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## **Arms proliferation and the crisis of cult supremacy and insecurity in Ogoniland Nigeria**

**ABSTRACT.** This study examined the nexus between arms proliferation and the crisis of cult supremacy and insecurity in Ogoniland of Rivers State. It adopted the Anomie Theory as propounded by Emile Durkheim and Strain Theory of Crime by Robert Merton. The central thrust of these theories is that attention is focused on the relationship between a person's socio economic condition and the possibility that the person would commit either crime or delinquency. The study argues that the vulnerable economically misbalance youth population took advantage of the porous nature of the waterways and engaged in arms struggle in the area. This is due to the lack of functional institutional framework to regulate the trade in illicit arms especially in the Niger Delta region, which is responsible for the influx of small arms and light weapon into the hands of non-state actors. This has generated persistent crises and insecurity among communities and the different cult groups over territorial supremacy in Ogoniland. The study also reveals that the political actors in the area equally mastermind cult related crisis for the purpose of political dominance. The study posits that only structured and sustainable policies and empowerment programmes can help to reduce cult crisis and insecurity in Ogoniland of Rivers state. The study recommends that government should initiate a functional strategy of controlling the trade in small arms and light weapons. Equally security at the borders and along the waterways in Ogoniland should be strengthened to check in inflow of arms.

**KEYWORDS:** arms proliferation, insecurity, crisis of cult supremacy, militancy and national security.

### **Introduction**

The issue of arms proliferation and the crisis of Cult supremacy and security in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta region have posed serious concern and threat to national security and socio-economic and

political development of the area. In recent time Rivers state has experienced different types of conflict ranging from communal/political crises to crises of cultism/militancy worsened by the free movement of small arms and light weapons across the coastal borders. This development has equally degenerated to the suburbs of the State, to the extent that different parts of the State have been bedeviled by different types of arm conflict. In recent times, the use of arms has fueled crisis and insecurity in Omoku, Ahoada, Ogbakiri, Rumuekpe, and Ogoniland. This development has aggravated the security challenges in Rivers State which has affected socio-economic and political activities. The proliferation of arms has been one of the biggest security challenges confronting the State which is capable of throwing the state into anarchy and increase crime and violence. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the hands of non-state actors is a global trend in the new economic order of trade liberalization inherent in the tenets of globalization. It is in line with this that Poroma, Odike & Nkpah (2012) argues that the contradiction that generates conflict in the Niger Delta could be traceable to some fundamental tenets of globalization. Poroma, Odike & Nkpah (2012) maintained that the new economic order of globalization had liberalized trade and international boundaries of countries resulting in the free flow of goods and labour across nations. This new global phenomenon is driven by multinationals based on the tenets of surplus accumulation. This has led to robust economic engagements by both local and international business actors resulting to influx of different consignments including small arms and light weapons. The consequence therefore, is the easy accessibility of arms among the vulnerable youth population. The resultant effect is the emergence of cult crisis, communal violence, criminality and insecurity.

In the recent past, Rivers State has become embroiled in the quagmire of violence and cult related crisis for territorial supremacy. The emergence of the crisis of cult supremacy and political thuggery increased the flow and use of small arms and light weapons in hands of non-state actors. Many groups were formed and arms were used to perpetrate violence and crime as a result of neglect, poor policy implementation, poverty, corruption, political rivalry and unemployment. This encourages criminal gangs, political thugs, militia groups to engage in war of supremacy, kidnapping, homicide, robbery. The militants confront government forces, sabotage oil installations and take foreign

oil workers hostage (Poroma & Kidi, 2016). However, there is a new dimension in the crises in Rivers state and other suburbs including Ogoniland. The current spate of crisis now is the crises of supremacy and territorial control among different cult groups. As a State in the comity of nations, the adoption of the new socio-economic structural changes without necessary structural formation has weakened almost all spheres of the nation's economic nerves. The multiplier effect on border control, oil theft and arms acquisition is enormous. (Poroma, Odike & Nkpah, 2012). Pearson (1994) argues that the intertwined economic and political interests of powerful States derived from the sale of arms has created an international security dilemma. The global nature of the trade in arms has made the business more sophisticated resulting to complex security challenges in developing economies like Nigeria and Ogoniland in particular. In contemporary Ogoni society, the legitimate and illegitimate use of small arms and light weapons is a common phenomenon.

This is in tandem with the report on Small Arms Survey, that at least 1,134 companies in 98 countries worldwide are involved in some aspects of the production of small arms and ammunition; the largest exporters of small arms by volume are European Union and United States.

The migration of these sophisticated weapons in the hands of the non State actors has posed serious security challenges in the area. According to Joab-Peterside, (2016) Rivers State witnessed a bloody political battle between two frontline political parties in the state, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) over supremacy and control of the state. The crisis was bloody due to the use of sophisticated weapons, which have freely circulated in the hands of non-state actors as a result of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region.

Consequently, the Ogoni axis of Rivers State has been crippled of socio-economic activities due to the crisis of cult supremacy and communal conflict. This could be attributed to the seeming porous security nature of the area. These crises have persisted for over the decades and the State seems not to have come up with any meaningful measure of securing a sustainable permanent solution. This development informed the need for this study with a view of critically analyzing the fundamental elements responsible for these incessant crises.

## Theoretical framework

The Anomie theory as propounded by Emile Durkheim and Strain Theory of Crime by Robert Merton focused on the relationship between a person's socio economic condition and the possibility that the person would commit either crime or delinquency. Emile Durkheim introduced the concept of Anomie in his book *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893). He believed that the specialized division of labour and the rapid expansion of the industrialized society contained threats to social solidarity. He posits that the general procedural rules in the society, the rules of how people ought to behave have broken down. This state of normlessness easily leads to deviant behavior (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004). Thus, Anomie refers to the breakdown of social norms and a condition where those norms no longer control the activities of the members of the society without clear cut rules to guide them, individuals cannot find their place in the society and have difficulty adjusting to the changing conditions of life. This leads to frustration, dissatisfaction, conflict and deviant behaviours. Crime is committed in search for a stable environment. Crime to Durkheim is committed out of anger and vengeance. Robert Merton's theory of anomie is a good example of strain theory. Adopting Emile Durkheim's concept of anomie—a situation of normlessness or lawlessness and social malaise that occurs when society experiences a breakdown in the laws, social rules, and values that regulate human behavior, The anomie theory presupposes that the society insidiously tell people that they need to gain material wealth to achieve a certain type of respectable status and if they are poor or in an unfortunate socio economic position, with enough hard work they can achieve their dream. Unfortunately strain theory explains that not everyone can be lucky enough even with hard work to fulfill their dream. And so, due to not fulfilling their dream and having blocked opportunities, people will find alternatives to try to obtain their dream. This would make the unfortunate individuals develop a sort of strain; this strain in turn would make the individual engage in criminal activities.

According to the social strain theory, social values actually produce deviance in two ways; first an actor can reject social values and become deviant, and secondly an actor can accept social values but use deviant means to realize them. The theories show that the emergence of violence, crime and other deviant behaviour is greatly caused by social structural factors such as poverty, urban decay, slum settlement, pressure

from the society, relative deprivation, unemployment, overcrowding. Given the fact that this deviant attitude crime is multi caused, its impact or consequences are severe on national security. Tard was one of the earliest writers to establish a relationship between crime and environment. He believes that people learn crime through imitation or contact with criminals in their environment. He holds that unhealthy exposure to certain environments would induce criminality. While agreeing with Tard, Dahrendof (1976) who argues that poverty as a social condition plays a vital role in crime. The poor are led to crime because of their relative deprivation and acute sense of want. As a result, the social environment of the poor and jobless in Nigeria often leads them to arms struggle. This condition may lead to the proliferation of arms and deviant behaviours like arms struggle and insecurity in the society. The thrust of this theory is adequate enough to explicate the issue of arms proliferation and security which had resulted to the breakdown of societal norms and values system. Therefore, this theoretical framework is relevant to the study.

### **Arms proliferation and the challenge of national security**

The terms, arms proliferation or spread of arms are interchangeably used to mean moving of arms, from one point to another, generally referring to moving them across international borders. According to Pearson, arms transfer is defined here as the shipment of arms or related goods and services by sales, loans or gift, from country to another. Such shipments may be by one government to another, by a government to specific individuals or forces (e.g. rebels) abroad or by manufacturers to either a foreign government or forces. Pearson (1994) categorizes the arms proliferation or global arms market into three major lines:

1. Licit arms market
2. Semi illicit or grey market
3. Illicit or black market

The licit market is the one where government or arms manufacturers ship arms to governments that are not under embargoes. While the semi illicit or grey arms market is where the government of a particular state, through an agency illegally make arms transfer to either state or forces that may be under embargoes. This is part of the illicit market, but it is called the semi illicit because it always has the backing of state. It is also

called the grey market. Pearson (1994) further stated that, the black market is where the transfer is been carried out by manufacturers or dealers to states, rebels or individuals, breaching known arms regulations. The 2006 United Nation Programme of Action on Small Arm and Light Weapons conference revealed the strong opposition to the adoption of a global principle on small arms trade, ultimately for the sale of large profit that accrue from it. The Nigerian Peace Education Center identified Cuba, India, Iran, and Pakistan among the nations that spoke against an NGO proposal for governments to agree to a set of global principles on small arms trade. But many nations refused to disclose the extent of their small arms trade, and are unwilling to discuss restrictions on ammunition and national gun ownership, selling weapons to non-state actors and tracing weapons back to their original sellers. This is not a surprising result, when the global trade in small arms is worth about \$4 billion a year, and at least one quarter of that is illicit (2006 United Nation Programme of Action on Small Arm and Light Weapons conference).

Many scholars attest to the fact that most nations see arms development as a means to showcase their technological superiority over others, and as a source of capital investment opportunity which has made anti-small arms proliferation efforts difficult to bring about a globally accepted and binding way of monitoring their transfer. The emphasis has been on sell-restraint, either unilaterally or through some form of multilateral agreement and the aim has been to govern the input of arms to particular states, region or to world society as a whole. The article pointed out that, the supplier-led method of arms transfer control which is based on self-restraint has not yielded much result. Because one of the major features of the traditional model is the fact that most often, there is the absence of sanction, even where sanctions exist there is the persistent failure to implement them simply because of the lack of political will. Kaith (1998) in similar view stated that the tools and assumptions of traditional arms control and disarmament focused on nuclear and major conventional arms and tailored to the needs and circumstances of cold war protagonists in North America, Russia, and Europe had little relevance in dealing with the spread of small arms and the peculiar set of internal conflict in which they are used to devastating effect. These scholars represent modern pro-third world views with emphasis on bringing about new control measures on the issue of arms proliferation, casing on small arms which poses more threat to West African States

and her developing regions of the world. Pearson in explaining the security dilemma said that there is the new trend in the arms business known as "retrofitting", whereby certain States will only buy parts of a particular weapon, use such components that can be assembled with an existing one, particularly such machines are used for dual purposes, which can easily conceal the original design of the weapon.

However, some States in the sub-region exchange natural resources for small arms, the disturbing unwholesome barter for small arm in Africa for natural resources has provided lucrative opportunities for arms dealers and merchants of war". The issue of economic and political interests of nations tends to overshadow international regulations, regime security is perceived to be higher than national security in most African States, which directly conflicts with anti-arms proliferation agreements.

There is an existing interest difference between the developed and most of the developing nations, which has probably made it difficult for the anti-arms proliferation efforts to succeed. Pearson's (1994) view on the global arms proliferation problem, centered mainly on nuclear and conventional weapons. This clearly represents the Western area of interest, which in many African states constitute less threat considering the number of people that are killed in the continents internal conflicts where SALW's are the most used. According to Kaith (1998), the instrument of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament emerged as an attempt to cope with the threat posed by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Although these issues were not the exclusive preserve of the super powers as witnessed by the constitution of the Nuclear non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and other multilateral instruments. The process in arms control was driven by super powers concern with maintaining stability and reducing the risk, that conflicts would escalate to a global level, since the conflicts in which small arms and light weapons were used posed few such risk, they could safely be ignored.

The divided views and interests among nations on the issue of small arms and light weapons proliferation is pined around what states consider as "threat to national and international security". Kaith (1998), states that in the cold war era for example, the goal of arms control was to reduce the risk of war, to reduce its destructiveness if war break out, and to redirect the resources devoted to armaments, to other ends. The divide among states on whether there should be internationally binding regulations on SALW's or not, is based on what categories of weapons,

each state consider a shaving the capacity to constitute threat to national and international security. While to the African states, particularly the West African states, SALW's are the ones that pose threat to their internal and sub-regional security, because most of the security problems are internal. According to Elizabeth Clegg, Owen Greene and Geraldine O'Callaghan (1998) in 1998, 56 countries sponsored resolution calling for legally binding international instruments to combat illicit weapons trafficking to be developed in the form of a fire arms protocol. The above statement attest to Kaith's view, that the arms manufacturing nations, are seen as having different opinion or stand point on the issue of establishing internationally binding regulations, While the developing nations are the ones clamoring for internationally binding regulations.

### **The impact of arms proliferation on the Niger Delta security**

Over the years, States in the Niger Delta have experienced security challenges arising from the proliferation of arms in the region. The situation has steep to a dangerous moment where militants and cult crisis has seriously impacted negatively on socio-economic and political activities thereby preventing development and peaceful living being threatened. The security of foreign citizens working in both oil multinationals and others sections in the region has become difficult to be guaranteed by the Nigerian state due to the ongoing arms violence in the region. Arising originally from the agitation of the people to have control of the natural resources in the area been controlled by the Federal Government, today arms struggle persist between rival cult groups, communities and criminals. According to Adeogun (2004), the Niger Delta crisis has arisen out of the refusal of the multinational oil companies to rechannel some of their profits to improve the lot of the communities as well as to rebuild the environment that suffers the direct consequences of the operations. The resultant effect is the restiveness among the youths, who are either jobless or under employed and are so ready to agitate on nearly daily basis for money from the oil companies. The Niger Delta crisis according to Adeogun, (2004) is caused by the economic deprivation suffered by the majority people in the area over the years, since oil exploration started in the area.

He said the people felt been neglected, because what the area has so far received, from the Federal Government is not commensurate to what



has been taken from their environment. Which have suffered degradation because of the activities of the oil multinationals. Falati was quoted by Shedrack (2004) that in the cases where a conflict has degenerated to the point of crisis, it is common that those involved will even find it difficult to remember what led to the initial disagreement. The present state of the Niger Delta crisis attests clearly to Falati's explanation of the characteristics of degenerating situation. In the Niger Delta where both foreigners working in construction companies who are directly involved in the physical development of the area, are not spared by the hostage takers, bringing to a halt many developmental projects in the region clearly point out the crisis state of the resource control agitation.

Many scholars associated violent crisis to frustration and aggression. Dougherty et al, citing from the work of John Dollard a modification of Dollard-Doob's frustration aggression theory, stated that, the aggressive behavior is inhabitable, where acts of aggression is rewarded by punishment or other undesirable consequences. Explaining further on frustration aggression, they maintained that, the threat of punishment interferes with the act of aggression which gives rise to further frustration which intensifies the pressure, either direct aggression against the interference agent or for other indirect forms of aggression. Such situation could lead to displacement of aggression, which the individual may direct hostility towards someone or something not responsible for the original frustration. Using Scott and Frederics on study on animal behaviour to explain the Dollard-Doob theory, Dorbin et al., as contained in James Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff work (1981) explained that there are other causes of aggression besides frustration, including dominance strivings, the sight of a stranger animal of the same species, resulted at the intrusion of stranger disputes over the possession of object, pain and the interference with comfort. The State as a strategic region due to the magnetic force of the resources in the area, attracting different people from all over the world because of the enormous natural resources has being facing unprecedented rate of crisis and this has impacted negatively on the security of the area. The monopolistic endowment of scarce natural resources in any particular environment usually attract to it people from other tribes and cultures. And where such strange elements dominate the control of such scarce resources, it is bound to cause crisis. John Dollard's explanation is based, on economic discrimination, which is probably one of the world most offensive forms of discrimination that causes crisis. Discrimination leads to fru-

stration, which leads to political agitation, which is because in the third world, political power determines the economic well-being of the people. Discrimination often creates in every human society the existence of violent crisis. Falati, in Shadrack (2004) painted a clear picture of the crisis arising from economic domination and stated that the particular ways societies are structured and organized, the social problems like political and economic exclusion, injustice, inequality etc., are sources of conflict.

In similar vein, Gurr (1993) through the minorities at risk study made it clear that most crisis turned conflicts are caused by discrimination created through economic inequality among the different ethnic groups in countries where crisis exist. Gurr (1993) maintained that the strongest demands are greater rights within societies not a desire to exit from the state. Discrimination motivates demands for greater political and economic rights. The existence of cross identity, this is where, in the same society, some particular groups can be identified as economically poor and politically weakened and the others economically better and politically stronger, in such scenario, violent crisis can easily occur which could lead to insecurity. It is obvious that the western democracies have evolved from segregational politics to that of assimilation, while there is the strong existence of repressive policies of Governments in heterogeneous African states, which encourages crisis. Gurr (1993) stated further that most communal conflicts begin with acts of protest that escalate into violent conflicts. In authoritarian third world regimes, the escalation usually happens very quickly in parts because of the official response are more likely to be repressive than reformist. Gurr's approach on the occurrence of violent conflict is hinged on the economic angles which are also in line with John Dollard's view on conflict. Because it is mainly economic inequality that, primarily leads to protests which may be suppressed by the authorities but gradually the situation may degenerate into a crisis state. That most violent crisis in the world where the existing gap that tend to create classes in the society continue for a little while, when there is psychological attachment made in the positions involve in the crisis, the faster or quicker the situation will degenerate into a violent one. The transfer of the traditional rights of ownership of the lands from the natural owners to the Federal Government and the subsequent occurrence of environmental abuses suffered by the people of the Niger Delta and the isolation of their traditional economy as farmers and fishermen as they were, has created severe unemployment

and frustration coupled with the reversal of the ownership of the natural resources in the area.

According to Ojo (1999) as the economic crisis deepens and the underdogs demand equity and social justice, the linkage of the crisis in the perception and reality, to increasing long-term resource scarcity engenders more trenchant resistance by the relatively, advantage groups. Ojo's explanation is evidently observed in the militarization of the Niger Delta by the Federal Government. And the reaction and manner in which the twenty five percent increase in the federal allocation to the area, in line with the derivation principle, in the sharing formula of the nation's revenue, as agitated for by the Niger Delta delegates to the 2006 constitutional review conference. And how the issue tore apart the conference leading to the total boycott of the conference by the delegates from the area shows clearly the economically induced nature of the crisis. The agitation of the Niger Delta people is said to be directed at addressing the economic deprivation suffered by the people of the region. Ojo, pointed out that, most of the African violent crisis are intra-state in nature and are mainly over economy. In every struggle all over the world, particularly those that are ethnic based conflicts are over resources and values. When those agitating for better deal have gotten or realized the pains of deprivation and have defined their interests, automatically their positions will galvanize and produce the strength and focus on the position, with power to execute and protect such interest, the goal of their pursuit immediately create the divide line against the interest of the others.

In the view of Mac-Ogonor (2002) those decades of socio-political neglect had also produced militant youths. These youths are different; they are educated in mathematics, chemistry, economics, law, political science, medicine and the arts. With precision they can calculate revenue the ruling elites and their MNC's alias are deriving from their states, and communities. And they are making their demands viciously felt by attacking the industrial installations of the multinationals. The observable degeneration of the resource control struggle moved through different stages to this crisis level and was pursued by different groups, adopting different approaches, at any particular given time. The security quagmire on the Niger Delta is directly fratricidal in nature, manifesting in series of armed violence that has developed over time. Rising to an irreconcilable difference, between the Federal Government position and that of the people of the Niger Delta, being characterized by communal conflicts, pipeline vandalization, direct attack on oil platforms, killing of

soldiers and policemen posted to sites of oil multinationals operational areas, hostage taking, and state violence on the part of the federal government in the area, directly affected the cycle of violence experienced in the area as explained by Mac-Ogonor. Quite often, groups in the area demand reparation and compensation for increasing environmental damage caused by the different activities of oil multinationals. And the occasional demand of the stoppage of further exploration activities, which the people considered as the major source of environmental damage over the years. Worst still is the economic exclusion of the majority of the people from the benefits of the oil economy and the continuous degradation of the physical environment on which lives depend, tend to deepen the crisis situation. According to Agbu as cited by Hassan (2005) the 1969 Petroleum Act, which vested the ownership of lands and all known oil deposits, in the Nigerian state, has also been a major source of the conflict. This act vests the power to grant Oil Exploration Licenses (OEL'S) and Oil Mining Licenses (OML'S) in the office of the Minister of Petroleum Resources, a Federal Representative by claiming ownership of "all oil" under the ground and having the power to expropriate all such land. Agbu's explanation in Hassan (2005) above fits into the picture on the crisis just like other scholars. Oil as an economic product is placed in the hands or control of the federal government. Having the reserved powers to take over all lands that are endowed with natural resources points out clearly that, the sole ownership of land by the Federal Government to expropriate oil is among the major cause of the crisis experienced in the Niger Delta region. Agbu concluded that, the crisis is centered on the taking over of the rights to control the resources produce in the area, that the crisis is purely an economic struggle.

### **Arms proliferation and the security challenge in Ogoniland**

The persistent hostility in Ogoni predates the emergence of political violence in the State's democratic culture in 1999. From medieval period local community inhabitants engaged in one form of communal crises or the other. These crises were mainly caused by land dispute or water boundaries for fishing. However, the instrument of war then was bow and arrow, machet and sticks which were supplied by the women at the war front. These crises were predicated on the scarce available farm lands and fishing area. Such disputes were sometime settled by the

community chiefs through the traditional conflict resolution mechanism. Thus, the frequency of conflict was minimal, which encouraged local trade and intermarriage.

According to Naagbantón (2016) before the current crisis of armed groups and proliferation of dangerous Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALW), there were seemingly low levels of misuse of weapons by non-state actors, and in post-Colonial Nigeria. The emergence of arm conflict in Ogoni was an aftermath of the Ogoni/Andoni crisis in 1993. This was the cradle of the infiltration of small arms and light weapons into the area. Consequently, the activities of the political actors towards the 1999 elections resulted to the general conscientization on the use of arms by the different segment of the society. According to Naagbantón (2016) the emergence of cult groups and crises was as a result of the roles played by the political actors in Gokana. He argues that the Gberesaakoo Boys cult group was allegedly founded around late 2003 by Chief Fred Barivule Kpakol, the then Chairman of the Gokana Local Government Council in Ogoni, while the Seresibra another petty cult group allegedly founded by Magnus Abe, the then Commissioner of Information to Governor Odili's government. The groups were heavily armed with dangerous AK47s, G3s and have history of murders and violence in the Gokana area. These two cult groups emerged from the Gokana central for the purpose of political dominance. Along the Bodo axis was the emergence of Dewell and Degbam as a result of political struggle over dominance. According to McFini (2006) Deewell was initiated in Bodo by Kenneth Kobani, while Pidomson, Jr, was in charge of Deebam. During the Paramount Rulers and stakeholders meeting in Giokoo, the traditional headquarters of the Gokana kingdom, the Paramount Ruler of Nweol town, His Royal Majesty Mene Sunday Kotex, blamed politicians for the persistent crisis in the area. He maintained that the only alternative way of checking cultism is to tackle politicians in the area first. Chief Kotex was of the view that all politicians in the area should be summoned to a meeting where they would be properly addressed and warned against supporting and sponsoring cult related activities in the area (The Tide online publication Oct. 10 2014).

Consequently, some communities in Ogoni have engaged in series of conflict especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These communal crises have occurred in Gokana, Khana and Tai Local Government Areas of Ogoniland. However, Gokana had witnessed mostly communal crises but of recent cult crises erupted.

Table 1. Chronology of crises in Ogoni

S/N	Year	Community
1.	1920s	Bodo/Mogho (Gokana) crisis started.
2.	1950s till date	Barako/Nweol (Gokana) crisis started and occur yearly during every farming season.
3.	1971 till date	Deeyor /Deken (Gokana) crisis started and occur yearly during every farming season.
4.	1979	Bomu/ Lewe (Gokana) crisis started.
5.	1988	Bomu/Lewe(Gokana) hostility resumed.
6.	2001	Kpите (Tai) political crisis occurred.
7.	2004	Kaani 1 and Kaani 2 crisis started.
8.	2005 Sept	Bodo (Gokana) Deebam/Deewell cults clash started.
9.	2006 July	Bomu/Lewe (Gokana) communal crisis started.
10.	2006 Sept	Bomu/Lewe communal hostility resumed.
11.	2007	Kaani 1 and Kaani 2 (Khana) resumed communal hostility.
12.	2007	Kpите /Botem (Tai) communal crisis.
13.	2007	Bodo/Mogho (Gokana) communal crisis resumed.
14.	2010	B-Dere/K-Dere (Gokana) communal crisis started.
15.	2012	B-Dere/K-Dere (Gokana) communal hostility resumed.
16.	2015 March	Bera(Gokana) cult hostility.
17.	2015 April	Bomu (Gokana) cult hostility.
18.	2015 April	Biara (Gokana) cult hostility.
19.	2015 April	Bera (Gokana) cult hostility continued.
20.	2015 April	Kpor (Gokana) cult hostility.
21.	2016 February	Yeghe (Gokana) cult crisis.
22.	2016 February	Bomu (Gokana) cult crisis.
23.	2016 Sept	Bodo (Gokana) cult hostility.
24.	2017	Bomu/Lewe (Gokana) cult crisis.
25.	2017	Baen (Khana) cult crisis.
26.	2017	Okwali (Khana) cult crisis.
27.	2017	Sogho (Khana) cult crisis.
28.	2017	Boue (Khana) cult crisis.
29.	2017	Lore (Khana) cult crisis.
30.	2017 March	Kaani 1and Kaani 2 (Khana) hostility continued.

Source: Compiled by the Authors

Bodo/Mogho communal crisis could be dated back to the 1920s. There was a resurgent in 2007 which witnessed colossal destruction of lives and properties and a fragrant display of arms. According to Ada-Dumpe (2017) the crisis was very devastating as small arms and

light weapons including dynamites were recklessly used. The crisis was instigated as a result of arms accumulated by the communities. In the same vein, the perennial crisis between the people of B-Dere and K-Dere communities equally is an emerging development in recent time. Hostilities erupted between the two neighbouring communities in 2010 and 2012. This led to the destruction and burning of houses and loss of lives. The communities' residents took refuge in neighbouring communities for safety. According to Nomkia (2017) such magnitude of destruction during the crisis was unprecedented and uncalled for as the two communities evolved from the same ancestral lineage.

The Bomu and Lewe crisis started in 1979 over the establishment and location of a secondary school in Bomu. In 1988 there was a resurgence of hostilities over land dispute between families of the same ancestral migrant from the two communities. In similar vein, resumption of hostility started again early 2017 between the two communities due to cult rivalry occasioned by illegal refining activities in the area (Naasikpo, 2017). Also the Deeyor and Deken communal crisis has remained a recalling event in the history of Ogoniland. Since the emergence of the crisis in 1971, there is no year especially during farming season that they do not engaged in hostility till date. They have engaged in litigation up to the Appeal Court, but such verdict could not resolve the issue. Over the period both communities have suffered colossal casualties in terms of lives and property.

**Kpите Political Crisis:** The crises in Ogoniland over the years have taken different forms. The Kpите Tai Crisis of June, 9 2001 had remained indelible and most devastating in the political history of the Tai people. The political configuration of the area has always been divided along two groups. The emergence of democracy in 1999 equally structurally followed the same pattern. In the then PDP in Tai existed two dominant groups: Hon. John Suanu Nna led "Restoration Team" loyal to Dr. Peter Odili and Chief Monday Ngbor "Agenda 99" a political platform of Chief Sergeant Awuse. Both Dr. Peter Odili and Chief Sergeant Awuse were governorship aspirants in Rivers State during the 1999 political era. After the elections Dr. Peter Odili emerged as the Governor of the State. This development led to the realignment within the political structure of PDP in the State for the purpose of relevance and dominance. The first local government elections by the Odili administration produced Hon. Barry Mpigi as Chairman Tai Local government from the Chief Monday Ngbor group. This generated and deepened the political division be-

tween Hon John Suanu Nna and Chief Monday Nabor groups. The emergence of Ogoni United Front (OUF) in 2001 headed by Sir Mike Oku (then General Manager of Radio Rivers 2 FM) and Co-ordinated by Poroma, Celestine Lekia at the Tai LGA level was a new political group in Ogoniland prior to the 2003 electioneering under the auspices of Governor Odili for the purpose of mobilization within the four Ogoni Local government areas. This was seen as a threat by some Ogoni political actors who were at the corridor of State power. Similarly, Chief Monday Nabor and his group were not comfortable and re-strategized to ensure the collapse of the young and emerging political group. Cumulatively, the two groups clashed in Kpite on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2001 during a proposed courtesy visit of the OUF to the Gbenemene of Tai King Gininwa. The arrival of members of OUF at the home of Hon. John Suanu Nna before take-off to the palace of the Gbenemene of Tai triggered the crisis. The loyalists of Chief Monday Nabor invaded the compound of Hon. John Suanu Nna. This resulted to sporadic and spontaneous shooting, burning and destruction of houses of Hon John Suanu Nna and Chief Poroma and other members of Hon. John Suanu Nna's group. The victims took refuge in neighbouring communities and were barred from returning to the community for about two years that the crisis lasted. This crisis eventually led to the early collapse of the Ogoni United front (OUF).

Yeghe community in Gokana in recent time has not engaged in any inter community crisis but has experienced military invasion due to the activities of militancy. The seeming peace experienced was due to the influence of an Ex-militant leader Solomon Ndigbara (Osama bin ladin) who hails from the community. The ex-militant leader seems to wield a lot of influence in his community and Ogoni in general and is always wooed by politicians within and outside Ogoni during elections in the area. The activities of the militant group of Osama bin Ladin later posed serious security threat within Ogoni territory and Rivers State at large due to the persistent killings and arms struggle in Ogoni allegedly traced to the group after the 2015 general elections and subsequent re-run elections in the area. In February 2016, the military engaged the militant group in an operation in Yeghe after it was alleged that the militant group was responsible for some killings in Yeghe and Ogoni in general. This led to the declaration of the Ex-militant leader wanted by the Police and the Army. Several lives were lost and Senator Magnus Abe's constituency office at Bori was burnt down. The Ogoni communities have experienced communal crisis and cult supremacy violence in recent time. In 2017,



Ogoniland experienced series of cult supremacy crisis. This crisis of supremacy is mainly to secure territorial dominance. The two major rival cult groups; Deebam and Dewell have engaged in battle of supremacy in different part of Ogoniland resulting to brutal killings and the beheading of members of rival cult group. This has affected economic and social activities of the people in the area. However they seem to enjoy the support of the political class due to their relevance during elections in the area.

The cult or militant groups in Ogoni refused to embrace the Rivers State amnesty programme and did not surrender any meaning arms during the committee's first visit to the area. It was in March 2017 that over 3000 cultists surrendered and denounced cultism due to the intervention of Rev. Fr. Abel the parish priest of St. Patrick Catholic Church Bodo. (<https://www.today.ng/tag/gokana>) The Hostility in Ogoniland has posed serious threat to socio-economic activities in the area which made the State government to extend the amnesty period to cultists and militants in Ogoni area in March 2017.

According to Chinda (2016), thousands of ammunition and explosives were recovered within 60 days of intense and sometimes dangerous work of disarming and enlisting thousands of cultists. Kenneth Chinda who is the chairman of the Rivers State Amnesty committee and the Special Adviser to the Governor on Amnesty noted that cult groups were found in all the local government in Rivers State. He maintained that some communities have weapons with which they prosecute communal wars and that community vigilante groups were also cult groups. He also revealed that the major reasons behind these cult groups include communal wars, chieftaincy tussle, economic hardship and sheer criminality. The battle for supremacy among these cult groups led to many killings in the near past and these cult groups were heavily armed attested to by the number of arms recovered from them". (<https://www.bellanaija.com>)

However, Chinda (2016) failed to attribute political influence and sponsorship to the acquisition of arms and the rise of cult crises in Rivers state. Therefore the question is: if the political actors are exonerated from the rising cases of arms acquisition and cult crises in the State then who are responsible for the armed political thugs who are involved in electoral violence during every election in Rivers State. Also, why has the state actors paid delve ear to cases of electoral violence as observed during the 2015 elections and subsequent re-run elections in River State.

According to Abuh (2015), the gubernatorial election in Rivers State was also trailed by violence with six persons killed. These acts were perpetrated by various armed militant or cult groups loyal to the political actors (Joab-Peterside, 2016).

The proliferation of arms in the domain of non-state actors in the state has led to persistent arm conflict even in the rural settlements. Consequently, Ogoniland has become a hotbed of crises in recent time. These crises range from communal conflict to cult rivalry and militancy. Also, the magnitude of the destruction and sophistication of arm experienced during any crisis in the area has been alarming. The crisis in the area has manifested in three major dimensions vis-a-vis: cultism, communal conflict and militancy. Although, the State has not been able to resolve these prolonged arm conflict in the area, So the challenge is, how do these arms infiltrate into the area in spite of the presence of the security agencies. This is an indication of the porous nature of our borders and water ways which encourage free movement of small arms and light weapons. The incessant conflicts and communal wars in the region have provided the perfect milieu, in which illicit trade in small arms in exchange for the natural resources of the State has continue to thrive. In spite of the national and sub-regional collaborations to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons precise solution have not been proffered. For instance in Nigeria, apart from being a party to the ECOWAS moratorium on SALW, member Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy (GGESS), there also exist the National Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCSALW), an institution charged with the responsibility of controlling the trade in small arm and light weapons yet it is without much achievement. Rivers State and Ogoni in particular has experienced so much fratricidal conflicts over time. It is most likely, that such guns recycle into new conflicts and contribute in the escalation, leaving a trail of death and destruction behind. This has made most scholars relate violent crisis in Rivers State to the availability of small arms which has circulated to the nooks and crannies of the State. Therefore, it is futile becoming a party to international and regional treaty on the control of arms proliferation without strengthening national capacity of the instruments against proliferation of illicit arms particularly Small Arms and light weapons in the nation. On several occasions, unsuspecting members of the public traveling on the rivers and creeks in the area have become victims of attack and robbed by sea pirates, armed with sophisticated small arms and light weapons. This has generally

made traveling on the rivers very unsafe with a significant impact on the economy of the area. The arms available to non-state actors in many locations in Ogoniland have created security challenges to socio-economic and political development in the areas.

### Conclusion

The strategy of the Nigerian State over the period towards regulating the inflow of arms has not yielded the desired result. However, this perennial quagmire has affected the socio-economic and political development of our society. The failure of the various policies and institutional framework geared towards addressing insecurity in Ogoniland seems not to make any reasonable impact due to the continuous inflow of small arms and light weapons into the region perpetrated by the political gladiators over territorial dominance. The study therefore concludes that there is a correlation between arms proliferation and the porous nature of the nation's borders. Similarly, the failure of anti-proliferation framework by the international organization is equally sabotaged by the developed economies whose economic and political interest is dependent on the licit and illicit trade. That as long as the flow of arms persists and unchecked, the region will continue to experience violence and insecurity.

It is therefore, imperative for the Nigerian States to strengthen the capacity of the security agencies in preventing arms proliferation and also ensuring that the National Committee on small arms and light weapons operate independently and formally creating the body through act of parliament. The State should initiate a functional strategy of controlling the trade in small arms and light weapons and the problem of unemployment and underdevelopment of the area should be addressed. Equally security at the borders and around Ogoniland should be strengthened to check the inflow of arms and incessant communal and cult crisis.

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