

Human Security Under Threat: The Proliferation of Small Arms in Nigeria

Waziri Rabiu Adamu, Dr. Bakri Bin Mat, Dr. Shamsuddin L. Taya

Department of Political Science, Bayero University Kano, Nigeria

School of International Studies, College of Law, Government and International Studies Universiti Utara, Malaysia

School of International Studies, College of Law, Government and International StudiesUniversiti Utara, Malaysia

School of International Studies, College of Law, Government and International StudiesUniversitiUtara, Malaysia

Corresponding Author: Waziri Rabiu Adamu

Abstract: The proliferation of small arms, their illegal use and its threat can be felt directly by the people and the communities. Most of small arms in Nigeria are those stolen arms from the government armories and stockpiles. In addition, there are other small arms that have been trafficking into the country from war-torn and conflict zones of the African continent. This article therefore, focuses on the threat of the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria from the human security perspective. The main objective of the article is to highlight the impact of small arms on individuals and the communities. This article utilizes secondary data as its source of information. The data was mainly generated from the interviews, books and journal articles. The article therefore, observes that the proliferation of small arms is a challenge to security of the individuals and communities. It causes massive death and injuries of civilians through conflict and armed crimes. It also found that, small arms are used to perpetuate armed violence and crimes that include the armed robbery, kidnapping and ethno-religious conflict. Consequently, this circumstance renders many civilians internally displaced persons. Furthermore, small arms led to the waste of financial resources which could be used to provide social services that promote human lives such as clean water, education and healthcare services among others. The article calls for an extraordinary measure against the proliferation of small arms in order to protect individual lives and their communities.

Keywords: Small Arms, Armed Crimes, Violence, Threat, Nigeria

Date of Submission: 21-04-2018

Date of acceptance: 08-05-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

Many countries across the world especially the developing nation states of Africa, Asia and Latin America, have been experiencing the challenge of illicit small arms (Eloma, Ugwumba, & Abanga 2014). Meanwhile, Nigeria faces security challenges and one of such challenges is the proliferation of illicit small arms. This article therefore, intends to highlight the menace of the proliferation of small arms on individuals and community, from the human security perspective in Nigeria. Upon all threat to individual and communities, the proliferation of small arms affects human lives, peace and development. It poses threat to socio-economic dimension (Stott 2016; Gikonyo 2015; Greene & Marsh 2012; Stohl & Hogendoom, 2011; Sear 2016).

Even though, there is no accurate data on the quantity of small arms in Nigeria, reports have shown that out of 10 million illicit small arms in West Africa one to three million are in circulation in Nigeria (Hoen et al. 2007; Ebo 2006; Nnamdi 2002). On the other hand, Onuoha (2012) has reported that, over 70 percent of the total illegal small arms in West Africa are in Nigeria, and further laments that, it is worrisome that there is regular interception of illegal small arms trafficking within and across the border by security agencies in Nigeria (Onuoha, 2012).

Most official reports showed that most of the illicit small arms in Nigeria are stolen arms from the government armories and stockpile. Additional sources of small arms include the arms by these security forces who returned from peace-keeping operations, the remaining of guns used during the civil war, local manufactured, smuggled arms and arms from war and conflict zones in other African countries among others (Obuoforibo, 2011; Edoko, 2011; Onuoha, 2012; Okeke & Oji, 2014). Largely due to the porous borders, Nigeria has become a destination and a center of small arms in Africa (Iloani and Sunday, 2016). Arms illegally smuggled into Nigeria were destined for places where there is violence, ethnic and religious conflict, insurgent

activities and armed crimes such as the Niger Delta region in the south-south, Jos in the central region, Kaduna in the North West and Maiduguri in the north eastern region of the country. In Kaduna State for instance, these forms of arms found themselves in the state due to many factors that the porosity of the borders, criminality, conflict in other neighboring countries, ethnic and religious conflict among others (Emmanuel & Charles, 2013). Onuoha (2012) argue that with the small arms in circulation in Nigeria, old security threats have remained and even become worst, while new security threats have emerged that include the armed robbery, kidnapping and cattle rustling. These forms of arms have been transformed in terms of functionality. They have become the most useful weapons for violent crimes and conflict (Okoro, 2011).

Although, an attempt has been made on other dimensions of the subject matter, this article therefore, concerns about the impact of the proliferation of small arms on human security in Nigeria, as such, the article, contains six items that include the introduction, conceptual analysis, overview of small arms and armed crimes and violent the, proliferation of small arms and dynamics in Nigeria, consequences of small arms on human security and conclusion.

II. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Human security is primarily a security framework which placed priority on the individuals in relation to his wants and fear. It differs from the traditional notion of security that placed state as the object of security. Human security focuses on the freedom of the individual from and wants. Moreover, the United Nations Commission on Human Security commonly defines human security as “*the protection of the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfillment*”. According to UNTFHS (2000) human security means protecting fundamental freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical and widespread threats. Therefore, human security being it focuses on the individual as the referent object and an end receiver of all security concerns; it can be recognised as freedom of fear and or want. It is the freedom against violent threats. It means that, threat and challenges to security has transcend national defense, and law and order to include all political, economic and social issues that guarantee a life free from risk and fear (Hussein, K., Gnisci, O. and Wanjiru, J. 2004).

Fundamentally, there is no universally acceptable definition of the concept of small arms, Nevertheless, small arms refer to the weapons designed for the use of single person. According to Wezeman (2003) small arms are broadly categorised as those weapons intended for use by individual; they are weapons designed for personal use. Smallarms are those weapons used by one person that are particularly firearms and other destructive devices such as incendiary bombs, gas bombs, and landmines that includes the pistols, machine guns, light machine guns and rifles (Gerald and Caleb, 2015:12). Riviere (2016) perceived small arms as anything from pistol to light machine guns, classified as weapons of choice for criminal activities, suicide, and a constant motivator to violence and crimes.

III. OVERVIEW OF SMALLARMS ANDARMED CRIMES AND VIOLENCE

In most societies Nigeria inclusive, there are no useful instruments for armed crimes and violence other than small arms. It has been revealed by numerous scholars that, the availability of small arms leads to the increasing rates of violent crimes and conflict. In this line, Nte (2011) argue that the widespread availability of small arms contributes to the high incidence of violent crimes. Similarly, Njoroge (2006) argue that, the widespread of small arms has increased the level of armed crimes in both rural and urban areas that include the armed robbery, cattle rustling and violent conflicts. Moreover, the used of illicit small arms intensifies violence and endangers people. It has been observed that, most of the incidences of violent crimes are being committed by using small arms (Emanuel and Ndimbuwa, 2013). Hayuma (2008) revealed that, majority of those who engaged in armed robbery and kidnapping are perpetuating the crimes with the small arms. This circumstance does not only pose threat to human lives but also, affects socio-economic aspect of the communities.

Armed violence on the other hand, has been exacerbated by the fact that illicit small arms are been largely available across regions worldwide. Many of these weapons are illicitly smuggled and they are usually used to perpetuate violence. In Nigeria, some of the violence perpetuates with the small arms include inter and intra communal violence, ethno-religious conflict and electoral violence (Ginifer and Ismail, 2005). Vines (2005) revealed that since the end of military rule in 1999, fighting in several regions of the country has claimed thousands of lives. Kaduna State in north western Nigeria has been particularly badly affected. Additionally, in the state, ethnic groups have fought each other in the name of ethnic and religious interest for example, conflict between Hausa Fulani Muslims and Kataf Christians in the southern part of the state which has been perpetuated with small arms.

One of the security challenges to individuals and communities in Nigeria is the proliferation of illegal small arms. In Nigeria, high circulation and illicit use of small arms endangers individual lives and the communities, leading to the massive death, injury and the loss of property worst millions of Naira during conflicts and even in the aftermath of the conflict. On this light, Onuoha (2012) revealed that, the presence of small arms in ethno-religious conflict in Jos has caused serious devastation on human and properties. The Nigeria's challenge of small arms is not new but, its increasing availability has helped in fueling ethno-religious conflict, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and other violent crimes (Onuoha, 2012; Edeko 2011). Availability of these forms of arms, prolongs conflict, facilitates internal displacement, disrupts social peace, devastates economic livelihood of individuals and it creates fear (Onuoha 2012; Munir 2011; Boutwell & Klare 2000; Ero & Ndinga-Muvumba 2004). Jinefer and Ismail (2005) argues that in Nigeria, the proliferation and illicit small arms has encouraged armed crimes and violent conflict that consequence a considerable death and injuries. This include conflict in Kaduna State, Plateau State Benue and Taraba in northern Nigeria among others.

In a related development, Stohl and Hogendoom (2010) portrayed that, the widely availability of small arms led to their excessive used in violent conflict, organised criminal activities and violent crimes that directly and indirectly affects hundred thousand of people and severely undermine socio-economic activities. Stohl and Tuttle (2009) argue that the threat of illegal use of small arms prevents the delivery of humanitarian and economic aid, and it contribute to the flow of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Thus, given its humanitarian effect, proliferation of illicit small arms can be described as threat to individuals and the communities.

Consequences of Small Arms on Human Security in Nigeria

The consequences of small arms proliferation have been extensive. In spite of its evident threat to the security of people and the community, the consequences of illegal use of small arms have also been felt directly by the people. It is clear to state that, the possession and use of small arms in crimes commitment has increased and becoming a threat to the security of individuals and their communities. The most dangerous and most serious problem is the use of small arms by criminal groups and gangsters which among other things, is associated with a greater incident of violent crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, hostage taken and rape. The circulation of small arms threatens human survival; it intimidates people and poses threat to their freedom of movement in economic activities.

However, besides the deaths and injuries, the threat of small arms also caused financial and property losses due to the several incidences of violent conflict and armed crimes in the state. Onuoha (2012) reveal that, substantial amount of money that indeed, could be used in providing basic social services that promotes human lives and development that include clean water, education and healthcare services among others were duly spent on security by the government.

The insecurity caused by the proliferation of illicit small arms also limits health care services, which prevents adequate care for preventable and treatable conditions and diseases. Moreover, conflicts fueled by small arms hinders educational opportunities as schools may not open during the situation of insecurity or cannot reopen after conflicts because of the death or other loss of teachers, the loss of equipment and lack of students who might flee during violence.

The circulation of small arms is a rising problem to community, causes and intensifies insecurity. This perception is in line with the statement made by Banerjee and Muggar (2002) who expressed that, small arms are the major source of insecurity and has massive impediment to sustainable development. Small arms constitute a grave threat. The number of people who die every year in homicide, conflict and other violent crimes is becoming greater given the circulation of illicit small arms. In fact, Uwa and Anthony (2015) expressed that since 1999, more than 10,000, an average of 1000 people annually were killed in Nigeria due to the proliferation and use of small arms. Additionally, the proliferation and illicit use of small arms becomes a major threat to human life and socio-economic activities (Adetiba, 2012). This is so, the case especially in those areas of the country where violent crimes and conflict prevails. Thus, it indicates that due to the large illicit small arms in circulation the conflicts get even severe and increasing the danger of creating huge people displacements, fear and insecurity.

However, in Nigeria, since 1999, substantial numbers of people have been killed as a result of the availability and use of small arms in violent conflict and crimes. It has been noted that the occurrence of ethno-religious armed violence in the northern region has led to extensive killings and material destruction (Ginifer & Ismail, 2005). Similarly, Uwa and Anthony (2015) explicated that, in urban areas of the country, injuries due to small arms have increased as much as ten-fold because, small arms are used in committing most homicides. It has been revealed that, possession and use of small arms are associated with greater incidences of violent crimes, murder, armed robbery and cattle rustling (Emanuel & Ndimbuwa, 2013).

For Small Arms Survey (2002), the possession and use of small arms contributes to a series of humanitarian effects, including forced displacement, declining access to basic needs and increase the scale and pace of killing. Moreover, small arms contribute to deaths and injuries; killing hundreds of thousands and injuring thousands more every year (Stohl and Hogendoom, 2010). Hence, it has been reported that, due to the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria, there are millions of people that are internally displaced (Onuoha, 2012). Furthermore, Hagendoom (2010) stressed that, in addition to the death and injuries, small arms is contributing to the force separation of families, and it also undermines traditional family structures, and support systems. Small arms are use in forced disappearance, torture, and for sexual violence, particularly rape and forced prostitution.

These forms of weapons therefore, serves as the instrument for violent crimes and conflict where theykill, injures and intimidate millions of people both men and women. This assertion is closely related to the view of (John, Mohammed, Pinto & Nkanta, 2007; Nte, 2011) who revealed that, in Nigeria, since 1999, every year thousands of people are been killed due to the illicit circulation of small arms. The often attendant of small arms in violent conflict and armed crimes have proved their being the present day's weapons of human destruction. This perception is corroborated by the statement that, the reoccurrence of ethno-religious armed violence in the northern region has led to extensive killings and material destruction (Ginifer and Ismail, 2005).

IV. CONCLUSION

At this point, it is pertinent therefore to state that the danger which the proliferation of small arms pose to individuals and the communities has been observed respectively. Globally, and in Nigeria particularly, proliferation and illegal use of small arms fuels violent crimes and conflict with attendant human and material losses. The use of small arms in violence is quite enough to force large number of people to leave their homes. Small armsplay a key role in intimidating people and causing destruction to human lives and socio-economic development. It has been recognized that small arms are the preferred instruments for armed crimes and violence where their usage has direct consequences on human lives; leading to the death and injury of hundred thousand of people every year in Nigeria since 1999. Furthermore, the fact is that, small arms at the hands of illegal users especially the criminal people, are not in any way helpful to the security of people and their communities. It causes fear, insecurity, hinders the free movement of people and limits their routine socio-economic activities. At this junction, this article is therefore, calls for extraordinary measures against illicit small arms order to ensure free society and the security of people.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Adetiba, T. C. (2012). Socio-political and Economic Development under Threat: TheProliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria.
- [2]. Boutwell J. & M.T Klare (2000). A Scourge of Small Arms” American Academy of Arts and Science, 282 No. 6
- [3]. Edeko, S. E. (2011). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa: a case study of the Niger Delta in Nigeria. *Sacha Journal of Environmental Studies*, 1(2), 55-80.
- [4]. Emanuel, M., &Ndimbwa, T. (2013). The Impact of Small Arms on Social Security in Tanzania *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 3(11), 520.
- [5]. Ero C., &Ndinga, M. A. (2004). Small Arms and Light Weapons, in AdekeyeAdebajo andIsmail Rashid. *West African Security Challenges: Building pace in a Troubled the region*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- [6]. Gerald, O., & Caleb, A. (2015). The Role of Small Arms and Light WeaponProliferation inWest African Conflicts Defence and Security Studies Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja, Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 9(3), 76-85.
- [7]. Ginifer, J., & Ismail, O. (2005). Armed violence and poverty in Nigeria. Centre for International Cooperation and Security. Working Paper
- [8]. Greene, O., & Marsh, N. (Eds.). (2013). *Small Arms, Crime, and Conflict: Global Governance and the threat of armed violence* (Vol. 15). Rutledge.
- [9]. Hayuma, D. (2008).Regulating Small Arms brokering in eastern Africa. From <http://unrec.org/docs/Small%20Arms%20Brokering%20in%20Eastern%20Africa.pdf>
- [10]. Hussein, K., Gnisci, O. &Wanjiru, J. (2004). Security and Human Security: An Overview of Concepts and Initiatives What Implications for West Africa. Issues Paper.
- [11]. Iloani, A., Sunday, E. S. (2016). Nigeria: Illegal Guns Flooding in Nigeria, Fuelling violence. Daily Trust
- [12]. Munir, M. (2011). The Role of Light Weapons in creating internal instability: The Casestudy of Pakistan. *Journal of Political Studies*, 18(2), 243.
- [13]. Njoroge, M. (2006). Small Arms and light weapons in Kenya. Sourced from http://archive.maryknollogc.org/Index_Folder/32.2/32.2.3_Kenya_Arms.html

- [14]. Nte, N. D. (2011). The changing patterns of small and light weapons (SALW) Proliferation and the challenges of national security in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Africa Studies*, 1(1), 5-23.
- [15]. Obuoforibo, G. I. (2011). Small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation and instability in the Niger Delta: An analysis of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process. *SPECIAL ISSUE: THE NIGER DELTA*, 49.
- [16]. Okere, V. O., & Oji, R. O. (2014). The Nigerian State and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Northern part of Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 4 (1), 41-58.
- [17]. Okoro, V. U. (2007). Proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa: Implications for sub-regional security: ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT LEAVENWORTHKS
- [18]. Onuoha, F. C. (2011). Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Human Security in Nigeria. *Conflict Trends*, (1), 50-56.
- [19]. Reviere, P. (2016). Small Arms Cover-up. The Problem of Proliferation. Le monde diplomatique, January 2001 from www.globalissues.org/article/78/smallarms
- [20]. Sears, N. A. (2012). Controlling Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation: The Potential of the Arms Trade Treaty. *Paterson Review of International Affairs*, 12, 35-59.
- [21]. Small arms Survey (2002), Monitoring the Proliferation of Small Arms Report Available at <http://www.fas.org/asmp/campaigns/smallarm.html>
- [22]. Stohl, R. & Tuttle, D. (2009). The Challenges of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Africa. *Conflict Trends* Issue 1, 2009
- [23]. Stohl, R. J., & Hagedorn, E. J. (2010). Stopping the destructive spread of small arms: how small arms and light weapons proliferation undermines security and development. Centre for American Progress.
- [24]. Stott, N. (2016). Small Arms Proliferation in Southern Africa: Reducing the Impact of real Weapons of Mass Destruction.
- [25]. UNTFHS (2000). Human Security in Theory and Practice: An Overview of the Human Security Concept and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. Human Security Unit, United Nations.
- [26]. Uwa, O. G., & Anthony, A. B. (2015). Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Problem of National Security in Nigeria. *International Affairs and Global Strategy* Retrieve <http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/jesr/article/download/1859/1858>
- [27]. Vines, A. (2005). Combating Light Weapons Proliferation in West Africa

Waziri Rabi Adamu. Human Security Under Threat: The Proliferation Of Small Arms In Nigeria.” *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 23 no. 05, 2018, pp. 17-21.