Public Perception of the Proliferation of Illegal Small Arms and Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Kaduna Metropolis, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

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Abstarct

In recent times, violent communal and religious conflicts have become regular features of social life in Nigeria. These conflicts result from different value systems, aggressive competition for land, water and political resources, and unhealthy competition of some leaders. There is hardly a year when there is no major violent conflict. Conflict in this respect, especially in Northern part of the country has varied in scope, intensity and nature, and has taken immeasurable toll on human lives, leaving many dead, maimed and numerous others displaced, as a result of the involvement of small arms illegally acquired. To this end, this study seeks to find out the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis and examine the impacts of ethno-religious conflicts on proliferation of illegal small arms. In collecting data for this study, two complementary modes of data collection – survey and in depth interviews were used, and the data generated were synergized. The data revealed that, smuggling from neighboring states/countries, politicians, local manufacturers, arms dealers, theft of security forces arms constitute the major sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis. Of equal importance is the revelation that prevalence of internal conflicts is responsible for continued proliferation of illegal small arms in the State. It was also found out that during conflicts, the use of illegal small arms destroy lives and properties, cause injuries and maiming, displace people and create general sense of insecurity. In conclusion, the study recommended the need to take decisive measures to reduce the spate of ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna metropolis in particular and Nigeria in general as a way of arresting the illegal use of small arms.

Key Words: Proliferation, Illegal arms, Ethnicity, Religion, Conflict, Small arms

INTRODUCTION

In theory, human activities can take two polar forms: pure anarchy and/or normlessness, and rule following (Simpson in Croft, 1996: vii). The relations between groups, communities and even States traditionally have been regarded as operating more at the anarchic (conflict) end of this spectrum than through conformity to rules of behavior. Okoye (2006:6) observes that, 'no man is an island unto himself. Individuals interact at the social, psychological and mental levels of existence in real life. This social interaction usually results in meeting the needs of members as well as creating situations of disagreements, quarrels, clashes and sorrow, which invariably lead to conflict". The above statement indicates the imperativeness of conflicts in human society. The world continues to witness various forms of conflict as a result of competing interests, values and ideologies. Oke (2002:1) observes that "the incompatibility of these interests and the need to protect core values created conflicts".

Conflict is part of several movements in history. (2006:20) It is an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence which is the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. In similar vein, Igwe (2002:84) quoted in (Ikejiani-Clark, 2010:54) conceives conflict as:

A universal and permanent attribute of nature, life and society, necessary and unavoidable when, in terms of dialectics they serve to advance the positive evolution of phenomena, and unnecessary and unavoidable when irresoluble and their consequences are negative for society and man.

These definitions above clearly demonstrate that conflicts are largely the expression of opposing interests. Thus, conflict means a state of open, prolonged fighting, confrontation, hostility, strife, struggle, war, warfare, etc. It is also a state of disagreement and disharmony, clash, contention, difference, dissonance, friction, fraction, schism, variance, etc (Ikejiani-Clark, 20 10:54). Ethno-religious conflict, occurs when the ultimate goal of conflict is of ethnic and religious nature. Such conflicts are often associated with ethnic or religious sentiments. Thus, the usage of the concept denotes the fact that all crises that have religious and ethnic undertones are ethno-religious conflicts (Yakubu, 2005:19).Ethno-Religious conflicts thus, are those conflicts emanating from ethnic and religious differences, attachment or sentiments which divide the conflicting parties along ethnic and religious lines in the quest to ascertain or defined their identities and assert their influence.

Ethno-religion, one of the most personal, but emotive phenomena, is an important area that generates the most pervasive conflict, the resolution of which can hardly be effected durably (Bassey and Oshita, 2007:57). Examples of these abound inherently, in recurrent cycles of the Arab-Israeli question. The Balkans question that overflowed in the break-up of Yugoslavia, and even the former Soviet Union, with their smothering after-shocks, continues to leave tales of woe, the resolution of which can hardly be predicted.

There is no doubt that Africa has not been at peace upwards of a century. Conflicts seem to be a recurring decimal in Africa both between various countries and within countries that make up the continent. From the North to the South and from the West to the East of the continent, conflicts have become more or less the norm. Tandon (1999) quoted in (Bassey and Oshita, 2007:63) for instance, notes that since 1970 more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa. Most of these have been internal rather than inter-state wars. He further notes that in 1996 alone, about 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were engaged in one form of armed conflict or the other with a resultant refugee population of over 80 million. The countries that have suffered most from these wars include Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Senegal, Guinea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somali, Zimbabwe, South Africa, etc. Most of these wars have been characterized by extreme brutality. In Rwanda alone, in a matter of 100 days, about a million people were massacred; a scale of killing that is almost unprecedented in world history. Some of these conflicts are either ethnic or religious in nature.

Nigeria, like other African countries has been bedeviled by several forms of conflicts that have posed a mortal challenge to the State and its structures. Nearly every part of Nigeria has experienced one form of crises or the other with attendant consequences. For instance, the peasant- oriented conflicts and riots that are currently raging in Nasarawa State are caused by both ethnic and religious factors, as well as recurrent land question between the Tiv of Benue State and the Hausa community in Nasarawa State. Other conflict flash-points in the country include the endemic and prolonged Ife-Modakeke imbroglio, the communal conflict in Shagamu, Lagos in the South-west, In the South-east, the Aguleri-Umohia/Anan conflict which is most noticeable. In the South-South, the communal and oil-induced conflict in the Niger-Delta also increased in scope and intensity, and the Ogoni crises, which almost led to complete destruction of Odi Township.

Apart from Kano State, Kaduna State has registered, more than any other city in Nigeria, a superlative number of ethno-religious disturbances ever in the history of Nigeria (Ikejiani-Clark, 2007:526). In Kaduna State, there have been conflicts leading to loss of lives and destruction of properties in Kasuwan Magani in 1980, Kaduna in 1982, Gure/Kahugu in 1986, Kafanchan in 1987, Kaduna in 1987 and Zango Kataf in 1992, Kafanchan in 1999 and Kaduna, Kachia and Birnin Gwari in February 2000 (Okoye, 2000: xii-xiv), and in 2002 (occasioned by the introduction of Sharia legal system and the Miss World pageant). During these periods, many people were killed, houses burnt, properties destroyed, and several people were displaced. The frequency and enormity of these conflicts have foisted a general threat to the security of the citizens, which are not only affecting the nation, but also economic activities of the State, given the manifestation of illegal small arms.

Today, the power of the State is gradually becoming weakened. This may be so because; presently a lot of weapons (particularly small arms) have illegally found their way into the hands of non-State actors, whose motives and intensions are at variance with those of the State. Consequently, arms that were originally intended for the protection of nation-States have become major source of internal threat. Oke (2002:2) pointed out that, "While there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of armed conflict between States within the past 25 years, the number of intra-State conflict appears to be on the increase". He argues that, out of the 108 armed conflicts since the cold war, 101 have been fought within, rather than between States, and all have been fought with small arms.

Small arm is a generic term covering weapons which may be carried by a man. According to Smith and Haslam (1982:195), "small arms are weapons which are generally man-portable and fire flat trajectory profile. Normally they are considered to be calibres of less than 12.7mm". Their unique characteristics have made their proliferation a very lucrative business world-wide, being compact, powerful, highly destructive, relatively inexpensive and easy to operate, conceal, and transport. It is believed that, "more than 500 million small arms are in existence globally, and these are produced in large numbers in over 70 countries" (Ariahu, 2005:2).

Realizing the destructive effects of small arms, given the numerous conflicts world over, several steps were taken to control their trafficking, proliferation and use. Yet, their trafficking, proliferation and misuse continue unabated as intra- conflicts continue. Their availability continues not only to fuel crises but has dominant and destabilizing effects in ethno-religious crises, particularly in Kaduna State where most of such violence have taken place over the years.

In fact, no real progress seem to have been made in the crucial field of small arms control, as their spread and use continue unabated vis-à-vis frequent ethno-religious conflicts, and the attendant insecurity. However, certain positive measures taken provide some encouragement. But the fact remains that these measures have only resulted in limited restraint as situations (ethno-religious conflicts) precipitating demands for arms remain unresolved. It is in this regard that this study is designed to identify the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis, and ascertain its impacts on ethno-religious conflicts.

Statement of the Problem

Violent communal conflicts are a regular feature of social life in Nigeria, especially since 1960s. These conflicts according to Otite and Albert (1999:86) result from different value systems, aggressive competition for land, water and political resources, and unhealthy competition of some leaders. There is hardly a year when there is no major violent community conflict in Nigeria. As observed by Best (2006:422), one could be alarmed of the multitude of conflicts that need to be solved in our polity. Conflict in this respect, especially in Northern part of the country varies in scope, intensity and nature, and has taken immeasurable toll on human lives, living many dead, maimed and numerous others displaced.

The nature, scale and dimension of conflicts vary according to the issues involved in relation to the cultures concerned. That is to say, conflicts take different forms depending on their specific contexts. This is central to many cases of conflicts in Kaduna State. For instance, "the struggle of ethnic minorities, framed by their experience of domination, tends to be targeted primarily against the Hausa/Fulani, and indirectly against the Nigerian State" (Best, 2006:422). Best pointed out that, conflicts of this nature which have turned Kaduna city and rural locations within the State into killing fields seem to have been fought by minority groups who perceive their relationship with the majority group at State and local levels, the former seeing their relationship with the later as 'internal colony' . Consequently, demands have centered on issues of access to power and opportunities as well as demands for cultural autonomy.

More often than not in Kaduna State, when conflicts of this nature erupt and spread, they tend to assume religious dimension, given the long time antagonism between the major religions in the State. Kaduna more than any city in Nigeria, seems to have become what Agbese (2002:12) referred to as 'hot bed', constantly generating religious crises of high magnitude. In this vein, it may be right to say that in Kaduna State, the two major religions that have always been in constant crises and conflicts are Islam and Christianity. In the quest to assert their relevance, there are bound to be skirmishes which naturally end up in violent religious crises. These struggles for relevance have tended to pose a mortal challenge to the State and its structures. They have also led to destruction of lives and properties and displacement of people. Most of the injuries and deaths recorded in these conflicts are believed to be caused by small arms and light weapons illegally acquired.

Given its strategic position and role in the West African sub-region, Nigeria has become a receptacle of arms flowing from other war-torn countries of the region. The sources and level of these illegal small arms in circulation in Nigeria can hardly be ascertained. It is believed that the frequency of political and ethno-religious violence has led to arms build-up in the country. According to Obasi (2002:80), Police records show that between 1990 and 1999, 12,000 people were arrested in different parts of the country in possession of prohibited fire-arms. In Aba for instance, it was estimated that one in ten adults in the town owned a gun either for self-defense or for criminal purposes. In Lagos, more than 6,000 rifles, pistols as well as about 20,000 rounds of ammunition were seized by security agents between 1996 and 1999. As from January to September 2007 alone, a one time Inspector General of Police, Mike Okiro, revealed that about 1,582 arms and 6,614 rounds of ammunition were recovered from various parts of the country (NTA Network News, 4 September 2007). Local observers have estimated that few thousand weapons melted down from the cameras is only a fraction of the number of weapons in circulation.

The sources of these illegal small arms remain a mystery. As Okiro (2004:12) observes;
If the interactions between legal and illegal small arms markets are intricate and complex, identifying their sources are even more nebulous. Even when the transaction is done through licensed manufacturers and distribution is legal, the movement of arms is often shrewd in secrecy.

Given this observation, it is also difficult to say categorically the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna State. If it is so, the question then is, how can we identify the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna State? Some people are of the view that ethnic/religious groups and politicians might have equipped their followers and thugs with various weapons, which are either smuggled into the country or produced locally to perpetuate violence (Olorunfemi, 2006:34). This may not be unconnected with the fact that most of the crises in the State are either fought along ethnic or religious lines. Which ever the case, it may be argued that the sources of arms in Kaduna State may not be different from other parts of the country.

This is because communities and States in Nigeria are inter-related and inter-dependent, and like the saying goes, 'what affects the eyes, must affect the nose'. This has become a diffused problem for the State, given the frequency of ethno-religious conflicts and the role these arms can play in conflicts.

In Kaduna State, the availability and use of these weapons is believed to fuel ethno-religious conflicts, with untold consequences on development. This may be so because, frequent ethnic and religious conflicts in the State have witnessed the use of these weapons, sometimes involving highly sophisticated ones suitable for external defence. It is not easy to quantify the level of destruction to lives and property, however, the clash in 2000 between Muslims and Christians over the implementation of Sharia resulted in massive loss of lives and property. The accompanying riots in Kaduna town in which many lives and property worth billions of Naira were lost and destroyed, are worthy of note. It may be difficult to quantify the number of people lost. However, it is believed by the public that nothing less than 5,000 people died, over 42,000 people were displaced and properties worth billions of Naira were destroyed during the 2000 crises alone (Okoye, 2002:128).Could the extent of these destructions have been possible if arms were not available for use? Some observers believe that the enormity of these may not be unconnected with the availability and fragrant use of these arms illegally acquired. More worrisome is the sense of insecurity created and reinforced by this situation. Proliferation of illegal small arms thus, tends to contribute to culture of violence and a cycle that is difficult to break. Owing to the vicious cycle of conflict and prevalent insecurity, Kaduna State like other parts of the country is now believed to have been plagued by massive arms.

Realizing the destructive impacts of illegal small arms, the government made several attempts to control their circulation and use. In spite of these attempts, proliferation and use of these offensive weapons continue unabated. This therefore appears to show that the entire situation has surpassed government solutions. What then is responsible for this? Perhaps, more distressing is the absence of any form of government reconciliation and weapons collection programs in the State. Most often government seems to rely on the use of security outfit to subdue conflicts or restore peace, which in public view is a palliative measure. This may be so because, even when the warring parties lay down their arms, probably due to the presence of security men, "the intervals during conflicts are often not used for reconciliation but for armaments and preparations for the next round" (Okoye, 2000:167). This means the withdrawal of warring parties does not imply peace or absence of arms but opportunities to pile up more arms for the next conflict.. Since the obvious causes of conflicts in society tend to be rooted in religious, economic and social inequalities and imbalance among people of same community, which are often not properly resolved, it is possible to anticipate more eruptions. The desire then may be to keep these weapons in case of a relapse.

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the nature of ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna metropolis, identify the sources of illegal small arms and ascertain the impacts of ethno-religious conflicts on illegal small arms, with the view to proffering useful suggestions. Thus, answers to the following research questions were sought in this study.

1) What are the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis?
2) What are the impacts of ethno-religious conflicts on proliferation of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis?

These were accomplished through the following research objectives:
1) To identify the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis.
2) To ascertain the impacts of ethno-religious conflicts on the proliferation of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis.

Theory: The study adopted strain theory to explain the findings. The strain theory is probably one of the most popular sociological explanations of crime and delinquency since it was first formulate by Robert Merton. Crime and delinquency have been explained as reactions or modes of adaptation to strain or frustration caused by disjunction between the culturally prescribed goals and institutionalized means for the realization of such goals. According to Merton in Fitzgerald et-al (1981), social structures exert enormous pressures on individuals. One of such pressures is that the social structure determines the nature of the aspiration of their citizens.

The point is that, society prescribed goals that its citizens should pursue. However, the institutionalized means for realizing the aspirations are restricted by distribution of talents and opportunities, and by structural inhibitions. Furthermore, cultural goals are emphasized without corresponding opportunities on the means of attaining ends (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2001:17). Consequently, society creates the condition whereby the realization of the goals is emphasized to the detriment of the institutionalized means. Deviance arises when society places undue emphasis on realization of material aspiration while at the same time ignoring or inadequately providing approved means for the achievement of these goals.

However, it is not the discrepancy itself that leads to deviant behavior, but rather creates several possible modes for individuals to pursue which results in deviance. According to Merton (1968), the pressure experienced by those who are excluded from the institutionalized means for realizing cultural goals can lead those individuals to adapt five modes of adaptation. These according to Merton are conformity (+ +), innovation (+ -), ritualism (- +), retreatism (- -) and rebellion $\begin{bmatrix} - & - \\ + & + \end{bmatrix}$ (Wolfgang et-al 1970:241).

However, according to Merton, the innovation, retreatism and rebellion modes of adaptation represent deviant ways adaptation that may involve crime and delinquency. From the theory, crime and delinquency can be prevented or reduced if there is concordance between cultural goals and institutionalized means for their attainment. However, crime and delinquency will increase whenever there is a disconnect between the means and goals. Thus, as Shaw and Mckay (1942:439) observe:

Where there is the greatest deprivation and frustration... and where there exists the greatest disparity between the social values to which people aspire and the availability of facilities for acquiring these values in conventional ways, the development of crimes as an organized way of life is most marked. Crime, in this situation, may be regarded as one of the means employed by people to acquire, or to attempt to acquire, the economic and social values generally idealized in our culture, which persons in other circumstances acquire by conventional means.

In Nigeria, there is overwhelming emphasis on being successful which means to be wealthy, to engage in ostentatious lifestyle and conspicuous consumption (possess expensive cars, large and expensive buildings, make huge donations at public fund-raising, etc), to be highly educated and to wield political power. Nigerians who failed to meet these aspirations and goals prescribed by society experience tremendous pressure or strain. Because of the disconnect between the goals and the means, many individuals may turn to other (non-institutionally prescribed) means to attain the cultural goals. Thus, the explanation of crime and frequent conflicts in Nigeria, and particularly Kaduna metropolis lies in the degree of correspondence between culturally prescribed goals and institutionalized norms or means for attaining the cultural goals.

From the late 1980s for instance, the people in the area of study were enmeshed in serious difficulties as due largely to economic privileges not being extended to all section of the people. Many could no longer pay bills in relation to schools, hospitals, etc. Peasants started paying more for agricultural inputs, while the prices of consumer goods and services were escalated. A large number of workers were thrown back into the peasantry in the communities, as a result of retrenchment in different sectors. School leavers and university graduates swelled the number of rural poor, as unemployment increased (Usang, 1992:4). This inability to achieve their aspirations was exploited by some elites to whip up ethnic and religious sentiments which invariably resulted to ethnic and religious conflicts (Olorunfemi, 2006:30). Thus, the proliferation of illegal small arms. This is because, the more the people feel frustrated the people feel, the more the likelihood of their also resorting to violence.

The theoretical conclusion therefore, is that the frequency of ethno-religious conflicts and proliferation of illegal small arms are driven by the general lack of socio-economic and political opportunities. Consequently, conflicts will continue to occur, and those who acquired arms to prosecute conflicts would never stop as long as that sense of alienation, injustice, deprivation and oppression continue. Thus, to combat proliferation of illegal small arms without restructuring the socio-economic and political structures will be as messy as trying to wash one's feet while putting on his sucks. This is so because, arms on their own do not cause ethno-religious conflicts, rather it is the injustices perpetrated in the system that give birth to incessant conflicts and consequently the need for arms.

Research Methodology: This study was carried out between 2008 and 2010. Kaduna metropolis was the major research location and source for the collection of survey data, as well as in-depth interviews. However, in depth interview were conducted with some key informants in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja to complement what was collected in Kaduna.

This study used both primary and secondary data sets. The primary data were collected through survey questionnaire and in-depth interview. The study populations from which they were drawn are the police, general public, and an NGO (Nigerian Action Network on Small Arms) based in Abuja. The secondary data on the other hand, were collected from police records.

The survey, in-depth interview and analysis of official documents were employed in collecting data. For the purpose of selecting the respondents, a combination of stratified-systematic and cluster-purposive sampling techniques were used for the police and members of the public respectively.

Consequently, a total of 200 questionnaires were administered to both the police and members of the public. In addition, 6 key informants were purposively selected from the police, the general public and an NGO in Abuja. The data derived from these methods were synergized and triangulated to present the findings.

FINDINGS

On the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the study shows that, 50.0% are between the age of 35 – 44 years, 68.0% are males, 71.5% are married, 71.0% have higher education, 56.0% are civil servants, while 26.0% out of 80 Police respondents have served in Kaduna metropolis for upward of 10years.

The various sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sources of Illegal Small Arms in Kaduna Metropolis

	ITEMS	OPINION					
		A		D		D	L
	There are illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis	3 1.5%	24 2.0%	.5%	.5%	.5%	00 00%
	Politicians are the source of illegal small arms	4 2.0%	2 1.0%	4 .0%	9 .5%	.5%	00 00%
0	Religious groups are the source of illegal small arms	4 2.0%	1 5.5%	6 3.0%	9 9.5%	0 0.0%	00 00%
1	Ethnic groups are the source of illegal small arms	1 5.5%	2 6.0%	4 2.0%	1 0.5%	2 6.0%	00 00%
2	Military returnees from peace keeping are the source of illegal small arms	5 7.5%	2 6.0%	9 9.5%	9 9.5%	5 .5%	00 00%
3	Security Operatives sell small arms	1 0.5%	5 7.5%	1 5.5%	5 2.5%	.0%	00 00%
4	Theft of arms from security operatives is the source of small arms	9 4.5%	02 1.0%	4 2.9%	9 .5%	.0%	00 00%
5	Smuggling from neighboring states/countries is the source of illegal small arms	4 2.0%	7 3.5%	4 .0%	.0%	.5%	00 00%
6	Arms dealers are the sources of illegal small arms	3 6.5%	00 0.0%	7 3.5%	4 .0%	.0%	00 00%
7	Defiance Industry Corporation of Nigeria(DICON)is the source of illegal small arms	7 .5%	9 4.5%	8 4.0%	4 7.0%	2 6.0%	00 00%
8	Local manufacturers (Black smiths) are the sources of illegal small arms	3 6.5%	04 2.0%	2 1.0%	5 .5%	.0%	00 00%

Key
SA   -   Strongly Agreed
A   -   Agreed
UD   -   Undecided
D   -   Disagreed
SD   -   Strongly Disagreed
TL   -   Total

On the sources of these illegal small arms the table above shows that 83% of the respondents strongly agreed that politicians often supply these illegal arms in circulation against 21% of the respondents who disagreed. This may be so because, Nigerian political history has been characterized by use of thugs by politicians to either intimidate their opponents or redress their failures. About 57% identified religious groups as the source of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis, while 29.5%disagreed. Also, 5 1.5% respondents identified ethnic groups against 36.5% who disagreed. These revelations may not be unconnected with the fact that most of the crises in Kaduna metropolis have both ethnic and religious connotations. However, 53.5% respondents indicated military returnees as against 27.0% who disagreed, 68.0% respondents indicated sales by security agents as against 16.5% who disagreed, 75.5% reported theft of security forces weapons as another source as against 12.5% who disagreed. This information may be so because many soldiers and police have often been implicated in illegal small arms transactions across the country (Okiro, 2004:14 and Nigerian Tribune (16 Jan. 2009). Other sources as shown in the table indicate that, overwhelming majority 85.5% identified smuggling from neighboring States and countries as against 7.5% respondents who disagreed, 76.5% identified arms dealers as against 10.0% who disagreed. These may be as a result of the porous nature of our borders, security check-points and lapses on the part of security agents, coupled with the fact that Kaduna State is close to other crises endemic States, such as Plateau and Kano. While 7 8.5% identified local manufacturers (Black smiths) as other source of illegal small arms in the metropolis, only 10.5% of the respondents disagreed. Given the above findings, we can therefore consider all the items listed as the major sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis.

Like the survey respondents, the in-depth interview informants for this study agreed on the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis. For instance, a member of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) pointed out that;

Talking about sources of illegal small arms, the case of Kaduna cannot be treated in isolation. Which ever State in Nigeria, the sources are common to all of them. For example, arms smuggled through the border can go to any part of the country. Secondly, our politicians, both ethnic and religious leaders themselves cannot be completely exonerated, while the security agents too are not sincere. Most worrisome is the local manufacturers who not only produce arms for youths to cause mayhem, but even for armed robbers

Another informant, who is police personnel, in his response pointed out this fact;

From my experience in the course of my job, I can say there are several sources of illegal small arms into the country (Kaduna inclusive), like other contraband goods. It ranges from smuggling, theft, unscrupulous security agents, and local manufacturers to indeed, the activities of our politicians and religious members. But the ones that pose challenges to all stakeholders are smuggling and local manufacturers, which we think fertilize other sources.

In a similar vain, a traditional leader observed that, the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis are numerous. But most worrisome is the involvement of security agents, our brothers in the villages who manufacture and sell arms to criminals and militants, and the porous nature of our borders due to corruption has even made easier for unscrupulous elements to continue to smuggle arms into the country. Some of these arms are even sourced by politicians to intimidate or eliminate their opponents whom they perceive as threat to their success at polls. These have made it difficult for government to take decisive action since some of these people are also in position of authority.

The observations by these informants (police and traditional leader) may be true because most of the sophisticated weapons found to be used in crisis could not be said to have been manufactured or sourced locally, but were smuggled into the country from troubled countries within the sub- region.

However, contrary to survey findings on security agents supplying illegal arms, a Police informant discounted the police of complicity. He explained;

I am not holding brief for the police anyway. Cases of police directly supplying arms for militants or hoodlums are very rare. Experience has shown that the police do not have arsenal of sophisticated arms discovered to be used in most conflicts. Even the fire-power of the hoodlums often overwhelms that of the police. However, there is a saying that in any society there must be Judah. There may be some but honestly I don't know).

In depth interview with some key informants seem to contradict the views expressed in survey data on the involvement of religious and traditional leaders in the conflict situation in Kaduna metropolis. For instance, a religious leader said that:

Religious groups use Koran and the Bible and not weapons. We are still having incidences of ethno-religious conflicts in the State. There are always deliberate efforts by religious leaders to stop escalation.. . . But these were controlled with the efforts of some Christian leaders and Muslim clerics. If we encourage arms build-up, these would have been opportunities to use them.

Similarly, a traditional leader observed that "ethnic leaders have a stake in ensuring peace and wellbeing of Nigerian society Thus; it is ridiculous and unethical for us to equip our subjects (ethnic groups) with arms to cause mayhem, chaos, or encourage violence". Another traditional leader observed that;

Traditional or ethnic rulers were not only like fathers to the people, but were on oath to defend the interest of the people and the nation It is therefore wicked of any body to connect the traditional leaders with evil plan by misguided people.

Despite the above, one cannot totally rule out the finding of the survey respondents given the fragile nature of the State in terms of crises, and for the fact that most of the crises have religious and ethnic colorations. In this regard, a police informant observed that,

To be candid, I must agree that there is a general state of insecurity in the State. Crises keep on occurring in the State that is ethnic or religious in nature. And most often some religious leaders make utterances that are provocative. Even when their members are arrested, instead of joining hands with the police, they trivialize the issue complicating it the more. These are indications that they have hands in it.

Another informant who works for an NGO declared;

My brother, even if you are not told, you know that, as for Kaduna, to be precise, the crises are usually between the Christians and Muslims. Most of the people arrested during the crises are those who cannot afford three square meals. Yet they were found with arms, at times, sophisticated ones. How did they get these weapons? For me, I think they are equipped by the privileged ones among them.

The impact of ethno-religious conflict on the proliferation of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis is presented in table 2

Table 2: Impacts of Ethno-religious Conflicts on Proliferation of Illegal Small Arms

	ITEMS	OPINION					
		A		D		D	L
1	Proliferation of illegal small arms	3 1.5%	24 2.0%	.0%	.5%	.5%	00 00%
2	Encouragements violent use of arms	6 3.0%	1 0.5%	1 0.0%	5 2.5%	.5%	00 00%
3	Loss of lives	03 1.5%	6 8.0%	.0%	.5%	.2%	00 00%
4	Destruction of properties	9 9.5%	0 5.5%	.5%	.5%	.5%	00 00%
5	Cause injuries and maiming	1 5.5%	1 5.5%	1 .5%	.5%	.0%	00 00%
8	Displacement of people	4 7.0%	8 9.0%	3 .5%	.0%	.5%	00 00%
3	Create general sense of insecurity	4 2.0%	4 9.0%	.0%	.5%	.5%	00 00%

The data presented in table 2 revealed several impacts of ethno-religious conflict on the proliferation of illegal small arms. Out of the 200 respondents, overwhelming majority of 93.0% reported that frequent ethno-religious conflicts has led to the proliferation of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis, while insignificant number of ll.0% disagreed. This information implies that little provocation or peaceful protest can easily become violent if large pile of illegal small arms exist in a crises endemic society. Also, about 73.5% agreed that ethno-religious conflict encourages violent use of small arms, 16.0% disagreed. While 91.0% of the respondents agreed that availability of illegal small arms in crises endemic area creates general sense of insecurity and only 5.0% who disagreed. This is closely related to the above. It implies that when there are no crises, these arms may be used to carry out other crimes such as armed robbery, assassination, etc.

Majority of the informants subscribed to these findings. For instance, an informant who works for an NGO observed that, "because of agony people suffered, and the circle of violence, people have continued to arm themselves in case of possible outbreak". He maintained that, "this can further escalate or turn little provocation into violence. So we must be very careful with the situation in which we find ourselves now".

Another informant who is police personnel confirmed this as he said:

The scale of destruction recorded in some of the recent crises was caused because people possess arms. Crises without arms, the effects in terms of killing, injuries and destruction will be less. But once arms are introduced it becomes disastrous. That is why we are worried.

A traditional leader in his view observed that,

Arms are instrument of violence we know. If crises in our society are not controlled, then we will continue to experience danger, because once it occurs, people will pick up their arms. No matter how little such conflict may be, it will assume greater scale.

Proliferation of illegal small arms also contributes to culture of violence and a cycle that is difficult to break. Violence fuels insecurity, and insecurity fuels violence. One of the religious leaders who is an informant made this point clearer;

In a crises endemic society where there is pent-up anger, mutual suspicions, and strife, availability of arms helps to escalate conflicts. The gravity of destructions (death, maiming and displacement of people) indicate dangerous role of illegal small arms in conflicts.

Another traditional leader also observed that;

If you were not in Kaduna during the violent crises (he laughed), you must have been told the extent of destructions, killings, and injuries people suffered…. These were not done by bare hands, but with weapons of different make. These show that arms are dangerous in crises, their availability fuel or escalate conflicts beyond imagination.

Further more, the table also shows that, overwhelming majority (89.5%) of the respondents agreed that illegal small arms lead to destruction of lives. Similarly, overwhelming majority (94.5%) reported destruction of properties, and 91.0% respondents reported that proliferation of illegal small arms causes injuries and maiming.

The qualitative data also confirm that illegal small arms play a destructive role in conflicts. For instance, according to an informant from an NGO;

The frequency of ethno-religious crises has led to arms build-up in the country. The result has been death, maiming, displacement of people and destruction of properties. It is difficult to tell you how many people died or were injured because both the government and the warring factions will not tell you the truth. While the government understates figures in order not to heighten tension, the warring factions often make counter claims to attract sympathy. But sincerely speaking, thousands have died.

Since the enthronement of democracy in 1999, it is estimated that about 100,000 persons have been killed in over 50 ethno-religious conflicts across the country (Ariahu, 2005:36).Another informant who is a police puts his view this way;

Arms are dangerous. They cause death, injuries and destruction in crises. It is not possible for me to tell the number of casualties or persons that died during the crises in Kaduna. But I can say, thousands of people died and their properties destroyed. Without arms, I don't think the casualties and destructions recorded would have reached disturbing proportion.

According to another informant (traditional leader),

Weapons are dangerous because they kill. So the purpose of using them in conflicts is to kill the opponents if possible. The high degree of deaths and injuries in conflicts is as a result of the use of arms. That is why we are worried about proliferation of these weapons. The more people acquire them, the more the likelihood of using them, more so that our society is fragile. People are looking for the slightest opportunity to cause mayhem.

The consequences of these are enormous. The frequent ethno-religious conflicts and misuse of arms can impede economic development, provision of health and education services as well as the development of effective good governance and democracy. Thus, as long as ethno-religious conflict continues and large quantities of small arms are in circulation or in wrong hands, the security, economic and political development of the nation will be jeopardized.

Table 3: Ethno-religious violence Vs Proliferation of Illegal Small Arms

		Are illegal small arms still in circulation in Kaduna Metropolis?		
		Y ES	O	OTAL
Are frequent ethno-religious conflicts responsible for proliferation of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis?	ES	1 4 57 1.4%	8 .4%	85 8.8%
	O	1 4 87 9.3%	.8%	94 1.2%
	OTAL	3 9 44 0.8%	5 .2%	78 00%

Table 3 examines the hypothesis that, 'there is no significant relationship between ethno-religious conflicts and proliferation of illegal small arms'.

Decision:
X^2 at 1 df at 0.05 level of significance = 3.841

Since the critical (table) value (3.841) is less than the calculated X^2 value (15.011b) the hypothesis is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant relationship between frequent ethno-religious conflicts and proliferation of illegal small arms. In other words, the prevalence of ethno-religious conflicts is responsible for the proliferation of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis. This explains why several efforts to curtail proliferation and use of i11egal small arms have not yielded meaningful results. The analysis of the in-depth interview confirmed these findings. For example, an informant from an NGO pointed out thus;

As you know, the frequent crises in the state, coupled with other violent crimes, have heightened the feeling of insecurity among the inhabitants of the state. So, because of possible attacks and out break of violence, people have continue to be busy arming and preparing themselves against any eventualities or to protect themselves against the increasing activities of criminals, having lost confidence in the ability of the state to do so.

The foregoing analyses show that with respect to possible sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis, smuggling from neighboring states/countries, politicians, local manufacturers, arms dealers and theft of security forces arms constitute the major ones.

On the impacts of ethno-religious conflicts on the proliferation of illegal small arms data revealed the destruction of lives and properties, injuries and maiming, displacement of people, and general sense of insecurity as the major ones.

DISCUSSION

The revelation by this study, that the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis include smuggling, politicians, local manufacturers, arms dealers, and theft of security forces arms is in conformity with the works and reports of Ariahu (2005:25); Obasi (2002:17,75 and 78); Oke (2002:27-28); Okiro (2004:12,13); Gyong (2007); Olorunfemi

(2006:32); Vanguard Newspaper (17 April 2007:16)s; Post Express (29 July, 2001:33); and Daily Trust (13 April, 2007:3)

For instance, the work of Okiro (2004:13) and Daily Trust of 13 April (2007:3) revealed that, most of the guns recovered from robbers (and other sources) and traced to the police are those that are usually stolen or taken away when a police is killed. This clearly indicates the negligence and inability of the security agencies, particularly the police to effectively fight crime. In fact, members of the police are said to connive with hoodlums, under the pretence of being attacked and overpowered.

Though the findings suggested arms dealers as one of the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis, there is no clear evidence from studies to buttress this claim. However, owing to the fact that the movement of arms is shrewd in secrecy, and arms that are imported legally- may fall into illegal hands through diversion, theft, etc, and may go into black market supply or fall into wrong hands, one cannot completely rule out the possibility of arms dealer involvement in the proliferation of these arms in Kaduna like other cities in Nigeria.

On the impacts of ethno-religious conflicts on the proliferation of illegal small arms, the study found that arms used during ethno-religious conflicts cause injuries and maiming, create general sense of insecurity, destruction of lives and properties, and displacement of people. These findings are in consonance with the literature, particularly the works of Abdul (2002:124); Alemika and Okoye (2002:117); Ariahu (2005:36 and 37); Okiro (2004:10); Okoye (2000:xiii-xiv, 21and77); Report of Committee on 1987 Crises; New Nigerian Weekly (5 December 2003:2) and Nigerian Tribune (16 January 2008:1 and 4). For instance, during the 1987 crises in Kaduna, 19 lives were lost, while damage to properties was valued at N78, 537,768 (Report of Committee on 1987 Crises: 55). While in 2000 crises, though there was no official document to ascertain the extent of damage to lives and properties, the study carried out by Alemika and Okoye (2002:128) however, revealed that there were controversial reports on the number of casualties They pointed out that, while Ja'amatu Nasir Islam claimed that about 799 Muslims were killed, the police reported a total of 609 deaths, and Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) provided a much higher figure for Christian victims. However, it is generally believed by the public that nothing less than 5,000 people died during the crises.

Thus, arms do not proliferate in a vacuum, rather, conflict/insecurity is the basis upon which the desire for their acquisition and accumulation of arms is nurtured and used. Supporting the above, Strachey (1992:191) maintained that arms and arms accumulation therefore do not, in themselves, cause of conflicts. No community could be said to have fought each other because they possess arms. Arms are only instruments or means through which conflicts are prosecuted. Conflicts therefore exacerbate proliferation of illegal small arms.

In the foregoing, lies the major justification for situating this study within the strain theoretical framework. The present Nigerian society, in terms of socio-economic and political structures, is characterized by injustice, inequality, oppression poverty and corruption, resulting in highly skewed distribution of power and wealth. The inabilities of government to properly manage the economy for the benefit of all and sundry, created widespread poverty, and the gap between the rich and poor progressively widen. This creates opportunities for all forms of crime, including ethno-religious conflicts to thrive, thus the proliferation of illegal small arms in most conflict zones in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing section discusses the major findings of this study. Implicit in the discussion is that the sources of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis cannot be completely detached from the sources in the country. During conflicts, the availability and use of illegal arms increase cases of violence, resulting in destruction of lives and properties. It is therefore imperative to quickly bring the spate of conflicts under control, else in the nearest future, Nigeria as a whole, will become a country of street gangs, lawlessness and anarchy, where organized and unorganized groups and armed militias will erode and undermine government's monopoly of arms, and even the relevance of security forces. Consequently, the above, the following recommendations are further made:

1)   Given the fact that incessant conflicts is one of the major factors precipitating the demand for illegal small arms, the government should take pro-active measures to resolve conflicting issues. To this end, white paper reports of past commissions of inquiry into communal and religious conflicts (like those of 1987 Zango Kataf, which spread to Kaduna, the Shana crises of 2000 and the Post-election crisis of 2011) be visited and reviewed by the government with the view to implementing the recommendations.

2) Nigeria's borders are porous and the security agents are poorly equipped to face the challenges Therefore, as an urgent measure to combat smuggling, the government should take steps to ensure proper security of these borders and seaports. To this end, the police and other security agencies should be well funded. Similarly there is the need to overhaul the security apparatus and personnel as a whole with the overall aim of improving their efficiency and effectiveness.

3) Granting of licenses to arms dealers for the importation of small arms should be seriously controlled since some of these arms are often diverted for illegal use. To this extent, the Defense Industry Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) be properly equipped to modern standard and empowered to be the only producer and distributor of small arms and ammunition in the country and their activities closely monitored by relevant authorities to prevent any lapses on their . This will reduce cases of illegal diversion of arms imported legally.

4) There are legislations to control the acquisition and use of fire-arms. These laws have become obsolete and insufficient to ensure deterrence in relation to penalties for breaching them. The current penalties of 4 years imprisonment or a fine of N100, 000.00 or both (Ariahu, 2005:45) no longer justify the present realities. Therefore, punishment for those who breach the laws prohibiting illegal importation, acquisition and use of illegal small arms should be made more stringent. Offenders should be made to face life jail terms without option of fine.

5) In addition, government should develop proper programmes for raising public awareness and control of illegal small arms. It should use its media organizations and other informal measures to educate the public on the dangers of illegal use of small arms. To achieve this, engaging civil society organizations and other relevant bodies and agencies to sensitize the public on the. implications of imbibing culture of violence is imperative.

6) As measure to check the easy loss of arms, security agencies keeping stockpiles of small arms should build more secure armories and develop effective internal systems to ensure regular and accurate accounting for all weapons in their custody and those issued for use to reduce theft and recycling of arms by corrupt officials.

7) Some of the arms found to be used during the crises were manufactured locally. To check the increasing production and use of anus, activities of the local manufacturers should be closely monitored. Only credible people who cannot compromise their integrity should be licensed to produce local weapons. Since the workshops of these manufacturers are located in the hinterland, the government should collaborate with community leaders to achieve this.

   The above short term measures have he potentials of minimizing the problem of illegal proliferation of small arms. However, there is also the need to embark on long term measures.

8) In the long term, and in line with the position of the theory of this study, structural reforms towards socio-economic reforms need to be made to quarantee social justice and equity between individuals and groups, observance of the role of law, transparency good governance and accountability. In this direction, government should address the issues of poverty, social inequality, injustice, oppression lopsided development among social, ethnic and religious groups to avoid situations that create communal and religious conflicts that precipitate the acquisition, accumulation and use of illegal small arms. These conditions will enhance better resource management, improve social, economic and political conditions, and thereby reduce not only pressures towards crime, but also incidence and prevalence of conflicts that are instrumental to illegal acquisition of small arms. This is important because, to combat the proliferation of illegal small arms in Kaduna metropolis in particular, and Nigeria in general, without up-rooting or restructuring the socio-economic and political structures that are at the base of the conflicts, will be a fruitless effort.

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