assertive.

The issue associated with national security is that security in itself is the absence of threat or danger against anything. On the international stage, security is seen in different dimensions. For overtime what we saw as security was purely protection of regimes, and territories internally and externally. But in the post-covid era (contemporary time), security is broadening, deepened and comprising human, health, economic, social, political, environmental (green), cultural, educational, housing, and cyber, among others. Therefore, security is the totality of the aforementioned variables. Security must encompass the protection of the core values of the nations as earlier mentioned. In Nigeria, and Africa at large, security does not lie in the military or other para-military security agencies, but in the empowerment of the masses.

4. Insecurity

Insecurity may be seen as a violation of peace and security, including several dimensions such as historical, religious, ethnic, regional, civic, social, economic, and political factors. It gives rise to repeated confrontations and results in indiscriminate loss of life and damage to property. Insecurity refers to a condition in which the safety and well-being of individuals and the country are jeopardized by both internal and external factors that pose a danger to lives and property.

Common Elements of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs)

Elemanya (2018, p. 140) and Oke (2002, p.6) have discovered four similar components in the aforementioned definitions: Initially, the emphasis is placed on deadly apparatus, specifically referring to armaments and their corresponding munitions, often used by

military and paramilitary entities, except objects like knives and hunting rifles. Furthermore, the focus is on weaponry that can be easily carried by individuals or transported using small vehicles, specifically considering the weight and dimensions of the equipment. Furthermore, this technology is very manageable, capable of operating with little logistical support, and requires just basic training for operation. Furthermore, to possess military and political significance, the term encompasses weapons that are regularly used, namely those that have a substantial lethality. It is worth mentioning that the conception of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in this way clarifies the features that determine the classification of these weapons as tiny and light, as well as their capacity to harm.

Several factors constitute the origin of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in the West African sub-region. Arms are proliferated through several means in the sub-region and history has it to have existed for a very long time, dating back to the contact with the West (Elemanya, 2018, p.147). Colonial conquests such as the expedition in the ancient Benin Kingdom; the Tuareg rebellion across the ancient strips of Mali, and Niger among others, have equal implications for illicit arms. However, a very unique phenomenon could be identified and isolated as a major reason for the vulnerability and influx of SALWs in West Africa as well as other parts of the continent in contemporary times. Notably, the systemic incapability for regulating the proliferation of SALWs characterizes the West African State. Little regard is attributed to regulatory frameworks in the conduct of arms-regulated transactions, and when recognized at all, it is ridiculed by corruption in the state institutions which are often incapacitated or sometimes ill-equipped or lack political will to tackle the complex case of arms trafficking or proliferation (Abiodun et al., 2018; Berman, 2007).

The origin of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in West Africa is attributed to the following factors namely: the huge global industrial arms production capacity; the Cold War politics and its aftermath; conflict in the region which necessitates the need for more arms, issues of cattle rustling, banditry, farmers-herders clashes, terrorism and; knowledge in arms manufacturing by the local often known as the local production.

On the other hand, theft from the government armouries and returning soldiers from peacekeeping operations, unending conflicts and wars in West Africa further created these phenomena of sabotage and Western conspiracy with due regard to arms transactions, conflicts, coups and civil wars in the sub-region presents the west with a perfect opportunity to counteract the arms glut created by the cold war politics, particularly in the Eastern Europe. Oil theft and smuggling across borders in exchange for arms constitute equally, effective means through which arms are proliferated and trafficked within the sub-Saharan African region (Aristotle, 2022; Schroeder & Guy, 2006).

Contemporary societies are continually influenced or affected by the globalization process. For instance, the United States as a world power wants the triumph of liberal democracy the world over. This liberal democracy is the core value of the capitalist system which emphasizes the sovereignty of the individual, self-interested and rational behaviour, as well as profit motives, all anchored on commodity production and this emphasis on the individual at the market means freedom to consume without intrusive state regulation.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Differential Association Theory (DAT) and Queer Ladder Theory (QLT). Justifying the use of these two theories is because they are most suitable for organized crimes involving arms smuggling, trafficking and proliferation.

Differential Association Theory (DAT)

Differential Association Theory is a criminological theory that examines criminal behaviour as acquired via learning. Edwin H. Sutherland is the advocate of this hypothesis, which was proposed in 1939. Sutherland, a sociologist and professor, formulated this theory which gained popularity due to its critique of other theories, notably the functionalist theory and the anomic theory of Emile Durkheim

and Robert K. Merton. These theories were criticized for their exclusive focus on an individual's social position as the primary determinant of criminal or deviant behaviour.

This theory became apparent as most scholars see the Differential Association Theory (DAT) as a window through which the social scientist sees the world. To Sutherland, deviance/criminal behaviour is seen as a newly learned process (what exposed to) and not a product of biological deformation in man, but it's a product of social acts (what one learns) (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2014).

The basic assumptions of Differential Association Theory (DAT) are that criminal or deviant behaviour such as armed smuggling/trafficking is learnt through the process of interaction with other persons via communication verbal and non-verbal.

The frequency, duration, priority, and intensity of differential associations depend on the level of contact an individual has with proponents of criminal behaviour. These principles indicate that there is a direct relationship that influences the occurrence of deviant behaviour in terms of how often it happens, how long it lasts, how significant it is, and how intense it becomes. Armed smugglers experience and express similar emotions and group feelings.

The theory argues that criminal/deviant behaviour is learnt through understanding the techniques, motives, drives and rationalization for community such acts. The specific direction of the motive is derived from the definition of the legal codes as favourable and unfavourable.

The last principle asserts that even those armed smugglers and traffickers try to rationalize their behaviour by satisfying basic needs. Non-criminals are subject to obtain the same general needs as criminals and do so in non-deviant form. An objection to Sutherland's Differential Association theory is that it assumes that simple encounters with criminals would directly cause a person to engage in criminal activity. Sutherland did not put up this suggestion.

The purpose of the Differential Association theory was to provide many dimensions to be taken into account when assessing deviant and criminal conduct. One key factor is that when a person is often exposed to societal approval of deviant activities, such as arms smuggling, they are more likely to participate in illegal activity as long as it fulfils their fundamental requirements.

Queer Ladder Theory (QLT)

The concept of queer ladder theory was developed by American Sociologist Daniel Bell. He introduced the notion of the 'queer ladder' to illustrate how organized crimes might serve as a desperate strategy for achieving socio-economic empowerment and social advancement.

According to Mustapha (2019, p. 1220), this theoretical paradigm has been extensively adopted and accepted in current criminal studies. The fundamental postulates of QLT are as follows:

- i. Organized crime is a utilitarian conduct, serving as a way to achieve a desired outcome.
- ii. It functions as a tool for upward social mobility and/or socio-economic progress.
- iii. It serves as a mechanism for amassing riches and establishing influence.

Advocates of the queer ladder hypothesis believe that organized crime flourishes in situations where the government lacks the ability to control, punish, and prevent crime, where public corruption is widespread, and where there are few possibilities for legal employment (Mustapha, 2019, p. 1219). In such conditions, the motivation to engage in illegal activities is elevated, but the discouragement from leading a criminal lifestyle is minimal. Put simply, the advantages of engaging in criminal activities outweigh the expenses and potential dangers associated with them. This creates a pretence that allows for criminal impunity and the establishment of a franchise.

When considering the theory in the context of arms smuggling and trafficking in Nigeria, it can be said that the smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) over national borders is motivated by criminals seeking to accumulate wealth in an environment that tolerates or even encourages illegal activity.

In QLT, the term 'Ladder' represents a negative pattern of social mobility. Therefore, those involved in organized criminal activities, such as the illicit trade of weapons, resort to such actions as

a last resort to amass wealth and gain social and economic influence. The decision to use this theory in this work is based on its analytical efficacy in offering insights into the social underpinnings of organized crime, particularly about weapons smuggling and trafficking in Nigeria.

Methodology

The descriptive research method is adopted in this study with the central method of data collection being library research. Data were collected from various secondary sources such as articles in journals, textbooks, newspapers and internet publications among others. The information gathered from these secondary sources was analyzed using the thematic method as relevant data were clustered under themes that are relevant, related and connected to the objectives of the study.

Nigeria's Defense Policy

The national defense strategy is a comprehensive plan aimed at effectively organizing the necessary people and material resources to counteract unexpected strategic actions by both hostile nations and non-state entities. It encompasses the process of creating military equipment, providing training, and developing troops to achieve defense goals, which include safeguarding territorial integrity, sovereignty, and strategic interests (Mubarak & Aliyu, 2022; Alabi, 2011; Bassey, 2011).

The Nigerian National Defense Policy (NNDP), comprises the philosophy and objectives of the nation's defense blueprint. Thus, the NNDP's philosophical tenants are as follows:

- (i) The Nigerian state has supreme authority and is responsible for ensuring the security, well-being, and welfare of its citizens.
- (ii) The armed forces play a vital role in Nigeria's fulfillment of her obligations, both on the global stage and inside the country.
- (iii) The Nigerian state has a significant role in international politics, especially in Africa, and is thus required to fulfill certain obligations.
- (iv) The defense strategy (National Defense Strategy Document, 2006) prioritizes the security of the state as its major objective.

There's no doubt, that the above serves as the main thrust of Nigeria's defense policy; intending to protect her national interest, as enshrined in the 1999 constitution (as amended); and therefore, shapes her defense blueprint objectives which include:

- (i) Protection of Nigeria's sovereignty, citizens, values, cultures, interests, resources, and territory against external threats;
- (ii) Promotion of security consciousness among Nigerians;
- (iii) Provision of defense as well as strategic advice and intelligence to the government;
- (iv) Participation in disaster management and humanitarian relief operations at home and abroad;
- (v) Ensuring security and stability in the West African sub-region through collective security;
- (vi) Participation in bi-lateral and multi-lateral operations; and
- (vii) Contributing to the international peace and security; among others (NNDP, 2006, p. 22).

Sources and Availability of Arms Smuggling/Trafficking in Nigeria and the West African Sub-Region

In Africa, and specifically in Nigeria, the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons (SALWs) is complex, shapeless, and always changing. This worldwide operation involves the smuggling of illegal weapons from many major arms-producing countries across the globe into Africa.

In their study, Schroeder & Guy (2006, p.69) noted that only a small number of African nations can produce weapons and ammunition, with the South African industry being the most prominent in this regard. The South African small weapons sector consists of less than 10 producers, and their production has a negligible impact on the worldwide small arms trade. In addition, the national government closely monitors and regulates African producers, resulting in a small amount of African-made weaponry and ammunition entering the criminal market.

According to Elemanya (2018, p. 168), the origins of illicit weapons in Nigeria may be traced to both domestic and foreign sources. The internal sources include indigenous manufacturing, remnants of firearms used during the civil war from 1967 to 1970, and theft of weapons from the government's arsenal. However, various external sources contribute to this issue. These sources include smuggling from neighbouring countries, the illicit activities of government-accredited importers, the return of individuals from international peacekeeping operations, insurgents and dissidents from neighbouring countries, and the activities of multinational oil companies operating in the oil-rich Niger Delta region.

Additional research demonstrates that the lack of security provided by the state and security agencies has led to the presence of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). Factors such as poverty, prolonged military rule, and corruption contribute to the widespread availability of SALWs. These weapons are obtained through various means, including confiscation or theft from government forces, looting from state armouries, purchasing from corrupt soldiers, and theft from private owners. Similarly, peacekeepers may relinquish or willingly surrender their tiny firearms, which often find their way into the stockpiles of insurgents. The ambush of Guinean peacekeepers in January 2000 resulted in Sierra Leonean rebels acquiring over 550 weapons, which included assault rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and two tons of ammunition (Elemanya, 2018; Onimisi, 2014; Adetiba, 2012; Aning, 2010; Schroeder & Guy, 2006).

Rebels and other armed factions are an additional origin of unlawful importation and trafficking of small firearms. According to UN investigators as quoted in Schroeder & Guy (2006, p. 69) "Somali militias regularly buy arms from and sell arms and ammunitions to each other on the local black market".

Considering the aforementioned facts, the unapproved manufacturing of weapons by local gunsmiths remains a significant contributor to the illegal circulation of small arms in some regions. Research conducted by Emmanuel Kwesi Aning in Ghana has uncovered that unlicensed gunsmiths in the nation can manufacture up to 200,000 handguns annually. It has been stated that some of these rifles are of a quality that is equivalent to those made by industrial manufacturers (Mubarak & Aliyu, 2022, p. 1220; Schroeder & Guy, 2006, p. 70).

Similarly, studies indicate that in Nigeria, in Anambra state, the indigenous fabrication of weapons known as Awka-made by skilled gunsmiths is a significant contributor to the illegal spread of small arms in the nation. Studies indicate that in the Niger Delta area, arms smugglers/traffickers from other continents illegally transport guns into the nation in return for oil goods, either by air or by sea. This phenomenon became apparent via the increase in maritime piracy and the growth of militant activities in the oil-abundant part of the nation (Aristotle & Okoyen, 2020).

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in African countries, coupled with the prolonged armed conflicts, has led to the establishment of a prevalent "gun culture." This culture encompasses a socio-legal framework of beliefs and principles, where the possession of firearms is highly esteemed and associated with one's identity and social standing. Gun culture may lead to the belief that using armed violence, or the fear of it, is an acceptable and legitimate way for individuals to behave socially. This is especially true in regions where the government is lacking in power or completely absent, such as the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and Somalia (Schroeder & Guy, 2006).

Similarly, in Nigeria, is the case of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) created by Nnamdi Kanu, IPOB leader to patrol the forest of the eastern region against the rising killer herdsmen spree in the region. Also, Amotekun in the west serves the same purpose since the state is seen to be weak, or absent in providing the needed security to its citizens as expected in that region, the arms in the hands of the non-state actors do aid in the proliferation of fire-arms in that region.

Generally, in Nigeria, small arms and light weapons at present have also been used to engage in banditry and kidnapping, a good example is the recent trending video on the social media space of January 2023 as bandits were seen in the bush in the northern part of the country celebrating the child-

naming ceremony of one of their own with assorted weapons shooting sporadically into the air. Similarly, there was the abduction of about 600 school boys in Kankara, in north-western Katsina state, Nigeria, on the 12th of December, 2020. It was reported that gunmen on motorbikes raided the boarding school daytime (Mubarak & Aliyu, 2022).

Nevertheless, with the rising insecurity challenges in the country ranging from banditry, Boko haram insurgency, militancy, secessionist agenda, cattle rustling, ritual murder, kidnapping, looting, armed robbery, and killers Fulani-herdsmen attack, one would wonder if Nigeria is a failed state.

Arms Smuggling and the Non-State Actors: Socio-Economic Implications

The trade-in small arms and light weapons (SALWs) is often an indicator rather than the primary catalyst for social unrest, rioting, tension, and bloodshed. The persistent use of tiny firearms amplifies the magnitude and endurance of violence and instability. The country's widespread distribution of small guns is marked by significant commerce in uncomplicated weapons that can be operated by almost anybody, as opposed to other forms of traditional weaponry (Elemaya, 2018).

The relentless pursuit of lucrative gains has fostered the expansion of the armaments trade. The local producers have generated money from their company, which, in turn, contributes to the escalation of violence in the nation. The accessibility to small guns and light weapons, including those smuggled over porous borders, contributes to their distribution among non-state actors. This trade intensifies violence and instability inside the nation (Adetiba, 2012, p. 186).

An unfortunate aspect of the socio-economic repercussions of armed smuggling/trafficking is the emergence of cultism in Nigerian elementary, secondary, and university educational institutions. The majority consists of those who are offsprings of the political elites, whose parents have instilled a culture of gun ownership. Likewise, individuals who are not offsprings of the political aristocracy are financially supported by influential benefactors who use them for their self-serving purposes, such as engaging in violent activities during elections, among other things (Mark & Iwebi, 2019, p. 908).

Moreover, the influx of small arms and light weapons into the nation has significantly undermined the years of peaceful coexistence and socioeconomic ties among Nigerians. This has led to the emergence of fear, which in turn has sparked civil disturbances and riots, particularly between Christians and Muslims in the northern region. Additionally, it has resulted in electoral violence, the politicization of ethno-religious differences, negative impacts on livelihood and food security, brain drain, the phenomenon of individuals leaving the country (Japa syndrome), broader economic costs, gender-related issues, the forced closure of schools, social disruption, internal displacement, the rise of ethnic militias, high levels of unemployment and poverty, and domestic demands for resource control. The escalation of instability in Nigeria further stimulates the demand for small arms and light weapons (SALWs) as a means of personal protection.

Government Efforts to Combat Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in Nigeria

The Firearms Act of 1959 serves as the primary legislative framework that regulates the manufacturing, use, importation, and exportation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in Nigeria. According to Section 23 of the Firearms Acts of 1959, it is prohibited for any individual to manufacture, assemble, or repair firearms or ammunition, unless it is done at a public armoury or arsenals specifically designated for the armed forces, with the President's consent, given at his discretion.

Due to the extensive distribution and increased prevalence of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), civil society organizations and the police are advocating for a revision of the Nigerian Firearms Acts of 1959. This revision would eliminate the possibility of a fine as a punishment for anyone found guilty of unlawful possession of firearms (Elemanya, 2018, p. 198).

Given this, successive government policies have been made to curb the menace of arms smuggling and trafficking namely: (i) The Babangida Order of 1989, (ii) the Delta State Weapon Collection Programme of 1999, (iii) the Plateau State Weapon Collection Programme of 2004, (iv) Inspector-

General of police order of 2004, (v) Cash for arms programme, River state, 2004, (vi) President Yar'Adua Amnesty programme of 2010, and (vii) Inspector-General of police order of 2019.

Concerning the curbing of SALWs in Nigeria, state failure and weak government institutions have attributed numerous factors namely: issues of corruption, mismanagement of institutions, weak political process, and lack of political will to overhaul the security structure are the major reasons why arms smuggling and trafficking persists and still on the increase in the country.

Conclusion

The research identified the primary elements contributing to weapons smuggling and trafficking, which in turn lead to related security concerns. The research identified the relationship between the variables and the factors that have an impact on them, along with the resulting consequences. The research demonstrates that the government's inadequate and negligent approach towards border security, together with its failure to properly enforce the tasks and responsibilities of its agencies, significantly contributes to its inability to effectively combat weapons smuggling due to internal pressures from powerful entities. The study shows that due to this laxity, the various forms of social vices currently manifesting in the Nigerian state which include: militancy, banditry, Boko haram insurgency, secessionist agenda, cattle rustling, armed robbery, kidnapping, youth restiveness, ethnic religious clashes, and Fulani herdsmen attacks.

The contribution to knowledge in this study first, lies in the ability of the researchers to critically assess Nigeria's defense regulative system and national security in curbing arms smuggling, proliferation and trafficking. Second, the ability to examine the sources and availability of arms smuggling and trafficking in Nigeria. Third, the ability to access the arms smuggling and non-state actors with its associated socio-economic implications. Last, is the ability to look at successive government efforts to combat illicit SALWs in Nigeria.

Given the above expositions and recommendations raised on the ills of arms smuggling and insecurity which depicts Nigeria as a failed state, there's a need for the government to implement a strategy to forestall insecurity in the country since the promotion of the welfare and well-being of the people is the reason for governance. The study recommends as follows:

- i. The need for government to crack down on violation of UN arms embargoes.
- ii. The need to expand foreign aid programmes that target the illicit arms trade in developing nations.
- iii. The need to strengthen national arms control legislation and strict implementation of such laws to curb arms smuggling and trafficking.
- iv. The need to address the factors that fuel the illicit small arms economy.
- v. Government to conduct regular verification exercises and record-keeping of weapons in the Nigerian armoury.
- vi. The need to guard against socio-economic deprivation. The severe wealth inequality among the people must be addressed by the Nigerian government in order to discourage Nigerian youths from patronizing arms smuggling and terrorist acts.
- vii. Politicians irrespective of their states and political affiliations, who have been identified as financing or supporting the sect should be prosecuted according to the provision of the law. This is crucial as political motivation has been pointed out as one of the major factors responsible for the insurgency in the country.

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