

## PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS: THE BANE OF HUMAN SECURITY IN NIGERIA

Sowale Adetayo Olamide M.Sc.  
Department of International Relations  
Obafemi Awolowo University  
[sowaleadetayo@gmail.com](mailto:sowaleadetayo@gmail.com)  
+2348026782317

### ABSTRACT

That borders melt and security becomes issue of concern to states around the globe is a result of globalisation. Globalisation after the end of the cold war dashed the hope for international peace and security as it gives wide range of opportunities for trans-border movement, transnational crimes and proliferation of small arms and light weapons across national boundaries and within national territories. Nigeria is a victim of the proliferation of SALWs within and from without its territories. SALWs have become readily available, easy to use tool for the escalation and intensification of ethno- religious, inter, and intra communal violence as well as the tool for effective armed robbery in economically developed areas within Nigeria thereby endangering human security. The SALWs in themselves lack the capacity to engender violent conflict, but the availability of the arms in the communities and in the hands of hooligans is a violation of individual and community freedom from fear as people become afraid of possible violent interruption in their day-to-day activities. The violation of freedom from want becomes possible as the use of SALWs in conflict could result in the devastation and destruction of lives and properties thereby leading humanitarian crises. Utilising secondary data source, the study established the corrosive effect of the trans-border movement and proliferation of small arm and light weapons on human security as Nigeria's fourth republic is replete with various violent attacks on innocent citizens within Nigeria communities.

**Keywords:** Trans-border, small arms, light weapons, human security, violence, globalisation and transnational

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has undergone diverse violent conflicts. These are ethnic conflict, religious clashes, political tensions etc. The nexus between small arms and security has been established among scholars. Literature abounds on the national security challenge of the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria. Adding to the security threat knowledge of the proliferation of small arms and light weapon is the bid to consider its effect on human security in Nigeria. This stems from the fact that Nigeria has become a gargantuan market accommodating trans-border arms merchants as well as metamorphosed into a destination for major arms and light weapons. The ineffectiveness of the government policies to curtail the illicit distribution of arms and light weapons in Nigeria presents a threat to the livelihood of citizens in the country. SALW is not just a threat to the citizens' fundamental right in the country, it also undermines human development. The escalation of violent conflict is a show of the availability of small arms and weapons in the hand of the perpetrators of crimes. The threat to human security in Nigeria owes to the discovery that Nigeria shares the three stages of the organised trafficking of small arms and light weapons in West Africa region: origin, transit and destination. Various reasons

account for the flow of weapons in Nigeria: Civil war, local productions, smuggling from government armoury, insurgents from Nigeria neighbours. The use of these weapons in any area undermines human security. It is enlightening to note that in moment of intense argument among youth in Nigeria, these small arms are readily available as instrument of aggression. In a twinkled moment, scores of dead persons would have started counting until security officers intervene. The worrisome witness of the issue of SALWs in Nigeria is the sophistication of these weapons to execute crimes as well as the destruction of life and property. Cultists in various tertiary institutions in Nigeria are armed members. It has been noted that the proliferation of arms among them originates as the weapons given to them by desperate political elite to perpetuate their organised nefarious rigging of electoral process. The failure to retrieve arms from the political thugs fostered the proliferations of weapons. In Nigeria's tertiary institution, many students are killed by cult clashes or stray bullet during sporadic shooting within the school remises. The proliferation of small arms affords the rogues on the high way to organise armed robbery and in key financial places in Nigeria. As a force that drive insecurity, the paper seeks to investigate the corrosive influence of the SALWs on human security in Nigeria.

### **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention defines 'Small arms' as arms used by one person, and which include firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as exploding bombs, incendiary bombs or gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missiles, missile systems or landmines; revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbines; machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns. The convention considers 'Light weapons' as portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team, and which include heavy machine guns, portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted portable anti-aircraft cannons; portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns; portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; portable anti-aircraft missile launchers; and mortars with a calibre of less than 100 millimetres.

In the examination of the proliferations of SALWS in Nigeria, it is pertinent to state that the challenge to security of lives and property fall under the freedom from fear and want dimension of the human security concept. This is because arms and light weapons is the basic requirement to secure and/or disrupt the daily activities of citizens. Security threats from inceptions of states in the world traditionally came from other states, whereas today security is challenged by domestic factors within states. Traditional studies on security usually focus on the state and/or nation. It is majorly concerned with defending the territorial integrity of nation's states and the resource controlled at their disposal without cognisance for the people they represent. The states focus mainly on protecting the lives and properties of the political elites while the poor are neglected to suffer security problems. It is displayed in their nonchalant attitude to the violence, conflict, disaster and disease which common average person struggle to overcome in his daily activities.

The concept of Human security was introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report. The report captured seven dimensions of the human security concept: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. Human security is the protection and empowerment of global citizens from diverse form of violence or threat of violence. The Commission on Human Security (CHS), advocated for the need for a paradigm shift in the notion of security. To the Commission this is associated with two sets of dynamics: First, human security is needed in response to the complexity and the interrelatedness of both old and new security threats – from chronic and persistent poverty to ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, international terrorism, and sudden economic and financial downturns. Such threats tend to acquire transnational dimensions and move beyond traditional notions of security that focus on external military aggressions alone. Second, human security is required as a comprehensive approach that utilizes the wide range of new opportunities to tackle such threats in an integrated manner. Human security threats cannot be tackled through conventional mechanisms alone. Instead, they require a new consensus that acknowledges the linkages and the interdependencies between development, human rights and national security.

The CHS therefore defines human security as protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.” (CHS: 2003: 4). Human security is paradigm shift from the conventional notion of security, which centres on the protection of states from external aggression; protection of political elite at the expense of the masses they represent. The attempt to focus on individuals and communities emanates from the recognition of the globalisation of needs, problems, and issues that require a shift from national security paradigm. The prevalence of international cooperation fizzles out external aggression as the threat to national security. The current issues posing a challenge to national security emerge from the internal dynamics of states. Issues such as Poverty, diseases, environmental degradation; the weak institutions; overpopulation struggle on the available scarce resources; economic meltdown, trans-border terrorism, violence (inter and intra community) are harmful issues that must be considered in the study of security (Boyd 2005). Human security, is chiefly about the safety and well being of people everywhere. A sense of insecurity among certain groups invariably leads to group violent conflict, ethnic violence, religious crisis, armed robbery, riots culminating in the loss of lives and property. The threats arise from the ordinate or inordinate human behaviour symbolising a sense of insecurity.

Ajulo (2004) believed that human security is the most appropriate approach to security, that is, the welfare of the individual inhabiting different community within a state. The concept of human security gain ascendancy in world view with spotlight on the protection of human freedom and fulfilment. Kofi Annan's demystification of human security dichotomised territorial sovereignty and individual sovereignty. In his clarification, the fundamental

freedom of each individuals are enhanced by a renewed consciousness of protecting individual rights as against the “territorial sovereignty” notion of protecting the political elites without consideration for the masses (Cited in Oberleitner, 2005: 194).

Human security according to Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen, is “protecting vital freedoms that are fundamental to human existence and development. Human security means protecting people and the community from severe and pervasive naturally or socially induced threats as well as the empowerment of individuals and communities to combat or curtail violent or non-violent threat to their freedom and fulfilment. Human security advocates the creation of a atmosphere conducive preventing the violation of human right; deprivation of social amenities that could engender a sense of fulfilment among individuals. It is eradication of fear and want among individual within a community.

Human security encapsulates all forms of security including national security. A nation or state does not exist and function by itself. The definition of nation always reflects the significance of dwellers as there can be no state or nation without a group of inhabitants. The individual make u the communities. Thus without the protection and empowerment of these ele in diverse communities within a state national security is at stake. The Niger-Delta crisis in Nigeria being considered a threat to national security is a functional coefficient of endangered human security. The Niger delta crisis first arose in the early 1990s over tensions between the foreign oil corporation and a number of Niger delta’s minority who felt exploited engaged in series of conflict with the military in the Ijaw, Ogoni of the region resulting in the loss of lives and property. The environmental degradation from oil spillage is result of a dimension of human security: environmental security. Environmental insecurity in the region oozed another threat to food security. Oil spillage has a major impact on the ecosystem include destruction of crops, and aquacultures through contamination of the groundwater and soils. The consumptions of dissolved oxygen by bacteria feeding on the spilled hydrocarbons contributed to the death of fishes. As a domino effect on food security, agricultural communities often a year’s supply of food was destroyed as result of careless oil exploration. Health security was also affected as people in the community complained of health issues including breathing problem and skin lesion. Many have lost basic human right such as health access to food, clean water and ability to work. A combination of the effect of oil spillage and others on human security led to the Niger delta crisis challenging the national security of the Nigerian state. Others crisis such as Odi Massacre 1999, 2000 Kaduna Riots, 2001 Jos Riots, Miss World Riot of 2002, Yelwa Massacre of 2004, Muhammad Cartoons riot of 2006, 2010 Jos Massacre etc. emanate from the failure to ensure the development of Nigerians in all dimensions of human security. Human security is about protection to ensure other security concepts such as national security, economic security, and food security. Human security entails the introduction of preventive schemes to reduce the level of vulnerability and risk of lives, freedom and fulfilment coupled with a proactive counteractive measures when prevention fails (Sabelo, 2003, David Hubert, 1999). The proliferation of SALWS however plays key role in threatening the freedom and fulfilment of individual and communities. Violence that disrupts daily activities causing fear becomes possible in the face of illegal

spread of small arms and weapons. It is against this backdrop that the paper aims to examine the effect of the proliferation of small arms and weapons on human security in Nigeria

## **THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN NIGERIA**

The last two decades in Nigeria records communal conflict, ethno-religious violence, political crisis, civil unrest. Nigeria is a huge destination market for illegal sale and use of SALWs. The demand for SALW has increased thereby stimulating the proliferation and easy availability of SALW. The failure of government to ensure adequate security for individual in a particular region of the country and the need to protect their lives and property is tantamount to the proliferations of SALWs. The legal SALW for authorised usage have been transferred to illegal hands for illicit usage. The unsecured stockpile of arms by security agencies give rise to leakages of SALWs in to the country (Chuma-Okoro, 2011)

In 2002, Nigeria records 1 and 3 million SALWs including lawful chattels of arms with the members of armed forces and the police and majority in the custody of civilians. The 80% of SALWs with civilians were illegal acquisition defying strict regulations. It is worth mentioning that SALWs do not just spread all around, but where demand is placed. Therefore, the covert popular demand results in the proliferation of SALW. While some scholars centre on the supply chain of SALW like ready sellers, profitability and border porosity others focus on demand reasons like crises, crime, violent conflict, armed robbery, riots and civil unrests (Chuma-Okoro, 2011; Nte, 2011). Estimated 640 million SALWs are in circulation world-wide. 100 million are revealed to be in Africa. sub-Saharan Africa is home to 30 million SALWs while 8 million have their nest in West Africa alone and more than 70% of about eight to 10 million illicit weapons in West Africa sub region are in Nigeria.

Investigation into the cause of increase in the proliferation of SALWs unveiled the upsurge of SALWs local production making the arms readily available and affordable. The presidential committee on small arms and light weapons revealed that 60% of the illegal arms in the south East Zone are made locally. Professor Aloysius Okolie the PRESCOM south east coordinator also said some communities are known for their natural fabrication of arms. He added that politicians are art of arms proliferation in the area of importation and fabrication. In his survey, political leaders import 40% of arms.

Maritime border is a conduit for the escalation of SALWs proliferation from the Sahel region of Africa taking advantage of the porosity of northern borders and southwest borders of Nigeria. The recurrent seizure of illegal arms and weapons across Nigerian borders by security agencies reveal the troubling rate of weapon proliferation in Nigeria. Today, the media is replete with alarming reports of modern small arms and light weapon seized by security operatives at ports, borders or highways (Ayissi and Sall, 2005). In 2017, the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) claimed that a syndicate based in turkey has been discovered to be bind illegal arm imports into the country. Since the beginning of the year, Nigeria Custom Service disclosed that four batches of arms illegally imported into the country from Turkey.

These include the interception of 661 in February 440 arms in June; 1,100 in September and 470 arms in September making 2671 arms.

In August, 2010, a commercial driver carrying 25AK-47 rifles allegedly smuggled into the country from Cameroon was arrested by security forces in Maiduguri. Jos, Plateau state where ethno-religious conflicts has caused unprecedented damage to human security was the destination of these arms. In November 2010, Lucy Danagana was captured at Dabar Nasara, Borno State in an attempt to smuggle 10 AK-47 rifles into Nigeria from Chad Republic. Around the same period, the police in Ibadan, Oyo State, intercepted a large accumulated arms from a suspected bank robbery squared. Nigeria intercepted heavy arms shipment from Iran in July 2010. The 13 containers shipment filled with artillery rockets and small arms intercepted at the Lagos Port (Tell Magazine, 2012). The discovery caused diplomatic rift between Nigeria and Iran compelling Nigeria to report Iran formerly to the UN.

Arms and other weapons used were not retrieved at the end of conflicts in West African countries: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Libya Chad and Mali. Some of these arms according to him slip into unlawful hands in the country (Mba, 2012). The Nigeria Custom Service, NCS claimed in a recent publication that between January and June 2012, 2,294 imported arms were seized throughout the country. Shehu Abdulkadir, the Chief of Army standards and Evaluation and a Major General, unveiled an alarming rate of 10 million illegal weapons in spreading throughout West Africa, of which seven to eight million are in Nigeria alone. The 2011 small Arms Survey released by the UN, disclosed that about 825 million of such weapons produced by over 100 companies in 100 countries are in circulation worldwide, Nigeria is home to seven to eight million in West Africa. This puts the country in the category of countries like South Africa, Yemen where the whooping sum of small arms in civilian hands is 5.95million, 11.5million and 270 million respectively.

In Nigeria, the use small arms and light weapons dominate most conflicts. A good number of terrorist attacks in Nigeria, is traced to the delimitation of small arms resulting in the escalation and intensification of these conflicts. As many investigations are carried out international arms dealers' network confirms cooperate faster with terrorist groups than states. Unlike the earlier situation where arms trade was the exclusive preserve of states, contemporary arms traffickers across national boundaries have successfully taken advantage of border porosity, trade liberalisation and free movement protocol in West Africa to permeate arms in sovereign states, and further perpetuating terrorist related activities in many countries. Both international and local security agencies confirm foreign infiltration of Nigeria's militia groups. In 2011, the presence of AL-Qaeda in some African countries, including Nigeria was unveiled by the international security agency. Both international security and local security agencies had intercepted some financial accounts. A large amount of money was alleged deposited to the Boko Haram groups in Nigeria. A case in point is the US disclosure on January 4, 2011, that AL-Qaeda was the sponsor of the Mogadishu bomb attack in Abuja that took place in December 31, 2010 (Tell Magazine, 2011). Mohammed Ashafa, was apprehended December 2006, in the course of receiving funds from two

Pakistani Al-Qaeda groups to detect and execute a terrorist attacks on Americans in Nigeria. (Tell May 16, 2011 p 10).

The use of SALW in ethnic and religious crisis, inter and intra communal clashes, armed robbery have exterminated more than 13,000 Nigerians, an average of 1250 people yearly from 1999. The majority of casualties of about 76% Nigerians were SALW victims, incurring irredeemable disabilities. Countable Nigerians have been harmed due to increase in the proliferation rate SALWs in the urban areas of Nigeria. Homicides were carried out with SALW (John, Mohammed, Pinto and Nkanta, 2007; Nte, 2011). The inability of the police to curb violent crime, guarantee law and order and protect lives and property aggravate the teething troubles of armed violence and proliferation of SALW. Security operatives at present are bereft of the training, resources that could equip them for effective performance of duties in the area of preventing and detecting proliferated SALWs in Nigeria (Hazen and Horner, 2007). The proliferations of SALWs have coursed untold damage to human security in Nigeria

### **THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON HUMAN SECURITY IN NIGERIA**

Human security in Nigeria has been acerbically challenged by diverse ethnic conflict, religious crisis, cross-border banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, insurgencies. These violent crimes increase the level of insecurity as the upsurge of armed ethnic militias and insurrection threaten and or violate the freedom from fear and wants of Nigerians. The militias of either ethnic group, sectional or religious sects engage in guerrilla warfare to articulate their interest or to assault unarmed individual in different communities (Adejo, 2005). The UN rightly depict the effect of the proliferation of SALW on human security, “Wreaks havoc everywhere; mobs terrorizing a neighbourhood; rebels attacking civilians or peace keepers; drug lords randomly killing law enforcers or anyone else interfering with them illegal business (and) bandits hijacking humanitarian aid convoys. In all continents, uncontrolled small arms form a persisting problem”.

SALW stockpiling has stimulated various violent conflicts in Nigeria. More than 187 ethno-religious conflict that claim the lives of people have been recorded in Nigeria since its return to democratic rule in 1999 until 2017. The eruption and the elongation of ethno-religious clashes are abetted by the proliferation of arms in many conflict-ridden communities in Nigeria. The resultant effect of these quagmires is the internal displacement of persons, violation of lives and deterioration of properties. The jeopardised socio-economic conditions of individual in different communities are captured in the historic annals of Nigeria’s existence. The demoralisations of Nigerians inflicted suffering through the ready availability of arms among the perpetrators of insurgents and militias representing sectional or factional interests in the country.

Nigeria is faced with the enormous task of responding to the challenge internally displaced persons (IDPs). Between 2000 and 2002, for instance, an estimated 1,713,306 persons were

displaced by ethno-religious conflicts and, by 2013, some 3, 470,500 Nigerians are have been displaced internally. The January 2010 to 2015 crisis in Jos displaced over 325,000 persons. Human security becomes vulnerable to violent crimes like rape, food insecurity, and environmental insecurity as there could be outbreak of disease in the camp thereby undermining health security. Niger delta region of Nigeria is a stage for violent agitation between ethnic groups tussling for ethnic or political hegemony. The oil bunkering and vandalism worsen the crisis as the availability of light weapons contributed to the scores of dead people and the displacement of thousand of indigenes by inter communal violence.

The prevalent of small arms and weapons has hampered human security by the nefarious destruction of material resources. In this wise proliferation of small arms and weapons has a far reaching impact on citizens' lives and fulfilment and this behoves the government to take the responsibility of securing lives and properties. Human security which is a sense of freedom from fear and want; protection from the violation of these freedom and the empowerment to mitigate threat or actual violation of the freedoms gives physical and mental capacity to carry out their daily activities without fear of violation molestation or untimely violent death. Thus, the unbridled proliferation of small arms represent a state of complete physical, mental and social discomfort characterising the society dangerous to live in (Bestman, 2006).

In addition, the outburst of violence as result of small arms and weapons also deter health care facilities as the health facilities are destroyed hindering people from seeking treatment. This results in the scarcity of medical supplies and equipments while trained doctors and nurses flee the violent areas. Serial bombings have destroyed vital organs of citizens' body such as noses, ears, and eyes turning them into handicappes. Individual and communities have witnessed the violent amputation of hands or legs. Different ailment such as high blood pressure, shock, due to the loss of relatives, breadwinners and valuable properties or means of livelihood have been incurred as small arms and weapons are ready for usage in a violent conflict. Besides, people within a community are living in fear as a result of available small arms and weapons with thugs (Ibrahim, 2003).

Nigeria is plagued and immersed in arm conflicts between farmers, community inhabitants and Fulani herdsmen. Hundreds of Nigerians in Adamawa have been displaced as Fulani attack two communities of Suwa and Burukutu in Lamurde local government. About 500 Fulani herdsmen attacked residents of the two communities (Premium Times, 2017). In plateau state, the police command on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2017 confirmed 19 persons killed and five others injured in an attack on Ancha village, Bassa local government. The Fulani herdsmen were reported to have carried out attack on the villagers. According to investigation, a Fulani boy was missing and his body was later found without the head on August 3, 2017. On a revenge mission, the Fulani attackers invaded the community and massacred innocent citizens. It is believed that the attack was a reprisal because the mayhem was unleashed on the villagers three day after the boy was found missing (Sahara Reporters, 2017). In the same Bassa local government, Fulani herdsmen exterminated 27 local residents

despite curfew in the month of October, 2017. Unknown gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen meted the attack on the Nkiedonwhro community while asleep (Punch, 2017).

Ipiga village in Ohimini local government area of Benue state recorded the death of 15 members to Fulani herdsmen attack. The crisis erupted when some herdsmen invaded the neighbouring community, Ajegbe village, graze their cattle forcefully and destroying farmlands. From there they entered Ipiga village shooting erratically resulting into the demise of some villagers (Vanguard, 2017). Not more than 300 villagers were reportedly dead as Fulani herdsmen launched attack on the Agatu local government of Benue state. Villages such as Okokolo, Akwu, Ocholonya, Adagbo, ugboku and Alia were attacked leaving dead bodies littering the community. Internal displacement occurred as many of the villagers flee their community to other for refuge. Obagaji local government where people find refuge are deserted due to untold violence in the village by the Fulani herdsmen. The lively of the displaced persons is further threatened and violated as there is no identifiable camps to cater for the internally displaced person which include women and children (Vanguard, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

In the current world environment in which the realities of globalization are literally facing the breakdown of borderlines, low intensity conflicts in which small arms are crucial, and widely used, are threatening the non-negotiable core-dimension of human security, especially, developing countries of Africa and indeed countries of the ECOWAS sub region. In Nigeria especially the northeast, life is not less than hobbesian description of state of nature- brutish nasty and short. The danger is apparent. Daily, Nigerians are confronted with danger pose by the availability and unhesitating use of small arms and light weapons in conflict . The influx of the trans-border supplies and weakening controls on arm undermines to human security as various sect in Nigeria lay hold of these weapons to express grievance violently.

A successful prevention of the SALWs' effect on human security in Nigeria requires an all-inclusive methodology that seeks to diagnose the factors generating the pull for SALW and the sources of push. The demand and supply factors of SALW proliferation are interrelated and interdependent. Therefore, mitigating the push factor without the pull factors may not engender the desired results. A productive method necessitates a willing legislative, administrative and judicial strategy that solves the supply and demand problems. This will discourage the demand for arms and simultaneously block the supply channel through which illegal arms and light weapons circulate. It is imperative that curbing schemes and strategies should be trans-national in outlook to tackle the cross-border implications of SALWs. The proliferation of SALWs is posing a grave threat to human security in Nigeria. The proliferation of arms should be curbed to the barest level up to achieve a measurable degree of success in securing of life and property. There is, therefore, the need for the Nigerian government to pursue a stout strategy that could curtail the arms circulation menace.

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