

The Impact Of Arms Proliferation On Nigeria's National Security

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Abstract: This paper investigates the rapid increase of arms and ammunition in Nigeria. To properly situate analysis the key concepts, arms proliferation and national security were operationally defined. The conflict theory was used as explanatory model. The paper reveals that Nigeria since independence in 1960 has witnessed a lot of internally-generated crisis, beginning with the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970, the battle for political offices through elections, ethno-religious crisis, the Boko Haram menace, Fulani herdsmen attacks, militancy in the Niger – Delta region and armed robbery among others has greatly contributed to the proliferation of illegal weapons in the nation, which entails that Nigeria's national security is under serious threat. The paper calls for a national vigilance of all citizens. It recommends the use of modern technologies by security operatives at our porous borders and seaports as well as adequate provision of security manpower and other logistics to help curtail the flow of dangerous illegal arms, and ammunition into the Nigerian nation-state.

I. INTRODUCTION

National security is one of the fundamental and core values of every Nation-States in the world. It ensures self-preservation and the protection of life and property of the citizenry. It ensures absolute maintenance of peace, law and order within a nation-State. Unfortunately, Nigeria has not enjoyed relative internal peace. The Nigerian nation-State since independence in 1960 has been posed with general insecurity due to contending issues' arising from socio-political and ethno-religious battles among others has led to the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in the country.

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons is increasingly and dangerously becoming a transnational organized crime in Nigeria with Boko Haram's insurgency, reemerging Niger-Delta crisis and escalating kidnappings, communal crisis and armed robbery in the South East serving as hubs or impetus for arms trafficking. Some border towns particularly in the North Eastern flank serve as locus for trafficking of arms as well as centers for stolen goods, drugs and hostages perpetrated by criminals, terrorists and their collaborators. The kidnap of a French family in 2013 at a border town between Nigeria and Cameroon is an example. Similarly, many arms and ammunition of various types, sizes and caliber have been intercepted and confiscated by security

agencies. The recurrent detection and recovery of cache of arms, ammunition and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) materials by the Joint Task Force (JTF) further buttressed the point. So also is the occasional recovery of stolen goods and hard drugs from criminals and terrorists' camps or hideouts. Despite efforts of security agencies, the "merchants of death" continues to engage in arms trafficking/trading through covert and deceptive use of porous Nigerian borders of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (Musa, 2013).

The Nigerian Immigration Services stated that the Service has discovered hundred of illegal routes in Nigeria that link or lead to some neighboring African countries. Nigeria's borders are massive with hundreds of footpaths crisscrossing to neighboring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger with links to Mali, Libya and Sudan. 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 and thus serve as leaky routes for arms and ammunitions trafficking into Nigeria (Musa, 2013).

The black marketeering, privatization of security, mass unemployment cultism, armed robbery, poverty, local manufacturing, etc. are some other causes of the proliferation of SALWs in contemporary Nigeria. In fact one study has revealed a "training school" for unemployed youths as armed

robbers in Ajegunle Area of Lagos State, Nigeria where they are trained to operate fine arms and ammunition (Tyona, n.d.). Therefore, the contention of this paper is to analyse the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria and its implications on her national security as well as proper useful solutions.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

A. ARMS PROLIFERATION

According to Kegley, (2007) arms proliferation is the spread of weapon capabilities from a few to many States in a chain reaction, so that an increasing number of States gain the ability to launch an attack on other States with devastating weapons. From the foregoing assertion, arms proliferation can be define as the rapid increase in the number of weapons (e.g. guns, ammunition and bombs) in a given society acquired by an authorized/legal organization or unauthorized/ illegal organization to launch an attack.

B. NATIONAL SECURITY

According to Orngu (2010) national security can be viewed in the light of States aims to meet the legitimate aspirations of the people within such States, to present them with a conducive atmosphere that would enable them pursue their legitimate values, and to free them from the danger to life and property. Therefore, in view of the above explanation, national security can be define as a nation's capacity to achieve freedom from the fear that the State will be unable to resist threats to its physical survival or core values emanating from external or internal.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework are ideologies that describe, analyse and explain why things happen or exist in the society. Attempting to explain socio-political issues that affects the society, especially in academic research without a theoretical support can be quite frustrating. Thus, this study is anchored on conflict theory.

Conflict theories according to research studies are perspectives in sociology and social psychology that emphasize the social, political or material inequality of a social group, that critique the broad socio-political system, or that otherwise detract from structural functionalism and ideological conservation. Conflict theories draw attention to power differentials, such as class conflict, and generally contrast historically dominant ideologies. It is therefore, a macro level analysis of society. Karl Marx (1818-1883) is the father of social conflict theory. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination of power, rather than consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and the powerless. Conflict theory also ascribes most of the fundamental development in human history, such as democracy and civil

rights, to capitalistic attempts to control the masses rather than to a desire for social order. Conflict theory has been used to explain a wide range of social phenomena, including wars and revolutions, wealth and poverty, discrimination and domestic violence (Tyona, 2016a).

Equally, according to sources, the conflict theories contend that conflicts reflect in the society and there had been a perpetual and vigorous struggle among social forces. Therefore, it is imperative to note that, human behaviour in social context results from conflicts between competing groups (Tyona, 2016a). For example, the Nigerian state has witnessed a lot of conflicts or battles as the result of Nigerian leaders engaging themselves in the struggle for survival in the political arena, the ethno-religious sentiment tussles that preaches hate messages by religious leaders, the struggle for resource control in the Niger-Delta region, failed leadership, Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsmen attacks just to mention a few exacerbated the proliferation of arms and ammunition in Nigeria which threatens her national security.

IV. SOME ANALYSIS OF ARMS PROLIFERATION IN NIGERIA

Historically, the possession of guns by Nigerian civilians is not new. According to Chuma-Okoro (2011) guns were introduced by the European 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 the establishment of the 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) further asserts that 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 become 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. Ostensibly, the 1959 Firearms Act was enacted to check the increasingly rate of arms proliferation in Nigeria towards independence. The failure of the Nigerian government to execute a comprehensive disarmament and arms destruction programme

after the civil war (1967 - 1970) exacerbated the proliferation of guns and illicit arms trafficking.

Since then, the Nigerian – State has experienced rapid proliferation of arms and ammunition. The many years of military junta contributed to the excessive militarization of the Nigerian nation-State and combined with the quest for political leadership, separatist agitators results to the rising demand for arms and ammunition. This is as the result of the failure of the political leadership in Nigeria to address or tackle the issues of unemployment, economic hardship, poverty, and insecurity of the citizenry, political corruption, communal crisis, ethno-religious crisis and separatist agitators leading to the increasing demand for all manner of arms and ammunition.

Thus, the inability of the Nigerian State to deal with the demand factors of SALWs heightens proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria, particularly the Northern part of the country. As an indication of this militarization of the Nigerian society, the oil companies are allowed to operate private security outfits, bodyguards, vigilante and thugs have proliferate over the years (Nte, 2011 cited in Okeke and Oji, 2014). One stimulant for the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria is elections such that in 2003 elections, locally fabricated and imported pistols, and a range of assault rifles were used by political thugs. In one of the State in Nigeria, Cross River States, the Police recovered 54 guns in 2002, 16 in possession of politicians and another 8 from politically motivated murders. In Edo State a gubernatorial aspirant by name Lucky Imasuen was arrested in possession of arms. In Bayelsa State, 11 people were killed in shootout by politicians contesting councillorship elections. In Ondo State, Police confirmed that a politician was stockpiling light weapons and found 13 single-barrel guns in his residence. In August, 2003, the Police arrested the son of a prominent Senator whom the Police believed to have been behind the importation of sophisticated arms used by armed robbers and feuding ethnic groups. The Police themselves are frequently involved in what is called “gunpowder” politics. In 2003, a Governor encouraged the production of pistols by a gang for a political campaign. Also, in 2003 elections political agents visited a number of university campuses and recruited students into their thugs arming them with various weapons (Vires, 2005 cited in Okeke and Oji, 2014).

To Gadzama, (2017), the country is believed to be a popular destination for dangerous weapons on account of several reasons. The most prominent is poor border control. This is not surprising as the country has about the longest border on the continent. No section of these borders and coastal waters is at the moment monitored electronically and technically. The porous borders are easy to breach by smugglers of dangerous weapons. This underscores the importance of deploying other strategies to deal with the issue of smuggling. There is also the problem of weak security and enforcement of laws dealing with illegal possession of dangerous weapons in the country. Attempts have been made in the past to curtail and mop up dangerous weapons in the country. Regrettably, this effort has not been successful. Other contributory factors are the huge demands for weapons for self protection. The loss of confidence in the ability of security and law enforcement agencies to provide adequate security to the citizenry compels many to resort to self protection, hence the

huge market for guns. The emergence of militancy in parts of the country is another factor that has hugely contributed to increase in the volume of dangerous weapons in circulation in parts of the country.

The insurgency in the North East from available intelligence is a major cause of flow of smuggled weapons into the country, secondary to the militancy in the Niger Delta in the last ten years. Some years ago, most of the dangerous weapons in possession of the insurgents were from sources that had connection with “death merchants” from countries like, Libya, Chad and Mali. There were also substantial quantity of the arms seized from law enforcement personnel and government armories in the hand of criminally minded people. Armed robbers are known to patronize criminals who seize weapons from security and law enforcement agents. There are also reports that, massive smuggling of dangerous weapons through the coastal waters accounts for the largest quantum of dangerous weapons in circulation in sections of the country. This development incidentally is, not unrelated to the outsourcing of maritime security to some vested interest some years ago and the militancy in the Niger Delta. The failure to effectively man border points known to be notorious routes for smuggling today represents the weakest link in our national security infrastructure. The point must however be noted that, despite the efforts of the agencies charged with the border security, effective border security control capable of intercepting dangerous weapons and persons whose activities could be inimical to national security remain daunting. It is believed that, dangerous weapons and persons of security interest still find their way into the country through the coastal waters and borders in most parts of the country (Gadzama, 2017).

In the same light, it is disheartening and unfortunate that the “merchants of death” have since devised methods use to beat security agencies at these borders and through the footpaths. 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 mainly meant for 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 post. The ‘grains’ are transported in large number via trucks, trailers, lorries and old model pickup vans and jeeps with little attention given to them by security agents (Musa, 2013).

Furthermore, the use of Jega type of tricycles (Keke-Napep) as well as camels, donkeys, and cows (moving in flocks) to deceive, hide end conveniently traffics arms in some parts of the North are ways hitherto unknown, not well exposed or documented. Their capacity for arms trafficking has been uncovered and are been curtailed by security agencies. The security situation in JTF operation RESTORE ORDER Area of Responsibility forced the Task Force to take on additional responsibility to trace sources of arms and ammunition to Boko Haram insurgents, how the arms are

trafficked and are also taking measures to block or curtail it. This one way of effectively only checking terrorism in Nigeria-destroy its centre of gravity (Musa, 2013).

Again, the Libyan and Malian rebels are desperate to exchange arms for money to Boko Haram Terrorists, their financiers and collaborators as the sect has since been affiliated to Al-Qaida in the Maghreb. This has added to the overwhelming challenge of the influx of illegal aliens, arms, ammunition and sophisticated IED materials into the country. Additionally, the water/seaports provide havens for arms trafficking through ships and speed boats on high sea and the use of canoes in the creeks. The exchange of stolen crude oil for arms/ammunition is a well known trading activity nurtured ferociously protected by militants or sea pirates and their financiers and collaborators with the possible connivance of unscrupulous law enforcement agents in the Niger Delta. This is one major source of arms and ammunition that strengthen militants' arms and ammunition holding not only in the Niger Delta, but also in the South East and South Western parts of the country (Musa, 2013).

A recent research showed that out of the 857million small arms and light weapons in the world, 500 million are illegal with 100 million found in sub-Saharan African. About 7.5 percent of this is in Nigeria. This damning figure was confirmed by the findings at a National Consultation and Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) in Abuja, organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament (UNREC) and the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PRESCOM). It was revealed that 350 million or 70 percent of the 500 million illegal SALWs in West Africa are in Nigeria. With a whopping 7.5 percent of African's illegal arms and 70 percent of the West African sub-region's SALWs, 90 percent of which are in the hands of non-state actors, any wonder why there is so much strife in the country? They use the weapons to threaten lives and property of their compatriots. Yet the situation only promises to grow worse with the influx of weapons from the residue of the conflicts in Libya and Mali as well as unresolved government area in Nigeria. No wonder little problems snowball into catastrophic events. Indeed the Nigerian Customs Services said that it had seized arms and ammunition imported into the country from the United States and Europe on 17 different occasions at various points of entry between 2012 and 2016 (Daily Trust, 2016, ThisDaylive, 2016).

Recently, the Nigerian Senate observed that in 2017 alone, three (3) shipments of illegal arms were imported into the country (FRCN, 2017a) Nigerians were jolted by the breaking news that the Nigerian Customs Services intercepted 661 pieces of pump-action rifles from China surreptitiously concealed in steel doors and other merchandise goods. The fact that the consignment was purportedly cleaned from Lagos port cast not a little doubt on the integrity and competence of officers of the Customs, but in a swift move to purge itself of complicity, the Customs leadership dismissed the culpable officers. Four months later, in May, 2017 news of another seizure of container with 440 arms and ammunition hit the newsstand. This time around, the consignment was disguised and declared as plaster of Paris by the importer. The imports which were said to have originated from Turkey were

intercepted even before declaration. Arrest was also effected and it is believed that the suspects are being prosecuted (Offiong-Etim, 2017).

Again, in September 11, 2017 the Customs announced another shocking discovery of 1100 rifles in Lagos. The guns, were concealed in a 20-foot container with number GESU255208, were seized by the Area Controller, Tin-Can Island Customs Command, Bashar Yusuf. The importer declared the prohibited items as wash hand basin and water closets. But after the suspected container was transferred to the Enforcement Unit of Tin-Can Command and examined, the items inside the container were found to be guns. The Comptroller General of Customs (CGC). Col. Hameed Ali (ret'd) confirmed that a vessel, *MV Bella Shuttle*, brought 600 Jojef Magnum pump-action rifles, 300 Jojef Magnum silver pump-action rifles, and 200 Jojef Magnum plastic single barrels hubting gun. The Pump-action rifles were shipped from Turkey into the country. A senior officer of the Service who allegedly authorized the cutting of the seal on the container and one of the clerks working in the terminal where the container was discharged were arrested and undergoing investigation (Dauda, 2017).

The Eagle-eyed operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS) during an operation on September 26, 2017 arrested a Police officer allegedly on his way to deliver arms and ammunition to Fulani herdsmen. The DSS source gave the name of the suspect as Amos Ishaya, a sergeant in Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Ishaya was arrested along Makurdi road in Lafia, Nasarawa State around 7: 05pm, in his Honda Hennessey vehicle painted red, with registration number BQ181KWL with 949 rounds of AK 47 ammunition, 1 Walkie Talkie Radio, different categories of local charms and varieties of hard drugs. The suspect claimed to be serving in the Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU), of Bukuru Police Barracks, Jos, Plateau State (The Voice, 2017). Similarly, the Benue State Police Command in September, 2017 paraded four suspects in connection with an attack on a Police Station in Ado Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State. This arrest came almost a year after two policemen were reported killed and one critically injured, while three services rifles were carted away during the attack which purportedly took place October 2, 2016 at the Police Station. (The Voice, 2017).

In the same light, the Nigerian Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratia revealed that soldiers chased a truck laden with weapons into the house said to belong to leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Nnamdi Kanu's father in Afara – Ukwu, Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria on September 14, 2017. Buratia stated that owners of the truck detonated the explosives on the day Kanu was last seen in public. He stressed that the suspects' intention was to frustrate the move to arrest them by the troops. Buratia further lamented that during ' a peaceful movement' which was part of the ' Operation Python Dance II' on September 14, 2017, some soldiers saw a truck and flagged it down, but the truck and its occupants ran over Army's barricade and defied soldiers' order stopping them to be searched (Ikhilae, 2017). Ikhilae maintained that the soldiers pursued the fleeing truck loaded with arms and ammunition, into a compound. The compound turned out to be the one Kanu later claimed, in a

suit, to belong to him and his father. However, the soldiers who pursued the truck into Kanu's father's house, did not fire any shot, but the occupants of the fleeing truck deliberately ignited the ammunition in the truck, it was the legitimate attempt by the officers and men of the Nigerian Army to arrest the fleeing occupants of the truck and impounded the truck that precipitated the deliberate igniting of the ammunition in the truck by persons now believed to be IPOB members. The act of the IPOB members resulted in sporadic explosions within Kanu's compound.

In the same vein, the Benue State Police Command on November 10, 2017 intercepted 1427 life ammunition in Oterse village in Guma LGA of Benue State along Makurdi-Lafia Road. The ammunition were conveyed in a saloon vehicle with registration number GBK 222 SA. One of the suspects escaped, while the others were arrested and under investigation (FRCN,2017b). In addition, the Department of State Security (DSS) had blamed the worsening insecurity in the country on corrupt members of the Armed Forces and other security agencies, who allegedly sell arms to criminals. Speaking at a Public hearing organized by the House of Representatives Joint Committee on Customs and Excise and National Intelligence, investigating the 'frightening influx of small arms and light weapons into the country,' Director of Operations at the DSS, Godwin Eteng, claimed some agencies had over the years, recruited former cultists and armed robbers, who get involved in illegal activities, including arms sales to criminals. Eteng further asserts:

We have conducted more than 27 operations and arrested more than 30 persons involved in the supply of arms and ammunition and some of them are serving security men. There was a case in one of the armouries belonging to one of the Armed Forces, where many pistols got missing with quantities of ammunition and all the pistols were new. In the armoury, on place was broken into, but the weapons were missing. And we are interested to know what happened (Yesufu, 2017).

The DSS Director of Operations listed four States in the North Central Zone as the major sources of illegal arms. Saying, the DSS studies discovered that three-quarter of the arms used to cause the crisis in the Southern- Kaduna, in Zamfara and Plateau States were coming from the following States: Nasarawa, Benue, Taraba and Plateau States (Yesufu, 2017). Furthermore, Yesufu notes that, Damgaiadiga Abubakar Deputy Comptroller, who represented the Comptroller General of Customs, Hemeed Ali, at the event disclosed that there were 1,100 illegal entry points into the country, with only 97 approved border posts. He revealed that 2,671 pump- action rifles had been seized from January, 2017 to November 2017. Therefore, the rapid influx of illicit arms and ammunition into the country have serious implications on Nigeria's national security.

V. IMPLICATIONS OF ARMS PROLIFERATION ON NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

The danger posed to national security by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country has become very alarming. The Nigerian Army somewhere in 2016 lost 11 personnel, including an officer to an attack by some bandits at

Kopa, Dagma, and Gagaw villages of Bosso LGA of Niger State. The troops were on a cordon and search operation to recover suspected cache of weapons and arrest their owners when they were downed in an ambush by the bandits (ThisDaylive, 2016). Equally, there have been observations that, violent attacks on communities and places of worship in parts of the country are direct consequences of easy access to dangerous weapons (Gadzama, 2017). For instance, the Lagos horror experience of the Ikeja bomb blasts of Sunday, January 27, 2002, the Independence Day celebration bomb blast in 2010 the Madalla Christians Day bombing on December 25, 2011 in Niger State, the Church bomb attack in Gombe State on January 6, 2012, the Christ Apostolic Church bomb blast in Yola, Adamawa State on January 6, 2012 (Orngu, 2010, Akpoo, 2013). These Church bombings were allegedly carried out by the Boko Haram sect.

In July, 2009 the Boko Haram sect's clashed with security agencies in Bauchi State after an all night attack on Dutsen-Tanshi Police Station in which 31 members, 2 policemen and one soldier died, more than 3600 people have officially been declared dead by government security agencies (Kertyo, 2015). An analyst on Aljazeera even argued that, the 3600 people are the ones that officially have been declared dead by government security agencies. To him, considering the way and manner the group operates, more than 6000 lives have been lost to the heinous activities of Boko Haram (Kertyo, 2015). Additionally, more than 700 people died between January and February, 2014 during the sects attacks in Gwazo, Konguga, Kawuri areas and Buri Yali Areas of Borno and Yobe State respectively, a development that attracted wide spread criticism from the international community especially the killings of 59 students of the Federal Government College Buri Yali and of course which led to the closure of Nigeria's border with the Republic of Cameroon (Kertyo, 2015).

Again, due to the proliferation of illicit arms in Nigeria, the political scene in Tivland during the electioneering periods between 2003 – 2007 down to 2015 experienced a lot of politically motivated assassinations or gun killings of Tiv people. This marked the era in which party thugs known as "Militia" were introduced in Tiv politics to kill. They were heavily armed. To a point, security agents sent to various polling units were receiving directives from the militia, especially in Kwande and Tarka Local Government Areas of Benue State. The political thugs were engaged in cold blooded murders and assassinations. For instance, the assassinations of Professor Gwa Jande, a lecturer in the Department of Law of the Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria and Comrade Tony Uduh of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. Also, the assassinations of the Katsina-Ala LGA Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman and that of a second Republic politician, Hon. Atoza Hindan among others (Tyona, 2015).

Another catastrophic dimension of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country is the security and other challenges posed by Fulani herdsmen invasion on Tiv farming communities in the North Central Zone of Nigeria. It is worthy to note that, since Nigeria's independence in 1960, grazing routes were created by the government. The Benue valley became important for cattle grazing, because of the favorable environment and nearness to the biggest markets in

Eastern Nigeria. Besides, with the encroachment of the Sahara desert in the far North, grazing activities became a fundamental problem in those areas, thus presence turned immensely to the Benue valley. The Fulani herdsmen could graze freely seasonally with their cattle in many Tiv communities in the Benue valley until when the herdsmen started maintaining year round grazing presence and straying of cattle into and vandalizing of Tiv farms. On the refusal of the Tivs' to allow the herdsmen access to their land, then the Fulani herdsmen started attacking Tiv communities in the Benue valley (Tyona, 2016b).

The Fulani herdsmen with the aid of mercenaries with sophisticated weapons launched attacks on Tiv communities in areas such as, Guma, Gwer-West, Makurdi, Logo, Ukum, Katsina-Ala, Kwande, and Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State between 1989 – 2015 and destroyed thousands of lives and properties, farmlands and crops worth billions of naira, and rendered thousands of people homeless. These attacks brought to a standstill the socio-economic activities as well as academic activities in the affected communities in Tivland (Tyona, 2016b). Thus, the foregoing assertion is very unhealthy for Nigeria's national security.

Another security threat posed by the spread of illicit arms and light weapons in Nigeria is the issue of violent attacks on the citizenry, kidnapping and armed robbery. For instance, in Benue State some notorious criminals have been terrorizing Katsina-Ala, Logo and Ukum axis of the State. It was reported that a notorious suspect, David Tyukwa alias "Biafra" who has been on the wanted list of the Police for longtime was arrested by operatives of the State Security Service (SSS) in September, 2017 in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State over his involvement in the killings of 17 people at a popular Zaki-Biam yam market in Ukum Local Government Area of the State. Biafra is a notorious armed robber and kidnapper conspired with Terwase Agwaza alias "Ghana", and Antyo Anyam Uduwe who are still at large robbed at gun point and massacred 17 people and carted away with valuables and cash yet to be estimated. Biafra admitted committing the crimes with "Ghana" and Uduwe (Edeh, 2017). Intelligence reports have it that "Ghana" and his gang are fully and well armed with sophisticated weapons and are still terrorizing the Sankera axis of Benue State, Nigeria.

From the above compounding situations, one does not need an oracle to tell him these crises have serious impact on Nigeria's national security. These internally-generated crises has brought the deplorable state of the socio-economic and socio-political nature in contemporary Nigeria, collapse our infrastructural development, rendered hundreds of thousands of people homeless as well as brought more hatred among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria which portend that national security is under serious threat. Equally, smuggling of illicit arms is significant externally motivated threats to Nigeria's national security. The influx of illicit arms explains the porosity of Nigeria's borders and its implications for Nigeria's national security.

VI. CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

The Nigerian nation – State since independence in 1960 has experienced so many crisis that have threatened her corporate existence. The situation is compounded by myriad of internally – generated crisis or threats which are multiplex. The Nigerian civil war (1967 - 1970) in recent years the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, the deplorable state of the socio-economic and socio-political nature, separatist agitations, ethno – religious flair ups, communal crisis, the resource control battle/militancy in the Niger – Delta, the struggle for political power through elections, unemployment, kidnapping, armed robbery and the Fulani herdsmen invasion in the North Central part of Nigeria among others has hugely contributed to the rapid proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition in the country. This shows that our national security is under very serious threat as the result of easy access to illegal weapons.

The above assertion calls for a national vigilance, not only the security agencies, but the entire citizenry. Some efforts have been made to curtail these menace by the Federal and States Governments in Nigeria. For instance, due to the persistent attacks by Fulani herdsmen on Tiv communities as the result of open cattle grazing activities in Benue State. Thus, the Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom signed into law, the Anti-Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law which took effect on November 1, 2017. This law to a good extent will help to curtail the Fulani herdsmen/Tiv farmers' crisis and bring lasting peace, law and order, as well as enhance socio- economic development to the farming communities in Benue state.

For a proper tackling of the increase in volume of dangerous weapons in the country, the paper recommends the use of innovative technologies such as radars, alarm systems or container scanners at our borders and seaports as primary detection sensors, as well as provision of adequate personnel, surveillance helicopters, speedboats and patrol vehicles to security operatives to enhance effective border/seaports monitoring. Again, all security agencies within Nigeria should unite, as a team to effectively fight and make the influx and outflow of illegal weapons impossible. Additionally, the paper recommends the review of crisis management at the local government levels and a more extensive vetting of those recruited into the security agencies as well as effective legislations on prohibited fire arms.

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