



THE IMPLICATIONS OF ARMS PROLIFERATION AND INSECURITY ON HUMAN SECURITY IN AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF MALI AND NIGERIA

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Abstract

Mali and Nigeria are both faced with the presence of insurgencies, militia, terrorism and other violent non-state actors (VNSAs), who perpetrate large-scale violence; thus, creating daunting security challenges in these countries. This goes pari passu with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in these countries. While these countries have inherent human security challenges, this spate of insecurity will not only inhibit the quest for human security, but further deteriorate it. Thus, this paper examines the interrelationship between arms proliferation, violent conflicts and insecurity in these countries and their implication on human security. The study is anchored on the State Collapse theory and the Ex-post Facto research design. The Documentary Observation method of data is utilised; hence, data is generated from secondary sources such as academic publications, organisational publications, databases, etc. For data analysis, the study adopts the Causal Analysis and Process Tracing methods of data analysis. The study found that the proliferation of SALWs and violent conflicts complement each other in Mali and Nigeria, thus, creating high-scale insecurity challenges in both countries. It also found that the implications of this state of affairs on human security are enormous in these countries; particularly in the aspects of physical security, food security, economic security, environmental security and political security. On these bases, the study advocates for relevant stakeholders such as the governments, ECOWAS, religious organisations and traditional institutions to play key roles in addressing the menace.

Keywords: SALWs, Insecurity, Human Security, Mali, Nigeria

Introduction

In the last decade, there has been an increase in insecurity in Mali and Nigeria alike in recent years. This increase in the levels of insecurity in both countries cannot be disconnected from two corollary issues. The first is large-scale violence perpetrated by numerous armed groups in the region. The second is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) that continue to find their way into the hands of violent non-state actors (NSVAs) in these countries. Both countries are confronted with cases of insurgencies, insurrections, terrorism and organised crime syndicates

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(Cocodia, 2021; Onuoha, Okafor & Femi-Adedayo, 2021). With the availability of arms, these violent groups have initiated several violent incidents that have resulted in loss of millions of lives and the destruction of property worth billions of dollars (Ani, & Mahmood, 2018; Brechenmacher, 2019; Dunn, 2018; Fayou et al. 2018).

In Nigeria for instance, armed groups such as Boko Haram, armed bandits, as well as armed herders and the violent activities of individuals that the Nigerian state have aptly named “unknown gunmen”, create an environment of terror that makes it challenging for the citizens to go about their normal lives. The ongoing activities of these VNSAs negatively affect social, economic and political life in these countries. Government institutions, agricultural activities, businesses, trade and investments, education and health institutions/services, tourism, and other essential private and public activities are adversely affected (Osimen, Anegbode, & Adi, 2020). The dynamics of this state of affairs appear to exacerbate fear and want, and undermine human security in these countries.

Human security entails all the conditions that bring about the state of safety and well-being of the human person. This involves the absence of threat or actual death or injury; freedom from fear and want (UN, 2016). This means that there should be a relatively low level, if not complete absence of violence and insecurity. The people should feel safe and confident in living their lives and going about their daily activities. However, the proliferation of arms and insecurity in Mali and Nigeria stand contrary to this state of living.

The data on violence and casualties of violence in both countries (ACLED, 2022; 2023) presents concern for policymakers and scholars alike and makes it pertinent to interrogate the impact of such outcomes on the state of human security in these countries. As such, this paper attempts to examine the link between arms proliferation and insecurity in Mali and Nigeria and the implications on human security in the two West African Countries. The study also posits that examining the role of government, ECOWAS, religious institutions, as well as traditional





institutions in curbing arms proliferation, and insecurity is also critical to understanding pathways to promoting human security in these countries.

The research design adopted in the study is the Ex-post facto. The Ex-post facto is appropriate for this research as it seeks to establish cause and effect relationships, where the independent variable is naturally occurring and cannot be manipulated by the researcher (Muruwei, 2018). Data is generated through secondary sources, utilising the documentary observation method of data collection. Thus, data on arms proliferation and its induced violence, as well as data on human security in Mali and Nigeria are extracted from secondary data sources such as academic texts, journals, articles, the news media and the internet. For data analysis, the study adopts the causal analysis and process tracing methods of data analysis.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: 1. Contextualising Insecurity in Mali and Nigeria, 2. Whose Security? Responsibility for Human Security in Mali and Nigeria, 3. Theoretical Discuss on the State and State Capacity, 4. Arms Proliferation and Insecurity in West Africa: Examining the Link, 5. Sources of SALWs in Mali and Nigeria, 6. Drivers of Violence and Insecurity in Mali and Nigeria, 7. Arms Proliferation and Insecurity in Mali and Nigeria: A Trend Analysis, 8. Implications of Insecurity on Human Security in Mali and Nigeria, 9. Promoting Human Security in Mali and Nigeria Through the Mitigation of Arms Proliferation and Insecurity, and 10. Concluding Remarks.

Contextualising Insecurity in Mali and Nigeria

The notion of insecurity according to Ali (2013) cited in Ishola (2022), is the state of fear or anxiety, stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. It speaks of insufficient or nonexistent freedom against harm. The most obvious type of insecurity is physical insecurity, which is reflected in this description. It also feeds into many other forms of insecurity, including social and economic security. Lack of protection, risk, hazard, and uncertainty are all associated with insecurity. According to Adeola and Oluyemi (2012), insecurity has two definitions. First, as the state of being





exposed to risk or danger, where risk is the state of being prone to harm or injury; second, as the state of being susceptible to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vaguely unpleasant feeling felt in anticipation of an unfortunate event. These definitions of insecurity highlight a crucial point: people who experience insecurity are not only unsure of what might happen or oblivious of it when it does, but they are also more susceptible to threats and hazards when they materialise. Violent conflicts which imply disagreements that have deteriorated to armed confrontations that cause injuries and deaths to the affected parties and the destruction of their property are thus a key element of insecurity. In the same vein, the proliferation of arms which refers to the increase in the quantity of SALWs, their availability and accessibility by VNSAs such as terrorists, insurgents, militias, armed bandits, etc. is a condition of insecurity.

Whose Security? Responsibility for Human Security in Mali and Nigeria

According to the United Nations Human Development Report of 1994, human security encompasses both protection from abrupt and harmful interruptions in daily life, such as employment or community disruptions, and safety from long-term threats including starvation, disease, and repression (UNDP, 1994). According to the paradigm of human security, a person is secure when they are not subject to any risks and may exercise their rights without hindrance (Hidayat, 2017; cited in Akim et al., 2019).

Human security entails all the conditions that bring about the state of safety and well-being of the human person. This involves the absence of threat or actual physical death or injury; and freedom from fear and want. This means that there should be a relatively low level, if not absence of violence and insecurity. The people should feel safe and confident in living their lives and going about their daily activities. This is guaranteed by the absence of killings, kidnapping, robbery, battery, rape, vandalism, arson, raiding, invasion and the like. This implies that any state of insecurity invariably hampers human security. Human security also involves availability and access to the necessities of life such as; food and nutrition, shelter, clothing, health care, education,

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clean water, energy, a clean and secure environment and so on. The security dynamics discussed above indicate that these factors are threatened in the West African sub-region; and in Mali and Nigeria specifically.

Human security is the prime motive and aspiration of the individual. This is predicated on the fact that the fundamental concern of human beings is survival and security (Ogba-Iyam, 2005). The survival and security matrix encapsulates the notion of human security. It is this quest for survival and security and invariably attaining human security that drives every human endeavour and needs for society. To attain human security, man has to produce and reproduce his needs, including its kind. This cannot be achieved in isolation, thus the need for social enterprise. It therefore follows that the essence of any society is to enable man to achieve this critical goal of human security. However, given the nature of man being selfish, conflicts and insecurity further rise as some seek to achieve their interest at the expense of others. It is the insecurity that ensues when every individual attempts to provide security for themselves in society that necessitates the establishment of the state and the government (Mukherjee, & Ramaswamy, 2007). It is within this context that the state, which is the highest form of social organisation is saddled with the responsibility to create the enabling environment for its citizens to achieve human security. The state being abstract, must perform this duty through its agent, the government.

Where the state fails to perform this crucial duty of providing human security, the individual reserves the right to seek other means to provide it for themselves as this is an inalienable duty of life. After all, it was this duty that necessitated the state. Whether or not a state, for instance, Mali and Nigeria can perform this duty is a question of the state's capacity. It is the lack of the capacity to perform this duty of providing the enabling environment and aid their citizens to attain human security that the spate of arms proliferation and insecurity can be located in Mali and Nigeria. As individuals take the responsibility of providing human security by themselves, the capacity of the state is further undermined.





Theoretical Discuss on the State and State Capacity

The discussion on arms proliferation and insecurity can be anchored within the context of state and state capacity and be located within the State Collapse theory. The State Collapse Theory focuses on a state's capacity and how well it can perform its basic functions of maintenance of law and order, provision of welfare for its citizens and adequate development. The theory is anchored on the basic assumption that any state that fails to perform its basic functions (in defence, social welfare, security, law and order), thus engendering general discontent of its citizens, breakdown of loyalty and commitment and eventual disintegration of the structures of the state will also fail to secure territorial integrity and internal security (Tar & Adejoh, 2021). The theory holds that states succeed or fail across all or in some of their basic functions of security, law and order, citizens' welfare and development. It is in the ability of delivering the most vital political goods that strong states are distinguished from weak states, and the weak from failed or collapsed states. Most strong states have a monopoly on the means of violence and are relatively free from political crisis and instability. They are also developed economically (having a strong and stable economy), have developed their infrastructure, have relatively fair income distribution, etc. States that fall within the strong state category like China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and USA have manifested these features. Others that fall within the weak state category like Brazil, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, etc., are known for their deficiencies in these features and lack of monopoly of coercive power (Tar & Adejoh, 2021). Indicators of weak states according to the theory include (I) an Increasing rate of internal conflicts which may be induced by socio-economic and political issues; (II) Breakdown of state institutions and an increase in non-state actors who challenge state monopoly of coercion; (III) Economic underdevelopment, gross deficiency of basic amenities with increasing unemployment; and (IV) Inability to provide basic human needs for its citizens.

The application of state collapse theoretical framework to the discourse on the issues of arms proliferation and human security in West Africa is justified by the fact that it sufficiently captures the socio-economic and political context of West African states that predetermines the ongoing





menace. For instance, the failure of West African states, Mali and Nigeria in particular to provide the necessary political goods to their citizens have evidently built up into arms proliferation, violent conflicts and armed attacks, which further worsen socio-political and economic crisis. While the use of coercive force is ideally the exclusive preserve of the state, the emergence of terrorists, armed bandits, insurgents, militias, etc. who challenge the monopoly of power and coercive force in Mali and Nigeria clearly indicate the features of a collapsing state.

It is pertinent to highlight also that the historicity of state formation and emergence in Africa , particularly Mali and Nigeria have shaped their capacity and also influenced monopoly of the use of force. For the purpose of this discussion, the colonial/post-colonial (Ake, 1996; Ekekwe, 1986) theory provides the major context. The colonial state is a creation of imperial capital for no other purpose than to serve the economic interest of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. There were no genuine development efforts by the colonial governments and African societies were factionalised and fraternalised through the divide and rule system.

The nature of politics and policies in the colonial period were grossly inimical to the development of African states. By all means, it controlled every aspect of the colonial economy tightly to maintain its power and domination and to realise the economic objectives of colonisation. Given the many functions, the colonial state was all-powerful. It needed to be, not just to execute its mission but also to survive the resentment of the colonised. The power of the colonial state was not only absolute but also arbitrary.

Influenced by the nature of colonial power on the use of arbitrary power, it could not engender any legitimacy even though it made rules and laws profusely and propagated values. Colonial subjects in struggling to advance their interest, did not worry about conforming to legality or legitimacy norms. Colonial politics was thus nothing but crude mechanics of opposing forces driven by the calculus of power. In this political configuration, security lay only in the accumulation of power. The logical outcome was an unprecedented drive for power; power was made the top priority in





all circumstances and sought by all means. As all and sundry, rulers and subordinates alike extended their rights to their powers, the idea of lawful political competition became unattainable; politics was unavoidably reduced to a single issue: the determination of the exclusive claims to rulership. This kind of politics rarely encouraged moderation and compromise.

This character was carried over to the post-colonial state. The only apparent change was the composition of the managers. The post-colonial state continued to be totalistic in scope, constituting a statist economy. It presented itself as an apparatus of violence, had a narrow social base, and relied for compliance on coercion rather than authority. With very few exceptions, the attainment of independence was not a matter of nationalists defeating the colonisers, but the acceptance of the colonisers of the unavoidable; thus orchestrating a handover of power to their chosen African successors who could be trusted to share their values and attentive to their interests (Ake, 1996).

The implication was that the political environment at independence was hostile to development. The struggle for power had absorbed everything else that even development was marginalised. Political power was everything; an access to power, wealth and security. The authoritarian disposition of those in power had built up a great force of hostility against them and they were so entrenched in their survival that they could not attend to the problem of development.

The political, social, and economic implications of the *raison d'être* of the colonial state formed the roots of subsequent national experiences in virtually all post-colonial societies in Africa. As an offshoot of the colonial state and manner of transition into independent nations, ethnicity and religion became the rallying points of political struggle. Emergent states in Africa, rather than being a public force, tended to be privatised (Ake, 1996). That is, arrogated to serve the interest of the private interests of the dominant faction of the elite. The society in which African states existed was characteristically partitioned into small rival political communities, often with strong localised identities competing to annex the state power; or at the minimum prevent it from oppressing them.





These factors undermine the capacity of the state to perform its functions effectively and have perpetually kept African states weak. This is the case with Mali and Nigeria being former colonies of France and Britain respectively both of which obtained independence in 1960 (Maiangwa, et al., 2018; Stewart, 2013).

Arms Proliferation and Insecurity in West Africa: Examining the Link

The discourse on arms proliferation in the West Africa sub-region revolves around six major debates. The first in this regard is hinged on the argument that incessant violent conflicts and the resultant insecurity in the sub-region is responsible for arms proliferation (Fung, 2006; Osimen, et al., 2020; Oxfam, 2016). To this effect, Fung (2006), asserts that the instability birthed by the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the incursions by rebel movements in Senegal, along the Republic of Guinea's southern border, in Mali, Niger, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire, have engendered substantial spread in the proliferation and illegal circulation of small arms in these areas.

The second is the argument that arms proliferation is at once a causal factor and sustainer of violent conflicts and insecurity in the sub-region (Keili, 2008). It is within this perspective that Keili (2008), argues that the greatest number of casualties and collateral damage in West Africa has mainly been due to the availability and use of SALWs with a deplorable effect on not only combatants but also on civilians that comprise the better part of casualties. Lives are being lost, health care is in comatose, and families, homes and livelihoods are destroyed. In West Africa, small arms, particularly rifles, are the most commonly used weapons for killing, threatening, and intimidating civilians. Displacement, rape, torture, recruitment of minors as soldiers, etc. are criminal activities in which small arms play a key part. Victims are frequently harassed, assaulted and kidnapped with small arms, while other crimes are perpetrated with machetes. This strengthens the standpoint that instability and insecurity in the sub-region caused more than 2.7 million individuals to migrate in 2004, with an estimated half of them being internally displaced (IDPs) (Berman & Florquin, 2005).

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The third is the argument that organised and trans-border crime in the sub-region and arms proliferation are mutually reinforcing phenomena. That is, organised and trans-border crime is a causal variable for arms proliferation and vice versa in the West Africa sub-region (Alemika, et al., n.d; UN, 2005). This perspective maintains that transnational crime is widespread in West Africa, posing a menace that requires international attention. For instance, the United Nations (UN) (2005) report indicated that poor economic conditions have plagued the region for decades. Civil wars, governmental fragility, corruption, etc. are factors that render the region subject to organised crime. It also suggests that transnational criminal organisations have a loose network structure. The study also goes into great depth about the sort of crimes that the criminal organisations are involved in. Drug and human trafficking, diamond smuggling, fraud, weapons fabrication and smuggling, money laundering, armed robbery, and crude oil bunkering are examples of these crimes. The study indicates that organised crime has huge consequences since it not only undermines state institutions, but also affects international corporate activities.

Alemika et al. (ND) agrees with the UN (2005) study, but classified the different forms of organised crime by locating it in West Africa. These scholars went on to name illegal migration, cattle rustling, illicit commerce in diamonds and other commodities, piracy, and terrorist operations as kinds of organised crimes that are pervasive. These are in addition to those identified by the UN (2005). They also assert that organised crimes infiltrate governments, companies, political, and economic institutions in West Africa, compromising the efficacy of these systems through corruption and violence. While organised crime has a variety of effects on government, the most prevalent and pronounced is political instability. The research identified a number of reactions as well as legislative initiatives taken by the region's administrations to address the problem. However, corruption and other major difficulties have prevented considerable progress in combating these crimes.





The fourth is the contention that arms proliferation, violent conflicts cum insecurity and organised trans-border crime in West Africa are a result of governance deficit and systemic corruption (Alusala, 2018; Osimen, et al, 2020). This perspective is rooted in the thinking that if the government was carrying out its basic function of security (maintenance of law and order and protection of lives and property), these high rates of arms proliferation, conflicts and violence would have been an anathema. It means that there would be very trivial gaps for these events to occur and reoccur as it is presently, More so, if the government is also able to adequately perform its other functions of provision of welfare for its citizens and effect sustained development, there would be minimal conflicts that lead to arms acquisition by individuals and groups. This will reduce their rebelling against the government, fighting one another or even carrying out attacks like robbery, kidnapping, etc. against their fellow citizens. Diversion of arms from state stockpiles by corrupt government officials; unguarded and unprotected borders, freelance mobility of illicit goods, increasing spate of conflicts, criminality, and so on which contribute to the proliferation of arms are partly attributed to bad governance and corruption.

The fifth is that arms proliferation and violent conflicts cum insecurity is as a result of the contemporary international order. This perspective is hinged on the argument that the major source of arms proliferation in the sub-region and the African continent in general remains the stockpiles that were pumped into the continent in the 1970s and 1980s by the defunct Soviet Union, USA and their allies to fan interstate proxy wars during the Cold War (Cocodia, 2021; Musah, 2002).

The sixth argument is the nature of politics in Mali Nigeria. Unprecedented drive for power is made the top priority in all circumstances and sought by all means; including the use of force which is a precondition for violence (Ake, 1996). Violence or threat of violence has become a political currency or criterion for relevance. As all and sundry, rulers and subordinates alike extend their rights to power, the idea of lawful political competition has been unattainable. Thus, politics is reduced to a single issue: the determination of exclusive claims to rulership. This kind of politics rarely encourages moderation and compromise.





Sources of SALWs in Mali and Nigeria

Libyan Crisis

Libya stands out as one major source from which arms travel to Mali and Nigeria. The most convincing example of how Libyan weaponry proliferation has impacted warfare comes from Mali. Following the 2011 crisis, hundreds of ethnic Tuareg rebels fled Libya, driving across the desert to northern Mali (Marsh, 2017). They brought armaments that were not previously common, like heavy machineguns, mortars, and anti-tank weapons. In the same vein, numerous reports from 2013 and 2014 claimed that Boko Haram in Nigeria received weapons from Libya through Niger and Chad (Marsh, 2017).

Cocodia (2021), asserts that prior to the civil war in Libya and the deposition of Muammar Qaddafi in 2011, much of the weapons in Africa were those brought into the continent during the Cold War. Consequent upon the civil war in Libya, the influx of arms into the Sahel region of Africa ballooned and Mali was directly affected due to its geographical propinquity with the former. This loophole was employed by those involved in arms smuggling and the Tuareg returnees who had fought in Qaddafi's army and were inclined to join local forces to start a rebellion. In addition to the foregoing scenario was the presence of Islamic Jihadists, exploiting governance lacunae in the country's northern region to advance territories. (Cocodia, 2021). Local officials are also implicated as complacent in arms proliferation in the country (Marsh, 2017).

Diversion from State Stockpiles

Uncontrolled and illegal arms are frequently obtained by African nations through the diversion of lawfully obtained weaponry. This can take many different forms, such as corrupt authorities selling weapons to non-state actors illegally. For instance, a few Nigerian troops were detained in February 2016 for allegedly supplying Boko Haram fighters with illicit weapons. Other times, like in northern Mali, during raids and conflicts with state forces, non-state armed groups also seize weapons from security and military personnel. The poor welfare state of security and military





troops, the absence of accountability for weapons stockpiles and monitoring of arms purchases, contribute to the diversion of state arms stockpiles (Oxfam, 2017).

Black Markets and Illicit Trafficking

The frequency of conflicts in Africa serves as an indicator of the illicit arms trade's boom on the continent. In parallel arms markets, locally produced weapons and diverted stocks are exchanged. For instance, a man who was illegally bringing 655 firearms to Nigeria was detained by Cameroonian security services in 2013 (Oxfam, 2017). According to the Small Arms Survey's evaluation of Libya's illicit arms market, man-portable air defence systems, rocket launchers, anti-tank guided missiles, heavy machine guns, shoulder-fired recoilless weapons, grenade launchers, and various rifle types are among the SALW that can be purchased online.

Inadequate Regulation of Local Arms Production

Throughout Africa, there are a number of unlicensed indigenous arms manufacturers, and the lax regulation of their operation add to the easy access of SALW. Southeast Nigeria produces more than 60% of its illicit weapons domestically. Weapons manufactured domestically are widely available and used in criminal activities in Mali. Due to this, law 040-50/ANLM was passed, which regulates the production, use, and exchange of weapons created in the country. Additionally, decree 05-441/P-RM was issued, which handles enforcement of law relating to arms production, exchange and usage.

Drivers of Violence and Insecurity in Mali and Nigeria

Violence and insecurity have similar multiple causes in Mali and Nigeria. The factors that stand out however include poverty, underdevelopment, marginalisation, exclusion, scarce economic opportunities, ethnic tensions, religious rivalry, competition for resources, changes in the climate and environment, corruption in the public sector, political instability, and a lack of effective governance (Targba, 2022). For example, the Tuareg insurrection is a major violent problem in northern Mali, and it has been linked to the region's extreme underdevelopment and the absence of government presence. In the same vein, the conflicts pervading the Niger Delta region of Nigeria

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are more related to politics of resource extraction and revenue distribution than socio-cultural issues. These conflicts have been blamed on the nature of federal government as practiced in Nigeria, environmental issues, neglect of development of the region by Transnational Oil Corporations (TNOCs), poor governance in the region, etc. (Ibaba, 2017).

A classic example is the 1916 Colonial Mineral Ordinance which in line with its provision in section (3.1), placed the ownership of all oil mineral resources on the Crown. This meant that discovery of any oil mineral would lead to the forfeiture of that land/property and any adjacent areas, even under the sea bed (Ibaba, 2020). Furthermore, this provision was re-enacted by the post-colonial Petroleum Act of 1969, and reproduced in the 1979, 1989 and 1999 Constitutions with replacements of colonial legacies. In addition, there is the negligence of standard operation methods by TNOCs which have resulted in environmental pollution. The government of the Nigerian federation has also done little or nothing to surmount this problem (Ajala, 2016; Ibaba, 2017). The point to note here is that the foregoing sets the pace for marginalisation, oppression, suppression, deprivation and alienation of the people from the oil resources in the midst of adverse oil extraction induced environmental pollution and degradation which threatens the very survival of the people (Jack & Zibima, 2020). This is a major causative variable of the Niger Delta conflicts. Perhaps this also is a logical explanation of the ‘grievance perspective’ of the conflicts.

The herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria has at the same time climate change effects, competition for resource and ethno-religious dimensions. Meanwhile, the Boko Haram conundrum predominantly demonstrates the religious conflicts of the country. Boko Haram is an Islamic extremist insurgent group domiciled in Northern Nigeria, with a trans-border reach that is responsible for adverse terrorist attacks. The group has reportedly killed thousands of people in their attacks and displaced a lot more both within and outside the shores of Nigeria. In addition to the foregoing is the destruction of property and other infrastructure worth billions of Naira in the country. Their activities have impacted negatively on the livelihoods of the people as business,





economic and agricultural activities are adversely affected (Ani, & Mahmood, 2018; Brechenmacher, 2019; Dunn, 2018; Fayou et al. 2018).

Arms Proliferation and Insecurity in Mali and Nigeria: A Trend Analysis

Mali and Nigeria share similar fate with their West African neighbouring states as regards arms proliferation. Scholars have demonstrated that both countries are characterised by a high number and mobility of illicit arms, as well as violent conflicts and armed attacks (Marsh, 2017; Cocodia, 2021). While getting a precise current data of quantity of SALWs is elusive, the 2017 GunPolicy figures of arms in Mali and Nigeria is sufficient to appreciate the trajectories of arms in the possession of civilian in these countries.

Table 1: Firearms Data of Mali and Nigeria 2017

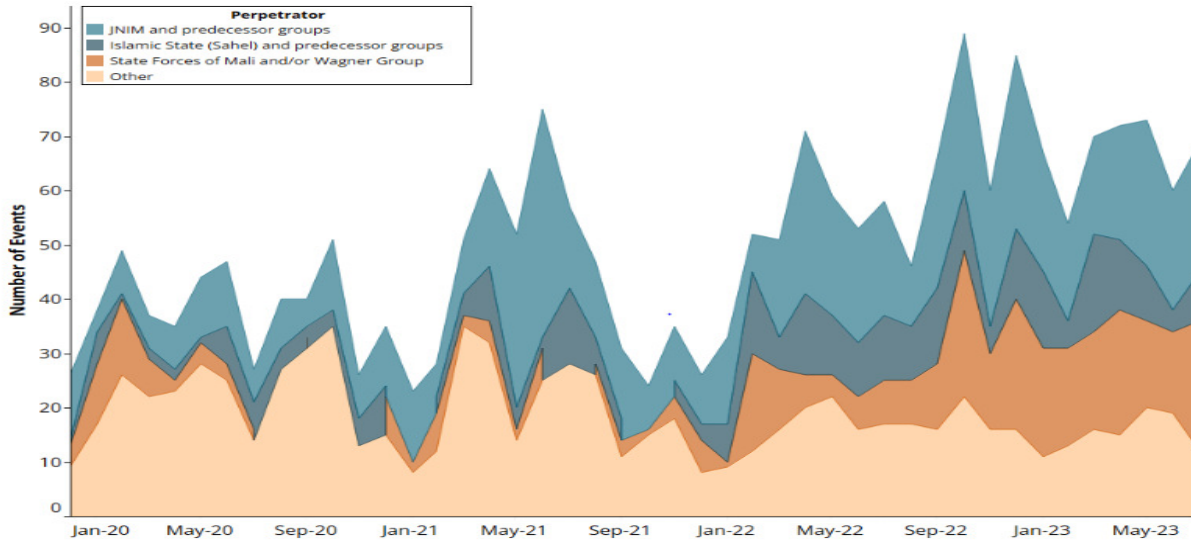
| Country | Privately Owned Firearms |
|---------|--------------------------|
| Mali | 206, 000 |
| Nigeria | 6, 154, 000 |

Source: GunPolicy, 2022

With these arms, VNSAs have engaged in inter and intra-group confrontations, attacks on security and military personnel and facilities, churches, mosques, schools, malls, villages, travelers and others. Injuries, killings, kidnapping, robbing and similar heinous actions are meted on the victims of these attacks and civilians constitute more of the casualties.



Figure 1: Violence Targeting Civilians in Mali January 2022 – August 2023

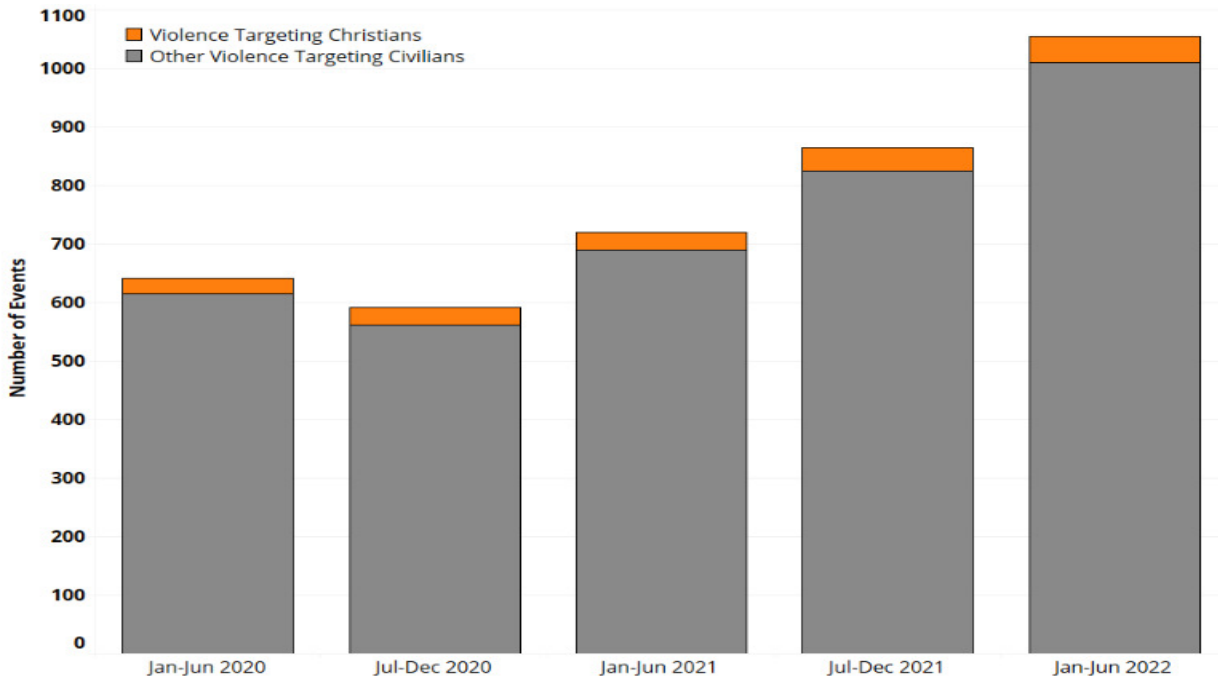


Source: ACLED, 2023

In the case of Nigeria, scholars have demonstrated that arms are in high rate of circulation, finding their way into the hands of violent groups that perpetrate recurrent violent activities in the country (Omitola & Awotayo, 2016). Notable actors in this regard include inter alia; the Boko Haram sect, armed bandits, armed robbers, militia groups, armed herders and farmers, kidnappers, cult groups, and unknown gunmen. For instance, Boko Haram alone is responsible for terrorist activities that have cost the country innumerable number of lives and property. According to a UNICEF (2018) study, since 2013, Boko Haram has kidnapped over 1000 children, including 113 girls from Dapchi in Yobe state and 276 girls from Chibok in Borno state (UNICEF 2018). The Nigeria Police Force documented 886 kidnappings in 2015. In a similar vein, Assano and Okereke (2018), indicated that over 630 persons were kidnapped between May 2016 and May 2017.



Figure 2: Violence Targeted at Christians and other Civilians in Nigeria 2020-2022

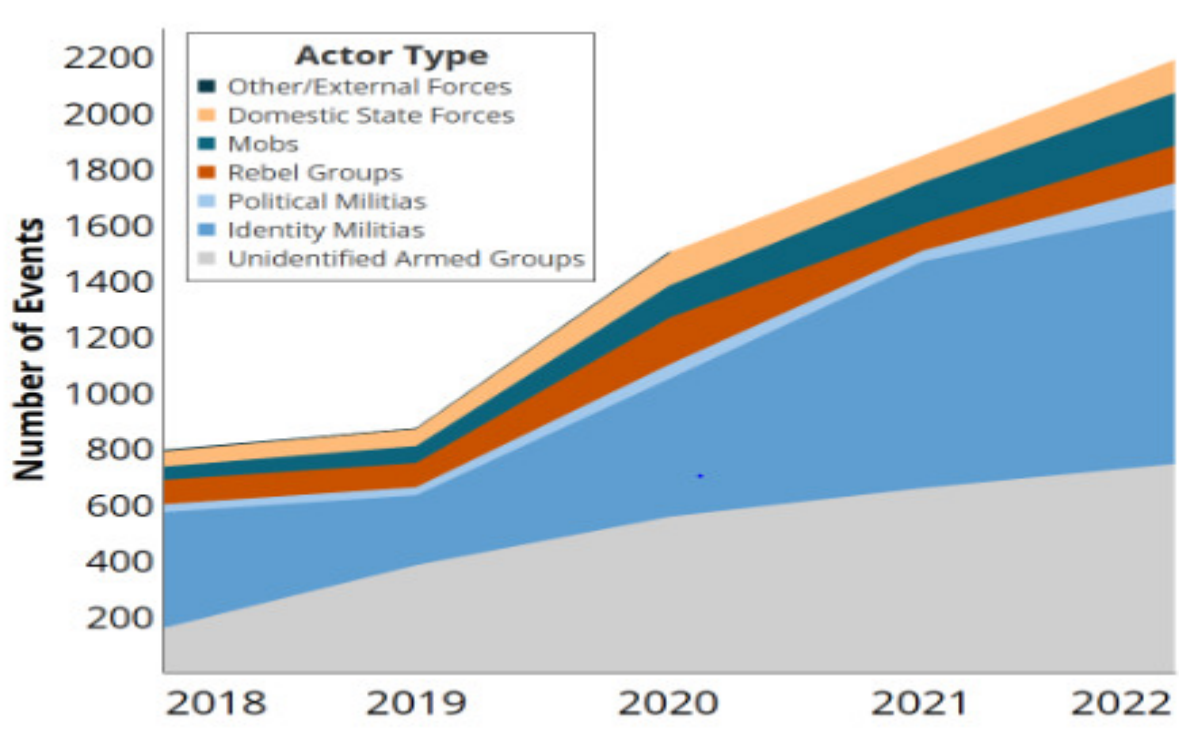


Source: ACLED, 2022

Evidence indicates that thousands of individuals have lost their lives in the group's attacks, and many more have been displaced both inside and beyond Nigeria. In addition to the aforementioned, the country has seen cases of damage of property and other infrastructure worth billions of Naira. People's livelihoods have been destroyed as a result of this renegade group's actions which in turn affected business, economic, and agricultural activities (Ani, & Mahmood, 2018; Brechenmacher, 2019; Dunn, 2018; Fayou et al. 2018).



Figure 3: Violent Incidents and NSVAs in Nigeria 2018-2022



Source: ACLED, 2023

Implications of Insecurity on Human Security in Mali and Nigeria

In Mali and Nigeria, intrastate violent conflicts have strengthened the spread of SALWs, and SALWs have increased the intensity and effect of these conflicts. Most of the direct conflicts which result in deaths, displacement, injuries, disruption of economic wellbeing, etc. in these and other West African countries are caused by these intertwined phenomena (Osimen, et al., 2020). It thus follows that the phenomena of arms proliferation and insecurity have a direct onslaught on human security in these countries.

According to the human security paradigm, a person is secure when they are not subject to any risks and may exercise their rights unhindered (Hidayat, 2017). Food security, economic security,

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personal security, and political security are the elements that make up human security. Due to the protracted violent conflicts in Mali and Nigeria, the four components are receiving international attention. People in these countries are very concerned about violent conflicts, particularly the civilian population, which feels threatened by weaponry that could target them and their houses. Groups continue to abuse and hold citizens as hostages during hostilities. Personal security is impacted by these factors. Additionally, because the government must concentrate its money on arming the military against the enemy, violent conflicts have an adverse effect on economic growth. Thus, a nation's income or economic resources are lost. It might be argued that violent conflict affects economic security in Mali and Nigeria because when a nation's economic growth declines, so does its people's ability to make economic decisions.

The impeded economic security has an impact on the people's ability to afford food as well as food security. Furthermore, food delivery is hindered by insecurity, which is exacerbated if an enemy-controlled area provides food. In a similar vein, violent conflicts in these nations violate citizens' rights. For instance, the enemy may impose laws that restrict residents' freedom to live, such as torturing them, raping women. The violence also involves preventing them from using their possessions, such as radios, televisions, etc. when violence and adversaries seize control of civilian areas. This demonstrates how conflict can upset the political security component of human security.

Social services that are intended to enhance human security such as those related to education, health, food, and shelter are hampered by the presence of insecurity. In the same vein, it has engendered displacement of thousands of people. A report released in May 2020 by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)(2021), indicates that since May 2020, violent conflicts in Mali have resulted in 2,070 fatalities and 300,000 displaced individuals. According to OCHA's Humanitarian Response Plan of 2021, which was unveiled on March 2, 5.9 million people in Mali were in need of humanitarian assistance, and 4.7 million of those individuals would require \$563 million in support (OCHA 2022b). There have been at least 599 deaths since

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January 1, 2022. Over 370,000 people have been displaced as a result of civil upheavals. In Mali, armed militants have destroyed and obstructed access to essential infrastructure, including farms. It further stated that children's access to education is being denied, as over 1,700 schools are closed as a result of insecurity. With numerous documented examples of sexual harassment, rape, and early marriages—a phenomenon known as the "hidden crisis"—women and girls constitute the most susceptible demography (OCHA 2022a).

In Nigeria, attacks and insecurity, especially in the northeast, have caused millions of people to be displaced, severely damaged livelihoods and agricultural output, severed access to basic services, and resulted in food insecurity, and the unabated spread of illnesses like cholera (OCHA 2022b). As per OCHA's report from 2022, 8.4 million people in the northeast needed humanitarian services. Of these, 2.2 million were internally displaced people (IDPs); 1.5 million returnees who do not have access to basic services. In addition, about 3.9 million members of communities were affected by the hosting of IDPs, including an approximate of one million individuals unreachable by humanitarian workers. Similar to Mali, the OCHA reported that peacekeeping efforts in northeastern Nigeria are hazardous and challenging due to fighting.

Promoting Human Security in Mali and Nigeria through the Mitigation of Arms Proliferation and Insecurity

Proliferation of SALWs and insecurity are mutually reinforcing phenomena in Mali and Nigeria which have significant impact on human security in the two countries. As indicated, the causes and dimensions of these issues are multifaceted and complex. Mitigating arms proliferation, insecurity and promotion of human security is thus a challenging task which requires all relevant stakeholders such as government, multilateral organizations (ECOWAS), religious organisations and traditional institutions to play pertinent roles.





The Role of Government

The state is traditionally mandated to perform three basic functions. These include the protection of life and property, provision of law; and order, and economic opportunities for its citizenry. The state being an abstract entity has the government as its agent to perform these functions in its stead. The proliferation of SALWs, insecurity; and threat or inhibition of human security in any country is basically a backlash of government's failure to perform these functions. As such, the role governments in Mali and Nigeria have to play in curbing proliferation of SALWs, insecurity and enhance human security is to adequately perform their basic functions. To be able to do this, the governments have to entrench good governance. This is because good governance has all the remedies to contain not only the effects but also the root causes of the proliferation of SALWs, insecurity and threat or inhibition of human security.

For instance, the absence of government in the northern region of Mali and government policies that promote horizontal inequality are indicated as the major causes of violent conflicts in Mali (Cocodia, 2021). It is within the ambit of good governance to redress this lacuna. Good governance constitutes certain conditions and indications which have the potential to address the basic causes of conflicts in Mali and Nigeria as indicated elsewhere. These include; participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, equity/inclusiveness, and effectiveness/efficiency (Ibaba, 2020).

As used here, participation denotes a process in which citizens freely take part in governance, thereby inhibiting authoritarianism. In both Mali and Nigeria, the minority Tuaregs, the middle belt and Ijaw ethnic groups suffer from a sense of exclusion in governance. There are also latent restrictions in accessing and distributing natural resources. Most political elites lack accountability and transparency in their conduct of political processes and power. The rule of law requires all political elite not to be excluded from obeying the laws. However, civil and human rights abuses are the norm in both Mali and Nigeria.





Transparency, on the other hand, calls for an open process in budgetary, contractual and procedural matters, etc. in administration. The running of government is based on trust and accountability. Responsiveness in governmental functions is to meet the expectations and aspirations of most of its citizens. The government is required to constantly respond to the concerns and needs of its citizenry. In both countries, however, most citizens perceive their governments as being insensitive and not responding to the needs of the people. There are massive illiteracy, poverty and unemployment. Inflation rates and human insecurity in both Mali and Nigeria are very high.

As regards equity and inclusiveness that foster the avoidance of discrimination and exclusion from governmental processes and resource distribution, notably exclusiveness and absence of equity abound in these countries. The elites of majority ethnic groups in both Mali and Nigeria hoard material and economic resources. The desired characteristics of effectiveness and efficiency in good governance in which such goals as law and order, development, social welfare, etc. are seriously lacking and undermined both in Mali and Nigeria. Rather, maximum input results in unregulated minimum output embedded with corruption and embezzlement. Impunity and outright disregard for equity, effectiveness and efficiency are the hallmarks of the socio-political and economic culture.

The Role of ECOWAS

The proliferation of arms and insecurity are mutually reinforcing phenomena as indicated elsewhere and have had devastating impact on human security. Traditionally, ECOWAS has focused on regional treaties, laws and regulations; as well as military actions such as peacekeeping missions to combat this dilemma in the West Africa sub-region. However, ECOWAS needs to look beyond these traditional methods and engage other alternatives like focusing on and mitigating the fundamental causes of the issue. While these traditional approaches have had laudable results, they are not enough to checkmate the root causes of the quagmire. This only implies that rather than solve the problem to a bearable degree, it will only be suppressing it.





Evidence indicates that the source cum causes of arms proliferation and insecurity include local arms production, arms trafficking and smuggling, black markets and illicit trading and diversion from state stockpile (Osimen, et al., 2020). These are arguably enhanced by governance deficit, corruption and weak institutions. This argument is based on the standpoint that the governments of Mali and Nigeria are failing in their basic functions of performing basic responsibilities of providing law and order and providing economic incentives for their citizens. Corruption and weak institutions are also mutually reinforcing phenomena that can render any government impotent. These have also been implicated as factors that breed protests and the resultant insecurity in the region. The implication here is that the institutions which are to contain illicit production, trading and smuggling of weapons in Mali and Nigeria are failing to perform their duty; hence, the resultant effect of arms proliferation and insecurity. ECOWAS efforts can be better effective only if it works with member states in mitigating these fundamental factors. This implies that the regional body supports member states to enthrone good governance, curb corruption and build strong institutions.

Artisanal weaponry can now be illegally imported into Nigeria by smugglers, thanks to the recent ECOWAS protocol revision that permits the mobility of people and products (Badmus 2009; cited in Umar & David, 2021). Whether they are created locally or imported, the majority of these SALWs end up in the hands of organised crime, armed militias, and insurgents (Adejo 2005; cited in Umar & David, 2021).

The Role of Religious Institutions

Generally speaking, every religion encourages peace and the harmonious coexistence of all people; none of them advocates violence, strife, or militancy. Every facet of human existence—social, political, cultural, and economic—is impacted by and permeated by religion. Religion has strength and power, and it scrutinises every human experience. Because it controls people's lifestyles and





serves as a unifying force, religion fosters harmony, discipline, and order in society, which improves security and fosters national progress (Okobia, 2020).

By instilling fundamental ideals that people generally believe are crucial to the improvement of order, peace, progress, happiness, protection of the weak and the invalid, social cohesiveness, and solidarity, religion fosters societal growth. (Osajie & Okobia, 2017; cited in Okobia, 2020). Because religion shapes people's behaviour to conform to societal standards and ideals, it can reduce insecurity and foster societal stability. Discipline, such as reprimands, censure, rejection, banishment, and ultimate judgement from God and its repercussions, serve as a unifying force among individuals in religion. People are compelled by religion to uphold established norms and values to accomplish their societal commitments. Religion instils in its followers' values such as justice, equity, fidelity, and the sanctity of life, which aid in the battle against social insecurity and advance national development. Prevention and resistance to the teaching of violent extremism should be carried out by religious leaders and members, particularly in the Islam religion. This would be particularly amenable in reducing extremist groups like the Boko Haram.

The Role of Traditional Institutions

In Africa, traditional institutions have existed for a very long period. The political establishments that supported the political, social, and economic goals of their people before colonisation arrived in Africa are known as traditional institutions, and they are now an integral part of our cultural legacy (Aliyu, 2012; cited in Lawal & Audu, 2021). They are in charge of maintaining the standards and principles that govern African society. It is impossible to overstate the importance of traditional institutions in fostering and preserving harmony, security, and peace. This is primarily because these organisations are legitimately regarded as the people's guardians of their customs and traditions. Conventional establishments take part in maintaining the safety of their territory. Traditional institutions typically hold a combination of legislative, executive, and judicial authority, as well as a great deal of respect from their constituents. These attributes allow them to

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carry out a wide range of duties related to modern state-building and cultural coexistence (Lawal & Audu, 2021).

When former President Umar Musa Yar'Adua offered amnesty to armed militants in the Niger Delta in 2008, traditional leaders in the region were included in the newly formed "Presidential Panel on Amnesty and Disarmament of Militants in the Niger Delta," demonstrating the specific roles traditional institutions played in the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) process. They contributed significantly in understanding of the underlying reasons of agitation, disarming strategies, and the identification of militant groups operating within their respective spheres of influence. Therefore, there was some success when the amnesty programme was implemented. Militants in the Niger Delta turned in "287,445 rounds of ammunition, 3155 magazines, 1090 dynamite caps, 763 explosives, and 18 gunboats" as a result of the amnesty campaign (Udoh 2013; cited in Lawal & Audu, 2021). The participation of traditional chiefs in Nigeria's militant amnesty initiative demonstrates their depth of goodwill and respect in society as an institution that is evolving in its position as a peacemaker. On the one hand, the traditional leaders liaised with the government to streamline programme procedures, and building trust between the government and militants was essential to the programme's initial success.

In many cases, traditional leaders were crucial in stopping the spread of SALW. They often lead local initiatives, although occasionally they engage in high-level lobbying over the impacts of SALW. Traditional leaders can assist by alerting the appropriate authorities to the presence of firearms in their communities, endorsing social issue-fighting programmes, and raising public awareness of law enforcement's use of social tactics. They can also help in spreading the word about the necessity of regulating and controlling the weapons that their members may hold for self-defense. To stop the spread of SALW, traditional leaders in Africa also perform the following roles:

- i. Traditional leaders have the power to influence public opinion, alter public attitudes, mould communal values, and speak out against social unrest and armed violence. They participate





in activities aimed at lowering the demand for SALW through initiatives or programmes that focus on lowering demand and raising public awareness of peaceful alternatives to conflict resolution. Eventually, this will result in a shift in mindset that will encourage voluntary DDR and the dismantling of a violent culture.

- ii. Less weaponry in society will inevitably lower the likelihood that it will be misused, which will contribute to the restoration of law and order. One method is voluntary/destruction programmes, in which traditional leaders encourage people or organisations to willingly give up weapons, whether they are lawful or illicit, that are unsafe or undesired, or that are not necessary for maintaining community security.
- iii. Traditional leaders can help with demobilisation, reintegration, and disarmament. This entails contacting both armed violence perpetrators and victims to persuade them to participate in DDR to gain acceptance, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society. Traditional leaders frequently extol the virtues of forgiveness and group comprehension, which are essential for peaceful community reconciliation. People who are trusted by both the government and the community can bring about lasting peace.

Concluding Remarks

Mali and Nigeria share a lot of things in common in relation to proliferation of SALWs, insecurity and their impact on human security. The two countries are faced with ethno-religious and political/governance deficit conflicts that have deteriorated to large scale violence. More so, militias, terrorism, insurgencies, dominate their insecurity landscape. Issues of governance deficit, exclusion, ethno-religious tensions, systemic corruption, underdevelopment, poverty are common denominators of the roots of violent conflicts in the countries. Consequent upon the state of insecurity in these countries, human security is adversely impeded. This is due to large scale loss of lives, displacement of persons, destruction of property, disruption of economic activities and opportunities, deprivation and obstruction of access to basic services, education and healthcare. In





short, the state of insecurity has deteriorated physical security, food security, economic security and political security.

Given the complexity of the insecurity landscape of the countries and the implication on human security, pragmatic solutions are required for sustained nationhood both for Mali and Nigeria. As such, all relevant stakeholders such as the governments, multilateral organisations (ECOWAS), religious organisations as well as traditional institutions have to play pertinent roles to address the proliferation of SALWs, insecurity and consequently promote human security in these countries. Specifically, the governments of these countries must engender good governance which is the solution to the attendant problems to exclusion, inequality, corruption, underdevelopment, poverty, and others which form the bases of the protracted conflicts in the countries. More so, beyond the traditional strategies, ECOWAS must also focus on entrenching good governance in its member states as this is invariably the solution to most of the problems they are contending with.

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