

Porous Borders and Armed Proliferation: Nigeria's Endless Security Dilemma

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Abstract: This article discusses how Nigeria's porous borders have fostered insecurity. The protection of human life and property inside a given jurisdiction necessitates border security. Smugglers of various kinds of illegal goods, including small weapons, use Nigeria's land borders as free entry and exit points. They operate practically unabated by the country's security forces. Our borders in the northeast and northwest are like thoroughfares without the resistance of Nigerian security officers. A qualitative approach was adopted for this study, a secondary method of gathering data was used; data was gathered from textbooks, journals, articles, published and unpublished works, and the internet. The link between porous borders, arms proliferation, and insecurity allows for the unrestricted flow of small guns into and out of Nigeria, with the majority of these weapons ending up in the hands of non-state actors who use them to stir up trouble and render society unfriendly, ungoverned, and unsafe. This study's theoretical framework is the failed state theory. The failed state theory outlines a situation in which a government fails to fulfill its duties. Nigeria's large land and marine borders, on the other hand, are extremely porous and poorly monitored and policed. The key findings of this article are that border porosity caused a food shortage in the northeast and that individuals in the quest for food ended up with significant problems. Kidnappings and insecurity have also escalated in that region, as well as in Nigeria as a whole. The research emphasizes the critical significance of border security in resolving the country's security concerns. This is because tiny arms and light weapons, as well as criminals, enter the country quite easily and occasionally wreak mayhem.

Keywords: national security, criminality, arms proliferation, arms trafficking, border control, porous borders.

I. INTRODUCTION

The fact that Nigeria's maritime and land borders are poorly manned and policed is a sobering truth. What is most perplexing, though, is how successive governments have addressed these security concerns with little or no action. The government's inaction is all the more disturbing given that it has been established that porous borders have facilitated illegal arms proliferation, particularly through the northern borders, while criminals from all over the world enter the country, contributing immeasurably to the frightening level of insecurity Nigeria faces today (<https://punchng.com/porous-borders-nigerias-endless-security-dilemma/>). The bulk of small weapons in Nigeria are assumed to be illegally possessed, according to Hazen and Horner (2007), due to the difficulties of lawfully obtaining a pistol. Due to their illegal status,

tracking their travels and possessions is difficult. Weapons enter the country in such large quantities via land borders and marine ports that they are difficult to trace.

Over a billion small arms are thought to be in circulation worldwide, with 87.5 percent of them in civilian hands. Residents of various African countries own roughly 40,009,000 small arms, according to the 2018 small arms research. The widespread availability of small guns and ammunition in Nigeria has resulted in bloodshed, kidnappings, robberies, mass murders, and societal upheaval (Okafor, 2021). Small arms and light weapons proliferation has resulted in a large number of deaths and displacements, as well as a substantial impact on human security. As a result, small weapons are still employed in armed conflict, organised crime, and terrorist acts, undermining peace, safety, and security initiatives. Small arms and light weapons proliferation is closely related to the occurrence of violent conflict in Nigeria, which exacerbates instability. The abundance of guns in the country has resulted in an increase in criminal herdsmen activities, kidnappings, and Boko Haram insurgents (2021, July 6, The Nation). Herders, Boko Haram activities, banditry, cultism in the Niger Delta, and ESN in the Southeast have all benefited from SALW.

Criminality, insurgency, terrorism, riots, militancy, electoral violence, political violence, social unrest, ethnic tensions, cross-border smuggling, porous borders, black marketeering, indigenous manufacturing, privatisation of security, insecurity On the other side, armed groups, national dealers, political and community leaders, and individuals obtain these weapons. Small arms are sourced in the United States from gun dealers, active and retired military and police officers, returning peacekeepers, cross-border armed organisations, and other persons who build firearms. Demand for small firearms will continue to grow as long as there is insecurity and the use of force can yield economic and political rewards (Omitola, & Awotayo, 2016).

Nigeria's porous borders are the result of colonial powers dividing Africa and post-colonial states maintaining them. The fundamental purpose of colonialists in balkanizing Africa was to establish a zone of influence based on political and economic issues rather than a physical barrier. Different ethnic and cultural communities are

divided by these lines, which are defined by latitudes, longitudes, geometric circles, and straight lines (James, 1989). As a result, most African countries find it difficult to manage international borders that span across cultural and ethnic groups.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is widely regarded as a major security threat to people, societies, and states worldwide, fueling the insurgency, human trafficking and drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, internal insurrections, and civil wars, all of which pose obstacles to the maintenance of stable peace and security. Oftentimes, little internal insurrections grow into major civil conflicts, which can destabilize an entire region (Kelvin, 2007:23). This trend, particularly in Nigeria, is attributed to the state's fragility and inability to execute decent governance. Small arms and light weapons are frequently used to evict civilians, obstruct development initiatives, humanitarian assistance, and peace-building and peace-keeping efforts in general. Small arms and light weapons are frequently retained in society following conflicts, which might result in increased violence if crises recur or conflicts emerge in neighbouring regions. Small guns may also be employed in non-conflict situations for criminal violence, suicides, accidents, and killings, among other things, and they are frequently the core equipment utilized by terrorists for societal annihilation (Holmes, 2014).

Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) noted that small arms and other lethal weapons are readily available in Nigerian markets because of the porosity of Nigeria's borders as well as the weak security system. The availability and accessibility of these weapons by non-state actors are responsible for the various forms of criminal activities witnessed across the country.

Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa (Edeko, 2011). Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for an unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Niger, Cameroon, Chad, and the Republic of Benin (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012). These migrants who are mostly young people are some of the perpetrators of violent crime in the country (Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro, 2013). The study hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between porous borders, small arms proliferation, and insecurity. This is because there is a lot of movement at our borders and small arms and light weapons come in unabated.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is the failed state theory. The failed state theory outlines a situation in which a government fails to fulfill its duties. To put it another way, the theory explains why a state has broken its promises (Abiodun et al, 2018). The concept of a failed state is based on the assumption that a state is a service provider. A state,

according to this viewpoint, safeguards its citizens' lives and property, provides opportunities for political involvement, health, and education, and ensures the rule of law's security (Eriksen, 2011). State failure, according to this definition, refers to a state's incapacity to provide essential services. State failure, according to Englehart (2009), arises when governments are unable to fulfil their responsibilities, which in this case is the failure to provide critical services. In essence, failed states are those that have lost the ability to fulfil their obligations. The failed state theory is based on the following premises: 1. Failed states are at war with one another. 2. Failed states are unable to maintain internal peace, security, and order. 3. Government activities and operations are absent in failed states. 4. Information censorship, female servitude, an unwillingness to take blame for failure, and religious dominance are all difficulties that failed governments face.

The failed state theory is employed in this study to explain the increase in SALWs as a result of the Nigerian government's inability to secure state borders and close unlawful entry points. According to Mark and Iwebi (2019), a lack of effective border control enables arms smuggling and, as a result, the development of SALWs in the country. Inevitably, these weapons fall into the hands of criminals, who employ them to conduct a range of offenses.

Porous Borders and Insecurity in Nigeria

When we talk about borders, we're talking about state territories where states have complete and legal sovereignty; the component that indicates the legal separation of one country's territory or political entity from another. That boundary, according to Ikome (2012), is a tool for illuminating the patterns and character of local and international relations. National borders, according to Gerstein et al (2018), are the geographical boundaries of a state within which the government of that state has complete legal control over the acts, structures, and persons residing within those bounds.

Maintaining national security requires effective border management. "The border acts as the first line of defence against terrorism and the final line of defence for a nation's territorial integrity," Spencer said. Nigeria's porous borders with Cameroon (1,690 kilometers east), Niger (1,497 kilometers north), Benin (773 kilometers west), and Chad (87 kilometers northeast) have exacerbated the Boko Haram conflict. These border zones are mostly mountainous or thickly forested. A country's borders are frequently porous, regardless of its geographic origin (<https://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/node/1323>).

Nigeria's porous borders have become a cog in the wheel of the country's war against insecurity. With a land area of 923,768 square kilometers, a land area of 910,768 square kilometers, and a water area of 13,000 square kilometers, a recent study found 1,400 illicit, uncontrolled, and unregulated routes into Nigeria, compared to 84 controlled entry ports.

This makes it easier for all kinds of commodities, including guns and illicit substances, to be smuggled into Nigeria without being detected, just as all kinds of people, including criminals, sneak into the country without being detected.

Nigeria's permeable borders are the result of colonialists splitting Africa and post-colonial states continuing those divisions. The fundamental purpose of the colonizers in balkanizing Africa was to create a zone of influence based on political and economic factors rather than a physical barrier. Separate ethnic and cultural communities are defined by latitudes, longitudes, geometric circles, and straight lines (James, 1989). As a result, the majority of African countries struggle to manage cross-cultural and racial borders.

While Nigeria's border problem has its roots in the colonial past, the porous character of the country's borders has been compounded by successive governments' failure to properly manage them. "The high level of insecurity on African borders is primarily due to how they are managed and administered and has little to do with how colonialists drew them," according to Okumu (Okumu, 2010). The settlements along the border have long been neglected by state and federal governments. As a result, infrastructure such as roads, power, health care facilities, schools, and water supplies became scarce. This development exacerbated youth unemployment and, as a result, agitation. They've become handy instruments for smugglers and other transnational criminals as a result of this predicament. Essentially, kids in border towns turn to smuggle as a source of income. The government could explore developing those neighbourhoods, providing alternate sources of income for the adolescents, and conducting extensive orientation and sensitization programmes to educate them about the perils of transnational crime. The Border Communities Development Commission can help with this.

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Insecurity in Nigeria

According to Ogwuda, SALW refers to less-lethal infantry weapons such as firearms that a person, particularly a rebel, may carry (2018). Revolvers, pistols, submachine guns, shotguns, carbines, assault rifles, rifle squad automatic weapons, light machine guns, general-purpose machine guns, medium machine guns, and hand grenades are some of the most common weaponry. These weapons are usually obtained illegally with the goal of accomplishing a certain goal. Depending on the situation, small guns and light weapons may be appropriate.

There is a need to investigate Security Sector Black-racketeering, in which a significant share of illicit firearms is made available to criminals by serving and retired members of the armed services and police. This includes residues or leakages from peacekeeping missions' returnees. Notably, Nigeria has a domestic source of both lawful and criminal SALW via local manufacturers. Despite the fact that section 22 of the Weapons Act prohibits the manufacture of weapons, the government established the Defence Industries

Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) in 1964 to legally manufacture arms and ammunition for military use in Nigeria. However, there are clusters of unlicensed local craftspeople dispersed around the country who manufacture and provide illegal weaponry to criminals (Mezie-Okoye & Kpae, 2013). Calabar and Enugu, as well as other locations in Nigeria, are home to illegal weapons manufacturers.

Nigeria's Interior Minister, Abba Moro, recently claimed that the country now has over 1,499 irregular (illegal) and 84 normal (legal) entry routes, demonstrating the country's extremely porous borders, which encourage illicit transnational arms trafficking. There are around 25 illicit routes into Nigeria from neighbouring countries in Adamawa State. Terrorists and arms traffickers take advantage of this loophole to get small arms and light weapons into Nigeria (SALWs). As a result, Nigeria is thought to be home to more than 70% of the estimated 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa. The frequency with which security and border control agents seize various types and calibres of weaponry, as well as the amount of human casualties and property damage incurred as a result of their use in Nigeria, all indicate to the spread of SALWs in the country (Onuoha, 2011).

The paper, titled "Small Arms, Mass Atrocities, and Migration in Nigeria," focused on how arms proliferation helped armed groups expand and displaced tens of thousands of Nigerians. Nigeria's tendency for weapon proliferation, according to SBM, has impacted the country's internal security, resulting in carnage and the killing and injuring of thousands of innocent residents. According to the study, the proliferation of weaponry in Southern Nigeria has led to an increase in the region's incidence of violence, which includes communal disputes, cultism, kidnappings, ethnic and religious battles, and Niger Delta insurgency, among other things (Omilana, 2020 October 26, The Guardian). Every day, we read stories about gunmen assassinating people in various parts of Nigeria. It's either bandit spent hours raiding Katsina towns, killing 13, and abducting village leaders and others. Numerous residents leave their houses as gunmen attack Niger settlements. Another headline stated that gunmen attacked Imo towns, killing seven people. Gunmen overcame security personnel, kidnapped Edo IPMAN's chairperson, and murdered drivers. It is widespread throughout the country, and little is being done to protect the lives of innocent civilians. Another headline reports on gunmen abducting a nursing woman and her infant in Bauchi. In Borno, fleeing gunmen slaughtered youth and robbed POS operators. Additionally, we received reports of gunmen storming an Anambra State village and assassinating a traffic official.

The availability of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) has expanded in Nigeria since 1999, when the democratic rule was restored. This is owing to the country's high rate of violence and crime. According to Moses and Ngomba (2017), Nigeria's level of insecurity is due to the availability of small guns, which are utilized in robberies, murders/assassinations, and other crimes. The unlawful

trafficking of Small Arms and Weapons, according to Abdullahi (2016), has posed a threat to the Nigerian state's security. While robberies, murders, and other acts of armed violence remain the principal results of their development, there are other indirect repercussions.

Barriers to foreign direct investment, a bad view of the country's security, a lack of or lack of confidence in the country's security apparatus, and so on are just a few examples (Moses & Ngomba, 2017).

Cars have pulled off many high roadways in the northwest United States today, fearful of kidnappers. Because the road has a reputation for being a haven for vicious kidnappers who use SALWs in their operations, the bulk of passengers traveling between Abuja and Kaduna choose to go by rail. Furthermore, the bandits in this part of the nation are so brazen that they warn villages ahead of time of their impending attacks. These thieves frequently keep their word since security officials are powerless to protect the public because they are not spared. As a result, the general public is pondering how to protect itself from criminals who commit these atrocities with impunity. After the Nigerian state failed to protect its inhabitants' lives and property, the people have been left to defend themselves (Gobir, 2020).

II. CONCLUSION

Nigeria's and regional security are jeopardised by the proliferation of SALW. The porous nature of our borders, particularly in the north, does not assist problems. Proliferation routes include cross-border smuggling, black-marketeering in the security sector, and domestic manufacture. The prevalence of SALW has a considerable impact on post-conflict security. Small guns are a significant component in sustaining and fueling conflict and violent extremism in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the proliferation of weaponry has resulted in an upsurge in crimes such as piracy, oil theft, and illicit refineries, armed robbery, and abduction and killing of security officers in the Niger Delta, as well as kidnapping and murdering of security personnel in the country's northern area.

The link between permeable borders, the rise of small guns, and instability is being debated by academics. Some argue that porous borders and small guns proliferation are directly responsible for insecurity, while others argue that porous borders and small arms proliferation contribute to the country's instability. Regardless of the outcome of this debate, researchers feel that porous borders and the proliferation of small firearms are serious national security risks.

While the phenomena of ethnicity, religion, economic deprivation, and youth unemployment have been frequently implicated in the recent violence experienced in contemporary Nigerian society, the role of Nigeria's porous borders, both land, and sea, in exacerbating insecurity in the country is yet to be appreciated and adequately addressed. Youth unemployment in the area paved the way for these youths to

join in the illegal arms business because it is said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. This type of illegal business will, and terrorism will not stop easily in the Northeast because of the high level of poverty.

Terrorists from the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram, he alleged, have continued to exploit porous border areas to destroy the livelihoods of innocent people. Monguno's remark came just hours after gunmen opened fire at the Nigerian Defence Academy's Afaka barracks in Kaduna, killing two senior officers. A senior officer was also said to have been taken by the bandits. "The threat of terrorism perpetrated by terrorists linked with the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram remains the most serious transnational security concern" (BHTs). "These terrorist organisations continue to exploit porous border areas in order to damage innocent people's livelihoods," he said (2021, August 24, Daily Trust). Unless and until our borders are adequately manned and policed, Nigeria will never have peace.

SALW is likely to persist if the masses are not gainfully employed. If these are not provided, strife in our society and insurgencies will continue, and disaffected people of society will be forced to seek alternative livelihoods.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper undergoes a comprehensive cooperative strategy that will be helpful in tackling straight on the problem of porous borders and the attendant insecurity side effect of SALW smuggling in Nigeria and her neighbouring cross-border countries.

- (1) A detailed mapping of the country's boundaries is necessary in order to ascertain the magnitude of migration dangers posed by the various parts, particularly in the Northern region. This would enable the government to determine the appropriate types of policing measures to implement in various places. Additionally, it would not be out of place to fence off any of these borders if necessary.
- (2) Our security personnel must be properly trained and compensated so that they do not succumb to the allures of corruption while performing their duties. It's also vital to provide them with a positive work atmosphere and resources.
- (3) As a result, the Nigerian government will need to design a new border security plan, which will involve a variety of development projects for border communities, highly trained and dedicated border troops, and enhanced border situation awareness infrastructure.
- (4) It is necessary to employ cutting-edge technology such as radars and alarm systems in order to monitor and secure a nation's borders. There are some radars that can detect slow-moving targets, even in complex mountainous, thickly forested terrains and large open areas. Radars such as Blihter Radar can detect

vehicles and people trying to cross borders illegally. In remote areas, it is common for intruders to follow natural routes across the land, valleys, mountain paths, or animal tracks. In these instances, Mobile Surveillance System provides a cost-effective way of monitoring key areas with limited resources. Similarly, Blighter Radar, unlike traditional Air Surveillance Radar can effectively surveil both the land and low air zone simultaneously.

- (5) The spread of SALW in Nigeria requires immediate action because of its destabilizing influence on the nation's overall security and on the country.
- (6) Modern governments monitor and secure their borders in large part through the employment of advanced technology such as radars and alarm systems. Some radars can be used as primary detection sensors for long-range remote surveillance platforms. The ability to detect slow-moving targets, even in complex mountainous, thickly forested terrains and large open areas makes some radars such as Blighter Radar ideal for remote surveillance and detection of vehicles and people trying to cross borders illegally (Adewoyin, 2019).

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