

# Arms Proliferation, Boko Haram Extremism and Insecurity in Nigeria

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Chapter

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## Abstract

Armed conflict is opaque in most of the third world, but Boko Haram extremism is a new dimension to the security threats facing the peace and stability of the African continent. The chapter argues that the problem of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is caused by a multiplicity of factors, but the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) is responsible largely for the spread and lethality of the sect's conflicts. The chapter traces the origin and political economy of this arms proliferation in Africa to the 1970s and 1980s, when many African leaders began to seek military assistance of foreign nations to end armed insurrections in their countries. With the neglect of this illicit arms transfer, coupled with the inability of the Nigerian government to effectively control its borders, the radical Islamist sect Boko Haram exploited the existing criminal networks by conniving with other radical Islamist sects in the Islamic Maghreb to get a cache of arms and ammunition used in its eight-year insurrection against the Nigerian state. The chapter suggests that an effective border control system is inevitable in Nigeria's counterinsurgency efforts and attempts to cut off the sources of arms supply to armed groups in the country.

## Keywords

Boko Haram Insurgency Porous borders and counterinsurgency