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## **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol On Free Movement and National Security: A Case Study of Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Ensuring the safety and security of countries is a priority for governments worldwide. As a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria has supported the integration and movement of goods, people, and services through the adoption of the Protocol on Free Movement (PFM). However, the unrestricted movement of people across porous borders can pose security threats, particularly with the trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW). This paper examines the potential security threats that could arise from the protocol on free movement of people and goods and highlights the importance of collaboration with other countries to achieve safe and secure borders. The study utilized a desk research method that relied heavily on secondary data to analyze relevant materials. The findings indicate that while the protocol enhances economic integration and financial stability, organized transnational criminal networks have taken advantage of free movement to perpetuate various forms of crime such as human trafficking, arms trafficking, and terrorism. The paper argues that regional integration is crucial but must be balanced with the need to maintain National Security in Nigeria. To address the challenges posed by free movement, the paper recommends that the Nigerian government needs to be strategic while endorsing international treaties to reflect the national interest of securing the Country. Strategies should be developed to monitor porous borders to check the illegal flow of arms, and efforts should be made to mop up illegal arms through the speedy establishment of the National Commission for the coordination and control of the proliferation of small Arms and Light Weapon (NATCOM) bill awaiting assent from the president. Additionally, intelligence sharing should be enhanced to promote regional integration while maintaining national security.*

**KEYWORDS:** ECOWAS, PFM, arms proliferation, national security, economic integration.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional organization composed of 15 countries in West Africa. One of the key objectives of ECOWAS is to promote

regional integration and economic development through the free movement of people, goods, and services. However, the open borders created by the protocol also pose national security challenges, particularly in Nigeria, the most populous and biggest economy in the sub-region. The Protocol on Free Movement was adopted by ECOWAS in 1979 and revised in 1998 to enhance its implementation. The protocol aims to create a common market and facilitate regional integration by removing obstacles to the movement of people, goods, and services within the region. Over the years, the protocol has contributed to the growth of intra-regional trade, and investment, within the sub- region. As of 2018, there were over 8 million ECOWAS citizens living and working in other member states. The protocol has helped in the quest for economic integration within the region. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on Economic Development in Africa, 2021, intra-regional trade among ECOWAS member states had increased to 15.5% in 2019, up from 8.3% in 2000. The report also notes that the free movement of people and goods facilitated by the ECOWAS protocol has contributed to the growth of the informal sector and to cross-border investments in the region. (UNCTAD, 2021).

The protocol on free movement of people and goods within the ECOWAS region is a critical aspect of the regional integration agenda, aimed at promoting trade, investment, and social integration among member states. However, the open borders created by the protocol have made it easier for criminal elements to perpetuate various forms of crimes, including arms trafficking, human trafficking, and terrorism.

Nigeria, as a member state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has endorsed the idea of integration, collaboration, and the establishment of a unified market by signing the agreement on unrestricted movement of goods, services, and people. Nevertheless, the unrestricted movement of people across borders has created security challenges for several countries, specifically concerning the transportation and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). Amzat and Olusakin (2020) have highlighted that this unrestrained movement across permeable borders could result in security concerns, particularly regarding the transportation and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) across national boundaries.

The spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) has become a significant issue for numerous West African countries, such as Nigeria. Due to the porous borders, it has become more effortless for criminal organizations to transport weapons across borders, leading to various criminal activities like human trafficking, terrorism, and arms trafficking.

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Nigeria has resulted in a significant toll, with an estimated 350,000 casualties from 2008 to 2015, as reported by Oluwaniyi (2019). The prevalence of SALW has contributed to increased incidents of armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, and inter-communal conflicts

Organized trans-border criminal networks have taken advantage of this protocol to perpetuate various forms of crime, including human trafficking, arms trafficking, and terrorism (Tella et al., 2021). Due to its size and economic importance, Nigeria has become a prime target for cross-border criminal activities such as the trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW). Multiple investigations have underscored the adverse consequences of unrestricted movement across borders.

For instance, Okoli & Ajisafe (2014) noted that the unrestricted movement of people across borders in West Africa has led to an increase in cross-border crimes such as smuggling, trafficking, and piracy. Similarly, Olonisakin & Shaw (2009) noted that the free movement of people across borders has provided opportunities for criminal networks to exploit the weaknesses in border management systems.

To tackle the difficulties created by unrestricted cross-border movement, several countries within the sub-region have implemented different measures such as setting up border control systems, exchanging intelligence, and introducing disarmament initiatives. In Nigeria, for example, the government founded the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW).

The aim is to track the movement of SALW across borders and encourage disarmament. Additionally, the Nigerian government has improved border control measures by using technology and collaborating with neighboring countries in joint patrols. To further address the security challenges associated with the free movement protocol, Nigeria has taken steps to strengthen its intelligence and security cooperation with other countries in the region, invested in border management especially procurement of technological gadgets and personnel to monitor and regulate the movement of goods and people across its borders to address the security threats posed by cross-border crimes (Ajayi, 2017). Despite these efforts, SALW proliferation in Nigeria persists, indicating that these measures have not been entirely effective, due to the poor management of porous borders and the limitations of the security agencies making it difficult to achieve the desired level of security.

The objective of this paper is to examine the possible security risks that may result from the protocol on free movement of people and goods, and emphasize the significance of working together with other nations to ensure secure and protected borders. The study asserts that allowing people to move freely across borders is crucial for regional integration, but it must be accompanied by measures to safeguard National Security

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework of this study draws upon two key theories: structural realism and complex interdependence. Structural realism emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance of power to preserve peace in the region (Waltz, 1979). According to structural realism, stability and equilibrium required for the state's survival can only be accomplished through a strategic security relationship. There are two security coalitions being advanced; aggressive security that enables nation-states to assault different adversaries, and defensive security that focuses on the capacity of the state to safeguard itself against any type of animosity (Mingst, 2004). To maintain security, deterrence can be used to discourage an aggressor (Mingst, 2004). On the other hand, the complex interdependence theory views states as interconnected and interdependent actors that rely on each other for economic and political resources (Keohane & Nye, 1977; Nye, 2004).

According to this framework, security issues cannot be separated from economic and political issues, and cooperation among states is necessary to address common problems (Keohane & Nye, 1977; Nye, 2004). Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye are among the scholars who have contributed to the development of the theory of complex interdependence (Keohane, 1984; Nye, 2004). In the context of the ECOWAS protocol on free movement, a complex interdependence perspective would suggest that Nigeria's economic and political interests are intertwined with those of other member states, and that cooperation and collaboration are necessary to address common challenges (Keohane & Nye, 1977; Nye, 2004)

## **ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON FREE MOVEMENT AND THE QUEST FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION**

Contemporarily, nation-states of the world are quite aware of the necessity to relate with other countries either through bi-lateral relation or multi-lateral relation offered by the membership of various regional or international organizations because it is highly unlikely for countries to live in isolation. The need for such relationship has progressively ignited government of several countries to be involved in both bilateral and multilateral relationships to pursue a common purpose. Given the impact of Globalisation on the relationship among countries, governments tend to resist the urge of closing their borders thereby ensuring the free movement of their citizens within their borders. Therefore, States have been searching for more smart and creative methods for building up joint efforts that can make opportunities for their populace while likewise extending agreeable relations with their neighbors (Kouyate, 2013).

Given the success of Regional integration in Europe, it was imperative for African countries to adopt such initiative because countries with close geographical proximity have a lot to gain for such cooperation. Regional integration could be said to be countries in a specific regional area

intentionally ceding some of their power to international or supranational establishments with the goal of pulling their resources together in order to collectively improve their overall wellbeing through collaboration. Thus, regional integration is a mechanism in which partnerships are deepened and extended between states (Amaleia, 2010) The objectives for such regional arrangement could range from financial, socio-political, and environmental, even though it is commonly viewed as an event of political and economic importance which have been the focus of national governments to achieve wider socio-political and security goals (Kouyate, 2013). Regional integration has been a priority for many countries worldwide, with the aim of enhancing economic development, political stability, and social cohesion.

Despite the obvious benefits of regional integration, and cooperation as a result of membership of such regional or international organization, the fact that countries often enter into treaties, agreements and pacts sometimes erode their sovereignty, and powers as well as the national security of such state which could have devastating effect for such country.

The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence, and Establishment is a legal framework that aims to facilitate the movement of goods and people across national borders in the ECOWAS region. This framework is a critical aspect of ECOWAS's integration agenda because it supports the free flow of goods, services, and people, which is essential to economic integration and progress in the region (ECOWAS, 1979; ECOWAS, 1998). The protocol eliminates visa requirements for ECOWAS citizens who travel within the region, gives them the right to enter, reside, and work in any member state, and allows them to establish companies and invest in any member state (ECOWAS, 1979; ECOWAS, 1998).

According to Adebayo and Oluwatobi (2015), the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence, and Establishment (PFM) plays a crucial role in promoting economic integration and cross-border investments in West Africa. They contend that the PFM was implemented to tackle the low levels of intra-regional trade and investment and can be a major catalyst for fostering sustainable economic growth and development in the region.

The ECOWAS protocol on free movement of people, goods, and services has been essential in advancing economic integration in the region, fostering cross-border trade, investments, and development. Nonetheless, there are still challenges that need to be addressed to enhance its efficiency, and its coverage should be expanded to encompass the movement of goods and services. The ECOWAS protocol on free movement has been instrumental in fostering economic integration within the region by enabling the free flow of people and goods across national borders. This has led to increased regional trade and investment, with intra-regional trade among member states rising from 8.3% in 2000 to 14.6% in 2016, as reported by UNCTAD (2018).

The ECOWAS protocol on free movement has played a significant role in promoting economic growth and job creation in the region by facilitating the movement of people, goods, and businesses across national borders. Despite its success, there have been implementation challenges, which ECOWAS has addressed through the development of measures such as the Common Approach on Migration and a roadmap for protocol implementation. Additionally, ECOWAS has established the ECOWAS Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons to control their proliferation in the region. However, there are still challenges in areas such as border security, identity management, and coordination among member states that need to be addressed (ECOWAS, 2006, 2008, 2015, 2018).

The harmonization of immigration and labor laws among ECOWAS member states has been a challenge in the implementation of the free movement protocol within the region. This has resulted in unequal treatment of ECOWAS citizens in different countries, leading to tensions and conflicts within the region.

Some scholars have raised concerns about the implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement and its impact on regional economic integration. For example, Oyebade (2011) observed that despite the adoption of the PFM, there are still significant barriers to the free movement of people and goods in the region. He identified issues such as inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and security challenges as major impediments to the implementation of the protocol. Similarly, Akpan (2014) argued that the PFM has not fully addressed the challenges of economic integration in the region. He noted that the protocol has been hampered by weak institutional frameworks and limited capacity for implementation, which has led to low levels of intra-regional trade and investment.

While the protocol has the potential to enhance regional trade and investment, its implementation has been hampered by several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and weak institutional frameworks. Therefore, addressing these challenges will be crucial for the successful implementation of the PFM and the realization of the economic integration objectives of ECOWAS.

### **CROSS-BORDER TRADE AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA UNDER THE ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON FREE MOVEMENT**

The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement has been beneficial to Nigeria's economy, as it has allowed for increased cross-border trade and investment. According to Akinwande (2017), the protocol has led to an increase in cross-border trade in Nigeria, with goods and services moving freely across the borders. The removal of trade barriers has also made it easier for Nigerian businesses to enter into other West African countries and vice versa.

Nigeria is the most populous country in ECOWAS and has been a major beneficiary of the free movement protocol. The protocol has facilitated trade and investment opportunities for Nigerian businesses and entrepreneurs, and has also enabled Nigerian citizens to travel, study, and work in other ECOWAS countries.

According to the Nigerian Immigration Service (2018), there were over 2 million ECOWAS citizens living in Nigeria, while over 1 million Nigerian citizens were residing in other ECOWAS countries. In addition, the World Bank (2021) reported that remittances from Nigerian Diaspora in other ECOWAS countries amounted to over \$3 billion in 2020, contributing significantly to the country's GDP.

Several Nigerian businesses are flourishing and all over west African countries. Globacom as a Nigerian telecommunications company operates in several countries in West Africa. like Ghana, Benin, Ivory Coast, Togo, Niger, and Senegal. Dangote conglomerate with interests in cement, sugar, flour, salt, and other commodities, operates in Benin, Ghana, Togo, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Also Flour Mills of Nigeria operates in Ghana and Ivory Coast. Additionally, several Nigerian banks operate in other West African countries like Access Bank with branches in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Zambia. Guaranty Trust Bank has branches in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal. United Bank for Africa operates in countries like Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Senegal, and Mali. Zenith Bank and First Bank has branches in Sierra Leone, Ghana, Gambia, and Liberia.

Although the Protocol on Free Movement has had positive effects on Nigeria's economy by promoting cross-border trade and investment, it has also posed security challenges for the country. Olajide and Olayinka (2019) point out that the increase in cross-border trade has been associated with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, which has been facilitated by the country's porous borders. This has fueled violent conflicts and insurgencies, posing a threat to Nigeria's national security.

The interplay between cross-border trade and national security in Nigeria is intricate. Although cross-border trade has played a role in the country's economic development, it has also posed security threats that require attention

According to Ojo (2018), the free movement of people has made it easier for criminals to move in and out of the country, thereby increasing the risk of transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and terrorism.

Furthermore, cross-border trade has also been linked to the spread of infectious diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, has highlighted the need for better border controls to prevent

the spread of the infectious diseases across borders. According to Okpara & Onwuka (2020), the implementation of the ECOWAS protocol has made it difficult for Nigeria to control its borders, thereby increasing the risk of the spread of infectious diseases.

The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement has brought about both favorable and unfavorable consequences for Nigeria's economy and national security. Despite its benefits of increased cross-border trade and investment, the protocol has also resulted in security issues like the spread of infectious diseases, transnational crimes, and the illegal spread of small arms and light weapons. Nigeria should thus strive to balance the promotion of cross-border trade with protecting its national security interests

### **ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON FREE MOVEMENT: IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL SECURITY**

The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons has resulted in several consequences for Nigeria's national security. Notably, it has enabled criminals and terrorists to cross borders within the region, leading to a rise in trans-border criminal activities such as terrorism in Nigeria and other member countries. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2021), the volume of drugs trafficked through West Africa increased by over 80% in 2020, with Nigeria being a major transit point. Terrorist organizations like Boko Haram and Ansaru have utilized the provisions of the protocol to conduct attacks in Nigeria and then flee to nearby nations. (Onapajo and Balogun ,2019).

While the free movement protocol has brought significant benefits to Nigeria and the region, it has also posed national security challenges. Nigeria has been a major source of migration flows in the West African region. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2021), in 2020, over 305,000 migrants were recorded as arriving in Nigeria, while over 144,000 departed from the country. These numbers highlight the importance of effective management of porous borders along the Nigeria-Benin-Niger-Chad-Cameroon axis to stem the tide of security threats from cross-border crimes, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling, and illicit trade in natural resources. Because such security challenges has the potential to undermined the stability and development of Nigeria and the region.

The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons has also been associated with an increase in the flow of small arms and light weapons across the region's borders. Criminals and terrorists have exploited the loopholes created by the protocol to smuggle weapons across borders, worsening the security situation in Nigeria. The proliferation of these weapons has been identified as a major factor in the rise of violent crimes, including terrorism, in the country, Okeke (2017). Additionally, the protocol has posed a challenge to Nigeria's immigration and border control system



The free movement of persons allowed by the protocol in the region has made it difficult for Nigerian authorities to oversee and manage the flow of individuals across borders, without any discrimination. Consequently, it has created a favorable environment for terrorists and criminals to infiltrate the country and perpetrate attacks. (Adeleye , 2019).

The Protocol on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism establishes a lawful structure for member countries to work together to prevent and combat terrorism. Despite this, the implementation of the protocol has been hindered by various obstacles, such as insufficient resources and inadequate institutional frameworks in member states.

To address these challenges, member states need to improve their institutional and legal frameworks for preventing and combating terrorism. They also need to enhance their cooperation in intelligence sharing, border control, and law enforcement (Akande, 2019).

Notwithstanding the difficulties, the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons possesses numerous benefits, but it also carries significant implications for Nigeria's national security. The protocol has allowed criminals and terrorists to move across borders, resulting in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and posing a challenge for Nigeria's border control and immigration system. To promote regional security in West Africa, member states must cooperate and address these issues.

## **NIGERIA'S POLICY RESPONSES TO ADDRESSING NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS UNDER THE ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON FREE MOVEMENT.**

Nigeria has encountered multiple national security issues, such as armed robbery, communal conflicts, kidnapping, and terrorism. The country's porous borders have further contributed to the rise in transnational crimes, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling. The implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons has been associated with the escalation in security concerns as it has enabled the mobility of criminals and terrorists across borders in the region, according to Adeniran (2019).

In response to the national security concerns, Nigeria has implemented several policy responses to address national security concerns under the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. One of the significant policy responses is the establishment of joint border patrols and intelligence-sharing mechanisms with neighboring countries to enhance border security and combat cross-border crimes. Nigeria has also implemented policies and strategies to regulate the flow of goods and people across its borders, and introduced a biometric identity card for ECOWAS citizens living in Nigeria to track their movements and activities.

The NIS has been empowered with the mandate to screen and profile travelers entering Nigeria to detect and prevent potential security threats (Adeleye, 2019). Another policy response is the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which is a joint military force comprising troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin Republic.

The MNJTF was established to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group, which has been responsible for several attacks in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region. The force has been effective in conducting joint operations against the terrorist group, resulting in a significant reduction in attacks (Nweke, 2019).

In Nigeria, strategies have been put in place to improve collaboration and sharing of information among member nations under the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. The country is pushing for the reinforcement of the protocol, especially in matters related to law enforcement and border control, to tackle security issues posed by the protocol. (Akande, 2019).

Additionally, Nigeria has developed a National Security Strategy that outlines the country's approach to addressing various security challenges, including those arising from the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement. The strategy emphasizes the need for cooperation and collaboration among various security agencies and the need to integrate modern technology into security operations (Adeniran, 2019).

The Nigerian government has been implementing measures to strengthen border security in the face of increasing threats. In 2019, the Nigerian government closed its borders with neighboring countries, including Benin and Niger, to curb smuggling and illegal migration. The closure led to a reduction in crime and an increase in revenue generation for the Nigerian government.

In a nutshell, Nigeria's policy responses to addressing national security concerns under the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement have been focused on enhancing border control, regional cooperation, intelligence sharing, and developing a comprehensive national security strategy. These policies have been effective in addressing some of the security challenges posed by the protocol. However, there is a need for member states to strengthen their institutional and legal frameworks to prevent and combat transnational crimes and terrorism within the region.

## **BALANCING ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY: LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE**

The balance between economic integration and national security has been a persistent issue for policymakers and scholars. While economic integration offers benefits such as increased trade and investment, it also presents potential security risks.

Economic integration can lead to increased vulnerability to transnational threats, including terrorism, organized crime, and cyber attacks (Krahmann, 2016). For example, the globalization of financial markets has made it easier for terrorist organizations to mobilize and move funds (LaFree & Dugan, 2018).

Balancing economic integration and national security can be a challenging task for governments, as the two objectives can sometimes be in tension with one another. For instance, policies aimed at enhancing economic openness and competitiveness can increase the risk of money laundering, tax evasion, and other illicit activities that threaten national security (Boz & Brixiova, 2014). Moreover, restrictions on cross-border flows of goods, services, and people can hinder economic growth and innovation, but may be necessary to safeguard national security (UNESCO, 2019).

One specific challenge is the potential tension between economic integration and border security. Increased trade and investment require more open borders, but this can lead to security risks such as the movement of illegal goods, people, and weapons (Kivimäki & Wirtz, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the tension between economic integration and border security, as countries have had to balance the need to maintain economic activity with the need to control the spread of the virus (He & Harris, 2021).

### **Lessons for the Future:**

Past experiences have shown that cooperation between nations is crucial, and multilateral organizations like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization can play a vital role in promoting cooperation and coordination (Krahmann, 2016). Besides, intelligence cooperation and sharing of information can help countries better address security threats (Denselow & Atanasova, 2019).

Another lesson is the need for a comprehensive approach that balances economic, social, and security considerations. Policymakers should take a holistic view and consider the potential impacts of economic integration on national security, as well as the potential security risks associated with border management (Wang & Pan, 2021). This requires collaboration across different government agencies and stakeholders.

Finally, policymakers should consider the use of technology and innovation to address the challenges of balancing economic integration and national security. For example, advances in artificial intelligence and big data analytics can help to identify potential security threats and enable more effective risk management (Kivimäki & Wirtz, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

There is hardly any country in the world without her fair share of trans-border criminal networks and violations. However, West Africa presented a distinct case because of the various economic-cum political problems faced by the sub-region which among others includes financial crises leading to extreme poverty, inequality, unemployment, and grand corruption has one way or the other enhanced transnational criminal network. The sub-regions tremendously neglected vast areas particularly those around the porous borders present a comfort zone for terrorist organizations to flourish in their nefarious activities.

The permeability of West African borders has contributed to the activities of insurgent groups and criminal networks in the region. While the Free Movement Protocol has laudable objectives, it has also been exploited by individuals engaging in covert activities, who take advantage of the protocol to carry out their illicit activities in the sub-region.

In conclusion, balancing economic integration and national security is a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires careful consideration of the trade-offs between economic openness and security.

### **Recommendations**

Nigeria and other west African countries should ensure there is a well-articulated strategy and template to limit the flow and exchange of weapons across borders they must key into the UN global benchmark for controlling SALW. It is imperative to create and use a reasonable and intelligent national approach to SALW control through structured collaboration within the ECOWAS.

Civil Societies are at the front line of advancing harmony amongst the local populace, engaging in capacity building. As Ikelegbe& okumu (2010) noted that as a result of conflict, sizable arms flow from one conflict region to another, while arms smuggling and trafficking across the border and along various waterways. The theft, smuggling, and sales of minerals and oil resources have provided abundant funds for the acquisition of arms in resource-rich regions

The study further recommends the speedy establishment of the National Commission for the coordination and control of the proliferation of small Arms and Light Weapon (NATCOM ) bill awaiting assent from the president.

The Nigerian government needs to be more strategic while endorsing international treaties to cater for the national interest of securing the Country and develop Strategies to monitor porous borders to check the illegal flow of arms, and efforts should be made to mop up illegal arms through Early resolution of conflicts can prevent the escalation of conflicts and the easy circulation of arms within the region.

The Nigerian government should develop strategies to manage porous borders and mop up illegal arms through intelligence sharing and collaborations especially countries sharing borders with Nigeria

Finally, to address the issue of balancing economic integration and national security, policymakers could consider leveraging technology and innovation. For instance, advancements in artificial intelligence and big data analytics could aid in the identification of potential security

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