



Boko Haram: The Menace of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Nigeria

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1. Introduction

The relationship between small arms and insecurity has been the object of contentious debates among scholars. While some scholars argue that small arms are the direct cause of insecurity, others maintain that small arms are merely trigger of insecurity or precipitating factor. Despite this seeming apparent disagreement, both scholars commonly agree that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) poses serious challenges to the sustenance of peace and stability of any society. John Keegan, a respected historian observed that:

Nuclear weapons have since 9 August 1945, killed no one. The 50,000,000 (Fifty Million) who have died in war since that date have for the most part, been killed by cheap, mass produced weapons and small calibre ammunition, costing a little more than the transistor radios and dry cell

batteries, which have flooded the World in the same period... (*Awake*, 2001:5).

Small arms and light weapons are often used to forcibly displace civilians, impede humanitarian assistance, prevent or delay development projects, and hinder peace-keeping and peace-building efforts. When conflicts end or subside, small arms often remain in circulation, which may lead to additional violence and suffering... And they are frequently the primary tools of terrorists bent on sowing chaos and discord (Stohl and Hogendoorn, 2010).

Attempt at curbing the proliferation of small arms is problematic. This is more so because while some countries are advocating their confiscation and destruction, others encourage their manufacture, sale and distribution, and see the trade as a legitimate business through which their citizens make a living and sustain their economy (Okoro, 2004:48).

In recent past, violent communal, religious and political conflicts have become a regular feature and/or reoccurring decimal of social life in Nigeria. These conflicts result from different value system, aggressive competition for access to resources. Nigeria is a country where thousands of people who are multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious co-exist. However, competition for the control of socio-political and economic resources among the various ethnic groups has led to series of violence and civil unrests. The growth and availability of small arms and light weapons has triggered several security challenges for the Nigerian government. There is hardly a year in Nigeria without major violent conflict. Conflict in this respect, especially in northern part of the country (where *Boko Haram* violent ravaging) has varied in scope, intensity and nature, and has taken immeasurable toll on human lives, leaving many dead, maimed and numerous others displaced, as a result of the involvement of small arms and light weapons illegally acquired.

The proliferation of these small arms and the new emergent trend in violence by the sectarian sect *Boko Haram* put to question the efficacy and general commitment of the Nigerian security in combating the menace. A worrying dimension to this menace is the level of the sophistication of weapons and tactics at the disposal of the group which seems to be more than what the security agencies can handle. It was established that out of an estimated 640 million SALW in circulation world-wide, 100 million are estimated to be Africa, about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa alone and Over 70% of about eight to 10 million illegal weapons in West Africa are in circulation in Nigeria. As at 2002, the number of SALW in Nigeria was estimated by various reports and studies at between 1 and 3 million including arms in lawful possession of members of the armed forces and the police and those (majority) in the hands of civilians. The 80% of SALW in civilian possession were illegally acquired because of the strict regulations (Ayissi and Sall (eds), 2005; Florquin and Berman (eds), 2005; *Premium Times*, August 7, 2015).

The growing proliferation in geometric progression being employed by the *Boko Haram* poses a serious threat and challenge to the country, exacerbating human suffering, threaten peace, security, and sustainable development. This paper examines sources of *Boko Haram* small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. This article assesses *Boko Haram's* arms smuggling operations within and across Nigeria and its impacts on national security.

The study discusses challenges of containing SALWs proliferation in Nigeria basing primarily on existing scholarly works on SALW control.

1.1. Conceptual Discourse

1.1.1. Small Arms: These include, but not limited to revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, submachine guns, and light machine guns.

1.1.2. Light Weapons: heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, and recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems (MANPADS); and mortars of calibers of less than 100mm. (Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, UN document A/52/298, 27 August 1997).

1.1.3. Boko Haram: It is believed that members of *Boko Haram* actually prefer to be known by their Arabic name – Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad – meaning 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'. In the town of Maiduguri, North-eastern Nigeria, where the group was believed to have been formed, the residents call them '*Boko Haram*' – a combination of the Hausa word 'boko' meaning 'Western education' and the Arabic word 'Haram' which figuratively means 'sin' and literally means 'forbidden'. *Boko Haram* has therefore been commonly translated as 'Western education is sacrilege' or 'Western education is a sin'. Some, such as Ioannis Mantzikos (2010), have, however, suggested that such a translation will be more a transliteration of the two words and that what the users of the expression meant to convey was that 'Western Civilisation is forbidden' rather than that 'Western education' is forbidden' or a sacrilege because what the group is opposed to really is Western civilization – which includes of course Western education, but is not limited to it (p.10).

Boko Haram was founded as an indigenous Salafist group, turning itself into a Salafist Jihadist group in 2009 (Bartolotta, 2011). Their school of thought considers anything western as an aberration or completely unislamic. The group viewed the western influence on Islamic society as the basis of the religion's weakness. Ideologically, any member who fought and died for the cause of an Islamic/Sharia state by destroying modern state formation and government establishment would automatically gain "Aljanna" (paradise or heaven) (Raheem, and Babalola, 2015)

1.2. Explaining the Boko Haram Phenomenon

Just as there are contestations over the reasons for the radicalization of the group, there is also no unanimity on how the emergence of the sect could be explained. Several theses and theories have been proffered. For some, *Boko Haram* is a symptom that the Nigerian state has become either a failed, or failing, state. Others blame it on poverty and poor governance, while yet some locates its emergence in a frustration-aggression hypothesis. Here members of the sect are said to be generally frustrated with the situation of things in the country, especially with the position of Northerners and Northern Muslims in the current configuration of political and economic power in Nigeria (Falola, 2009). In this view *Boko Haram's* terrorism is simply misplaced aggression.

For other analysts, *Boko Haram* is more a symptom of the crisis in Nigeria's nation-building (Adibe, 2012). This crisis, it is argued, has triggered a massive de-Nigerianization process, with several individuals and groups retreating into primordial identities where they seek to construct meaning as they feel let down by the Nigerian state. In this view, those withdrawing from the Nigeria project instinctively see the state as an enemy and attack it by using whatever means are at their disposal – those entrusted with husbanding the country's resources steal it blind, law enforcement officers turn the other way if you offer them a little inducement, organised labour, including university lecturers, go on prolonged strikes on a whim, students resort to cultism and examination malpractices, and workers drag their feet, refuse to put in their best and engage in moonlighting (Obi, 2008). Essentially, everyone seems to have one form of grouse or the other against the Nigerian state and its institutions.

Boko Haram is evidently inspired by the establishment of external linkages with ideologically – driven Islamic terrorist groups in Somalia, the Islamic Maghreb and possibly, as recent well-informed reports widely-quoted by the international press indicate, the PAKISTAN/Afghanistan axis which is acknowledged to be the global headquarters of terrorism (Gilbert, 2014; Phillip, 2012). While affiliating itself with the Islamic States (ISIS) in March 7, 2015, *Boko Haram* has at the same time not distance itself from Al Qaeda (Raheem and Babalola, 2015).

Boko Haram resorting to violence in pursuit of its objective dates back to 24 December 2003 when it attacked police stations and public buildings in the towns of Geiam and Kanamma in Yobe State. It was then known in the media as the 'Nigerian Taliban'. In 2004 it established a base called 'Afghanistan' in Kanamma village in northern Yobe State. On 21 September 2004 members attacked Bama and Gworza police stations in Borno State, killing several policemen and stealing arms and ammunition. It maintained intermittent hit-and-run attacks on security posts in some parts of Borno and Yobe States until July 2009, when it staged a major anti-government revolt, in revenge for the killing of its members by state security forces. The fighting lasted from 26 to 30 July 2009, across five northern states: Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Katsina, and Yobe. The revolt ended when its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was finally captured by the military and handed over to police. Yusuf was extrajudicially murdered in police custody, although police officials claimed that he was killed while trying to escape. Several other arrested members were also summarily executed by the police.

Since the July 2009 revolt, the sect has changed from using low-level guerrilla tactics to outright warfare and has evolved into a more dynamic and decentralised organisation, capable of changing tactics as well as expanding or reordering target selection. Over 2.3 million people have been displaced by the conflict, particularly in Northeastern part of the country, and Over 250,000 of them have fled from Nigeria into Cameroon, Chad and Niger (Nichols, 2015; International Organisation for Migration (IOM) September 4, 2015). A conservative estimate of over 100,000 people has been killed by the sect since 2009, aside from damage to private and public property. The group have carried mass abductions including the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in April 2014 (Brimah, 2014).

2. Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Nigeria: Historical Perspective

The first small arms came into general use at the end of the 14th century. Initially they were nothing more than small cannon held in the hands, fired by placing a lighted match at the touch hole. Later a stock was added- the match lock and the first real handgun. Perhaps, gun possession by civilians in Nigeria today, is not a new and predates colonialism. Guns were introduced by the Europeans prior to colonialism during legitimate and illegitimate (slave) trade between them and Africans. Subsequently, guns and other arms, ammunition and weapons were used by Europeans to realize their imperial ambitions when they used force to suppress Africa's resistance to European incursion, conquest and colonialism.

The gunboat diplomacy was popularly employed by the British to compel African chiefs to enter into various treaties with them. There was establishment of West African Frontier Force (WAFF) used by the British which was used to execute the British-Aro War of (1901- 1902), and other forms of resistance in Nigeria, West Africa, and Africa. The role of Royal Niger Company (RNC) later United African Company (UAC) backed by British Government in using force to suppress dissenting communities is imperative (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). These arms or guns possibly found their ways to the hands of Africans during the period of colonialism subsequently used in tradition and hunting in the rural community. In no time, guns and gun powder became symbols of strength and power, and were later transformed into ceremonial weapons displayed during funerals, burials, ceremonies and customary festivals among the natives. They also became symbols of individual and ethnic grandeur, and for deterring aggressors and invaders. Today, guns are no longer just ornaments of prestige, or just for hunting, safari and expedition. Guns have transformed in terms of functionality, lethality, sophistication, ubiquity and motive of ownership. They have become more weapons of criminality and instruments of the underworld (Chuma- Okoro, 2011).

2.1. *Boko Haram's Arms Sources and Trafficking Modus Operandi*

Since 2009, acts of domestic terrorism perpetrated by the sectarian sect, have eclipsed Nigeria's longstanding security threats such as piracy, militancy, kidnappings, and armed robbery. The group has since then ramped up violent attacks on diverse government and civilian targets, including suicide bombing attacks on different locations in the country, with the most hit states being Adamawa, Yobe and Borno, the epicentre of the crisis. Of particular concern are the growing sophisticated arms and weapons used by its militants in recent attacks, evidenced in seizures made by security forces in northern Nigeria and the level of human casualty and material damage recorded in the aftermath of their use by the sect. This section examines sources and trafficking of *Boko Haram* small arms and light weapons within and across Nigeria.



File photo, journalists look at arms and ammunition which military commanders say they seized from Islamic fighters, in Maiduguri, Nigeria, on Wednesday, June 5, 2013. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell, File)

2.2. Stolen Weapons, Improvised or Purchased

Boko Haram is known to possess large numbers of assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and improvised bombs and shells. The group possesses an unknown number of tanks and armoured personnel carriers. They also possess a limited anti-aircraft capability, and a large number of pickup trucks that have been adapted as improvised fighting vehicles to carry heavy machine guns (Steve and Chris, 2015).

Boko Haram's obtains arms by breaking into the armoury of police stations, improvised or purchased on the black market. The group's primary source of weaponry is the looting of police stations and military bases within Nigeria. Attacking men in uniform en masse and wearing military fatigues. *Boko Haram* has time and time again been able to overwhelm the Nigerian security forces and raid their bases for weapons and vehicles. For instance, on December 2003 and August 2004, *Boko Haram* launched attack on police stations in the towns of Kanamma and Geidam in Yobe State and Gwoza and Bama in Borno State respectively. The militants killed several policemen and requisitioned police weapons

and vehicles (*Vanguard*, 31 December 2003; 9 August 2004). The Nigerian military has been forced to buy new weapons and equipment from both the black market and the legal arms trade to advance their fight against *Boko Haram*. It is unfortunate that some of these purchases may now be being used against them. No wonder the sect that was armed with bows and arrow, cutlasses, and hunting guns when their leader was arrested and killed in 2009 now boast of superior fire power to a military base, to carry out a bombing spree. In a statement recently released by the Defence Headquarters through its Director of Defence Information, Maj. Gen. Chris Olukolade affirms looting its armoury “We are taking measures to ensure that our armouries are secured. We agree and are aware *Boko Haram* has stolen arms.” (*Punch Newspaper*, September 30, 2014).

Boko Haram augments its stolen arsenal with improvised munitions and fighting vehicles. Agriculture in northeast Nigeria requires significant fertilizer inputs, which means local farms hold a ready stock of a key component of certain improvised explosive devices that *Boko Haram* can easily steal. For instance, the sect on November 4, 2014, extended their raids to a French-owned multinational Lafarge cement factory in Gombe state, where they looted the company's stores for dynamite and made off with trucks stolen from the site (*TheNEWS*, November 5, 2014).

2.3. War-Torn Countries in the West African Sub-Region

Nigeria is virtually surrounded by countries with large-scale internal armed conflicts where there has been a proliferation of small arms and light weapons. *Boko Haram* is able to purchase weapons from allied militant groups and arms traffickers operating within Nigeria and across the Western Sahara region. Lower-end weaponry is available from the saturated post-conflict markets across West Africa, from Western Sahara down to Benin, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has reported the seizure of weapons coming overland from Niger and Chad into Nigeria. In recent years, there have also been multiple weapons shipments intercepted coming east out of the Senegal-Liberia cluster and south from Libya and Algeria, suggesting these are major trafficking routes that *Boko Haram* could take advantage of. In particular, a United Nations Panel of Experts on Libya that studied the illicit transfer of weapons stressed that arms left “Libya to 12 countries” in the North African region and West Africa, and these weapons made it through Niger to Nigeria, even before Muammar Gaddafi was ousted. As normalcy returned, arms unaccounted for are now sold via online sites (*Punch Editorial*, April 14, 2014; Steve and Chris, 2015).

In addition, high-quality weapons are purchased or trafficked from outside the region. UNODC has reported the seizure of weapons trafficked from outside the region into Nigeria by air near the border with Niger and by sea on Nigeria's southern coast. The sect's access to rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and other high calibre arms is generating concern within security establishments. RPGs are explosive projectile weapons used by insurgents to attack or destroy targets from long distances, while rocket launchers are devices that are used to propel missiles or explosives from long ranges. Some of the launchers can go as far as 900m. Possession of these high calibre weapons not only confers on *Boko Haram* deadly firepower, but also enables fighters to hit targets from long distance. The Baga attack that killed at least 185 people in April 2013 showed *Boko Haram's* substantial fire power, including machine guns, large numbers of RPGs and pick-up trucks

mounted with anti-aircraft guns (Onuoha, 2013). Steve and Chris argue that “the weaponry seen in Nigeria is highly-durable Russian and Eastern European stock that, if maintained properly, will remain usable for many years” (Steve and Chris, 2015). In his statement of the situation, Mike McGovern, along with other observers, agrees that:

“Given the group’s movement as well as its usage of rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), heavy weaponry, and bomb-making materials, it is evident that *Boko Haram* has increased access to regional criminal and illicit trafficking networks, and is growing increasingly aligned with global jihad” (McGovern, 2013).

2.4. Porous Borders and State Security

Effective border management is vitally important for the preservation of national security. This is why Spencer noted that “the border is the first line of defence against terrorism and the last line of a nation’s territorial integrity” (Spencer, 2007). Thus, *Boko Haram* insurgency in northern Nigeria (especially the northeast zone) has been exacerbated by Nigeria’s porous borders with Cameroon (1,690 kilometres) in the east, Niger (1,497 kilometres) in the north, Benin (773 kilometres) in the west, and Chad (87 kilometres) in the northeast. Most of these border areas are either mountainous or in the jungle (Onuoha, 2013). Irrespective of their geographic nature, a common feature of the nation’s borders is its porosity.

Map showing Nigeria’s International Borders as well as Locations of *Boko Haram* Attacks (Onuoha, 2013)



The porosity of Nigeria's borders owe as much to the way the colonialists carved up the African continent as to the nature of their management by post-colonial states. The original intention of the colonialists in the balkanisation of Africa was not to create a boundary per se, but to create a sphere of influence driven by political and economic motives. These boundaries - defined in terms of latitudes, longitudes, geometric circles and straight lines-split several ethnic and cultural communities (James, 1989). As a result, most African governments find it extremely difficult to administer international boundaries that sliced through cultural and ethnic groups.

While Nigeria's border problem is related to this colonial history, its porosity has been exacerbated by the failure of succeeding governments to properly administer these borders. As Okumu argues, "the high level of insecurity on African borders is largely due to the way they are administered and managed, and less to do with how colonialists drew them" (Okumu, 2010). In this respect, Nigerian borders are known for the limited presence of security and law enforcement officials. The few that are deployed are poorly trained, work with inadequate and obsolete equipment, and sometimes poorly remunerated. In addition, most border communities have for long been neglected by the government, making it difficult for government to leverage on their position to curtail illicit cross-border activities (Onuoha, 2013).

The recent disclosure by Nigeria's former Minister of Interior, Abba Moro, that there are over 1,499 irregular (illegal) and 84 regular (legal) officially identified entry routes into Nigeria, confirms the very porous state of these borders which permits illicit transnational arms trafficking. From conservative estimate by locals, there are well over 250 footpaths from Damaturu/Maiduguri axis that link or lead direct to Cameroon, Chad or Niger. These paths are mostly unknown by security agencies, are unmanned, unprotected. It has also been argued that the exact number of illegal routes and means through which illegal aliens, arms and ammunition are traffic into the country is largely unknown by the nation's security system. The problem is compounded by inadequate personnel, patrol vehicles, surveillance helicopters and equipments. Consequently, most of the borders are leaky and this makes effective control of intruders, smugglers and "merchants of death" a mirage, and thus serve as leaky routes for *Boko Haram* to smuggle small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into Nigeria (Sagir, 2013).

Given the porosity of borders, *Boko Haram* fighters have devised methods of concealing and successfully trafficking SALWs across and within Nigeria's borders. Such trafficking operations, according to Onuoha, could be considered under two broad dimensions: transnational and national trafficking.

- *Transnational Trafficking*

Transnational trafficking refers to the movement of arms and weapons across borders of sovereign States. The ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of persons, goods and services, has thus created a space that criminals exploit to facilitate cross-border trafficking. The uprising of Libya; the activities of jihadists in Mali and the civil war environment it created; the Al Shabaab, the Somalia-based jihadist group in East Africa; the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which shares the aspirations of *Boko Haram* terrorist group, emboldening the activities of *Boko Haram* and has added to the overwhelming challenge of the influx of

illegal aliens, arms, ammunitions and sophisticated IED materials into the country. Terrorist groups like AQIM acquired heavy weapons such as SAM-7 anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, transporting them to the Sahel region. These terrorist sects exploit loopholes in state capacity in monitoring cross-border trade in the region and relaxation of national borders intended to enhance regional integration, to perpetrate their nefarious activities (Sagir, 2013). The Northeastern part of Nigeria, where *Boko Haram* violent ravaging, shares boundaries with Niger Republic, Cameroon and Chad Republic. There is a large scale of smuggling of arms into Nigeria through this frontier and is a spillover effect from the internal conflict in Chad, Niger, Libya, Mali, Somalia, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso and nearby Sudan. Guns (and other destructive weapons) come into the country with ease through Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states because the vast border region is not effectively patrolled by Nigerian customs and other security agencies.

Boko Haram has been able to smuggle arms into Nigeria using various methods to beat security agencies at the borders and through the footpaths, especially the porous borders in Borno and Yobe States, which are the strongholds of the sect. These methods include the use of camels, donkeys and cows to traffic arms, ammunition and drugs, like cocaine into Nigeria. The fact that the weapons are small, light and collapsible makes it easy to be concealed and moved on camels and donkeys' back in a specially crafted skin or thatched bags with the aid of nomadic pastoralists or herders mainly meant for the illegal "expedition" unexpected, unsuspected and therefore undetected. Similarly, some cows and grains merchants in the North- East sub – region of the country, devices means of hiding cache of arms and ammunition in empty fuel tankers, under vehicles' engines and inside bags of grains mostly undetected by security agencies at the affected border posts. The "grains" are transported in large number via trucks, trailers, Lorries and old model pickup vans and jeeps with very little or no scrutiny is conducted on them by security agents given the huge size of the goods loaded on these vehicles (Sagir, 2013).

- *National Trafficking*

National trafficking refers to the smuggling of arms from one location to another within Nigerian territory. Similar to their methods of transnational arms smuggling, *Boko Haram* has equally adopted stocking in goods, loading in specially-adapted vehicles, hiding under cloths of couriers, and tunnelling for arms smuggling.

Boko Haram's arms smugglers sometimes conceal SALWs in bags of grains or carton of goods which are often loaded on heavy-duty vehicle like trucks, trailers, and Lorries. This is usually adopted when transporting arms from one community, town, and state to another. Such arms are been wrapped in polythene bags and stocked into empty fuel tankers or sewage tankers for long-distance transfer. For instance, 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 (*The Nation*, 14 July 2013). It was suspected that these arms were destined for *Boko Haram* insurgents operating in the region.

Furthermore, arms at times are hidden in improvised compartments in a vehicle designed to evade detection by security agents. Cars used for such operations are

constructed with chambers for concealing arms or additional fuel tank to minimise the rate of refuelling. On July 2013, an ex-Niger Delta militant, Anietie Etim and four others who allegedly specialised in buying arms in Bakassi Peninsula for supply to *Boko Haram* insurgents were arrested by the police (Okwe, 2013). The traffickers carefully constructed a special tank at the booth of an Audi salon car where they conceal arms for shipment to the north. The car also had an extra tank constructed for fuel to ensure enough fuel that will take them to their destination.

Moreover, part of the sect's weapons enter the country through the Apapa Wharf and are evacuated into tankers with the alleged assistance of some members of the authorized security agents suspected to be members of the group. The tankers often used had the inscription of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, formulated to deceive security operatives and erase any form of suspicion. Thus, the tankers would normally sail through all checkpoints until they get to their destination where the contents are again evacuated into designated mosques, particularly mosques where only members of the sect worship (Albert, April 20, 2012, retrieved).

Another method used by *Boko Haram* is tunnelling. The use of tunnels to traffic arms, drugs and other substances is not a new tactics among terrorist groups (Lichtenwald and Perri, 2013). *Boko Haram* has used such tunnels for arms trafficking, especially in Borno State. In July 2013, for instance, security forces discovered a vast network of underground tunnels connecting houses and many bunkers used by *Boko Haram* for trafficking SALWs in Bulabulin area (Soriwei, 2013). 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 security agents tighten the noose around known trafficking methods, *Boko Haram* militants have resorted to 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 or conceal improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on their backs as if they were carrying their babies (Odunsi, 2013). Such women arms couriers allegedly receive between N5, 000 and N50, 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, there are allegations that sympathizers in the Nigerian security deliberately leave doors of armouries unlocked for *Boko Haram*. For instance, on May 23, 2014, three persons, including a retired Deputy Superintendent of Police, DSP, and a corporal, Abu Haruna Solomon, respectively were arrested for illegal trafficking of arms and ammunition. The three suspects, who were heading to the North from Imo State, were intercepted in Nsukka. Items recovered from them include- 40 AK47 magazines, 4 boxes of AK47 live ammunition, 100 pieces of live cartridges, one piece of Denin Mopol khaki and charms concealed in a cap. Their confession showed alleged involvement in supplying of arms to insurgents in the Northern Nigeria (Uzodinma, 2014). The former President Olusegun Obasanjo ones alleged that "most of the ammunition we have found in wrong hands have come from security agencies... the police, the military... only recently we found that 3000 rounds of ammunitions were sold here in Abuja by the police and in 10s by the military" (Okiro, 2014).

3. Challenges of Containing SALWs Proliferation in Nigeria

The high circulation of SALWS in Nigeria is a product of the interplay of several interrelated factors. The proliferation derives principally from the internal socio-economic and political dynamics of Nigeria, compounded by globalisation, as well as the nature of SALW.

The crude nature of Nigerian politics is one key factor driving the process of SALWs proliferation. Politics in Nigeria -especially electoral politics – is defined and approached by politicians as a do-or-die affair, or warfare. The stake in Nigerian politics is incredibly high, making politicians desperate in the struggle to win elective positions. As a result, many of them recruit 'specialists of violence' - cultists, gangs and thugs – to attain and retain political power. In some cases, these 'specialists' are compensated with sensitive elective and appointive offices. The result is either gross ineptitude or recrudescence of political warfare, further exacerbating governance failure in Nigeria. This goes a long way to explaining the violent brand of Nigerian politics, usually painted with blood and money. The incredible logic becomes: more money in politics, more SALWs. And more SALWs in politics, more blood spilling in the name of politics.

Governance failure, in turn, adds another dimension to the proliferation of SALWs. The term 'governance' is used here in its generic form to encompass not only how state institutions and structures are managed, but also the processes of decision-making and policy formulation, the capacity to execute these policies, resource allocation, information flow and the efficiency of officials (Moulaye, 2006). Governance, therefore, seeks institutions and rules that promote more equitable socioeconomic outcomes and enhances human development. Accordingly, governance failure entails the inability of state actors, institutions and agencies to use public resources and authorities to ensure the protection of lives and properties, as well as the delivering of public goods necessary for the advancement of human security and development. It is a product of gross mismanagement and embezzlement of public resources, resulting in mounting poverty, unemployment and poor/failed delivery of basic services, not least security. Despite enormous oil wealth, over 70% of Nigeria's 150 million people subsist on less than US\$1 per day. Owing to frustration and deprivation, many have taken to criminal activities such as piracy, armed robbery, kidnapping, militancy and terrorism, which contribute to the demand side of arms penetration and circulation (Onuoha, 2009).

Also related to – or defining – the problem of governance failure is the issue of corruption. Corruption creates a security paradox that feeds into the cycle of SALWs proliferation in Nigeria. Corruption has become largely institutionalised in both the public and private sectors in Nigeria, and the security sector has become worse for it. Given widespread poverty and the low wages of security agents, some greedy security personnel are easily corrupted by transnational arms traffickers – or are themselves involved in illegal business. On several occasions, security agents have been found aiding arms trafficking in Nigeria. For example, a major and five other soldiers of the Nigerian Army were convicted in November 2008 of selling over 7 000 arms [valued at over 100 million Nigerian naira (₦)] – including AK-47 rifles, rocket launchers and machine guns – to Niger Delta militants between January 2000 and December 2006. These arms were stolen from the depots of the Nigerian Army at the Command and Staff College, Jaji, and the One Base

Ordnance, Kaduna (Onuoha, 2009).

Governance failure also manifests in the inability of the Nigerian state to provide public security. In the last decade, the Nigerian state has demonstrated 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. The consequence of the failure of public security is the intermittent outbreak of violent conflicts in recent times. The failure of public security in Nigeria has led communities to indulge in different forms of 'self-help' security measures, ranging from vigilante groups to community-owned arms stockpiling. Having lost confidence in the Nigerian state, parties to some of these conflicts have become entangled in a security dilemma. The quest to procure more arms to guarantee personal and community protection from perceived and real enemies is fuelling the 'domestic arms race'. Hence, breaking the chain of SALWs circulation has remained a major challenge to the Nigerian government.

This unfortunate situation, in turn, stokes the demand for more arms by both the government and non-state actors (individuals, groups and communities, among others) to maintain security. While the government increases its stock through importation and local manufacturing at the Defence Industry Corporation of Nigeria (DICON), non-state actors patronise transnational traffickers and burgeoning unregulated local and artisanal arms manufactures. In November 2010, for instance, the police uncovered arms fabrication outfits in Barkin Ladi and Kuru in the Jos South local government area of Plateau State. In the south-eastern zone of Nigeria, a locally manufactured firearm known as 'Awka-made' enjoys patronage from hunters, armed robbers, cultists and kidnappers, among others (Onuoha, 2015).

The challenge of containing SALWs proliferation is further compounded by contradictions inherent in globalisation. Globalisation is the product of numerous factors, including reduced trade barriers, lower transportation and communication costs, and increased movements of capital, knowledge, technology, culture and people across borders with fewer restrictions (Onuoha, 2010). Its logic presents opportunities and risks for the world, with potential security implications for states, corporate bodies and individuals. Malhotra (2011) identified globalization factors that facilitate proliferation of illicit trade in arms:

(a) Political and economic integration are coupled with lesser restrictions in migration and human movement. This helps the arms dealers to fortify their present business connections and tap new ones. Dealers migrate to various regions, motivated by business expansion or reduced operational risks.

(b) Banking reforms and capital mobility have aided the black market to spread its trade internationally, utilizing every angle of the well linked financial market. This also gives rise to offshore markets and tax shelters. An illustration of banking innovation is E-money. Banks have introduced cards bearing microchips, which are able to store large sums of money. These cards are portable outside conventional channels or can be easily bartered among individuals.

(c) The linkage of banks with the internet has posed a new challenge in combating illegitimate activities in the financial sector. E-banking has digitized money making it prone to criminality. Even though, it has numerous benefits for the world at large, it is misused for money laundering, credit card scams and check-kiting. Adding to this, economic integration among regions blesses arm brokers with more opportunities to shelter their money, by investing in different stock exchanges. Numerous other illegal practices are a by-product of a deregulated financial sector, but money laundering is at the apex. Money Laundering or 'cleansing of money' is an unlawful practice of concealing the point of origin, identity or destination of the funds, when performing a particular financial transaction. The criminals manoeuvre money across borders gaining from banks in countries with lax anti-laundering policies.

(d) Profound expansion of commercial airline and freight industry (making transport cheaper and easier) are instrumental in increased penetration of arms in conflict zones. Global merger of airline companies, supply chains, shipping firms make it tough to supervise unlawful practices in air and water.

(e) The growth of global communication in the past two decades has been unfathomable. This has enhanced the ability of arms dealers to communicate internationally through the web at a cheap rate.

Globalisation, which has enhanced the movement of goods and people across borders, has equally facilitated the activities of criminal groups. In this regard, the ECOWAS region and Nigeria are suffering from the negative effects of the relaxation of national boundaries intended to enhance regional integration, but inadvertently facilitating transnational trafficking in SALWs. With porous land and maritime borders coupled with ineffectual national security systems, SALWs proliferation has grown by leaps and bounds in Nigeria.

Lastly, small arms and light weapons by virtue of their several characteristics make them very attractive to paramilitary and irregular forces and even untrained civilians thereby assisting in their proliferation. Apart from governments increased their demand for SALW to counter political insurgency and suppress domestic opposition movements, a number of different factors account for their 'high desirability' on the country. Their simplicity makes them easy to operate even by people who have had very little or no military training. This explains their use by *Boko Haram* combatants as it was the case in many armed conflicts in Africa Liberia, Sierra Leone, Code d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Somalia, South Sudan, and Libya among others. According to Bashir Malam (2014), "small arms are plentiful, cheap and durable these weapons are highly desired and profitable commodity and are often sold with little domestic and international regulation by numerous weapons producers, from surplus military stockpiles, and by private arms dealers" (p. 266).

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

The activities of *Boko Haram* have cost Nigeria a lot in terms of human, material and financial losses. The implication of all this is that nobody is immune from the dangers inherent in arms proliferation in the land The Nigerian government has responded with different measures to weaken or defeating the group, of which military crackdown is the

most prominent. The sect's access to sophisticated arms has enabled its fighters to continue to occasionally mount deadly attacks.

A successful resolution of the SALW conundrum in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that addresses the underlying factors creating the demand for SALW and the sources of supply, rather than treating the SALW problem as an independent or a compartmentalized issue. The proliferation of SALWs is posing a grave threat to security and development in Nigeria. The following intervention mechanisms are recommended to include:

1. The porosity of Nigeria's borders is an important factor in its survival. Thorough shoring up of border security constitutes a critical component of any short-term measures to degrade the sect. The Nigeria government needs to evolve a new approach to securing the border entry points: land, sea and airports, one that includes an integrated mix of development interventions for border communities, trained and dedicated border officials, and enhanced border situation awareness infrastructure.
2. The use of innovative technology – radars and alarm systems are major ways modern nations utilize to monitor and secure their borders. Some radar can be used as primary detection sensor for long range remote surveillance platforms. The ability to detect slow moving targets, even in complex mountainous, thickly forested terrains and large open areas make some radars such as Blighter Radar ideal for remote surveillance and detection of vehicles and people trying to cross borders illegally. In remote areas, it is common for intruders to follow natural routes across the land, valleys, mountain paths or animal tracks. In these instances, Mobile Surveillance System provides a cost effective way of monitoring key areas with limited resources. Similarly, Blighter Radar, unlike traditional Air Surveillance Radar can effectively surveil both the land and low air zone simultaneously (Sagir, 2013).
3. Greater surveillance is needed to monitor *Boko Haram* and identify its supply networks, which can be targeted by Nigerian or international forces. While there may be some successes in slowing the trafficking of arms across Nigeria's borders, it will be very difficult to track and intercept supplies from Nigeria's own informal weapons dealing network. Intelligence-led operations (with Western technical assistance) targeting the major arms dealers could at least reduce the supply. Law enforcement efforts limiting *Boko Haram's* ability to earn income from kidnapping and hostage trading, including using legal measures to target the group's funding and leadership would also limit the funds it had available for weapons purchases.
4. Consolidation of and greatly increased security for Nigerian police stations, and military bases will increase the risk to *Boko Haram* of raids on such facilities, and reduce its single greatest source of weaponry. An effort to enhance prison security is important in order to prevent the escape of suspected and convicted *Boko Haram* members.
5. However, it will be of utmost importance to tackle the deep structural socio-economic problems and political grievances in northern Nigeria that will have the most success in fundamentally weakening *Boko Haram*. Government at various

levels should develop infrastructure and create employment to reduce poverty, increase literacy, and re-engineer socio-economic change.

6. The National Orientation Agency should partner with credible civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media to mount enlightenment and orientation programmes on the practice of security situation awareness or security consciousness critical to crime prevention. This will enable people to appreciate the importance of monitoring developments around them and to report unwholesome activities (arms trafficking) to security agencies.
7. Adoption and implementation of a national arms control strategy (NACS) to guide the clean-up and prevention of SALWs circulation. The proposed establishment of a National Commission on the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NATCOM) should be fast-tracked to lead this effort, involving collaboration with CSOs, NATFORCE and other stakeholders.

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