

CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ECOWAS CONVENTION ON THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS ON LIGHT WEAPONS ON NIGERIA'S SECURITY

¹JEMPLAK Michael Mashal, ²PROF. ABDULLAHI Nuhu Liman & ³DR. LUKA Ruth Caleb

^{1,2&3}Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Email: mjemplak@yahoo.com

Abstract

After Nigeria indicated interest and signed the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the volume of small arms and light weapons in circulation in the country continue to increase, thereby undermining the purpose for which the Convention was established. To this end, this study interrogates the challenges of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on Nigeria's security. The paper was anchored on the Elite theory. Data for the study were based on primary and secondary method. Findings revealed that the corruption in the security agencies has contributed to its weakness; thereby giving a room for disgruntled elements in the security institutions to sell arms and light weapons to criminal elements in the society. The study recommends inter alia that the current problem of SALWs requires a multi-faceted approach that would involve the private sectors and non-governmental organizations. The state must put in place a comprehensive security policy to address the problems of insecurity of lives and properties, and the Nigerian government should establish a commission in line with article 24 of the convention with a view to mitigating the inflow and outflow of illicit arms within the sub-region.

Key Words: Convention, Light Weapons, Proliferation, Small Arms and Security

INTRODUCTION

The issue of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWS) has been identified as one of the major security challenges that confronts individuals, societies as well as states globally; which invariably impinge on political, human and state security. Small arms and light weapons are the weapons of preference in many conflict areas, hence becoming the major instruments of death and destruction. The challenge posed by uncontrolled spread as well as acquisition of SALWs have been a major focus of the global agenda for many years, making it to gain more prominence. The foregoing is hinged on the reduction in many parts of the globe at the end of the Cold War, which brought about a huge rise in circulation of SALWs globally. With this increase in the wave of globalization within the same period, there is increase in both legal as well as illegal inter-border movements of these weapons, while an increase in intra-state conflicts brought about increase in demand for small arms and light weapons make them to remain in circulation even when the war has ended. This situation could equally trigger more violence and hardship since conflicts may spill-over in neighbouring states. Small arms can equally be used in perpetuating suicides, homicides, as well as accidents in areas devoid of conflicts.

Statistics from (Small Arms Survey, 2013) showed that about 875 million small arms are in circulation globally, which are produced by nearly 1,200 companies that spread around 100 countries. Data from studies conducted by Boutwell and Klare (2005) as cited in Caleb (2019) showed that United States of America produces M16 Rifle, Russia produces AK-47 and AK-74, China produces AK-97 and RPG, Germany produces G3 Rifle, and Israel produces UZI Submachine Guns. The export of the foregoing arms largely contributes to gross abuses of human rights in Nigeria, West Africa and Africa as a whole. Only one-fifth of the universal arms trade in small arms have disproportionate impact as they maim and kill far beyond any other conventional weapon.

Nigeria is now a destination of SALWs used in violent crimes in the country such as ethno-religious conflicts, election violence, separatist agitations, kidnappings, banditry, among others. It has been estimated that out of over 640 million SALWs in circulation around the world, about 8 million to 10 million of such weapons are in unauthorised hands in Nigeria. Nigeria is confronted with challenges associated with increase in the availability SALWs, and this has helped in increasing the spate of cross-border banditry, communal conflicts, kidnapping, human trafficking, among other forms of violent crimes in the country. From the year 1999 to 2010, Nigeria

experienced over 187 incidences of ethno-religious conflicts, which led to deaths of many people as well as displacement of many others. This further deteriorates the challenge of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria (Osman, 2010).

In 2006, the need to ensure security in West Africa made the Moratorium to be changed to the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons by ECOWAS member states, which among other things outlawed the transfer of SALWs into, from, as well as through the territories of states that are parties to the Protocol with a view to combating and preventing massive and illicit accumulation of SALWs within the ECOWAS sub-region. The aim of the foregoing was to reinforce the gains of the Moratorium and its Code of Conduct, as well as current shortcoming observed (ECOWAS Convention, 2006).

A number of measures have been taken to curb the menace of proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country and its effects on Nigeria's security. At the national level, the government, among other strategies, established the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PRESCOM) on April 24, 2013, under the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan. At sub-regional level, Nigeria ratified the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs. At global level, Nigeria signed and ratified the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty in August 2013, which was the first international protocol for the regulation of arms trade globally (Caleb, 2019).

Despite the foregoing and more, Nigeria is still confronted with the challenge of increase in the availability and misuse of SALWs. This threat has worsened with the emergence of Boko Haram, whose activities became so lethal after the death of their former leader, Muhammed Yusuf in police detention. Today, SALWs have found its way in the hands of kidnappers, bandits, separatist agitators, cultists, among other criminal groups in the country. This has brought about high level of insecurity in the country mostly especially in Plateau State, and this may have many implications for the continued capacity of the Nigerian government to protect lives and properties of the people which is one of its primary responsibilities, among other things.

Conceptual Clarification

Small Arms

The United Nations (UN) Panel of Government Experts on small arms define small arms as ranging from knives, clubs and machetes to weapons particularly below the caliber of 100mm. It conceives of Small Arms as those weapons manufactured to military specifications and designed for use by one person. The Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms conceived small arms as weapons used by one person. Small Arms refers to those non-manufactured instruments like sticks, stones, knives, machetes, conventional weaponry to United Nations (UN) Register of Conventional Arms (Ochogwu & Aku, 2011). Wezeman (2003) also identify small arms to include Dane guns, revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles, assault rifles, sub-machine guns, carbines, light machine guns, hand grenades, local pistols, among others. According to Best Practice Guidelines for the Implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol on Small Arms and Light Weapons, small arms are weapons designed for personal use and shall include light machine guns, including machine pistols, fully automatic rifles and assault rifles and semi-automatic rifles (Best Practices, 2005). They include firearms of any portable barreled and lethal weapon that expels, is designed to expel or may be readily converted to expel a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of burning propellant, excluding antique firearms or their replicas. In the course of this subject matter small refers to any material that is use in killing such cater port, revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles, carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and locally made pistols, Dane guns, hand grenades among others which to cause security implications in the North Central Nigeria.

Light Weapons

Light Weapons is defined as those used by several persons working as a crew. Wezeman (2003) define light weapons as those used by several members of the armed or security forces servicing as a crew. Light weapons

are those portable weapons designed for use by several persons serving as a crew, heavy machine guns, automatic cannons, howitzers, mortars of less than 100 mm caliber, grenade launchers, anti-tank weapons and launchers, recoilless guns, shoulder fired rockets, anti-aircraft weapons and launchers, and air defense weapons (SADC: Safeafrica & Saferworld, 2003). The Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms looks at light weapons as portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team. Ngang, (2007) identify light weapons as those heavy machine guns, recoilless rifles, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems and mortars of caliber less than 100 mm. Light weapon in the context of the paper refers to any device, instrument or tool capable of inflicting injury and death on a person or group of persons. They sometimes refer to small firearms and gadgets designed to kill and destroy.

Proliferation

The production, distribution availability and accessibility for use-misuse of those objects in large and uncontrollable manner such as large shipment of arms or guns. Proliferation is defined as a sudden increase in the number of arms and weapons beyond that need for legitimate national security. This means when the state supplier recipient, does not exercise restraint in the production, transfer and acquisition of such arms and weapons beyond those needed. Unidentified groups do this act either for economic or political purposes. This arms and weapons get easily in the hands of private individuals especially politicians.

Security

According to Mesjasz (2016), security is derived from two Latin words: "se" and "curus" which means "without" and "uneasiness" correspondingly. Security was initially used by scholars to indicate freedom from uneasiness or a situation hallmarked by peace as well as absence of threats or risks. Nevertheless, the English word "security" has larger meaning showing "to be protected" or "to feel safe". Security in English language is mainly used in describing a situation of nonexistence of concern or threats.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) in Section 14 (2) (b) take security as well as welfare of the people as the primary responsibility of government (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). For Alaga (2010), security is comprised of defence of vital interests of individuals, communities, different groups in the society as well as institutions in a defined geographical location. Security equally includes subjects like democracy and democratic consolidation, environmental safety, economic development as well as social justice. In the same manner, Shinoda (2004) asserted that security means the protection of a nation-state from external attacks while also ensuring that every individual within its territory lives his or her life safely. The foregoing suggests that security of the individual is focused on freedom of people from mental torture, freedom from violence as well as financial loss in so as to have or maintain an expected standard of living.

Heymann (2015) noted that the protection from threats to health is largely recognised as one of the vital non-traditional security issues in the world. Therefore, health security of individuals in a defined location has deep historical roots that can be traced back to quarantine against plague in the 14th century. Therefore, health security is people-centred. People-centeredness is vital because despite the level of threat, what is important is the people, not territorial integrity, money, economy or international relations. Threats to health security include epidemics, poverty, inequality, bad governance and humanitarian crisis. However, the foregoing did not meet our requirements for definition of security in this paper because there are many factors that pose threat to security including poverty, inequality, bad governance, natural disaster, accidents, proliferation of SALW, terrorism, human trafficking, drugs trafficking, banditry, farmers-herders' conflicts, among others. Therefore, security is defined in this paper as protection of individuals and the state from those things such as terrorism, armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency and proliferation of SALW that pose threats to the wellbeing, affecting their economic wellbeing, psychological dispositions, and general development in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Nzeako and Rilwan (2021) studied the smuggle and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) within the West African Sub-region: a contemporary appraisal. The study opined or examined the challenges and effects of smuggling small arms and light weapons in West African sub-region and by extension Nigeria. The research maintained that smuggling of arms and light weapons across the borders is a catalyst to the development of ethnic militia and armed conflicts in the sub-region. Secondary method of data collection was employed in carrying the research in terms of data collection while data analysis was done using content analysis. Findings in the study revealed that porous Nigeria's border, corruption amongst Security agencies, lack of enough manpower, poor logistics support, inadequate provision of basic social amenities are some of the factors that ignites the smuggling of arms and light weapons in Nigeria. In addition, unstable political system in the neighboring states and high level of poverty aids smuggling of small arms and light weapons. The work recommended among others that border cooperation in the West African Sub-region should be strongly instituted and government should improve welfare package of security agencies for optimal performance. The study is relevant to the objective of the current research. Nevertheless, the study did not identify the challenges encountered in the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria, which is part of the objectives of the study.

Rosenje, Ademiyi and Peju-Rosenje (2020) studied arms proliferation, security challenges and electoral violence in the 2019 River State Governorship election. The purpose of the study is to examine arms proliferation, security challenges and electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic using the 2012 gubernatorial election in River as a focus. Elite theory was adopted in the research with the view to adding more light in the analysis of issues raised. The study adopted descriptive method, garnered information through Secondary sources of data collection. Findings in the study revealed that porous Nigeria's borders, corruption among security agencies, lack of enough manpower, poor logistics support, inadequacy of basic social amenities are some of the factors that is igniting the smuggling of arms and light weapons in Nigeria. In addition, unstable political system in the neighboring States and high level of Poverty aids smuggling of small arms and light weapons. The work recommended among others that border cooperation in the West African Sub-region should be strongly instituted or advocated and government should improve welfare packages of security agencies for optimal performance. The study is relevant to the objective of the current research. However, the study did not identify the challenges encountered in the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria, which is the focus of this study.

Olayiwola (2017) studied proliferation of Arms and Security Challenges in Nigeria. the study holds the views that in Nigeria, the trade in small arms and light weapons has been on the increase since the end of the Nigerian civil unrest. The trends have continued despite the illegality of the trade. The proliferation has assumed a serious dimension since the beginning of the current political dispensation. As a result, Nigeria has faced serious security challenges which includes; the maitasine religious riots in Kano and Bauchi, religious riots in Kaduna, conflicts in Jos, the Zango-Kataf among others. This development calls for serious attention from the states as it poses security challenges, the increased number of internal crisis or conflicts are as a result of these proliferations of arms in the country. The study raised issues which are germane to the current study. However, the paper is not underpinned with any theoretical framework and method of data collection which appears as some of the gaps the study at hand intends to cover.

Elite theory

The elite theory is propounded by political philosophers and thinkers such as Mosca, Pareto, Vilfredo, Gaetano, Michels whose combined studies are referred to as the Italian school of elite theory. On the other hand, scholars under the contemporary or modern school of thoughts are: Mills, Burnham, Mann, Skocpol, and others (Evans, 2006). The main differences between the classical and contemporary elites is that; for the classical scholars, they believe that there is a single cohesive elite group that dominate the affairs of every given society, whereas, the

contemporary elite theorists opined that there exist numerous elite groups in a given society and leadership emerges as a result of competition among them

Elite theory of behaviouralism paradigm at national level of analysis was reviewed and subsequently adopted in this study because it best explains issues relating to ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs and its security implications for Nigeria.

One of the major assumptions of the theory is that the rule by the few minorities is unavoidable in human society and the ruling minority is said to be superior to the majority of the people who lack direction and capacity to govern, which results into the request of the elite leadership for guidance. The main changes in the society take place when elite replaces another. Pareto (cited in Ibietan & Ajayi, 2015, P.16) calls it the “circulation of elites” Pareto opined that people are ruled by elites, throughout the history of mankind, replacement of elites with another elites, that is, the rise and fall of elites (new elites rise and old elites fall). In his postulation, elites or aristocrats do not last long. They live or take position in a given time. History is said to be a graveyard of aristocracies (cited in Ibietan & Ajayi, 2015: p. 16).

The majority of the people are controlled and manipulated by the elites, brainwashing the people with distorted information to justify their rule. Decisions which influence society is taken by the elite, and these decisions most active are to the interest of the elites and not the generality of the masses or public. In every given society, there is a minority that governed the society. Pareto argued that minority rule is the reality in all human inhabitants or societies whether developed or developing, complex or simple.

Relevance of the Elite Theory to the Study

The theory provides an important guide on how changes take place in political power. It is helpful in the analysis of ECOWAS convention on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and its implications for Nigeria's Security, most importantly, the role of the elites in the implementation of the convention. This brings to notice the source of the policy flow as well as identification of the interests the Convention seeks to promote.

The theory is relevant in the understanding of the lackadaisical attitudes of the Nigerian elites to adequately implement the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria which largely explains the level of security threats in the country. The elites in Nigeria are largely protected by the government security apparatus and as such are reluctant in developing the political will aimed at galvanizing required support from both local and international actors within the sub-region with a view to combating security threats in the country. The elites who are not adequately protected by the government security mechanisms have adequate resources to engage private security guards to protect them and their interests, leaving the ordinary Nigerians to their fate. The foregoing is relevant in the understanding of the lack of adequate implementation of the ECOWAS Convention in Nigeria and its attendant security challenges in the country.

METHODOLOGY

The population of this study was 553 people comprising of staff from ECOWAS Commission Nigeria Customs Service, Nigerian Police Force, Nigeria Immigration Service, National Centre for the Council of Small Arms and Light Weapons, National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency and lecturers from the University of Jos respectively, who are vast in security, diplomacy, defense, strategy, and related areas. The sample size of the study was 227 determined using Krejcie and Morgan formula for sample size. Also, five (5) senior staff from Level 14 drawn from the population of study were tentatively selected for in-depth interview using purposive sampling method.

Data for the study were collected using questionnaire, in-depth interview and secondary sources. For the questionnaire, 277 copies were distributed to the respondents to elicit their opinions on the questions raised in the paper, while 5 respondents were interviewed using in-depth method. On the other hand, data on ECOWAS Convention of the proliferation of SALWs and Nigeria's security were collected from security reports in Nigeria from relevant agencies and organizations. Data collected from questionnaire were analyzed using simple

percentages and frequencies, while data from in-depth interview were analyzed using narrative-analytic method. Data from secondary sources were analyzed using historical analysis.

Data Analysis

Challenges facing the Implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the Proliferation of SALWs and Nigeria's security

From the investigation, the study shows that, 78 respondents representing 37% and 61 respondents representing 28.9% strongly agree and agreed that ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs has not largely improved on Nigeria's security, 34 respondents representing (16.1%) and 38 (18%) disagreed and strongly disagree with the statement. This indicates that ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs has not largely improved on Nigeria's security.

111 respondents representing 52.6% and 70 respondents representing 33.2% were of the view that, impacts of ECOWAS Convention is inconsequential as SALWs still circulating feely in Nigeria, thus worsening the security situation, 11 respondents representing 5.2% and 4 respondents representing 1.9% disagree and strongly disagree with the above assertion, while only 4 (1.9%) declined comments. This indicates that, the impact of ECOWAS Convention is inconsequential as SALWs still circulating feely in Nigeria, thus worsening the security situation across the country.

From the finding, 35 respondents representing 16.6% and 28 respondents representing 13.3% agreed that, implementation of ECOWAS Convention on proliferation of SALWs has reduced loss of lives and property arising from incessant communal crises in Nigeria. 77 respondents representing 35.5% and 69 (32.7%) disagree and strongly disagreed with the above position, while 2 respondents representing 0.9% remain mute. This indicates that there is no truth saying implementation of ECOWAS Convention on proliferation of SALWs has reduced loss of lives and property arising from incessant communal crises in Nigeria.

Similarly, 88 respondents representing 41.7% and 64 respondents representing 30.3% agree that adequate provision of security increased following the implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs. 35 respondents representing 16.6% and 23 respondents representing 10.9% disagree and strongly disagreed with the view with only 1 respondent which constitute 0.5% failed to comment. This means that, adequate provision of security increased following the implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs but that did not in any way address the security challenges faced across the country.

On the other hand, 41(19.4%) and 30(14.2%) strongly agree and agree that impact of ECOWAS Convention on proliferation of SALWs is far from being felt in Nigeria, 62 (29.4%) and 75 (35.5%) disagree and strongly disagree with the proposition, while 3 respondents representing (1.4%) were undecided. It is therefore clear from the analysis that, ECOWAS Convention on proliferation of SALWs despite its poor implementation cannot be far from being felt in Nigeria, as positive steps are being taken by relevant authorities to correct abnormalities. One of such steps is the approval by President Muhammadu Buhari in May 2021, for the establishment of a National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons to be domiciled in the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA), to replace the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

However, from the interview conducted with staff of Nigeria Immigration Service on the 4th January, 2023 to assess the impacts of ECOWAS convention on the proliferation of SALWs for Nigeria's Security, it was revealed thus:

The impact is minimal, this is as a result of global insecurity and the political instability in some countries e.g Libya and others which fuels terrorism in the Sahel as arms and weapons are smuggled in Nigeria through illegal routes (Field Survey January, 2023).

From the findings, it is apparent that the nature of the Convention in Nigeria is not in line with the provisions of the Convention. It operates under a Presidential Committee, PRESCOM, and not a National Commission as specified by the Convention and this with all its attendant limitations even though it collaborates with ECOWAS in this regard as the focal institution for the implementation of the Convention and ECOWAS recognizes it as such. ECOWAS merely tolerates this situation because of Nigeria's hegemonic posture which the organization does not have the courage to sanction it for its failure to put the necessary structure in place for the proper implementation of the Convention.

Looking at the human security threat arising from proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), Plateau state is not an exception, this is because the people of the state have suffered from the menace in one form or the other. In an interview with community leader of Kangtang in Langtang North on 15th April, 2023 revealed that:

A lot, it affects us economically, agriculturally and otherwise. People have been stopped from carrying out farm activities and education has been badly affected because our children are no longer safe. This has promotes a lot of killings in our society. On a general level, people who are in possession of these arms illegally are no longer respecters of our norms and values in the society.

And the answer to whether the proliferation of SALWs can be eradicated in Plateau State is Yes and No. This is because government has not shown any strong will to mob these arms in the hands of individuals and community who keeps and uses these weapons illegally. Again, community leaders have being trying to talk to our people to surrender these illegal arms in the hands of these criminal elements. For instance, in 2021, here in Langtang North, the entire communities surrendered their arms to federal government (Field Survey, April 2023).

In looking at whether proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) constitute human security threat in Plateau state from the opinion of Plateau Peace Building Agency staff on 14th April, 2023. The interview with the staff revealed that:

In all ramifications, it does affects human security. In Plateau State, it has been noticed that when these SALWs enters the hands of these non-state actors and it is been misused, it negatively affects economic activities. For example, the 2008 curfew as a result of Jos North Local Government elections which in turn threw the entire state in to turmoil.

In my opinion whether these can be eradicated in Plateau state, I would say no but it can be reduced to the barest minimum. There must be holistic campaign to stam it distribution and misuse, even if Plateau State tries to do so, another challenge will be her neighbouring states and the porosity of our borders. It is a herculean task (Field Survey, April 2023).

In an interview with a community leader of Jebbu-Miango in Bass local government area on 24th April, 2023, he stated that:

The proliferation of SALWs constitute serious security threats in the state because we cannot go to farm any longer, our children are now out of school, business no longer flourish or being stopped completely. Hunger and poverty is the order of the day.

Previously, I don't know what and how arms looks like, but due to the frequent attacks on our people, we now know how these arms looks like. As I speak to you now, if I have the money I will also buy AK47 and even for

every one in the community. I don't think that the proliferation of arms and light weapons can be stopped given the lack of will by our political leaders (Field Survey, April 2023).

Interview with STEFANOS Foundation on human security threat in Plateau state arising from proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), it shows that:

I have recorded over seven million attacks all over the country. In Plateau state almost one million instances of attacks, out of these attacks, over five hundred are said to be carried out by the Fulanies. This have affected the socio-economic well-being of the state. this is a clear evidence to the reasons why proliferation of arms is on the high increase.

On the opinion if proliferation of SALWs can be eradicated in Plateau State, he states that:

We know of efforts that have taken place before, cordon search have been carried out in Riyom, Langtang and Wase, that of Wase left us worrying because the search was not authorized by any body in authority and it was a biased one. Lack of distributive justice should be tackled (Field Survey, April 2023).

Similarly, interview conducted with a community leader at Kerang in Mangu LGA, revealed that:

A lot of people in our community no longer go out for their lawful businesses like farming due to fear of been attacked, kidnapped, raped or molested by these criminal elements. Our children are out of school.

On the eradication of proliferation of SALWs in Plateau State, he states that:

It cannot be totally eradicated in the state because it is a social problem which can only be minimized through dialogue, gainful employment for the teaming youths, organizing good agricultural programmes for our farmers will mitigate the proliferation of arms in our communities (Field Survey, April 2023).

Strategies for Combating Challenges Militating against the Implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the Proliferation of SALWs on Nigeria's Security

This section represents the policy frameworks that can best maximize the benefits of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALW to enhance Nigeria's security. The data as presented above shows that, 87 respondents representing 41.2% strongly agreed that trans-border cooperation and effective implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria can be used in improving security in the country. 94 respondents representing 44.5% agree with the above view, 15 respondents representing 7.1% disagree while 13 respondents representing 6.2% strongly disagree with the above assertion and 2(0.9%) were undecided. Above analysis shows that trans-border cooperation and effective implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria can improve security challenges in the country.

The finding indicates that, 111 respondents representing 52.6% and 70 respondents representing 33.2% respectively agreed and strongly agree that, involvement of civil society organization in the implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs will go a long way to improve security challenges in Nigeria, while 21 respondents representing 10% and 6 respondents representing 2.8% disagree and strongly disagreed with the above perception. On the other hand, only 3 respondents which constitute 1.4% declined comment. This indicates that following the critical role played by civil society organization in the affairs of governance, their involvement will add credence to effective implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs to improve security challenges in Nigeria.

It also revealed that, 88 respondents representing 41.7% and 91 respondents representing 43.1% strongly agree and agreed that cooperation among member states of ECOWAS is key in finding lasting solutions to the problems of arms proliferation in Nigeria, 11 respondents representing 5.2% and 16 (7.6%) however disagreed and strongly disagreed with the proposition, while only 5 respondents representing 2.4% declined comments. In view of the responses from the majority of the respondents, cooperation among member states of ECOWAS remain crucial in finding lasting solutions to the problems of arms proliferation in Nigeria.

The finding shows that 67 respondents representing 31.8% and 100 respondents representing 47.4% strongly agree and agreed that establishment of the National Commission for SALW has the capacity to effectively control SALW, 23 (10.9%) disagreed, 17 respondents representing 8.1% strongly disagree with the above notion, while 4 (1.9%) were undecided. This indicates that National Commission for SALW has the capacity to effectively control SALW if appropriate political will is employed.

94 (44.5%) and 89 (42.2%) strongly agree and agree that purchase of modern security gazettes, cooperation and sharing of intelligence gathering among sister security agencies will enhance will improve the implementation of ECOWAS Convention and enhance Nigeria's security, 13 (6.2%) and 15 (7.1%) disagree and strongly disagree with the proposition. It is therefore clear from the analysis that, the role of collaboration in both technology and synergy among security agencies cannot be overemphasized as it will go along way to enhance the implementation of ECOWAS Convention and improve Nigeria's security.

In complementing the responses from the questionnaire, the researcher carried out interview with representatives from Nigeria Custom Service and Nigeria Immigration Service on 4th January, 2023. The respondents recommend that people should be made to speak out their minds as it relates the issue of SALWs in Nigeria no matter who is involved. There should be strive punishment for culprits of SALWs to serve as a deterrence to entrepreneurs in the manning and importing of illegal arms. Government should put more funds on the purchase of modern security gazzets, incentives, cooperation and share of intelligence gathering amongst sister security agencies. Though, Customs have good incentives and cooperation among member states of ECOWAS is key in finding lasting solutions to the problems of arms proliferation in Nigeria (Field survey, January 2023).

To complement the above, an interview was conducted with selected community leaders and relevant stakeholders across the state to look at the contribution of community leaders and other stakeholders on how security be improved in Plateau State, their responses is captured below:

To community leader in Kerang in Mangu local government on 15th April, 2023:

The traditional rulers are honesty playing a serious role in curbing the problem of insecurity in their domains through enlightening their subjects on certain security tips. Some of the traditional rulers have also tested the pains of arms in the hands of non-state actors. For instance, Mishkaham Pushit, Mishkaham Pangyam, Sum-Pyem, Dagwon Rai Kuru etc, were some among the kidnapped traditional rulers in Plateau state most especially in Mangu local government area.

He further reiterates that everybody should be security conscious because is everybody's business. Government should be proactive rather than being reactive on security issues. Government should create employment opportunities for the youths and to be seen demonstrating distributive justice which is key in the demilitarization of our state (Field Survey, April, 2023).

On the part of STEFANOS Foundation, an interview conducted with the staff on 14th April, 2023 revealed that:

Traditional rulers can only do one thing, which is only intelligence gathering. Some of the traditional rulers formed vigilante groups.

In addition, the involvement of conflict communities, community policing, will make the system accountable and it will make the police and the people responsible in case of any break down of peace and security (Field Survey, April, 2023).

In an interview conducted with community leader of Jebbu-Miango in Bassa local government area on 24th April, 2023, it was stated that:

For me, the traditional rulers should be constitutionally mandated to handle certain local security issues within their communities, it will give them that power of curtailing the production and distribution of these arms in Nigeria.

The community leader further stated that:

Well, Plateau State is an agrarian state, job opportunities, job creation can be made along the agricultural structure to help the youths reduce idleness. Deliberate government policies that will open up investment within the state, should be explored. Proactive measures should be put in place in order to curb security issues rather than being reactive (Field Survey, April, 2023).

Opinion of Plateau Peace Building Agency staff during the interview conducted on 14th April, 2023 shows that: The traditional rulers who are the custodian of the people's culture and tradition, should be given a full constitutional role in the safeguarding and accountability of their respective communities.

Security should be adequately provided. This will allow people to carry out their daily activities such as farming, etc. I advised that there should be joined patrol and security operation between the Jir and community vigilante groups. This if done, will build confidence and genuine intelligence gathering because the people have lost confidence on the military and other sister security agencies.

In an interview a community leader at Kangtang in Langtang North LGA of Plateau State on 15th April, 2023, he stated thus:

Traditional rulers in their part has being talking to the people to surrender illegal arms in their possession despite all odds and it promotes peace in the local government and state as a whole.

There are diverse ways in which human security can be improved. These includes: job creation through skill acquisition, improve small and medium enterprises by given soft loans, engaging our teaming farmers on modern ways of farming and making available subsidiary farming implements and other materials needed (Field Survey, April, 2023).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the analysis, it is evident that there are challenges encountered following the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs with severe implications on Nigeria arising from institutional weakness of state security personnel in Nigeria. Our findings revealed that the corruption in the security agencies has also contributed to its weakness; thereby disgruntled elements in the security institution sell arms and light weapons to the criminal elements in the society. The research agrees with earlier research conducted by Nzeako and Rilwan (2021) who revealed that porous Nigeria's border, corruption amongst Security agencies, lack of enough manpower, poor logistics support, inadequate provision of basic social amenities are some of the factors that ignites the smuggling of arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

The findings of this study have shown that there is a significant relationship between trans-border cooperation and effective implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria can be used in improving security in the country. This finding concurs with Chilaka (2010) who found that the fight against excessive accumulation of SALWs in the ECOWAS sub-region is still a mirage and institutions established in Nigeria for the implementation of the Convention lack funds and autonomy among other things. To Chilaka, for subsequent policy frameworks to be maximize to benefit the Security Sector of the Nigerian State as it implements the provisions of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALW, penalty for breach of the Convention should be made heavy enough to deter potential offenders.

CONCLUSION

The study examines the challenges of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on Nigeria's security. The paper was motivated by the rise in the spate of threats to human and state security in Nigeria due to availability and misuse of SALWs by non-state actors despite efforts at combating proliferation of such weapons in Nigeria. Findings showed, among other things, that the volume of SALWs in Nigeria and security threats in the country have not abated despite the implementation of ECOWAS

Convention in the country given the rise in crime and criminality in the country as well as its harmful impact on the wellbeing of individuals and protection of the state's vital interests. In view of the foregoing, it is concluded that unless the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs is adequately implemented in Nigeria, the country would continue to suffer upsurge in security threats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The current problem of small arms and light weapons requires a multi-faceted approach that will involve all and sundry like the private sectors and non-governmental organizations. The state must first put in place a comprehensive security policy to address the problems of insecurity of lives and properties, and this should include the issue of SALW proliferation;
- ii. Border control in the neighbouring West African states should be a priority. Apart from acquiring modern border control technologies, a broad-based relationship with communities living along the border is required to report suspicious movement to Nigerian Security agencies. There should be a quick response to early warning, and synergy between communities along with borderline and security agencies.

References

- Alaga, F. (2010). The security of Nigeria's image and its economy within the context of media publications and broadcasts. In M. Yusuf (Ed.), *The military, the media, and Nigeria's national security* (pp.100-115). Ibadan, Nigeria: Gold Press Ltd
- [Best Practice Guidelines for the Implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Protocol on Small Arms and Light Weapons, June 2005.](#)
- Caleb, L. (2019). *Implementation of the ECOWAS convention of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, 2009 -2017*. A Doctorate Degree Thesis Submitted to the Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi.
- ECOWAS Convention. (2006). *ECOWAS convention on small arms and light weapons, their ammunition and other related materials*. Abuja: ECOWAS Commission
- Heymann, D. (2015). *Global health security: The wider lessons from the West African ebola virus disease epidemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.odbrana.mod.gov.rs>
- Ibietan, J., & Ajayi, O. O. (2015). The Governing Elite and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: An Appraisal of the Fourth Republic. *Journal of Human and Social Science Research*, 6(1), 14-21.
- Mesjasz, C. (2016). *Security as an analytical concept*. Retrieved from <http://www.afes-press.de/pdf/>
- Ngang, C. K. (2007). Small arms and light weapons, Africa's true WMDs: The role of SALW in conflict and insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa, M.A. Thesis, European Centre for Peace Studies (EPU), Stadtschlaining, Austria.
- Nigeria Watch Project. (2014). *Fourth report on violence in Nigeria (2006-2014)*. Retrieved from <https://www.nigeriawatch.org/>
- Nzeako, U. & Rilwan, A (2021). The smuggle and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) within the West African Sub-Region .A contemporary appraisal. *Journal*. Vol81(2020)<https://nigerianjournalonline.com/index.php/UZUJ/article/view/1839>
- Ochogwu, J. & Aku, D. (2011). Small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation and violent crimes in Nigeria." *Africa Peace Review*, 10 (2) (May), 91-110.
- Okoh, A. (2021). the implications of small arms and light weapons proliferation on human security in Rivers state. Unpublished Ph.D thesis submitted to the Security and Strategic Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi.
- Rosenje, M. Adeniyi, P. & Peju-Rosenje, T. (2020). *Arms Proliferation, Security Challenge and Electoral violence in the 2019 Rivers State Governorship Election* .Retrieved from <https://www.ajpasebsu.org.ng/Arms-Proliferation-Security-challenges-and-electoral-violence-in-the-2019-River-State-governorship-election>

[SADC Firearms Protocol \(2003\). Article 1.2 as quoted in the law of the gun; an audit of firearms legislation in the SADC Region, Safer Africa and Safer world, June.](#)

Shinoda, H. (2004). *The concept of human security: Historical and theoretical implications*. Retrieved from <http://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/heiwa/pub/e19>

Small Arms Survey. (2013). *development denied*. Retrieved from <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/sas/publications/yearb2003.html.pdf>

Stefanos Foundation (2022). Instances of Violence in Nigeria from 2001 to 2022 in Plateau State.

Wezeman, P. D. (2003). *Conflicts and transfer of small arms*, Stockholm, international peace research institute, Signalistgatan 9, SE-169-70, Solna, Sweden.