

BORDER POROSITY, SMALL ARMS PROLIFERATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The colossal loss in terms of human lives and properties arising from the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Nigeria has been spiralling is frightening. The failure of law enforcement agencies to tackle the illicit flow of SALW through the country's borders remains a major concern for the citizenry. This paper argues that the enormous loss in human lives and properties resulting from illicit flow of SALW in Nigeria has reached a terrifyingly level and if not checked by an effective strategy that will secure her borders, the country will remain an environment that stimulates violence instead of dialogue and as such promote the ideology that 'might is right'. The paper reveals that, while religious beliefs, ethnic identities, socio-economic deprivation and youth unemployment are no doubt important drivers of violence and insecurity in Nigeria, porous borders and arms proliferation are more critical propellants of insecurity in the country as they determine the intensity of all the other drivers of insecurity. This paper recommends a comprehensive cooperative strategy (CCS) to tackle headlong the problem of border porosity and the attendant insecurity fallout of SALW smuggling in Nigeria and her neighbouring countries.

Keywords: Border Porosity, Small Arms and Light Weapons, Arms proliferation, Violent Insecurity.

Introduction

Armed conflict has become one of the major security threats bedeviling the peace and stability of the Nigerian state. Each region in the country have been grappling with the menace from one or multiple forms of armed conflict ranging from armed robbery, kidnapping, gang war, political killings, ethno-

religious conflict, herdsmen/farmers clashes, and militancy to terrorism.

While increasing global insecurity may suggest that armed conflict is not peculiar to Nigeria alone, as typified by cases of armed violence in Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Ukraine, United States

among others, the Nigerian case has drawn huge international attention obviously due to the staggering figures of violence-related deaths, displacement of persons, and economic decline in areas seriously affected by violence in the country. Africa presents a pathetic story of insecurity of varied magnitude.

In the Nigerian case, a report from the Council on Foreign Relations revealed that about 30,000 persons have died in just three and half years from violence linked to the Boko Haram (BH) insurgency in the north and other militant groups in different parts of the country, including in government military operations to quell them (Viola, 2015). Correspondingly, the figures of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the country have risen astronomically. In 2013 alone, the Nigerian state had to contend with over 3.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) only surpassed by Syria with 6.5 million IDPs and Colombia with 5.7 million IDPs (NRC-IDMC, 2014). By implication, Nigeria is home to the third largest number of IDPs globally and highest on the African continent.

This unprecedented high level of insecurity in Africa's most populous nation has attracted alot of scholarly and media investigations. However, in attempt to make sense of this violence, scholars have emphasized the role of religion, ethnicity, and economic deprivation in the violence experienced in the country. In this regard, Adesoji (2010) argued that religion is at the core of the armed violence in Nigeria. In his view, the Boko Haram uprising is obviously a stark reminder of past efforts made by fundamentalist groups to forcefully impose an Islamic ideology on a secular Nigerian State. Similarly, Osaghae and Suberu (2005) also noted that aside religious beliefs, ethnic identities also play a significant role in driving violence in the country. This was predicated on the thesis that the Nigerian State "presents a complex of individual as well as crisscrossing and recursive identities of which the ethnic, religious, regional and sub-ethnic

(communal) are the most salient and the main bases for violent conflicts in the country" (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005:7). On his part, Persson (2014) stressed that the socio-economic deprivation (which has manifested in the recent high levels of youth unemployment, poverty, and underdevelopment) is at the root of the insecurity. While these explanations are cogent, they seem to have neglected the strategic role porous borders also play in the discourse of insecurity in the country.

This article interrogates extant literature by displaying how and why Nigeria's porous borders have significantly increased the availability of small arms which at the root of insecurity in the country. Accordingly, this paper is divided into five sections: the second part which follows this introduction dwells on the conceptual and analytical framework. The third section captures the sources, dynamics and availability of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation. The fourth segment explains the nexus between porous borders, small arms and the recent level of violent insecurity in Nigeria. The fifth portion concludes the discourse with recommended policy direction.

Conceptualising Porous Border and Small Arms and Light Weapons

From a political perspective, the concept 'border' is used here to describe the main line (real or imagined) that demarcates, at the same time, links two political entities (countries or states) from or to one another. Thus, it defines geographical boundaries and legal jurisdiction of political entities such as sovereign states, federated state, governments and sub national entities. When these lines run between two political entities (states or region), they are described as international boundaries (either on land, sea or in the air). The point where an individual or goods cross from one country to another is usually called the border and in some cases they are referred to as frontiers. While some states borders are

tight; others are very open but not porous, and yet some other states have very porous borders. Today, states whose borders (specifically land, air and sea) fall short of the international standards are referred to as states with porous border(s) and in many cases it creates an avenue for the free entry and exit of illegal transnational goods including Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) (Musa, 2013; United Nations, 2015)

There are many definitions of SALW (Small Arms Survey, 2015). Essentially, small arms are weapons which include: revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine-guns, assault rifles, light machine-guns. While light weapons are: heavy machine-guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, mortars of calibres of less than 100mm (Small Arms Survey, 2015). In addition, 'light weapons' are usually heavy and thus require more than one person to carry and operate. It is also worthy of note that SALW are not as small and light as their names suggest but rather an

embodiment of a huge spectrum of different kinds of weapons which are deadly enough to destabilise or cripple a nation.

Sources, Dynamics and Availability of Illicit SALW in Nigeria

Beyond the legitimate production of SALW by the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (established by the government to locally produce arms and ammunitions for the military needs of the armed forces and police), prospective buyers of legitimate and illicit SALW are often left with diverse sources. This includes residue of weapons used in the 1967-1970 Civil War, those stolen from state armoury or security outpost during raids by criminals, and those sold by corrupt security officials including returnees from foreign peacekeeping missions (Onuoha, 2011: Aghedo, 2015). In addition, locally crafted guns abound in cities like Awka, Aba and Warri, Calabar, Kaduna, Katsina as its hotspots also form a significant source of illicit SALW circulating in Nigeria (Ikelegbe, 2014). Table 1 below presents samples of locally produced SALW and their estimated prizes in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Locally-produced SALW in Awka

Weapon	Ammunition	Cost
Pocket single-shot handgun	Various calibre of cartridge	₦ 4000/USD 32
Four-shot revolver	9mm, 7.5mm, or 8.5mm	₦ 8,000/USD 64
Eight-shot revolver	Various calibre of shotgun Cartridge	₦10,000 - 11,000/USD 80 – 88
Horizontal double-barrel shotgun	Various calibre of shotgun Cartridge	₦ 25,000 – 30,000/USD 200 – 240
Vertical double-barrel Shotgun	Various calibre of shotgun Cartridge	₦ 45,000/ USD 360

Source: Karp, 2007 cited in Ikelegbe, 2014.

In addition, a significant amount of illicit SALW also infiltrates the state through cross-border arms smuggling. The huge amount of illicit weapons uncovered within Nigeria's territorial

space attest to this claim. For example, on the 26 of October 2010, a total of 240 metric tons of Iranian made ammunition were discovered by security agents in 13 shipping containers in

Nigeria's main port of Lagos (Holtom, 2011). Similarly, between 16 and 28 May 2013, three Lebanese men (alleged to be members of the Lebanese movement Hezbollah) were arrested by security agents for their alleged role in illicit arms proliferation in Kano city, Nigeria. The weapons which were uncovered in an underground bunker in a residential apartment includes: seventeen AK-47s rifles with over 11,000 bullets, four anti-tank landmines, 60mm anti-tank weapons, 21 rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), two rounds of ammunition for a 122mm artillery gun, and dynamites (Vanguard, 28 May, 2013). That these weapons were discovered in Nigeria is an indication that several other weapons had been smuggled into the country undetected, a majority of which are of foreign made and many of these weapons are possessed illegally by suspected criminals.

Behind these sources of illicit weapons in modern Nigeria, lies a massive land border which spans across several countries. In the west Nigeria is bordered by Benin (773 kilometres), Niger in the north (1,497 kilometres), Cameroon in the southeast (1,690 kilometres) and Chad in the northeast (87 kilometres). It also has a distance of 853 kilometres of coastline (Onuoha, 2013; Suleiman, 2014). But despite the massive nature of the country's land borders, there exist only 84 legal as against 1,497 illegal entry routes into Nigeria (Okoro, 2014; Suleiman, 2014). With such large number of identified illegal entry routes, the territorial integrity and survival of the Nigerian state is threatened particularly by the porous borders on the northern axis of the country bordering Chad and Niger republics. This is because such neighbouring states thus provide direct links for 'conflict entrepreneurs' to troubled states like Algeria, Mali and Libya are now known to be safe haven for terrorist groups and armed militias often involved in the illicit arms trade in the region (*AlJazeera*, 8 October 2013, Small

Arms Survey, 2015; Tessières, 2017). In the past, groups such as Boko Haram (BH) and Al Qaida related terrorist groups in northern Mali, Algeria and beyond have also used some of these routes to indoctrinate, recruit, train, coalesce, and to provide refuge for their members (Zenn 2013; Comolli, 2015; Cold-Ravnkilde & Plambech, 2015).

It is also important to note that the effective use of these illegal borders by transnational arms smugglers is thus facilitated by certain geographic and socio-economic factors. For example, while a majority of the border lines in the east and north of Nigeria are either mountainous or in the jungle, some others are covered by sand dunes (Onuoha, 2013; *Punch*, May 21 2013). These are geographic conditions that inhibit serious border policing in a developing state like Nigeria and at the same time create a safe passage way for illegal arms smugglers who capitalise on the difficulties faced by security agents in securing the area. Similarly, the ethnic compositions of the border communities in Nigeria as well as in neighbouring African states also influence the use of illegal borders by smugglers in the axis. Indeed, with the partitioning of Africa, certain tribes and ethnic groups were divided as part of two or more sovereign states in the continent thus leading to the existence of the same tribes and ethnic groups in different African states. The security implication of this is that it has made it difficult for state security agents in some border areas in the continent to identify a citizen of a particular state as well as apprehending an illegal alien. For instance, groups such as Fulanis, Hausas, Kanuris, Kotokos and Mandaras now live both in Cameroon and Nigeria; the Borgu and Yoruba ethnic groups live in Benin and Nigeria, and the Fulanis and Hausa groups also live in Niger and Nigeria as well. In some cases they even intermarry and coexist peacefully across national boundaries (Adejo, 2005), a

phenomenon that may have been strengthened by their linguistic affiliations.

In the same way, the poor conditions of most border communities in the country have also influenced the effective patronage of these borders. Border communities such as Jibia in Katsina State, Kiisi in Oyo State, Idiroko in Ogun State, Badagry in Lagos State, Bakassi in Cross River State, Bama in Borno State, and Baruten in Kwara state have all become informal centers for trans-border trade relations (Garuba, 2010). In fact the continuous neglect of these border communities by successive governments at all levels has led to the poor state of affairs in most border communities in the country. For example, the lack of basic public goods (such as good roads, health care centres, schools, clean water etc.) in some border communities in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara state Nigeria, have pushed citizens to a point where they migrate to neighbouring Benin Republic whenever they have need to access such basic amenities required for their survival (Yakubu, 2015). This is further compounded by the poor economic conditions in such border communities as most citizens and inhabitants live below \$1.25 per day – the specified global ideal living standard by the United Nations – an indication that poverty is manifest in these areas (World Bank, 2008; Adeyinka, 2014). This lack of public goods coupled with the poor economic conditions, have made citizens in these border communities vulnerable to the manipulation of arms trafficking criminal Czars who offer reward in return for their compromise. Thus, the dwellers of these communities are left with few options for survival, and one of the most lucrative is to partake in the illicit arms trafficking to complement their poor income levels essentially because of the failure of governance along these frontier communities. It is within this context Adejo noted that illegal trafficking of goods into Nigeria – including

SALW – through her weak borders “is simply an honest means of earning a living” (Adejo, 2005:94).

Beyond the variety of sources of Illicit SALW in Nigeria, the fact that SALW “are small, light and easily collapsible makes it easy to be concealed and moved” into and within any State in the world. The dynamics of the nature of arms smuggling in Nigeria have remained fluid and difficult to track owing to SALW collapsibility and innovative tactics deployed (Musa, 2013). For instance, arms smugglers in their quest to beat Nigeria’s security checks at its frontiers have devised means such as using specially constructed chambers in conventional vehicles, stuffing arms in bags of grains, kegs of oil, carton of goods inside overloaded heavy duty trucks. Given the huge size of the goods loaded on these vehicles, very little or no scrutiny is conducted on them by security and border officials. In some cases “specially crafted skin or thatched bags attached to camels, donkeys and cows” have also been used by same to conceal weapons specifically with the assistance of trans-border nomadic pastoralists whose flock has been transformed into vehicles for transporting illegal arms into Nigeria (Musa, 2013; Onuoha, 2013:5). Obviously, these are new tactics used by arms smugglers.

Arms-smugglers in recent past have also deployed women and young girls who are often in *hijab* and *burka* (*hijab* is the head covering and *burka* is the long garments worn mostly by a female Islamic faithful often loose and made of non see-through textiles) as objects of weapons smuggling. A long *hijab* and *burka* can conceal any kind of SALW as well as explosives. Unfortunately, thorough security search of females dressed in *hijab* and *burka* is perceived as a taboo owing to cultural and religious reasons in Nigeria. This has made it almost impossible for security agents to effectively search female suspects during regular checks at the borders and elsewhere.

In effect, such women clad in *hijab* and *burka* with concealed weapons underneath are largely unquestioned and unhindered. The frequent use of females clad in *hijab* and *burka* as suicide bombers for the BH insurgents attest to the effectiveness and efficiency of the clothes in terms of weapons smuggling and attacks in the country. Between 2014 and 2016, the United Nations estimates that BH deployed 100 abducted women and girls for suicide attacks. In January 2015, at least 20 persons were killed with many more injured when a girl of about 10 years of age detonated explosives concealed under her *burka* at a crowded market in Maiduguri (*Punch*, 12 July 2015). In February, 2016 in Dikwa refugee camp, housing 80,000 refugees, two girls disguised as displaced persons and blew themselves up, killing 58 people and wounding 78 (Searcey, 2016).

Although, the different tactics and capacity of various arms trafficking syndicates are gradually being uncovered and some counter measures have been put in place by security agencies, a significant number of SALW have already infiltrated the country. Despite the inaccurate nature of data on SALW circulating the country, available estimates revealed that about 70% of the eight to ten million SALW circulating in West Africa are in Nigeria and a significant proportion of these weapons are illicitly acquired (Hazen and Horner, 2007; Bello, 2010; Ikelegbe, 2014).

Mapping the Nexus: Porous Borders, Small Arms and Insecurity

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 Nigeria's porous borders (particularly land and sea borders) in exacerbating insecurity in the country is yet to be appreciated and adequately addressed.

When a country border(s) are porous, it creates a safe passage for trans-border criminals and terrorist who in turn capitalise on its weak and porous state to smuggle illegal goods including SALW into the country. This is further compounded by the fact that neighbouring African states; such as Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger Republic are also struggling with ineffective border control thus making smuggling of illicit goods between states in the axis and beyond relatively easy (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013). For instance on the Nigeria/Benin border (prominent among which is the Seme – Idiroko border) a World Bank study on the volume of illegal imports – including SALW – into Nigeria, revealed that, on the average, an estimated 750 billion naira (USD 5 billion) worth of goods are smuggled into the country through the borders of the Republic of Benin annually (Raballand & Mjekiqi, 2010). In the same way, a study conducted on behalf of the British research institute Chatham House on the level of unrecorded trade between Nigeria and her African trade partners also revealed that over 70 per cent of virtually all trade between Nigeria and its African neighbours goes unrecorded (Melly & Hoffman, 2015).

Similarly, on the Nigerian/Chadian coast, the leaky nature of both state frontiers has in no little way provided the Nigerian state with links through Chad to hot beds such as Central African Republic, Libya, Sudan, and South Sudan. No doubt, with a measure of instability engendered mostly by armed militias in these states currently struggling with the control of not only their porous borders but also to establish significant state presence on existing 'ungoverned spaces' in their territories. By implication, they have all become conveyor belts for illicit trafficking of goods such as people, narcotics, arms and ammunition among others into and out of Nigeria. For example, aside past claims that weapons are usually smuggled from Mali and other states

into Nigeria, more recently, the commander of the United States military's special operations in Africa Brigadier General Donald Bolduc, also revealed that a significant amount of different types of weapons alleged to have been sent by the dreaded Islamic State (IS) terrorist group in Libya to the Nigerian based Boko Haram insurgents in the Lake Chad region, were intercepted by security agents in Chad (Dearden, 2016).

The critical point here is that when the border(s) of a country as well as that of her neighbours are porous, it makes it much easier for non-state actors to avail themselves illicit weapons which they use to engender insecurity in their operational base. Thus, the

advance of non-state actors in terms of military capability or weaponry in Nigeria has been closely bound with the porosity of the country's borders primarily because they allow the free entry of illicit SALW.

SALW as Propellers of Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria

SALW have been the main tool of destruction in the hands of conflict proprietors and thus fuel the recent forms of violence experienced in the country. As the data in table 2 below show, between 2000 and 2013 a total number of 53,908 (gun related) homicidal deaths were recorded across Nigeria.

Table 2: Homicidal Related Deaths in Nigeria

Year	Total number of gun related homicides/death per year	Annual rate of homicide per 100,000 people
2013	1,897	1.16
2012	33,817	20.0
2008	1,956	1.3
2007	1,981	1.3
2006	2,000	1.4
2005	2,074	1.5
2004	2,550	1.9
2003	2,136	1.6
2002	2,117	1.6
2001	2,120	1.7
2000	1,255	1.0
Total	53,903	43.46

Source: Adapted by the Authors from the International Firearm Injury Prevention and Policy database, 2015.

The recent progression by parties to conflicts in Nigeria from crude weapons (such as sticks, stones, bow and arrows, spears, knives, machetes, and locally crafted guns) to modern military weapons (including handguns, shotguns, AK47, light machine guns) also clearly exudes the correlations between porous borders, small arms and violent deaths in the country. For instance the conflict

between herdsmen and farmers across the country demonstrates that the recent threat and casualty levels from the crisis have been heightened by the increased availability and use of illicit small arms by actors in conflicts. In the past, these set of aggrieved herdsmen and farmers were only able to kill at least 1 - 3 persons per attack owing to the crude nature of their weapons. But with the increased

availability and possession of sophisticated weapons, the nomads and farmers are now able to double and in some cases triple the

casualty levels in their attacks as shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Reported Cases of Violent deaths caused by Herdsmen vs. Farmers clashes in Nigeria from January 2013 – April 2016

Year	Major Actors	Major Weapons Used by Actors	Estimated number of reported casualties
2016	Farmers and Fulani herdsmen,	AK47 rifles and Dane guns	800 +
2015	Farmers and Fulani herdsmen,	AK47 rifles and Dane guns	599
2014	Farmers and Fulani herdsmen,	AK47 rifles and Dane guns	1229
2013	Farmers and Fulani herdsmen,	Dane guns and other locally crafted weapons	63

Source: Institute for Economic and Peace (2014 - 2016), Olayoku (2014: 8-14), SB Morgen (2016).

As table 4 indicates, fatalities from herdsmen and farmers clashes have increased dramatically from 63 in 2013 to a staggering 1229 in 2014, 599 in 2015 and 800 in 2016, over ten times the figure in 2013, when crude weapons were used as against sophisticated weapons deployed in the later years with huge fatalities.

Similarly, the recent threats posed by Nigerian sea pirate groups which operate within her territorial waterways also demonstrate the deadly link between the country's porous borders, small arms and violence. No doubt pirate groups in the country have all equally relied strongly on the use of small arms to carry out their operations and have thus made the region and Nigeria in particular the epicentre of pirate attacks since 2013 (Doyle, 2013; ICC-International Maritime Bureau, 2013). With sophisticated illicit weapons, pirates in recent years have been able to maim, abduct, and kill ship crew members more easily than with crude instruments of war such as knives, cutlasses

etc. For example, in 2015 a total of 17 violent incidents against commercial ships operating on the riverine areas of the Niger Delta region were recorded by researchers working on behalf of the Ocean Beyond Piracy agency. These include the attack on *MT Kalamos* (a Malta-flagged vessel which had 23 crew and two armed guards on board) by Nigerian pirates while the ship was waiting at an oil terminal at Bonny, Bayelsa state Nigeria. At the end of the incident, it was reported that among the crew a seafarer was shot dead, one severely injured and three others (two Greeks and a Pakistani) were kidnapped by the pirates for ransom (Ocean Beyond Piracy, 2015). Similarly, on February 5, 2017, a cargo ship named *BBC Caribbean* with armed guards on board was boarded, robbed and some of the crew members (seven Russians and a Ukrainian) were also abducted— 45 nautical miles south-west Brass, Nigeria –by armed pirates (*Vanguard*, 8 February 2017; Soldatkin, 2017). Given the proximity of such attacks to the Nigerian shore line, it becomes plausible to

suggest two things: First, that a majority of the perpetrators of such acts are Nigerians. Secondly, it also shows that illicit guns have played a significant role in the activities of local pirates in the country. Therefore, it becomes plausible to suggest that guns have played a significant role in the activities of pirates in the country and beyond (ICC International Maritime Bureau, 2010-2014).

In addition, the recent high level of fatalities attributed to the BH group since its campaign of terror escalated in 2009 in the North-eastern region of Nigeria; also reinforce the thesis that there is a deadly link between porous borders, small arms and violent deaths in the country. As the data extracted from the Global Terrorism Database shows, terrorist attacks from the BH insurgent group (between 2009 and 2013) on average caused about eight deaths per attack which is significantly higher than its previous levels of fatality which was 1-3 per attack (Institute for Economic and Peace, 2014; Global Terrorism Database, 2015). This could be attributed to the groups' recent access to illicit high calibre military weapons

smuggled from different parts of the world including Libya and Mali which have significantly enhanced the group capability to vanquish more lives than the incipient stage when members of the group relied primarily on crude weapons of war (Okoro, 2014). This also explains why in 2014 the number of fatalities attributed to the group was estimated at over 17,000 with more than 1.5 million persons displaced (Amnesty International, 2015). In addition, the group's acquisition and control of the Sambisa forest – an area of about 60,000 square miles on the north-eastern region of Nigeria – was also made possible because of the group's military might (Kayode, 2014)

Beyond the above stated cases, recorded activities of kidnappers, armed robbers, assassins, cult gangs and lone-wolfs within Nigeria have all also ruled with reckless abandon due to the easy access and availability of SALW. In Anambra state alone, for example, the level of kidnappings, armed robbery and assassinations between 2014 and 2017 were alarming as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Categorisation of Crime Incidence in Anambra State between 1999–2015

Year	Murder	Robbery	Kidnapping	Arson
1999	400	500	Nil	95
2000	390	315	5	125
2001	200	616	2	75
2002	391	231	8	49
2003	202	600	5	61
2004	198	496	10	49
2005	516	760	Nil	68
2006	610	298	4	139
2007	279	800	10	610
2008	407	430	139	200
Total	3593	5046	183	1541

Sources: Adapted from Idike, Eme, & Anyadike, (2017). *Insecurity Question and Crime Statistics in Nigeria: A Case of Anambra State*, p.35

Conclusion

While religious beliefs, ethnic identities, socio-economic deprivation and youth unemployment are no doubt important drivers of violence and insecurity in Nigeria, porous borders and arms proliferation are critical propellants of insecurity in the country as they determine the intensity of all the other drivers of insecurity. Hence, the evidence presented and discussed above enhances our understanding of the role being played by porous borders and SALW in fuelling the violence ravaging the Nigerian society.

Recommendations

It is our contention that secured borders and control of SALW will serve as antidotes to insecurity in Nigeria. This template was erected on the premise that ethno – religious conflicts or socio – economic driven uprisings among others are bloody and deadly largely because of the availability of easily accessible and cheap SALW which have infiltrated Nigeria through her porous borders.

It is therefore important that Nigeria should as matter of urgency take appropriate steps to strengthen her borders to curb the increasing violence and crime being unleashed on the citizenry as a fall out of SALW trafficking into the country. The problem of border porosity appears intractable because the right policy has not been crafted and implemented in several countries, Nigeria inclusive.

This paper distils a comprehensive cooperative strategy (CCS) that will be helpful in tackling headlong the problem of border porosity and the attendant insecurity fallout of SALW smuggling in Nigeria and her neighbouring cross-border countries. The CCS is predicated on two cardinal premises. First is the primacy of politics in attacking the SALW trafficking and the second is the need for multi prong approach to solving the problem.

The primacy of politics has to do with the political will of neighbouring countries in

the border region to solve the menace of smuggling of SALW by cartels and individuals. The neighbouring countries must first appreciate in principle the short and long term effects of free flow of SALW between border countries. It is naïve for one country in the border region to think that the problem is more of that of the country where the negative effect of SALW smuggling is most felt at a particular point in time and as result, feel less concerned or nonchalant about cooperating with other countries to solve the problem. Core to the success of the fight against SALW smuggling in Nigeria is co-operation amongst cross-border countries in planning and execution of combat programmes after a painstaking study of the terrain. Political commitment to a well articulated capacity building of personnel, infrastructural development, the adoption of modern technology, the involvement of the local population and the civil society will greatly help in stemming the of illegal SALW trafficking across borders. It is also important that concerted efforts should be made by Nigeria and her neighbours to harmonise the legislations of their border states to ensure that there is no safe haven or soft landing for SALW smugglers. The global dimension of SALW trafficking also calls for political as well as legal coordination of efforts internationally in the task of standardizing export destination documentation of SALW. Nigeria should be open to these efforts and make necessary inputs.

The second premise with regards to the CCS in solving of smuggling of SALW is that it must not be divorced or isolated from other border challenges. There is the need for Nigeria to adopt a comprehensive management approach in tackling all border challenges (illegal immigration and enhanced economic conditions at the border communities inclusive). While specific strategies may be instituted and institutions

created to combat SALW smuggling menace, existing traditional establishments; customs, immigration, etc that deal with border management issues should be utilised but with necessary re-orientation in terms of how they can be more effective in complementing activities. The custom service for example should be re-oriented to give same attention to the task of inspecting documents of cargo and the physical inspection of cargo. The customs officers should be enhanced technologically to perform this function. The issue of giving the custom service high revenue targets should not be to the utter disadvantage of solving the problem of SALW trafficking across borders. Also, the idea of the custom service focusing more on goods coming into the country rather than goods

going out should be discouraged. If cross-border countries care less about what goes out of their country, the adverse effects will be the same for all the countries with this unwholesome practice. Border patrol with the use of sophisticated surveillance devices must be on at the same in all cross-border areas to ensure there is no space for SALW traffickers to take advantage of in perpetuating their nefarious activities.

It is hoped that Nigeria will appreciate the dire necessity of the hour and attempt significant reinforcement of her leaky borders with the aim to stem the proliferation of illicit SALW in the foreseeable future and join nation states that are typified by their ability to live up to their core statehood responsibilities.

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