



**NATURE AND RESPONSES OF NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT ON
ECOWAS CONVENTION ON THE PROLIFERATION OF
SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS ON NIGERIA'S
SECURITY**

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Abstract

Small arms and light weapons have emerged a position of serious security threat giving the indiscriminate misuse of illicit weapons to commit crimes and reinforce violent conflicts and conduct acts of terrorism with abandon recklessness, causing high incidence of mortality, deterring peace and harmony in Nigeria. The signing of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and other measures adopted to regulate small arms overtime have yielded little or no result because of increase demand for and supply of these weapons. In the light of the foregoing, this study interrogates the nature and responses of Nigerian government on ECOWAS convention on the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) on Nigeria's security. The study employed survey design with the use of primary and secondary method of data. The Frustration-Aggression theory was adopted in the study. Findings revealed that ECOWAS Convention on SALWs is not adequate implemented in Nigeria owing to the proliferation of arms into the country. Nigeria's efforts in combating SALWs have not been based on the fundamental provisions of the Convention, particularly the establishment of a National Commission in line with article 24 of the convention. The study therefore recommends among other things that a commission be established. Again, civil society organizations, private sectors and traditional rulers should be mobilized and seen in the fight against possession of illicit arms and its misuse by educating the public about the dangers of SALWs in the hands of non-state actors.

Keywords: Nigerian Government, ECOWAS, Proliferation, Small Arms, Light Weapons, Nigeria's Security

INTRODUCTION

The quest for security is naturally a major concern for man, whether as individuals, a group or a society. This is because man's survival and well-being are contingent on his security. Thus, it is widely acknowledged that a peaceful and secure environment is imperative for any meaningful and beneficial human activity to thrive. This places security and survival in the domain of man's primary concerns right from the prehistoric times. The concept of

security has evolved over time. The traditional notion of security as the survival of the state through the instrumentality of guns and military power has been expanded to include the concept of human security. Human security is about human freedom and survival, and presupposes that the state exists for the good of the populace and therefore state protection cannot be prioritized over that of the people. Human security is concerned with safeguarding and expanding people's vital freedoms. It requires both protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and empowering them to take charge of their own lives (Small Arms Survey, 2013).

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.

Within the African continent, proliferation of arms has brought about increase in criminal violence, widespread insecurity, privatization of violence as well as security which largely manifest in proliferation of private military companies, paramilitary organizations and mercenaries. It is reported that every year, SALWs kill between 500,000 to 750,000 people worldwide, as a consequence of its usage. Out of about 4 million conflict-related deaths in the 1990s, 90 percent of people who were killed were civilians, out of which children and women comprised 80 percent of those who were victims of SALWs abuse. The foregoing equally resulted in the destruction of homes, livelihoods and families (Adeko, 2011).

In West Africa, small arms are bought at cheap rates, depending on the seller, type as well as area of purchase. It is much easier to acquire small arms in areas laden with conflicts than in more stable and peaceful areas, at significantly cheaper rates. During the Cold War era, many if not all of arms control agreements have largely focused on major weapons systems such as nuclear bombs, aircraft, and ballistic missiles. In view of this, efforts at reducing armed conflicts and global insecurity must be targeted at SALWs (Muktal & Ahmed, 2016). In response to these challenges, ECOWAS policy on tracing of illicit Small Arms and light Weapons is a key mechanism for national and regional efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit circulation, trafficking and proliferation of SALW. The ECOWAS Commission is committed to strengthening the ability of its Member States to cooperate in identifying and tracing illicit SALW in a timely and reliable manner. Though, the ECOWAS policy has been faced with the problem of implementation. It rapidly became clear in 1999 that there was substantial confusion about the terms of the Moratorium. In several ECOWAS countries, the military and the arms transfer licensing authorities were apparently unaware that their government had declared the Moratorium. Recent studies on small arms and light weapons indicates that underpinning these proliferations were bad governance, high levels of poverty, struggle for scarce resources, and the competition for economic and/or political power among the elites, oil theft, money laundering, corruption,

exploitation, terrorism, militancy, ethno-religious violence, scrambling for resource control, and other premeditated violence (Ibrahim, 2015; Small Arms Survey, 2015; Osimen & Akintunde, 2015).

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).

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). According to Abiodun (2016), the proliferation of SALWs as well as the new trend in armed violence in the country poses huge threat to the government in combating security threats within its territory, especially challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The increasing rate at which SALWs are circulated in Nigeria pose significant threats to the country's security. There appears to be a nexus between proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria and the level of insecurity. Given the above, the study examines the nature of ECOWAS convention on the proliferation of small arms and light vis-à-vis the response of Nigerian government towards addressing Nigeria's security challenges.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Small Arms and Light Weapon Proliferation

There is no universally accepted definition of SALW. Different researchers have provided a variety of definitions to suit their purposes, but they usually come up with similar meanings. Some of the parameters used in the conceptualization of SALW are the design, characteristics, size, number of operators or any combination of the factors. According to ECOWAS Convention on SALW (2006), small arms as arms used by individuals, and which include firearms and other destructive arms or device such as exploding bombs incendiary bombs or gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missiles, missile systems, or landmines; revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbines; machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns" (Ibrahim, Mutum& Sunday, 2020). The light weapons "are

portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team, and which include notable heavy machine guns, portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted portable anti-aircraft cannons, portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns, portable anti-tank missile launchers, and mortars with a caliber of fewer than 100 millimeters" (Ibrahim, Mutum & Sunday, 2020).

Security

Security, as a concept and phenomenon, is a relative term that means different things to different people, there are different approaches in the pursuit of it (Nwagbosa, 2012). However, from these differences, there seems to be some elements of agreement among security experts and scholars as to what the term means. Security is freedom from risk or danger and fear (Amakiri, 2018). Security is safety, confidence and the ability of a nation to protect and defend itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests and enhance the well-being of its people. In fact, security could be seen strictly as a state of affair aimed entirely at securing the territorial integrity of the state through military approach (Nwagbosa, 2012). The word security emanated from the Greek word *se-cura*, meaning "to be in a state of no fear". Security is the protection of the life and property of a person. The concept of security keeps changing from its original conceptualization.

Arase opines that security is about the management of threat and it is often thought of as the pursuit of freedom from threat. Security requires specification of both a threat, and a referent object. The concept of security within the national space has been defined within the context of national security, a term that defines the dynamics and inter-relationships between internal security which refers to threats from within the country and external security which touches on transnational threats Arase (2013). He further defined security as "the absence of threats to acquired values and subjectively, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.

Human Security

Human security means protecting the fundamental freedom and protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. Human security means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations (Alkire, 2003). Human security means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. Without human security, state security cannot be attained and vice versa (Mandel, 2001). From an operational perspective, human security aims to address complex situations of insecurity through collaborative, responsive and sustainable measures that are people centred, multi-sectoral, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented. In addition, human security employs a hybrid approach that brings together these elements through a protection and empowerment framework (Mandel, 2001). Human security found its earliest comprehensive expression in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report in 1994 (UN, 2009). According to the report, human security means

freedom from want and freedom from fear. It goes further to list seven dimensions of human security. This includes economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (Alkire, 2003). This brings to the fore the fact that even though Nigeria is not fighting any external aggression, most communities in Nigeria particularly in Plateau State whose loved ones are being killed almost on daily basis, houses and farms destroyed by unknown gun men lack human security (McNamara, 1983). In the same vein, a young graduate who has searched for job without hope of getting any cannot talk of security. A poverty-ridden market woman struggling every day to survive hunger is not secured. In-fact, human security is synonymous to development. It involves raising the quality of life of the people through provision of safe drinking water, food, quality healthcare, good roads, dignified housing, quality education, quality and sustainable environment, and community participation (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Neo-Liberal Institutionalism Theory

This study adopts neoliberal institutionalism as its point of departure. Liberal institutionalism (or institutional liberalism or neoliberalism) is a theory of international relations that holds that international cooperation between states is feasible and sustainable, and that such cooperation can reduce conflict and competition. Neoliberalism is a revised version of liberalism. Alongside neorealism, liberal institutionalism is one of the two most influential contemporary approaches to international relations. In contrast to neorealist scholarship (which is skeptical of prospects for sustainable cooperation), liberal institutionalism argues that cooperation is feasible and sustainable. Liberal institutionalists highlight the role of international institutions and regimes in facilitating cooperation between states .

The theory holds the views that unacceptable human behaviour such as terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, war and other forms of criminality are product of inadequate or corrupt social institution. The liberals believe that such unwanted and anti-social behaviour though not inevitable, can be moderated through institutional reform and collective active or international cooperation that states or countries or internal bodies can put their heads together to reduce significantly or even eliminate the possibility of conflicts or unacceptable human behaviour.

The theory is in tandem or reflects the works of great scholars or theorists such as Baron De Montesquieu and Emmanuel Kant who both believes that international problems can be overcome through collective action even though K. Kant holds the views or agrees that such task is not easily comedy. The neo-liberal theory has Robert Keohane (1984) and David Axelrod (1986) as some of the major proponents of the school who contributed immensely and gone deep explanations as to why nations-states choose to cooperate most of the time in the international system in order to tackle global problems.

Basing its argument on the Greek idea, institutionalism liberalism holds that individuals are rational human beings able to understand the universally applicable laws governing both nature and human society. Grasping what such laws means, people have the capacity to modify or improve their behaviours or condition by creating a more peaceful, conflict-free and better international system through international cooperation at both bilateral and multilateral levels.

Relevance of the Theory to the Study

Institutional liberalism is therefore, relevant to our study since it enables us to understand and explain why nation-states must cooperate in the search for solution to common international obstacles or problems such as terrorism, war, banditry, kidnapping or conflicts which are all fueled by the rapid increase in the proliferation of SALWs within the West African sub-region and the world as a whole. It is an indisputable fact that no country or nation can exist in isolation. The theory which is an international relations postulation holds the assumptions that countries or nations within the international system must cooperate with one another in order to achieve peace, security and stability. In the light of the foregoing, for the evils of proliferation of small arms and light weapons to be curtailed or minimized if not totally eradicated, within the West African sub-region, member states must cooperate in order to stem out the menace of inflow and outflow of illicit weapons in the West African states. The ECOWAS Convention is a product of cooperation among member states. Border security among other sundry strategies are keys to successful fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the West African sub-region which needs collective action according to the liberal school of thought in the fight against illicit proliferation of arms. The theory is relevant because it holds the view that certain unacceptable human behaviour, such as war, illicit trade in arms, drug trafficking, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and other social vices been fueled by proliferation of SALWs are the product of inadequate or corrupt social institutions.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Relevant previous studies on this subject area are reviewed in this section showing the variables, methodology and main findings to provide a sharp focus for the gap which this new study would fill.

Awotayo, Akinrinde and Oyebade (2022) wrote on proliferation of illicit arms and control mechanisms in Nigeria: A Critical Socio-economic analysis. The study addresses the question of illicit weapons proliferation and many diverse control measures undertaken to counteract it in Nigeria. It further explores the reason why Nigeria has become a appealing target for illicit weapons in the West African Sub-region. The study recognized the ease of inflow and outflow of illicit arms within the border of the Nigerian state. In addition, the outdated nature of the Nigeria's firearms law, it maintained that all the required containment measures, from ECOWAS to weapon trading agreements, have not decreased the proliferation of illicit arms in Nigeria and that the Nigeria's firearms Act is outdated and

unsuitable for security needs of Nigerian state, notwithstanding the problem faced by the security dynamics of the 21st century. While the undergoing research work agrees with the position that is maintained in the above reviewed paper, the study failed to use a theory in its analytical work. Method of data collection was not mentioned and explained.

Uwu and Anthony (2022) wrote on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) proliferation and problem of National Security in Nigeria. The study holds the view that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the major security challenges currently facing Nigeria, Africa and indeed the global as a whole. The trafficking and wide availability of these weapons fuel communal conflict, political instability and pose a threat, not only to national security but also to sustainable development. The paper interrogates the role of government and policy makers in checkmating SALWs in Nigeria and to ascertain the level of insecurity this menace had incurred in the Nigerian state. The study revealed the inability of Nigerian government and the law enforcement agencies to check the supply and demand factors of the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria has heightened and worsened the security situations in the country. The current research work agrees in totality the position that is maintained by the authors but the study failed to use theoretical framework in furtherance of explanation which could have made the paper scholarly based. Method of data collection was not indicated. The current study utilizes both theoretical framework and adopts both qualitative and quantitative.

Dinshak (2020) examine the nature of the implementation of the Convention in Nigeria with a view to determining the lacuna in the process and addressing it. In-depth interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders and leaders of institutions such as the ECOWAS Commission and Nigeria's Presidential Committee on Small Arms (PRESCOM). Secondary data were also used including official documents and researches related to them. This study has shown that Nigeria has failed to domesticate and implement the Convention accordingly. Instead of establishing a National Commission as a starting point, it has been experimenting with committees beginning with the national committee on SALW (NatCom) and now the presidential committee on SALW (PRESCOM). The operations of these committees have not made tangible impacts because of their ad hoc nature. They are not established by law so they have been lacking in proper funding, accommodation, staffing and spread. The sustainability of their engagements has also been short lived as their leadership has been inconsistent. It therefore recommended that the Federal Government should urgently take steps towards establishing the National Commission and put the required structure and support to ensure its effective and efficient implementation. This study however limits its source of data to secondary method in assessing the nature of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALW and Nigeria's Security, hence this study.

Omoroge, Egbule and Emubie (2021) wrote on Achieving National Security in Nigeria through Education. The purpose of the paper is to examines how Nigeria as a nation can achieve national security. The study was able to establish the fact that quality education can reduce incidences of insecurity, even if not totally eradicated. Education, the study alluded is a major weapon of progressive social. The paper found out that sound education anchored

on good educational policies and implementation can reduce to a manageable extent, insecurity in Nigeria. The study recommends among other things, that a state of emergency should be declared on the educational sector to reduce illiteracy which is one of the major factors for insecurity in Nigeria. However, the study was not impinged or anchored on any theoretical framework and method of data collection was not explained whereas, the current study is anchored on a theoretical framework and adopted dual method of data collection (primary and secondary). The paper is in tandem with the current study.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted quantitative data with the use of primary sources particularly interview as instrument of data collection. A total of twelve (12) personnel from the Nigeria Customs Service, Nigerian Police Force, Nigeria Immigration Service, National Centre for the Council of Small Arms and Light Weapons, STEFANOS Foundation, Plateau Peace Building Agency, National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency and Lecturers in the Department of Political Science, University of Jos respectively were interviewed using purposive sampling technique or judgmental method. However, the total population of the study constituted two hundred and twenty-seven (227). However, data from in-depth interview were presented using narrative-analytic method.

DATA ANALYSIS

Nature of the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs on Nigeria's Security

Analysis from the investigation shows that, 83 respondents representing 39.3% strongly agreed that ECOWAS Convention has great potential in controlling the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in Nigeria. 99 respondents representing 46.9% agree with the above view, 12 respondents representing 5.7% disagree while 14 respondents representing 6.6% strongly disagree with the above assertion and 3(1.4%) were undecided. Above analysis shows that ECOWAS Convention has great potential to support the control of SALWs in Nigeria if adequately implemented.

The second item of the above table indicate that, 101 respondents representing 47.9% and 80 respondents representing 37.9% respectively Agreed and Strongly Agree that, prior to the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention, insecurity was at a lower ebb, while 16 respondents representing 7.9% and 12 respondents representing 5.7% disagree and strongly disagreed with the above perception. On the other hand, 2 respondents which constitute 0.9% declined comments. This indicates that even before the convention, the security issues in Nigeria were not this worse compared to the aftermath of the implementation.

From item 3 on the same table, 113 respondents representing 53.6% and 66 respondents representing 31.3% strongly agree and agreed that Nigeria has poorly implemented the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs., 18 respondents representing 8.5% and 14 (6.6%) however disagreed and strongly disagreed with the proposition. In view of

the responses from the majority of the respondents, the ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria is poorly implemented.

The fourth item shows that 7 respondents representing 3.3% and 11 respondents representing 5.2% strongly agree and agreed that Nigeria has satisfactorily complied with the requirement in Article 24 of the Convention which requires that all states should put in place an implementation framework, 133 (53.6%) disagreed, 58 respondents representing 27.5% strongly disagree with the above notion, while 2 (0.9%) were undecided. From the foregoing therefore, it is apparent that the nature of the ECOWAS Convention in Nigeria is not in line with the provisions of the Convention. Nigeria 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.

In item 5, 24 respondents representing 11.4% and 33 respondents representing 15.6% attest that, inadequate implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs on Nigeria's security is due to rising spate of insecurity, while 61 respondents representing 28.9% and 88 respondents representing 41.7% disagreed and strongly disagreed. In addition, 5 respondents constituting 2.4% did not say anything. This shows that, inadequate implementation of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs on Nigeria's security are internal challenges.

In view of the above, an interview was conducted to corroborate the responses from the questionnaire with selected respondents from Centre for the Council of Small Arms and Light Weapons on the 5th January, 2023. The respondents are of the impression that there has not been a deliberate and sustained effort towards addressing SALW control as one of them put it that:

So far, ECOWAS Convention in Nigeria remain very poor. We will not get it right unless we are deliberate and it is the National Commission that will help us to structure it, and it will be able to monitor what progress is being made (Field Survey January, 2023).

Another respondent derisively said that I have not seen anything in respect of the control of SALWs in Nigeria through the Convention (Interview with a Senior Military Officer 1, January, 2023). The prevalence of SALW in the hands of non-state actors' manifests in the insurgency in the FCT and other regions in Nigeria were cited as the indicators of the absence of the implementation of any framework for the control of SALW in Nigeria. The two basic points of this position therefore are the unavailability of the prescribed body for implementing the Convention and the fact following from this is that, any effort outside of

that is worthless especially that it cannot be sustained evidenced in the insecurity occasioned by the availability of SALW in the country.

The respondents affirmed that, yes, by the virtue of the enactment of the firearms Act (1959) as the main legal instrument governing the production, use, import and export of SALW in Nigeria. The provision of 24 to 26 of the Act prohibits dealing in firearms except by registered dealers as well as import and export of firearms and ammunition into Nigeria by sea or by air (Field Survey, January 2023).

An interview held with STEFANOS Foundation on 14th April, 2023 revealed that:

I have worked with people on the ground whenever there is security in any community in the Plateau State, the people called us because of the confidence did trust they have bestowed on us. A lot of arms are on the high spread in Plateau state, just as it is in the entire country. Sophisticated arms and ammunitions are seen to be carried by non-state actors. There are deliberate efforts to proliferates small arms and light weapon in the state and Nigeria at large.

Well, there is a pattern to proliferation. I grew up here, we watched the community we considered as unsafe today. A Fulani man used to move around with a stick but now it is a different story even though proliferation cut across all ethnic and religious groups in the state. Guns and machet are mostly not carried again but AK of variety sorts (Field Survey, April, 2023).

Buttressing the above revelations, interview with Plateau Peace Building Agency on 14th April, 2023 also shows that:

Yes, looking at the incidences happening in the state, given the attendant conflicts and killings, it is in no doubt that small arms and light weapons is in the hands of non-state actors either as individuals or community.

On the pattern of proliferation of arms and light weapons in Plateau state, he stated that:

Yes, like I earlier said, we could say, there are patterns because prone areas, the conflict is said to be higher. For instance, Bassa which borders Kaduna, there is an overflow of small arms and light weapons, Wase and Langtang north too. So, conflict merchants find it easier to sale these weapons due to demand factors (Field Survey, April, 2023).

Analysis on the efforts made by the Nigerian Government in enhancing national security shows that, 88 respondents and 47 respondents representing 41.7% and 22.3% respectively strongly agree and agreed that the efforts made by the Nigerian Government are largely inadequate in enhancing national security, 40 respondents representing 19% and 30 respondents representing 14.2% respectively disagree with the above statement, while 6 (2.8%) did not comment.

In item 12, 105 respondents representing 49.8% and 77 respondents representing 36.5% agreed that setting up of Presidential Committee (PRESCOM) by Ministry of Defence in conjunction with the office of the National Security Adviser is a right step towards addressing the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and will reduce security challenges in Nigeria, while 21 respondents representing 10% and 6 respondents representing 2.8% disagree. On the other hand, only 2 respondents representing 0.9% were undecided. This means that establishment of Presidential Committee (PRESCOM) is a proactive step with the potential to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

From item 13, 43 respondents representing 20.4% and 41 respondents representing 19.4% agreed that PRESCOM has gone ahead to articulate a policy thrust based on the understanding that it is the focal point for government's intervention in curbing the proliferation of SALW in Nigeria, 45 respondents representing 21.3% and 78 respondents representing 37% disagree, while 4 (1.9%) declined. This means that as part of measures to bring an end to proliferation of SALWs to address Nigeria's security challenges through the ECOWAS Convention, the PRESCOM failed to live up to expectations.

On the other hand, responses from item 14 reveals that 63 respondents representing 29.9% and 70 respondents representing 33.2% agreed that the implementation of ECOWAS Convention on proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria is more political than real, 33 respondents representing 15.6% disagree and 43 respondents representing 20.4% strongly disagree, while 2 (0.9%) were undecided. This entails that, implementation of ECOWAS Convention on proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria is more political than real.

From item 15, 77 respondents representing 36.5% and 84 respondents representing 39.8% agreed that, there is political influence to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, 20 (9.5%) and 27 respondents representing 12.8% disagree with the above statement, while 3 (1.4) declined comment. This shows that some political office holders are sabotaging the effort of Nigerian government by influencing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

In view of the above, an interview was conducted to corroborate the responses from the questionnaire with officials of Department of Political Science, University of Jos on 5th January 2023. Field research showed that:

Government is making effort to improve the security situation but such is not adequate. Corruption is implicated in the inadequate response to the security challenges. They further revealed that there is no serious effort by the Nigerian government to improve the security environment through the framework of ECOWAS Convention. The refusal of government to convert PRESCOM into a Commission is the reason for weak implementation of the Convention towards controlling the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria (Field Work January, 2023).

One of the staff from the Nigeria Custom Service added that: yes, there are concrete efforts put by the Central government of Nigeria in curtailing the proliferation of SALWs. The

customs for example is saddled with the responsibility of border drill which is coordinated by the office of the National Security Adviser. For customs, government is already providing scanners in all entry points which will reveal the inflow of weapons and other illegal goods into the country. Government has also hugely invested in the provision of arms for security agencies for the above mentioned purposes. A respondent who is also the staff of the organization with verse experience on border management reported that:

Even before the ECOWAS Convention, the security issues in Nigeria were not like this worse but there were issues of security threat but like I said earlier, the security situation in Nigeria today is worse. Again, the fact that it was not adequately implemented does not mean, it has not achieved anything. We have seen the number of weapons that have been seized in some states of the federation. The fact still remains that more weapons still coming in (Field survey January, 2023).

In an interview another official from the Nigeria Custom Service to further look at the impacts of ECOWAS Convention on the proliferation of SALWs for Nigeria's security, he responded that; the ECOWAS Convention is domesticated, that is why there is definite efforts by government to remove illegal weapons in the hands of unauthorized persons or non-state actors.

An interview with another STEFANOS Foundation on 14th April, 2023 shared similar opinion with the traditional ruler in Bass LGA, that:

The problem is lack of will power from the Federal government, because the Presidency is in charge of giving directives because even in the face of attacks, you would hear security personnel saying we have not been given directive (Field Survey April, 2023).

To the Plateau Peace Building Agency, an interview conducted with staff of the agency on 14th April, 2023 on the effort of state and federal government in addressing the SALWs in the state revealed that:

Yes, it has been done in the Plateau State, certain mechanism has been put in place. For instance, using security centric approaches, the creation of Operation Rainbow as a state-owned security outfit to see how they can tackle some of the security challenges. On being proactive, the state government also established the Plateau Peace Building Agency to mitigate the high rate of violent conflicts through dialogue and mediation of disputes. At the federal, the government has use the customs, immigration, police and other sister security outfits in manning the Minister of proliferation of SALWs in the country (Field Survey April, 2023).

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the investigation reveals that ECOWAS Convention on SALWs is not adequate in Nigeria owing to the proliferation of arms into the country as the arms from

wanton countries find their ways into the country. These, coupled with poor funding, made it difficult for any meaningful achievement by NatCom with regards to the implementation of the Convention. Secondly, Nigeria's efforts in controlling SALWs have not been based on the fundamental provisions of the Convention, particularly the establishment of a National Commission, resulting in the country's failure to achieve tangible results. The functions of a national commission are so crucial that failure to establish it is a significant setback to the implementation of the Convention, as has become manifest in Nigeria. PRESCOM is attempting to cover some of these functions, but it obviously does not have the requisite institutional and operational capacity to effectively carry them out, because of its limitations as a presidential committee.

CONCLUSION

The study examines the nature and responses of Nigerian government on ECOWAS convention on the proliferation of SALWs on Nigeria's security. The paper was motivated by the increasing threat to human and state security in Nigeria occasioned by the availability of SALW in the possession of unauthorized individuals and non-state actors despite the robust instruments for its control which the ECOWAS Convention offers, it has become necessary to evaluate its implementation in the country, as this has resulted to proliferation of arms into the country as the arms from wanton countries find their ways into the country. This study has shown that Nigeria has failed to adequately domesticate and implement the Convention accordingly. The establishment of SALW (NatCom), the presidential committee on SALW (PRESCOM) and recently National Centre for the Council of Small Arms and Light Weapons, has been short lived as their leadership has been inconsistent and lack political will. To stem the tide of a drift to anarchy by the continuous uncontrolled availability and use of SALW, it will be necessary to take steps to implement the Convention accordingly.

Recommendations

In view of the above, the following recommendations are made:

- i. There should be political will and adequate monitoring of National Centre for the Council of Small Arms and Light Weapons and other relevant agencies in ensuring safe and effective management of arms and weapons, storage and security of national stocks, among others. Mopping up of arms and weapons in Nigeria should be a periodic exercise by the state government collaborating with the security agencies;
- ii. The executive branch, legislative assembly, and Civil Society Organisations should work together to promptly ratify ECOWAS and establish a national commission on SALW. Once the legislation has passed, civil society organisations should assist in implementation of the Convention by educating the public about the dangers of SALW in the hands of non-state actors and by helping to expose those entities that are possessing and using SALW.

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