CAUSES OF PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPON ON NATION BUILDING ON THE PEOPLE OF UROMI (1970-1991)

Esezobor Paul

&

Fidelis Achoba, PhD

fidelisachoba@gmail.com

Department of History and International Studies

Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The research work focus on the origin and brief history of Esanland in Edo State. This study examined proliferation of small arms and it impact on nation building in Esanland with special focus on Uraomi from 1970-1991. The research looks at the Esanland people, environment, causes and spread of small arms and lights weapon proliteration. This study investigated the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on nation building in Esanland in Edo State. Both primary and secondary sources were used for the collection of data. The research work argued that the proliferation and use of illegal arms increases the frequency of violence in Eanland in Edo State of Nigeria as is as result of the end of the Nigeria civil war in 1970. This encourage or bring into Esandland difference people of different background which results in the spread of small arms and light weapon and led destruction of lives and properties. It is important for the government to check the spread and movement of small arms and light weapon in Esanland in Edo State or else street gangs, lawlessness individuals would create condition for anarchy in Edo and Nigeria at large. Government's monopoly of arms and the security forces would be overwhelmed and unorganized groups and armed militias will constitute threat to the development of citizens of not only Esanland in Edo State but Nigeria as a whole.

Keywords: *Uromi , arms, light weapons and proliferation*

Introduction

Uromi is a city located in north-eastern Esan, a sub-ethnic group of theBenin in Edo state, Nigeria. At various points in Uromi's history, the city and people have been an important part of the Benin Uromi Main Market. Uromi, originally known as 'Uronmun', is the most populated area in Esanland, settled by two waves of people. The first wave consisted of migrants from Benin and other outlying areas between 900 and 1400 AD. These early settlers formed a Location of Uromi in Nigeria.

Geographical Setting and Vegetation of the Uromi People

The Uromi community lies in north-eastern Esan in Edo State, Nigeria, located on longitude 3° 24' E and latitude 6° 27' N[1]. Almost the whole of the city is covered with land. The climate in Uromi is similar to that of the rest of southern Nigeria. There are two rainy seasons, with the heaviest rains falling from April to July and a

weaker rainy season in October and November. There is a brief relatively dry spell in August and September and a longer dry season from December to March. Monthly rainfall between May and July averages over 300 mm (12 in), while in August and September it is down to 75 mm (3 inches) and in January as low as 35 mm (1.5 inches). The main dry season is accompanied by harmattan winds from the Sahara Desert, which between December and early February can be quite strong. The average temperature in January is 27 °C (79 °F) and for July it is25 °C (77 °F). On average the hottest month is March; with a mean temperature of 29 °C (84 °F); while July is the coolest month[2].

The Political Organization of Uromi

Politics and government in Uromiis not a municipality and has therefore no overall city administration or governance but instead, it is run by the Local government council headed by a Chairman. Uromi is not a local government but is this art of the local government council governing the Esan-North-East local government area. The administration of the government of Uromi is divided into eleven (11) wards. Each ward delegates a Councillor who represents it at its localCouncil election that is normally tenured for four years[3].

The Uromi kingdom is a monarchical territory headed by a king (Onojie) who handles the leadership of the kingdom. The leadership in the Uromi kingdom is hereditary monarchy system. The king is the monarch who rules with the body of chiefs who assist the king in the leadership of the kingdom.The kingdom was installed in 1463 by the Bini Monarch Oba Ewuare conferring kingship on Ichesan (first Onojie of Uromi). Since 1463, the kingship has passed through inheritance. The different villages of Uromi are led by the Elders of the individual villages who are responsible to the king. The council of Elders is headed by an indigenous elderly man who by birth is eldest among all the male indigenes. The council of elders have their own legislative authority and so are able to mete out punishment to offenders within their designation[4]

Theorical Analysis of Small Arms And Light Weapon

According to Karl Marx's writings on class struggles, presents society in a different light than do the functionalist and symbolic interactionist perspectives. While these latter perspectives focus on

the positive aspects of society that contribute to its stability, the conflict perspective focuses on the negative, conflicted, and ever-changing nature of society. Unlike functionalists who defend the status quo, avoid social change, and believe people cooperate to effect social order, conflict theorists challenge the status quo, encourage social change (even when this means social revolution), and believe rich and powerful people force social order on the poor and the weak. Conflict theorists, for example, may interpret an "elite" board of regents raising tuition to pay for esoteric new programs that raise the prestige of a local college as self-serving rather than as beneficial for students[5].

Today, conflict theorists find social conflict between any groups in which the potential for inequality exists religious, political, racial, economic and gender. Conflict theorists note that unequal groups usually have conflicting values and agenda, causing them to compete for power to survival economic, political among one another in Uromi, Esanland in Edo State. This constant competition between groups forms the basis for the ever-changing nature of society. Critics of the conflict perspective point to its overly negative view of society[6]. The theory ultimately attributes humanitarian efforts, altruism, democracy, civil rights, and other positive aspects of society to capitalistic designs to control the masses, not to inherent interests in preserving society and social order[7].

According to D.P. Berridge, argued that disarmament and arms control is based on the theory that arms cause wars, and implies the complete abolition or at least drastic reduction of all armaments. The point is that, the theory on arms control accepts armaments as a necessary part of the state security system, but proposes that the risk of war should be reduced by agreement between potential enemies to stabilise and curtail the proliferation of arms in order to establish a balance of power, which can prevent emergence war[8]. Arms control and disarmament are almost synonymous because they are concerned with arms reduction or total stoppage of its production. Small arms denote weapons designed for individual use, such as pistols, sub-machine gun, assault rifles and light machine guns (Department for International Development. The 1997 report of the United Nations Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms conceived of small arms as "weapons designed for personal use, designed for use by several persons serving as a crew". The Report

further indicated that small arms are "revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine-guns; assault rifles; light machine-guns, while light weapons include: heavy machine-guns; hand-held under barrel and mounted grenade launchers; portable antiaircraft guns; portable anti-tank guns; recoilless rifles; portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems; and mortars of calibers less than 100mm"[9]. This resulted in the underdevelopment of developing society like Uromi in Esanland of Edo State, Nigeria during the colonial era and post- colonial era.

However, the strength of this theory lies in its recognition that arms and weapons proliferation is a violent crime against democracy and humanity generally as it affects Uromi in Esanland of Edo State. It hinders the effective utilisation of human capital for national development. Based on the foregoing assumptions the theory has been adopted as a theoretical guide for the study. From the above theoretical perspective, conflict theory is of the view that politicians are regarded as enemy of progress in the society. Democracy in Uromi Esanland of Edo State, Nigeria has become multidimensional to the extent that the right people are not allowed to take part in the system. This situation makes the control of the menace of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Uromi, Esanland which make it difficult for the authority handle.

Members of the public cannot understand the complex nature of arms and weapons proliferation as such they do not give the needed vital information to the appropriate authority saddled with the responsibility of controlling the phenomenon. Politicians can muster enough resources not only to bribe the appropriate law enforcement agencies but also to frustrate their investigation aimed at curbing the menace in the society. Similarly, the organized social structure in Nigeria which attaches more importance to wealth acquisition with less attention given to the approved means of acquiring such wealth by the society provide grounds for increase in electoral violence in the country Nigeria.

Proliferation (Arms): Sudden increased in the number of Small Arms and Light Weapons beyond those needs for legitimate security provision.

Small arms: Weapons intended for use by an individual. They include pistols, rifles, submachine guns, assault rifles and light machine gun.

Light weapons: Weapons designed for use by two or more persons serving as a crew and include heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, mortars, anti-aircraft guns and anti-tank guns, all less than 100 mm in caliber.

Causes of Proliferation of Arms

Corruption and Poor governance: Corruption and Poor governance are the bane to small arms proliferation in Nigeria. The other side effects of poor governance and corruption are unemployment and poverty in the country. These elements have contributed significantly to arms proliferation in Nigeria. It is either those in powers are siphoning money or they are arming thugs for personal reasons. Governance system in Nigeria has created much problem than it can solve. The problems of corruption, injustice, poverty, lack of patriotism, favouritism, ethnic bigotry, political theurgy and lack of regard to traditional institution which is important to the maintained of peace, stability, development in Uromi society and national building in Nigeria.

Porous borders: Inter-Security Agencies Conflict at Nigeria's Borders and Challenges to Nigeria's National Security. The state has responsibility for maintaining its authority and preserving law and order within its own border. According to T. A. Imobighe, Nigeria's economy remains fragile, underdeveloped, and heavily dependent on oil, mismanagement of resources, unsuitable development plans and lack of welfare programme. Indeed, the economy is very important in equipping and maintaining the security agents in the pursuit of their assignments outside Nigeria's borders[10]. Porous border is one of the major factors responsible for small armsproliferation in Nigeria. It encourages smuggling of arms into the country at will. Most of theweapons in circulation were smuggled from the neighbouring countries such as Ghana, Chad, Niger, Benin into the country. Recognising this, in August 2004, the Nigerian Government and the Benin Republic signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to set up trans-border security outfit that will be responsible for the effective border security and control of illicit

trade in small arms and other border related crimes at the Nigeria/ Benin borders.

The ineffective demarcation of Nigeria's border has been a big challenge to her national security. While the Western and Northern borders are fairly well demarcated and perhaps need only minor adjustments and up-dating, some parts of the eastern and north-eastern borders with Cameroun and Chad respectively have not been effectively demarcated and have remained bones of contention between Nigeria and the two neighbouring countries[11].

Even along the north-western and north-eastern sector where the borders have been relatively stable, the geographic condition, which is more or less a desert condition, makes the border porous and hence represent areas of potential conflict and security violations. Thus, the spill-over effect of this conflict is an overflow of refugees from the neighbouring countries to Nigeria. Even more serious is the influx of illegal aliens who are normally engaged in criminal activities along the borderline areas of Nigeria. Thus, a country cannot be secured when its border is porous. However, the porous nature of Nigeria's borders presents evidence of the impact of cross-border Small Arms and Light Weapons. This is facilitated by huge cross-border smuggling and mercenary activities (from Chad and Niger) and the country' long porous borders that are poorly policed due to inadequate resources and the lack of capacity of the security agencies, according to J. Ginifer and O. Ismail[12].

Some of the consequences of this ugly situation include threat to the peace and security of Nigeria, threat to Nigeria's territorial integrity especially from the eastern and northern borders, loss of lives and properties of Nigerian citizens residing in the border areas and constant harassment of Nigerians in these border areas. The biggest challenge to Nigeria's national security within the context of inter-security agencies conflict at her borders is that Nigeria lacks the capabilities that are useful in conflict intervention. In fact, there is a challenge in terms of personnel and materials in this regard.

The Inter-Security Borders threats: Nigeria and its neighbouring countries can have unintended consequences between Nigeria and France. To be sure, France was Nigeria's only perceived continental threat. France maintained defence pacts with several African states; stationed troops permanently in Chad, Gabon and Central African Republic and intervene in their local politics. In short, France's hegemonic interests and regional penetration constrained Nigeria

politically and strategically, frustrating its "natural" emergence as the preeminent regional power (http://www.country-data.com).

According to G.J. Johan stress that, the coasts are vulnerable and the marine sector deserves urgent national attention. This is because a large percentage of Nigeria's commerce is moved by sea. Nigeria, like other littoral states of Africa, has to contend with increasingly disturbing maritime challenges to her national security. The contemporary maritime challenges within Nigeria's maritime area of interest result from the dynamics of economics, socio-political, environmental, and technological and security factors[13].

J. Ginifer and O. Ismail, equally emphasis that pertinent is the increasing sophistication of organized piracy, oil-bunkering and hostage-taking in the oil-producing Niger-Delta region especially in Uromi, Esanland of Edo State, coupled with the region's peculiar swampy geography and extensive access to international waterways, combine to make the region an important conduit for Small Arms and Light Weapons availability and proliferation in region[14].

The sad part of it, is that the government has failed to exploit technology in fight against proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the country with the aid of inter-border security relationship with other countries.

Lack of patriotism on the part of Government/Security agencies: A good number of arms in circulation are leakages from government armories. Arms are stolen from the armory for criminal purposes or with the intention to sell them for the purpose of making money. The insecure nature of our armories has contributed immensely to arms leakages in the country. For instance, the national dailies often report cases of riffles missing from different police formations across the country.

Political desperation: The level of desperation among politicians in Uromi, Esanland of Edo State since the end of the Nigeria Civil War in 1970 is of great concern. Politics is considered as the most profitable business that can easily, in the shortest possible time, change the personality profile and status of an individual in the society, but reserve is case in Uromi, Esanland as politics played with the attitude of do or die affair and winner take it all.

According to, O. A.Atoyebi, posited that arms buildup by politicians has reached an alarming stage[15]. The sustenance of democratic rule

and peace look gloomy following the rate of arms inflow into the country. The point is that to be a successful politician in Nigeria, you must develop your own thugs, armed them with sophisticated weapons for effective operation. These forms of acts will create room for multiplicity of arms in the country as argued by C. N. Alimba[16].

Recommendations

There is need for a National Commission on Control of Small Arms control in the country. The commission will be responsible for developing strategies and approaches to contain small arms and light weapons in the country. Equally, the commission will see to the coordination of all arms control programme for proper implementation in the country.

Organisation of conferences and Workshops: This has helped to bring a larger number of countries, private organisations and NGOs together to evolve a collective programme of action that will stimulate the formulation of legal codes or protocols to control small arms and light weapons at individual basis, domestically and internationally. These legal codes or protocols are directed at the production, transfer and procurement of small arms and light weapons worldwide.

Increasing public awareness about the need to control small arms. Information about the issue has been disseminated through public enlightenment campaigns or programmes often conducted by the UN through its specialised agencies such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDR) and the like. The UN has also supported governments of countries, such as Mali, Albania, Cambodia, Sierra Leone among others; private organisations and NGOs such Small Arms Survey, Human Rights Watch and so on in campaigning against the illegal use and transfer of small around the world.

The involvement of traditional ruler's and communities' heads in fight against proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon in Uromi, Esanland of Edo State. The process to make it an all-inclusive affair geared towards enhancing its efficacy for the promotion of peace, stability in community and help in nation building in the country.

Border security should be adequate and responsive. Collaboration with neighbouring countries bordering the country such as Ghana, Republic of Benin, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and so on should be given attention in order to improve border security which is essential for arms control in UIromi and the country at large.

Increase in the activities of private organisations, NGOs and Human Rights organisations to conduct researches, organise conferences, and workshops. This has gone a long way in promoting campaign against small arms and its usage, and closing the gap created by insufficient information on the issue of arms proliferation. In West Africa, controlling small arms has been difficult because governments cannot directly determine the quantities of small arms flowing into their countries, and the quantities in the hand of non-state actors due to porous border, politics, corruption and leaking state armories which are the major channel of access to small arms.

Local production of guns should be regulated to the extent that they should be marked so that they can easily be traced to the point of production. Stringent rules should be made to guide the production of local guns and those involved in the production exercise should be made to register for the sake of regulation to promote orderliness in the business.

Sophisticated and automated logistics should be provided for security agencies to enable them adequately combat arms proliferation in the country.

Government policy and good will in Small Arms and Light Weapon in Country. The Case of Nigeria Arms availability in Nigeria has skyrocketed, increasing from about one million to over four million. These weapons will be used indiscriminately to wreak havoc in the forms of fueling new conflicts and reinvigorating old ones, increasing violent crimes, intensifying the fire powers of ethnic militias in the country and increasing the devastating attacks of Boko Haram and insurgents and herdsmen violent behaviours.

Conclusion

In the analysis it is clear that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Uromi, Esanland of Edo State in Nigeria is as a result of porous borders which create tensions, fear, instability in Uromi, Esanland and between Nigeria and her neighbouring countries. It is therefore, important for the Nigeria's security

agencies responsibility in the protection of life and properties in Country and in the protection her territory. Given the important position of Country in the West Africa region. Therefore, to build peace for it to be sustained, arms should be effectively controlled to reduce its excessive availability in Uromi, Esanland of Edo State and the country at large. By mobbing arms in circulation, positive atmosphere will be stimulated to encourage peace, stability and development equally enhance its sustainability in Uromi, Esanland and Nigeria. Arms control coupled with good governance, justice, respect for law and order, human rights, equitable distribution of resources, provision of effective channels of communication and conflict management will restore peace, stability, growth, institutionalisation, development and nations building in Nigeria.

There should be political will, unity of purpose and clear sense of direction from the government on the issue of border control and fight against proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Uromi, Esanland of Edo State, Nigeria and her neighbouring countries. More importantly, the security agents at Nigeria's borders should be educated on their role in maintaining peace, stability at the border, their area of operation with the emphasis on nations building. This will lessen suspicion, fear, tension, lack of patriotism, lack of trust and good will from other security agents from the neighbouring countries.Trust has been murdered based on suspicion arising from aggressive ethnic and religious patriotism which has promoted inequality, injustice, discrimination and favouritism. These elements have activated the demand for arms in the country.

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