# The Detonating effects of Arms Proliferation on Food Security in Nigeria

**By**

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**Abstract**

This study analyzes the impact of banditry and arms proliferation on agricultural productivity and food security in Nigeria of Nigeria from 2011 to 2023. This period has witnessed a dramatic rise in armed banditry, exacerbated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These dynamics have severely impacted agricultural production and relived on conflict theory as the theoretical framework enabled the article to examine the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to the crises of banditry and arms proliferation and its implications on food security in Nigeria. The findings highlight the compounded effects of violence, displacement, and disrupted agricultural cycles on food security. The study concluded with policy recommendations which aimed at curbing or reducing the negative impacts of arms proliferation, enhance security measures, and promote sustainable agricultural practices to restore food security in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Banditry, arms proliferation, food security, Nigeria

## Introduction

Today, one study that is giving both the government and the citizenry serious concern is security. In fact, at some public for a, so many prominent individuals have proffered various solutions to how we can solve our various security challenges.

These individuals include retired army generals, security experts, legal luminaries, human rights activities, lecturers and others. The existence of small arms at various parts of the country, no doubt, has fueled insecurity.

The existence of small arms at a various parts of the country, no doubt, has fueled insecurity. Today, Nigerians live in palpable fears in their fatherland.

The small arms without mincing words are imported by mindless Nigerians who believe in destruction rather than building.

One of the sources of bringing in of small arms into the country is through our various seaports and borders. In fact, there are so many illegal routes at the land borders in which these small arms are brought into the country, while a few of these are smuggled through our various airports especially at nights.

From a school of thought, one of these greatest challenges facing the country is the incessant crises in both the West African sub-region and on the African continent. In fact, the rate of wars across various countries in West Africa is becoming alarming.

In Africa , for instance, series of war took place in Liberia, Cote de Voire, Togo, Niger and of course, Chad; just to mention a few.

Series of protests that nearly led to war also took place in Libya, Egypt and Algeria. Namibia, Ethiopia, Congo and Sudan are not left out in this saga.

All these crises in both the West Africa sub-region and on the continent is effecting Nigeria as some of the arms used in these conflicts found their way into the country with adverse impact. These paper seem to examine the West African sub-region and Africa paper, it should use the experiences generate from various peace keeping missions to avert the scourge of insecurity in the society.

As a result of these insecurity, also, the federal government has acquired a few helicopters for surveillance and patrol for the immigration department, it will be very necessary to acquire more of these helicopters for this purpose.

Equally, the joint patrol teams of the various security outfits like army, Navy, Air force and Police should be strengthened with sophisticated equipment and personnel so as to nip in the bud any attempt by hardened criminals to smuggle small arms through the land borders.

This study highlights the nexus between insecurity and food security, emphasizing the importance of addressing arms proliferation and banditry for sustainable agriculture in the North-East. It will also provide policy recommendations for strengthening security and boosting agricultural resilience in conflict-prone areas.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**Concept of Armed Proliferation**

Banditry refers to organized crimes involving violence, particularly in rural areas, where criminal groups engage in activities such as robbery, cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, and armed assaults on communities. Unlike insurgent or terrorist groups driven by ideological objectives, bandits are primarily motivated by economic gain. In Nigeria,

**Methodology**

The methodology employed for the study was the secondary data research and library review methods. The secondary data research involves analyzing existing data collected by other researchers or organizations. This method is crucial for studying complex issues like banditry and arms proliferation in Nigeria, as it allows researchers to leverage on large datasets, historical records, and previously conducted surveys.

**Conceptual Review**

**Armers Proliferation**

Small Arms Survey (2022) agency defines armed proliferation as the spread of Nuclear weapons to more countries which could lead to an increased risk of nuclear conflict and underlie global security. United national office of drug and crime (2022) describe arms proliferation as the dissemination of new chemical or biological weapons as well as the means to deliver them to states or non-state actors that do not already possess their, this paper sees arms proliferation as the

situation in which more countries develop the ability to produce of individual or acquire weapons which can fuel all forms of conflict food security: World Bank (2011) defines food in security as access by all people at all times to enough food for active and healthy life… United States world food program (2013) advance that food security to a condition in which people at all times have access to enough food for active living and healthy life including availability of access to and utilization of food as well as ability to acquire food in an acceptable way these paper see food security as ensuring that all people at all times have both the physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their delivery needs at all time.

**Food Security**

The concept of food security cannot by over emphasized in our studies due to its crucial role in the life of people of Rivers State and Nigeria at large. Food security can be defined as a condition where all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (World Good Summit, 2003). Indicators of food insecurity in a given region can include number of hungry or malnourished people of underweight children and of people suffering from micro-nutrient deficiency.

In addition, Eboh (1995) cited in Idachaba (2004), food security simply refers to the ability of individuals and households especially the rural and urban poor to meet staple food needs all year round. Eboh (1995) states that the above description is essentially intra-generational food security as opposed to inter-generations to meet their food needs, on season and off season.

The food and Agricultural Organization (FAQ) also defined food security as a state of affairs where all people at times have access to safe and nutrition food to maintain a healthy and productive life. This implies availability, accessibility and proper utilization. Food security means ensuring that sufficient food is available, maintaining sufficient supplies.

**Theoretical Framework**

The paper utilizes the conflict theory primarily developed by Karl Marx in the mid-19th century, with its foundational ideas first articulated in works like *the Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867) as its theoretical framework. Marx's theory argues that society is in a state of perpetual conflict due to competition for limited resources. Abdulkair, et al (2020) states that this competition, particularly between the ruling class (bourgeoisie) and the working class (proletariat), leads to social inequality, which in turn drives conflict and change. While Marx initially applied this theory to class struggles in capitalist societies, conflict theory has been extended to understand various forms of power dynamics, inequality, and resource competition in modern contexts, including political, ethnic, and military conflicts.

Conflict theory was utilized for the study on banditry, arms proliferation, and food security in Nigeria (2011-2023) because, in the case of Nigeria's North East, conflict theory is highly relevant in understanding the drives of banditry, arms proliferation, and their impact on food security. Accordingly, Ekweme and Gadzama (2023) state the reasons that the root causes of conflict are resource resources competition, social inequality, margnization.

Understanding the situation through the lens of conflict theory emphasizes the need for policies that address the root causes of inequality and resource competition. Akinwale and Olayanju (2021) states that the implication of conflict theory for the study also means, economic empowerment, land reform, and equitable resource distribution could help reduce banditry and arms proliferation in Nigeria. Also, the conflict theory could be applied in addressing social inequality through establishment and sincere implementation of education, healthcare, and economic opportunities as essential curbing measures for long-term stability on security and food supply in Nigeria. Thus, by applying conflict theory, policymakers and researchers can better comprehended the dynamics of violence in Nigeria's and devise solutions aimed at both reducing insecurity and improving and security in the country, the conflict theory is necessary and relevant for the study on banditry and arms proliferation in Nigeria.

**Driver of Arms Proliferation in Nigeria**

1. **Porous Borders:** Nigeria's borders with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon are poorly regulated, making it easy for arms traffickers to smuggle weapons into the country. These borders are vast and largely ungoverned, allowing bandit groups to arm themselves with weapons acquired from the black market.

2. **Weak Law Enforcement:** Law enforcement agencies in Nigeria are underfunded, undertrained, and ill-equipped to tackle the scale of arms trafficking in the country. Corruption within security agencies has exacerbated the problems, as arms and ammunition are often sold to criminals.

3. **Regional Conflicts:** The collapse of Libya in 2011 after the fall of Muammar Gaddafit triggered a massive arms flow into West Africa. Many of the arms used in the Libyan civil war ended up n the hands of non-state actors across the region, including in Nigeria. This has enabled bandit groups to access sophisticated weaponry, increasing the frequency and lethality of their attacks.

4. **Local Conflicts and Ethnic Tensions:** The competition for scarce resources, including land, water, and livestock, has increased tensions between various ethnic groups. Bandit groups often exploit these tensions to create chaos, seizing resources, kidnapping for ransom, and smuggling arms to maintain control over territories.

**Detonating, effects Arms Proliferation on Food Security in Nigeria**

Agricultural production in North-East Nigeria has significantly declined due to the rise in banditry and the proliferation of arms. The region, known for its farming and livestock rearing activities, has seen large-scale destruction of farmlands and theft of livestock. Bandits frequently attack rural communities, extorting money from farmers and stealing their livestock. These attacks have led to the abandonment of farmlands, several reducing the area under cultivation and the yield of essential crops such as maize, millet, and sorghum. A report by Human Rights Watch (2022) that farmers in many parts of the North-East have been unable

to access their lands during planting or harvest seasons due to fear of attacks. In Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States, many farmers have lost their livestock, a key source of income and nutrition for rural households. The destruction of farming inputs, theft of agricultural machinery, and the inability of farmers to tend to their crops have resulted in sharp declines in food production, exacerbating food insecurity. Furthermore, the widespread availability of arms has emboldened criminal gangs, making it difficult for local communities to defend themselves. According to Oladipo (2021), the continuous proliferation of arms in rural areas ha militarized these conflicts, turning what were once sporadic incidents of banditry into more organized, violent campaigns that target both people and their means of livelihood.

The escalation of violence driven by banditry has led to mass displacement of people from rural areas, further impacting food security. The International Organization for Migration (IMO, 2023) estimates that over 2.5 million people have been displaced in the North-East due to violent conflicts, including banditry. Displacement has not only separated people from their homes but also disrupted their traditional livelihoods, particularly agriculture. Displaced populations are forced into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, where access to food and basic services is often inadequate. With many displaced people no longer able to engage in farming, their primary source of food and income, dependency on humanitarian aid has increased.

Banditry and arms proliferation have disrupted food supply chains in the North-East, leading to significant market instability. The closure of rural markets due to security concerns has reduced the flow of agricultural goods from farms to urban centers. In many areas, the transportation of goods has become dangerous, with bandits frequently attacking transporters on major highways. This disruption of the food supply chain has led to higher transportation costs, food shortages, and price inflation, making basic foodstuffs inaccessible to many households. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022) notes that rural markets in conflict-affected areas have been particularly hard-hit, as the violence have led to the collapse of local economies. Market closures, the inability of farmers to reach buyers, and the destruction of rural infrastructure have reduced food availability, causing price spikes. These disruptions are further compounded by the

proliferation of arms, which has fueled the rise of criminal groups that control key trade routes, preventing the free movement of goods. Moreover, the rise in insecurity has discouraged investment in the agricultural sector. Katsina (2022) states that farmers are reluctant to plant crops that they may never harvest, and traders avoid areas that are known to be bandit strongholds. As a result, food supply chains are weakened, reducing food access and affordability for both urban and rural populations. This has led to increasing food insecurity across the region, especially in areas already struggling with poverty and unemployment with impacts on the people, government, and economy of the North East, Nigeria.

**Recommendations**

The following are recommended to reduce the activities of banditry, arms proliferations and its implication on food security in the North East, Nigeria. They are:

1. **Strengthening Arms Control Measures:** Implement stricter border controls, enhance intelligence-sharing between regional governments, and increase enforcement of existing arms control laws, especially through the National Commission on Small Arms.

2. **Enhancing Security and Law Enforcement:** Expand community policing initiatives, improve the training and equipment of security forces, and foster stronger collaboration between military operations and local vigilante groups for more effective crime preventions.

3. **Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Invest in climate- smart agriculture, provide farmers with access to drought-resistant seeds, and implement irrigation systems to safeguard food production in conflict-prone areas.

4. **Supporting Community Resilience and Rehabilitation:** Strengthen local economies through livelihood support programs, prioritize psychological and vocational rehabilitation for displaced persons, and promote peace building initiatives to recue conflict recurrence.

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