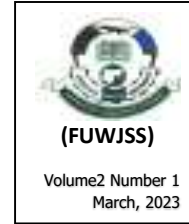


PROLIFERATION OF UNAUTHORIZED WEAPONS AND STATE FAILURE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study seeks to explain the proliferation of unauthorized weapons and state failure in Nigeria. In recent years, there have been the unprecedented flows of unauthorized weapons into Nigeria and this arguably has given rise to grave security concerns in the country. Through a systematic review of literature involving journal articles, text-books, newspapers and white paper reports on the proliferation of unauthorized weapons in Nigeria, this study examines the failure of state institutions in regulating the proliferation of weapons in Nigeria and its impacts on state-building in Nigeria. Analyses of the study are rooted in assumptions of the failed state theory. Major findings revealed that the proliferation of unauthorized weapons in Nigeria critically exacerbate the humanitarian crisis bedeviling Nigeria and the country's effort to state-building. The study concludes that the proliferation of unauthorized weapons accounts for the unabated destruction of lives and property in Nigeria, thereby obfuscating the consolidation of democratic processes and institutions in the country. The study recommends that Nigerian borders should be effectively manned by relevant security agencies, and patriotism should be appropriately rewarded, celebrated and encouraged in the country.

Keywords: Insecurity, unauthorized weapon, banditry, patriotism, terrorism

Introduction

The flows of unauthorized weapons have arguably given rise to development of grave security concern, as seen recently the violence conflicts suffered by Nigerians appears to have been fueled by the phenomenon of weapons proliferation. This development has left Nigerians in a pitiable situation such as never known in recent time. Nigerians survival today, is at the mercies of criminal elements that

move and operate almost freely without being challenged by operatives of government, as though they are untouchable. In the last few years, the major security challenge that has beset societies globally, which has given boost to insurgency and allied criminal activities such as terrorism, organized crimes, internal insurrections and other uncharitable events of security interest, is unchecked flow of weapons in the hands of non-state actors (Kevin, 2007). This being the case with Nigeria, the circulation of sizeable number of weapons, and easily accessible by non state actors; threats to national security in the form of civil wars, human trafficking, banditry, terrorism and the host of other vices that have undermined peaceful coexistence, are now the order of the day. In many cases, minor disagreement that ordinarily could be settled without resorting to free for all, most often degenerate into serious violent conflict with attending consequences of loss of lives, properties and displacement of people. This trend is attributed to ineptitude, weakness and fragile nature of the state and the attendance failure to deliver good governance. Small arms and light weapons are often procured illegally by non state actors and used same to forcefully send people packing out of their home, consequent upon, preventing development, creating humanitarian crisis, as well constituting threat to peaceful coexistence among people thereby creating a setback in human development.

The illicit movement of weapons has constituted a setback to security and development in Nigeria and of course, its consequences go beyond the shore of Nigeria and as well beyond the African continent as the impact is always felt globally. Available estimate indicates that over 70 percent of about 10 million illegal weapons in West Africa are in Nigeria (Morgan, 2020). This incident has exacerbated insecurity in the form of banditry, farmers-herders conflicts, youth restiveness, piracy, terrorism, and recently added to the catalogue of this disturbing trend is secessionists' agitation. The successful operation of criminal elements cannot be divorced of the availability and easy accessibility and smooth acquisition of arms and other necessities that are vital for the operation. In Africa, proliferation of small and light weapons has contributed in no small measure in the menace of violence and conflicts of multi dimensional level with an increase in worsening security implications as consequences. These weapons do not in themselves create the state of insecurity and criminal merchandise they are being deployed for, but their easy accessibility resulting from uninterrupted flow in circulation tend to exacerbate violent conflict and undermine security and inhibit social stability as well as economic development (Soetan, 2017). In a study conducted by the National Small Arms and Light Weapons Survey (2021), it was revealed that, 17 percent of Nigerians have suffered injury

related violence; 20 percent suffered death whereas, 54 percent suffered other forms of harm, as a result of circulation of unauthorized weapons. The circulation of small and light weapons has been a major factor fueling violent conflict, and this usually come with horrific consequences in the form of loss of lives, dislodging people from their ancestral homes, instability and generally undermining national security especially when the security architecture is overwhelmed so much that the security managers appear to be helpless as a result of ineffectiveness of their strategies put in place. This been a global phenomenon is as exemplified by the troubling experience countries such as Liberia, Rwanda, Pakistan, Sudan, Cote D'Ivoire others have had to go through, partly as a result of circulation of large swath of weapons in the hands of non-state actors.

The Weapons being circulated in Nigeria are partly residue of guns used during the civil war sold by civil war veterans to non state actors; some weapons are illegally procured through Cameroon, often as part of a shipment of machinery parts or smuggled inside petrol tankers and ended up in the hands of non state actors as well, other countries such as Gabon and Guinea-Bissau are also known to be countries through which illegal weapons transit to Nigeria, all of these eventually find its way in the hands of civilian populace, while others acquired same for self defense purposes, some use same to cause the state of insecurity (Ojudu, 2007). Weapons are also brought into Nigeria from countries such as South Africa, Ukraine, and Liberia, whereas other sources are locally fabricated weapons; weapons stolen from armories of security operatives; supplies from organized criminal syndicates and terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda, Boko haram Terrorists (Abiodun, 2016). This could explain the terrifying volume of weapons in the hands of non-state actors, as the case with Nigeria today.

The damage Nigeria has suffered and is still suffering as a resulting effect of insecurity is beyond summing, damages ranges from the lost of means of livelihood to loss of homes, consequent upon which, millions of Nigerians are subjected to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps across Nigeria and even neighboring countries such as Niger republic, republic of Cameroon, and Chad republic, with little or no hope of ever returning to their homes; resulting to millions out of school children roaming the streets of major cities across Nigeria, which may further create juvenile delinquents and crime tendencies. The decline in agricultural activities is another fall out of insecurity; this has ensured steady increase in inflation rate. These are all cumulative effects of insecurity that has become of Nigeria today, which if put in monetary terms is running into billions of dollars that would have been utilized or

still invest in profitable ventures that would have added value to lives (Okoro, 2020). It is in this light that this study focuses on the failure of institutions in regulating the proliferation of weapons in Nigeria and its impacts on security as well recommend effective measures of curbing the phenomenon of proliferation of weapons in Nigeria.

Globalization and Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The introduction of arms, guns and other weapons to African society was carried out by the Europeans during the heydays of slave trade even before the emergence of colonialism; these weapons were used to exert maximum force on Africans so that resistance can be neutralized and ambition realized (Abiodun, Ayo-Adeyekun, Onafowora & Nwanneaya, 2018). As a fallout of globalization, illegal shipment of lethal arms from one jurisdiction to another become more easier and fast to achieve at the right price more than ever before; this flow of lethal weapons have in a great deal made complex national security challenges with its impacts having international spread. As typified in recent times, proliferation of weapons has led to a situation where there is an exponential increase in rape, banditry, terrorism, herdsmen's killings, armed robbery and kidnapping, in most parts of Nigeria (Abiodun, Ayo-Adeyekun, Onafowora & Nwanneaya, 2018). This proliferation in most cases constitutes a brick-wall in resolving such impasse and it festers into civil war as typified by Liberian, Sierra-Leon and the most recent one South Sudan.

The proliferation of weapons in whatever guise is a function of conflicts both in terms of cause and effects (Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering, 2013; Edeko, 2013). As a result of the proliferation of weapons, national security is threatened to a great extent; the presence of these arms put the interest of the state at risk of being annihilated. As observed earlier, National Security is not the function of the military force alone, but comprises of other component such as optimum functioning of other apparatuses of the state, the working of the economy, equity and social justice, political inclusiveness, cultural integration (Barash and Webel, 2009). National security is undermine when some members of same state are not carried along in the scheme of things; are relegated to the background for not justifiable cause, when right of citizens are denied and are treated with impunity, these could be trappings that if not addressed could lead to national security breach.

Unfortunately, Nigeria is surrounded by Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger who are all French speaking nations, and their foreign policies would be tele-guided by France and bad enough one of France sources

of income is selling of weapons, as if this is not enough challenge to content with, the borders shared between Nigeria and the aforementioned countries are porous, and as a result illegal weapons are being shipped into Nigeria through these porous borders. Weapons are illegally procured through Cameroon, often as part of a shipment of machinery parts or smuggled inside petrol tankers. Other countries such as Gabon and Guinea-Bissau are also known to be countries through which illegal weapons transit to Nigeria (Ojudu, 2007). Weapons are equally brought into Nigeria from countries such as south Africa, Ukraine, Liberia, and other sources such as locally fabricated, weapons stolen from military or police armories, and even supplies from organized criminals syndicate and terrorist organization such as Al-Qaeda supplying to their affiliate such as boko-haram fighters (Abiodun, 2016). And because these weapons came into the country illegally, their possession is illegal as a result, usage of which cannot be regulated by the appropriate authorities.

Theoretical Framework

Generally a theory connotes a set of ideas that explains, analyze, describes and/or defines any phenomenon, condition or situation in society. In this study, the failed state theory as propounded by Goldstone (2008), was adopted. The Failed State Theory was propounded by Goldstone J.A (2008). The tenet of this theory is anchored on the argument that, failed states are those that have lost both effectiveness and legitimacy in that they neither function well, nor is their continued functioning desired by major of the population or elitist group (Goldstone, 2008). The theory, presupposes that failed state is a state that is incapable to maintain law and order and the government is so weak that it has no control over much of its territory. Accordingly, Nation-states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive political goods to their inhabitants (*ibid*). In the business of governance, security cannot be substituted with any other service, especially human security. And no private arrangement can ever take the place of full spectrum of public security. The state's primary function is the provision of security to its adherents, and achieving this feat means there must be a deliberate effort to prevent cross-border invasions as well as infiltrations, and also avoid loss of territory to any group; eliminate both real and potentials security threats to national assets and social structure; to also prevent crime and criminality against the citizens and provide a platform for resolving disputes between the citizens and the state and also among citizens

without recourse to arms or other forms of physical coercion (Robert, 2003).

The above assumption of failed state theory aptly typified the contemporary state of Nigeria. This is so because, Nigeria as a sovereign nation is currently challenged in the provision of security for its citizens and is grossly sectional; as could be ascertained in the constant cases of ethnic, religious and communal conflicts. Consequently, these inadequacy on the part of the government paved ways for the proliferation of Small Arms and Light weapons and the promotion of social vices such as armed robbery, Kidnapping, banditry, Terrorism not exempting the infiltration of law enforcement agencies with criminal elements.

The failed state theory was however criticized as having a setback in its assumptions. The argument was that, the theory failed to point out effective measures through which the phenomenon of failed state can be avoided. It was argued that, the incident of failed state can come from either discriminatory or inclusive government; it could arise from reforming autocracies to democracies or regional rebellion. Once effectiveness or legitimacy is lost, restoring it is another uphill task all together. The process of bringing about legitimacy vis-à-vis effectiveness is most often tricky because of the blowbacks that come to be during the process. For instance brutality and autocratic regime increases effectiveness however it erodes legitimacy, on the other hand, democratic process brings about legitimacy but only if the process is free, fair and credible, this is mostly difficult to achieve, moreover, in the event of stalemate or when the outcome of the democratic process is rejected by major stakeholders then the effectiveness of the state is threatened. This could as well set the state on the pathway to a fail state (Goldstone, 2008). This has always being the case with mostly developing nations, and this has led to a situation in which even little development recorded is eventually destroyed.

Research Methodology

The study relied on secondary data for its analysis. To these end, literatures review was carried out on arms proliferations, state failure, state building and national security as well as globalization and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The review from the secondary data aided the structuring of the theme, raising of assumptions, theoretical backing, findings summary, conclusion and recommendations.

State Building and National Security in Nigeria

Security just like other concepts in the field of social sciences has no conclusive view point on its meaning. Scholars across the globe have postulated different views on the concept of security. Accordingly, the United Nations Development Programme (1994), views human security as a protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the daily activities, at homes, offices or communities. It is the state of safety and being secured from danger threat, as well other threats in the form of hunger, diseases and repression. For the commission on human security, it is the protection of the important aspect of human lives, in that freedom and sense of fulfillment is reinforced (Commission on Human Security, 2003). This of course covers such aspects as having access to wants, free from exposure to harm, no fear as well having the freedom to execute one's actions as guaranteed by extant legislations without inhibition from any quarter as well as guaranteeing a secured future. While Otto and Ukpere (2012) view security in the light of happiness, security as well safety and protection of man and his resources. In their view point one cannot talk about security when there is no peace, safety is under threat, man and his resources are not secured and protected from threatening events both present as well as potential. For Omoyibo and Akpomera security in Nigeria is inseparable from construction of iron bars as additional protection across one's window as well as additional security to door, this though ward off criminal elements from trespassing but in the event of accident such as fire outbreak, it makes chances of survival very slim (Omoyibo & Akpomera, 2012). In view of the foregoing, security can be summed as feeling sense of safety from threats having looked around and seen that nothing untoward is of threat both now and in the future. This encourages one to initiate plans, develop same and execute them and be fulfilled.

National security as a concept is defined as the freedom from danger or absence of threats to the multidimensional elements that may affect the nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and national interests, as much as promote and boost the well-being of its peoples (Onuoha, 2008), it is the priority of every nation to as a matter of importance to consider first the safety of its territorial integrity, resources, as well its citizenry (Muyiwa, 2016). This should take precedent over other things; this is informed by the fact that development can only thrive in an atmosphere of stability. An independent nation must consider national security as an exclusive preserve so as to ensure its sovereignty as a nation state. This in turn will bring about sustainable development. Protection of state's interest which culminate into good governance, protection of social and economic well being and of course the values should be of paramount interest to any

nation and must be protected at all cost. Lippmann asserts that a nation is secured when it does not have to resort to war or threat of war to preserve its legitimate interest (Lippmann, 1944). It's also involved the protection of the national interest, including national values, political and economic ways of life against internal threat and challenges (Orwa, 1984). This could mean the capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given society believe are necessary for it to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy prosperity and well-being.

From the foregoing, national security is not in isolation but rather a total sum of effort a sovereign state must muster to protect lives and property and its entire assets the citizens from being exposed to threats both real and potentials. As a departure from a militarized form of protection as posited by Lippmann and Orwa, (1944 & 1984) respectively, in addition to the militarized form of territorial defense, components of the state equally have shared responsibility in seeing to the safety of the state from threats; hence national security is not the exclusive reserve of the military but alongside all apparatuses of government as well as the citizenry.

Proliferation of Unauthorized Weapons in Nigeria

The proliferation of weapons is a threat not only to Nigeria's but world peace. The increase in the importation and smuggling of weapons into Nigerian shore has grave consequences and as well create tension suggestive of another civil war in no distance time. The division in Nigeria along ethnic and religious line is glaringly obvious that may lead to disintegration of Nigeria. Edeko (2013) observes that in Africa, the proliferation of small arms is increasing in proportion. Small arms proliferation is a chief result of the remnants of conflicts in Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Sudan, Sierra Lone etc. as well as licensed weapons being stolen or lost, have played a major role in exacerbating crimes and armed violence in Nigeria.

Eke (2004) states that there are about 640 million weapons in circulation globally; 100 million is found in Africa, 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa. Of this, about 59% are in the hands of civilians, 38% are owned by government armed forces, 2.8 % by police and 0.2% by armed groups. This development is scary enough to make one infer that there exists a state of lawlessness in the society. This is not a good omen, as its manifestation can be seen in the myriad of security challenges that that have undermine the sovereignty of Nigerian state. Since the advent of democracy in 1999 there have always been a link between proliferation of arms, conflict and

development that has been witnessed in Niger Delta militant struggle, boko haram and currently Fulani herdsmen attacks. It is therefore glaring that sustainable development is threatened by insecurity. The proliferation of weapons has undermined meaningful development, engenders poverty and made worst human insecurity. Keili (2008) noted that the presence of small arms creates an atmosphere of fear that affects the resumption of normal economy activities in everyday's life, and this can equally prevent people from conducting business, leading to reduction in trade and foreign investment; as well discourage tourists from touring with financial loss as it attendant effect.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the proliferation of weapons and insecurity in Nigeria. The proliferation of weapons has become a hydra-headed monster in our society today. And as a fallout, national security is undermined, lives loss and many other subjected to untold hardship; people were dislodged from their ancestral homes, properties destroyed, means of livelihood obliterated thereby creating humanitarian crisis in the form of internally displaced persons both within Nigeria and in the neighbouring countries such as Cameroun and Niger republic who are playing hosts to Nigerians who were forced out of Nigeria as a result of violent conflict. Notwithstanding the horrific development the proliferation of weapons has created on Nigerian state by way of undermining Nigeria's national security, there are basic strategies for curbing the menace of proliferation of weapons.

These strategies include provision of social justice, fairness and equity to all Nigerians without parochial interest such as tribal, religious affiliation and other mundane factors. This will instill the spirit of patriotism among various groups within Nigerian state; it will engender enthusiasm among citizens who will want to protect the state's interest which is actually a collective interest of the entire sub-nationalities. Nigeria's borders with her neighbours should be effectively manned by relevant agencies empowered by the constitution of Nigeria, by deploying technological necessary to curb the incident of smuggling in weapons from the neighbouring countries. Nigeria's borders are her assets and must be protected against the enemies of Nigeria, in other to achieve this goal; no resources must be spared in this regard. The relevant agencies saddled with such constitutional responsibility must be empowered with the necessary resources for them to be able to meet up with their mandate. Patriotism be rewarded, celebrated and encouraged: those who have shown great feat in the course of

discharging their constitutional responsibilities should be encouraged so that more of it can be reinforced from other members of the public. Those who have distinguished themselves in different works of life be celebrated and encouraged and failure must not be rewarded with appointment over the most deserving members of the society. This can help in dispelling brain drain among Nigerian citizens. Meritocracy, integrity and accountability over other parochial interest be cultured across board: Appointment should be based on one's ability to deliver with unquestionable character and able to account for act carried out within his/her authority. Those who can do the job be given the opportunity to do it as opposed to picking people based on cronyism.

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