
**CONTROLLING THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS IN NIGERIA:
EMERGING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

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ABSTRACT: *Small arms have emerged as serious security issue because of their perpetual and indiscriminate usage to commit crimes, initiate, and reinforce violent conflicts and conduct acts of terrorism with abandon recklessness, causing high incidence of mortality, deterring peace and the potential to sustain it worldwide. The measures often adopted to regulate small arms overtime have yielded little or no result because of increased demand for and supply of small arms and light weapons are readily induced more speedily than envisaged worldwide. Recent accounts revealed that Nigeria is awash with small arms, and that large quantities of these weapons are found in illegal hands in nooks and crannies of the country. These weapons are used to commit crimes and fuel violent conflicts, thereby thwarting the achievement of peace and its sustainability in the country. Poor security network, corruption, border leakages and politics have played dominant roles in the excessive availability of arms in Nigeria. Thus, this study reviewed the various arms control mechanisms put in place and used by government overtime to control arms in order to promote peace in the country. It was argued that if small arms are effectively controlled a serene atmosphere will be stimulated which will promote peace and with the demonstration of good governance its sustainability will be assured. The issues and challenges underpinning arms control as well as policy advocacy were highlighted for proactive actions to be taken in order to promote peace in the country.*

KEY WORDS: small arms, small arms proliferation, disarmament, arm control

INTRODUCTION

Small arms have become a serious security challenge in the world today. This is due to their lethal efficient nature, easy accessibility, indiscriminate usage, and the devastating havocs they often used to wreak in many societies around the world. The excessive availability of small arms is the repercussion of the experiences of the Cold War. The rise in arms production and its proliferation dynamics have direct connection with the events that evolved during the Cold War. The United Nations Disarmament Commission (1995) reported that one factor bearing on the availability, circulation, and accumulation of small and light weapons in many conflict areas is their earlier supply by Cold War opponent. The role played by Cold War in intensifying the production of arms was further reinforced by the activities of globalisation. The global experience provided grounds for easy networking of arms dealers, easy procurement and transportation of arms illicitly across international borders, to weak states with porous borders and weak or absent state control system (Stemmet, 2001). Globalisation expanded the arms market and created room for the emergence of sophisticated arm brokers. With the sheer number of companies producing arms rising, production of arms also increased. There are 640 to 650 million small arms circulating in the world today (Milmo & Holt, 2006). Also, about 8 million new guns and 14 billion units of ammunition are manufactured every year by 1,249 companies in 92 countries – with the United States and the

European Union producing about 75 percent (Milmo & Holt, 2006). Similarly, with 16 billion units of military ammunition produced every year, there are small arms and ammunition enough to shoot every man, woman and child on the planet twice (McCullum, 2016). Thus, small arms have continued to account for increased rate of mortality on a daily basis, worldwide. According to Kytömäki (2015), more than 2,000 people are killed as a consequence of armed violence daily and between 500,000 and 750,000 people are killed annually.

Therefore, small arms remain a factor in armed conflict, the displacement of people, organised crimes and acts of terrorism, thereby undermining peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable social and economic development (Geneva Declaration, 2011). Specifically, Africa houses large cascade of arms, which are used to conduct various criminal acts and prosecute conflicts. According to Small Arms Survey (2007), small arms in Africa are distributed among their users as follows: 79% are in the hands of civilians; 16% of the military; 3% of the police and 2% of insurgents. This suggests that in Africa, arms are more in the hands of civilians than the real security agencies that are meant to bear arms. This idea is corroborated by the fact that over 378 million weapons (which amount to 59% of the world's small arms and light weapons arsenal) are in the hands of civilians. The remaining 38% are owned by government armed forces, 3% by the police and 0.2% by armed opposition groups, totaling 638.9 million (Shattered Lives, 2003 & Small Arms Survey, 2001).

There is an estimated 100 million small arms in Africa, especially around the Horn, including Somalia, Ethiopia, Southern Sudan, the violent belt of Central Africa and many areas of West Africa. In some countries like Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, possession of guns is almost synonymous with the people's cultural lives; almost everyone carries a personal weapon (McCullum, 2016). The undue availability of small arms in illegal hands has continued to rob the continent of its peace and stability, which were its defining identity in the past. Also, out of over 8 million small arms found in West Africa, a substantial proportion is found in Nigeria. In the last one decade in Nigeria, about one million small arms were reported to be in illegal hands (Alimba, 2004). It is pathetic that current development reveals that small arms have increased alarmingly in the country, signifying that more arms would probably be at the disposal of individuals, who ordinarily are not supposed to bear arms. This portends danger for the country because of the havoc these weapons will be used to perpetuate. Such illegal possession of arms will continue to engender various forms of crimes, fuelling violent conflicts, promoting militancy and even in conducting act of terrorism, thereby undermining peace and development in the country. The increase in the firepower of ethnic militias such as Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC); The Movement for the Emanicipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and that of the Avengers, Herdsmen and Boko Haram insurgents are the resultant effects of excessive availability of arms in the country. At the micro level, small arms have contributed significantly to the formation of militarised behaviour, attitude and worldview, which have promoted the mentality of resolving differences with gun. Thus, the use guns has become a channel of communication in expressing grievances which seems to have become fashionable in Nigeria, because of the plethora of available guns in the country. Sequel to the insecurity challenge in the country, individuals are desirous of bearing arms for personal security, which has increased the demand for arms in the country. One of the leading dailies captured in its front page that "Illegal guns flooding Nigeria,

fuelling violence” (Daily Trust, 2016). The newspaper further reported that there were “over 3 million small arms and light weapons in Nigeria”.

This type of unrestrained possession of guns will deter peace and stability in the country. Therefore, it becomes imperative to control arms in order to ensure the promotion of a stable environment that will not only encourage peace but also promote its sustainability. Effective arms control will promote peace and ensure stability, especially because it will encourage the reduction of the amount of arms in illegal hands and fosters arms free society. Arms control has been a difficult task because of its security and socio-economic implications as well as lack of trust, which has been circumventing arm deals worldwide. In Nigeria, several efforts have been made to regulate arms overtime. Unfortunately, the efforts have only produced marginal result because of injustice, corruption, marginalisation, security issues, and politics. However, the amnesty programme remained a remarkable policy in arms retrieval exercise in the country. Despite this development, the existing socio-economic and security parameters inducing the demand for and supply of arms are more steadily generated, making the control measures ineffective in regulating arms as expected, in the country. Based on this preliminary introduction, this study interrogates the issues of control measures in Nigeria. In doing this, disarmament efforts are examined as in the case of amnesty programme and other measures put in place overtime by the government to control arms. The issues and challenges that underscore arms control measures are explicated, to expound the factors that have been circumventing the effective and efficient arms control system in Nigeria.

Conceptualisation of Small Arms and Small Arms Proliferation

Small arms denote weapons designed for individual use, such as pistols, sub-machine gun, assault rifles and light machine guns (Department for International Development, 2002). Small arms are considered as any means of lethality other than sheer use of physical force (Rana, 1994). The 1997 report of the United Nations Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms conceived of small arms as “weapons designed for personal use, designed for use by several persons serving as a crew”. The Report further indicated that small arms are “revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine-guns; assault rifles; light machine-guns, while light weapons include: heavy machine-guns; hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers; portable anti-aircraft guns; portable anti-tank guns; recoilless rifles; portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems; and mortars of calibers less than 100mm”. Small arms can, therefore, be defined as anything used by an individual to injure or cause the death of a person or persons other than sheer use of physical strength. Thus, small arms range from stick, stone, knife to the conventional weapons contained in the 1997 Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. The phrase “small arms proliferation” denotes the “unregulated availability of small arms” (Muggah, 2001). Lock (2001) described it as the “uncontrolled spread of small arms”. These descriptions simply imply that small arms proliferation is the degree of rapid increase in the quantities of small arms existing in a place, be it a community, region, country or continent (Alimba, 2008). In other words, small arms proliferation is the propensity at which individuals can easily get access to arms through illegal channels because of its excessive availability in a society. What characterises small arms as weapons of choice for non-state actors such as warlords, armed rebels, bandits, insurgents, terrorists and even criminals are the fact that they are cheap to buy; simple to use; capacity to last for a longer period; easy to carry about; easy to conceal and its extreme lethal nature (Alimba, 2004). These factors are equally

responsible for the manner at which small arms and light weapons are proliferating in Nigeria and generally in the world.

Conceptual Understanding of Arms Control

According to Nwolise (1988), arms control “has to do mainly with restraint in the production of new quality weapons and the quantity of such weapons. It also focuses on the limitation of spread of weapon systems such as preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons”. Arms control is a bilateral or multilateral measure, usually facilitated through international organisations to mutually reduce military capacities—armaments, armed forces, deployment zones, and general usage—particularly aimed at reducing conventional and nuclear war, but also intended to alleviate tensions that could escalate into military confrontations (Miller, 2005). Berridge (1997) was of the view that disarmament and arms control is based on the theory that arms cause wars, and implies the complete abolition or at least drastic reduction of all armaments. The point is that, the theory on arms control accepts armaments as a necessary part of the state security system, but proposes that the risk of war should be reduced by agreement between potential enemies to stabilise and curtail the proliferation of arms in order to establish a balance of power, which can prevent emergence war (Berridge, 1997). Arms control and disarmament are almost synonymous because they are concerned with arms reduction or total stoppage of its production. Nwolise (1988) posited that “to disarm” means to reduce or limit the size of armament or to deprive of arms (tools of attack or defence). He reiterated further that disarmament discourse among nations is focused on reduction of arms and not total removal or deprivation of arms, since all nations agree that self-protection is necessary as seen in Article 51 of the UNO charter. The position of Miller (2005) on disarmament creates the impression that the concept is broader than arms control because it is holistic in nature. According to Miller (2005), although complete disarmament is deemed idealistic, the concept is often considered interchangeable with arms control, which is viewed as more practical and refers to restraints on specific weapons or forces. More of a process than an event, disarmament theoretically speaking contributes to a reduction in tensions, de-legitimises the reflexive turn to military force in conflict, and redirects military expenditures and resources towards other endeavours. Arms control or disarmament is based on the evolution of methods and procedures that are centred on how to reduce, limit or totally stop the production and circulation of arms with the motive to prevent their excessive availability, indiscriminate usage and fuelling of war in order to ensure that peace gain preeminence in the world.

Small Arms Control Mechanisms: International Perspectives

America, the Great Britain, France, Italy, Russian, and China are the top nations in the world that have been implicated in the production of arms in large quantities. To them, investment in arms is a serious security business (SSB) that has implications for who gets what, when and how in international politics. Discourses in the international arena have continued to project small arms as being of strategic importance in terms of its economic and security values, which as a matter of fact has become a possible bane to arms control. Therefore, controlling arms has become a sensitive issue that cannot be faster than the ways it is being conducted and more so may not make much headway because of the strategic importance attached to arms because of their values to their producers around the world. Barash and Webel (2002) concluded that “the history of such efforts (disarmament) is largely one of failure”. This is because of the strategic roles small arms have been playing in defence and its economic perspectives. Before the Cold War era, arms control was

principally based on limiting nuclear weapons, which was a reflection of the fact that small arms were underrated in terms of its lethality and efficiency. However, the havocs which small arms have been used to wreck have necessitated the need for its urgent control, and the awareness had spread fast in this regard in order to reduce its devastating effects on humanity and material resources, domestically and internationally.

Before now, the provisions made for the control of conventional arms were: the UN Register of conventional Arms, and the Wassenaar Arrangement. The UN Register of conventional arms exists in relation to the sales and destination of arms and really did not capture small arms. The Wassenaar Arrangement on export controls and conventional arms was established purposely to contribute to regional and international security, by promoting transparency in arms transfers among participating states and reducing the need for states to acquire advanced weapons. The political will and trust required to implement the conventions were lacking, hence, the reasons why they were easily by-passed. The United Nations in a meeting of the General Assembly in 1995 raised the issue of small arms proliferation for the first time. Since then, the United Nations have been playing leading role in the evolution of approaches and procedures that can be adopted by nations and NGOs to control small arms around the world. The meeting culminated in the setting up of a body of governmental experts to look into the issue of small arms proliferation and make recommendations. It was the recommendations of the body that gave birth to the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects, which took place in New York in 2001. The conference provided a rare opportunity for the UN to raise public awareness about the need to control the spread and misuse of small arms, as 138 governments of countries attended the programme. The following procedures have been used by the UN in controlling small arms:

- (a) Increasing public awareness about the need to control small arms. Information about the issue has been disseminated through public enlightenment campaigns or programmes often conducted by the UN through its specialised agencies such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDR) and the like. The UN has also supported governments of countries, such as Mali, Albania, Cambodia, Sierra Leone among others; private organisations and NGOs such Small Arms Survey, Human Rights Watch and so on in campaigning against the illegal use and transfer of small arms around the world.
- (b) Organisation of conferences and Workshops: This has helped to bring a larger number of countries, private organisations and NGOs together to evolve a collective programme of action that will stimulate the formulation of legal codes or protocols to control small arms and light weapons at individual basis, domestically and internationally. These legal codes or protocols are directed at the production, transfer and procurement of small arms and light weapons worldwide.
- (c) Supporting governments of nations on the collection and destruction of weapons through demobilisation and re-integration of rebel groups. This is done to strengthen the countries in maintaining peace by reducing arms in illegal hands. In Sierra Leone, the figures released by the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Integration (NCDDR), which was set up in 1998, estimated that 45,000 combatants were disarmed. On April 17, 1998 about 28,189 were disarmed, and 16,216 guns and 299,526 rounds of ammunition were collected (World Press Review, 2001). In Nigeria, between March and December 2002, the force recovered 1,872 firearms and 15,300 ammunition. By the first week of June, 2004, the Nigerian police confiscated 2,699

arms, 6,583 ammunition and 111,964 cartridges (TELL Magazine, 2004). In October 1999, the disarmament program in Liberia had destroyed some 20,000 small arms and light weapons and more than three million rounds of ammunition. In Mali, the government oversaw the destruction, at the "flame of peace" ceremony held at Timbuktu on 27 March 1996, where thousands of small arms were handed over by ex-combatants of the Armed Movements of Northern Mali. A level of success has been recorded so far in West Africa through these methods.

(d) The programmes of Buy-Back and Weapons for Development (WFD): The buy-back method involves exchanging weapons for money from members of a society, who are holding them illegally by the government. Liberia and Sierra Leone adopted these methods, especially the buy-back approach, to create stability in their countries. WFD was adopted in Mali. It involves giving out weapons for the collective development of a place. Actually, all these methods have been working for good in West Africa. However, the rate and manner at which arms are flowing back into the regions, made these programmes less effective in tackling the proliferation of arms. Equally, regional provisions such as the Bamako Declaration on illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in 2000; the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of SALWs in 2004 and ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and light weapons, their Ammunitions and other related materials in 2006 were made to help countries involved to strengthen their control measures.

(e) Supporting private organisations, NGOs and Human Rights organisations to conduct researches, organise conferences, and workshops. This has gone a long way in promoting campaign against small arms and its usage, and closing the gap created by insufficient information on the issue of arms proliferation. In West Africa, controlling small arms has been difficult because governments cannot directly determine the quantities of small arms flowing into their countries, and the quantities in the hand of non-state actors due to porous border, politics, corruption and leaking state armories which are the major channel of access to small arms. In controlling small arms in the sub-region, the first attempt was the move made by the president of Mali in 1993 requesting the Secretary-General of the UN to assist in controlling the proliferation of weapons in the country. This led to the emergence of two fact-finding missions. The first was to consider Mali and the second, the neighbouring countries surrounding Mali, which include: Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. It was discovered that in all the countries visited, proliferation of small arms was visible and posed a serious security problem, due to the ease at which people have access to them. In the end, the committee recommended the adoption of a regional based approach in the control of small arms. Also in 1998, the West African leaders signed a moratorium on importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons. Going by this moratorium, it was expected that the importation and exportation as well as the manufacturing of firearms should stop for a period of three years. Although, the moratorium has been renewed for a second term in 1 July 2001. The effectiveness of the moratorium has been in doubt because of the exemption of some countries like Nigeria, and Ghana, and the political will required to implement the programme was also totally lacking.

(f)

Controlling Small Arms: The Case of Nigeria

Arms availability in Nigeria has skyrocketed, increasing from about one million to over four million. These weapons will be used indiscriminately to wreak havoc in the forms of fueling new conflicts and reinvigorating old ones, increasing violent crimes, intensifying the fire powers of ethnic militias in the country and increasing the devastating attacks of Boko Haram insurgents and

herdsmen violent behaviours. The mechanisms used overtime to control arms can be categorised in to three; namely (i) institutional framework (ii) legal protocol (iii) civil actions.

(i) Institutional framework denotes institutions established to ensure the control of arms using various approaches which are centred on weapon collection. Such institutions include:

(a) The National Committee on the Proliferation and illicit Trafficking of small arms and light weapons: The committee was inaugurated in May 2000 in Abuja. The committee was charged with the responsibilities of unraveling the sources of arms in illegal hands and gathering information on the extent of proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons within and around the borders of the country.

(b) The National Task Force to Combat illegal importation and Smuggling of Goods, Small Arms Ammunition and Light Weapons (NATFORCE): The task force was inaugurated in June 2009. This body was essentially empowered to control arms by arresting those found guilty of the offence in the country.

(c) The setting up of Task Force in the 12 zones of the federation to recover illegal weapons: The task force was also one of the institutional frameworks put in place to reduce arms in circulation. The task force is controlled by an appointed officer of the Nigeria police. The task force was expected to work in their zones to control the proliferation of arms in the country.

(ii) Legal Protocol refers to existing legal codes which are put in place to checkmate arms in the country. The legal codes include:

(a) The Nigerian firearms Acts of 1959 as amended in 1990: This law prohibits the illegal possession of firearms, its transfer, manufacturing, assembly and trading. It also prohibits trading in firearms except by registered dealers as well as the import and export of firearms and ammunition into Nigeria either by sea or by air. In addition, the Act imposes a minimum sentence 5 to 10 years for illegal importation, exportation, manufacture and repair of firearms, depending on the gravity of the offence committed.

(b) The 1984 Anti-Robbery and Firearms Decree: Under this decree, illegal possession of firearms attracts a severe punishment in the country. The decree considerably expanded gun related offences and sanctions.

(iii) Civil Actions are actions conducted to promote awareness and enlightenment through programmes to persuade people to understand the need for the control of arms in the country. They include:

(a) Organisation of National and Local Workshops on techniques on arms control: The purpose of these workshops was to fashion out ways of controlling small arms proliferation. One of the national workshops facilitated the setting up of National Committee on Arms proliferation. The committee was charged with the responsibilities of unraveling the sources of arms and those in illegal hands in the country. In 2010, the National Survey on SALW proliferation embarked on national public dialogue to sensitise people and come up with a better understanding of the situation and how arms can be controlled in the country.

(b) Publicity: Through the pages of newspapers and magazines and even on television shows, information has been publicly carried out on small arms proliferation for the creation of the required understanding and the penalty associated with dealing with arms. Through this medium, appropriate information has been made available to people to help curb the ugly menace of small arms proliferation in the country.

(c) State governments involvement: Apart from the efforts of the federal government through its agents to get rid of illegal weapons in circulation, the state governments are also working hard

through state channels to check the proliferation of small arms through legal means, operation war on terror, buy -back programme, arms destruction, and supporting security agents (at federal level) to combat the proliferation of arms in their states. States such as Imo, Rivers, Ondo and so on have organised amnesty exercise as a state-based programme to collect arms from illegal sources.

Amnesty Programme

The amnesty programme was a call to voluntary return of arms for freedom from prosecution. It was a programme aimed at reducing the quantity of arms in circulation in Nigeria. The programme was a fallout from the recommendations of a technical committee set up on Niger-Delta headed by Barrister Ledum Mitee in 2008. The programme was initiated by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 2009, and was to operate within a time frame of August 6 to October 4, 2009. This implies that 60 days unconditional amnesty period was granted to the Niger-Delta militants to surrender their arms, renounce militancy and enjoy government pardon. The programme was guided by disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration activities, and the targeted states were Akwa Ibom, Balyelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers, and Ondo. The amnesty programme resulted in the demobilisation of 30,000 militants. At the expiration of 60 days for the disarmament, 2,760 guns of different forms, 287,445 round of ammunition, 18 gun boats, 763 explosives and 1,090 dynamites caps were recovered. The committee, through its leader, AVM Alaibe, revealed that the highest counts of ammunitions of 130,877 were recovered from Bayelsa State. This was followed by Rivers State which recorded 82,406 ammunitions and Delta State with 52,958 ammunitions. The amnesty programme recorded huge success, based on the quantities and varieties of arms that were turned in by the militants. The success story of the programme, perhaps, motivated its adoption by some state governments such as Imo state and Ondo State to reduce arms in circulation in their domains.

Emerging Issues

While it appears that Nigeria had once made some success at controlling the flow of arms within the polity, there are some emergent issues, in the contemporary time, that are germane to arms control in the country. They are as follows.

- (i) The increasing outlets for conflict emission into the polity have sparked up the desire for weapons for self-protection. This development has jeopardised attempts at controlling arms and the drive to promote peace in the country. Equally, the insecurity palaver present has contributed significantly to the formation of such aspirations and desire for weapons in the country.
- (ii) The will of government to protect the people has declined. Recent killings by Boko Haram and herdsmen around the country insightfully revealed the inability of the government to adequately protect its citizens. The gap so created has awakened the interest for personal security. Thus, the desire for arms for personal security has increased arms in circulation, thereby hampering efforts at curtailing them and promoting peace in the country.
- (iii) Peace and its initiatives have drastically waned because of easy accessibility to arms and their indiscriminate usage in the country. It is difficult to talk about achieving and sustaining peace in an atmosphere where demand for arms is rising on a daily basis. This shows that a violent culture has been created and the rising urge to acquire arms will thwart efforts at achieving and promoting peace in the country.
- (iv) The issue of trust has been seriously implicated in this era of democracy in Nigeria. The ethnic groups that have been coexisting peacefully for decades no longer trust one another anymore. The

actions or inactions of one group become suspicious to the other groups especially when the government in power seems to be supporting a particular is group at the detriment of the other ethnic groups. This lack of trust among the ethnic groups has implication for group protection in the country. This is one of factors that have contributed to the agitation for state police in the recent time. This drive is bound to increase arms in circulation.

Challenges

The challenges that have rendered arms control mechanisms ineffective and have exacerbated the problem are:

(i) Trans-Border Control: Porous border is one of the major factors responsible for small arms proliferation in Nigeria. It encourages smuggling of arms into the country at will. Most of the weapons in circulation were smuggled from the neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger, Benin etc into the country. Recognising this, in August 2004, the Nigerian Government and the Benin Republic signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to set up trans-border security outfit that will be responsible for the effective border security and control of illicit trade in small arms and other border related crimes at the Nigeria/ Benin borders. In recent times, with the advent of Boko Haram insurgency, more of these collaborative measures have been put in place including Regional Joint Task Force. The collaboration has not yielded much fruit in relations to arms inflow into the country because of the numerous illegal routes existing at the surrounding borders of the country.

(ii) Logistics problem: The state of art logistics are required to control arms. Poor logistics have rendered arms control ineffective in Nigeria. It is either logistics/facilities to use are not available or the existing ones are too obsolete to meet the contemporary demands. Modern machines and facilities underpin the control measures to combat illicit arms smuggling and businesses. Logistics is needed to conduct effective search and inspection to detect and prevent arms from being smuggled into the country.

(iii) Poor governance and the issue of corruption are the bane to small arms proliferation in Nigeria. The other side effects of poor governance and corruption are unemployment and poverty in the country. These elements have contributed significantly to arms proliferation in Nigeria. It is either those in powers are siphoning money or they are arming thugs for personal reasons. Governance system in Nigeria has created much problem than it can solve. The problems of poverty, favouritism, corruption, injustice, and ethnic bigotry which are integral issues on discourses on small arms proliferation, played out as a result of the governance dynamics in Nigeria

(iv) Leak of armories: A good number of arms in circulation are leakages from government armories. Arms are stolen from the armory for criminal purposes or with the intention to sell them for the purpose of making money. The insecure nature of our armories has contributed immensely to arms leakages in the country. For instance, the national dailies often report cases of rifles missing from different police formations across the country.

(v) Political desperation: The level of desperation among politicians since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 is unfathomable. Politics is considered as the most profitable business that can easily, in the shortest possible time, change the personality profile and status of an individual in the country. Thus, politics is played with the attitude of do or die affair. The nature and quantities of arms that often flow into the country for the prosecution of elections is unthinkable. Atoyebi (2003) posited that arms buildup by politicians has reached an alarming stage. The sustenance of democratic rule and peace look gloomy following the rate of arms inflow into the country. The

point is that to be a successful politician in Nigeria, you must develop your own thugs, armed them with sophisticated weapons for effective operation. These forms of acts will create room for multiplicity of arms in the country (Alimba, 2008).

(vi) Increased number of local producers of arms. The activities of blacksmiths and goldsmiths have greatly increased overtime with respect to arms production. Instead of producing their usual farm implements and other materials for local industries and hunting, they have changed to the production of locally fabricated guns, which they consider to be more rewarding and profitable in the country (Alimba, 2008). The media is replete with cases of criminals arrested with locally made guns used for operations. Locally made guns are contributory factors to arms proliferation in Nigeria.

(vii) Emergence of sophisticated networks of arms dealers and smugglers. Since the return to democracy in 1999 in Nigeria, more conflict entrepreneurs have emerged. They incessantly create conflicts for sales of arms. This development has resulted in the emergence of sophisticated arms dealers and smugglers in the country. These dealers and smugglers indulge in illegal importation and smuggling of arms in the country. The various conflict outlets have made the business of sales and smuggling of arms more lucrative and profitable.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's historical antecedent is replete with cases of violent conflicts. Since the resumption of democratic system in 1999, old conflicts have been reinvigorated while new ones are emerging. Violent conflicts such as ethno-religious clashes, communal crisis, farmer-herder clashes, electoral violence, Boko Haram insurgency, militancy and herdsmen crisis have dominated the political space exacerbating insecurity, which has resulted in the desire to acquire arms for the purpose of self-protection. Equally, the widened channels of conflict emission into the polity as well as the issues of politics, injustice, porous border and high incident of criminality have contributed immensely to arms proliferation in Nigeria. Thus, excessive availability of arms has distorted the drive to cultivate peace and its facilities, making it a mirage in the country. Therefore to build peace for it to be sustained, arms should be effectively controlled to reduce its excessive availability in the country. By mobbing arms in circulation, positive atmosphere will be stimulated to encourage peace and equally enhance its sustainability in the country. Arms control coupled with good governance, justice, respect for law and order, human rights, equitable distribution of resources, provision of effective channels of communication and conflict management will restore peace and encourage its institutionalisation in the country. The demonstration of ethnic and religious chauvinism by leaders has increased the tempo of suspicion with grave consequences on peace building and trust in the country. Suspicion has distorted the drive to effectively control arms based on lack of trust, which is one of the major pillars that underpin arms control activity. Trust has been murdered based on suspicion arising from aggressive ethnic and religious patriotism which has promoted inequality, injustice, discrimination and favouritism. These elements have activated the demand for arms in the country.

Policy Advocacy

The issues raised in this study call for policy advocacy. Thus, this study advocates for the following policies:

- (i) There is need for a National Commission on Control of Small Arms control in the country. The commission will be responsible for developing strategies and approaches to contain small arms and light weapons in the country. Equally, the commission will see to the coordination of all arms control programme for proper implementation in the country.
- (ii) There is need to adopt an holistic arms control system in which the various layers of communities will be involved in the process to make it an all-inclusive affairs geared towards enhancing its efficacy for the promotion of peace in the country.
- (iii) Border security should be adequate and responsive. Collaboration with neighbouring countries bordering the country such as Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Benin and so on should be taken serious to improve border security which is essential for arms control in the country.
- (iv) Local production of guns should be regulated to the extent that they should be marked so that they can easily be traced to the point of production. Stringent rules should be made to guide the production of local guns and those involved in the production exercise should be made to register for the sake of regulation to promote orderliness in the business.
- (v) Sophisticated and automated logistics should be provided for security agencies to enable them adequately combat arms proliferation in the country.

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