

# **Arms Control and Disarmament: Implications of Proliferation of Arms on Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

***E**vents of the contemporary age of human existence is creating new opportunities and their corresponding challenges. The most obvious of these new realities is that cross border activities must take place among national entities as the necessity for this is motivated by the need for human survival in the midst of varying degrees, and aspects of national endowments which orchestrates a type of interdependence among nation-states and their citizens. One of the unintended implications of this interdependence is the menace of small arms and light weapons proliferation, which is creating new levels of national concerns to states like Nigeria, that are at the receiving ends of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which are originally manufactured for national security interest in an ‘anarchical’ global community. This study examines the concept of arms control and disarmament in the light of the trends in arms control initiatives from the global perspective, to the continental and sub-regional praxis. And, within the framework of descriptive methodology, it applies itself to the theory of national interest to establish both the implication of arms proliferation and the basis for Nigeria to look inwards to curb the corresponding negative implications of arms proliferation in an interdependent global community. It explores the nature and dynamics of arms control in its contemporary praxis, and proceeds further to establish the implications of this ugly trend to sustainable development in Nigeria; with a recipe on how to ameliorate this cancerous trend in the interest of national development. It ends with a concluding remark that restates the need for Nigeria to articulate a pragmatic policy framework, and measures for surviving in the light of present global realities.*

**Keywords:** Arms control, Disarmament, Proliferation of arms, Security, Sustainable development.

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## **Introduction**

The quest for security is as old as the history of human existence on planet earth. Since coming into this space, the actions and inactions of man has been predicated on the need for self- sustenance and self-preservation in a hostile environment. Personal security, in terms of daily sustenance and safety of the environment against all negative eventualities from the extraneous environment, has propelled man to device simple objects for hunting games; to what can be referred to as sophisticated arms and ammunitions. This drive has multiplied in proportion as man attempts to exert his influence and control over his immediate environment in their expansive forms. Thus, from the micro level of adventurism at exploring the virtues of personal preservation, the discovery of metallurgical objects came into use as a means to an end. The manufacture and use of arms and ammunitions thus became a tool for territorial expansion and conquest, as well as a symbol of status and national prestige for traditional state entities. The quantum and sophistication in the manufacture and use of these tools became the definition of wars as might come to justify the right of control of one social group by another. This tendency is at the behest of all wars ever fought in human history.

Consequent upon this, the end of World War II in 1945 is believed to be a watershed in the evolution of arms and ammunitions. The aftermath of this war is considered as the harbinger to the transformation of the nature of arms and ammunitions at the disposal of nation-states and thus has re-defined both military and political intercourse that ensue among states in the global community. The discovery and evolution of arms and ammunitions has thrown up new frontiers and pattern of relationships in the globe, such that sustainable development in many instances has come under severe threat of extinction. The global diffusion of arms including small and light weapons has evoked serious safety concerns for humanity, hence the call for disarmament. The right of sovereignty which means that states at liberty to produce and sometimes acquire arms and ammunition in defence of their territorial enclaves, is a tendency that creates the devil's jeopardy as non-state actors and other criminal gangs are presently subverting the primary goal of state protection and preservation through arms, to the unleashing of terror and other forms of danger on innocent and helpless individuals in the society.

Arms control and disarmament, in the purview of this study, is a clarion call for an effective control and reduction in the proliferation of arms and ammunition to mitigate their negative impact on the socio-economic development of Nigeria

and the entire global community. This study undertakes to explore this subject within the framework of an introduction, a conceptual and theoretical praxis, an investigation into the nature and trends in arms control disarmament, the implications/consequences of arms proliferation for sustainable development in Nigeria, and strategies for effective arms control/proliferation in Nigeria, with a concise conclusion.

### **Conceptual and theoretical discourse**

The subject matter of arms control and disarmament has elicited different interpretations in varied contexts. It therefore lacks a precise meaning and can only do so when it is interrogated via a careful qualification. The scale and dimensions at which arms control and disarmament has been interrogated ranges from multilateral, bilateral and unilateral levels. The scope of this study is from the prism of unilateralism but, in a rapidly globalizing world, where mobility and migration is redefining the human interface, the multilateral and bilateral interpretation cannot remain in isolation. This accounts why geographical factors are considered sine-qua-non in the quest for arms control and disarmament.

The twin concepts of arms control and disarmament finds acceptance in the belief that the human urge to resort to violent altercations is directly related to the propensity and availability of weapons for inflicting hurt and discomfort and, in extreme cases, deaths on their victims. Research from military industrial complex from the first and second world wars has occasioned the manufacture of, and deployment of destructive weapons that ranges from field guns to dangerous explosive bombs, M250 Machine guns, M7 rifles, M-16, Fighter jets, Unmanned Area Vehicles (UAV's), Battle ships, Sub-marine war ships, Hypersonic weapons (missiles) to Poisonous gases, and Nuclear weapons, Chemical weapons, etc.

Arms control encapsulates agreements reached, or intentionally entered into for the purpose of reduction of the dangers associated with the outbreak of war and the mitigation of the negative implications of war on the warring parties in particular, and the global community in general. It embraces all the measures put in place by states to foster transparency and build confidence among themselves through reciprocal monitoring and evaluation on the limits placed on the manufacture of destructive weapons (Burns, 1993). By the same stretch of thinking, Rotfield (2001) declared that arms control is the strategic effort needed to support and maintain both stability and balance of power between the erstwhile contending superpowers. This was mostly necessary a goal to achieve

in the interest of global security so as to escape the possibility of nuclear annihilation of mankind. Arms control therefore are concerted efforts put in place through international agreements to limit and control the possibilities of war making capabilities of national entities through effective monitoring of the quantity and quality of weapons from their places of manufacture and deployment in the attempt to prevent conflict escalation in the interest of humanity (Schmid, 1998).

In the same vein, disarmament is a wider term that presupposes arms control. It refers to measures, undertaken through formal or official agreements by states to reduce or completely abolish military capabilities and strategies for war both in terms weapons and personnel (Burns, 1993). The concept of disarmament revolves around the development of responsible arms management systems or program of action towards ensuring peace and safety in conflict ravaged regions of the world. It is the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, small arms and light weapons, including weapons of combat capabilities. It is taken for granted that disarmament is a post-conflict strategy that involves retrieving weapons from the hands of ex-combatants to integrate them into the peace process. Achieving this goal requires some measures to support and sustain these ex-combatants.

From the prism of weapons of large-scale destruction, Joshua *et al*, (2014) sees proliferation of arms as the spread of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, chemical or biological weapons into the hands of more actors. This articulation encapsulates the spread and domestication of arms and ammunition in the hands of unauthorized persons typically known as non-state actors in global lexicon. Perpetuating the spread of arms portends danger to humanity as the end-users of these assault weapons are sometimes not trained but use them for criminal purposes.

In this light of this, the words; arms control and disarmament embody a safety campaign that advocates that national entities should limit and refrain themselves, including preventing the proliferation of these categories of destructive weapons within their territorial jurisdiction. This view does not in any way contradict the security dilemma which bears tolerance for, and encourages the manufacture of weapons for the purpose of self-help by states to address their security needs and thus makes it compulsory for them to adopt adequate military measures to achieve this; taking into consideration the wider security implications this holds

for other states. The twist to this is that, while some states see the propagation and advancement in their military industrial complex as defence and national security oriented, others view such efforts as a threat to collective security which advocates for a concerted effort at maintaining world peace and safety through the joint agreement of all nations. It is on this basis that arms control aligns with the notion that the existence of weapons is not the primary cause of wars but that wars and instability occurs as a result of inter-state conflict of interest. Mitsuru (2008), summarized both concepts as the efforts put in place by interested parties to limit, reduce and eliminate certain types of weapons, or the prohibition of their development, manufacture and production, testing, stockpile and possession, transfer, receipt or deployment. The scope of arms control and disarmament covers nuclear and biological weapons including other conventional weapons as well as their delivery systems. The ever-changing dynamics of the international system and the possibility of outbreak of conflict between state entities remains a barrier to an effective arms control. This is in tandem with the realist's position that a tension-infested global community gives rise to the acquisition of arms in lieu of the possibilities of war. The end of the Cold War may have reduced the tendency for direct nuclear threats with global implication yet, recent events between Russia and Ukraine, the on-going Hama-Israel debacle, Iran and Israel face-off, incidence of terrorism, and a preponderance of civil unrests across different regions especially Latin America and Africa, makes arms proliferation a present-continuous affair. A fallout of this scenario is what impedes the effectiveness of arms control and the proliferation of small and light weapons across national borders.

The area of concern of this study is the failure by states to regulate the availability and movement of these arms originally meant for national defence purposes but find themselves in the hands of some non-state actors who sell and engage the use of these weapons to subversion of national security. This tendency raises the need for arms control policies between and among state entities where dialogue and negotiation should find precedence in order to limit the development, stockpiling and use of these destructive weapons. The focus of such diplomatic engagement should be on arms reduction, arms limitation and arms freeze, where possible. The effectiveness of arms reduction interface among states would checkmate the quantum of arms, put a ceiling on their manufacture including the spread of certain categories of weapons and ultimately prevent their wider negative implications. Where this is attained, arm reduction as an integral part of

arms control would find a healthy consensus and this is what the theory of national interest would want to achieve.

### **Theory of National Interest**

The word 'national' refers to nation as a socio-political organization. National interest constitutes the major thrust of foreign policy agenda of nation-state. It embraces all the goals a state prioritizes in the effort to survive in a seemingly anarchical global community. It is what provides the template whereupon foreign policy is formed. Given its theoretical construct, national interest for practical purposes, embodies or it's the totality of what is best for a national society to which all foreign policy initiatives are designed to achieve or realize. The historical origin of the theory of national interest dates back to the aftermath of the 30 years' war between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church, and the subsequent signing of the Westphalia Treaty of 1648. From this early beginning, the notion of national interest has been hinged on national self-interest based on national self-survival and the need to secure power in its varied forms, plus wealth in an anarchical international system. Blurred as it practically appears, its constitutive relevance holds true in different contexts. Considered as either an independent variable, an intervening variable or a dependent variable, national interest constitutes the central focus in foreign policy formulation to which state actors and their representatives give prior attention (Vital,1968). Correspondingly, Padellford and Lincoln (1962) postulate that the national interests of all states are similar as they are centred on the welfare of the state and the preservation of its political doctrine and national way of life. It is used for analyzing foreign policy by restating what is in the public interest. It indicates what is best for a nation in its relations with other states. Therefore, the core national interests of states are expectedly permanent, and extremely durable. It is believed that the national interests of stable and advanced democracies are in good measure secured and impervious to ideological and institutional changes. This underscores the consolidation of national interest with the transition from one political regime to another in these climes.

Scholars of the realist extraction among whom are Carr, Morgenthau, Reinhold etc., hold the position that national leaders should focus on what promote their national interests rather than confine themselves to ideological persuasions that make them vulnerable to both national and international danger. They stressed in their submission that national survival, self-interest, and self-preservation is the real deal in an anarchical world. To them, the exigencies of the present time

require national prudence in the interest of the safety of citizens domiciled in the state against external forces and symbolic influence that put them at the risk of extermination. The doctrine of statism equally holds the position that the state, as the legitimate representative of the collective will of the people, has the reserved powers to exercise authority within its territorial borders; a duty that is considered as the iron law of necessity (Baylis *et al*, 2008).

Judging from the prism of the above school of thought, there is the urgent need for policies and pragmatic efforts that aims at a 'balance of power' towards national preservation and stability in the domestic enclaves of sovereign states like Nigeria. This is what resonates the need for arms control and disarmament, at a time when there is a relentless struggle by states to amass weapons of self-survival but has suffered abuse, with the inflow of these weapons into other climes by criminal elements and some ideologically obsessed individuals who believe that the force of arms is what it would take to make their belief and other interests count at a time when modernization and liberal ideas to human existence advocate for a world of equal partnership and the liberty to practice what one believes without undue interference from others. It is in this light, that arms control and disarmament becomes a clarion call for national security and maximum safety by the Nigerian state through a preventive approach that would guarantee sustainable development. However, interrogating this concept from an objective standpoint, the national interest of states is influenced by the changes in the global arena of which all its elements are hinged on the fundamental indices of time and space, which informs why foreign policy of states is designed to adequately respond to the specific context of time and space, as they apply to situations with different context. But, as a constant, the core interests to which all states aspire for as vital are strategically connected with the notion of power in its varied forms as deemed necessary for national survival and the attainment of sundry goals.

### **The Nature and Emerging Trends in Arms Control and Disarmament**

The globalization of information flows and the increase in cross-border contact today orchestrates a situation where events in one part of the globe precipitate both positive and negative consequences for people in other parts of the world. Through this, all aspects of human socio-economic interface are being transformed in a variety of ways as a result of an integrated form of exchanges which guarantees open access for all and sundry. Capitalizing on this trend, transnational violent networks of criminal gangs and the existential conflicts that

dot the landscape of different regions of the world is defining the contemporary nature of arms flow hence the need for arms control and disarmament.

Contemporary arms control and disarmament, according to Jean (2022), has evolved through some concerted efforts articulated by states to regulate the propensity for warfare whose smart nature and technological composition is in a constant state of transformation. The first category of non-conventional weapons to incur global restraint was the asphyxiating gases, and in the intervening years after World War II, the use of nuclear weapons came under interrogation. Thus, pursuing this goal of arms control and disarmament, different strategies have been conceived and adopted to curtail and limit the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). These efforts have heralded an array of bilateral, regional and multilateral treaty agreements. In a similar vein, chemical and biological weapons have witnessed a more integrated approach towards their control and elimination, thus precipitating a unified, and comprehensive disarmament treaty in the aftermath of World War II.

In the history of global safety and conflict resolution, the genesis of arms control was in 1982, when the then contending superpowers, alias USA and former USSR, began the strategic arms negotiation talks which culminated in the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in 1991. The objective of this global peace effort was to negotiate a reduction in arms race, which ultimately heralded a consensus on the reduction of the number of strategic warheads to 6000, and the restriction on the number of nuclear launch vehicles to 1600, and abolishing of all ballistic missiles in ten years (Baglione, 1997). The target of this strategic arms reduction talks was a reduction in offence and defence capabilities, and the proclivity for war including the elimination of tactical nuclear weapons hosted by the two superpowers.

Similar efforts were consummated in the west coast of Africa under the auspices of ECOWAS. This effort was spearheaded by the state of Mali who pioneered the initiative on a Moratorium on the Import, Export and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa. This initiative gained acceptance and was adopted in the 22<sup>nd</sup> summit of ECOWAS held in Togo. Its resolution was that “the most significant measure to restrict weapons proliferation in the region was a code of conduct to backstop the import, export, and manufacture of light weapons” (Balglione, 1997). The terms of this code on arms regulation on the sub-region was officially signed in Abuja on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1998 and came into



force on 1<sup>st</sup> of November, 1998 with a pledge for a review of the code after every three years.

To strengthen this effort at arms reduction and control, the ECOWAS Convention on Small and Light Weapons and Other Related Matters was adopted on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005 with the objective to; prevent and combat the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons within the region, strengthen all efforts to control small arms and light weapons within the ECOWAS, consolidate on the modest gains from the declaration of the moratorium on the import, export, and manufacture of small arms and light weapons as a code of conduct among members, promote trust between member states through concerted and transparent action on the control of small arms and light weapons within the sub-region, build the capacity of ECOWAS executive secretariat and member states in their effort to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and lastly, promote the exchange of information and cooperation among member states.

The African Union, at its transition from OAU, aligned with this goal of arms control on the continent, and in July 2002, adopted a common African position on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons at the AU Summit hosted in Mali which is now known as the Bamako Declaration of 2002. Other initiatives that followed under the auspices of African Union include the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (2011-2013), with a follow-up on this in 2016-2020. The AU took this approach with a mandate to 'Silence the Guns' and herald a conflict-free Africa. The Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), therefore, provided an inclusive and participatory process that revolves around five priority areas namely; conflict prevention, conflict management and post conflict reconstruction, peace building, strategic security and issues around illegal flows of small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive device, weapons of mass destruction, disarmament, counter-terrorism, illicit financial flows as well as transnational organized crimes/cybercrimes (<https://au.int>).

In 2017, the Assembly of the African Union pushed further on this agenda by adopting another strategic document known as the 'AU Master Roadmap (AUMR) with a detailed procedure on how to 'silence the guns' in Africa by 2020. Since the adoption of this initiative, the AU Peace and Security Council had made some efforts towards implementation of AU Master Roadmap (AUMR), through collaboration with AU member states and other stakeholders on the continent.

## **The Implications/Consequences of Arms Proliferation for Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

Arms proliferation has witnessed an unrivalled intensity for more than a decade now in Nigeria. These items of human creation, that has sent many to their untimely grave, covers a wide range of lethal weapons in the form of pistol, machine guns, AK 47, firearms, grenades, anti-tank systems, mortars, and many more. The prevalence of ethnic and ideological divisions are the acclaimed factors that orchestrates the flurry of arms and ammunitions in Africa and other underdeveloped regions. Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, there has been a mounting campaign from adherents of the Islamic faith against some negative western influence in what Rupesinghe (1998) captured as "... a reaction to western cultural domination and support for corrupt regimes". The moral and religious ground for this is the widening gap between the rich and the poor which western liberal ideas and democratic philosophy propagates against a greater percent of humanity.

This tendency finds acceptance among other groups with whom other factors orchestrates deepening poverty that has worsened their living conditions and reduced human dignity to zero percent. In this second category, people in the regions of natural endowment like gold become prone to communal attacks by some armed invaders thus leading to the bearing of arms by their native owners to defend their heritage. On these two pillars hangs the challenge of arms proliferation in contemporary Nigerian state where insurgency, kidnapping, and banditry hold sway. The consequences of arms proliferation are examined under the following framework:

- i. **Humanitarian Emergencies:** The North East of Nigeria is presently plagued with an unrivalled incidence of displaced people often housed in Internally Displaced Peoples Camps (IDPs). The United Nations Humanitarian Centre for Refugees (2002) indeed acknowledged that armed conflict is encouraged by illicit arms flow through illegal national borders and this is the driving force behind most refugee incidents globally. Recounting the humanitarian crisis caused by Boko Haram in Bornu State Nigeria, Zulum (2024), revealed that for over a decade, several people have been killed and many properties destroyed for over a decade. According to him, "we have identified a total of over 100,000 orphans resulting from Boko Haram crisis. These figures are the official ones; the unofficial figures are even higher than this". He added, "In the past seven years, we had about 3.2 million displacements, with about

50% being resettled and about 1.2 million still in Internally Displaced Peoples Camps (IDP), 432 health centres were destroyed and over 5000 classrooms were destroyed". Similarly, Uwa, (2015) gave the report that the Nigerian government supported the Bauchi State with sum of ₦135 million to help resettle about 30,000 IDP's from Plateau State after the 2010 Jos crisis. What follows these humanitarian emergencies, at the wake of illicit arms-induced conflict, is that schools are forced to close down, students and their teachers are forcefully sent home for safety concerns, doctors and nurses in the hospitals who cannot work in conflict-infested environments are equally forced to flee for their safety (Mogire, 2004).

- ii. **Violence and Insecurity:** The proliferation and the abusive use of arms and ammunition orchestrates the culture of violence that desecrates the sanctity of human lives and the stability of the state. Apart from distabilising the Nigerian society on many fronts, this tendency provides the fertile atmosphere for criminal acts such as banditry, kidnap for ransom, insurgency, violent extremism, the unknown gunmen syndrome subsists and thrive. These acts of inhumanity by criminal elements, who are emboldened by their illegal access to small arms and light weapons, is impacting negatively on the fundamental indices of good governance among which are the protection of lives and properties of the people, human rights, peaceful co-existence among the populace, and general economic development. It is incontestable that the massive inflow of arms into Nigeria, through the country's porous borders, is what has multiplied the incidence of ethnic and religious violence in the country. Psychologically, this has made the peaceful resolution of conflict difficult to achieve with the attendant loss of lives in such conflict-infested communities due to reprisal attacks on perceived enemies.
- iii. **Food Insecurity:** Another implication of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is its distortion on the means of livelihood of the predominant size of Nigerian population which is largely agriculture. The inflows of arms into Nigeria from the neighbouring states of the Sahel region is a harbinger to many conducts that impact negatively on socio-economic development of Nigeria. With the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, many trading engagement takes place through the Nigerian borders. Along this premise, the movement of herders and their cattle

through these routes provides a window for the illegal inflow of arms. The conflict of interest and contradictions around insufficient pastures for the pastoralists and the extremist's ideologies peddled by these visitors fans the embers of discord between the local farmers and the itinerant herders. This results in open confrontation and hostility where farmers are displaced, and unable to carry out their farming activities. The outcome of this is food insecurity as the number of farmers who engage in farming become marginally small leading to poor food supply. Also, the difficulties encountered by traders who purchase these farm produce heightens the scale of food insecurity in tandem with the economic principles of demand and supply.

- iv. **Mistrust and Mutual Suspicion:** The criminal elements who illegally acquire small arms and light weapons perpetuate heinous crimes with it, such that when they are apprehended, their names and place of origin evoke the instinct of 'bad blood' and 'labelling' from some members of the public who label such criminal acts as the heritage of such ethnic nationality in Nigeria. Until recently, all acts of banditry and kidnap for ransom was attributed to a particular ethnic group which is not usually the case on close investigation of their perpetrators. But quite frankly, crime and criminal activities bears no ethnic colouration as all societies are equally infiltrated with both good and bad people. As a result of this, innocent and patriotic Nigerians who hail from the same place of origin with the apprehended criminals become victims of mistrust and suspicion as they are exposed to undeserved prejudice, scorn and maltreatment. This, in itself is a disincentive to sustainable development because it erodes on the pillar of unity and mutual partnership which is fundamental to sustainable development. The labelling theory that this evokes is a cankerworm that destroys national unity and sustainable progress in critical aspects of our national life.

### **Strategies for Effective Arms Control/Proliferation in Nigeria**

- i. **Fight Against Corruption:** The hydra-headed monster called corruption, by its numerous manifestations, has impacted negatively on the economic, social, and total wellbeing of Nigerian citizens. The psychological and emotional malaise it creates precipitates an atmosphere where the country lacks genuine stakeholders who uphold and strive for her dignity and glory. As it is today, corruption has brought

about 'a republic' that is drifting to abyss where primitive accumulation has taken the centre-stage among the elites; and the common man sees no hope for a better future and therefore resigns to fate. The current stage and dynamics of looting of our common patrimony has exceeded digital formats. Today, it is considered a sign of failure to steal in millions of naira except in dollars or in billions of naira and the rush to score high in this negative adventure doesn't exempt any gender. This type of retrogressive conduct erodes national development and the very essence of patriotism among the elites. The government is therefore called upon to match words with actions to arrest this dangerous walk to national abyss. And beyond the conventional judicial institution which hold the ace to address this concern, there should be a special court which is given the express powers to try and dispense with corruption cases including arms related crimes, and death sentence awarded to culpable perpetrators of this crime which impinge on our collective survival, and the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria.

- ii. **Reduce Unemployment:** The National Bureau of Statistics (2023) conservatively put unemployment rate in Nigeria at 38%, and a larger percentage of this figure are young Nigerians of good educational background, yet many more lack the requisite skills to make them employable. The disillusion and loss of hope created by this is believed to force many youths into illegal trade in and use of arms, drug peddling and addiction, internet/cybercrimes, kidnapping, armed robbery, insurgency and terrorism among others. The impact of unemployment has made the most active category of Nigeria's population to lose faith in the ability of the government to create the enabling environment for them to actualize their dreams and aspirations in life. And for those who lack a strong moral character fabric, their vulnerability to criminal tendencies becomes an inevitable consequence.
- iii. **Good Governance:** The persistence of bad governance stems from lack of democratically elected representatives of the people through an electoral system that is both substantively and procedurally free and fair. This defective premise of leadership recruitment in Nigeria gives birth to a political leadership that fails to prioritize on the people's interest but their selfish interest. This situation breeds an atmosphere of loss of hope and many Nigerians are suffering the effects of this under a democratic

framework considered to be a welfare-oriented system of rule that prioritizes on the interest and wellbeing of the majority, as opposed to what obtains today where the interest of the few elites and their cronies takes precedence over the interest of the majority poor. The recent approval to purchase 460 units of SUV's worth ₦160 million for members of Nigerian law makers, and another whooping sum for the renovation of the official residences of both the president and his vice is by every standard, a testament of bad governance at a time when Nigeria is rated as the poverty capital of the world, and a country where majority of its citizens are suffering as a result of the adverse effects of subsidy removal on petrol. The ripple effect of this is that inflation has reached an alarming proportion of 28.92% as at December, 2023 (NBS). The implication of bad governance is mass poverty and, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) report, 133 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor, and 63% of the population in Nigeria have no access to basic health care services and pipe-borne water. It is painful to note that a government that refuse to prioritise the education of her citizens, with over 13.2 million out-of-school children (UNDP, 2023) would venture into a riotous expenditure of purchasing exotic cars for an insignificant percentage of its population. The latest Human Development Index of UNDP has it that Nigeria ranks 164 out of 191 in global scale of social-economic development (UNDP, 2023). The persistent inequality occasioned by poor distribution of national resources creates discontent and ill-feelings that heightens the scale of arms proliferation and their illegal usage in Nigeria. This is what jeopardizes peace today, as an essential element for achieving the goal of sustainable development in Nigeria.

- iv. **A New Approach to Policing Nigerian Borders:** Policing our national borders requires a comprehensive approach, ranging from addressing welfare issues of the dramatis persona in the delivery of this service, to an attitudinal change in the mindset of these agents of policing our national borders from one of corrupt enrichment and national sabotage, to patriotic service delivery to the Nigerian state. The state must take advantage of modern technology in arresting arms proliferation on our borders by deploying modern technology to arrest this ugly trend. Modern technology like the use of drones should be adopted as surveillance instrument to police and monitor the porous

Nigerian border towns and regions. Other digital and hi-tech devices/concepts like space surveillance cameras, fencing of the border areas etc. should be deployed to checkmate the activities of smugglers of small arms and light weapons into the Nigerian space, as well as arrest insurgent groups who want to undermine the Nigerian security system through their nefarious activities.

## **Conclusion**

The endemic nature of global conflict makes the manufacture of arms inevitable in the realist perspective. Similarly, the prevailing domestic environment could either deter or encourage the proliferation of arms into national borders. While efforts are being made to discourage and regulate arms proliferation by multilateral agencies, the reality and circumstances of a globalized world sometimes undermine the effectiveness of these extraneous approaches. It therefore behooves on national governments like Nigeria to realise the enormity of the threat posed by the incidence of arms proliferation to national security, and device internal policy measures and mechanisms to redefine, and arrest this menace in the interest of achieving the goal of sustainable development.

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