



The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Challenges of National Security in Nigeria: A Case Study of Adamawa State

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) is a major national security challenge in Nigeria. The insecurity resulting from insurgency, banditry, militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery, ethno-religious and communal conflicts have become worrisome in Nigeria. All this, are perpetrated with small arms and light weapons, which are easily concealed and used to unleash violence in the society. There is hardly any week that passes by, without a report of one attack or the other somewhere in Nigeria. Adamawa state is not different as security challenges perpetrated with SALWs have destroyed lives and properties, and displaced a lot of people many of whom are farmers thereby, threatening food security. Again, Boko-Haram insurgency has over the years increased the availability of SALWs in the state. Porosity of Nigerian borders in Adamawa state axis has equally made it much easier for criminals to smuggle in SALWs into the state from neighboring Cameroon. The security agencies that are saddled with the responsibility to check this are complicit, as the bad ones facilitate the smuggling or are themselves sources of SALWs. Today, there is mutual distrust and deep seated grievances among the various ethnic groups co-habiting the state due to injustice. The deep seated grievances have made groups to acquire SALWs for self-help and retaliation. Furthermore, suspicion is commonplace and many people

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have lost trust and faith in the security architecture of the state government. Thus, people have resorted to the acquisition of SALWs for self-defense. Above all, politicians procure arms for the youths during elections. These arms are never returned as they are used to make ends meet due to poverty and unemployment ravaging the country. It is within the context of this broad narrative that the proliferation of SALWs is situated in Adamawa state nay Nigeria. Therefore, to check this menace, there is need to rejig the security architecture of Adamawa state and indeed Nigeria. Border security must be strengthened through cross-border security arrangement with Nigeria neighbors. The culture of violence in politics must be de-emphasized and the premium attached to political office should be reduced. Poverty and unemployment should be reduced and Justice should be served to all who deserve it. Finally, mutual trust should be encouraged by the government to foster inter-ethnic and religious co-existence and harmony among the diverse people in the state.

Keywords: Small arms and light weapons; national security; criminality; border control; violent conflicts; arms trafficking.

1. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) has become a major threat to national security, peace and stability in Africa. Illicit SALWs in the hands of non-state actors are commonplace thereby, challenging the security of lives and property. Although arms proliferation is a global issue, available data on SALWs show that out of the 640 million circulating globally, it is estimated that 100 million are found in Africa, about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa, alone. The majority of these SALWs 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 [1].

In Nigeria, there is estimated one to three million small arms in circulation [2]. The illicit proliferations of these arms have encouraged all manner of crimes ranging from kidnapping of innocent civilians for ransom, sexual assault of women and girls, cattle rustling, armed robbery, banditry, ethno-religious conflicts and to full-fledged insurgency [3]. The reason for these is that SALWs are easily concealed and used by criminals to achieve their objectives [4]. It is important to note that, it is not these SALWs that cause conflicts or criminalities, but the ease with which these arms are available, lead to easy escalation or festering [5]. Today, the security agencies are overwhelmed by the spate of criminality that abounds in different communities in Nigeria. In all these crimes, the presence of these arms is not contestable.

However, some experts have attributed the proliferation of SALWs to the porosity of Nigeria's borders which make it very easy to move arms

into the country. Thus, a major characteristic of illicit SALWs is their movement through trafficking and smuggling across national and regional borders [6]. Therefore, the end of the Cold War and the deregulation of former state arms industries in Eastern and Central Europe led to an aggressive search for new markets in the developing world. The illicit trafficking of SALWs is a transnational and global activity that has been able to operate outside national and international regulatory institutions [6].

It is noteworthy that most of the countries that share common border with Nigeria, most especially in the northern part, are grappling with one security challenge or the other, and the availability of SALWs in these countries have made it very easy for criminals in Nigeria to acquire them which are used to cause mayhem in Nigerian communities. There is no gain saying the fact that Chad, Niger and Cameroon are countries in arms with different rebel groups, fighting to advance their interests, as Lake Chad region has become the fertile ground for Boko-Haram [7].

Furthermore, other experts attributed the proliferation of SALWs to unwholesome behavior of some Nigerian security officials who sell or lease arms to individuals and groups for selfish purposes [8]. These arms are given out to youth groups who are being recruited to unleash terror in an event of group conflicts, or the arms are leased out to criminals to perpetrate all manner of criminal activities in the society. This has been the bane of national security in Nigeria.

Also, politicians too are responsible for the proliferation of SALWs. In Nigeria, politics is considered a big industry by the political class.

Therefore, the political class stops at nothing in arming the youths to intimidate opposition in order to secure electoral victory at all costs [9]. What happens to these arms after elections is not their business as their security is guaranteed by the state. The civil society is left to pay dearly from the carnage that is unleashed by the youths who bear arms in the community. This truism is a national security problem in every part of Nigeria.

1.1 Research Setting: Adamawa State

Adamawa states is one of the states in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria with (21) twenty one local government areas which are as follows: Michika, Madagali, Maiha, Mubi-North, Mubi-South, Gombi, Hong, Song, Girei, Yola-North, Yola-South, Fufore, Demsa, Numan, Lamurde, Guyuk, Shelleng, Mayo-Belwa, Jada, Ganye, and Toungo. A lot of these local government areas share boundaries with the Republic of Cameroon at different locations.

Besides, majority of the local government areas in the state are potpourri of ethnic diversities with different cultures and political alliances as well as different religious belief systems and trades which often times pit one group against the other hence, the desire to bear arms for self defence, leading to the proliferation of SALWs in the state.

However, Adamawa state is one of the states in North-Eastern Nigeria that has suffered devastation by the dreaded Boko-Haram terrorists. The state has suffered attacks leading to the destructions of lives and property since the inception of Boko-Haram insurgency in 2009. This makes it much easier for arms to come into the state. The local government areas in the Northern part of the state which include Michika, Madagali, Maiha, Mubi-North, Mubi-South, are the worst hit by Boko-Haram insurgency. The activities of Boko-Haram have exacerbated security crisis in the state as communities and military/Para-military formations are sacked and razed to the ground by this group, thereby carting away with arms and ammunition belonging to security agencies. The counter attacks by the security agencies and the desire to escape the onslaughts of the military by the insurgents had left arms in the hands of civilians. In most cases, these arms are never returned to the security agencies, but are hidden for use in an event of communal conflict.

Furthermore, Adamawa state has also suffered from farmers-herders clashes over the years.

The disappearance of trust between these groups who are always suspicious of each other had made them to develop illegal armories to stockpile arms for self-help in case of any eventuality. This, coupled with the fact that the state has so many porous borders with Cameroon has made it much easier for arms traffickers to cross into Nigeria, as the number of border security officials is not sufficient enough to man the borders. It is noteworthy that even in situation when adequate arrangements are made by deploying more security personnel to the various borders, the challenge is the same as the security operatives compromise on their duties. This engenders the proliferation of SALWs in Adamawa state which threatens peace, stability and progress.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this research paper is to understand the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and how this menace constitutes threat to national security in Nigeria, with focus on Adamawa state. The specific objectives however are to:

- i. Analyze the desire by individuals, groups and communities to acquire SALWs in Adamawa state;
- ii. Understand the sources of SALWs in Adamawa state;
- iii. Understand whether or not the security agencies are doing enough to check the influx and proliferation of SALWs in Adamawa state;
- iv. Examine how the Boko-Haram insurgency has increased the availability of SALWs in Adamawa state;
- v. Examine the extent the availability of SALWs engenders conflicts in Adamawa state.
- vi. Appreciate the role traditional and community leaders can play to discourage the proliferation of SALWs in Adamawa state.

1.3 Research Questions

This research is based on the following research questions:

- i. Why do individuals, groups and communities desire to acquire small arms and light weapons in Adamawa state?
- ii. What are the sources of SALWs in Adamawa state?

- iii. Are the security agencies doing enough to check the proliferation and the influx of SALWs into Adamawa state from the neighboring Cameroon?
- iv. How has the Boko-Haram insurgency in Adamawa state increased the availability of SALWs?
- v. To what extent the availability of SALWs engendered conflicts in Adamawa state?
- vi. What role can the traditional and community leaders play to discourage the proliferation of SALWs in the state?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Sources in Nigeria

SALWs refers to the cheap, simple, portable, durable and widely available arms; held and operated by individuals or two to three persons, and in violent conflicts, armed violence and criminality. Small arms are used by one person, while light weapons are used by several persons working together [10]. Furthermore, small arms are defined as smaller infantry weapons, such as fire arms that individual's soldiers can carry. It is usually limited to revolvers, pistols, sub-machine guns, shot guns, carbines, assault-rifles, rifles-squad purpose machine guns and hand grenades. It also includes heavy machine guns, as well as smaller mortars, recoilless rifles and some rocket launchers depending on the context [11].

Nevertheless, the term light weapon can also refer to any weapon that can be carried by one person or two people. Examples range from military-style guns-pistol, carbines, assault rifles, and light machine guns to grenade launchers, mortars, mobile anti-tank guns and rocket launchers and shoulder-fired anti air craft missile launchers. Munitions used with these weapons (such as bullets, grenades and missile), land mines, and explosives are also encompassed by the term [12].

Accordingly, small arms are those man-portable; largely shoulder controlled weapons of up to 12.7 millimeter (0.5 inches) caliber; such weapons that generally have a flat trajectory and an effective operational range of 0-800 meters although this varies considerably with caliber and weapon type, certain weapon can also provide neutralizing fire up to 1800 meters. Therefore, SALWs are those weapons manufactured to those military specific and designed for use by

persons, whereas high weapons are those used by several persons working as a crew [13].

Furthermore, small arm was conceived as revolvers self-loading guns, rifles and carbines, sub-machine gun, assault rifles and light machine guns. Light weapons on the other hand includes heavy machine guns, hand held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-craft guns, portable anti-tank guns, portable launcher of anti-craft missiles systems, mortars of caliber less than 100 millimeters [14].

However, the proliferation and misuse of SALWs over the years have become a major threat to national security and good governance, as the availability of these arms in the civil society which are acquired via illicit network of cartel has engendered all manner of crimes in the society, thus, the government has struggled to halt the proliferation [2].

Nevertheless, cross border trafficking by organized international arms dealers is a major source of SALWs inflow into Nigeria [2]. Nigeria shares 1500 km of land border with Niger and Chad in the North, 1000 km border with Benin on the West and 1700 km border with Cameroon in the East [15]. It is a truism that border control at the borders with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon are very weak despite the presence of law enforcement agencies [6].

Furthermore, Nigerian maritime borders make it easier for smuggling of SALWs to thrive. Nigeria has an Atlantic coastline of about 700km without adequate or effective surveillance; as the Nigeria's maritime borders are porous. The Atlantic coastline flank is a black box, an area where ships and people from different countries berth. Therefore, Nigeria's maritime neighbors, Gabon and Guinea-Bissau, are also sources of SALWs smuggling [6]. The major maritime smuggling hub is located in the Warri region, where smugglers from Guinea-Bissau, Gabon and the Cameroon reportedly use speedboats to reach off-shore ships and purchase guns. These weapons are then sold to communities in Warri, where they are further trafficked to other parts of the country [16].

Local manufacturing too is another source of SALWs. For instance, the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons revealed that 60% of the illegal arms in the South-East zone are made locally. Some communities are known for their natural fabrication of arms as political leaders import 40% of arms [17].

2.2 Impact of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria

The impact of the proliferation of SALWs is felt across the world. It is pertinent to note that, of the 500,000 people killed every year across the world, an estimated 300,000 of them are as a result of small arms. In Africa, an estimated 50 percent of illicit weapons that proliferate are used in internal conflicts, armed robbery and drug trafficking. Availability of small arms outside the formal security structures had contributed greatly in creating continuous cycle of violence and instability in which particularly women and children are brutalized [18].

However, the impact of the proliferation is being felt across the length and breadth of Nigeria given the myriad of security challenges. In the Northern part of Nigeria, the ungovernable spaces have been taken over by insurgents and bandits who daily inflict pain on the hapless civilians [19]. In the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, Boko-Haram terrorists group who has been fighting since 2009 to establish an Islamic state, had killed more than 37,000 people, and displaced more than 2.5 million in the Lake Chad region, and rendered nearly 244,000 refugees since May 2011, in their campaign of terror [20]. Hence, they are described as the most deadly terrorists group [21]. Their operations have caused acute food shortages, thereby creating food insecurity in Nigeria as farmers are either being killed, displaced, or their livelihoods destroyed. Infrastructural facilities on the other hand, as well as businesses have not been spared of the devastating impact of the Boko-Haram insurgency [22].

In the North-Western part of Nigeria, armed bandits have taken over the vast forests killing people in different communities of Kebbi, Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna and Niger state without any cause. In Sokoto state for instance, bandits took over communities and even appointed Judges [23]. Millions of people in these states have been exposed to insecurity from activities of bandits. Thus; the people have become hopeless as they are daily being killed in their numbers [24,25]. Providing a historical background to banditry in the area, it was posited that:

Banditry began in 2011 and intensified between 2017 to 2018 to include cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, sexual violence and killings. The discovery of gold mines and the activities of illegal miners competing for control of

gold reserves have served to further intensify the existence and activities of armed groups in the North-West, most especially in Zamfara state. By March 2020, more than 21,000 people have been internally displaced. More than 35,000 refugees have crossed communal borders to Maradi in Niger Republic by the beginning of March 2020. These refugees are hosted in Madaou in Tahaoua region, Dan Dadji, Makaou, Garin Kaka and Guidan Roudmji [25].

Today, some high ways in the North-West are abandoned by motorists for fear of kidnappers. Most people travelling from Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory to Kaduna prefer to use the train as the road has become a den of merciless kidnappers who use SALWs in their operations. Also, the bandits in this part of the country are so daring that they send advanced notice to communities about their impending attacks. More often than not, these criminals make good their promise, as the security personnel can do little or nothing to secure the people, as they are not spared either. Therefore, the people are grappling with how to secure themselves from incessant attacks by these criminals who carry these heinous acts with impunity. The people are left to rise up to the occasion to defend themselves as the Nigerian state has failed to protect lives and properties [23].

Nevertheless, in the North-Central part of Nigeria, the proliferation of SALWs has led to incessant clashes between herders and farmers. The states that are worst hit in this region are Benue, Plateau, part of Taraba, Nasarawa and Southern Kaduna. One has lost count of these clashes as they have become recurring decimal, given the fact that there is hardly any month without an ugly report of wanton destructions of lives, properties and livelihoods.

It is instructive to note that the North-Central region is the food basket of the nation. Today, this is under a very serious threat as farmers have abandoned their communities to safe havens. Ethnic conflicts also abound in the North-Central region where ethnic militia are formed and armed by different ethnic groups to protect their socio-economic and political interests [26]. Thus, at the slightest provocation, people who have co-existed for a very long time would rise against one another leaving behind deaths and destructions. This is the case between Tiv and Jukun ethnic groups in Taraba state, as well as Fulani and Berom alongside Anaguta ethnic groups in Plateau state. Also, Nasarawa state too has its fair share as the state

has witnessed bloody ethnic conflicts between Ibira-koto and Bassa in recent times. All these conflicts are recurring due to the availability of illegal SALWs in the hands of civilian population.

The South-East and the South-West regions are somewhat homogenous with less record of ethnic conflicts. However, these regions are notorious for kidnapping, armed robbery and the unwholesome activities of area boys, Odua People's Congress (OPC) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East and South-West respectively. In the South-South, otherwise known as Niger Delta region of Nigeria where oil is produced, the region has been an epicenter of violence prior to the Amnesty Programme of 2009 [27]. The region is known for violence emanating from the activities of oil insurgents who claimed that oil wealth from the region is transferred to other parts of the country for socio-economic development while the region lies in ruins [28]. The activities of the militants over the years have almost brought the mono-cultural economy of Nigeria to its knees as the insurgents destroy oil installations and kidnap oil expatriates [29]. These have been a major challenge to national security in Nigeria. For instance, by the end of the Amnesty period in October 2009, 20,192 ex-militants (and non-militants) had surrendered their weapons-consisting of 2,760 arms of different classes and calibre, 287,445 ammunitions, 3,155 magazines, 1090 dynamite caps, 763 explosives and sticks of dynamite, and 18 gun boats-to the Presidential Amnesty Committee [30]. Apart from destruction of oil installations and kidnapping, these SALWs were used in armed robbery, cultism and general crimes in the Niger Delta [29, 31].

3. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were generated through interviews with stakeholders who have deep understanding of the issues at stake in the study area. The sampling technique used in this study for selection of interviewees was purposive. This was intentional because only knowledgeable members of the population who understand the issues at stake were selected for interview. A sample of 20 interviewees was selected. As it is rightly observed and generally agreed, the main purpose of sampling is to reduce the time and money that would be spent if the total population were studied, and still generate data that are accurate representations of the entire population [32].

Therefore, interviews were conducted with officials of security agencies such as officers of the Nigeria Immigration Service, the Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Customs Service and the Army who provided firsthand information. Other categories of persons interviewed included the youths, professional drivers, political leaders and a vigilante member. It is important to note that the sample was to a very large extent, determined by the readiness and willingness to participate in the survey as many turned down the researcher's request owing to the sensitive nature of the study. The research questions generated were answered by the above interviewees. However, secondary data were gotten through books, journals and internet materials relevant to the study.

3.1 Limitation of the Study

The study faced a lot of challenges. Majority of those interviewed were reluctant in answering questions posed by the researcher for fear of being implicated now or in the future despite assurances of the researcher that their responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Again, the absence of central data on the number of illicit SALWs in Adamawa state constitutes a big limitation. Concerted efforts made to access such data failed as the Police officers were not comfortable in availing such data. These constitute major gap in this study.

Furthermore, the security agencies interviewed in the state (Adamawa state) were not cooperative as a lot of them doubted the motive of this research given the insecurity ravaging the state. Again, the sensitive nature of the research made it extremely difficult for some civilian stakeholders to provide information despite assurances by research assistant. Also, Boko-Haram insurgency that is raging made it impossible to travel to some local government areas for interview. These limitations notwithstanding, the research has contributed to knowledge in the proliferation of SALWs in Adamawa state.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Presentation

Data on this study were analyzed and discussed based on the research questions and the responses of the interviewees in the research setting. However, it was on the premise of the discussions that key findings of the study were generated. To this end, interviewees were

Table 1. Representation of interviewees: Number and professions

Profession	Number interviewed
Army	2
Police	4
Immigration	3
Customs	2
Drivers/Civilians	9
Total	20

Source: Fieldwork 2020

categorized into (2) two groups **A** and **B**. Group **A** represents the opinions and views of all military and Para-military establishments, while group **B** represents the opinions and views of all civilians interviewed as mentioned in the research methodology. **RQ** is simply an acronym for research questions.

4.2 Analysis and Discussion

4.2.1 RQ 1: Why do you think individuals, groups and communities desire to acquire small arms and light weapons in Adamawa state?

Responding to this question, **B** posited that the major reasons is for self-defence or better still, balance of terror in an uncertain terrain where people use violence to advance their interests. They maintained that government has failed in its responsibilities of protecting lives and properties most especially in the rural areas where one can hardly see the presence of security agencies in the whole of a district. The local chiefs who themselves are novice when it comes to security of lives and properties preside over the security arrangements of their localities. Their interventions over the years have not really helped matters as attackers can easily invade, destroy and loot anything in sight. In fact, the people are at the mercy of God. Therefore, the people have resorted to self-defence and self-help leading to the proliferation of SALWs.

Furthermore, **B** also posited that propaganda by community leaders is also a strong reason individuals, groups and communities bear arms. It's truism that Adamawa state is a potpourri of ethnic groups in Nigeria. The desire for each group to survive pushes communities to develop armories to stockpile arms against any eventuality. The Fulani ethnic group who rear cattle for instance, would stop at nothing, even if it means destroying farmlands to graze and access sources of fresh water for their cows. On

the other hand, the sedentary farmers desire to produce crops which are the basis of their survival and existence even if it means blocking cattle routes in different areas. These unwholesome practices continually pit one group against the other in Adamawa state, and it's a recipe for distrust and violence over the years. To this end, leaderships of different groups encourage their people to do the needful which simply mean, acquire arms for the protection of one's life, community and the means of livelihoods.

Nevertheless, **A** in their submission did not mince words. They hold the view that majority of those who acquire arms are into one form of criminality or the other. They opined that the prevalence of kidnapping, armed robbery and even insurgency are attributed to the availability of SALWs in the state. Therefore, a lot of people acquire arms not necessarily for self-defence, but to use such arms to rob and kidnap which have festered over time because it is seen as a lucrative business given the ransom their victims pay before they are released. **A** further opined that there are powerful and highly placed criminals who are in the business of leasing arms to trusted 'boys' to operate with, and make 'returns' after a successful operation. It is worthy of note that, in an event that the robbers or kidnappers are apprehended by security agencies, the kingpin (powerful criminal) deny out rightly of having anything to do with the armed robber(s) or the kidnapper(s). Cases of such nature abound in different Police Divisions across the length and breadth of the state.

Above all, **A** and **B** opined that political reasons also serve as an impetus for the acquisition and the proliferation of SALWs most especially, guns. Like many other states in Nigeria, some politicians in Adamawa state desire to acquire political power at all cost including violence because of the paraphernalia of office and the benefits political power accrues to an individual.

Therefore, arms are procured for use during electioneering where youths are hired to intimidate voters, harass oppositions, snatch ballot boxes and when occasion demands, force electoral officials to announce results under duress, contrary to the position of the law. In a nutshell, interviewees submitted that self-defence, criminality and political reasons encourage people to bear SALWs in Adamawa state.

4.2.2 RQ 2: What are the sources of small arms and light weapons in Adamawa state?

Responding, **A** and **B** maintained that smuggling via legal, illegal or unauthorized routes is one of the major sources of SALWs into Adamawa state. Adamawa state has countless communities that share common border with the Republic of Cameroon and the whole security agencies put together in the state cannot man these routes. Therefore, individuals and groups take advantage of the vast, porous and more often than not, unmanned borders in the state to smuggle in arms to perpetrate all manner of crimes.

Further to this, **B** revealed that some of these arms from Cameroon come through river Benue. They are concealed and smuggled into different villages on the bank of the river. Again, some of these arms pass through Yola, the state capital and the only thing the various security agencies do at the jetty is to collect bribe in the name of 'clearance' without checking the contents of the flying boat or ferry, some of which are carrying SALWS including AK 47. At the black market, AK 47 is sold between 400-500 thousand naira while ammunition is sold between 500-1500 depending on demand. **B** went on to explain that cartridges are also brought into Adamawa from Onitsha, Anambra state with the use of luxurious buses which more often than not, are not thoroughly checked by the security agencies at various checkpoints. It is noteworthy that ethnic militia groups from Taraba state easily enter Adamawa to buy arms and ammunition which makes the Tiv/Jukun crisis endless.

Besides, **B** again stressed that blacksmiths in the state are another source of SALWs as Ganye and Toungo local government areas are well-known for local production of double-barrel guns. The blacksmiths in these areas are specialists in the art of gun production, little wonder Toungo local government area is a den of criminals.

Additionally, **B** authoritatively asserted that the security agencies themselves are one major source of SALWs in the state. For instance, at one point, a police officer in Girei local government area was apprehended, prosecuted, dismissed and imprisoned for wielding a good number of AK 47 rifles, which he leases out to criminals for either armed robbery or kidnapping, explaining the prevalence of crimes in the area in recent times.

More so, **A** alluded to the fact that insurgents attack the armories of security agencies to cart away arms and ammunition. Again, on so many occasions, criminals ambushed, killed and took possession of arms belonging to security personnel and melted into Cameroonian communities. Such was the case between an Army officer who was attacked in Maiha area in 2019, who lost his AK 47 rifle to the criminals, and some (2) two Immigration officers who were attacked and killed in Buspan, a village in Toungo local government area in 2018, though their arms were seen. Above all, security personnel who were dismissed illegally or due to one offence or the other, who feel aggrieved for being sacked, also aid and abate the acquisition and the proliferation of SALWs in Adamawa state.

4.2.3 RQ 3: Are the security agencies doing enough to check the proliferation and the influx of SALWs into the state from the neighboring Cameroon?

Responding to this, **A** stressed that the various security agencies are putting in their best to check the menace of the proliferation of SALWs in the state despite the various challenges ranging from limited manpower and logistic support. **A** insisted that were it not for the intervention of the various security establishments, the situation would have been worst. **B** however, opined that in spite of the challenges confronting the security agencies; they can still do better if they eschew extortion which is informed by greed, to carry out their duties truthfully and faithfully. Therefore, the desire to grab everything at the various borders and checkpoints won't allow the security agencies to do their job as expected. Also, the superior officers in the office expect 'returns' from field officers. In this situation, how do you expect officers to do their job of proper stopping and searching? He asked rhetorically.

4.2.4 RQ 4: How has the Boko-Haram insurgency in Adamawa state increased the availability of SALWs?

Responding to this question, both **A** and **B** answered in the affirmative and subscribed to the fact that Boko-Haram insurgency that started in Borno state, North-Eastern Nigeria has increased the availability of SALWs in Adamawa state most especially in Michika, Madagali and Mubi axis, where both the insurgents and the security agents were killed and in some cases, fire arms are picked by communities members who never returned them to the police. Similarly, **B** revealed that onslaughts by the military and insurgents have made both to escape which in some cases throw away their arms to disguise as civilians. These arms are picked and kept for personal or communal use in these areas.

Also, **B** maintained that some unpatriotic wealthy individuals who for whatever reason sympathize with Boko-Haram members smuggle in arms from Central African Republic, Chad and Cameroon to Adamawa state to support the cause of the insurgents. Buttressing this position, **A** revealed that at different times in Madagali, Michika and Mubi, individuals were alleged to have supplied arms to conscripted indigenous youths who unleashed terror and looted a lot of shops and stores. This has been a recurring decimal in these LGAs. It should be noted that despite the incessant attacks by the insurgents, some communities in the state refused to succumb to the threats of the insurgents. They resisted the onslaughts as the youths are armed to the tooth. These arms were not given to these communities by the government, but were sourced by the people themselves for the protection of their lives and livelihoods. Therefore, one cannot ascertain the whereabouts of these arms even as relative peace has returned. Of course, it would be used for other purposes which threaten the security of lives and properties of the people in the state.

4.2.5 RQ 5: To what extent the availability of SALWs engendered conflicts in Adamawa state?

Responding to this question, **B** asked rhetorically: who would go and fight if the person is armless? It is the availability of these arms in the hands of the people that serves as a driving force to herders/farmers clashes, ethno-religious conflicts in the state most especially in Numan, Demsa and Lamurde local government areas of

the state. Thus, these arms have encouraged youths who fortified themselves traditionally to test the potency of their gods hence, a slight provocation whether in the market or farmlands degenerates into full-fledged religious or ethnic conflicts in the state.

Beside this, these arms have pushed one group to want to grab lands to advance their trade from a weaker group. Thus, over the years, in a quest to expand as a result of population explosion and limited lands for cattle grazing, one group rises against the other with the intention of totally annihilating their neighbors, uprooting them completely from their ancestral homelands in order to occupy and take possession of land. Therefore, the scarcity of land and the unquenchable desire of groups to pass land from one generation to another encourage different groups to acquire arms for communal defence. Hence, any trespass on small portion of individual or communal land by immediate neighbor is resisted even by means of violence. This tendency is very common in the state. In conclusion, **A** submitted that some ethnic militia groups who wield arms disguise as vigilante to foment trouble by killing innocent people whom they suspect as either thieves or cattle rustlers. These precipitated serious conflicts most especially, if the innocence of the victim is established.

4.2.6 RQ 6: What role(s) can the traditional and community leaders play to discourage the proliferation of SALWs in the state?

Responding to this question, both **A** and **B** posited that traditional and community leaders must rise to the occasion by providing intelligence on the activities of arms smugglers in their domain to the security agencies to act on, as a lot of the criminals who smuggle arms do not fly, but use illegal routes that connect Adamawa state with Cameroonian communities. Traditional and community leaders must be just and fair to all irrespective of religious or ethnic identities. Those whose rights have been trampled upon should be compensated to avoid people to develop urge to acquire arms for revenge. The leaders must not be tired of preaching the value of peace, love and tolerance in their communities. Once there is confidence building, the incentive or appetite to bear arms will fizzle out. Leaders should identify those who bear arms illegally in their respective communities and hand them over to the security

agencies. Above all, leaders whether religious, ethnic or political must lead by example to engender peaceful co-existence and discourage anything that is capable of pushing people to acquire SALWs in the state.

4.3 Discussion of Key Findings

The findings of the study, no doubt is similar to some previous study on the proliferation of SALWs undertaken. However, ground breaking points of departure are as follows:

1. The proliferation of SALWs in Adamawa state is precipitated by the desire of the diverse ethnic groups in the state to defend themselves and their means of livelihoods which is fundamental to their existence as a people. This informed the ethnic conflicts in the state among neighbors who engage in different trade for survival.
2. Adamawa state is a major route where arms and ammunition are smuggled into Taraba state where the ethnic conflict between Tiv and Jukun continues unabated. Even though Taraba state has borders with Cameroon, it is much easier to transport these arms through Adamawa state because of proximity, similar cross-border language and the various illegal routes in Adamawa State.
3. Boko-Haram insurgency in Adamawa state most especially in Madagali, Michika and Mubi axis has made some communities to look inwards to produce arms to resist the onslaughts of the insurgents. These arms today are in the hands of civilian population in the state.
4. The Gumti-Gashaka National Park that stretches from Toungo local government area to Cameroon is a major hide out and a route for arms smuggling into Adamawa state. The forest has almost been taken over by criminals who make it extremely difficult for security agencies to patrol. The criminals easily melt to Cameroon to avoid arrest by security agencies.
5. River Benue is a smuggling route for arms into Adamawa state. The various security agencies do little or nothing to check the contents loaded into ferry. All they are interested is 'clearance'. To this end, the Police, Immigration and Customs officials who are to ensure that people and goods are thoroughly checked are not free from culpability.

6. The spate of kidnapping in the state and the fact that the security agencies encourage victims relations and friends to negotiate with kidnapers without conscious attempt to rescue the victims has encouraged the acquisition of small arms for kidnapping which is seen as a lucrative business.
7. Drivers and bike riders who move passenger to and fro Cameroon, wittingly or unwittingly are used to bring in arms through the bush paths that connect Adamawa communities to Cameroon. They beat security personnel whether at checkpoints, most of whom only demand for bribe from either the drivers or the bike riders without any form of checks.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proliferation of SALWs remains a major global security threat. In Africa and indeed Nigeria, the availability of these arms serves as an impetus to criminality. It has engendered kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry, insurgency and ethno-religious conflicts of different intensities. Many people have lost their lives from this, and properties destroyed, rendering many survivors as widows, widowers or orphans with all its attendant consequences.

In Adamawa state, the proliferation of SALWs has made the state to be notorious for different kinds of security challenges. Farmers/herders clashes are among the security threat that must be overcome in the pursuit of peace and harmony in the state. Kidnapping for ransom is commonplace as the criminal gangs operating around Girei local government area and Ngurore community of Yola-South local government area, rob and kidnap with ease more often than not. Ngurore particularly is reputable for armed robbery because it serves as a hideout for criminals.

In Numan, Demsa and Lamurde LGAs of the state, the ethnic conflicts continue to recur owing to the availability of SALWs in these areas. People who have co-existed side by side over the years have become enemies overnight, slaughtering and killing one another in the name of ethnicity, leaving behind destruction and devastation in its wake. Furthermore, Toungo LGA harbours a lot of criminal elements who bear different kinds of arms. The LGA shares boundary with Kontcha, a small Northern

Cameroonian community. The Gumti-Gashaga National Park located in Toungo is a major area where these criminals hide. They come out anytime from this forest to terrorize innocent people either going to Cameroon or coming into Nigeria. A lot of herdsmen who migrated from elsewhere in the North-East also use the Gumti-Gashaga Park. Therefore, arms easily enter into the tick forest, and the forest harbours these criminals because it occupies an expanse of land and stretches to Cameroon, and the presence of Park Rangers is minimal due to incessant killings of rangers and burning of offices and buildings belonging to security agencies.

However, Mubi, Michika and Madagali LGAs at different times fell to the onslaught of Boko-Haram insurgency. There is no gain saying the fact that Boko-Haram insurgency that started in 2009 in Borno state has taken its toll in those LGAs. A lot of arms were abandoned by security agencies that ran to neighboring Cameroon for safety. A lot of community members who found them refused to return them to the Police but decided to keep them for self-defence and self-help. Again, it was gathered that many people who have sworn not to leave their ancestral home due to Boko-Haram onslaughts had procured arms to defend their communities, when the occasion demands. Blacksmiths too, contributed in no small measures to the proliferation of illegal arms in those areas where those who could not afford sophisticated weapons could make do with the ones produced by local blacksmiths. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations will go a long way in checking the proliferation of SALWs in Adamawa state and by extension Nigeria.

First, border security must be enhanced. It's truism that Nigeria has a vast border, with limited manpower to man the borders. In spite of this, the security agencies can halt the influx of SALWs into Nigeria and Adamawa state particularly, by patrolling both the legal and illegal entry and exit points. This is possible when a lot of manpower is deployed to border communities for this assignment. Therefore, a joint border patrol team that is committed and patriotic to serve and ensure the security of lives and property of the people in the state can contribute in halting this menace in Adamawa state.

Secondly, security personnel caught in leasing arms should be prosecuted, sacked and

imprisoned to serve as deterrence to others. It is a fact that some bad eggs in the security agencies sabotage government's efforts in checking this ugly development. The bad eggs must be dealt with in accordance with the laws of the land.

Furthermore, government of Adamawa state should consider granting Amnesty to those who bear illegal arms in the state. The advantages of the Amnesty Programme should be clearly stated and an aggressive campaign should be carried out to encourage people to surrender their arms. After the amnesty period, the government should embark on house to house search to recover those whom the bearers refused to surrender to the government. However, those with licensed arms should be closely monitored. Unscheduled visit by security agencies should be carried out to check the temptation of wanting to lease their arms to criminals.

Additionally, local blacksmiths who are in the business of making guns should be arrested and prosecuted. There is no shortage of them in Adamawa state. The state government should have a data base of all of them and their locations through their leaders to ensure proper monitoring and supervision. It is a fact that a lot of arms used in local conflicts are produced by the blacksmiths in the state.

Again, Adamawa state government should engage the services of vigilante groups really and truly to patrol the vast forests located in different LGAs which share borders with Cameroon such as Toungo LGA. The vigilante are more familiar with the terrain and can engage armed traffickers, most of whom use illegal routes with the help of drivers to traffick arms into the state. The vigilante groups should be motivated and be encouraged by the LGAs in the state. Other LGAs should emulate what Mr "Tambaya" and his group are doing in Toungo LGA of Adamawa state to arrest criminals who smuggle in arms to terrorize the people.

Nevertheless, the federal government should empower Nigeria National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons to carry out their statutory responsibilities. The agency which is moribund should be revived by the federal government and the necessary logistics to perform should be made available for the officers to mount hinterland checkpoints to apprehend smugglers who beat security agencies at the

border. This will go a long way in halting the proliferation of SALWs in the state.

The security agencies in Adamawa state should collaborate with officials of National Union of Road Transport Workers, NURTW to ensure that drivers insist on seeing the wares they are carrying to any part of the state. Some drivers carry arms without knowing as more often than not, the smugglers conceal them in a manner that no one would suspect. Officials of Special Anti-robbery and kidnapping Squad must step up their game by ensuring thorough search on vehicles plying different routes in the state, as some highly placed individuals are in the business of procuring arms and ammunition for the youths in the state.

Justice is fundamental in the pursuit of peace in all societies. Where a group of people feel a sense of injustice, it snowballs into hatred, acquisition of small arms and conflicts. Some interviewees maintained that over the years, their ancestral lands had been taken over by external forces and the government has done nothing to give them back their lands. Therefore, to avoid the recurrence of such in the future gives rise to the acquisition of SALWs for self and communal defence as their lands are the basis of their existence. Hence, land grabbers who foment crisis to take over people's lands must be resisted by the government to discourage people from acquiring arms.

Poverty and unemployment are twin evil that must be fought to a standstill in Adamawa state. These realities have made youths to be susceptible to manipulation by political elite who procure arms for use during electioneering. These arms in most cases are never returned, but are used for kidnapping, armed robbery and banditry for survival in post elections periods. Therefore, the state government must engage these youths who are the most productive segment of the population in agriculture and other meaningful ventures to stem the tide of criminality which is made possible by the availability of SALWs.

The government should encourage inter-ethnic and religious harmony among the people with a view to promoting peaceful co-existence. Adamawa state is a melting pot of ethnic/religious diversity in Nigeria, blessed with fertile arable lands for cultivation, alongside many cattle. All these are sources of wealth if properly harnessed. However, these blessings

have become a recipe for conflicts due to various interests and belief systems. Therefore, leadership must demonstrate commitment and desire for peace so that whenever there is misunderstanding whether in the market or about farmland or cattle rustling etc, wisdom by leaders should prevail in settling problems amicably. It is by so doing that the proliferation of SALWs in Adamawa state will be halted.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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