

**ARMS FLOW AND COMMUNAL WARFARE: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF  
SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS ON JUKUN, KONA AND FULANI  
CONFLICTS IN NORTHERN SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF TARABA STATE,  
NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the communal conflict warfare between Jukun-Kona and Fulani in Northern Senatorial District of Taraba State with the aimed to investigate the impact of small and light weapons in the crisis. The paper employed the descriptive survey research design. The paper adopted conflict theory as framework of analysis. The findings of the paper reveal that changing access rights, scarcity of resources, failure of government in land resource governance, and proliferation of small and light weapons have contributed to the escalation of the conflicts over the years. The paper concludes that the conflict is a complex struggle over access to water, grazing area, and land ownership. It is a resource-based conflict that intractable. The paper recommends, regulation of land access rights, community engagements and dialogue, and compensation of victims

**Keywords:** Arms flow, Communal warfare, Conflicts, small and light weapons

**Introduction**

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is considered the most pressing security threat to individuals, societies, and states globally, exacerbating civil wars, organised crime, insurgency, and terrorism, thereby creating substantial obstacles to long-term security and development. This has led to violent internal conflicts, massive civilian casualties, and egregious abuses of human rights at an alarming rate. The proliferation of tiny firearms, especially from developed nations to emerging economies, has significantly contributed to the intensification and exacerbation of these conflicts. The present ramifications encompass insufficient security, intense internal strife, unparalleled civilian losses, and egregious violations of human rights within Nigerian society.

Since the early 1980s, ethnic hostilities, notably between the Jukun and Tiv communities, have transpired in the North Central Nigerian states of Wukari, Taraba, and Sardauna. Some were characterised as intra-ethnic conflicts, such as those among the Ebira of Kogi; ethno-religious conflicts, exemplified by incidents in Zangon-Kataf and Kafanchan in Kaduna State, as well as other locations in Plateau State; and the proliferation of these conflicts into adjacent urban locales (Onyema, E. M, 2017).

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons exacerbates warfare, organised crime, insurgency, and terrorism, presenting substantial obstacles to Nigeria's social and economic development. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is attributable to the collapse of governance in Nigeria and its corresponding failure to manage its numerous porous borders. The accessibility of small arms and light weapons facilitates rapid conflict escalation and presents a substantial obstacle to peace and development.

Tukur et al. (2017) assert that the proliferation of tiny and light armament in employed regions incites violence and criminal behaviour. These weapons are readily accessible, proliferate, and are unlawfully transferred; they also tend to exacerbate conflict, undermine peace accords, amplify violence and its repercussions on crime, hinder social and economic progress, and impede the advancement of social stability, democracy, and effective governance. It is sometimes utilized to impede or delay development projects, obstruct humanitarian assistance, forcibly displace residents, and thwart efforts to uphold and enhance peace. Small and light weapons exacerbate armed conflict, population displacement, and organized crime, undermining peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability, and long-term social and economic development (Salihu, M., & Ozden, K. 2020). The emergence of Islamic extremism, exemplified by the dual bombings in Abuja on October 1, 2010, during Nigeria's Independence Day celebrations, and the Nyanya motor park bombing on April 14, 2014, which resulted in numerous injuries and 75 fatalities, has significantly altered the dynamics of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria. Nevertheless, under the current political framework, the actions of Fulani herders have imposed significant pressure on Nigeria to sustain internal security, resulting in an unprecedented increase in the utilisation of light and small arms. Reports indicate that Fulani herdsmen are employing sophisticated weaponry, including assault rifles, hand grenades, shotguns, knives, light machine guns, and submachine guns, to perpetrate acts of genocide against local populations in Taraba, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna, and Kogi States (Wuyep, 2015).

Chukwuemeka et al. (2018) by the start of the twenty-first century, it was noted that conflicts between pastoralists and farmers had intensified in violence, with pastoralists employing increasingly advanced weaponry, leading some members of agricultural communities to mobilise for self-defence. Intense confrontations between pastoralists and farmers have been prevalent in North Central Nigeria, especially in Taraba State. The illicit transfer of guns is not confined to specific nations, nor does the proliferation of violent conflict that necessitates their use respect national boundaries. Firearms and handguns are no longer exclusive to military and law enforcement; they have proliferated among ordinary criminals, terrorists, ethnic militias, and death squads globally. Recent events have transformed the chronicles of men's contented lives, as society is embroiled in internal conflict. The causes of these disputes are numerous and diverse. Nevertheless, in nearly all of these confrontations, the proliferation of small arms has significantly contributed to their escalation and ferocity.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) has emerged as a significant global issue, exacerbating violent conflicts in several nations. The situation is especially severe in the Northern Senatorial District of Taraba State, where tensions and conflicts between the Jukun-Kona and Fulani populations have escalated since 2015. The accessibility of SALW intensifies these conflicts, amplifying violence and presenting a significant threat to regional stability. Ndambuki (2016) emphasised that researchers have shown the illicit trade and transport of small weapons exacerbates inter-communal violence, intensifying pre-existing socioeconomic and political grievances.

The Jukun-Kona and Fulani conflict in Taraba's Northern Senatorial District serves as a critical case study for comprehending the intricate dynamics of small arms and light weapons proliferation and its effects on violent conflicts in this research. The roots of this conflict are closely tied to historical, ethnic, and resource-related causes. The competition among these groups for land and resources is intensified by the advent of small weaponry, escalating disputes into protracted and lethal conflicts. Researchers have identified that the Jukun-Kona-Fulani conflict, akin to numerous others in Nigeria, is defined by a multifaceted interplay of elements including historical grievances, rivalry for limited resources, and political disenfranchisement. The study has further analysed the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, along with the conflicts between the Jukun-kona and Fulani communities in the northern senatorial district of Taraba State from 2015 to 2022. This paper aims to elucidate the relationship between the proliferation of small arms and the persistence of violent conflicts by meticulously analysing the origins, pathways, and actors involved in the illicit arms trade inside Taraba State's Northern Senatorial District. This knowledge is crucial for formulating strategies and policies that successfully tackle the underlying causes of the conflict, mitigate the impacts of SALW, and promote enduring peace and prosperity between the Fulani and Jukun-kona populations for the overall development of Taraba state.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons among the Jukun-kona and Fulani in the northern senatorial district of Taraba State has established a vicious cycle wherein insecurity generates an increased demand for weapons by both the State and individuals, hence exacerbating insecurity further. This has caused significant concerns in conflict situations between the Jukun-kona and Fulani groups in the northern senatorial district of Taraba State, with the most apparent issue in this study being the elevated mortality toll. This encompasses fatalities directly caused by small guns and indirectly arising from the repercussions of armed conflict related to ethnicity, famine, and displacement; it also incorporates socio-economic issues such as poverty, trauma, and unemployment.

The detrimental impacts of small arms and light weapons are evident in the daily lives of inhabitants, even beyond the northern senatorial district of Taraba State. Their very lethal character results in numerous fatalities caused by state agents, interpersonal violence, accidents, and violent crimes. The visibility of a weapon empowers its possessor to intimidate, leading to the frequent employment of small guns in many crimes unrelated to conflicts, including rape, robbery, kidnapping, and general criminality.

Small arms and light weapons have caused a significant death toll and numerous injuries, while also adversely impacting the socioeconomic development of the entire population in the northern senatorial district of Taraba State. Widespread armed violence adversely affects the social and economic fabric of both the state and its citizens, incurring costs such as internal displacement, medical treatment and rehabilitation, refugee flows, destruction of physical infrastructure, diminished productivity, reduced foreign investment, and overall disruption of civic, political, and economic activities.

The extensive and systematic violations of human rights are exacerbated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The misuse and inadequate control of human rights have repercussions on the fundamental freedoms and rights of victims, both individually and collectively. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the two human rights Covenants, various thematic treaties, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, national legislation, and numerous international and regional treaties have all enshrined these rights. They explicitly encompass the freedoms of life, liberty, and movement; the right to protection against the confiscation of property; the freedom from fear; the freedom from torture or inhumane treatment; the right to security; and, additionally, collective rights such as the right to development. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons inside Jukun-kona and Fulani communities has resulted in catastrophic consequences and has placed them in significant peril. This paper meticulously investigates the sources, pathways, and strategies for mitigating the illicit use of small arms and light weapons in the Northern Senatorial District of Taraba State to elucidate the correlation between the proliferation of small arms and the continuation of violent conflicts. This understanding was essential for formulating strategies and policies that effectively tackle the root causes of the conflict, alleviate the impacts of SALW, and foster enduring peace and prosperity among the Fulani and Jukun-kona communities in Taraba state.

### **Objectives of the Research**

The primary goal of this research is to investigate and examine the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as violent clashes between Jukun-kona and Fulani populations in Taraba State's Northern Senatorial District, from 2015 to 2022.

- i. To investigate into the violent and conflict experience among Jukun-kona and Fulani Communities in the Northern Senatorial Districts of Taraba State.
- ii. To determine the level of violent experience among Jukun-Kona and Fulani Communities in the northern senatorial district of Taraba state.

### **Research Questions**

This paper investigates and examined the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as violent clashes between Jukun-kona and Fulani populations in Taraba State's Northern Senatorial District, from 2015 to 2022. The study has provided answers to the following research question;

- i. Does Jukun-kona and Fulani communities in northern senatorial district of Taraba state experience conflict between 2015 -2022?
- ii. What is the extent to which Jukun-kona and Fulani communities affected in violent conflict in northern senatorial district of Taraba state?

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

#### **Concept of Proliferation**

The phrase "proliferation" refers to the rapid and extensive increase in the quantity or population of a particular phenomenon. It specifically pertains to the exponential proliferation and dissemination of small arms and light weapons (SALW) within the framework of arms

control and international security. Concerns about the term's possible impact on international peace and security have emerged due to its frequent association with unauthorised or illicit proliferation of these weapons.

The proliferation of small guns and light weapons is a global concern with implications for both domestic and international security. These armaments, suitable for utilisation by small factions or individuals, encompass firearms, grenades, and other easily transported lethal weapons. Proliferation often occurs through several illicit methods, including smuggling, arms trafficking, and black market transactions. (Soetan, S., 2017). To tackle the fundamental reasons of small arms and light weapons proliferation, it is essential to understand their drivers and origins. Frequently cited key reasons include economic issues, political instability, military conflicts, and inadequate governance frameworks. The illicit arms trade is facilitated by ethnic and regional rivalries, together with porous borders. Salihu, M. (2019).

The impact of small arms and light weapon proliferation significantly differs between locations; it is not uniform. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is more probable in regions experiencing political instability, civil disorder, or historical conflicts. The proliferation has regional implications that extend beyond immediate security concerns to encompass economic development, human rights, and the rule of law. (Rufus, 2021). The spread of small arms and light weapons significantly influences the dynamics of conflicts. The increasing availability of firearms may exacerbate and extend conflicts, converting minor disputes into protracted and more lethal confrontations. Facilitated access to armaments can empower non-state entities, exacerbate existing tensions, and hinder conflict resolution efforts.

Numerous global initiatives have been initiated to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons because to the transnational nature of the issue (Lung'ung'u, 2021). Examples of such endeavours include multilateral treaties, weapons control agreements, and collaborative steps to enhance border security and dismantle illicit arms networks. Boothby, 2016. Non-state actors, including insurgencies, criminal organisations, and rebel factions, often engage in proliferation activities. These gangs acquire and distribute small arms and light weapons by exploiting inadequate government structures and political instability. (Ofori-Ayeh, 2022).

The proliferation of weapons has significant humanitarian consequences for civilian populations caught in conflict zones. The widespread availability of small firearms increases the likelihood of deaths, displacement, and human rights violations. Innocent bystanders frequently endure the most suffering, facing heightened dangers to their safety and well-being. Dokos, 2020.

A multifaceted strategy that beyond mere disarmament is required to tackle this issue. Development initiatives, peacebuilding efforts, and conflict prevention measures must all be incorporated. Formulating enduring solutions to halt the proliferation of small arms and light weapons necessitates tackling the root causes of violence, including poverty and inequality (Plesch, 2020). Despite achievements in countering proliferation, challenges persist. This encompasses the evolution of warfare, advancements in weapon manufacturing technologies, and the resilience of criminal networks. Future strategies to combat proliferation are likely to

involve ongoing international cooperation, enhanced intelligence sharing, and targeted actions addressing the intricate factors contributing to the spread of arms (Thompson, 2023). Proliferation is an expansive phrase including a variety of complex issues with regional, political, and humanitarian dimensions. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses significant dangers to international peace and security, necessitating coordinated efforts to tackle the root causes and consequences of this phenomenon.

### **Concept of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)**

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) encompass a diverse array of portable firearms designed for solo or small-group utilisation. Among them are firearms such as handguns, rifles, light machine guns, submachine guns, and grenade launchers. Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) are portable and adaptable for usage in various contexts due to their compact size and lightweight nature (Stevenson, 2019). Small weapons refer to bigger armaments designed for use by small groups, like light machine guns and portable anti-aircraft guns, whereas small arms denote handguns and shoulder-fired weapons intended for individual utilisation. Understanding the extensive range of weaponry under this category necessitates comprehension of the distinctions between small arms and light weapons (Thomas y, 2022).

The proliferation of SALW results from their unauthorised and widespread dissemination, sometimes facilitated by illicit market networks. These weapons are illicitly traded due to political instability, inadequate regulatory frameworks, and porous borders. The proliferation poses a significant danger to global security and stability (Aldridge, 2016). Small arms and light weapons are crucial to armed conflicts, enhancing their worldwide lethality and prolonging their duration. Non-state actors, insurgent factions, and rebel organisations can erode state sovereignty and extend conflicts because to the relative accessibility of these armaments. The utilisation of SALW in conflicts exacerbates human suffering and obstructs peace initiatives (Sa'ad, 2021).

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) exert a profound adverse humanitarian effect, resulting in human rights violations, displacement, and civilian fatalities. The widespread availability of these weapons perpetuates violence and exacerbates the suffering of innocent individuals trapped in conflict zones (Mittawa, 2022). The proliferation of SALW has elicited many international initiatives and conventions. The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN PoA) serves as a significant illustration of this initiative. This program seeks to tackle several aspects of the proliferation of SALW through international collaboration (Sedra, M, 2016).

The impact of SALW varies by region, with certain areas experiencing more significant challenges due to unstable political conditions, prolonged conflicts, and insufficient government structures. To develop targeted activities aimed at mitigating the proliferation of SALW, it is crucial to understand these geographical disparities (Small Arms Survey, 2012). To promote enduring stability, efforts to address the proliferation of SALW should be integrated into broader developmental goals (Davies, 2017).

Effective control and reduction of SALW necessitate comprehensive measures that tackle both the root causes of proliferation and the weapons themselves. This involves tackling issues such as political instability, inequality, and poverty. To achieve enduring impacts, disarmament initiatives must be incorporated into broader development and peacebuilding efforts (Tar, U, 2021). Understanding the concept of small arms and light weapons encompasses acknowledging their diverse range, their application in armed conflicts, their humanitarian consequences, and the imperative for international measures to curtail their spread. SALW present complex challenges that necessitate a coordinated, multifaceted approach to promote world peace and security.

The Human Security Centre (2005) believes that the fatalities from the wars of the 1990s approached 4 million. Small arms are responsible for a considerable number of these fatalities. However, significant suffering has been caused by the utilisation of small arms in civil conflicts. Approximately fifty percent of civilian casualties during wars due to internal conflicts have been women and children. The proliferation of tiny guns has recently garnered global attention due to its humanitarian consequences. The entire community recognises the imperative of tackling the proliferation, purchase, and misuse of small arms, given the suffering and criminality these weapons have inflicted upon individuals (Koblentz, 2018). Conversely, one can argue that the international community's insufficient political will to tackle the underlying causes of internal conflicts significantly contributes to the heightened demand for small arms across borders. The stakeholders anticipated that certain adverse consequences stemming from internal conflicts could be mitigated or managed within existing political limitations by concentrating on the mechanisms of violence rather than its underlying causes, and by addressing the small arms issue as a separate or isolated matter.

Nonetheless, small arms are not merely indicators of violence; they also contribute to the intensity, duration, and destruction of internal conflicts. The longstanding and contentious issue of whether mere access to weapons and their proliferation should be seen as sufficient catalysts for violent behaviour has resurfaced in the ongoing small arms discourse. It has been proposed that small firearms may sometimes play a more substantial role in instigating internal conflicts than other "permissive factors" or the fundamental causes of wars (Nwaokonko, 2022). However, it would probably be more precise from an analytical perspective to categorise tiny firearms as one of the "approximate causes" of internal disputes. The difference between the two groups of elements is that, while the existence of conditions that foster violence heightens the probability of violent occurrences, it is the immediate causes that transform potentially violent situations into extensive disputes. The assessment of whether the line between non-violence and violence has been breached depends on immediate circumstances.

Florquin (2021) asserts that tiny guns are the primary instruments of violence utilised by criminals, whether acting nationally or transnationally. The correlation between small guns and drug trafficking exemplifies how drug traffickers utilise small arms to safeguard their commercial interests and frequently provide firearms to other criminal factions and non-State entities. In numerous instances, factions engaged in internal conflicts participate in drugs

trafficking as it may be their sole means of financing the acquisition of small guns and various military equipment. Likewise, the trafficking of other commodities and mineral resources, such as diamonds, is utilised to support military operations. The militarisation of crime poses a threat not just to nations afflicted by internal conflict but also to those that, while stable, serve as transit routes or final destinations for illicit substances. Countries already beset by significant societal and economic issues are particularly susceptible to further challenges arising from the entry of drugs and weaponry.

Ishola (2019) asserted that the escalation of crime, violence, and corruption may be a significant impediment to national growth and well-being. The complex issue of small arms encompasses three distinct dimensions: the association between small arms and internal conflict, the correlation between small arms and crime, and the impact of small arms on obstructed economic, social, and political development. The global growth and accumulation of small guns is driven by demand, but supply-side variables also significantly influence their circulation worldwide. The phrase "buyer's market" frequently characterises the transformations in the global small weapons market following the conclusion of the Cold War. This mostly pertains to the increased accessibility of weapons due to reductions in national defence budgets, which have compelled small arms producers to seek alternate markets internationally. The term suggests that purchasers of small guns, whether governmental or non-state entities, have gained enhanced access to the arsenals accumulated during the Cold War and later released onto the global market.

### **The Concept of Violent Conflicts**

Violent conflicts are characterized by a range of confrontations involving physical force, animosity, and aggression among different organizations or entities. These conflicts may possess political, economic, social, or cultural elements and can manifest in various forms, from minor domestic disputes to extensive international wars (Demmers, 2016). Various factors, including political, economic, social, and historical grievances, may precipitate violent confrontations. The primary reasons are complex and interconnected, encompassing issues such as resource scarcity, political repression, discrimination, inequality, and competition for resources and power (Tool, 2018).

Violent conflicts exhibit intricate, dynamic interactions that often encompass cycles of aggression, retaliation, and subsequent escalation. Latent tensions, explicit conflicts, and efforts at resolution or peacebuilding represent but a few stages that a conflict may traverse (Avis, 2019). Violent conflicts adversely impact civilian populations, leading to extensive suffering, casualties, and displacement. Prolonged socioeconomic issues are intensified by armed conflicts, which hinder access to healthcare and education, interrupt essential services, and elevate poverty levels (Jawad, et al, 2020).

Violent conflicts often encompass non-state actors such as insurgencies and rebel groups. These organisations contest state authority, often driven by grievances related to economic inequity, identity issues, or political disenfranchisement. The involvement of non-state actors may complicate conflict resolution efforts (Coggins, 2015). Adjacent governments may engage in

violent conflicts with regional and global implications due to political, racial, or economic links. External operations, whether military or diplomatic, can affect the course and duration of wars (Williams, 2016).

The intensification of violent conflicts is often profoundly affected by identity and ethnicity. Prolonged conflicts may arise from complaints against perceived racial or religious injustices, facilitating group organisation. (Akanke, 2024). Understanding the factors that exacerbate violence is crucial for developing effective conflict resolution strategies. Similarly, implementing de-escalation strategies such as communication, mediation, and peacebuilding initiatives is essential to prevent further tragedies (Ide, 2023). Thorough initiatives in post-conflict reconstruction are essential to tackle the consequences of violent conflicts. Sustainable peacebuilding necessitates the restoration of institutions, the promotion of rapprochement, and the addressing of the fundamental causes of conflict (O'Driscoll, 2018). Various academic disciplines, such as political science, sociology, international relations, and peace studies, have investigated violent conflicts. Researchers investigate the causes, dynamics, and consequences of disputes, providing practitioners, policymakers, and the public with valuable information on conflict resolution (Dunne, 2021).

Violent conflicts are intricate phenomena with diverse consequences and fundamental causes. Analysing the various factors that influence the initiation, intensification, and resolution of these conflicts is essential for understanding their dynamics. A holistic strategy that considers political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions is essential for addressing the intricate nature of violent conflicts (Rupesinghe, 2016).

### **History of Proliferation of Small & Light Weapons in Nigeria**

Europeans introduced firearms to West Africa via the transatlantic commerce. When the British-supported West African Frontier Force and the Royal Niger Company employed firearms, munitions, and gunboat diplomacy to incorporate Nigeria into the colonial sphere, the population in that region saw guns and gunpowder for the first time (Allen, 2015). Firearms and gunpowder progressively came into the possession of Nigerians during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Both hunting expeditions and ceremonial events utilised these rifles.

The Nigerian-Biafran War, which commenced in 1967 after Nigeria's independence, exacerbated the nation's firearm issues and illicit arms trafficking. The escalation of lightweight firearms in Nigeria has surged significantly because to the government's failure to implement a thorough disarmament and arms destruction initiative. This thus heralded a new epoch wherein firearms ceased to be instruments of exploration and status, instead transforming into implements of criminality, violence, and genocide.

Between the conclusion of the 20th century and the onset of the 21st, conflicts erupted in West African nations such Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and most recently, Libya, resulting in the illicit trafficking of guns and ammunition to and from Nigeria from these volatile regions. Consequently, small firearms and light armament gained significant popularity in West Africa. Nigeria emerged as the origin, destination, and transit hub for light and small arms as a consequence. The emphasis on religious and ethnic identification over class

consciousness resulted in an increase in the demand for light and small arms, utilised in communal conflicts, electoral violence, and ethno-religious strife. This is evidenced by the numerous conflicts among communities, sects, and ethnic and religious groupings that have arisen in Nigeria following the reinstatement of civil authority. During this period, multiple conflicts erupted in Nigeria, including: religious riots in Kaduna (2000), sectarian violence in Jos (2004), the Tiv and Jukun conflict (2011), the Yoruba-Hausa/Fulani clash (2016), the Ife and Modakeke conflict (1997), the Agulueri-Umuleri communal dispute (1999), and the Niger Delta unrest (2009) (Olayiwola, 2017).

### **Concise Historical Overview of the Fulani People**

The Fulani people originate from populations in North Africa and the Middle East. The majority are Muslims, primarily situated in West Africa, with Futa-Jalo, Guinea as their main base. Their origins trace to the Berbers of North Africa in the eleventh century AD (Anter, 2015). He stated that the Fulanis, under the leadership of Uthman dan Fodio, conducted a Jihad and established a caliphate that extended from Nigeria into Chad and Niger. They preserved their ethnic dominance in most West African nations through the utilisation of the caliphate. The predominant population of Fulanis exists as nomads, tending to sheep, goats, and cattle across the parched plains of their environment. In Nigeria, there exist five Fulani subgroups: Fulbe Gombe, Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Mbororo, and Fulbe Borgu (Kasarachi, 2016).

In Nigeria, farmers and pastoralists have historically maintained a symbiotic relationship. Farmers obtained daily provisions from herders' livestock, along with manure for agricultural fertilisation. Agricultural communities supplied pastoralists with wheat and other agricultural products in exchange (Baca, 2015). This static harmonic relationship is currently unravelling due to increasing interest in agriculture and the consequent reduction of arable land availability. This development incites the Fulani Herdsmen to encroach upon farmers' cultivated areas with their livestock, provoking their utter fury. Baca (2015) asserts that this results in farmers' resistance and confrontation, which "degenerates into armed clashes that poison communal relations and lead to further instances of violence."

Mohammed (2013), citing Bleach, asserts that disputes between pastoralists and farmers have existed since the advent of agriculture; nevertheless, until the 20th century, the incidence of these conflicts was minimal due to the prevalence of tse-tse flies and the density of cattle settlements.

Comparable hostilities occurred in the Mambila Plateau in 2002, resulting in over 25,000 Fulani herdsmen fleeing to Cameroon and causing numerous fatalities (IDMC, 2008). On December 18, 2009, in Nasarawa state, at least thirty individuals were killed in clashes between farmers and livestock herders who invaded the community of UdeniGida (Country Report on Human Rights, cited in Igbahenah, 2016). In 2014, Fulani militants, predominantly herders, ranked as the fourth deadliest terrorist organisation according to the Global Terrorism Index (2015:43–44). They assault neighbourhoods with machine guns and intimidate farmers.

Between 2010 and 2013, eighty individuals perished in attacks, culminating in an approximate total of 1,229 fatalities by 2013 (Ukase and Ityonzughul, 2016).

Conflicts between farmers and herders in Taraba State have become so frequent that significant casualties are reported nearly every month. "Clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers have historically troubled Nigeria; however, the recent assault on Taraba indigenes, resulting in around 75 fatalities, presents a significant challenge to the nation's internal security" (Eze, 2018:1). Besides fatalities among civilians, there are several occurrences of military, police, and paramilitary casualties resulting from herdsmen assaults. Colonel Timothy Lagbaja, the commanding officer of the 72 Battalion, asserts that from 2012 to 2015, four officers and eleven soldiers participated in an incident during the Agatu raid, resulting in the deaths of two officers and six soldiers in one day.

#### **A Concise History of Jukun-Kona**

The broader Jukun ethnic group in Nigeria encompasses the Jukun-Kona people. The Jukun people are renowned for their rich cultural legacy, extensive history, and presence in Taraba State, among other regions. The Jukun people has a rich history that predates the colonial period. This encompasses the Jukun-Kona subgroup. Their history encompasses relations with other ethnic groups and various political entities that have existed in the region for millennia. They are believed to possess ancient origins. The Jukun people have historically established societies with structured political structures. They established several chiefdoms and kingdoms, including the renowned Kwararafa Kingdom, a significant pre-colonial political entity in the region. Parts of present-day Taraba and Taraba States were incorporated into the Kwararafa Kingdom.

#### **Historical Roots of Small and Light Weapons Proliferation in Nigeria**

The predominance of gun ownership among Nigerian civilians, which predate colonisation, is not a contemporary phenomenon. Osimen and Akintunde (2015) assert that Europeans introduced firearms prior to colonisation during both the legitimate and illicit slave trade with Africans. Subsequently, Europeans deployed firearms and other munitions to achieve their imperial objectives by utilising force to suppress Africa's opposition to invasion, conquest, and colonisation. The British often employed "gunboat diplomacy" to compel African leaders to endorse various treaties. To conduct the British-Aro War (1901–1902) and other resistance efforts in Nigeria, West Africa, and Africa, the British formed the West African Frontier Force (WAFF). The British government saw it necessary to endorse the use of force by the Royal Niger Company (RNC) and subsequently the United African Company (UAC) to suppress opposing people (Chuma, 2011).

Firearms have transcended their traditional roles as mere status symbols or instruments for hunting, safaris, and excursions. The purpose, prevalence, functionality, lethality, and motivations for possession of firearms have all evolved. They have transformed into instruments of the underworld and implements of criminality (Chuma, 2011). The 1959 Firearms Act was reportedly enacted to mitigate Nigeria's accelerating armaments proliferation as the nation approached independence. The proliferation of firearms and illicit arms trafficking

were exacerbated by the Nigerian government's failure to implement a comprehensive disarmament and weapons destruction initiative after the civil war (1967–1970).

### **Factors Influencing Farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts in Taraba State**

It is almost incontrovertible that the causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts are often not farfetched. However, there appears to be no consensus among both groups as to the causes of their mutual conflict. Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999:13) reported that the key underlying causes of farmer-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria are:

- i) Changing resource access rights, whereby traditional access rights to communal grazing and water resources are being obstructed by the individual tenureship of arable farmers. This is particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favorite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the tekking herds in these areas. Within the Fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragment nature of the crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult;
- ii) Inadequacy of grazing resources, as increasing crop cultivation (and increasing commercialization of the crop-residues) and poor management of the existing grazing reserves have resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed resources, in particular in the Northern States. Moreover, the high value crops introduced by NFDLP (tomatoes and onions) produce almost no crop-residues for livestock feeding.
- iii) Decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods, and the authority of the traditional rules is broken down. It is worthy of note that the regulation stipulating that twenty percent of the Fadama land would need to be set aside for grazing (National Agricultural Policy, 1988) has not been adhered to.

A further contributing aspect is the seasonal variability of grazing resources, such as pasture and water, necessitating continual mobility among cattle herders for opportunistic resource utilisation. This facilitates interaction with the established agrarian population, resulting in competitiveness and conflict (Abubakar: 2012). Tonah (2006) asserted that the factors contributing to conflicts between farmers and herders encompass the southward migration of pastoral herds into humid and sub-humid regions, facilitated by effective disease management, the accessibility of veterinary medicine, and the encroachment of agricultural practices into previously designated pasturelands.

Hoffmann et al. (2008, as reported in Aliyu, 2015) asserted that the relationship between farmers and nomadic Fulanis began to deteriorate when Hausa farmers commenced raising livestock, including cattle. The farmers began providing crop remnants to their livestock, resulting in a scarcity of pasture for herders during the dry season. In anger, the settled herders urged the nomadic herders to graze their animals on the farmers' fields, even before the crops had been harvested. Violence ensued when the farmers sought to confront them. This suggests that the conflict between nomads and farmers may be influenced by ethnic factors. Government policies may sometimes be regarded as a catalyst for confrontations between nomads and

farmers. Aliyu (2015) elucidated that disputes arise as the size of the existing reserves continues to diminish due to encroachment and government-sanctioned expansion of agricultural areas. This results in the transformation of water sources and stock corridors into agricultural land. This leads to disputes between the resident agricultural groups and the nomadic populations. They additionally noted that the pollution of streams essential to host communities and the sexual assault of local girls by nomads contribute to and exacerbate the conflict.

Blench (2010) delineated several concerns pertaining to the causes of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. He asserts that the conflict between farmers and cattle herders in Nigeria has been recorded from the pre-colonial period, and that dispute settlement systems were operational until the 1970s, albeit with a bias favouring herders' interests. Blench (2010) stated that the advent of democracy in the late 1990s, along with the proliferation of contemporary automatic weaponry and enhanced communication, is intensifying conflicts. Conflicts are often perceived as religious or political, despite the underlying causes often being disputes over resource access.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **The Conflict Theory**

Given that the goal of this paper is to look into the violent struggle and proliferation of small arms and light weapons between the Fulani and the Jukun-kona in Taraba State's northern senatorial region. Thus, the Conflict Theory will be used in the research. The conflicts theory states that there are different degrees of conflict in every society and social group. This can happen within social groups or between people (Esteban, 2012). The fundamental tool for comprehending how and why these conflicts arise is conflict theory. The main focus of conflict theory is on power dynamics inside and between social groupings and individuals (Knight, 1992). This thesis highlights the idea that humans are naturally antagonistic while vying for power and wealth. It is derived from philosophical viewpoints advanced by Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Karl Marx. During the Civil Rights Movement, when individuals questioned the historically superior dominance of White men in society, this argument became increasingly prevalent (Herbert, 2017).

According to (Jeong, 2018) conflict inevitably arises in social interactions and is a characteristic of humans. On the other hand, (Dijkstra, 2011) added that conflict has its advantages, particularly when it leads to constructive adjustments and problem-solving. Within the context of Jukun-kona and Fulani communities in Taraba State's senatorial district, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons creates a vicious cycle wherein increased demand for weapons by the State and individuals, coupled with increased insecurity, perpetuates the cycle.

The high death toll from this study is the most obvious indication that there are conflict situations between the Fulani and Jukun-kona groups in Taraba's northern senatorial district. This aroused serious concerns. This covers deaths caused by small arms use directly as well as deaths indirectly from armed conflict circumstances because of ethnicity, malnutrition, and

displacement. It also covers socioeconomic issues including trauma, poverty, and unemployment, in that order. Even outside of Taraba State's northern senatorial district, the harmful consequences of small arms and light weapons are evident in the day-to-day life of the populace. Due to their extremely deadly nature, they are frequently the source of violent crimes, accidents, domestic abuse, and killings at the hands of State agents. Small arms are frequently utilized in a variety of crimes that have nothing to do with hostilities, such as rape, robbery, kidnappings, and general gangsterism, since the display of a weapon provides its user the ability to coerce.

### **Application of Conflict Theory**

Each society and social group encounters differing degrees of conflict. This may transpire within social groupings or amongst individuals (Esteban, 2012). Conflict theory is the fundamental framework for comprehending the origins and dynamics of these disputes. The conflict between the Jukun-kona and Fulani communities in Taraba state's senatorial district can be ascribed to the state's government's inadequacy in fortifying institutions tasked with addressing the unlawful proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region. These entities encompass all state securities, law enforcement agencies (particularly the police), immigration, customs, and the military, and non-state actors. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has led to the establishment of numerous camps for internally displaced persons, not only in Taraba but across Nigeria.

The spread of small arms and light weapons generally leads to violent crimes, accidents, domestic violence, and homicide. They are also employed in various non-violent offences, including sexual assault, theft, abduction, and general criminality. This aligns with Esteban's (2012) assertion that "various levels of conflict exist within every society and social group." This may transpire within social organisations or among individuals. Consequently, conflict theory serves as the paramount framework for comprehending the origins and dynamics of disagreements between the Jukun-kona and Fulani factions in the northern senatorial district of Taraba State.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive survey design. Nardi (2018) posits that a descriptive survey takes into account existing conditions or relationships, held opinions, ongoing processes, evident influences, and emerging trends during its design. The design of the descriptive survey facilitated the collection of information without altering the study variables. A descriptive survey was developed to optimize the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The survey method yielded representative results for the entire population at a reduced cost and facilitated data collection from a substantial sample size. The instrument of data collection is the questionnaire (Rassel et al., 2020).

### **Area of Study**

Jalingo Local Government serves as the capital of Taraba State. The region constitutes one of the Local Governments in the Northern Senatorial District of Taraba State, comprising eleven (11) wards: Abbare Yelwa Ward, Barade Ward, Kachalla Sembe Ward, Kona Ward, Majidadi

Ward, Mayo Goi Ward, Sarkin Dawaki Ward, Sintali Ward, Turaki ‘A’ Ward, and Turaki ‘B’ Ward (Daniel, 2023). The population of Jalingo Local Government is projected to be 418,000 as of 2018.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

The findings of the study are given in accordance with the research questions and hypothesis. Tables were used to present the findings from several sectors, including data analysis and interpretation. In accordance with the study's aims and hypothesis. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were distributed to participants in the study area, and all of them were returned. The 400 replies acquired were used for data analysis, yielding a 100% returned rate, as shown in the tables below.

**Table 1 Socio-Demographic Information**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>	15-19	26	6.5
	20-24	79	19.8
	25-29	149	37.3
	30-34	104	26.0
	35-39	28	7.0
	40-44	13	3.3
	45 and above	1	.3
	<b>Total</b>	400	100.0
<b>Gender</b>	Male	279	69.75
	Female	121	30.25
	<b>Total</b>	4000	100.0
<b>Ethnic group</b>	Jukun	153	38.25
	Kona	194	48.5
	Fulani	52	13
	<b>Total</b>	400	100.0
<b>Religion</b>	Christian	318	79.5
	Muslim	82	20.5
	Other	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	400	100.0
<b>Occupation</b>	Self employed	34	8.5
	Housewife	222	55.5
	civil servant	85	21.3
	Student	59	14.8
	<b>Total</b>	400	100.0
<b>Level of Education</b>	Primary	11	2.8
	Secondary	159	39.8
	Tertiary	216	54.0
	Arabic	13	3.3
	None Formal	1	.3
	<b>Total</b>	400	100.0

Source: field survey, 2023

**Table 1.** The above delineates the socio-demographic attributes of the study's participants. The socio-demographic factors encompass individuals' age, gender, ethnicity, religion, occupation, and educational attainment. The table illustrates the age distribution of the participants. 37.3% of respondents are aged 25 to 29, 6.5% are aged 15 to 19, 19.8% are aged 20 to 24,

26.0% are aged 30 to 34, 7% are aged 35 to 39, 3.3% are aged 40 to 44, and those aged 45 and above constitute merely 0.3% of the participants. 69.75% of the participants are male, whereas just 30.25% are female. The Kona community constitutes the majority of responses, achieving the greatest percentage of 48.5% based on ethnicity. Jukun accounted for 38.25%, while Fulani represented 13%.

The findings revealed that the Fulani are a minority within the population, comprising merely 13%. Nonetheless, about 20.5% of participants identify as Islamic. This indicates that they constitute a minority within the population. The poll indicates that 79.5% of respondents identify as Christians, representing the highest percentage. This indicates that they constitute the majority of the study's population. It is based on occupations. Housewives constitute the predominant occupational category, representing 55.5% of all responses. Civil servants comprise 21.3% of the study's participants, students 14.8%, and self-employed individuals 8.5%. The participants' educational backgrounds indicate that 54.0% possess university education, 39.8% have secondary education, 2.8% have just primary education, 3.3% have had Arabic education, and 0.3% have no formal education.

**Table 2 Does Jukun-kona and Fulani communities in northern senatorial district of Taraba state experience conflict between 2015 -2022?**

Variables	Categories	Number of Responses	Percent (%)
Have you seen or heard of small arms/light weapons being used in the conflict?	Yes	275	68.75
	No	125	31.25
Have you ever seen gun, matched and or knives being used?	Yes	315	78.75
	No	85	21.25
Do you know of anyone who own or carried small arms/light weapon?	Yes	295	73.75
	No	105	26.25

Source: field survey, 2023

**Table 2** The above presents a thorough analysis of small guns and light weapons in the research area. This also includes other essential elements, providing significant insights into the utilisation of small guns and light weapons in intra-conflict scenarios. The findings revealed that 275 participants (68.75%) reported having observed or heard about the utilisation of small arms/light weapons in the regional war. Only 125 respondents (31.25%) reported that they had not seen or heard of small arms/light weapons being utilised in the war. Of the respondents, 315 (78.75%) said that firearms, matches, and knives are utilised in conflicts, whilst just 85 (21.25%) stated that they had not observed the employment of firearms, matches, and knives. 295 respondents (73.75%) reported knowing individuals who possessed small arms or light weapons during war circumstances in the region. Only 105 respondents (26.25%) reported that they are unaware of individuals who possess small guns or light weapons in crisis situations.

**Table 3: What is the extent to which Jukun-kona and Fulani communities affected in violent conflict in northern senatorial district of Taraba state?**

Variables	Categories	Number of Responses	Percent (%)
Have you or your family member been affected by the conflict?	Yes	385	96.3
	No	15	3.8
Have you witnessed violent clashes?	Yes	253	63.3
	No	147	36.8
How often have you experienced or witnessed violence in the past year?	Yes	352	88.0
	No	48	12.0

Source: field survey, 2023

**Table 3** The above presents a thorough analysis of the participants' experiences with conflict. This analysis includes several critical elements, providing significant insights into the research. The results suggest that 385 participants (96.3%) reported having encountered conflict situations. Only 15 individuals (3.8%) reported not experiencing conflict, attributed to their status as newcomers from other regions of the county. In the research area, 253 participants (63.3%) reported having witnessed violent incidents in the past. Only 147 individuals (36.8%) reported that they had not witnessed conflict in the past. According to the frequency of disputes in the study area, 352 respondents (88.0%) reported having observed conflict situations four times between 2015 and 2022. Only 48 individuals (12.0%) reported that they had not witnessed fights in the past. This indicates that the respondents encountered conflict situations multiple times in the region from 2015 to 2022.

This paper aimed to investigate the spread of small guns and light weapons in the senatorial district of Taraba State, Nigeria. The research identifies numerous significant conclusions, derived from primary survey data and corroborated by secondary literature. Consequently, the study concludes; Objective one: the majority of participants answered that they had observed or been informed about the utilization of small guns and light weapons in the regional war. A limited number of respondents reported that they had not observed or been aware of the usage of small arms/light weapons in the conflict. Some respondents reported the use of guns, matches, and knives in conflicts, while others stated they have not witnessed such weapons being utilized. They also stated that they are aware of individuals who used small arms and light weapons during combat scenarios in the region. Only a minority indicated that they do not know individuals who possess small guns or light weapons in crisis situations.

Objective Two: The results suggest that the majority of participants reported having encountered conflict situations. A minority responded that they do not experience conflict, attributing this to their status as newcomers from other regions of the country. Participants reported having observed violent incidents and conflict situations in the research area in the past. Only a handful replied that they had not witnessed conflict in the past. The majority of respondents reported witnessing conflict situations four times in the research area from 2015 to 2022. Only a minority indicated that they had not witnessed fights in the past.

## Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned findings, the study proposed the following solutions to mitigate conflicts. The paper consequently advocates, among other recommendations:

- i. The Taraba state administration should enhance regulatory efforts to restrict the availability of small arms and light weapons in the northern senatorial district of Taraba state. This encompasses stricter boundary regulations, routine supplier inspections, and comprehensive tracking systems for the procurement and distribution of these products.
- ii. Augment Law Enforcement and Border Security: Enhance the efficacy of law enforcement agencies and border security through the allocation of additional resources, advanced training, and improved coordination. This entails the implementation of sophisticated technologies for surveillance and monitoring, tackling corruption via stringent accountability protocols, and promoting inter-agency collaboration.
- iii. Enhance Community Engagement and Awareness: Amplify community consciousness and education regarding the perils of violence and conflict through focused outreach initiatives and collaborations with local leaders. Foster trust between security forces and communities by safeguarding informants, rectifying historical human rights violations, and engaging community people in security strategising.

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