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### **The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in The North East Nigeria: The Role of The United Nations**

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#### **Abstract**

The paper analyzes the effects of proliferation of small arms and light weapons on human security in the global context. Accordingly, it examines the existing treaties and protocols instituted by the United Nations on proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Moreover, review relevant literature, with a view to explain how proliferation of small arms of light weapons is a global issue that necessitates a collective approach, even though there are issues that are only peculiar to the North East region of Nigeria. Failed State Theory is adopted to explain the inability of the Nigerian state, to properly handle the issues surrounding the problem in the North East. This research found out that, there are various internal and external factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. Furthermore, states especially the developing ones, in their capacity are largely unable to address the trend informing their continuous dependence on United Nations. To this effect, the study has examined the efforts of the United Nation in the North East Nigeria in the wake of increasing armed conflict in the region. Resultantly, the United Nations have adopted numerous Treaties and Protocols, however they remains largely insufficient and are unable to comprehensively address the issue. Suggestively, the United Nation needs to put in more efforts in regulating arms production globally. While the nation states need to improve their commitment to addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons in their various jurisdictions.

**Keywords:** Small Arms and Light Weapons, Proliferation, Security, United Nations

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## **1. Introduction**

The destructive impact of the misappropriation and abuse of small arms and light weapons has attracted international attention, particularly since the demise of the Cold War. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) can be adjudged as one of the most immediate challenge to human security and by extension to states worldwide. This is thought to be so because the proliferation of arms globally has fueled civil wars, sustained organized crime and has the potency to transform minor insurgents into globally recognized terror groups as in the case of Boko Haram in the North East Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Sub-Saharan Africa, Taliban in the Middle-East and Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in Mexico. In furtherance, the ease to which SALWs can be accessed (legally or illegally) has increased the spate of mass-shootings in the West.

According to the Small Arms Survey, there are at least 875 million firearms in the world (Small Arms Survey, 2011). "There are more than 1,200 companies in 90 countries that produce small arms (Small Arms Survey 2004) SALW kill between 500,000 and 750,000 people annually and are a "contributory factor to armed conflict, the displacement of people, organized crime and terrorism, thereby undermining peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable social and economic development "(Small Arms Survey, 2011). Relatedly, Pokoo (2014, p. 39) claims there are an estimated 7 million such weapons circulating in sub-Saharan Africa with substantial numbers in the North East Nigeria. Worldwide, just 35 percent of these weapons are used by the military. The rest are in civilian hands, and the majority of these owners are unaccountable for the use of their weapons. The proliferation of SALWs prolongs conflicts, facilitates violations of international humanitarian laws and human rights laws, and puts civilians at high risk of death or injury from weapons-related violence.

The prevalence in the trafficking of SALWs is conditioned largely by demand and supply. As in any commodity the increase in conflict globally has been accompanied by a significant increase in SALWs proliferation. Regrettably, globalization and transnationalism has been accompanied by certain unintended negative consequences, such that criminal persons and organizations have exploited the free movement of human and other capital resources to move arms and weapons across national borders illicitly. For Malam (2014, p. 262) globalization bring with it opportunities

and challenges, the near elimination of state enforced restrictions on exchanges across borders and the increasingly integrated and complex global system of production and exchange that has emerged, as a result further complicates the challenge of containing SALWs proliferation. The idea of globalization and its advocate for free market forces with minimum economic barriers and open trade for world development provides ground for illicit trade in arms by minimizing custom regulations and border control, trafficking of small arms becomes easier. Malhotra (2011) on the other hand is of the opinion that a minuscule percent of container ships have cargo checks, therefore making the arms movement smooth. Faking documents bribing officials and concealing arms as humanitarian aids are common practices. Ibrahim (2003) weighs in on the argument claiming the accelerated pace of globalization has facilitated both legal and illegal cross-border transfers of these weapons, while a sudden upsurge in intra-state conflicts created an overwhelming demand for the SALW, thereby making them weapons of choice in majority of recent conflicts and even in non-war settings such as sectarian violence (ethnic, religious and chieftaincy conflicts), suicides, murders, homicides and accidents.

Against the backdrop of varying degrees of human security challenges brought about by proliferation of SALW, the global community began to pay greater attention to SALW, and to regard them as the most destabilizing conventional weapons. This call for an analysis of the success and failures of a key step in this process was the 1997 report of the UN Panel of Governmental Experts on SALW. This led to the 2001 United Nations SALW Conference and the drafting of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in small arms and light weapons in All Its Aspects (POA). It also led to the drafting of the 2005 International Tracing Instrument and efforts to fully include SALW in the coverage of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA). In 2005 the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) voted in favor of the UNSC's presidential statement encouraging the arms-exporting countries to exercise the highest degree of responsibility in small arms and light weapons transactions according to their existing responsibilities under relevant international laws'. The launching of the UN-level ATT process in 2006 indicated a shift of attention back to the broader category of conventional arms. However, determined efforts to ensure that SALW were included in the coverage of the Arms Trade Treaty reflected the extent to which they remained central to the international security agenda. This was underlined with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2117 in September 2013, the first UN Security Council Resolution to focus exclusively

on the problems associated with the illicit trade in SALW (Anthony, 2016). The study looked at the various efforts made by the United Nations and the ways they've translated into result vis-à-vis arms proliferation in the North East Nigeria.

In lieu, this study relies mainly on secondary literature sets out examine the negative correlation between SALW and human security. In furtherance, it also intends to interrogate United Nations treaties and protocols on the subject matter of proliferation of SALW in a bid to ascertain their efficiencies as well as deficiencies if any. Accordingly, the study is divided into four sections. The first which is the introduction, the second deals with operationalizing the concepts of human security and SALW, the third is made up theoretical framework and the fourth will attempt to examine the role of the UN, closely followed by recommendations and conclusion.

The method adopted in this research is desk review, using mainly secondary data. The secondary data employed include existing literature on the topic such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, conference papers, UN publications, periodicals and other related documents.

## **2. The Theory "Failed State" and the Explanation of Failures of Third World Countries in the Management of SALWs Proliferation**

Obasi (1999) contend a theory to mean a device or scheme for adopting or applying the assumptions, postulations and principles of a theory in the description and analysis of a research problem. In lieu of this, this research adopted the failed system theory. According to Abiodun (2018), a failed state is a state that has failed in her responsibilities often used to describe a state of a sovereign government. According to Anyanwu (2005) in Abiodun (2018), a failed state is one that has shattered social and political structures. It is characterized by social, political and economic failure. According to Abiodun (2018), common characteristics of a failed state is when a government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory, non-provision of public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations, and sharp economic decline (ibid). For Patrick (1999) the term failed state is often used to describe a state perceived as having failed at some of basic conditions and responsibilities of a sovereign government. A failed state is one that has shattered social and political structures. It is characterized by social, political and economic failure. Common characteristics of a failing state is according to Patrick is when a central government is

so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory, non-provision of public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations, and sharp economic decline. Clarke, (2015) notes that failing states are invariably the product of a collapse of the power structures providing political supports for law and order, a process generally triggered and accompanied by anarchic forms of internal violence. It is the collapse of state institutions, especially the police and judiciary with resulting paralysis of governance, a breakdown of law and order, and general banditry and chaos. Anyanwu (2005) in Abiodun (2018) explains that failing states are invariably the product of a collapse of the power structures providing political supports for law and order, a process generally triggered and accompanied by anarchic forms of internal violence. It is the collapse of state institutions, especially the police and judiciary with resulting paralysis of governance, a breakdown of law and order, and general banditry and chaos. Not only are the functions of government suspended, but its assets are destroyed or looted; and experienced officials are killed or flee the country. It is as a result of these failed states that make people to take laws into their hands, and start committing various crimes, which make it possible for the movement of small arms and light weapons across the Nigerian borders. Consequently, to preserve transnational security, International Organization's intervention is required to cope with the menace of the proliferations and the armed conflicts.

### **3. SALWs Proliferations and The Spade of Violent Conflicts and other Social Problems**

Nte. (2011:5) in Danwanzam, Saleh and Stephen (2019) explained that "there is a direct link between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and escalation of violent conflict" in North-East Nigeria. Nigeria severely experienced direct and indirect consequences and security challenges of proliferation and circulation of SALW, which have contributed to the slow pace of development in the North-East. According to Ogwuda (2018), SALW refers to lesser infantry weapons, such as firearms that an individual, particularly a rebel, could carry and is generally restricted to revolvers, pistols, submachine guns, shotguns, carbines, assault rifles, rifle squad automatic weapons, light machine guns, general-purpose machine-gun, medium machine guns and hand grenades. Mostly, these weapons are acquired illegally for the sole aim of achieving defined objectives. small arms and light weapons depending on the context of when they are used. They could involve machine guns, rocket launchers, rifle etc. According to Abiodun (2018), in Africa,

the proliferation of small arms is increasing in proportion. These small arms being the remnants of conflicts in Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Libya etc. as well as licensed weapons being stolen or lost, have played a major role in exacerbating crimes and armed violence in Nigeria. Abiodun (2018) continued by saying that Nigeria has become a destination country for SALWs used in crimes, revolts, sabotage, religious crisis, communal conflicts, social agitations, internal insurrection, terrorism, insurgency, riots, militancy, electoral violence, political violence, social interest, ethnic tensions, cross-border smuggling, black marketeering, among others. Broadly speaking, SALWs are those weapons designed for personal use, and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew (United Nations 1994). Examples of small arms thus include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine-guns, assault rifles, and their parts and associated cartridges or rounds. Examples of light weapons include heavy machine-guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable antiaircraft guns, portable antitank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of antitank missile and rocket systems, ammunition and explosives, mortars with a caliber of less than 100 millimeters, antiaircraft and antitank systems, landmines, and associated shells and missiles (United Nations 1997). While the sale and purchase of arms by individuals are permissible on the basis of obtaining relevant license, persons and criminal groups such as ethnic militias have devised numerous means through which such arms are bought and sold sophisticatedly across the globe.

#### **4. Modes of Acquisition**

According to Moses and Ngomba (2017), the means of acquiring SALW is now different today than what is obtainable during the cold war, the reason why is that the Cold War arms trading was more strictly regulated than what is obtainable today. According to Yoroms in Moses and Ngomba (2017), in the present dispensation, Nigeria has now become a theater of transitional organized crimes, which means Nigeria is now a source, transition and destination for small arms and light weapons. The activities of insurgency group in the North East have now become a great concern to many, there have been questions about how these insurgence groups acquire small arms and light weapons and from whom do they acquire. According to Bashir (2014) in Moses and Ngomba (2017) the Nigerian porous borders could be the reasons for the proliferation of these weapons into Nigeria.

Moses and Ngomba (2017) believed that, important factors are the manufacturing of SALWs process is either at the industrial level or local level, and the critical actors who are involved in gun making process. According to Aning (2005) in Moses and Ngomba (2017) the proliferation of illegal weapons into any country ranges from the 'guild' who coordinate the whole process, set rules and apply sanctions, the 'lock and blacksmith' who manufacture, assemble, repair and service the accessories, the 'carpenter' who are engage in shaping the stock, the 'machinist' who engrave the stock and the barrel, the 'mechanic' who arrange the spring to the 'middleman' who's role is to identify potential buyers, sale products and introducing actors and the 'transmitter' who moves the weapons from one country to another.

SALWs proliferation as put forward by Onuoha (2013) is measured under two broad dimensions to include transnational and national trafficking. The former refers to the movement of the weapons across the borders sovereign states while the later refers to the movement of weapons within a sovereign state movement. In the case of Nigeria, small and light weapons are moved into Nigeria through the porous borders from nations such as Niger Republic, Chad, Benin Republic and Cameroon (Moses and Ngomba, 2017).

According to Onuoha (2013), effective border management is vitally important for the preservation of national security, this paper agrees with Onuoha (2013) that borders are the first line of defense against terrorism and the last line of a nation's territorial integrity. To be sure Onuoha (2013) said that one of the reasons for the proliferation of Boko Haram insurgency in North Eastern part of Nigeria is due to Nigeria's porous borders with Cameroon (1,690 kilometers) in the east, Niger Republic (1,497 kilometers) in the north, Benin (773 kilometers) in the west, and Chad (87 kilometers) in the northeast. Most of these border areas are either mountainous or in the jungle. Irrespective of their geographic nature, a common feature of the nation's borders is its porosity.

In 2018 former Nigeria's Minister of Interior; Abba Moro said that there were over 1,499 irregular (illegal) and 84 regular (legal) officially identified entry routes into Nigeria (Onuoha, 2013). This disclosure by the former Minister of Interior confirms the very porous state of Nigerian borders which allow for the illicit transnational arms trafficking.

According to Moses and Ngomba (2017) there are many arms and weapons revolutions that have taken place since the end of Cold War, which resulted in the illegal acquisition of small arms and light weapons. Some of the reasons for the acquisition of small arms and light weapons are:

1. The end of Cold War has made it possible for many countries to be able to produce small and light weapons and this was due to the diffusion of arms producing technology during the Cold War.
2. Economic necessity have forced some countries that are involved in the production of small arms and light weapons to export surplus arms and weapons
3. According to Laurence (2010) in Moses and Ngomba (2017), he believes that the major change in the proliferation of arms trading system brought about the relative rise in illicit or illegal trade. This is mainly due to the characteristics of the class of weapons now dominating the world's armed conflicts that is, light, portable, inexpensive, easily concealed and transported, etc. Illicit acquisition is usually perpetrated through a covert or secret transfer of arms to a government or non-state actor from another government.
4. The increasing number of embargoes imposed by the United Nations on some countries and or the refusal of major powers to sell arms and ammunitions has made the black market suppliers becoming the only source of arms and ammunition for such countries under embargo. Equally, underground political organizations, and criminal organizations such as drug cartels, terrorists, armed robbers etc are also forced to rely on this means of acquisition.

##### **5. Factors encouraging the Proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria**

According to Onuaha(2012) in Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado (2019) proliferation of SALWs derive principally from the internal socio-economic and political factors in Nigeria compounded by globalization. He further identifies the following as factors that necessitate the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria:

**The crude nature of Nigeria's politics:** The crude nature of Nigerian politics is one of key factor driving the process of SALWs proliferation. Politics in Nigeria, especially electoral politics



according to Onuoha is defined and approached by politicians as a do or die matter, or warfare. The stake in Nigerian politics is incredibly high, making politicians desperate in the quest to win election at all costs. As a result, many of them recruit specialist of violence such as cultists, gangs and thugs to attain and retain political power.

**Insecurity:** The inability of the Nigerian state to provide adequate security for its citizens demonstrates visible weakness in controlling the use of violence within its territory. As a result, its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence is increasingly up for grabs by criminals, militants, warring communities and other forms of non-state actors (Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado, 2019). The consequence is the intermittent outbreak of violent conflicts and general insecurity.

**Governance failure:** Onuoha (2012) identified governance failure as a contributing factor to SALWs proliferation in Nigeria. The inability of state actors, agencies and institutions to use public recourses and authorities to ensure the protection of lives and properties as well as delivery of public goods resulting to mounting poverty and unemployment among the Nigerian populace. This has led many to indulge into criminal activities such as piracy, armed robbery kidnapping, militancy which contribute to the demand of arms penetration and circulation.

**Corruption:** Corruption has become an hackneyed vebertim in Nigeria, which makes it not to command our sense of hatred anymore. It creates a security paradox that feeds into the cycle of SALWs proliferation in Nigeria (Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado, 2019). Corruption has become largely institutionalized in both the public and private sectors in Nigeria and the security sector has been hugely affected. Given wide spread poverty and low wages of security agents, some greedy security personnel are easily corrupted by transnational arms trafficking in Nigeria.

**Globalization:** The challenges of containing SALWS proliferation is compounded by contradictions inherent in Globalization (Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado, 2019). The process of globalization has congealed both time and space, making it easier for ideas, goods, persons, services, information, products and money to move across borders with fewer restrictions. This has enhanced the movement of goods and people across borders and equally facilitated the activities of criminal grou (Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado).

## **6. Links between SALWS and Insecurity in Nigeria**

The linkage between SALWs and insecurity in Nigeria has been a reoccurring debate among various academic scholars. While some scholars believe that proliferation of SALWs is the main reasons for the problem of insecurity in Nigeria, other scholars are of the opinion that proliferation of SALWs is not the main reason but a contributing factor. But the two groups seem to agree that the proliferation of SALWs poses a security threat to any country.

Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado (2019) explain that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is often one of the major security obstacles currently facing Nigeria, Africa and indeed the world in general. The trafficking and wide availability of these weapons fuel communal conflict, political instability and pose a threat, not only to security, but also to sustainable development of any country (Gowfan, Ishaya and Ado, 2019). The widespread proliferation of small arms is a contributing factor to the various security challenges witnessed in Nigeria (Nte, 2011). Increased proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria and the corresponding increase in their accessibility deepens the tendency of the average person to resort to violence as a means of dispute resolution (Gowfan, Ishaya and Ado, 2019). Gowfan, Ishaya and Ado (2019) continued by saying that weapons proliferation has increased the potential for violence and violent conflict, armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, farmers/herders clashes, cattle rusting, gangsterism, cultism in Nigeria and by extension, threatens to retard development, cause massive human and physical destruction, serious human infractions and a chronic atmosphere of instability and insecurity in the country (p36). Caleb and Okafor, (2015) in their assertion posit that, the different forms of security challenges plaguing Nigeria as a country are multiple- from those of armed robbery to kidnappings, from ethno-religious and farmers-herders crises to outright terrorism and insurgencies against the authority of state. These states of insecurity according to them have connection with the massive proliferation of small arms and light weapons. According to Ngang, (2007), in Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado (2019) opined SALWs are widely used in domestic and gender related crimes, help facilitate violent crimes and thus has contributed directly to greater insecurity in Nigeria. Insecurity associated with SALWs proliferation in Nigeria is evident in the present clashes between farmers and herders, the frequent attacks by the dreaded Boko Haram, kidnappings, militancy in the Niger Delta, armed robbery, cultism and political violence (Gofwan, Ishaya and Ado, 2019).

## **7. The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the North East**

The security implications of small arms and light weapons can pave way for violent crimes in the North East of Nigeria. The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) noted that Nigeria accounts for about 70% of illegal small arms in West Africa (Matum, 2018). A report, 'CrimeJust: Fact Sheet Nigeria' published by (Dailytrust,2018 ), said that Nigerian porous borders pave ways for free flow of small arms and light weapons in and out of Nigeria. It is said to have contributed to increasing number of violent conflicts of the deadly terrorist group Boko-Haram in the North East part of Nigeria which has remained a challenge to authorities within and outside Nigeria. For example Air Commodore Yusuf Anas (rtd), the Executive Secretary of Centre for Crisis Communication (CCC) in an interview conducted by Daily Trust published on September 08 2019 monitored by this paper said that since the forceful fall of the former Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, it is known that a lot of weapons that were used in fighting the war were taken away from that country. He continued by saying that definitely, there is a lot of weapons in the region as a result of the conflicts around the Lake Chad area, those firearms are being used for cross border crimes as well as insurgency and other organized crimes. He concluded by saying that Boko Haram must have benefited from those weapons, adding that, the insurgents also over ran several military barracks where they were able to take away quite a number of arms and ammunition. This paper is of the opinion that the proliferation of arms clearly has a huge impact on insecurity in the country, which has had much impact in the security situation in the North East.

## **8. Types of Small Arms Trafficking**

### **8.1. Transnational Trafficking**

Transnational trafficking refers to the movement of arms and weapons across borders of sovereign States. It can be seen as the movement of arms and ammunitions through illegal means According to Onuoha (2013) During the Libyan uprising, state armories were either ordered opened in February 2011 by former Libyan Head of State, Muammar Gaddafi, or looted by rebel forces and mercenaries, and majority of these weapons were never recovered. Onuoha continued by saying that terrorist groups like AQIM acquired heavy weapons illegally such as SAM-7 anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, transporting them back to the Sahel region. Onuoha (2013) believes that these terrorist groups obtained these illegal arms and ammunition by either posing as Gaddafi's

supporters or indirectly purchased from mercenaries who had acquired these arms from Libyan depositors. Courtesy of the AQIM, these arms have been transferred to groups such Boko Haram emboldening and enabling them to mount more deadly and audacious attacks in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. Some of these weapons are very deadly in nature; such weapons may include armor tanks, sophisticated rifles magazines, IEDs etc. It was as a result of this illegal acquisition of weaponry that the Boko Haram groups has the audacity to be able to launch attacks in the North Eastern part of Nigeria, and even faced and sometime subdue the Nigerian security personnel. The porous borders in Borno and Yobe States, which are the strongholds of the sect, made it possible for Boko Haram to smuggle arms into Nigeria.

According to Onuoha (2013), Boko Haram smuggles arms into Nigeria by using various methods such as the use of specially crafted skin or thatched bags attached to camels, donkeys and cows where arms are concealed and moved across the borders with the aid of nomadic pastoralists or herders. Its members are known to connive with merchants involved in cross-border trade to help stuff their arms and weapons in goods that are transported via heavy trucks, trailers, and Lorries. Given the huge size of the goods loaded on these vehicles, very little or no scrutiny is conducted on them by security and border officials (Onuoha, 2013).

The ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of persons, goods and services, has thus created a space that criminals exploit to facilitate cross-border trafficking. These traffickers make the use of the opportunity of free movement of goods and people among the ECOWAS region to traffic arms and ammunition into the country by pretending to be transporting goods. Since corruption has now become a hackneyed phrase in Nigeria, cross-border arms trafficking is sometimes facilitated by security agents. According to Onuoha (2013) in May 2013 a senior Customs personnel was arrested for allegedly assisting Boko Haram insurgents to smuggle several trucks loaded with large cache of arms and ammunition into Nigeria.

## **8.2. National Trafficking**

National trafficking means the illegal movement of arms and ammunitions from one location to another within the Nigerian territory. It can also be explained as the illegal transportation and acquisition of arms and ammunitions from by unauthorized persons. Similar to their methods of transnational arms smuggling, Boko Haram has equally developed a new plan of stocking in goods,

loading in specially-adapted vehicles, hiding under cloths of couriers, and tunneling for arms smuggling. There have been various investigative journalism reports that explain how Boko Haram's conceals arms in bags of grains or carton of goods which are often loaded on heavy-duty vehicle like trucks, trailers, and Lorries. This method is usually used when transporting arms from one community, town, and state to another. Such arms can also be wrapped in polythene bags and stocked into empty fuel tankers or sewage tankers for long-distance transfer. On 12 July 2013 Nigerian soldiers in Kebbi State impounded a petrol tanker loaded with three AK 47 Rifles, one rocket propelled grenade (RPG)-2, nine AK 47 magazines, two bombs, three RPG chargers and 790 rounds of 7.62mm of special ammunitions in the fuel compartment of the tanker. It was suspected that these arms were destined for Boko Haram insurgents operating in the North Eastern part of Nigeria (Onuoha, 2013).

Furthermore, arms can also be concealed in improvised compartments in a vehicle designed to evade detection by security operatives. Cars used for such operations are constructed with chambers for concealing arms or additional fuel tank to minimize the rate of refueling. On July 2013, according to Onuoha (2013), an ex-Niger Delta militant, Anietie Etim and four others who allegedly specialized in buying arms in Bakassi Peninsula which in turn were supplied to Boko Haram insurgents were arrested by the police in 2013. The traffickers carefully constructed a special tank at the booth of an Audi salon car where they conceal arms for shipment to the crisis ravaged north east. The car also had an extra tank constructed for fuel to ensure enough fuel that will take them to their destination.

Another method used by Boko Haram is tunneling. The use of tunnels to traffic arms, drugs and other substances is not a new tactics that is being deployed by the militant groups in the North East. Boko Haram has used such tunnels for trafficking of arms especially in Borno State. In July 2013, according to Onuoha (2013), Nigerian security forces discovered a vast network of underground tunnels connecting houses and many bunkers used by Boko Haram for trafficking SALWs in Bulabulin area. Some of the tunnels and bunkers have the capacity to accommodate over 100 persons, enabling its fighters to hide and move SALWs around the area.

As Nigerian security forces deployed a means to stop smuggling of arms by the militants. Boko Haram militants have changed approach, and they are now disguising as women to evade attention

of security forces while transporting arms. They have equally recruited women (sometimes wives of members) as arms couriers. The women hide AK 47 rifles on their backs covered with their veils (himar) or conceal improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on their backs as if they were carrying their babies. Such women according to Onuoha (2013) who are arms couriers receive between N5, 000 and N 50,000 (\$30 and \$312), depending on the mission and the location for the delivery of the guns and IEDs. They have equally concealed guns and ammunition inside grains in plastic buckets and sacks in their homes. Beyond SALWs smuggled into Nigeria from outside, the sect also obtains arms by breaking into the armory of police stations and other sister security stations.

## **9. Role of the United Nations**

One of the earliest international instruments adopted by the United Nations in addressing the proliferation of SALW in Nigeria is the United Nations of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms Light Weapons in All Aspects (UNPoA) (Wolfe, 2020). According to Wolfe (2020), the UNPoA seeks to address the uncontrolled spread of SALW in Nigeria which has a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and poses a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development, especially at the North East part of Nigeria. Article II (2) of UNPoA instructs Nigeria and other member states to put in place “adequate laws, regulations and administrative procedures to exercise effective control over the export, import and transit of small arms.” However, the Instrument does not specify what constitutes “adequate laws” or “effective control”. Furthermore, it lacks a legally binding force. This notwithstanding, it provides the fundamental international benchmark for determining the adequacy of any national legislation on regulating SALW.

There is also the UN Illicit Firearms Protocol, which promotes uniform international standards for the movement of firearms among member states. This protocol urges Nigeria and other member states to criminalized illicit manufacture and trafficking in firearms and to also adopt preventive measures.

The International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit small arms and light weapons is also an important standard setting document regardless of its non-binding status. It was adopted by the United Nations in recognition of tracing as a key mechanism in the effort to prevent,

combat and eradicate illicit SALW. It is intended to assist Nigeria and other member states in establishing a mechanism to facilitate the identification and tracking of illicit SALW. At the African regional level, the most outstanding initiative on controlling SALW is the Bamako Declaration on Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The Bamako Declaration is a politically binding instrument adopting a common African approach to combating illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of SALW. Paragraph 3A of the Declaration enjoin Nigeria and other member states to establish specific legal regimes with specific structures and procedures to deal with the problem of SALW at both the national and regional levels. It encourages, inter alia, the enhancement of the capacity of national law enforcement and security agencies and officials (Chuma-Okoro, 2020).

## **10. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper found out that economic necessity has forced some countries that are involved in the production of small arms and light weapons to export surplus arms and weapons. The increasing number of embargoes imposed by the United Nations on some countries and or the refusal of major powers to sell arms and ammunitions has made the black market suppliers becoming the only source of arms and ammunition for such countries under embargo, not forgetting internal Nigeria issues such as corruption, bad governance, the nature of Nigerian politics and the failure of Nigeria security have all contributed to the rise of SALWs in the country. This paper found out that the security implications of SALWs have paved a way for violent crimes in the North East of Nigeria. This research regretted that the United Nations that should be responsible for putting down strong measures for the control SALWs are a pawn in the hands of the West, which this research identified as the culprits in the proliferation of SALW in the globe, which has affected Nigeria. This research is of the view that even though the United Nations has established some initiatives in combating the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria, a lot still needs to be done. It will suffice to claim that United Nations efforts have largely failed to make significant strides in addressing the proliferation of SALWs globally. This is thought to be so because the UN has done little or nothing to prevent the spate of armed interventions carried out by the Western superpowers. More pronounced is the invasion of Libya that led to the death of the then leader. Preceding the invasion by United States and its allies, weapons of different sizes and capacity have remained in the hands of non-state actors; this singular act is thought to be responsible for the increase in proliferation of SALWs in

Sub-Saharan Africa. Activities of the likes of Boko Haram, Bandits, and alleged armed herders have significantly increased in recent time; arguably this can be tied to the influx of SALWs into the Sub-Saharan African region.

To address this trend, this research recommends that the United Nations as a matter of urgency should establish International Norms. The first, and perhaps most important, step is to adopt international norms against the uncontrolled and destabilizing transfer of small arms and light weapons to areas of tension and conflict. Secondly, the United Nations should Increase International Transparency. Thirdly, the United Nations must assume a central role in deterring armed invasion on the basis of fighting terrorism or ideological imposition of Western forms of liberal democracy on non-Western societies. Furthermore, the UN should rise above partisan politics and should seize to be a tool for propagating and furthering the interest of the West.

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