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Religious Conflicts and Arms Proliferation in the Security Law Reform

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between small arms and light weapons, religious crises, and insecurity has continued to be a burning issue in the national security discourse in Nigeria. Religious organizations under the guise of spreading their beliefs now engage in the laundering of donations by members on acquisitions of small and arms and light weapons to protect their jurisdictions and ward off other perceived oppositions. There is no doubt

that the laundering operations and arms acquisitions by religious organizations in the country are slightly different in scope and activity, although no less complex and hard to detect unless put under the searchlight. However, the effects of this are manifested in the escalation of insecurity and religious crises as evidenced in incessant killings, maiming of innocent citizens, and wanton destruction of properties in the country. This paper observes that the uncontrollable proliferation of arms fuel and prolong religious crises, and has created economic, socio-political crises and a huge burden of humanitarian cost in all facets of the polity. The paper concludes that it has become imperative to address this phenomenon as the emerging scenario no doubt continues to threaten the achievement of sustainable development goals in the country.

Keywords: *Religious Conflicts; Arms Proliferation; Money Laundering, Insecurity; Sustainable Development Goals*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between small arms and light weapons, religious crises, and insecurity in Nigeria has continued to be a burning issue in the national security discourse in Nigeria. Small arms proliferation, ethnoreligious conflict, banditry, and underdevelopment are multi-dimensional and interconnected social problems that have bedeviled and undermined progress in many countries across Africa. Nigeria has been laced with a series of armed violence, conflict of various forms and types, violent crimes, and a series of deadly attacks by religious sect groups. In the further context, some studies generally agreed that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses serious challenges to national security. It was also agreed that the availability of small arms has direct causation on the escalation of insecurity in Nigeria.¹ This is evinced in recent times,

¹ Nelson Alusala, "Lessons from small arms and weapons control initiatives in Africa." (2016): 33. Working Paper 1, 2016. *See also* Z. B. Peterside, "The impacts of proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the quest for national security in

violent communal and religious conflicts have become obvious features of social life in Nigeria and thereby pose a greater danger to the very fragile cooperative existence in the country. These conflicts result from different value systems. Conflicts in this respect, especially in the Northern part of the country, vary not only in scope but also in intensity and nature, and have great consequences on human lives, leaving many dead and millions of people displaced. The indiscriminate use of small arms and light weapons is not only a mere security issue, but also a threat to human rights and development in Nigeria and across African states. It has caused untold atrocities, including deaths, sexual violence, displacement, shattered communities, and loss of hope for a decent standard of living. ECOSAP (2007) noted that global experts estimate that at least 500,000 people die every year, on average, and millions more are displaced and abused as a result of armed violence and conflict.

The unabating religious conflict in Nigeria has destabilizing effects and is linked to the proliferation of arms, and it has greatly become visible in recent times as Nigeria is divided along ethnic and religious lines. It is a truism that religious conflict has become a global trend and has turned into a global phenomenon. The effect of this globalization has caught Nigeria on the web in the area of insecurity and development. However, the effect and control of religious conflict differ from one country to another. Insecurity has affected Nigerians in no small measure, and it seems that the government is overwhelmed. The rate of incessant killings and bombings has become a daily occurrence. The government's responses to this security issue remain unimpressive. It seems that the government is static and stuck within the confines of this religious fundamentalist and criminals who daily perpetrate their dastardly acts are not being brought to book.

The nexus between religious conflict, the proliferation of arms, security, and development have become much better recognized and understood over the past decade, and it is now widely accepted that the work of sustainable development is under threat from recurrent religious violent conflicts. Religious violent conflicts in Nigeria are capable of erasing decades of development progress and further entrenching poverty and inequality. The linkage between peace and development speaks to the

Nigeria." *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no.7 (2018): 852-860; Ogaba Oche, *The proliferation of small arms and light weapons*. Fog Ventures, 2005. A Research Project Submitted to the National War College, Abuja.

core development mandates of poverty eradication, enhanced human security, inclusion, and governance in an atmosphere that is devoid of religious acrimony, and where religious tolerance is the order that reigns supreme.² UNODC (2010) put it that West Africa is a haven for organized crime, offering ideal conducive environments for trafficking contraband: a strategic location, porous borders, weak governance, widespread poverty, and extensive corruption. As a result, criminals and insurgents are exploiting the region to perpetrate these crimes.

Onuoha emphasized that arms transmitted into the country can be measured under two broad dimensions, which include transnational and national trafficking. Transnational trafficking refers to movement across the borders of sovereign states, while national trafficking refers to the movement or smuggling of small arms and light weapons within a national territory. For the UNODC (2010), West Africa serves as a transit hub between Latin America and Europe for US \$1 billion worth of cocaine, as a destination for counterfeit medicines and toxic waste, and as a source of stolen natural resources, particularly oil. Human trafficking, whether for forced labour or sexual exploitation, also occurs in the region.³ Adeniyi noted that the rate at which new conflicts are emerging and increasingly putting lives under threat needs serious attention. Apart from conventional violent conflict, non-conventional threats are evolving, such as the spread of violent extremist groups in numerous locations in Africa.⁴ He further stated that this spread has been enabled by the unregulated flow of arms, among other socio-economic and political factors. In addition to that, there are proxy wars that are also taking lives, dividing communities, and bringing about prolonged suffering.

Rana put it that 300 companies in over 50 countries are into manufacturing small arms, equipment, and other accessories. This represents an increase in the percentage of the known number of

² Mutiullah Olasupo, and Onwuagana Okafor. "Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing: Policy Implication for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) in West Africa." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 23, no. 2 (2018): 10-18.

³ Freedom C. Onuoha, "Oil pipeline sabotage in Nigeria: Dimensions, actors and implications for national security." *African Security Review* 17, no. 3 (2008): 99-115. See also Freedom C. Onuoha, "Porous borders and Boko Haram's arms smuggling operations in Nigeria." *Al Jazeera Center for Studies* 8 (2013).

⁴ Adesoji Adeniyi, *The human cost of uncontrolled arms in Africa: Cross-national research on seven African countries*. Oxfam, 2017.

manufacturing countries as compared to ten years earlier.⁵ Those that were in the business of importing small arms have started domestic production through reverse engineering, licenses for coproduction with suppliers, and turn-key production arrangements between sellers and clients. China alone has 16 factories producing small arms. Because of this, China currently has the world's largest industrial capacity for producing infantry weapons. The proliferation and destructive impacts of illegal small arms on religious conflicts is an indication that arms do not proliferate in a peaceful environment, but conflicts are the basis upon which the desire for accumulation of arms is nurtured and proliferates given the law of demand and supply. When there are demands there, supply is inevitable.

METHOD

This paper observes that the uncontrollable proliferation of arms fuel and prolong religious crises, and has created economic, socio-political crises and a huge burden of humanitarian cost in all facets of the polity. The paper concludes that it has become imperative to address this phenomenon as the emerging scenario no doubt continues to threaten the achievement of sustainable development goals in the country.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

This part, authors explore and examines some of problems and challenges on religious crisis and the impact on security law reform in Nigeria. This part also describes the impact for the conflict and crisis into sustainable development in Nigeria.

⁵ Swadesh Rana, *Small arms and intra-state conflicts*. No. 34. UN, 1995.

I.

RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE & THE PROLIFERATION OF ARMS IN NIGERIA: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada holds the opinion that the current religious crisis in Nigeria has a cause that is complex and intricately linked together. The Board noted that the rise of religious fundamentalism, particularly that of Islam, coupled with the religious cards played by elements of the political and economic elite, and this play out in all levels of governments' particular religious situations, have all contributed to the escalation of religious conflicts. Ellis and Haar describe religion as a new political language whose pattern of interaction cannot be overlooked in the study of African politics, especially Nigeria.⁶

Otite, in his view, opined that in a democratic situation such as Nigeria, ethnicity and religion become weapons of power game as a symbolic difference and an instrumental game of number. This is also a causal factor to the rise of the ethnoreligious crisis in Nigeria's political space, especially in a democratic dispensation.⁷ Fox and Sandler, in the vein, agree that religion is a potent force in the activities of not only non-state actors but also the state herself. This influence is bi-directional: it can promote both peace and war. They, however, stated further that this dual purpose of religion does not mean discarding religion as a mere instrument, but it is used by the government or opposition because of its power to mobilize people and to get domestic and international support.

Ushe notes that the persistent religious conflicts and insecurity in Nigeria have given meaningful Nigerians a cause for deep concern in recent times. Many of them wonder why religion, which used to be the cohesive factor and core of national unity, peaceful co-existence, and

⁶ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar. "Religion and politics: taking African epistemologies seriously." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45, no. 3 (2007): 385-401

⁷ Onigu Otite, *Ethnic Pluralism Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria: (with Comparative Materials)*. Shaneson, 2000.

national development, has become a tool for political manipulation, violence, and destruction of lives and property in Nigeria in contemporary times.⁸ Olojo puts it that in Nigeria, there appears to be an almost seamless connection between several violent incidents from the 1960s through the decades up to the current period. And at different phases in this historical trajectory, the controversy between Muslims and Christians over the definition and interpretation of 'secularity', for instance, has offered opportunities for analysts to gauge what they see as opposed to the platforms of Muslims against Christians in Nigeria.⁹ Olojo further submitted that most of this Muslim and Christian involvement in the trend of violent deaths. However, there are instances where violent deaths are not underscored by religious issues between Muslims and Christians. There are cases where violent deaths transpire between groups of the same religious faith. Some religious leaders, through their dogmatic teachings and narrow-minded and intolerant predilections, advocate social exclusion for their followers.¹⁰

Many of the violent conflicts in the world today involve religious animosities. Indeed, the history of encounters between the world's religions is filled with distrust and hatred, violence, and vengeance. The deepest tragedy of the history of religions is that the very movements that should bring human beings closer to each other and their ultimate source and goal have time and again become forces of division. In one conflict after another around the world, religious convictions and interpretations of revelation have been abused as justification for violence.¹¹ Ekpang, in his submission, opined that religion also appears as a major factor for instability in certain African countries. Christianity and Islam are the two major religions on the continent. Both religions preach peace. But certain politicians and elites seek to make use of religion to promote disorder and

⁸ Ushe Mike. "Religious Conflicts and Education in Nigeria: Implications for National Security." *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 2 (2015): 117-129

⁹ Akinola Ejodame Olojo, "Muslims, Christians and religious violence in Nigeria: Patterns and mapping (June 2006-May 2014)." *IFRA-Nigeria working papers series 32* (2014). See also Akinola Ejodame Olojo, "Muslims, Christians and religious violence in Nigeria: Patterns and mapping (2006-2014)." *Violence in Nigeria: A qualitative and quantitative analysis* (2016): 91-110.

¹⁰ Akinola Ejodame Olojo, 2014.

¹¹ John Azumah, "My Neighbour's Faith." *Islam explained for Christians*. Nairobi: Hippobooks (2008): 146.

violence. With the politicization of religion, a country as volatile as Nigeria spells doom if care is not taken.¹² The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is principally a consequence of conflicts, mostly religious conflicts, where warring groups require arms to protect themselves from the perceived enemy. Likewise, other criminal elements require arms to protect their interests while carrying out their nefarious activities. Hence, one can submit that conflicts are a major vehicle for both legal and illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons.

Stohl & Hogendoorn noted that the proliferation of SALW is not a local problem, but a global problem. Over 875 million small arms are estimated to be in circulation the world over, with a significant proportion of them illegally in the hands of non-state actors and civilians.¹³ Kofi Annan, while lamenting the issue of illicit transfer of small arms, noted that the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms, light weapons, and the use of mercenaries promote conflicts, exacerbate violence, fuel crime, and terrorism, and promote a culture of violence. National security threats to Nigeria include small arms proliferation.¹⁴ It is one among many other threats, including refugees, religious and political fundamentalism, terrorism, HIV/AIDS, drug trafficking, and environmental degradation. Saroja noted that the illegal local production of firearms poses a serious security threat. However, it receives little or no attention. Indigenous manufactured weapons are always cheap, and while their accuracy cannot be guaranteed, they are highly destructive and impossible to trace using ballistic fingerprinting.¹⁵

Peterside submits that, apart from the fact that Nigeria is a transit and destination for SALW, it is also a local manufacturer of these small arms. This was given credence by the Presidential Committee on small arms and

¹² B. M. Ekpong, "For a culture of peace in West Africa." *Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa: A Handbook for the Training of Armed and Security Forces* (2005).

¹³ Rachel J. Stohl, and Ernst Jan Hogendoorn. *Stopping the destructive spread of small arms: how small arms and light weapons proliferation undermines security and development*. Center for American Progress, 2010.

¹⁴ Kofi Annan, "UN Security Council Takes Aim at Illegal Arms Proliferation in Africa." (2003).

¹⁵ B. Saroja, "Proliferation of Small Arms in South Asia: An Arc of Instability." *International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research*. 1, no. 12 (2012): 152-161.

light weapons in 2015 when it was confirmed that 60 percent of all illicit arms used in the South-East were locally fabricated.¹⁶ Saroja again noted that small arms are widely available and accessible. They are not costly and durable and can be reused in one conflict zone after another. This has made them weapons readily available for traditional and non-state combatants who do not have access to larger weapons. In conflicts, the proliferation of weapons in the hands of new and often undisciplined groups has outpaced efforts to ensure compliance with the basic rules of warfare and has led to a deteriorating situation for civilians. Nigeria has both strengths and weaknesses in its control initiative efforts to mitigate the SALW challenge.¹⁷

Consequently, unraveling the impact of small arms on Nigerian citizens, society and the state is vital to sensitize and guarantee the preparedness of the Nigerian security architecture as it will be equipped with the intelligence and know how to deal with the menace of the proliferation of small arms. The conflicts between farmers and herders over land and water in Nigeria have been existent for many years, even outdated the entity called Nigeria, and have over the years turned deadly due to the availability and accessibility of small arms. The large-scale intra-state conflicts in Nigeria have fed the ready availability of small arms to pastoral communities in the region. The prevalence of small arms protracted these harder/farmer conflicts and complicated and rendered useless the traditional methods of peaceful conflict resolution.

II. RADICALIZATION & RELIGIOUS VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND PROLIFERATION OF ARMS

Religious intolerance means the inability of some to tolerate the weaknesses or deviant behaviors of other groups, while fanaticism, on the

¹⁶ Z. B. Peterside, "The impacts of proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the quest for national security in Nigeria." *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 7 (2018): 852-860.

¹⁷ B. Saroja, 2012

other hand, is wildly excessive or irrational devotion, dedication, or enthusiasm about one's religious belief. When these two factors fester in any country, tension, discord, hostility, violence, and confrontations are bound to pervade. The continuing polarization and proliferation of doctrines among the major religions in Nigeria has bred more tension and has led to the stockpiling of arms. Adeniyi, in his own view, put it that the increase in growth and activities of religious groups all over the country has brought to the fore radical extremist ideologies which have festered the spread and use of illicit arms in Africa.¹⁸ The availability of SALW by extremist groups has negatively impacted on security in the West, Horn and North Africa. He posits further that the manner in which they openly display SALW is seen as a requisite element in the identity of violent extremist groups, and extremist groups appear deadlier based on SALW increases in their possession.

Adeniyi also said that Islamist militancy has recently received greater attention given the consequence of the violent attacks of Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Al-Shabaab and other similar groups operating across Africa. Based on UNDP estimates, 24,771 people were killed and 5,507 wounded between 2011 and 2015, with most of the fatalities recorded in Nigeria and Somalia. The porous border and swathes of 'ungoverned spaces' in the Sahel and West Africa are exploited for the illicit transfer of arms to extremist groups.¹⁹

III.

MONEY LAUNDERING, PROLIFERATION OF ARMS & RELIGIOUS CRISIS IN NIGERIA

Olasupo and Okafor opine that money laundering and terrorist financing are not new in West Africa. The effect is far greater than the way literature has portrayed it due to the corrosive effect on a country's economy, government, and social wellbeing.²⁰ International reports such as the FATF

¹⁸ Adesoji Adeniyi, 2017

¹⁹ Adesoji Adeniyi, 2017

²⁰ Mutiullah Olasupo, and Onwuagana Okafor. "Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing: Policy Implication for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) in West Africa." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 23, no. 2 (2018): 10-18.

2006 GIABA report said that the illicit trade in firearms generates vast sums of revenue valued at \$53 million annually. Nasir 2017 noted that money laundry has grown sophisticated. There is a nexus between money laundering and financing the arms trade. Laundered money is mostly hidden under the globalization of trade and the product of technological breakthroughs in transferring huge funds.

Both criminal groups and terrorist organizations take advantage of the non-compliance of banks in most African countries to anti-money laundering to operate. Nasir 2017 noted that banks play a major role in the application of anti-money laundering and counter financing terrorism (AML and CFT) prevention, but not much has been achieved with the level of banks' compliance with the extant legislation and frameworks. However, money laundering, use of terrorism and other transnational crimes, including illicit trading of arms, are far different activities. In most cases, the money is clean, such as donations to charities or gathered through religious tithing, but it will end up being used to fuel the terror operation in some manner.

Omitola and Awotayo, in their own view, noted that money laundering operations are slightly different in scope and activity, although they are complex and mostly hard to detect if not put under the microscope of financial forensic experts. Both criminal groups and terrorist organizations take advantage of the weak legislature and control initiatives in the area of jurisdiction. Funding through Islamic donations (e.g. *Zakat*) is one of the most abused methods by designated terrorist groups operating in West and Central Africa. This means requires little infrastructure and is huge because it manipulates a common practice of the Muslim population as it is an injunction, one of the five pillars of Islam. However, the use of these donations to commit violent extremism is unknown to the donor, and regional authorities are unable to control or monitor these movements of money, which are commonly comprised because of the minute nature of the amounts involved. However, this is not to say that some supporters of extremist groups do not also knowingly and willfully finance the activities of the organization with donations. However, all these means are sometimes exploited to finance terrorist organizations and it is difficult for authorities to control them because religious organizations' accounts are not audited and controlled by the government. An attempt by the Nigerian government to regulate the finances of the religious body has been greeted with opposition.

Criminals maneuver money across borders, gaining from banks in countries with weak anti-laundering and counter terrorism finance policies. In the same vein, when criminals take control of financial institutions or hold managerial executive positions, countries may find it pretty difficult to detect and stop money laundering. The regulatory agencies should be up and doing with respect to fishing out criminals from financial institutions. FATF Recommendation 23 provides that financial institutions should be subject to adequate supervision and regulation to ascertain that they are effectively implementing the FATF Recommendations. Given the FATF recommendations and the Nigeria situation, having a regulation in place is not synonymous with enforcement.

The outcry of the END SAR protest is given credence to the above; the police who are supposed to enforce the law are actually the lawbreakers, coupled with the weak structure of government agencies and a dependent, corrupt, and weak justice system. Malhotra opined that the linkage of banks with the internet has posed a new challenge in the area of combating financial crime. The digitalization of money has made it prone to criminality.²¹ However, it doesn't rule out the fact that it has greater benefits for the world and that a global entity is driven by its benefits. He, however, decried the misapplication of digitalization for laundering processes, hacking of credit cards and check-kiting. Malhotra also noted that the continuing expansion of the commercial airline and freight industries across the globe has eased transportation globally and has been instrumental in increasing penetration of arms in conflict zones.²²

²¹ Aditi Malhotra, "Globalization and the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons." *Eurasia Review* (2011).

²² Aditi Malhotra, 2011

IV.

RELIGION CRISIS & THE PROLIFERATION OF ARMS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Generally, achieving millennium development goals remains an unfinished business for most African countries, especially in Nigeria. The Sustainable development goals (SDGs) capture Africa's priorities for the next fifteen years. The future of growth and its impact on poverty reduction in Africa will be anchored on what happens to structural transformation. A new development trajectory of structural transformation is required to ensure improving productivity as Africa's industrialization takes off. This industrialization of Africa requires huge investment in both human and physical capital. Africa's major priorities would be greater investment in infrastructure, majorly energy; and, improvement of labour productivity, to meet the needs of manufacturing and agro industries. National development is going to be a ruse when the challenges arising from stunted economic development in Nigeria present very real threats to security. The core of the sustainable security approach is to use the nexus between development and security as both a means of identifying threats to our very co-existence and a method for dealing with them. Small arms and light weapons, as it were, weaken the impact of development assistance aimed at improving levels of human security and engendering development. Development projects that have involved years of planning and implementation and multi-million Naira can be destroyed just because religion is intolerant.

Ibrahim and Azubuike argue that underdevelopment threatens human security and exposes a large number of people to poverty, illness, and poor political and economic recession. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2015 noted that the consequences of conflict, especially civil conflicts, for development are profound. Armed conflict often leads to forced migration, long-term refugee problems, and the destruction of infrastructure. Social, political, and economic institutions are permanently damaged. The implications of all these on development are enormous and devastating. As noted, internally

displaced populations have overstretched health systems of host countries to capacity, both in terms of finances and staff resources. The increased demands on services like health, education, water and sanitation are overwhelming, exposing countries to serious health risks and resulting in the loss of health-related development goals achieved with years of hard work. Displacement exposes internally displaced people to new hazards and accrued vulnerability. These dynamics result in a greater risk of illness and death. Most of the time, access of internally displaced persons to health care and humanitarian assistance is deliberately excluded by conflicting parties.

Furthermore, the arrival of IDPs can strain local health systems and the host population ends up sharing the sufferings of the internally displaced. The cumulative public health consequences of emergencies in the region on displaced populations are profound and enduring, affecting not only the displaced populations themselves, but also host communities, and playing a key role in determining the health security of the entire region. With injuries remaining a considerable burden among refugees, some types of wounds require costly surgical treatment and lengthy rehabilitation. Agbikimi argues that scholarly debates over modernization and social change in the late twentieth century have raised far-reaching questions about the possible consequences of religious group conflict and differences in behavior, identity, and opinions.²³ Aver et al. view that the proliferation of arms and weapons is among the social problems retarding the development of democracy in Nigeria today. This particular social problem came into being as a result of the greediness of contemporary politicians.²⁴

²³ N. A. U. Agbikimi, "Current trends in theories of religious studies: A clue to proliferation of religions worldwide." *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 7 (2014): 27-46.

²⁴ Aver et al, (2014) *The Proliferation of Arms and its Effect on the Development of Democracy* in Toyin Cotties Adetiba, "Socio-political and economic development under threat: the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria." *Greener Journal of Social Sciences* 2, no. 5 (2012): 179-189.

V. THE ECONOMIC & SOCIO-POLITICAL COSTS OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT & UNCONTROLLABLE ARMS IN NIGERIA

The cost of religious conflicts on the proliferation of illegal small arms is alarming because arms used during ethno-religious conflicts cause injuries and maiming, create a general sense of insecurity, destruction of lives and properties, and displacement of people. Furthermore, small arms contribute to deaths and injuries, killing hundreds of thousands and injuring thousands more every year. In fact, one person dies every minute from gun violence, according to the International Action Network on Small Arms, which noted that small arms are used to kill, and they are also used for forced disappearances, torture, and for sexual violence, particularly rape and forced prostitution. Conflicts and violence fueled by these weapons often force large numbers of people to flee their homes, and refugees and internally displaced populations are prevented from returning home after a conflict because large numbers of weapons remain in circulation. Small arms violence also contributes to psychosocial trauma, which takes much longer than physical wounds to heal.²⁵

Moussou agrees that the cost of proliferating arms is a social, economic and environmental cost. He said socially, people are in palpable fear and insecurity because certain places and times are known to be unsafe. Moussou noted further that, economically, it has been observed that economic operators are reluctant to invest in an environment where violence is the order of the day. Going by Moussou's assertion, it is deduced that the proliferation of arms and religious conflict drives away direct foreign investment, thereby reducing financial investment and therefore slowing down the desired development.

²⁵ M. Okiro, "Proliferation of illegal arms and ethno-religious violence in Nigeria." *Alemika, EO and Chukwuma, IC Crime and Policing in Nigeria: Challenges and Options*. Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (2005).

VI. RELIGION CRISIS & PROLIFERATION ARMS IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF CONTROL INITIATIVES

The continuing massive illicit small arms and light weapons inflow through the maritime border, from the Sahel through very porous northern borders, and from West Africa through southwest borders. Without effective controls and methods of deterrence, the already high levels of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria will continue to increase, as well as insecurity among the citizens. In addition to that, is that Nigeria's firearms law is obsolete and ineffective in the face of the dynamics of 21st century security challenges. There is a need to generate a new document in collaboration with relevant agencies to cause a repeal of the firearms bill. The 1959 Firearms Act is obsolete. In recent times, these threats to human security are transnational and also inter-connected in nature and, therefore, require a rapid response strategy that is integrated and also transnational.

Omitola and Awotayo noted that Nigeria, like any other developing country, has no human intelligence capacity to guarantee the security of life and property of its citizens. There are obstacles to effective national and organizational intelligence service delivery to control the proliferation of arms. Major of the obstacles are lack of coordination and rivalry between intelligence agencies. Rivalry is a major problem which is compounded in a country like Nigeria with a proliferation of security and intelligence agencies and layers of government authorities. In Nigeria, the poverty rate has greater effect on the proliferation of arms and religious conflict. Most religion leaders take advantage of the prevailing poverty and youth unemployment to lure them into various nefarious activities such as violent conflict. All control initiatives should factor in the alleviation of poverty.

In the same vein, the absence of strong coercive law creates a vacuum and even with the existing law, there has not been political will to enforce it. Closer to it is the lack of national strategies. Onuoha noted that it is important to design and enforce strategies for effective coordination,

detention, tracking, and control of small arms and light weapons, the need to beam government search light on the teachings and doctrines of the proliferation of worship houses, as most religious leaders aid and abet money laundering.²⁶ For effective control of religious conflict and arms proliferation, there is a need for effective public education to disabuse any violent doctrines that have permeated our worship centers, prompt and peaceful resolution of conflicts before they escalate. Resourcing and rigging the security architecture to deal effectively with the menace of religious conflict and the proliferation of arms. In addition to this is to increase the state government's commitments and roles in security in their states.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between small arms and light weapons, religious crises, and insecurity has had a more devastating effect on our social, political, and economic wellbeing and our national security has been challenged. Religious organizations under the guise of spreading their beliefs now engage in laundering of donations by members for acquisitions of small arms and light weapons to protect their jurisdictions and ward off other perceived opposition. There is no doubt that the laundering operations and arms acquisitions by religious organizations in the country are slightly different in scope and activity, although no less complex and hard to detect unless put under the search light. The growth of extremists has also increased the rate at which arms proliferate. However, the effects of this are manifested in the escalation of insecurity and religious crises, as evidenced by incessant killings, maiming of innocent citizens and wanton destruction of properties in the country. The uncontrollable proliferation of arms fuels and prolongs religious crises, and has created economic, socio-political, and humanitarian crises in all facets of the polity. The proliferation of arms and religious conflict drives away direct foreign investment, thereby reducing financial investment and therefore slowing down the desired development. The paper noted that it has become imperative to address this phenomenon as the emerging scenario no doubt continues to threaten the achievement of sustainable development goals in the country as most previous control initiatives have no national

²⁶ Freedom C. Onuohona, 2008. *See also* Freedom C. Onuohona, 2013

coordinated strategies. Enhance legislation is also very key to controlling the proliferation of arms because the current law is obsolete. National value reorientation is important to orientate our youth toward national integration. The open greediness and corruption of contemporary politicians, which has led to the impoverishment of many, also call for concern, because if the poor are awake, the rich will not certainly sleep.

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