

**West African Insecurity: Preliminary Assessment of the Intersections of Natural resource-
Corruption and Violent Gun-criminality**Sam O. Smah, PhD¹**Abstract**

Based on socio-historical data, this study investigates the intersection of natural resource/extractive-based corruption and violent gun-induced criminality in the 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and the implications of these relationships on the sub-region's security and development. The work demonstrates that corrupt management, prolong social injustices in the distribution of positions, monetary and financial gains and other life-enhancing opportunities nationally as well as the external thirst or quest to control those resources derived from natural resource endowments in the sub-region are the drivers of violent gun-criminality between several actors. The failure of the region's stance against Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) sustains violent antagonisms between competitors on one hand and the powerless local populations on the other. The implication of this apparent state of helplessness to control illegal flow and circulation of illegal arms and ammunitions is the deepening crisis of nepotistic corruption and the perpetuation of criminal and insurgent groups, such as Boko Haram/Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP), Al-Qaeda and affiliates and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), among others- who have continued to wage wars of attrition with various governments and communities in the sub-region.

Key words: Natural resource-based corruption, violent gun-criminality, West African security

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Introduction

West Africa's crude-extractive industry has impacted on global and regional economies since crude oil and other natural resources were exploited in commercial quantities by the colonial masters from 1900s. In fact, the best grades of crude, gold, diamond and other natural reserves come from the sub-region and have continued to attract international corporations despite the hunt for alternative sources of energy for industrial and domestic uses around the world. At home, oil, gas and other natural resource endowment in each country remains the benchmark for the ruling elite formation, be they political, social or economic classes, who in both military gabs and civilian attires have continued to entrench themselves in those superior positions.

Only 30% of ECOWAS's over 400million citizens Worldometer (2020) is said to enjoy over 70% of the resources and opportunities created by the natural resource revenues, which are far more than 80% of revenues accruing to the federation account of many of the states while the rest of the 70% of the populations are subjected to misery of insecurity, poverty and living on the brink of life. The reactions of the bulk of the citizens who have been subjected to hardships in their attempt to better their lives in these richly endowed "extractive" economies, have not been to kill one another but are often provoked by the quest by outsiders to takeover those resources in their domains. What now constitutes the region's nightmare, terrorism (broadly defined in terms of the effect or threats and actual use of violence-NACTEST, 2014), transnational organized crime and corruption began as isolated protests especially from the early 1980s, against prolong neglect orchestrated by the post-independence local elite power holders' conspirator affiliation with large oil companies coupled with their state's indifference, coldness and aloofness to environmental degradation and costs of usable fuel and gas for ordinary citizens in most of the states in the region (The Economist, 2007). Most protracted crises in West Africa (and elsewhere) are fueled by the desire to control natural resources (crude oil and natural gas in Nigeria, gold and diamond in Liberia and Sierra Leone, uranium in Mali, etc.) by corrupt local ruling elite and external forces who destabilize the region's stability for the same reason (ICG, 2017a).

Natural resource/extractive industries² remain the economic bedrock for the sub-region, generating the main, if not the sole source of fiscal revenues, source of foreign exchange earnings and surpluses to finance much needed socio-economic development. Yet, studies and surveys indicate that these countries have been unable to effectively and judiciously use the resources and therefore they have shown poor economic performance in comparison with countries with similar levels of income. In many cases, enormous revenues shared among the tiers of the region's governments appear to have retarded economic and social security development leading to the "resource curse" thesis (IFRA, 2010; Ibeanu & Lukman, 2006). However, a more theoretically sound thesis is found in a combination of related criminological theories.

This contribution focuses on the complex role that natural resource endowment plays in many violent criminality and abuses aided by SALW circulation in the ECOWAS sub-region, nay African continent. It begins with a brief reference on West African demographics and then an exploration of natural resource distribution in the region, a theoretical model as well as providing exploratory investigation of the scenarios of violent criminality mediated by an avalanche of small arms and light weapons circulation and the concluding remarks.

2. West African demographics

The region is essentially mobile, always in transit and presently constitutes young people. According to Worldometer (2020) the current population of West Africa is 401,861,254 as of Wednesday, January 29, 2020, based on the latest United Nations estimates. West Africa population is equivalent to 5.4% of the total world population. West Africa ranks number 2 in Africa among subregions ranked by Population. The population density in West Africa is 66 per Km² (172 people per mi²). The total land area is 6,064,060 Km² (2,341,346 sq. miles). 47.7 % of the population is urban (191,841,724 people in 2019). The median age in

² Generally, extractive industries relate to mineral and hydrocarbon products such as gold, phosphates, diamonds, oil, gas, etc., with the "petroleum subsector" as just one of the divisions of the industry.

Western Africa is 18. 2years.This is a sub-region that is largely youthful, going by the median age of 18.2 years.

Table 1: West African countries and their populations

Country	Population (2020)
Nigeria	206,139,589
Ghana	31,072,940
Côte d'Ivoire	26,378,274
Niger	24,206,644
Burkina Faso	20,903,273
Mali	20,250,833
Senegal	16,743,927
Guinea	13,132,795
Benin	12,123,200
Togo	8,278,724
Sierra Leone	7,976,983
Liberia	5,057,681
Mauritania	4,649,658
Gambia	2,416,668
Guinea-Bissau	1,968,001

Country	Population (2020)
Cabo Verde	555,987
Saint Helena	6,077

Source: Worldometer (www.Worldometers.info). Elaboration of data by United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision. (Medium-fertility variant).

Table 1 shows that Nigeria’s estimated population is slightly more than half (206,139,589) the population of the West Africa sub-region (which is 401,861,254) in 2020. It is an important fact that Nigeria’s problems of instability and terrorism constitute a significant source of the sub-region’s problems by the sheer of population of the country. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) reported in February 2016 that ‘in 2015, growth in West Africa was 4.2 per cent, down from 6.1 per cent in 2014. This drop in regional growth resulted mainly from the fall in primary commodity prices, in particular oil. The sharp drop in the price of oil, which lost over half of its value in under a year, has highlighted the fragile nature of the foundations of West Africa’s growth, which is highly dependent on primary commodity exports to support its populations. As recovery measures the region needs its vibrant population to engage in alternative economic ventures and could not afford what the ECOWAS Vision 2020 acknowledges as human insecurity which is one of the bottlenecks on the path of region’s socio-economic development and growth (also see Economic Perspectives, 2004; Nsikan, 2017).

3. Natural resource-grounded assessment of West African insecurity

In the ECOWAS sub-region, there are clear indications that the richer and more natural resource-endowed States the more criminogenic it paradoxically becomes and the less endowed the State, the less criminogenic and therefore, more peaceful, stable and secure (UNODC, 2016; Smillie, 2001). A few examples will demonstrate this assumption, shortly.

A look at Table 2 shows Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mali, Liberia, Guinea, Mauritania, and Niger are richly endowed with natural resources. The political and economic history of these Member states is fraught with sustained violent criminality. This is so, not necessarily because of the endowments per se but because of the value of the resources and their prices at the world market. Such high demands for the natural resources in the international market come with virulent high-level competition between national and multi-national companies, organizations and the local ruling elite to control the markets and revenues from trading with those rich natural resources.

Table 2: Natural resource endowments of selected West African countries

Country	Natural resources	Key remark
Guinea Bissau	Bauxite	Large deposit
Senegal	Phosphate	Large deposit but sparsely endowed country
Mauritania	Phosphate, Copper, Gypsum, Iron ore	Vast reserve of phosphate
Sierra Leone	Iron ore, Gold, Platinum, Rutile, Diamond, Base metals, Chromite, Clays, Lignite	Richly endowed
Liberia	Diamond, Gold, Rutile, Chromium, Iron ore	Vast deposit of Diamond and Gold
Gambia	Zircon, Rutile, Ilmenite	Sparsely endowed country
Guinea	Bauxite, Gold, Aluminum, Iron ore, Graphite, Nickel, Limestone, Uranium, Diamond	50% of global Bauxite reserve is in Guinea
Mali	Gold, Manganese, Bauxite, Nickel, Tin, Phosphate, Lithium	Reckoned as the 3 rd producer of Gold in Africa
Niger	Uranium, Tin, Coal, Phosphate, Gold	4 th world Uranium reserve
Burkina Faso	Manganese, Gold, Copper, Uranium, Bauxite, Limestone	Limestone in the northern part of the country. Aside Cotton, Gold is the largest foreign income earner

Cote d'Ivoire	Diamond, Iron ore, Manganese, Crude oil	Sparsely endowed but Crude oil is found in small quantities in the southern part of the country
Ghana	Gold, Manganese, Bauxite, Diamond, Crude oil	Huge Gold deposit and is almost 35% of exports. Crude oil was recently discovered in the southern part of the country
Nigeria	Crude oil, Natural Gas, Tin, Coal, Iron ore, Bitumen	Largest producer of Crude oil in Africa and 7 th in the world. Natural gas reserve is around 160 trillion feet
Togo	Limestone, Phosphate	Large quantities of Limestone but sparsely endowed with Phosphate in the southern part of the country

Source: Information reworked from Nsikan, D. (2017). Natural resources found in West Africa, published on November 9, 2017 in Westafricancountries.com/-natural-resources-found-in-west-africa/ and accessed on Wednesday 29th January 2020.

The region's capacity to expropriate and apply these resources for the well-being of its population, which is increasingly becoming youthful determines to a large extent the propensity to tilt towards war, crisis and instability.

4. Historical evidence

The historical basis for the pattern of violent gun-criminality in the sub-region, which manifests criminal negligence and force is typical of the foundation of resource-based social structures. There is evidence of international involvement in the precipitation of all the wars going on in oil

and mineral-rich countries of the developing world, much of which hardly receive scholarly research. A few examples will suffice.

According to Guardian (2012), there was an unhealthy nonexistent outrage against December 2011's Royal Dutch Shell oil spill in Nigeria. Like Shell, most oil companies are rarely scrutinized or penalized for their ongoing exploitation and degradation of the environment. The lack of political will, media coverage and international assistance demonstrates how the international community privileges large oil corporations at the expense of the environment and the people (Guardian, 2012).

The issue of Halliburton Corporation has refused to die in Nigeria because it provided the milking cow for corrupt corporate and government individuals for over a decade. Nigeria dropped the corruption charges against Dick Cheney after Halliburton reached a financial settlement with Nigerian government and paid \$250m in fines for previously paying \$180m in bribes to Nigerian officials while Cheney was the CEO and secured contracts for natural gas projects in the Niger Delta (Guardian, 2010). Furthermore, the US military command base in Africa (AFRICOM) was alleged to have sought US-legislation to allow it go beyond merely providing technical support to actively engage in armed conflicts to further US access to African oil supplies. The US government documents, such as "African Oil: a priority for US national security and African development" is a case in point (Pambazuka, 2010).

In 2009 it was reported that the oil-rich Niger Delta region had suffered from environmental degradation and social unrest as a result of transnational corporations' activities which have heightened corporate irresponsibility and human rights abuses in the region(huhuonline.com). The near absence of local courts entertaining cases in Nigeria, Nigerians have resorted to the Alien Tort Claim Act, which provides a framework for foreign nationals to institute lawsuits in the US. As a fallout, at the G8 summit in July 2007, Nigerian president at that time, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua suggested that countries should treat stolen oil similar to the stolen diamonds. That the trading of "blood oil" caused corruption and violence (ISN Security Watch, 2008; Follath, 2006)).

As far back as 2005, the question had been raised as to whether Nigeria was the next Persian Gulf. This was because of the intensification of US military presence in the Niger Delta as an attempt to grab hold of new oil fields that were not in the troublesome Persian Gulf region. Many had

experienced worry that more military activities in the Niger Delta region would heighten tension and lead to more violent conflict (AlterNet, 2005). Even the US oil firm ChevronTexaco found that its Nigerian aid programme increased ethnic tensions in the Niger Delta region and that its cash aid had indirectly led to violent conflicts with the people saying the aid programme rather encouraged corruption and conflicts among communities (Ibeanu & Lukman, 2006).

In 2004, Inter Press Service reported on threats to wage war against the Nigerian government by a self-styled 'freedom fighter', Mahajeed Asari-Dokubo. While he was hailed as a freedom fighter by the masses, many people saw him as a skilled opportunist. He has soon relocated to Benin Republic and moved all his investments and assets there. While there is enormous environmental devastation, economic property and constant conflict in the region, the government and multinational oil corporations reap all the benefits while minorities face poverty, intertribal wars and arms proliferation (Inter Press Service, 2004; Pambazuka, 2004; Keen, 2000; Middleton, 2007).

The fore-going illustrates the fact that unabated corruption, violent criminality aided by SALWs and the inability to secure a national territory safe for the vast majority of the powerless segments of the society to eke a meaningful living is a function of the type of economy that is operated. More relevantly, the nature of a national development plan determines the outcome of development plans in the way they affect the lives of the vast majority of citizens in the region. A historico-sociological hindsight from the challenges of corruption, gun-violent conflicts and wars suggests that oil and gas supplies are becoming scarcer and more expensive (Gonzales, 2010), thus, the hunt for the world's remaining resources is creating new alliances and the dangers of fresh conflicts all around the world. China is moving aggressively to satiate its growing appetite for energy, potentially setting up conflict with the United States over the dwindling resources of the Middle East and Africa. For many within the academic world, oil has created a fluid, dark foundation upon which many of the world's wars, conflicts, and grievances have been based. This, coupled with a geo-strategic energy concern from the world's leading powers to safeguard and access oil, has led to this resource being at the heart of much of the instability in countries and regions across the globe. For oil remains an integral part of any country and its ability to function at an international, national and local level. Its importance is paramount with the oil lobby, in itself a sub government, with roots planted deep in the soil of the real government. Oil can have a huge

influence on any country and its foreign policy with a clear example being the United States (Human Rights watch, 2005).

According to Le Billon (2005), beginning immediately after World War II, the United States moved towards the domination of the global production and distribution of oil. This became closely linked to the containment of the Soviet Union and the prevention of communist control of this valuable resource, though Scott ascertains that it became a naked American determination to control and dominate these oil reserves and prevent this power from passing to anyone else. In practice this meant that from Iran in 1957 to Indonesia in 1965 and Ghana in 1966, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was involved in the covert overthrow of governments around the world that had threatened to nationalize their oil industries. To Gonzales (2010), the United States more recently, has been embroiled in two major wars in the Gulf (Scott, 2003; Pelletier, 2010).

As the above evidence shows, for the United States and her western allies, oil has been either a key factor or underlying cause for direct military action or covert destabilization of non-United States or Western backed governments. The competition between the West and developing countries such as China and India will place further demand and strain on oil producing states, not least on those who are politically, economically or socially unstable. Many countries such as these reside within the African continent and it is here that this article will now focus. Oil and war on the African continent tied to oil's impact on individual countries foreign policy has been petroleum's submerge effects on war and conflict itself. The recent emphasis on non-fossil fuel for meeting domestic and international energy needs still has time to materialize. For now, the argument of the Library of Congress in 2008 is veritable. That is, Nigeria's economy is struggling to leverage the country's vast wealth in fossil fuels in order to displace the crushing poverty that affects about 57 percent of its population. Economists refer to the coexistence of vast natural resources wealth and extreme personal poverty in developing countries like Nigeria as the "paradox of plenty" or the "curse of oil." Nigeria's exports of oil and natural gas—at a time of peak prices-have enabled the country to post merchandise trade and current account surpluses in recent years. Reportedly, 80 percent of Nigeria's energy revenues flow to the government, 16 percent covers operational costs, and the remaining 4 percent go to investors. However, the World Bank has estimated that, as a result of corruption, 80 percent of energy revenues benefit only 1 percent of the population (Smith, 2001).

Similarly, the National Intelligence Council estimates that United States imports of oil from sub-Saharan Africa will increase to 25 percent in the next ten years. Consequently, international involvement is, like Africa's oil production, only set to expand. Still, unlike the increase in oil production and revenue, many of these oil producing nations continue to suffer from dilapidated infrastructure, a chronic lack of public services and general populaces that have remained caught in a circle of conflict, despair and destitute poverty. Furthermore, the United Nations has recorded over 6,800 in the region (Oshita, 2003).

To Gonzales (2005), in many cases, enormous revenues shared among the tiers of governments appear to have retarded economic and social development through a number of phenomena often referred to collectively as the "resource curse". Gonzales (2005) cites Le Billion's (2005) thesis of the two key types of resource war.

The first is **scarce resource war** where people will fight each other for the resources necessary to survive. That is, resource poor societies are confronted by the capture of resource rents by the elite and are unable to adapt to the scarcity of resources. An example includes the appropriation of irrigated lands on the Senegal and Mauritania border. Violent confrontations between Mauritanian herders and Senegalese farmers have erupted along the Senegal River Valley over the increasing competition for land. The construction of dams built upstream and downstream has also exacerbated problems in regional land tenure that has often led to tragic consequences for the residents there. This is not supported in this work.

In Le Billion's (2005) typology, the second type of resource war is the **abundant resource war** which argues that a wealth of resources can result in less democracy, poor economic growth and greedy behaviour by competing elites (Vines, 2010). That the more narrowly rights are held, the less equal will the society be. This will create growing frustration amongst marginalized groups and the general populace, who could conclude that violence is the only option open to them in order to change their situation. Brutality also becomes a method of maintaining control for the governing body, which will create and sustain profitable patterns of resource exploitation and wealth distribution. Subsequently, Le Billion (2005) concludes that these resource wars are conflicts in which violence, or the threat of it, becomes an intrinsic part of the political economy of resource exploitation. This is more of Nigeria's situation.

In Nigeria there is reasonable evidence that the presence of valuable natural assets increases the risk of state organized or unorganized rebellion, especially from outside forces. Nigeria is currently the United State's fourth largest exporter of crude oil but is currently in the midst of an ever-worsening militant situation in the Niger Delta, numerous incidences of organized communal conflicts and violent clashes between Fulani herders and other pastoralists and crop farmers, intra-elite conflicts, etc. (Nnamdi, 2018; Gundu, 2018; Smillie, 2001). According to Vines (2010), historically, the people of the Niger Delta have always been at the mercy of greedy outsiders who plunder their natural resources without giving them anything in return, from the days of slavery to the present day and by implication the basis for the emergence of sinister militias, religious sectarian groups and freedom fighter groups (Okonta and Douglas, 2003; Smah, 2008, 2015). Also, Vines (2005) noted that the country has suffered through decades of national government corruption, bad governance, unemployment, insecurity, and a total indifference to poverty alleviation, which have all become key conflict triggers that underlie much of the anger and resentment in the Niger Delta region and other parts of the country (Smah, 2016). However, it is the national governments and the oil giant's insensitivity to the local communities' right to oil revenue, which has caused the final escalation to low-intensity conflict (IFRA, 2010).

5. The RAViCO model of natural-resource-based violent gun-criminality

West Africa's subtle invitation to its deepening insecurity is in section 59 of its Convention on small arms and light weapons, which allows people and therefore would-be terrorists to enjoy easy movement between the countries. The 15-member ECOWAS allows citizens of those countries to travel around the region without visas, and border areas are often poorly controlled. Governments, meanwhile, are often unable to track suspicious people as they move. (Pujol-Mazzini, 2018). However, how does this theoretically play out? For a better appreciation of the interplay of factors that explain violent gun-criminality and criminal justice abuses in accessing natural resources endowment of developing societies, it is important to consider the simple **RAViCO model** developed from integrating the elements of Rational Choice and Routine activities, subculture of violence and fraud/organized crime triangle theories. First let us present a brief discussion on the

underlying their theoretical postulations before drawing up the tenets of the RAViCO model (see Miethe & Meier 1994; Smith, 2001; Kassem & Higson, 2012).

Subculture of Violence

According to OMCYA (2010), the search for the social causes of violent crime in society has been an ongoing preoccupation of criminologists since the early 20th century, when researchers attempted to look beyond biological and psychological explanations to understand crime. The shift in understanding violence as a social phenomenon, rather than an individual one, emerged from observations that incidents of violence tend to not be evenly distributed within society. Rather, rates of crime and violence vary spatially and demographically. The endeavor to understand these patterns has generated a range of theories that highlight various social processes, including how crime is learned and taught and how it emerges from social inequalities. Amongst these various explanations, few have been as durable as the explanation of culture.

Cultural explanations for violence first emerged in the works of American delinquency theorists in the 1930s who were attempting to account for the concentrations of crime and violence in poor, urban African-American neighborhoods in the 1930s. Sellin (1938), Miller (1958) and Cohen (1951) were amongst the first of many cultural deviance theorists to develop the concept of a criminal subculture and to link it to social problems such as poverty and inequality. However, it was not until the late 1960s that Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) launched a distinct and comprehensive subculture of violence thesis. Possibly the most well-known theory in this genre of work, Wolfgang and Ferracuti's *Subculture of Violence* attempted to outline a methodological framework for the empirical examination of violent subcultures. Central to their discussion was the idea that higher rates of violence amongst lower-class and racialized populations could be explained by the fact that these groups have embraced values and norms that are more permissive of violence. This theorization assumes the existence of distinct subcultural, pro-violent values that develop in opposition to dominant or middle-class norms and values (Anderson, 1999).

In sum, research indicates that high concentrations of violence amongst specific populations and geographic locations can be attributed to a variety of social and cultural forces. While macro-socio-economic processes play a role, collective norms that govern smaller groups, such as schools, also appear to generate violence. From the foregoing, the persistence of organized violence in Nigeria is precipitated by the existence of violent subcultures with religious, social or economic orientation and motivation. Further research on the subculture of violence thesis could benefit from more qualitative and ethnographic analysis of the specific factors that lead individuals down paths of violence and nonviolence.

Rational Choice and Routine Activities Theories

Experts argue that the rational choice and routine activities theories are based on the fundamental tenets of classical criminology, which hold that people freely choose their behaviour and are motivated by the avoidance of pain and the pursuit of pleasure. Individuals evaluate their choice of actions in accordance with each option's ability to produce advantage, pleasure and happiness. Rational choice provides a micro perspective on why individual offenders decide to commit specific crimes; people choose to engage in crime because it can be rewarding, easy, satisfying and fun. The central premise of this theory is that people are rational beings whose behaviour can be controlled or modified by a fear of punishment. In this way, it is believed offenders can be persuaded to desist from offending by intensifying their fear of punishment. In terms of setting the quantum of punishment, according to this theory, sanctions should be limited to what is necessary to deter people from choosing crime (Siegel and McCormick, 2006; Keen, 2000).

Rational choice is premised on a utilitarian belief that actions are based on a conscious evaluation of the utility of acting in a certain way. This perspective assumes that crime is a personal choice, the result of individual decision-making processes. This means that individuals are responsible for their choices and thus individual offenders are subject to blame for their criminality. In terms of offending, rational choice posits that offenders weigh the potential benefits and consequences associated with committing an offence and then make a rational choice on the basis of this evaluation. Therefore, before committing a crime, the reasoning criminal weighs the chances of

getting caught, the severity of the expected penalty and the value to be gained by committing the act. This means that if offenders perceive the costs to be too high, the act to be too risky, or the payoff to be too small, they will choose to not engage in the act.

The tenets of this theory are based on several assumptions about the decision-making process and behavioral motivations. It is held that people decide to commit crime after careful consideration of the costs and benefits of behaving in a certain manner. This involves considering both personal factors, which may include a need for money, revenge, or entertainment, and situational factors such as the target/victim's vulnerability and the presence of witnesses, guardians, or the police. Rational choice focuses on the opportunity to commit crime and on how criminal choices are structured by the social environment and situational variables.

Routine activities theory is a subsidiary of rational choice theory. Developed by Cohen and Felson (1979), routine activities theory requires three elements be present for a crime to occur: a motivated offender with criminal intentions and the ability to act on these inclinations, a suitable victim or target, and the absence of a capable guardian who can prevent the crime from happening. These three elements must converge in time and space for a crime to occur.

Routine activities theory provides a macro perspective on crime in that it predicts how changes in social and economic conditions influence the overall crime and victimization rate. Felson and Cohen (1980) postulate that criminal activities are a "structurally significant phenomenon," meaning that violations are neither random nor trivial events. In consequence, it is the routine of activities people partake in over the course of their day and night lives that makes some individuals more susceptible to being viewed as suitable targets by a rationally calculating offender. Routine activities theory relates the pattern of offending to the everyday patterns of social interaction. Crime is therefore normal and is dependent on available opportunities to offend. If there is an unprotected target and there are sufficient rewards, a motivated offender will commit a crime.

In terms of suitable targets, the choice is influenced by the offender's perception of the target's vulnerability; the more suitable and accessible the target, the more likely that a crime will occur. The number of motivated criminals in the population also affects crime levels. It is held that offenders are less likely to commit crimes if they can achieve personal goals through legitimate

means. This implies that criminal motivations can be reduced if offenders perceive that there are alternatives to crime.

The presence of capable guardians is also held to deter individuals from offending. Guardianship can be the physical presence of a person who is able to act in a protective manner or in the form of more passive mechanical devices such as video surveillance or security systems. These physical security measures help limit an offender's access to suitable targets. The essential aspect of routine activities theory is the interaction of motivation, opportunity and targets. In this way, the presence of guardians will deter most offenders, rendering even attractive targets off limits. Therefore, the presence of opportunity coupled with a lack of guardianship increases criminal motivations and the likelihood of an offence taking place.

Cohen and Felson (1979) argue that routine activities theory, like the related lifestyle-exposure theory, emerged as a key theoretical approach in criminology in the late 1970s. *Routine activities* refer to generalized patterns of social activities in a society (i.e., spatial and temporal patterns in family, work, and leisure activities). A key idea is that the structure of routine activities in a society influences what kinds of situations emerge, and changes in a society's routine activities cause changes in the kind of situations people confront. Another key idea is that people act in response to situations (including when they commit crimes); therefore, the kinds of situations they encounter in their daily lives influence their crime involvement (and, as a result, influence a society's crime rate), and changes in people's exposure to situations may lead to changes in their crime involvement (and, consequently, changes in a society's crime rate). Routine activity theory links a macro-level structural model (spatial and temporal patterns of routine activities in society) with a micro-level situational model that aims to explain why a crime occurs.

The situational model stipulates that a criminal act occurs as a result of the convergence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of guardianship (control and supervision). Routine activity theory is sometimes combined with rational choice theory, an action theory that explains human action as the result of rational choice (i.e., acting on the best available option perceived). When applied at the individual level, the routine activity approach has generally aimed to explain why a person is victimized, or offends, by explaining how his/her individual routines (lifestyles) bring him/her into contact with (or expose him/her to) situations conducive to crime. Some efforts

have been made to integrate the routine activity approach with other criminological theories. In terms of policy and prevention, the routine activity approach has mainly been linked to situational crime prevention and policing (for example, hot spots analysis).

The Fraud Triangle as Applied to The Study of Organized Crime

Donald Ray Cressey (1919-1987) was an American penologist, sociologist, and criminologist who made innovative contributions to the study of organized crime, prisons, criminology, the sociology of criminal law, and white-collar crime and created the concept of the fraud triangle. The creation of the theory required Cressey to interview about 200 convicted embezzlers around the Midwest of the United States, which he dubbed “trust violators.” The people that had entered the workplace with no intention of stealing peaked his interest. After the interviews Cressey formulated the following hypothesis:

Trusted persons become trust violators when they conceive of themselves as having a financial problem that is non-shareable and are aware this problem can be secretly resolved by violation of the position of financial trust, and are able to apply to their own conduct in that situation verbalizations which enable them to adjust their conceptions of themselves as users of the entrusted funds and properties (Cressey, 1973:30).

Professor Donald R. Cressey (Cressey, 1973, 1972, 1969) can therefore, be considered the founder of the modern study of organized crime. His book "Theft of the Nation: The Structure and Operations of Organized Crime in America", published in 1969, remains the most widely cited and perhaps also the most controversial scholarly book on organized crime in which he created the fraud triangle and the three fraud triangle components. These consist of all of the following: Pressure, Rationalization and Opportunity. The fraud triangle can best explain most of all abuse unless the particular person entered the company with the intent of stealing in the first place.

According to Wells (2005), **Pressure** is the first leg of the fraud triangle. Cressey (1973) describes it in his hypothesis as a non-shareable financial problem. These financial problems are usually personal to that person. But they are too ashamed by the problem that they are unwilling to share with others. This is particularly disturbing when it is later understood that if the violator had talked about it others would have been willing to help. **Opportunity** is the second leg of the fraud triangle and is an opportunity that exists within a company for fraud to take place.



Figure 1: Donald Cressey's (1973) Fraud Triangle

Opportunities usually occur from a lack of internal controls within a company. For example, the violator here feels that he/she can take advantage of the situation without getting caught. Of course, there has to be a certain level of technical skill to be able to define an opportunity which is why several violators find opportunities within their own job function. The third and final component of the fraud triangle is that of **Rationalization**. Cressey (1973) found that many of the violators never felt that they were actually a criminal. This is because they had rationalized to themselves that the misdeed was okay. In fact, many of the violators he interviewed felt that they were justified. Instead, the act was part of a general irresponsibility for which they were not completely accountable.

In the region, large numbers and high intensity of manifest or potential violent conflicts dominate both the political culture and the people's everyday lives. Since the beginning of the resumed democratization process in 1990s, the number and intensity of violent conflicts has tended to

increase rather than decrease. In Nigeria, some sources claim that more than 6, 800 major conflicts had been recorded since then (Oshita, 2003). One of the central conflicts, influenced by ecological, economic and social factors, involves petroleum and natural gas production in the Niger Delta and the distribution of profits. A second conflict which has escalated dramatically since 1999 is the introduction of the Islamic *Sharia* in Nigeria's northern states. On the one hand, this is a religious conflict between the country's Muslim-influenced North (West and East) and Christian-influenced South. Tensions between members of the different religions repeatedly lead to violent conflicts and protests, many of which are caused by an interpretation of the natural resource endowments in either South, Central or North states. On the other hand, however, political influence and the distribution of power are at stake as well (Abdel-Fattah, 1999).

What does the **RAViCO** model of natural resource-based violent gun-criminality explain? In various countries and cities of the region, religious and ethnic militias threaten the 'legitimate' power monopoly of the state, whose institutions (such as the security sector) can no longer tackle basic societal responsibilities because of their compromised weakness and inefficient functioning. This model attempts to provide the explanatory basis for this scenario.

From the discourse on each of the three theories stated in this contribution, a working thesis can be developed thus, viz *the rationalized, persistent corrupt management of natural resource endowments through unequal, unjust distribution of opportunities and positions repeatedly obstruct pathways to distributive justice, social equality, equity, good governance, accountability and social security; and which if prolonged, make the control, by any means whatsoever, of the same resources and opportunities the ultimate subject target of violent agitations resulting to different forms of aberrantly repressive forces engaging in violent crimes using lethal instruments of selective destruction, thereby promoting fear, anxiety, instability and newer forms of social disorder. The result of this scenario is the underdevelopment of socio-economic, security and political institutions and processes needed to bring about meaningful, sustainable peace and development.*

The facts that are derivable from the above thesis include;

- i. A combination of pressure, opportunity and rationalization all of which are implicit in the subculture of violence theory and rational choice and routine activity theory produces a rational paradigm that connects and defends state corruption in all facets of life (economic, financial, property, political, etc) but more importantly in the context of defending violent gun-criminality in accessing opportunities and life-enhancing resources generated from natural resource endowments of the society. Persistent corruption in the management of those resources creates the opportunity to replace or dissolve the state by those who feel left out but fight to come in.
- ii. Society is, therefore, pregnant with conflict which produces pressure among different segments and inherent institutions of the society insofar as access to resources is denied or injustice justified. Conflict is at the heart of different forms and degrees of fraud in personal, interpersonal and intergroup relations in society. Due to the competitive nature of relationships between and among people, the desire to outfit one another in the scheme of things serves as the main drivers and propellers of pressures.
- iii. The opportunities to break trust and oath of office arise not from hidden and undisclosed desires include not only the need to appear to have arrived, to show off assets and lifestyles and attitudes of the now rich but the conscious realization that the power to protect injustice is in the barrel of the gun and the entire criminal justice institutions.
- iv. The extent to which one succeeds in excusing their criminality of any type- murder, homicide, assassination, fraud, corruption and illegal arms trade, possession, use and traffic, depends on the principles and nature of anti-corruption framework, criminal law enforcement and societal values and practices that is committed to defend injustices and criminality.
- v. The fight against street level crime and corruption in the extractive-based economy and society as well as the so-called 'illegal arms and ammunition manufacture and circulation' is directly related to the character of the state and its operators at each given epoch. The arms of government-executive (and all executively created bodies-police, security, etc.), judiciary (all levels of courts) and legislature (for law creation and oversight functions) usually work in sync when it comes to sustaining an regimen of

- inequity, social injustice, insecurity for the marginalized and powerless segments of society.
- vi. Under the circumstances, SALW control is simply not feasible though local manufacturers of Dane guns, knives, spears and other simple hand-held tools used essentially for hunting and domestic purposes are often made the scapegoats of illegal arms dealers while largescale traffickers in sophisticated and more dangerous weapons, often of mass destruction in nature are screened from media exposure. More often than not, subcultures and transborder illegal arms dealers violent subcultures to protect their trade with the same dangerous weapons on land and high seas. The emergent subcultures of violence are deployed to commit electoral fraud, sustain unjust criminal justice institutions and processes and defend corrupt persons who aided their entrance into power. ‘Governments’ routinely abuse power, protect the corrupt and punish the less harmful street level crimes and criminals. The entire criminal justice system is tilted against the poor and their crimes.
 - vii. Sustained aggression by contending interests to control the financial and economic resources, namely crude oil, gas reserves or other mineral deposits is the rule of the game and the rationalizations are presented using institutions of state power and vantage positions aided by means of coercion.

We cannot explain violent criminality, drug and arms trafficking, abuse and violations of criminal justice values outside the context of maximizing effective control of economic, financial and natural resource endowments of countries. Directly and remotely, rulers who pitch themselves with interests that protect them use state resources to crush those opposed to them.

6. Country Case Studies

A reflection on a few of the region’s countries will explicate the interface of natural resources and criminality and criminal justice.

Case study 1-Nigeria: Nigeria is the largest economy in the economic bloc and even by its demographics. Over 80% of its revenue come from crude oil exploration and sale even though

there are other natural resource endowments. From the late decade of the 21st Century, Nigeria has been dealing with sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians with a bloody insurgency by a Muslim rebel group called Boko Haram³ as well as the Niger Delta crises bordering mainly on environmental degradation from oil exploration. Though Nigeria fought a 36-month civil war between 1967 and 1970, however, the main basis of that war was not conflict over natural resources as it is what is playing out as its aftermath (Nnamdi, 2018; ICG, 2017b).

Muslim-Christian Sectarian Violence (2000-Present): Whereas religious violence had taken a daunting toll on Nigeria's intergroup relations particularly between Igbos and the Hausa/Fulani north, among others, the inception of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 ushered in new dimensions. Combat conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria have now become a matter of course, for virtually any slight provocations. While this in many ways is an extension of the sectarian, or religious, animosity seen in Nigeria's coups and prior civil war, this variation is significant in that it is tied to the imposition of Muslim Sharia law in many parts of Northern Nigeria by state governments as well as the nature of the present northern Muslim President, Muhammadu Buhari's administration in handling the Boko Haram attacks by word and actions targeted at Christians in the local government areas of Borno and Adamawa states. Riots and other forms of violence between Muslims and Christians have claimed thousands of lives since the start of the 21st Century. In the end, the analysis must implicate the political economy of the natural resource endowments that pitch these groups against each other (IFRA, 2010; Odeyemi, 2010).

The activities of Boko Haram, an Islamist guerrilla force, which has been in armed rebellion against the Nigerian government since 2009 must be identified for analysis. Boko Haram is an al-Qaida affiliated Islamist group that seeks to impose Sharia (Muslim) law on Nigeria. This group targets Christians and secular, more moderate Muslims and is best known for the 2014 kidnappings that resulted in the abduction of over 200 Christian schoolgirls. Boko Haram's attacks are largely in Nigeria's northeast. The rebels also operate out of bases in neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and

³ A cursory look at the country's past indicates the following major conflicts: The Major Nzekwu-led 1966 military coup; Nigerian civil (Biafran) war (1967-1970); The Murtala-led 1975 military coup; The Dimla-led 1976 attempted coup which led to the death of Gen. Murtala and ascension Gen. Obasanjo as Head of State; The Buhari-led 1983 military coup; The Babangida-led 1985 military coup; The Orkar-led 1990 military coup; The Liberian civil war-Nigerian intervention (1990-1998); Nigerian-Cameroon border dispute (1991-1998); The Sierra Leone civil war intervention (1993-1999); The Sani Abacha-led 1993 military coup that was later succeeded by Abubakar in 1998 due to the sudden death of Gen. Sani Abacha

Niger (Lebovich, 2019). The kidnapping of the female students prompted the United States and the United Kingdom to send aid to Nigeria, including military resources to help combat Boko Haram and to locate and rescue the kidnapped girls. That ended in dismissal failure as the military, diplomatic or soft options failed to secure the safe rescue of the girls largely due to the alleged complicity of Nigerian troops. While some of them are being released piecemeal via dubious political negotiations and alleged payment of huge sums of money to the terrorist sect, another 110 schoolgirls were abducted at the Government Girls Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State on February 19, 2018. The group however, returned 105 of the kidnapped Dapchi girls, with reports of 5 reportedly dead and a Christian girl still held in captivity up until recently when she was shown in video to have given birth to a baby boy for one of the commanders of Boko Haram sect.

The Niger Delta oil wars (1998-date): The failure of all forms of peaceful negotiations toward the constructive redress of the environmental injustices associated with oil exploration led to the 1998 Kaiama Declaration by Ogoniland activists. This was the start of when armed struggle became the order of relationships between government and oil companies on one hand and the respective communities of the nine Niger Delta states on the other. The Niger Delta region have been devastated by the activities of oil companies, especially Shell, Total and others. This devastation has taken the form of oil pollution, gas flaring, killing of aquatic life, acid rain and land degradation as well as economic deprivation leading to abject poverty (Tamuno, 2011; Ibeanu & Lukman, 2006; Middleton, 2007).

Beginning from negotiations to violence the Niger Delta region has exemplified the basic characteristics of Nigeria's capitalism and cabalism where the intersection between local comprador and burgeoning class interests and international capitalist demands is unified (Le Bullon, 2005; Sutcliffe, 2012; Hollingshead, 2013; Smah, 2008). It is will be made clear therefore, that the richly endowed Niger Delta extractive resources generate virtually all the violent conflicts experienced in all over the country no matter how they are dressed or labelled. That is to say that oil and gas resources empower or disempower sections of the country to undertake criminal activities depending on whether they have access or they do not access the profits from the industry.

Case study 2- Liberia:

In a study by PeacebuildingData.org, the surveyed adult Liberians identified the following as the causes of the Liberian civil war: greed and corruption most frequently (63%); identity (tribal/ethnic) 40%; poverty 30% and inequalities 27%. In their conclusion, the results on the direct causes of violence perceived by the population may not highlight structural deficiencies that allow greed, corruption or inequalities to exist and eventually lead to conflict, but nevertheless they suggest that conflict results partly from elites' behaviour. There are various explanations for the outbreak of war. Liberian scholars offer a range of explanations for the years of conflict including ethnic divisions, predatory elites who abused power, a corrupt political system, and economic disparities (also see Smillie, 2001).

According to Smillie (2001), the period between 1989 and 1996, is what is known as Liberia's first civil war. It was a war of all tribal/ethnic groups against all other groups who stood on their way. ECOWAS's intervention succeeded in preventing Charles Taylor from capturing Monrovia. An Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was formed in Gambia under the auspices of ECOWAS in October 1990 and Dr. Amos C. Sawyer became President. Sawyer was backed by a Nigerian-led peacekeeping force, known as ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group). It was reported that Taylor refused to work with the interim government and continued the war. The war eventually spilled over into Sierra Leone in 1991, when Foday Sankoh led a mixed group of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans into Kailahun in eastern Sierra Leone. The then President Momoh's troops attempted to train a fighting force from among the 250,000 Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone. In the space of time, an ex-Liberian Broadcasting Corporation head, Alhaji Kromah, organised Mandingo Muslims and Krahn refugees in Freetown to form the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO). The Krahns and Mandingoes became the direct targets of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) group. In neighboring Sierra Leone, refugees of these two tribes led other tribes in organizing the ULIMO faction and returned to Liberia. It was this group in 1992 that helped the West African ECOMOG peacekeeping force stop the takeover of Monrovia by Taylor's NPFL rebel group. An interregnum prevailed for some time, up to 1997 (Smillie, 2001).

However, the so-called Second Liberian Civil War began in 1999 (Smillie, 2001) when a rebel group backed by the government of neighbouring Guinea, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), emerged in northern Liberia. In early 2003, a second rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), emerged in the south, and by June–July 2003, Charles Taylor's government controlled only a third of the country. The capital Monrovia was besieged by LURD, and the group's shelling of the city resulted in the deaths of many civilians. Thousands of people were displaced from their homes as the result of the conflict. The Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed by the warring parties on August 18, 2003 marking the political end of the conflict and beginning of the country's transition to democracy under the National Transitional Government of Liberia which was led by interim President Gyude Bryant until the Liberian 2005 general election (Smillie, 2001).

To Smillie (2001), 'conflict diamonds' first came to the world's attention when a small British NGO, Global Witness, published a report at the end of 1998 entitled *A Rough Trade: The Role of Companies and Governments in the Angola Conflict*. Global Witness argued that the renewed civil war in Angola, following failed elections in 1992, was largely financed by oil and diamonds, costing the lives of more than half a million people. It reported that UNITA controlled up to 70 per cent of the country's diamond production, generating \$3.7 billion in less than seven years. It also argued that the diamond industry, headed by the giant De Beers cartel, had simply ignored the problem, buying diamonds from any source that offered them. In respect with Liberia, it was reported that \$2.2 billion worth of diamonds might have been produced in a country like Liberia in only five years. Charles Taylor's moneys came from theft from Liberia's government budget, diamond from Sierra Leone and advance taxes from timber and iron ore and extortion from other commodities sale. Thus, blood diamond supported one of the most heinous criminal campaigns against humanity in Liberia.

Case study 3- Sierra Leone: Prior to 1991, Sierra Leone was ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world, even though it benefited from ample natural resources including diamonds, gold, bauxite, rutile, iron ore, fish, coffee, and cocoa. The Eastern and Southern districts in Sierra Leone, most notably the Kono and Kenema districts, are rich in alluvial diamonds, and more importantly, are easily accessible by anyone with a shovel, sieve, and transport. Since their discovery in the early 1930s, diamonds have been critical in financing the continuing pattern of corruption and personal aggrandizement at the expense of needed public services, institutions, and infrastructure.

The situation whereby countries with an abundance of natural resources tend to nonetheless be characterized by lower levels of economic and social development (resource curse) is exemplified in Sierra Leone.

Analysts note that the presence of diamonds in Sierra Leone invited and led to the civil war in several ways. First, the highly unequal benefits resulting from diamond mining made ordinary Sierra Leoneans frustrated. Under the Siaka Stevens' government, revenues from the National Diamond Mining Corporation (known as DIMINCO) – a joint government/DeBeers venture- were used for the personal enrichment of the President and of members of the government and business elite who were close to the government. When DeBeers pulled out of the venture in 1984, the government lost direct control of the diamond mining areas. By the late 1980s, almost all of Sierra Leone's diamonds were being smuggled and traded illicitly, with revenues going directly into the hands of private investors. In this period the diamond trade was dominated by Lebanese traders. Even after the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) took power in 1992, ostensibly with the goal of reducing corruption and returning revenues to the state, high-ranking members of the government sold diamonds for their personal gain and lived extravagantly off the proceeds. Diamonds also helped to arm the RUF rebels who used funds harvested from the alluvial diamond mines to purchase weapons and ammunition from neighboring Guinea, Liberia, and even Sierra Leonean Army (SLA) soldiers. But the most significant connection between diamonds and war is that the presence of easily extractable diamonds provided an incentive for violence. To maintain control of important mining districts like Kono, thousands of civilians were expelled and kept away from these important economic centers (Smillie, 2001).

Although diamonds were a significant motivating and sustaining factor, there were other means of profiting from the Sierra Leone Civil War. For instance, gold mining was prominent in some regions. Even more common was cash crop farming through the use of forced labor. Looting during the Sierra Leone Civil War did not just center on diamonds, but also included that of currency, household items, food, livestock, cars, and international aid shipments. For Sierra Leoneans who did not have access to arable land, joining the rebel cause was an opportunity to seize property through the use of deadly force. Due to the First Liberian Civil War, 80,000 refugees fled neighboring Liberia for the Sierra Leone- Liberian border. This displaced population, composed almost entirely of children, would prove to be an invaluable asset to the invading rebel armies because the refugee and detention centers, populated first by displaced Liberians and later

by Sierra Leoneans, helped provide the manpower for the RUF's insurgency. The RUF took advantage of the refugees, who were abandoned, starving, and in dire need of medical attention, by promising food, shelter, medical care, and looting and mining profits in return for their support. When this method of recruitment failed, as it often did for the RUF, youths were often coerced at the barrel of a gun to join the ranks of the RUF. After being forced to join, many child soldiers learned that the complete lack of law – as a result of the civil war- provided a unique opportunity for self-empowerment through violence and thus continued to support the rebel causes and missions. As an anecdote, Muammar al-Gaddafi both trained and supported Charles Taylor and also helped Foday Sankoh, the founder of Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone. It was also reported that Russian businessman Viktor Bout supplied Charles Taylor with arms for use in Sierra Leone and took briefs from him on the crises.

Case study 4- Mali:

Lebovich (2019) reports that since 2012, Mali faced a succession of violent conflicts. The Tuareg rebellion and subsequent jihadist occupation of northern Mali in that year revealed several cleavages in society and governance that, while not new, have grown worse with time. The departure of the government from more than half of the country's landmass and the pressure placed on local areas by resource competition, weapons proliferation, and clashing ideologies have all exacerbated Mali's internal conflicts, patterns that have also played out elsewhere. The French intervention under the guise of Operation Serval in January 2013 dislodged the jihadist groups from Mali's cities but did not eliminate them. They slipped away and reorganised, coming back to attack the United Nations peacekeeping mission established in Mali, MINUSMA, as well as Malian and French forces and civilian targets in the capital Bamako and even beyond Mali's borders. The signing of peace accords in Algiers in June 2015 did not appreciably improve the situation. MINUSMA is the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world but efforts to restore state authority have faltered, jihadist groups have grown and spread into Burkina Faso and parts of Niger, and local conflicts erupted in new and deadly ways in those locations.

We can say that jihadist groups largely seek to reimpose their version of Islamic law and to drive out foreign forces in Mali and the broader Sahel, while also seeking to capitalise on communal

tensions and resentment against local governments to implant themselves more securely. They also take part in local conflicts and have presented themselves at times as protecting local communities from attack, whether Tuareg in the north or Fulani (locally referred to as Peul) in more central regions. As for the other groups, they sometimes represent local or communal interests, while others promote broader political goals, like independence or widespread autonomy in northern Mali or new, less hierarchical modes of governance and communal structure. The following is a broad overview of these groups and their areas of operations, with the understanding that this is not an exact or a comprehensive description. It focuses on Mali and touches on the wider Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad), though it excludes the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), more commonly referred to as Boko Haram, which is active in the Lake Chad region. These groups skirt the southern fringe of Sahara desert and use the vast, empty areas to hide, recruit and organize. The attack on Cote d'Ivoire in 2016 and Burkina Faso, respectively, arrests made in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Senegal where 29 people were arrested in this State considered one of the sub-region's most stable state; al-Qaeda affiliates' threat on Senegal and Guinea with large presence of Westerners and United Nations' peace-keeping missions in Mali as priority targets-show how terrorist organizations have turned their attention on West Africa (Lebovich, 2019).

Furthermore, Lebovich (2019) noted that in northern Mali, armed terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) a jihadist terrorist group based in North Africa which operates primarily in Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Libya, Tunisia, and Niger), Ansar Dine, including its affiliates such as the Macina Liberation Front (FLM) in Central and Southern Mali, and Al-Mourabitoun operate in historically ungoverned or under-governed spaces. Despite the 2013 French military intervention in northern Mali and Sahel which significantly disrupted the terrorist activity, the peace process in this region continues to be destabilized by terrorist organizations currently operating not only in the northern part of the country but also in Central Mali. According to Strazzari & Raineri (2019), at the transnational level, security problems related to radicalization processes, jihadist insurgencies, and more-or-less organized crime continue to intensify in Guinea and the Sahel region. In 2019, attacks by jihadist groups in the region increased exponentially in number, lethality, and complexity. In Mali the presence of groups in Al-Qaeda's orbit and united under the umbrella of the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM) is continuing to take hold,

while the Islamic State is growing roots in Niger through an alliance between the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) – the heirs to Boko Haram, who are active in the area of Lake Chad – and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) – the heirs to the MOJWA, a group that in 2012 took over the Malian city of Gao.

FATF (2016) reports that the sources of terrorist financing for Islamist groups operating in West and Central Africa include extortion, robberies/looting, cattle/livestock rustling, donations/zakat, abuse of not-for-profit organizations (NPOs), local businesses/commercial enterprises and kidnapping for ransom. The Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic coastline provide routes for illicit trafficking that may supply funding for terrorism. Potential risk factors include drug trafficking, trafficking of weapons, trafficking of other goods, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons/slave markets, oil smuggling, cybercrime and fraud and piracy, among others. This provides a slightly different funding situation from the other case studies where natural resource endowments are the main basis of the violent gun-criminality.

7. The Threats of Transnational Organized Crime in West African Security

The ECOWAS region is clearly faced with serious crimogenics that present overt and covert threats to her security and attainment of its economic integration vision. These include drug and arms trafficking, violent gun-criminality which constitute abuses of the criminal justice system. UNODC (2016) presents the most influential ones.

First, is the flow of cocaine through the sub-region, which though declined to about 18tons, down from a peak of 47 tons in 2007 still translates to the fact that the 18 tons would worth US\$1.25billion at wholesale in Europe. That would provide West African traffickers with substantial illegal incomes with which to fund illegal political activities, such as corrupting the electoral system and Terrorist Financing (TF).

Second, methamphetamine (meth) production in the region is a growing concern, with two meth laboratories detected in Nigeria during 2011-2012. The main market for West African-made meth

is East Asia and to a lesser extent, South Africa. According to UNODC (2016), income from trafficking in West African-made meths to East Asia was remarkably high for such a new flow.

Third, the flow of smuggled migrants from West Africa to Europe has declined over the years due to the economic downturn. However, there is the prominence of many routes which have now shifted significantly with such routes moving eastwards from the present patterns established over the years in west Africa.

Fourth, the number of weapons still in circulation from past conflict in the region was similarly identified by UNODC's (2016) report. The quantum of arms and ammunition has reached a surplus level so that there is very little need to import large numbers in the region. This report acknowledges that most of the illicit flow of weapons in the region was diverted or stolen from the licit stocks held by the police and military. The recent flood of between 10,000 and 20,000 firearms from Libya constitute a serious threat to the security and stability of the ECOWAS region, a threat that appears to have been realized in northern Mali's conflict. The proliferation of these small arms and the new emergent trend in violence in the region put to question the efficacy and general commitment of the region in combating the menace. It was established that there are estimated 7 million small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the West African Sub-region of which 77,000 are in the hands of major West African insurgent groups and another 70% of these are circulation in Nigeria. SALW have particularly fuelled conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo and the Sub-region is still struggling to survive ongoing conflicts in which small arms play a central and destabilizing role in Nigeria and Ghana. The growing proliferation in geometric progression poses a serious threat and challenge to the region, exacerbating human suffering, threaten peace, security, and sustainable development. This article examines the effects of small arms proliferation in West Africa and how the region wakes up or responds to the challenges basing primarily on existing scholarly works on SALW control.

8. Violent⁴ Gun-criminality Through the Benevolence of SALWs

Our discussion here encompasses the provisions of the Community's Convention on SALW, summary on various cases of violent criminal assaults in the region and the implications of the foregoing on criminal justice systems in the region (see Bello, 2010; Mallam, 2014).

First, let us simplify the ramifications of violent crimes by stating that a violent crime or crime of violence is one crime in which an offender or perpetrator uses or threatens to use force upon a victim. This entails both crimes in which the violent act is the objective, such as murder or rape, as well as crimes in which violence is used as a form of coercion (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967).

Second, violent crimes under consideration are aided by the production, marketing, distribution, circulation, bearing and use of SALWs, which have been regulated by the ECOWAs treaty in its "ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials" in June, 2006 (ECOWAS, 2006). It is obvious that such a convention has failed in its application by Member States of the regional body (Bello, 2010; Mallam, 2014).

The problem starts from here. Article 59 is on immigration and section 1 states that Citizens of the Community shall have the right of entry, residence and establishment and Member States undertake to recognize these rights of Community citizens in their territories in accordance with the provisions of the Protocols relating thereto. Section 2 pledges that Member States undertake to adopt all appropriate measures to ensure that Community citizens enjoy fully the rights referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article. In its section 3 the Article stipulates that Member States undertake to adopt, at national level, all measures necessary for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Article.

⁴ See https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_social-problems-continuity-and-change/s11-02-types-of-crime.html for a discussion on violent crimes. Criminologists commonly group crimes into several major categories: (1) violent crime; (2) property crime; (3) white-collar crime; (4) organized crime; and (5) consensual or victimless crime. Within each category, many more specific crimes exist. For example, violent crime includes homicide, aggravated and simple assault, rape and sexual assault, and robbery, while property crime includes burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson. In this work, violent crimes are those that the means of violence, especially SALWs are involved in perpetrating them in an organized manner.

In Article 1 relevant terms were defined, namely; light weapons, which are portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team and which include notably: - heavy machine guns; - portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted; - portable anti-aircraft cannons; - portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns; - portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; - portable anti-aircraft missile launchers; - mortars with a calibre of less than 100 millimetres. Section 2 defines small arms to arms used by one person and which include notably: - firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as an exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb or a gas bomb, a grenade, a rocket launcher, a missile, a missile system or landmine; - revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; - rifles and carbines; - machine guns; - assault rifles; - light machine guns. Section 3 defines ammunition as devices destined to be shot or projected through the means of firearms including among others: - cartridges; - projectiles and missiles for light weapons; - mobile containers with missiles or projectiles for anti-aircraft or anti-tank single action systems. Section 11 states that small and light weapons in the Convention shall be deemed to include ammunition and other related materials, the latter being All components, parts or spare parts for small arms or light weapons or ammunition necessary for its functioning; or any chemical substance serving as active material used as propelling or explosive agent (section 4).

Article 3 Prohibits the transfer of small arms and light weapons and their manufacturing materials into their national territory or from/ through their national territory and shall ban, without exception, transfers of small arms and light weapons to Non-State Actors that are not explicitly authorized by the importing Member. Article 4 however, provides conditions of Exemption from the provisions of Article 3 (b) in order to meet legitimate national defence and security needs, or to participate in peace support or other operations in accordance with the decisions of the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, or other regional or sub-regional body of which it is a member.

The control of the manufacture of SALW shall be achieved through measures such as the establishment of a sub-regional database and register of small arms and light weapons under the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat's oversight as a way of promoting confidence (see Articles 7-10).

Article 22 (c) provides for withdrawal where Each Member State shall, in exercising its national sovereignty, have the right to withdraw from this Convention if it decides that extraordinary events

related to the subject-matter of this Convention, have jeopardised its supreme interests. 2. Withdrawal shall be effected by a Member State giving notice, which includes a statement of the extraordinary events it regards as having jeopardised its supreme interest, twelve months in advance to the Depository. The Depository shall circulate such notice to all other Member States. 3. During the period of twelve months referred to in the preceding paragraph, such Member State shall nevertheless continue to observe the provisions of this Convention.

Unfortunately, both provisions of withdrawal and conditions of Exempt are windows to the flagrant violation of the provisions of the Convention by Member States and entities within them. The avalanche of arms in circulation in the region as pointed out earlier attest to the weakness of the Convention. SALWs have continued to be deployed in the execution of violent criminal campaigns against modern institutions, oil wells and installations, communities and in some cases, the state, such as in Mali across the region.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons reflects a worrying trend in the privatization of security and violence, which has created a condition whereby non-state entities are in custody of weapons outside the control of the state. The question here is: what factors account for the proliferation of weapons? There is actually a strong link between violent conflicts and arms proliferation. Because these entities operate outside state control, tracking the weapons they use becomes difficult. In fact, the activities of gunsmiths and the porous nature of Nigeria's borders greatly facilitate access to arms. It has been reported that over 70% of the 10 million arms in circulation in West Africa are in Nigeria (Bello, 2010:29). Sophistication in terms of types and nature of weapons is a trend that defines high level cattle rustling and the associated criminality. The use of AK 47 and other assault weapons is a common feature of such acts that have led to huge deaths and population displacements (Abdel-Fattah, 1999; Ajasa, 2016; CLEEN Foundation, 2014). This shows that there is a well-established criminal network of cattle rustlers that are responsive to market demands for rustled cattle. This reinforces the strong link that exists between cattle rustling and an underground economy. The fact that thousands of cattle can be rustled with little or no trace shows that there are loopholes within the country that provides buffer for criminals.

As it was rightly observed:

This situation is seen by many communities as a reflection of the failure ...to protect its citizen, in the face of its displacement by non-state actors in terms of the control of the instruments of coercion. The inability of the security agencies to arrest or prosecute persons and groups responsible for the spate of violence and insecurity in the region, has accounted for an entrenched culture of impunity (CLEEN Foundation, 2014:12).

To demonstrate the fact that even state governments and persons running them amplify illegal trade or smuggling trends, an All Progressives Party (APC) Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello reportedly imported some military ware and were impounded at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport Abuja by Customs. When carton loads of prohibited military wares were confiscated it brought to the fore the age-long denied suspicion of government complicities in precipitating or aggravating violent criminality. Thus, the most glaring instance of state-sponsored violence, terrorism or victimization in Nigeria is exemplified by the seizure by the Nigeria Customs Service, Airport Command, Abuja on 8th March, 2018 of illegally imported military hard and soft wares by the Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello. The imported items packaged in 28 cartons included:100 pieces of military camouflage; 26 pieces of military camouflage jungle boots; 20 pieces of plastic knives; 24 pieces of black bullet proof vests; 28 black boxing gloves; 26 pieces of arctic hunter bags; 40 pieces of training mats; 20 pieces of black batons; 100 pieces of black T-shirts; 31 pieces of protective glasses; 25 pieces of black sunglasses; and 29 pieces of black uniform belts.

Preliminary analysis of the purpose of this importation, *ab initio*, without prior End-User Certification (EUC) usually obtained from the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) is indicative of the preparation of the state government against the November, 2019 election, which will likely be rigged by force of arms. In essence, the lesson of this open demonstration of state involvement in illegality is that ordinary citizens come under serious military assault under the guise of defending the state against criminals fighting the state. It is least surprising therefore, that investigative panel reports on cases of assassination, murder and other heinous crimes ever see the light of day. Even when such reports indict certain individuals with government backing they are let off the hook without any charges and sanctions.

Ajasa (2016) also observed in a report on the activities of Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PRESCOM-SALW) that Nigeria is one of the countries experiencing some of the most devastating effects of the proliferation of SALW as a result of spillover effect of the recent crises in Libya and Mali as well as unresolved internal conflicts in different parts of the country, especially in the North East, Niger Delta and southern regions. If reliable data on the numbers of these weapons circulating freely in the country are unavailable it is clear that much more are in wrong hands, portending more danger for the peace and development of the country.

It is important that gun controls be implemented. This is because a 1998 review found that suicide rates generally declined after gun control laws were enacted in the U.S and concluded that "The findings support gun control measures as a strategy for reducing suicide rates. A 2016 review found that laws banning people under restraining orders due to domestic violence convictions from accessing guns were associated with "reductions in intimate partner homicide". Another 2016 review identified 130 studies regarding restrictive gun laws and found that the implementation of multiple such laws simultaneously was associated with a decrease in gun-related deaths. According to a 2011 UN study, after identifying a number of methodological problems, it stated "notwithstanding such challenges, a significant body of literature tends to suggest that firearm availability predominantly represents a risk factor rather than a protective factor for homicide. In particular, a number of quantitative studies tend towards demonstrating a firearm prevalence-homicide association.

In spite of the region's States being signatory and committed to United Nations Small Arms Programme of Action (UNPoA), illegal SALWs' handling by non-state actors has not abated. In fact the figures grew from 10 million by 2006 to 350 million in 2016, 70% of which were allegedly in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, most of the countries in the region have committed to a consensus decision of the "United Nations to adopt, support and implement the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects". Some of them, like Nigeria have subsequently participated in the UNPoA Implementation Monitor Score. However, in its UN small arms Programme of Action Implementation Monitor (PoAIM Phase 1), the Small Arms Survey in 2003 scored Nigeria against its commitments to the PoA, then ranked it poorly at No. 149 among 159 Member States in terms

of implementation. This is why illegal SALWs from every region of Africa find their way into the region (Nigeria, 2006; SAS, 2014).

9. Implications and Concluding Remarks

The implications of the fore-going are:

- i. Ruthless corruption with the attendant use of violence to protect the sources of the proceeds of corruption derived natural resources will heighten. The use of gun violence that foreshadows impunity means that the activities of anti-corruption agencies, the office of the Attorney-General (via the Department of Public Prosecution- DPP), the Police and other relevant law enforcement agencies as well as the active role of the media and civil society organizations are weakened and curtailed
- ii. Massification of criminal groups in the category of freedom fighter, Islamist insurgents and other predatory gangs will be visible. This means that as the state law enforcement and other security outfits/institutions get more brutal in the protection of the criminal interests of their bosses, criminal sub-cultures and sub-cultural entities will increase. It is because of the social contexts and milieu in which such groupings take place, that the nature, nomenclature and characterization of such criminal entities will be defined. Areas dominated by religious sentiments will generate anti-establishment groups that wear the garb of 'religion'; environmental ecologies will grow criminal groups that dress as environmental activists. In the end, the multiplicity of these organised criminal groups will present formidable challenges to establishment
- iii. Inter-class conflicts will heighten in the attempt to control the means of violence. Ruling classes of military (serving and retired), traditional stools, retired senior citizens and classes of socialites based on ethnic, tribal and economic statuses will engage contemporary ruling classes. Stability in the social and economic order is relatively possible insofar as the political elites engage in some sort of equitable balancing in the opportunities over the resources they compete about.
- iv. In this entire situation, the emergence of gun running entrepreneurs is easily facilitated. As shown recently by the Kogi Governor's saga, even legislators, executives at state and federal levels and criminal groups will engage in direct importation and circulation

- of illegal arms. The extent to which government officials are able to deviate from engaging in covert criminal activities is the extent they have the morality to stem the tide of illegal flow of arms and ammunitions into the country and as channels of international arms couriers through Nigeria
- v. The implicit significance of this scenario lies in the fact that there will be breakdown of law and order with attendant consequences on personal, community and societal security, increased incidents of murder, homicide, assassinations, kidnappings, abductions and manifest conflicts at the interpersonal and inter-group levels.
 - vi. In regard of the fore-going, the legal processes for adjudication, delivery of criminal justice and attainment of basic human rights will be tailed towards abuse and denial of rights. Citizens' confidence in the judicial processes and institutions of justice, law enforcement and law and order will be near zero
 - vii. Poverty incidences will increase in the region since most people's access to their means of livelihood is not possible due to incessant conflicts among farming communities and regions with deposits/reserves of natural resources. Generically, Nigeria reportedly lost four million jobs in 2017 alone. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reported in 2016 that more Nigerians and developing countries live in extreme poverty, citing poor quality jobs and low incomes. The World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO) 2016 on transforming jobs to end poverty projects at least \$10 trillion for attaining the 2030 sustainable development goals in that sector
 - viii. A combination of failed dreams, insecurity and poverty can only make citizens depressed and unhappy. This is clearly demonstrated by the 2018 World Happiness report in which Nigeria ranked 148th out of 156 countries. The UN's annual world happiness report ranks for things such as gross domestic product (GDP) per capital, social support, healthy life expectancy, social freedom (freedom to make own decisions about just anything), generosity and absence of corruption. All these are tellers of the 'ground' situation in respective countries surveyed, such as Nigeria. Escalating cases of corruption (political, economic & financial), violence and insecurity are rampant social problems in Nigeria
 - ix. Build border walls in areas with propensity to encourage illegal migration into the country should be erected between and among Member States. There are ample

examples to draw inspiration from, for example, between America and Canada (under water), America and Mexico, Turkey and Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia, Slovenia and Croatia, Serbia and Hungary and Slovenia and Austria, among others. It is borne out of the seeming helplessness of the region in containing illegal border crossing, especially for terrorist or criminal purposes. For example, while there exist different forms of punishments/sanctions for illegal border crossing in North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Venezuela, Cuba, etc. for illegal border crossing, one may be free to kill, murder, destroy farmlands/crops, burn villages etc and get rewarded, protected by armed forces, or get integrated as citizens and become an automatic citizens.

- x. In the light of the preceding point, States must move for the review of the “protocol on free movement of persons, residence and establishment”. The reason is borne out of the fact that though this was to promote economic development by integration, the free movement of community members has tended to create free flow of illegal arms and ammunitions that has tended to destabilize the country due to the activities of terrorists and other violent cross-border, organized criminal syndicates operating in and through the sub-region. The entire sub-regional body (ECOWAS) has since inception settled more political problems between members than promoting economic integration and has tended to create more social problems for the region than blessings.

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