

Privatization of Military and Security Companies: A Threat and Risk Analysis to the Security of the Nigerian State

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ABSTRACT

The study on "Privatization of Military and Security Companies: A Threat and Risk Analysis" examines the involvement of PMCs in the proliferation of SALWs and their impact on the security of states in Africa, particularly Nigeria. The carnage caused by the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II drove the world to the threat of possible human extermination through weapons of mass destruction. Consequently, various organizations, particularly the United Nations, regional bodies, and non-state actors, have attempted to ensure global safety. To prevent and monitor the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, the United Nations (UN) created the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on July 29, 1957. Since the end of the Cold War, however, it has become a sobering reality that SALWs, rather than WMDs, are responsible for the vast majority of casualties in internal conflicts worldwide. It is accurate to label SALWs as "weapons of mass destruction" due to the devastation they cause. This primary gap is what we aim to address with this research. The study employed a qualitative approach to data analysis, drawing from primary and secondary sources, including existing literature on the topic and related documents. Existing data on this subject revealed a potentially disastrous aspect of the spread of SALWs throughout sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria in particular. Similarly, the research findings concluded that small arms and light weapons (SALWs) have never been subjected to any systematic, traceable transfer mechanism, nor have they been recognized as strategically important to global safety. This situation persisted until the end of the Cold War when asymmetric warfare in the world's weakest nations began to threaten state disintegration. The study concludes that numerous factors contribute to the widespread proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria, including but not limited to porous borders, activities of private military and security companies, rogue arms brokers, corruption, sales of arms to civilians by security operatives, and weak arms control mechanisms.

Keywords: Privatization, Military, Security, Companies, SALWs and Proliferations, Economic sustainability, Development, Crimes, Nigeria

1. Introduction

PMCs are private entities that provide military or security services for profit. They have been employed by governments, non-governmental organizations, and corporations to carry out tasks such as security, training, and logistics support. PMCs have been involved in a number of conflicts in Africa since the 1990s, including in Nigeria (Theophilus et al., 2022). The proliferation of SALWs has been a major concern in Africa, as these weapons have been responsible for a significant number of fatalities and injuries in conflicts. The deregulation of the weapons trade, driven by the triumph of free-market ideology and a unipolar political and

economic worldview, has made it easier for individuals to obtain small and light guns in Africa. PMCs have played a significant role in the production, dissemination, and distribution of SALWs in Africa, including in Nigeria. PMCs have been involved in the training and equipping of local forces in Africa, often providing SALWs as part of their services. They have also been involved in the sale of SALWs to various actors, including governments, rebel groups, and criminal organizations. PMCs have been accused of fueling conflicts and exacerbating the proliferation of SALWs in Africa (Theophilus *et al.*, 2022; Okoi, *etal*, 2022).

The proliferation of Small and Light Weapons (SALW) in Africa by Private Military Companies (PMCs) is indeed a complex issue, influenced by a variety of factors. One of the key drivers is the legacy of Cold War proxy conflicts, which saw superpowers like the Soviet Union and the United States provide weapons and training to various factions in Africa (Abdel-Fatau, 2002). These weapons have continued to circulate in the continent, fueling ongoing conflicts and destabilizing fragile states (Omang, *et al*, 2020). Another factor is the breakdown of state structures, which has allowed armed groups to operate with impunity and has created a demand for weapons among civilians seeking protection. In some cases, corrupt officials have sold weapons from national armories or allowed weapons to fall into the wrong hands (Okpa, *etal*, 2021). This has been compounded by the proliferation of illicit arms markets, which are often fueled by the demand for weapons by PMCs and other non-state actors. PMCs themselves also play a role in the proliferation of SALW in Africa (Abdel-Fatau, 2002). These companies operate in a legal gray area, with few regulations governing their activities, and have been accused of exacerbating conflicts by providing weapons and training to various parties. In some cases, PMCs have been accused of actively fueling conflicts to justify their continued presence and profit from the sale of weapons. The dissolution of the arms trade in Eastern and Central Europe has also played a role in the proliferation of SALW in Africa. As traditional markets have dried up, some arms dealers have sought new markets in the developing world, often ignoring export regulations and fueling conflicts in the process (Okpa, *etal*, 2020). Finally, there are also cultural and economic factors at play. Some African nations, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, have a long history of producing weapons and take pride in their ability to do so. In some cases, economic pressures have also driven these countries to sell weapons abroad, despite the risks involved (Theophilus *et al.*, 2022; Abdel-Fatau, 2002).

However, it is certain that, as the variety of entities involved in conflict expanded and the quantity of available weapons grew throughout the 1990s, the nature of war itself changed. Concerns about who is buying weapons and why have been exacerbated by the expansion of the international arms trade, which has allowed for more suppliers and purchasers (Ukwayi, *etal*, 2019). The continued, if not increasing, use of mercenaries and the establishment of private military organizations hired to offer military and security services are two aspects of warfare that have evolved in recent decades

1.1 Statement of the problem

While international laws, treaties, and standards are undoubtedly important, as discussed in "What's the Point of Arms Transfer Control," the author points out that these approaches often face criticism for placing too much emphasis on measures such as trade restrictions, weapons embargoes, disarmament efforts, demobilization and reintegration programs, and weapon collection initiatives. The socio-cultural and historical factors that enable the misuse and abuse of SALWs are not taken into account by these methods (Peter, *etal*, 2020). The challenge posed by global criminal networks, which may outsmart any well-constructed legal system, remains, even if African nations have the political will to control the weapons trade. The wide and easily penetrable borders, insurgencies, lack of effective governance (including various corrupt activities), and insufficient government capabilities all contribute to the proliferation of illegal weapons in the West African subregion. As stated by Lampitey (2013), border agencies are particularly hampered by a lack of resources, such as equipment, and a lack of incentive for personnel (Ebingha *etal*, 2019).

Moving small arms across international borders is possible through various modes of transportation. The flow of SALWs from Libya and Chad into Mali, northern Nigeria, and other parts of Sahelian West Africa is on the rise. Moreover, weapons might fall into the hands of terrorist organizations if stolen from state arsenals or transferred to them by corrupt officials. Locally-produced assault rifles and small arms and light weapons (SALWs) pose a challenge if they end up in the wrong hands, as they can be difficult to retrieve (Ukwayi *et al*, 2018). Even after disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs and arms collection efforts, a significant number of weapons may still be held by those who could potentially use them. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the weapons collected during these initiatives often have little impact on security, as they tend to consist of surplus or obsolete stockpiles. People are less inclined to lay down their weapons when they feel uneasy and skeptical of the authorities, according to Muggah (2010). In order to successfully minimize SALW proliferation concerns in Nigeria, it is crucial to address not just the supply and ownership of SALWs, but also the demand and misuse of these weapons. A review of the relevant literature reveals that researchers have devoted significant time and effort to studying the spread of SALWs in conjunction with the Proliferating States Monitoring Committee, but far less attention has been paid to the threat these weapons pose to Nigeria's national security. Our goal with this study is to close this critical knowledge gap.

1.2 Methods of Data Collection

The study adopted a documentary research method. This research method involves the use of secondary sources of data collection, such as textbooks, articles published in peer-reviewed journals, newspaper publications, and picture sources in paper, electronic, or other hard-copy forms. Data for this study were gathered from published articles in national dailies and peer-reviewed journals. The choice of these sources of data collection was made due to their wide coverage in reporting and their online presence. The thematic areas that guided the literature review include: mode of acquisition, privatization, military companies, and SALWs proliferation, threat and risk analysis: Implications for National Security. The preliminary article survey included over 156 articles in total, with data extracted from 39 published articles. These articles were sourced from the Google search engine, the Scopus database, and PubMed. Selected articles comprise both qualitative and quantitative published articles written in English.

1.3 Modes of acquisition

There is no denying that, in comparison to the Cold War era, today's options for obtaining weapons are far more convenient and flexible. The reason for this is that the arms trafficking system during the Cold War was more tightly regulated than the current system, particularly in regards to small arms and light weapons (Lawrence, 2010). During the Cold War era, non-governmental entities were the main players in the distribution of weapons, while the superpowers and their allies supplied their clients with weapons to advance their political and ideological objectives. It is not incorrect to argue that the system was not subject to complete governmental supervision (Ukwayi & Okpa, 2017). During that time period, imperfect measures were taken to prevent these weapons from falling into the wrong hands, particularly when they were supplied to non-state actors. However, initially, the government regulated the manufacturing and export of these weapons to nations and non-state players.

It is also possible to legally obtain weapons. It is well documented that a significant portion of small arms and light weapons is acquired through lawful commerce between states or between legal firms sanctioned by governments. Nations in war zones continue to lawfully import small arms and light weapons from countries that produce them and their excess of old weapons, where "legal" is defined as any transfer that is not "contrary to the law of states and/or international law" (Lawrence, 2010). This is a common practice, especially when a major army is downsizing and wants to sell off its excess weaponry. However, commercial sale is the most common type of legal transfer, followed by transactions between governments. Export permits

and end-user certifications are common methods through which national processes in both the supplying and receiving countries regulate the transfer (Omang, *etal*, 2022).

In a similar vein, governments concerned about maintaining their own security and political influence may equip subnational organizations that align with their socio-political agendas and provide backup to official security forces. In many cases, this involves either equipping a "self-defense" force or relaxing laws against private residents possessing firearms. At the conclusion of a peace process, in particular, both types of holders may choose to keep their weapons even when the necessity for them has diminished. South Africa, Mozambique, Colombia, and Guatemala are just a few of the countries where this has occurred. Distribution and transfer of excess weapons after a conflict may hamper efforts to register the weapons (Okpa *etal*, 2022).

After the end of the Cold War, several significant changes have occurred, which have made the majority of small arms and light weapons trade no longer qualify as lawful commerce. The first change is in the type of SALWs being traded; previously traded outdated weapons have been replaced with new ones. Secondly, many states can currently manufacture light weapons. This is now a real possibility due to the proliferation of weapons-making technologies during the Cold War. The third point concerns the significant decrease in the production of small arms and light weapons after the Cold War. Most of the SALWs provided during the Cold War have remained in the areas where these wars were fought, creating a surplus pool that can be reused and disseminated. The United Nations Disarmament Commission found that the delivery of these weapons by Cold War adversaries contributed to their widespread availability, circulation, and buildup in many regions of conflict (United Nations Disarmament Commission Report, 1995). As a result of economic constraints, nations that produce guns but are not in zones of intrastate conflict are increasingly exporting the excess they have accumulated over the years, rather than continuing to produce new weapons. The UN Small Arms Panel studied the production of assault rifles from 1945 to 1990 and concluded that most small arms and light weapons used in conflicts under UN jurisdiction are not newly created.

Fifth, the rise of Private Military Companies (PMCs) is a significant development in the weapons industry after the Cold War. The prevalence of light, portable, and easily transportable weapons has contributed to this trend. Illicit acquisition of arms through covert or secret transfers from one government to another, including non-state entities, is a primary means of acquiring weapons. This strategy is still used by nations that support separatist movements, which hampers efforts to regulate firearms and reduce the likelihood of war.

The sixth point to discuss involves illicit exchanges on the black market, which have become more prevalent due to the imposition of weapons embargoes by the United Nations and the involvement of non-state actors in armed conflicts. Nations subject to embargoes, covert political groups, and criminal organizations like drug cartels rely on the black market for arms acquisition because of its mobility, low cost, and ability to be concealed.

The seventh issue is the unlawful in-country circulation, which occurs when a large portion of the supply is already present in the area, and occasionally in the nation, where it is most in demand. It is more feasible (economically, militarily, and politically) to obtain the required weapons without having to go through cumbersome export and import processes. Cross-border purchases are not always necessary. The first method is the illegal acquisition of weapons from government stockpiles. To provide just one example, in South Africa, over 10,000 firearms have been stolen from law enforcement, military, and legitimate self-defense groups since 1990, according to a recent government investigation. The second strategy for acquiring firearms within the nation is ambush. Third, it is not uncommon for non-state actors to engage in bilateral weapons agreements. This was a prevalent phenomenon in the Liberian war, as existing combatants armed new factions. Subnational groups may also obtain weapons through arms deals with criminal organizations, particularly if the criminals are employed to protect the subnational groups' illicit endeavors. When any one of the aforementioned methods of acquisition is used

(see Fig. 1), Theophilus et al. (2022) found that a considerable amount of weaponry is siphoned off by government officials or sub-national organizations.

Life cycle of a gun

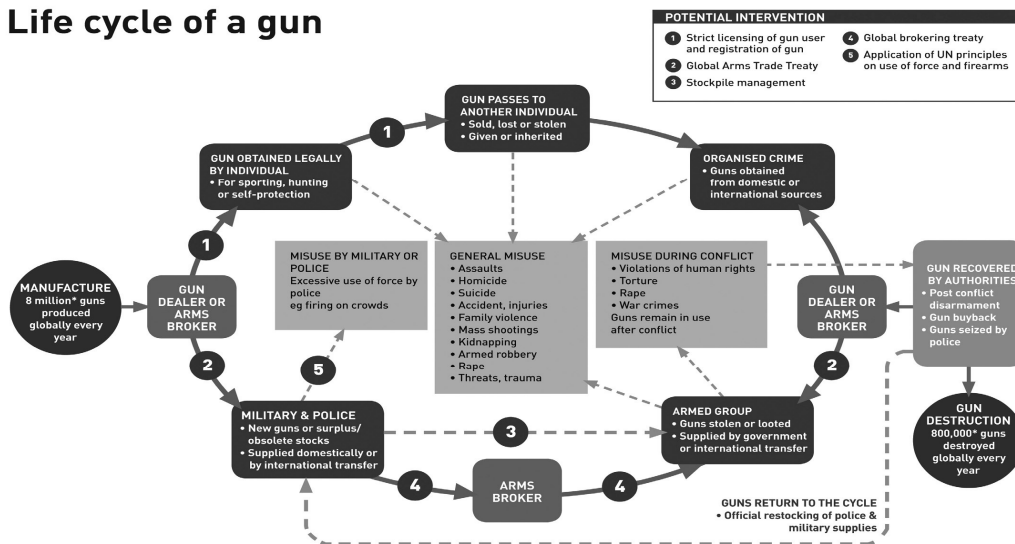


Fig. 1: SALWs life cycle and proliferation

Source: International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) (2012)

2. Literature Review: Privative, Military Companies and SALWs proliferation

Private military corporations were investigated for their part in the spread of light weapons in a 1990 International Alert study (Sami Makki et al., 1990). The investigation found that PMCs were engaged in all phases of military and intelligence operations worldwide, from direct fighting to combat support to the purchase of weapons. It was found that PMCs, in these capacities, contributed both directly and indirectly to the demand for armaments in the area where they operate. Since the 1990s, PMCs have proliferated all over the globe, as the authors point out. They linked this trend to a variety of post-Cold War developments, including the substantial reduction of western armies and the growth of interstate wars, both of which left power vacuums in certain emerging nations. The authors claim that this shift has disrupted the established order of the international arms trade by "raising the number of buyers and sellers," so enabling a wider variety of entities to get access to weapons.

According to the United Nations Report of Panel Group of Government experts on Small Arms, this has led to "increased use of arms to fuel conflicts and to facilitate human rights abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law" because of the proliferation of unaccountable actors involved in the arms trade. The research highlights the danger that PMCs pose to international security by arguing that the involvement of third parties in conflicts has only served to prolong such conflicts across the globe.

In her analysis titled "Private military and security companies: The End of state responsibility," Uruena Sanchez M. I. (2019) confirms the idea that the rise of neoliberalism in influential countries like the United Kingdom and the United States made it easier to transfer government functions to the private sector after the Cold War. This led to private individuals taking over important state functions with the belief that corporate governance would ensure efficiency.

The privatization of security and defense has been a surprising development, contradicting Adam Smith's precepts that only security and administration of justice should be areas of state domination. Private Military and Security Companies (PMCs) have emerged as new actors in the international system, challenging the idea of violence as a state monopoly. While PMCs are not a new phenomenon, their role in performing tasks that were exclusively the

responsibility of the state in the past is novel. The debate over coercive power between the state and PMCs has shifted attention away from the responsibility of the state as a sovereign entity.

Private Military Companies (PMCs) have been around for decades, with some of the earliest examples being British officers and ex-officers who established companies like Watchguard International and Control Risk Group during the Cold War. ArmorGroup, founded in 1981 as Defense Services Limited, is another example of a PMC that has played a significant role in modern conflicts and security operations.

Private Military Companies (PMCs), have been established by various countries for various purposes, including Canada, France, Israel, Australia, and Belgium. However, the United States is widely regarded as the country where this industry became more widespread and where the largest number of PMCs are headquartered. However, the use of PMCs has been controversial, with critics arguing that their use undermines state sovereignty, international law, and human rights. Additionally, there have been concerns about the lack of accountability and transparency surrounding their activities, as well as their potential for corruption and abuse. One of the main areas of action for American PMCs has been protecting individuals, including diplomats and other high-value targets, in conflict zones. This has involved providing security services such as armed guards, armored vehicles, and security assessments of facilities. The use of PMCs by the US government has not been without controversy, however. Critics have raised concerns about the lack of accountability and oversight for these contractors and their potential to operate with impunity in conflict zones. There have been reports of misconduct and human rights abuses by PMC personnel, leading to calls for greater regulation and oversight of the industry (Dionisi, 2005: 90; McCallion, 2005, Perret, 2013).

Private military companies (PMCs) have a controversial history, and their activities have often resulted in negative consequences the activities of PMCs like Executive Outcomes and Sandline International have been controversial, and their use has often resulted in adverse outcomes. While some argue that PMCs can provide valuable services in conflict zones, others point to the potential risks associated with their activities, including the potential for human rights abuses and violations of international law (Adams, 2002; Krahmann, 2005).

MPRI's involvement in the Croatian War in the mid-1990s was a turning point for private military companies. Before MPRI's successful involvement, private military companies were largely viewed as "mercenaries" and "war dogs" who worked for profit, often without regard for human rights or international law. However, MPRI's strong organizational structure and transparent corporate governance helped to change this perception. MPRI's work in Operation Storm was seen as a model for how private military companies could work effectively and ethically alongside conventional military forces to achieve military objectives. Despite this success, the 21st century has seen a significant increase in the use of private military contractors in international interventions. During the Iraq War, the number of contractors working for the US government increased rapidly, reaching a peak of 190,000 at its height (Nicoll, 2007).

The war against drugs in the Americas led to the consolidation of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in Colombia and their expansion into Mexico. Plan Colombia was launched in 2000 by the Colombian government, with the aim of reducing drug production and trafficking, as well as improving the country's social and economic conditions. The initiative received significant support from the United States, which provided billions of dollars in aid to Colombia over the years. One of the key strategies of Plan Colombia was the use of private military contractors (PMCs) such as Dyncorp, MPRI, Northrop Grumman, and Kellogg, Brown & Root. These PMCs were involved in a variety of tasks, including coca crop fumigation, radar monitoring of narcotics trafficking, and training security forces to combat drug trafficking. (Perret, 2013; McCallion, 2005). In Colombia, the combination of narco-guerrilla activities led to a hybrid strategy of high-tech missions and counterinsurgency. Private Military Companies (PMCs) became more prominent in the 2000s, but faced increased scrutiny for their use. Their image was partially rehabilitated by providing security for International and Non-Governmental Organizations (Avant, 2005: 156), The violation of human rights by private military and security

companies (PMSCs) has raised questions about their role in various situations. Examples include the involvement of CACI employees in torture practices against Abu Ghraib prisoners, the shooting of Blackwater personnel in Baghdad, the dismissal of DynCorp workers for involvement in acts of rape and child prostitution in Bosnia, and the direct participation of PMSCs in hostilities in Colombia. These are some of the excesses perpetrated by PMSCs during that period (Kurlantzick, 2003; Perret, 2013; Nicoll, 2007; Seahill, 2007; McCarron, 2008).

During the Bush years, private military contractors (PMCs) were delegitimized, which provoked a frustrated reaction from the subsequent administration. During Barack Obama's presidency, there was an attempt to regain control of the military by regulating private military contractors. Congress issued a circular in 2009 to restrict their use in combat, security, and intelligence operations. However, the results were only formal, and the attempt to regulate these companies was not fully successful. The government's urgent need for a unified approach to action has revealed the shortcomings of the Department of Defense procurement system and exposed how military commanders conform to the prevailing status quo (Bruneau, 2013).

The responsibility of Private Military Companies (PMCs) is a concern due to two main issues: accountability and international legal subjectivity. PMCs are not held accountable for their conduct due to the lack of specialized bodies or specific regulations. The instruments of international law that seek to control the behavior of these companies are part of soft law sources, making their binding nature non-existent. Moreover, pressure groups have limited knowledge about their activities, which makes it difficult to hold them accountable. PMCs have not been strongly controlled by their countries of origin, which are usually great powers, as they respond to their hegemonic interests and support their policies in the countries where they operate (Adams, 2002).

Private military contractors (PMCs) are not recognized as subjects of international law, which means that while individuals working for these companies can be held accountable, the companies themselves cannot. This lack of legal status makes it difficult for international justice mechanisms to pursue and punish PMCs for their corporate capacity, allowing them to evade accountability (Rousseau, 2014, Huskey, 2012: 203, Barnes, 2013).

The search for responsibility for Private Military Companies (PMCs) has not been successful, leading to an investigation into the responsibility of the state. In the traditional view of international law, the responsibility of the state is determined by two factors: losses and damages suffered, and the responsibility to ensure the security of other states (Kinsey, 2003). There are two types of states that would be held responsible for not controlling the actions of Private Military Companies (PMCs): the state where the PMC is registered and the state where they operate.

The legal ambiguity surrounding private military companies (PMCs) is exploited by both sending and receiving states to achieve their respective economic and political interests. Sending states delegate sensitive security issues to PMCs to avoid accusations of imperialism and to avoid sacrificing regular troops. Receiving states see PMCs as a valuable opportunity to deal with destabilizing forces that threaten their economic accumulation and social control. These attitudes have resulted in failures, such as the failed attempt to ratify the Convention against mercenary recruitment in 2001 (Adams, 2002).

The combination of military power and corporate power is a complex concern, as it challenges the precepts of modernity such as the monopoly of violence by the State and democratic control of defense (Machairas, 2014). The use of private military companies (PMCs) by various legal and illegal actors, including unpopular and illegitimate governments and interventionist states, can potentially undermine human rights in affected countries due to the fragility of the institutions and humanitarian conditions in these areas.

From this combination, Dawn Rothe and Jeffery Ross warn of this potential complicity through the concept of State-corporate crimes, which can be defined as:

The illegal or socially damaging action that results as a collective product of the interaction between corporation and the State agency ... (this) involves the

active participation of two or more organizations, where one is private and the other is public. It is the harmful result of the interorganizational relationship between business and government (2010).

In his study titled "The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Africa," Edeko, 2011 58-80) observed that private military companies (PMCs) are not subject to any international regulation, unlike state armies. Though the United States and South Africa were singled out as having restrictions in place regarding the use of PMCs, the study stated that the regulatory process for PMCs in the United States lags well behind the intense legislative scrutiny given to inter-state weapons transfers. Abdul-Fatau and Kayode (2000) argue that the report did not sufficiently address the involvement of private military companies (PMCs) in the West African wars. They point out that PMCs played a role in the proliferation of weapons during the Sierra Leone civil conflict, highlighting the private sector's contribution to the conflict. In addition, the executive consequence, acts of British PMCs Sandline, are extensively recorded, showing their direct participation in the civil conflict in South Africa. Sandline, a private military company, and Peter Penfold, the British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, were involved in illegally shipping guns to Sierra Leone in violation of a United Nations arms embargo. While the British government denies any involvement, suspicions remain due to the High Commissioner's participation and Sandline's false information to the British Secret Service.

Likewise, an article called "Foot Soldiers of the New World Order: The Risk of the Corporate Military" recognized the notable influence that private military and security firms have in the spread and misuse of small arms, particularly when they are involved in facilitating the trade and transport of weapons. A case in point is the involvement of Sandline International in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 1977. The PNG government contracted with the firm to acquire Russian weapons and put down a revolt on Bouguinville Island. Military personnel from South Africa, the United Kingdom, and Ethiopia were engaged via private military corporations (PMCs) to function as weapons brokers, transport agents, and mediators between suppliers and receivers. Their role might vary from just introducing buyers and sellers to coordinating all aspects of the deal on the buyer's behalf, including the shipping of weapons Simon (1998). The dissemination of weapons to zones of conflict and human rights crises has been conclusively linked to arms brokering and transportation operations. Therefore, the subject of weapons brokering has risen to the forefront of debate at the UN Small Arms Conference (UN Security Council, S/CES/1132,p.3).

Private military and security firms have been accused of potentially violating UN and regional arms embargoes, such as the case of Sandline International's contract with Sierra Leone's president in 1988 to supply arms from Bulgaria. This incident raised concerns about whether it breached the UN arms embargo on Sierra Leone at the time. However, the sanctions imposed on Eritrea and Ethiopia by the United Nations Security Council in 2000 included exceptions for military services, which is not the case with most weapons embargoes. That "all governments shall block the sale or supply to Eritrea and Ethiopia of all sorts of armaments and associated materials," as well as "the provision of technical support or training linked to forbidden materials," were among the many provisions of the resolution. However, as stated by the Security Council in its report from May 2001 (UNSCR.3), it is hard to tell whether these restrictions have been observed owing to the weak implementation of weapons embargoes by many nations.

Accordingly, Sampson (1996), in "The Arms Bazaar", reviewed that, by undermining national security, the unregulated trade in arms severely constrains the notion of sovereignly envisioned in the peace of Westphalia, 1648. It is clear from the Lebanese experience that weapons can easily get out of control and establish their anarchy on state. Put differently, intra-state conflicts could decoy and guns originally supplied to one country for one cause soon find their way across borders to other countries for different and opposing purposes. For example, some of the weapons used in distant and diverse conflicts as in Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone,

Yugoslavia, etc. have found their way into Nigeria, for example, through regime participation in peacekeeping missions in those countries.

Military operations abroad are linked to the proliferation of small guns in Nigeria, which has led to an increase in communal violence since the country's return to democracy in May 1999. The prevalence of weaponry in the hands of unauthorised individuals exacerbates not only communal tensions but also robberies and political killings. Guns are readily accessible to bored, dissatisfied teenagers because of rising rates of young unemployment and social isolation. When the police and other security forces are overworked, it may lead to safety problems in the community. The natural conclusion is that people would turn to private security, vigilantes, and the Militia to fill their security demands.

Accordingly, the role of individual private arms transfer remains hugely relevant considering the fact that this is hinge on the right to transact business based on free market forces. An example that choreographs a typical circle is when Cummings, a private arms dealer, bought 2,000 Russian small arms captured by the Israelis from the Egyptians after the Seuz war of 1956, and nearly a million lee-Enfield rifles from the British government, most of which end up in America, Kenya and Pakistan.

The arms trade is conducted with knowledge of the world's security organisation and the circuitous movement of these arms is often sniffed in security circles. In the 1950s, the American Garund rifles were first exported to Germany for German rearmament, from Germany to Jordan in the 1960s, Jordan to Cummings factory in Manchester, from where some were exported to the Philippines to fight rebels (Ibid).

Corroborating the above assertion, (OShita, 2010) "In the Arms Trade and common security: The case of SALWs in West Africa", noted that the arms industry has a dynamism and drive which make their own logic beyond any arguments about strategy and diplomacy, and refuses to accept that it is different in kind from other industries. In addition, the fact that several arms trade scandals are shielded from the public eyes makes regulation of the industry very difficult. This is not to say that not much is known about the involvement of private military and security companies to enable legislation by the international community on their hazardous operations. Since the end of Cold War, private security and weapons resource companies in the United States have been "more or less overt" compared to the case in Britain. For instance, the US contingent to the NATO Monitoring Group in Kosovo was supplied by a commercial firm, Dyncorp, the Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI) was engaged in the Balkans in 1995, and BDM is involved in training Saudi forces in the Gulf. He further argued that the US State Department is the primary arms export licensing authority administered by the Office of Munitions Control (OMC), and later by-the Centre for Defence Trade.

In the United Kingdom, for instance, the Import, Export and Custom Power (Defence) Act of 1939, Customs and Excise Act of 1952, the Export of Goods (Control) Order of 1987, and as amended by Export of Goods (Control) Order of 1988, deal with "all used and unused articles defined as-military and strategic equipment". Revisions in the Export of Goods (Control) Order have been governed by two incompatible impulses, maximizing financial returns for the British Armed Forces and respect for political direction of export policy such as fundamental tension makes superfluous the execution of the end-user certificates, defined to track export and shipment of military equipment to destinations to which they were authorized by a license. The complicity of government in arms trade is traced to several years of transactions between private military companies and government. Among the important arms salesmen are servants of government. The export to the Middle. East, for example, was achieved not by gun-running or quick-bargains by obscure persons, but by long drawn-out negotiations between retired civil servants in Washington, Paris or London, endowed by executives and legislatures.

Comprehending security crisis from the mutual vulnerability perspective helps to blur the distinction between the involvement of private military and security companies with their second-hand supply routes, and movement of elaborate weapon systems. This is especially so when account is taken of the loss of life, internally displaced persons, refugee catastrophe and

atrocities of war. Private defence companies and other emerging nations' transfer of conventional armaments to Africa presents unique moral and political challenges. When more weapons are supplied to countries with a low HDI every day than food, medicine, and life-improving infrastructure combined, it's hard to see how these countries can be helped to improve. Unscrupulous weapons merchants, politically vulnerable individuals, security agents and leaders of armed groups, domestic producers, foreign governments, and international gangs were all complicit in the private military and security industry's clandestine SALWs trafficking activity.

In his analysis on "The coming Anarchy shattering the dreams of the post-Cold War", Kaplan (2001) is very critical of wealthier countries, arguing that their predatory policy initiatives are to blame for the humanitarian disasters that have occurred in many developing economies. The bulk of the client nations have experienced as a direct consequence internal turmoil as well as instability. The world has seen foreign players engaging in productive dialogue with reprehensible governments not just in Sierra Leone but also in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Apartheid South Africa, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Similarly, in Nigeria, Naagbanton (2005) in "The Proliferation of Small Arms, Armed Groups and Violent Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" claimed that insurgency and rebel organisation leaders, armed criminal gangs, and cults on college campuses are the main players in the illegal weapons trade. For example, Henry Okah, the head of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delia (MEND), is a well-known weapons trader who has considerable influence and essentially a monopoly over the arms trafficking axis that runs between Nigeria and South Africa. Another MEND commander, Asari Dokubo, said that Okah had given him weapons including AK-47s, GPMGs, cans of bullets, G3, and RPGS. Thus, the organization's leaders have foreign accounts abroad through which they launder the group's criminal riches using the identities of people who are not directly associated with the organisation. MEND was able to finance its series of violent assaults on government targets in the Niger Delta by trafficking in illegal SALWs and engaging in other criminal enterprises. In fact, Okah has said in the past that a militarised MEND "would carry out assaults on government institutions."

As part of the government's amnesty initiative in 2007, members of MEND and other organisations got substantial financial incentives for surrendering their weapons. Most notably, Commander Ateke Tom was paid US\$2,000 for each of the 360 AK-47 firearms he surrendered. This is equivalent to around \$720,000 in current U.S. dollars and is considered to be excessive. Under the amnesty plan, Asari Duokubo also made a deal with the government. Available evidence from the various Police and Military raids of the criminal hide-outs, from government-initiated disarmament of cash-for-arms programmes and more recently, the Federal government-initiated amnesty programmes, the number of weapons (firearms) collected, sized or destroyed are sourced or acquired from attacks on police and military armories.

The statement suggests that there is a broad consensus among various segments of society, including government officials, academics, and civil society organizations, that private military and security companies have played a significant role in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These weapons are widely available and have been used to kill millions of people worldwide. Ultimately, the sentiment expressed in the statement reflects a growing awareness of the devastating impact of small arms and light weapons on communities worldwide, and the need for concerted action to address this pressing issue. The West African subregion has been beset by a multitude of challenges, from political instability to economic struggles, and from inter-ethnic conflicts to religious tensions. In an effort to address these problems, numerous experts and commentators have put forth a wide range of possible causes. Despite the many and varied factors that have been identified, however, one element that seems to be common to many of the explanations is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) by private military and security corporations. Given the significant impact that the proliferation of SALWs has had on the West African subregion, it is clear that efforts to address this issue must be a top priority for policymakers and international organizations alike. While there may be differing

opinions on the root causes of the region's many problems, it is clear that addressing the issue of SALW proliferation will be an important step in building a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous future for the people of West Africa.

According to Ero and Ndinga-Muvumba (2004), "In small arms and light weapons in a contribution to Adebajo and Rashid's West African's security challenges building peace in a trouble region". Although, small arms and light weapons (SALWs) are not the root cause of conflicts, they exacerbate and fuel underlying tensions, making conflicts more lethal and harder to resolve. Taya Weiss, in his article "A Demand-side Approach to Fighting Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation," argues that the widespread availability of SALWs undermines alternative conflict resolution strategies and perpetuates violence. SALWs increase the number of casualties in conflicts and deepen the sense of crisis, prolonging conflicts and blighting the chances of resolution. This impact is not limited to developing countries but also applies to developed countries, where the availability of SALWs can contribute to criminal activities and other forms of violence. Therefore, controlling the proliferation of SALWs is critical in reducing the severity and duration of conflicts and promoting peace and security.

The concept of security in Nigeria should include economic development, according to former World Bank President Robert McNamara. Without development, there can be no security. This idea is supported by the violence seen in Nigeria, which is often linked to economic factors. Economic security is therefore an important factor to consider when discussing security in Nigeria, as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has undermined economic development and contributed to violence. Despite the destructive reputation of SALWs, they have not received the same level of attention as weapons of mass destruction.

The priority given to addressing the threat of nuclear weapons has been criticized by some scholars who point out the irony that these weapons have not been used since the bombing of Nagasaki in 1945, while Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) have caused an estimated three million deaths since 1990. The lack of sufficient action by the developed world to address the SALWs trade in West Africa has been attributed to foreign interests in the region's mineral resources. This trade, coupled with West Africa's potential as a future global energy source, further exacerbates concerns over the subregion's security.

Theophilus et al (2021) provides a different perspective from the Western economic interest in arms supply and identifies inept leadership as a significant factor in the unending demand for Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs). In Nigeria, corruption and administrative recklessness have contributed to the persistence of armed violence. The untold misery and suffering that these weapons have inflicted on innocent victims, continues to attract global attention as well as the search for effective ways of ridding the world of these weapons of death. From the survey on the threat and risk of proliferating as it affects the security of the Nigerian state, ultimately, we must draw the conclusion that the inherent inconsistencies in liberalisation exacerbate the difficulty of controlling the role of private military and security firms in the spread of SALWs. Arms dealers benefit from liberalisation research because it allows them to strengthen existing business connections and explore new ones, as a result of variables such as cheaper transportation and technology costs and less constraints across the border. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to claim that the instability the Nigerian state is experiencing and the deteriorating state capability throughout Africa are both caused and exacerbated by the growing role of private military and security corporations in the spread of small guns and light weapons (see fig. 2 & 3).

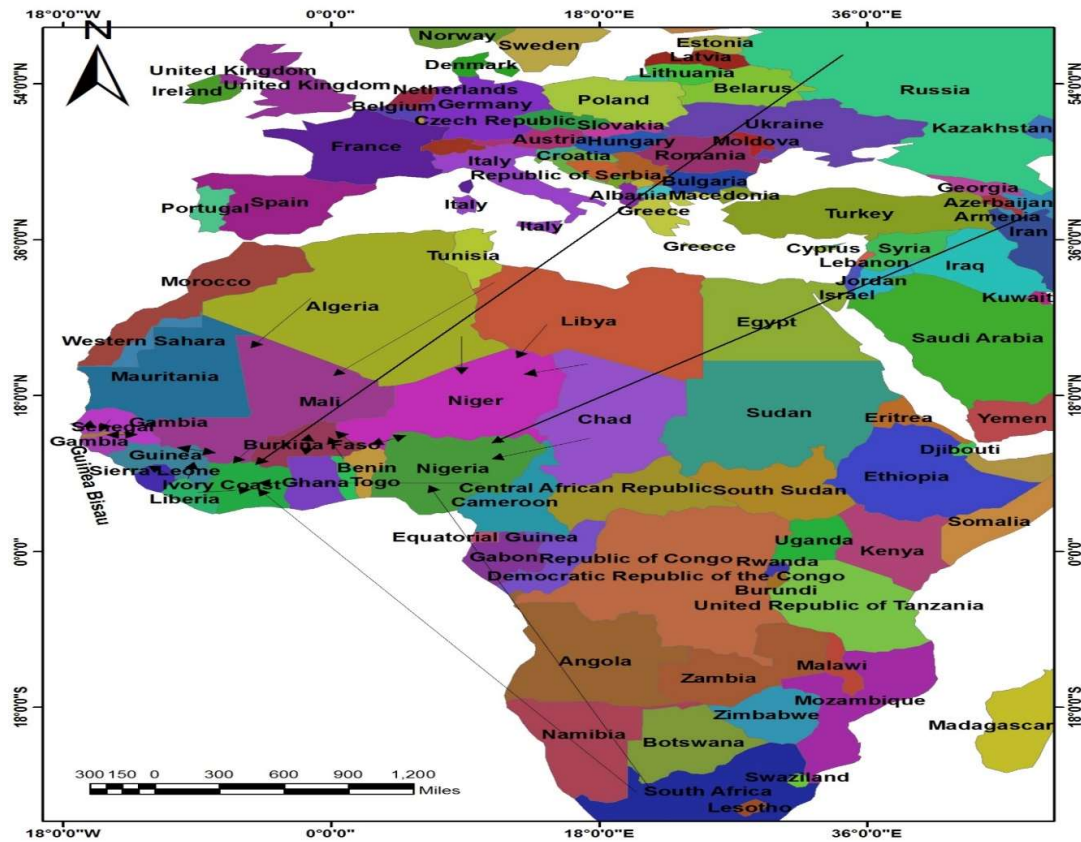


Fig. 2: Routes for illicit trafficking in SALWs in West Africa

Source: Theophilus, O. A. GIS Lab, Geography/Environmental Science, University of Calabar, 2021

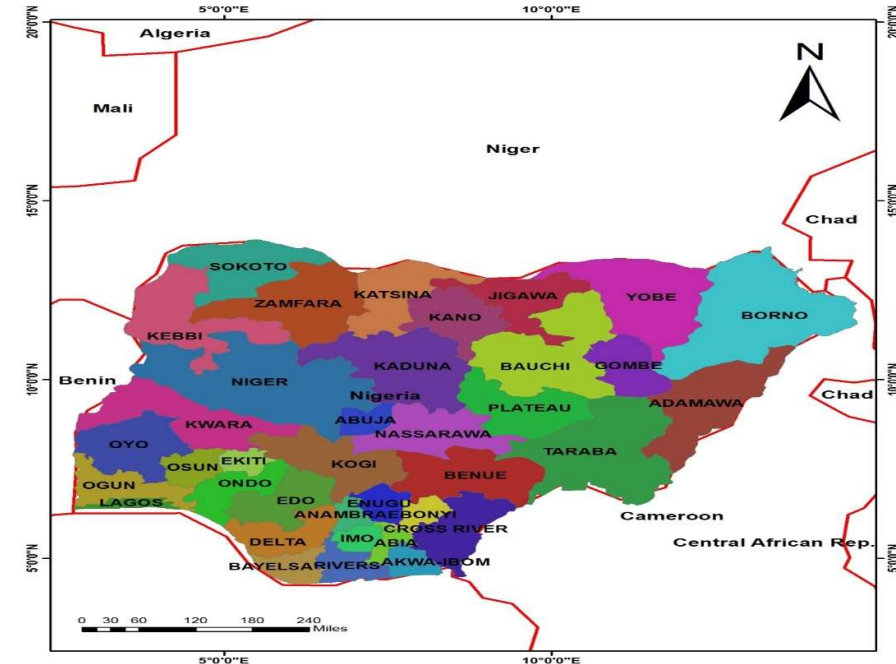


Fig. 3: Map showing Nigeria's International borders

Source: Theophilus, O. A.: GIS Lab, Geography/Environmental Science, University of Calabar, 2021

Theoretical Discourse

Using an appropriate theoretical framework is crucial for any study as it not only provides explanatory capabilities but also serves as a guide to enhance the understanding of the research. In this particular study, two theories, Realism and Liberalism, were selected.

i) Realism

Realism as an epistemological framework is based on two key assumptions. The first assumption is that states are the only actors in the international system. The second assumption is that the international system is characterized by anarchy, meaning that there is no overarching authority or hierarchy governing the interactions between states. These two assumptions provide the foundation for the validity of realism as a framework for understanding international relations. This feeling of anarchy is not due to the fact that there is no order or that things are chaotic; rather, it is due to the fact that there is no global authority that is powerful enough to ensure the safety of individual nations. As a result, in an effort for nations to ensure security and political power, governments attempt to secure their particular security by increasing their levels of armament. For this reason, Morgenthau (1948) characterises international politics as a fight for power. While it's true that there isn't a global government, it's important to note that this doesn't mean there isn't international law. Rather, whether or not individual governments recognise international law depends on whether or not they're prepared to accept the consequences of doing so.

Realism is a philosophical movement in international relations that rejects idealism and views anarchy as the predominant force in the world. Figures such as Kennan, (1954), Morgenthau, (1948), and Kegley (1994) contributed to the development of this philosophy, which holds that force is the ultimate tool in diplomacy and the foundation of all contracts outside the bounds of the state. The ability and willingness of states to defend themselves form the basic framework for international negotiations, according to Michael Howard (Bassey, 2012).

It is true that realism is relevant to understanding the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and the security threats they pose. Realism emphasizes the role of states in international relations and their pursuit of self-interest, including through the production and sale of arms. However, as you noted, realism has limitations when it comes to non-state actors, who often play a significant role in the proliferation of SALW. Non-state actors such as armed groups, criminal networks, and terrorist organizations can acquire weapons through a variety of means, including theft, smuggling, and purchase from corrupt officials. The GIABA report from 2013 highlights the role of major industrialized countries in producing the majority of SALW used in recent wars. This underscores the importance of addressing the supply side of the issue, as well as demand-side factors such as conflict and instability.

It is clear that the dominant patterns of conflict in interstate relations, characterised by continual struggle among states, are the defining characteristic of global reality, leading Realists to have a negative outlook on the international system. As a result, governments will use all means required to ensure their safety within the international community. That's why there's always a chance of conflict, and why people want guns all the time. It follows that the Realist theory will, at most, provide a required but insufficient rationale for the spread of SALWs. It is because of this shortcoming that the authors of this research have turned to Liberal theoretical frameworks.

ii) Liberalism

Liberalism is fundamentally a theory that ties occurrences to their probable causes. The economic premise of this idea is that governments shouldn't meddle with the production and pricing of necessities like food and water, but instead should let market forces take the reins. It promotes the idea that individuals, not governments, should have the right to possess and manage economic resources. Exponents of Liberalism, including Keohane & Nye, Rosenau, and John Locke, have identified various factors contributing to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). The causes of the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

in Africa can be traced to two factors. Firstly, the massive supply of weapons by the former Soviet Union, the United States, and its allies for proxy conflicts within and between African states. Secondly, the dismantling and deregulation of arms industries in Eastern and Central Europe, which has led to the proliferation of mini-industries in Africa and rendered current export laws meaningless. As a result, several African countries now have thriving SALW industries. The Coming Anarchy" argues that the abrupt collapse of the system of ideological proxies created major economic and political challenges for many developing nations in the post-Cold War environment. When these nations were unable to stop the wave of liberal reform, they experienced violent civil wars within their own borders. The relevance of the privatization concept in the study is demonstrated by the fact that it shows that, contrary to the Realist belief that state actors are responsible for the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), Liberal theorists believe that individuals and Private Military Companies are encouraged to produce and manufacture SALWs and their components due to their sudden affordability. For instance, in the United States and other developed nations, the Military Industrial complex has been privatized, allowing smaller firms to freely manufacture weapons and spare parts. In areas plagued by political instability and violent conflicts, the risk of proliferation has increased due to unregulated production and trafficking of SALWs.

As may be seen from the above, the liberal theory is an improved alternative to the other theories on which this investigation is founded. The research explains the origins of proliferation leading to the privatization of the security system and suggests that the state taking absolute control and management of state security could be a solution. The research is guided by the Liberalism theory.

Discussion and Analysis

A Review of the Threat and Risk of PMCs: Implications for National Security in Nigeria

The problems of insecurity and the spread of readily available, low-powered firearms are being discussed and debated in Nigerian academia, government, public commentary, and the media to a greater extent than ever before. A fundamental source of public anxiety is the ongoing debate about whose interest's national security should ultimately protect. Clearly, the state and dominant class interests outweigh National state security concerns in Nigeria, as argued by Cyril Obi (1997), While, Olukoshi cited in Onoja (2013) posits that "state security thrust is directed towards the interests of the governing classes and their propertied allies, why most Nigerians are alienated from the security process that ironically turns on them from time to time". New variables have emerged in the internal and external environment of the Nigerian state, necessitating a shift in the nature of national and international threats to national security. Omede (2011) also claims that violence and the availability of firearms have grown in Nigeria during the last decade. The protracted military control that occurred between the early 1980s and the 1990s is blamed for the drug's rapid spread during that time. Many Nigerians felt disenfranchised and disconnected from the state as a result of the military junta's actions. In particular, the widespread poverty, joblessness, rural-urban migration, corruption, and economic mismanagement that plague Nigeria today may be traced back to June 1986, when the Babangida Administration adopted the structural adjustment plan. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Nigerians still lack the resources necessary to live safely and comfortably, including a good education, reliable healthcare, clean drinking water, safe housing, gainful job, and food on the table. This deficiency has sparked "frustration of escalating expectations," which has led to "violence, kidnappings, armed robberies, prostitution, terrorism, and the new trend of religious fundamentalist agitations against western norms and ideals, notably education."

Nigeria now has a high degree of insecurity as a result of the importation and widespread use of small guns and light weapons by private military and security firms. In agreement with Omede, Uwa and Anthony (2015) assertion that SALWs transit through and eventually end up in Nigeria. these scholars argue that conflicts are fueled by a variety of factors, including but not

limited to: "crime, revolts, subversion, sabotage, religious crises, communal conflicts, social agitations, micro-nationalism, insurgency, terrorism, insurgency, riots, social unrest, ethnic tensions, cross-border smuggling, porous borders, black marketeering, and so on".

Remarkably, scholars have attributed the violent conflicts in Nigeria and the West African sub area to the problem of arms proliferations. Because of this, insurgent groups are encouraged to take up weapons against their nations, and peacekeeping and humanitarian missions are made difficult, if not impossible, in the area. According to Hazen J. and Horner J. (2007), the government's failure to protect citizens' lives and belongings has created a security gap, resulting in a never-ending cycle of insecurity and the resulting dilemma of having to rely on private security outfits for protection. In an effort to feel safe in one's own home, people have looked for firearms that may deter armed robbers and other criminals, and they have also sought for firearms with a high enough rate of fire (delivery capacity) to return fire and effectively neutralise their attackers. According to research, out of the 640 million Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) worldwide, about 100 million are in Africa, with 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa. Nigeria alone has more than 70% of the estimated eight to ten million illegal weapons in West Africa.

The government's dedication to stopping this disturbing trend is called into doubt by the ease with which illicit guns change hands. The direct (licensed) and indirect (unlicensed) spread of firearms is not being adequately addressed, and neither are their origins or networks. Some weapons that have been seized and others that have been abandoned by security personnel nevertheless make their way back to the underground market, and no one is ever held accountable for this. Many innocent people have been killed by these people who are armed illegally. This is supported, for example, by the fact that Fulani herders have brutally murdered members of the Ajatu and Nimbo ethnic groups in the states of Benue and Enugu, respectively.

Akinwumi (2008), Ikejiani-Clark (2009), and Ifeanyichukwu Michael (2009), amongst others, have all highlighted that several community disputes throughout the history of modern civilization are known to have been fueled by firearms. For example, communal land disputes including Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra State, Umuode-Oruku in Enugu State, Ezza-Ezilo in Ebonyi State, Neke-Ikcm in Enugu State, the Jukun/Tiv Crisis in Taraba State, Ife-Modakeke in Osun State, Urhobo/Ijaw conflicts, and Ijaw-Itsekiri Disputes between Fulani and farmers in the state of Plateau, religious strife in the state of Kano, and religious strife in the states of Kaduna, Niger, Nasarawa, and Benue, among other flashpoints in Nigeria, could not have persisted without the availability of weapons. The phenomena has prompted a significant reevaluation of the catastrophic effects of armaments proliferation.

Multiple high-profile political killings and violent incidents using SALWs have continued to plague Nigeria for decades. A prime example of the sophisticated use of SALWs by the political class to secure their political ambition in any (upcoming) elections is the murder of a sitting Minister, Chief Bola Ige, in December 2002. As a result of the elites' relentless pursuit of political power in Nigeria, the country's political landscape has been buried by an avalanche of weapons.

Thus, in rivalry with the official security infrastructure, armed gangs, party thugs, ethnic militias, private security guards and corporations, vigilante organisations, and community subalterns become security managers. They're sent out and made to do work for "both offensive and defensive goals," meaning they may be used to strike fear into the hearts of their foes or to ward off sneak assaults from the opposing side. Concerned about this possibility, Nigerian journalist Akinola G. A. wrote the following in his article "Prayer and the Prosperity Hustle" for the Nation newspaper on June 8th, 2014: "Today, what is happening can be described as mafia-like elimination." This was his description of the political landscape in Nigeria since the advent of democracy in 1999. The political opposition has advanced to a new level of sophistication. Though he was correct in saying that political violence in Nigeria is nothing new, he did notice that its frequency has increased to the point of "monotonic regularity;" in fact, the murder of Chief Bola Ige was immediately followed by the murder of Henry Marshall on March 15, 2003.

In the 2003 presidential election, Mohammed Buhari ran under the banner of the now defunct All Nigerian People Party (ANPP), for which Marshall served as National Vice Chairman.

Also related to the defining problem of SALWs proliferation, as captured by Theophilus et al (2021) "is the long years of colonial rule, and the authoritarian nature of colonial administrators in Africa has left a political legacy of authoritarian rule on the continent, the psyche of Africans have been negatively confined to a trend of independent authoritarian regimes and leadership systems across the continent; Zimbabwe, Egypt, Libya, Cote d'voire, until recently are all cases in point". A number of decades have passed since independence, yet the corrupt, unaccountable, nonrepresentative governance that was typical under colonial authority persists.

The leadership quality in Africa has been adversely affected by the existence of faulty military regimes for several years. These leadership tendencies have sparked widespread opposition and resistance among African citizens due to issues like the systematic exclusion of certain groups from development efforts, a general decline in living standards and wages, rising unemployment and poverty rates, and so on. Insurgent groups in Africa are resorting to violence to make their voices heard, but these groups have been infiltrated by criminal and terrorist organizations, causing chaos for both governments and citizens in several countries. Contrary to popular belief, the issue of firearms is not exclusively linked to the larger issue of violent political struggles inside nations. SALWs are also the primary weapons of choice for criminal organisations on a national or international scale. Furthermore, the author argues, "the unfortunate thing is that, the threat and risks associated with this weapon is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, unless there is a dynamic change in several global, regional, sub-regional, and national arms control and non-proliferation strategies and treaties that have arguably continued to exist without significantly impacting the problem of arms proliferation by private military and security companies."

Privatization of Military and Security Companies and its Implications for National Security: The Nigerian Experience

Private Military Companies (PMCs) have emerged in Nigeria due to the failure of the government to provide adequate security for its citizens. This trend has significant implications for democratic governance in the country. PMCs operate outside of government control, and their proliferation could lead to the erosion of the state's monopoly on the use of force, further weakening the government's legitimacy. Furthermore, PMCs' loyalty to their clients and profit motives may lead to human rights violations and undermine efforts to establish the rule of law. The rise of PMCs in Nigeria requires urgent attention from policymakers to ensure that their activities do not undermine the country's democratic institutions (Duffied, 2006).

The withdrawal of the Nigerian state from providing security under the pretext of liberalization has left the country vulnerable and poses a significant threat to the safety of the people and the state. The proliferation of private military companies (PMCs) in the security sector is eroding state power and hindering institution building due to their lack of transparency and oversight (Hansen, 2008). The Nigerian government has been facing challenges in maintaining law and order, resulting in the emergence of Private Military Companies (PMCs) providing security and military services. PMCs have become significant players in the security sector, especially in the Niger Delta region and the military. According to Ball and Fayemi (2004), the escalation of insecurity can be ascribed to the emergence of armed conflicts, inadequacies in state security agencies, and the expansion of criminal activities. These factors are connected to the precariousness of the institutional framework for security. The effectiveness of the state's efforts to address insecurity is uncertain due to several contributing factors (Ibeanu and Momoh, 2008). The rise of PMCs in Nigeria aims to contest the state's authority as the only entity responsible for providing security to the public. The concept of security provision is now viewed from a multi-party perspective rather than the conventional state-centric approach, which has been limited to the state and its institutions for many years.

According to Akpuru-Aja's report in 2003, one year after his election as President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo entered into a military assistance agreement with the United States of America. The agreement reportedly covered various areas of military cooperation between the two countries:

- i. To educate and prepare the Nigerian armed forces and provide them with further training
- ii. To safeguard the emerging democracy from potential military intrusion;
- iii. To supply patrol boats to the Nigerian Navy, which will be used to monitor the oil-producing regions and safeguard facilities located in the Niger Delta region
- iv. Teach and educate the military repeatedly to prepare them for carrying out peacekeeping missions.

The Nigerian government hired Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), a private security company based in the United States, to conduct an audit of the Nigerian military at a cost of \$8 million (USD) in order to improve their professionalism. However, this is not something that advanced countries would outsource to foreign contractors due to concerns about the secrecy of their activities and the potential threat to national sovereignty. MPRI was fully integrated into the Nigerian military and had an office and support staff at the Defence Headquarters. Former Chief of Army Staff, General Victor Malu, objected to MPRI's unlimited access to military and security information, which resulted in his premature retirement. However, the Nigerian military has a more extensive history of peacekeeping in numerous countries globally than the US military, which was not considered by the political leadership.

The current analysis of Private Military Companies (PMCs) suggests that they have a two-fold impact on institution building and democratic governance in Nigeria. On the one hand, they can have a negative effect by working on behalf of foreign interests and compromising national security due to their lack of transparency and accountability. On the other hand, they can be beneficial to weaker states that are unable to protect their territories and institutions, and provide physical security for their citizens. Private Military Companies (PMCs) have played a positive role in conflict situations, as seen in Dyncorp's involvement in Dafur and Liberia, and the contract between the Nigerian government and the MPRI, according to various sources (Fayemi, 2003; Small, 2006; Aning et al., 2008; Hansen, 2008).

In Nigeria, democratic governance replaced years of authoritarian rule starting in 1999. However, the majority of people still lack basic public goods like safety and welfare. This is mainly because state institutions are weak and easily disrupted, and leaders benefit from the unchecked actions and impunity of private military companies (PMCs). For example, in the Halliburton scandal, Nigerian elites were allegedly paid \$180 million (USD) by a US-based PMC, Halliburton, as a condition for winning a contract in Nigeria. This is why US President Barack Obama recently called for strong institutions in Africa rather than strong leaders.

The extractive industry in Nigeria's volatile Niger Delta region relies on private military companies (PMCs) for the protection of personnel and property, as they cannot rely on the weak Nigerian state for security. Arms tend to remain in unstable regions where resources are located, and some oil companies pay militant leaders for protection of pipelines and infrastructure. This can lead to conflicts and rivalries for contracts. Despite the presence of the Nigerian military's Joint Task Force, some oil companies engage in illicit activities, suggesting complicity between them and militant groups in the region. The involvement of US-origin PMCs in the Niger Delta is expected to increase as long as the US energy security policy depends on increased importation of oil and gas from Nigeria.

Zabadi (2005) highlighted the potential threat posed by informal security actors such as militias in the Niger Delta region. These groups may assume the role of law enforcement agents and operate outside the control of the government, leading to instability and insecurity in the area. The actions of these informal security actors also blur the lines between the roles of government and non-governmental organizations in maintaining security, which can further complicate efforts to address security challenges in the region. Although the government has the

exclusive right to use force legally, the use of weapons by militias and PMCs invalidates the rule of law and has a detrimental impact on peace and domestic security. Their aim of providing security is defeated, and they promote insecurity, which undermines public trust in the government and its institutions.

Private Military Companies (PMCs) hired by multi-national oil companies in Nigeria's Niger Delta region may compromise the country's human and national security if accountability, transparency, and popular participation are not upheld. Foreign PMCs prioritize profit and safeguarding the interests of superpowers like the US, which has a significant stake in Nigeria's oil reserves. The Nigerian government has little influence over foreign PMCs, while indigenous security firms are subject to fewer repercussions.

Based on the preceding information, it is apparent that the fragility of the state has allowed the expansion of liberalization, resulting in the emergence of PMCs that encroach upon the state's core security functions (Isima, 2007). The encroachment of militants in the Niger Delta region poses a strategic danger for the security of the state and its citizens on a global level. It also challenges the state's ability to provide security to its people in line with the constitution. The ongoing conflict between the state and militants in the region shows that the state is compelled to negotiate with them on security matters to allow for the exploitation of oil, which generates over 95% of the country's revenue. To maintain uninterrupted oil supply and effective control of its territory amidst insurgency, it is in the state's best interest to ensure security in the Niger Delta region.

The Niger Delta region in Nigeria is experiencing instability and conflict, and foreign Private Military Companies (PMCs) are providing security and military services to oil companies operating in the area. Examples of these foreign PMCs include WAC Global Services, Corporate Engagement Project, Triple Canopy, Control Risk, Erinys International, AmorGroup, Aiges Defence System, and Northbridge Service Group. Some militants in the Niger Delta region provide security services and are financially sustained by doing so, in addition to foreign private military companies. Asari Dokubo and his deputy, as well as other militant leaders, own several security companies that provide security to government-owned institutions. The Nigerian law only allows foreign military and security companies to operate, but some foreign PMCs partner with local security companies to provide advisory services, which goes against the Private Guards Company Act of 1986. One such foreign PMC, Northbridge Service Group (formerly Executive Outcome), has a negative history in countries like Angola and Sierra Leone where it engaged in mercenary activities (Ginifer & Peimani, 2005).

The Nigerian government has allowed companies like North-bridge Service to operate in the country, providing counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, personnel security, and anti-piracy services. However, this move puts the government's ability to regulate the activities of foreign mercenaries at risk, which has had negative implications for national security in other African countries where mercenarism has undermined peace and security, such as the DRC, Sierra Leone, and Angola. (Baker and Gumedze, 2008).

The use of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in Nigeria has negative effects on state institutions, the national economy, and the provision of basic services to the public. PMCs are becoming an alternative source of security and welfare for people due to the failure of the state to address potent security threats such as poverty, rising inequality, mass unemployment, criminality in the Niger Delta region, poor infrastructure, and ethnic and religious intolerance. The existence of a national security policy has not effectively tackled these issues.

Therefore, given the current security situation in Nigeria, stories of this kind are very common and seemingly never-ending. For example, the United Nations Security Council in 2003 captured the position above in the assertion that "the upsurge in intra-state conflicts and violence has created a staggering demand for small arms, and has contributed to the continued proliferation of bandits, rebel groups, mercenaries, uncontrolled police and militia in the entire sub-region (and infact the continent at large)". In light of this, it is reasonable to infer that the growth of

private military and security firms is at least partly to blame for the increasing risk of instability and the weakening of governmental capability throughout Africa and Nigeria in particular.

Conclusion

The conclusion that emerges from this study is that, the end of the cold war altered the international security environment. The emergence of the USA as the world's sole superpower including other competing power centres have led to the liberalization of economic and security environment, and this has repercussion in Africa and Nigeria in particular. It is generally agreed upon by scholars that the existence and access to small arms in West Africa and Nigeria, as well as their ongoing spread of firearm, is one of the most significant impediments to peace and security in those regions. According to the research that has been conducted, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) is one of the primary factors that has led to the militarization of civil society and the escalation of a culture of violence. These factors have also contributed to an increase in the level of armed violence that has occurred even in regions that were previously considered to be peaceful. The study therefore concludes that the activities of PMCs in the proliferation of SALWs globally should be tackled both at the level of re-engineering of obsolete policy frameworks and the accelerated practical implementation of modern measures and techniques of warfare on the ground with a view to proactively curtailing the menace of SALWs. In light of these considerations, the following workable solutions are recommended to counter the proliferation danger to Nigeria's national security.

- (i) For the Nigerian government to fulfil its duty of ensuring the people's socio-economic security and progress, it must show dedication not only in the creation of policies, the approval of agreements, and the creation of laws, but also in the practical effort required to put those policies into effect.;
- (ii) The Nigerian state needs to urgently review its outdated Firearms Act of 1959 and impose strict penalties to tackle the challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). The executive branch of government, with the assistance of civil society organizations (CSOs), should ensure that the review of the obsolete Firearms Act remains a priority in legislative discussions.
- (iii) It is important for the federal government to adopt a National Arms Control Strategy (NACS) to guide the cleanup and prevention of SALWs circulation. A NACS would provide a comprehensive framework for addressing SALWs circulation, including measures to prevent the illegal manufacture, trade, and trafficking of these weapons. It could also provide guidance on ways to strengthen border controls, improve weapons tracing and marking, and enhance international cooperation to combat SALWs proliferation.
- (iv) Lastly, there is a pressing need for stakeholders at all levels of society to make coordinated and consistent actions to reduce the spread of illegal small arms and light weapons.

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