

The Character of the Post-Colonial State and Arms Proliferation in Fragile Democracies in Africa: The Nigerian Experience

¹Wenibowei, Korikiye, ²Isaac E. Uki & ³Godknows, Nein

^{1,2&3}Department of Political Science

Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/ijcsird.v10.i1.04

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the struggle for state power and the increasing number of SALWs on the African continent, as well as the threat this poses to democracy and national cohesion. The study used secondary data to demonstrate the association between the power struggle and the expansion of SALWs in Nigeria and throughout Africa. The findings imply that the features of the post-colonial state characterize African politics, especially Nigerian politics. This state-sponsored consolidation of political and economic power has resulted in a fierce and violent fight for control of the state's authority between people and social groupings. This conflict has led to the use of SALWs. It is argued that the political elite demand that they reconsider the notion that the wellbeing of the great majority of people in society should be the state's main priority.

Keywords: *Post-colonial state, Democracy, Small arms and light weapons, Arms proliferation, Power.*

Corresponding Author: Wenibowei, Korikiye

Background to then Study

The spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in Nigeria and throughout Africa continues to pose a risk to regional peace and security as well as the stability of newly emerging democracies. The increasing tension and high number of violent conflicts on the African continent are partly caused by the availability of illegal firearms. The increasing crime wave in African countries can be attributed to the easy access to small guns and light weapons, leading to terrorism and other attacks. Healthy relationships between individuals and organizations are therefore slipping away, putting lives and property at risk. Nigeria's democratic government in 1999 led to the formation of youth militias, causing ethnic and religious conflicts. These conflicts include election violence, herdsmen confrontations, abduction, hostage-taking, maritime piracy, rape, and armed robbery, posing threats to peace, security, democracy, and national integration.

Illicit small arms and light weapons (SALWs) are frequently used in violence, with Nigeria facing serious security implications due to their flow across national borders in the Sahel Region of West Africa and ECOWAS, according to a 2016 report by the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light weapons (in Anayo, 2017). The report highlights violent insurgencies, criminal activity, and armed rebellion in Nigeria and the Sub-region due to the spread of weapons, with increasing casualties among civilians and military personnel. The spread of small guns and light weapons in Nigeria and the African continent poses a threat to peace, security, stability, and democratic consolidation, as violent conflicts often aim to subdue opponents (Oluwadare, 2014). The spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) is a global concern, with over 100 million in Africa, including 8 million in West Africa, 30 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, and approximately 70% in Nigeria, out of the 640 million SALWs in circulation (Salopeck, 2000). Nigeria, a major dumping ground for SALWs in West Africa, is a major source of illicit weapons, with over 350 million in the region. The country's proliferation of these weapons threatens the nation's corporate existence, lives, and properties, according to a UN report (Uwa and Anthony, 2015; Adeniyi, 2017 and Anayo, 2017).

In the same vein, Badmus (2010) stated that SALWs have become so widespread that not only do they threaten security across the world, but also undermine the peace and security of civil society. On the part of Nna, Gbara and Friday (2012), they argued that Africa has become an attractive and profitable dumping ground for SALWs. The large volume of illicit weapons in the African continent can be seen from the large number of violent conflicts and the high rate of crime among the nations in the region. In 2017, 25 African states faced insecurity, including organized rebellion, civil war, and extremism. Nigeria experienced over 187 conflicts between 1999 and 2010, resulting in thousands of deaths. (Adeniyi, 2017; Uwa and Anthony, 2015)

This study investigates the reasons behind the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria's democratic experience, highlighting the importance of democracy in achieving political and elected posts, but also highlighting the influence of politics and state form on the effectiveness of a democratic system. The success and sustainability of democracy depend on the understanding of politics among elites and community participants, as well as the State's central role in ownership and distribution. To understand the spread of SALWs in post-colonial Africa, it's

crucial to understand the politics and state structure. The consolidation of political and economic power has led to a fierce struggle among ethnic groups for control over the state's authority, resulting in ethnic militia fighters. Conflicts in countries like Sierra Leone, Sudan, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia have escalated into full-blown civil wars.

Objectives of the Study

This study is premised on the following two objectives.

1. To undertake a historical overview of arms proliferation in Nigeria.
2. To examine the character of the post-colonial state in Africa and the nature of politics as the primary reason/cause of the proliferation of SALWs in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

Methodology of the Study

The study is qualitative and explanatory as such the study relied on secondary sources of data collected from journals, textbooks, newspapers and magazine publications as well as online materials. The contents of these materials are employed to further deepen the analysis of the issues raised in the study.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

In order to explain the spread of small guns and light weapons in Nigeria in particular and throughout Africa in general, the research uses the power framework of political analysis. The power theory has a lot to do with international politics and global economic ties, but it is also quite useful for analyzing the growing trend of armaments proliferation in African nations.

Power, according to Varma (1975) is the instrument of coercion and has a physical effect. Tawney (1931) cited in Nna (2000), defined power as “the capacity of an individual or group of individuals to modify the conduct of other individuals or group in the manner which he desires”. In the same vein, Pious (1986) also cited in Nna (2000) sees power as “the capacity of an actor to get others to do what he wants them to do using subtle or overt pressures or even the use of force”. From the above views, power relates to the ability of one or a group or an institution towards changing the behaviour of others. Thus, the primary objective for the exercise of power either by an individual or group of individuals is to bring about a change in the behaviour of others through some subtle means. It means the use of physical force or threat of it.

As a framework of analysis in international politics, the power theory focuses on the analysis of the development of state power by various countries as an instrument of influence. This development is anchored on the belief that the more powerful a country is, the more influential it becomes in the international system. The first advocates of the power theory include German historians of the 19th Century such as Heinrich Van Treitschke and philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche (Varma, 1975). Eric Kanffmann in 1911 stated that “the essence of the State is *Manchtentfal tung*” interpreted to mean, “the development, increase and display of power” along with the will successfully to maintain and assert itself (Varma, 1975). A strong advocate

of the power theory in the 20th century is the American Political Science scholar, Hans J. Morgenthau. Morgenthau (1973) defines the global system as the struggle for power among nations. He contended that the security and survival of any state in the international system depends very much on its accumulation of power. He argued further that global political and economic relation like domestic politics is a power struggle. He defined power as “man's control over the minds and actions of other men” (Morgenthau, 1973).

Domestic politics like international politics is characterized by conflict of interest by various individuals and groups which invariably leads to the struggle for control of state power. Oluwadare (2014) sees politics as the struggle for power. The nature of the post-colonial state and its role in the ownership and management of natural resources as well as the concentration of political power in post-colonial Africa exacerbate this competition for State authority. This phenomenon makes the post-colonial state in Africa become the central focus of politics, hence, the main focus for struggle by individuals and groups. The main purpose of the struggle is to get control of the state apparatus to enable the holders of state power determine the distribution and redistribution of available scarce resources of the state (Eavis, 2002; Oluwadare, 2014).

Because of this, the post-colonial African state is structured in a way that gives the person in charge of the state both political and economic authority. It gives the person in charge of politics the ability to assume a traditional role and determine who receives what, when, and how. Politics in Nigeria and most of Africa are currently shaped by these conflicts between people and organizations over control of state authority. The spread of light and small guns across the continent is a direct result of this type of politics in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. In summary, the research claims that the fight for control of state authority amongst and among people and groups is the main cause of the widespread distribution, accessibility, and ease of use of weapons in most African nations, and Nigeria in particular.

Literature Review

Arms Proliferation: The problems of Measurement

It is difficult to determine how many weapons a nation owns overall, especially in emerging nations (Krause, 2007; Stohl, 2008; IPI, 2009). It's merely estimable at best. This is because nations generally have permeable borders, insufficient investigative equipment, and third parties involved in the flow of weapons. The difficulty increases when dealing with small guns and light weapons since people may readily transport these weapons from one place to another without adhering to the proper protocols. International Peace Institute (IPI)(2009) affirmed that globally effective SALW control is naturally difficult. The body identified some of the reasons to include the high number of SALW producers and owners, the low costs of acquisition, the ease with which they can be concealed and transferred (especially given poor border controls and access to air transport and sea vessels), and the existing massive proliferation. Similarly, Stohl (2008) argued that SALW are also a core component of national law enforcement and defense strategy. In this sense, “International law and standards, including Article 51 of the UN Charter, recognizes a state's right to self-defense”, thereby indirectly acknowledging “the right to produce and acquire weapons for legitimate purposes”

(Stohl, 2008). Indeed, the yearly increases in global military spending point to a trend of bolstering national security capabilities. Regarding the challenges associated with SALW measurement, Krause's (2007) perspective is consistent with the arguments put out by IPI (2009) and Stohl (2008). He, however, identified political divisions in states as a problem of controlling SALW proliferation difficult. According to him as states are divided on addressing aspects and addressing challenges to state sovereignty, similar to how multilateral efforts combat transnational organized crime, despite existing norms and regulatory frameworks, small-arms control measures implementation remains uneven, with states varying their views on the effectiveness of international cooperation in promoting their monopoly (Krause, 2007).

As a result, no common model or statistical instrument has been created to quantify the spread of armaments. Only databases from certain organizations, such the National Control List (NCL), Congressional Research Services (CRS), and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2024), have been used by researchers (Cockayne & Mikulaschek, (2008). However, it should be mentioned that the information these organizations offer is limited to legitimate arms deals involving first-party receivers and suppliers (PRESCOM, 2021). According PRESCOM 2021 report third-party transfers are frequently unrecorded and consequently, illicit sales and unlawful gun possession are frequently left out of official records and statistics and are not reported as such. SIPRI, for instance, offers data on arms transfers internationally for several calendar years (SIPRI, 2024). The majority of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) transfers are not covered by it, but it does offer information on international arms transfers and uses a special pricing mechanism to gauge the amount of transfers. For its part, the CRS only works for the US Congress, offering committees and members of the House and Senate legal and policy analysis (CRS, 2019).

Historical Perspective of the Proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria

The term SALW lacks a commonly accepted meaning. While much later regional and international protocols have reduced the definitions used to focus primarily on weaponry, the UN Group of Governmental Experts that investigated the subject of SALW in 1997 proposed a definition that includes clubs, knives, and machetes (UN, 2002). In general, small arms are weapons intended for personal use. Among them are, for example, assault rifles, light machine guns, submachine guns, revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles, and carbines (UNDP, 1994).

Although some may be carried and handled by a single person, light weapons are often made for use by two or three people working as a crew (Laurabce and Stohl, 2002). UNDP uses the word "small arms" to refer to both small arms and light weapons, even though they are two different types of weaponry. Small arms and light weapons, as defined in this study, simply refer to any deadly weapon that may be readily used and controlled by one or more people, and that has the potential to cause harm and devastation to human lives and property. Thus, all of the small guns and light weapons listed by the UN Panel of Governmental Experts are included in this research, along with clubs, spears, knives, machetes, bows, and

a detailed account of the gradual growth and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Nigeria is scanty and imprecise. This may be attributed to the traditional nature of African societies before the advent of colonial rule, though, it should be noted that inter/intra-communal strifes and wars in African societies pre-date the colonial era. Nevertheless, these wars were fought with spears, clubs, machetes, and bows and arrows. The discovery of the African continent by white traders and the subsequent development of the region as a major slave trade route precipitated the use of small arms by the Europeans and their African allies. Africans who were freed and forced into slavery were raided and rustled with small guns. In order to find victims, armed raids were conducted in African villages and communities. Those Africans who became aware of the superior firepower of small arms became interested in acquiring them and did so by exchanging their goods for arms. The acquisition of these arms from the Europeans further enhanced the powers and their ability as middlemen to carry out raids in villages and communities. The slave trade era therefore became the point of departure for the beginning of the inflow of small arms and ammunitions into the African continent.

The slave trade was followed by the legitimate trade and the forceful acquisition of African territories by European powers. This process in Africa was accomplished with the effective use of small arms and light weapons by the colonial invaders. Africans were also integrated as foot soldiers into the Whiteman's army and were trained to use the Whiteman's weapon to forcefully subdue their fellow brothers in their territory. The Africans who fought as the White man's foot soldiers established a new social class for themselves. Trained in the technique of the Whiteman's destructive weapon, the natives feared and revered them as small gods. They started acting haughty and repressively. Thus, small guns and light weaponry entered Africa through the several-year-long Atlantic Slave Trade and the establishment of colonial control. Today, small arms and light weapons have serious negative effects on African societies. It has become a determining factor in the direction of politics and the dimensions of power struggle in Nigeria and in most African countries. They are the primary weapons used for most of the violent conflicts in Africa.

However, the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria in particular can be traced to the beginning of military rule in the 1960s. This is a result of the kind of politics the military introduced into the body politics of the country. First and foremost, the military introduced a centralized governmental system in the country where political and economic power was vested in the central government. This phenomenon allowed the State to have possession of all economic resources and control over the instrument of coercive force. The central government became the "pot wherein the sub-units of the federation relied on for their survival". In other words, the central government became the determining factor in the distribution and redistribution of the scarce resources of the nation. Thus, power became centralized and the struggle for it became fierce and detrimental to every known political practice elsewhere in the world.

The intense political competition and the employment of SALWs that currently define the nation's body politics are just a reflection of the State's concentration of political and economic power of the federal government, a procedure that was initiated in the 1960s by the military government. The widespread corruption that affects the military's lower ranks is another

significant issue that must be acknowledged during the military interregnum. Society is frequently negatively impacted by corruption. Political and socioeconomic institutions in society are weakened by corruption in all of its manifestations (Wenibowei, 2017). According to Adetiba (2012), it degrades professionalism, hinders effectiveness and efficiency, encourages mediocrity, and casts doubt on merit. The military became politicized at this time, and military officers openly stole public monies and abused their positions in politics. The staff's extravagant and showy way of living outside the barracks proved to be the widespread corruption that existed at the time (Adetiba, 2012).

January 1966 and July 1966 witnessed the beginning of a series of military coups in Nigeria. The July 1966 military coup led to a power tussle among the top military brass. This struggle led to the 1968 Nigerian Civil War between the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria (Biafra) and the Nigerian State. The Nigerian civil war could be argued to be the starting point of the massive inflow into the country SALWs. This view is made clear by Adetiba (2012) when he stated that "the civil war commenced the militarization of the Nigerian society". The two opposing sides used both heavy and small weaponry to further their military efforts during that time. Without a doubt, the civil war increased the quantity of weaponry that non-state actors in the nation obtained. Regretfully, these weapons remained in the hands of this group of people after the Civil War. They now add to the enormous quantity of weapons in the nation's possession.

The Character of the Post-Colonial State in Africa

Agagu (2004, p:391) argued that colonialism in Africa, "created structural arrangement imbued with ethnic conflict and antagonism among indigenous constituent units of the conquered territories and a dual morality among the citizens, as it laid a foundation for exploitation, brutality, praetorianism and corruption". Observably, the post-colonial state in Africa is dominated by the following features:-

Divisions between and among the different Ethnic and Religious Groups: The second feature is the schisms underlying social relations between and among the different ethnic nationalities. This element is very strong and remains a potent factor in the political matrix and permutations in most African nations. It goes a long way in determining the emergence of political leadership, followership, and voting patterns of electorates. Ethnic diversity is often reinforced by religious and other forms of clandestine and parochial sentiments. This trend is quite visible in Nigeria during elections where voters' assessment of a candidate is usually based on or guided by his or her religious, ethnic and primordial biases, rather than a critical assessment of the candidate's integrity and policy objectives.

Ethnic and religious feelings are frequently used as predetermined standards for a candidate's support. Disgruntled, unsuccessful politicians also utilize these sentiments to incite unrest, particularly when they are unable to achieve their political objectives through the election process. They frequently rely on such covert and localized assistance to fulfill their egotistical goals. Following the 2011 general elections, there was a violent outburst in the northern region of Nigeria, which was attributed to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a Christian from the southern part of the country, allegedly manipulating the

results. Supporters of Muhammadu Buhari, the leading opposition candidate and a Muslim from northern Nigeria running on the Congress for Democratic Change platform, started the violence with large-scale demonstrations. According to estimates from Human Rights Watch, around 800 people were slain in Bauchi State, including ten members of the National Youth Service Corps (HRW Report, 2011). Ethnic plurality and religious differences in Africa and the struggle for state power have degenerated into more violent situations in countries like Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria in 1967-1970, Congo-Zaire now the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc.

Institutional Weakness among African States: The third characteristic of the post-colonial state in Africa is the existence of weak, inefficient and ineffective political and socio-economic structures and institutions (Wenibowei, 2017). As part of the legacies of the colonial government, the over-developed political and socio-economic institutions (e.g; the Legislature, Executive, Judiciary, Police, electoral body, the military, political parties, the bureaucracy, etc) bequeathed to Africans were weak from the foundation and no serious efforts were made by the colonial administrators to strengthen these institutions to withstand the peculiar challenges characteristic of plural societies (Fadakinte, 2013).

The colonial government needed to create state apparatuses to enable it exercise political and economic hegemony over African societies (Osaghae, 1989; Olowu, 1994). Thus, the colonial goal was primarily to exploit the economic resources through political domination and therefore was not interested in the development and stability of these societies during and after their departure (Agagu, 2004; Adedayo, 2010). At independence, the inherited institutions were maintained by African leaders. High levels of corruption, ineffective courts, insufficient security, inadequate healthcare and education systems, inadequate infrastructure, conflicts based on religion or ethnicity, shaky electoral systems, and other issues are all indicative of institutional failure in post-colonial African states.

The State as an Instrument for Personal Aggrandizement: The State in Africa has also become a source of personal aggrandizement. Agagu (2004, p:392) observed that “politics in Nigeria has turned out to be a means of mindlessly appropriating the resources of the state to serve one's interest”. State power has become an avenue for African political elites to accumulate wealth often seen as a powerful instrument to control the minds and behaviours of the impoverished masses. Thus, whoever controls the state apparatus does so for two reasons. The first is to be in a vintage position to authoritatively allocate the scarce values in society. The second is to amass wealth through corrupt practices and by denying the mass of the people benefits due to them. This explains the massive political corruption among African leaders. These factors have become the decisive factors in politics among African nations. It goes on to explain and determine the nature of the struggle for state power in Nigeria and other African nations. The strength of these characteristics is acknowledged in this research, along with their consequences for the political and socioeconomic advancement of Nigeria and other African countries. The crucial political and economic function of the post-colonial state, as well as the effects of politics in Nigeria and throughout Africa, serves as our study's starting point. The Nigerian State, for example, owns, controls, and manages the economic resources and has

under its whims and caprices all the military and other security apparatuses. Ekeh (1975) put the above observation more clearly when he noted that “colonialism also brought with it the centralization of power and the creation of a modern military that used the centralization of power as a tool to control the country and its natural resources”. Consequently, the Nigerian state wields so much power to influence individuals and institutions within its sphere of jurisdictions in domestic and international politics.

The Struggle for Political Power and the Proliferation of SALW in Nigeria

Unfortunately, the nature of politics in Nigeria and most African countries is determined by these post-colonial features. The State's ownership and control of economic resources place the state above society and its citizens (Olowu, 1994). Because the state wields so much political and economic power, the state becomes the primary focus of politics. According to William, (1980), the state in Africa organizes and engages itself in economic activities and is responsible directly or indirectly for the allocation of strategic opportunities and resources. Thus, the state in Africa has become an arena of conflict, rather than an institution of conflict mediation, management and resolution. The dominant trend today is that when individuals engage in politics, the primary objective is to control state apparatuses to enable them allocate political and economic benefits, to determine, according to Easton (1962) “who gets what, when and how?”

According to Ake (1996, p. 241), "politics is mainly about the control of state power" in Africa. As a result, the post-colonial state's strong political and economic foundation in Africa has drawn political attention to it and largely shaped the form of the conflicts between people and organizations for control over it. It was said rather plainly by Ake (1996, p. 241) that "Africa's state politics are detrimental to democracy." In addition, he said, "The extent to which the nature of the state, including its powers, determines politics is not so well-known in Africa." Then he advanced the claim that "the state's nature, especially its lack of autonomy, the scope of its powers, its susceptibility to abuse, and the lack of immunity against it, accounts for a great deal of what is particularly negative about politics in Africa" (Ake, 1996, p:244). The fight for political power by individuals and groups in Nigeria in particular and among African countries generally has been made feasible by the state's concentrated role.

In post-independence Nigeria, the struggle over the control of state power by various individuals, political, and ethnic groups have resulted in the introduction and inculcation of a negative attitude, a negative orientation and behaviour by Nigerian politicians. Politics in post-independence Nigeria is now characterized by two dominant attitudes and beliefs. The first is the belief and attitude that the winner in an election win all. Here, the winner in the competition for power wins everything, the loser loses everything. According to Ake (1996, p:243), “Nothing can be worse than losing and nothing can be better than winning”. Consequently, no contestant would want to lose knowing that losing means losing everything. As a result, everyone aspires to power through all channels, legal or otherwise, and those in positions of authority use all strategies to hold onto them. As a result, a politician must win, whereas a contender must not write or mention losing in their political lexicon.

In Nigeria, a second political mindset and attitude known as "do-or-die" (zero-sum) politics has emerged as a result of this type of politics. Politicians that adopt a "do-or-die" mindset, perspective, and understanding are those who feel that once an election is contested, it must be won and that defeat is not an option. It refers to a mindset and a conviction that the means always justify the ends. Therefore, the most crucial factor for a candidate is how he wins an election; the strategy, tactics, or other methods used to get the vote are irrelevant. It is this mindset and orientation that has become the guiding principle of electoral engagement between and among competing candidates in an election in Nigeria.

Ladan (2015) averred that "electoral violence in Nigeria is made possible because the political system supports zero-sum politics". In this form of politics, there are two or more players involved, with the ultimate goal of winning by employing the rules and strategies (Kehinde, 2007). The main rule of the game is that there can be only one winner and there are no compensations for losers. The winner therefore takes all and does not usually consider the losing party as worthy of any reward or acknowledgment. Such a condition may be frustrating on the part of the loser (s). In order to avoid humiliation, contestants often adopt "underhand strategies that are alien to the rule of the game" (Kehinde, 2007, p:143). In these situations, those who stand to lose may turn to violence as a means of venting their resentment and unhappiness. According to Duru's (2002) assessment of the political climate in the nation, politicians who have grown increasingly aware of the benefits of holding public office frequently use a variety of strategies to seize control, marginalize, or even outright banish, the opposition from political life. This, in his opinion, is the cause of the vote-buying, violence, thuggery, and manipulation used by ambitious politicians to stifle the nation's citizens' desire to elect their leaders. When running for office in Nigeria, candidates frequently exhibit a lack of faith in both the electoral process and the electorate's capacity for discernment. This anxiety is a result of the reality that most of the time voters are either cheated out of their civic right to select the candidate of their choice by candidates or are swayed by money (vote-buying). In addition, voters are occasionally harassed, threatened, and mistreated by campaign supporters during polling events.

Equally, the lack of confidence could also stem from the poor leadership exhibited by the members of the governing class. This is because most of them who had the privilege to serve the masses in a public capacity use their offices for their interest and the interests of their cronies. As a result, they frequently lack the moral grounds to turn to the voters in an election to ask for their support. Nonetheless, the majority of them turn to such harsh and violent methods in order to fulfill their excessive goals in order to hold onto their positions of authority or have access to state resources. "Conflicts arise when power is manipulated through the electoral process to include or exclude certain individuals, communities, groups, religion or region," (Obi, 2009, p. 104). According to Obi those who are left out go to great lengths to express their dissatisfaction, including staging violent rallies or engaging in armed rebellions using illegal weapons or guns obtained via illegal means. For instance, Adetiba (2012, p. 179) contended that "the electoral system's impartiality and transparency are undermined by pervasive political corruption, casting a shadow over Nigeria's political history." People who felt they were duped throughout the election process, in particular, typically no longer have much faith

in the system. Therefore, regardless of whose ox is goose, Nigerian politicians must use every measure at their disposal to influence and manipulate the public and the political process.

Consequently, as a result of their political aspirations, Nigerian politicians have learned to see elections as a reliable channel for achieving their goals. They have also realized that by using violence, they can accomplish goals that they could not have in a free and fair competition. After all, China's Mao Tsetung made it rather evident that "political power" originates from the barrel of a pistol (Nna, Gbara, and Friday, 2012). Many political figures in Africa today use deceptive electoral tactics to gain and hold onto power, even resorting to illegal ways of doing so. Thus, the question of weaponry has political implications in addition to security and economic ones. This is because, according to Nna, Gbara, and Friday (2012), weapons are now a tool of gaining political influence. Tribune (2017) investigations claimed that about 21,548,608 million arms and ammunition were shipped into Nigeria between 2010 and 2017 illegally. According to the report, the largest cache of ammunition 21,407,933 was intercepted at the Apapa port in November 2010, while 1,100 pump action guns were seized at Tin-Can seaport in September 2017 (Nigerian Tribune, 2017). The table below shows the breakdown of seized arms and ammunition by the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) from 2010 to 2017.

Table 1: Showing the number of arms seized by NCS between 2010-2017

S/N	Date	Entry Point	Arms/Ammunition Seized
1	January 20 th , 2010	Murtala Mohammed International Air Port	1 Ak-47 Rifle
2	January 23 rd , 2010	MMIA	Arg-3 guns and 2,352 quantity of Pepper bullets
3	November 1 st , 2010	Apapa Port, Lagos	21, 407, 933 live ammunition and 34, 062 bomb Mi/Grenhard/Fuze of Rockets
4	February 24 th , 2011	PTML Terminal in Tin-Can Port, Lagos	1 Remington pistol and 15 quantity of 45 calibre ammunition
5	September 13 th , 2012	Idoroko Border	3,000 live ammunition was intercepted
6	January 26 th , 2013	Sahuda Border, Adamawa State	1,800 live ammunition was intercepted
7	April 2 nd , 2013	MMIA, Lagos	49 live ammunition 1 Barette pistol were intercepted.
8	April 24 th , 2013	MMIA, Lagos	1 Air of zinc Alloy Shell pistol and 5 Rubber bullets Pellets were seized.
9	May 17 th , 2013	Shaki, Oyo State	56, 750 live cartridges were seized.
10	May 13 th , 2013	Koko in Kebbi State	149 jackknives were intercepted
11	September 17 th , 2013	PTML Terminal Lagos	3 Sniper Rifles and 140 live ammunition were seized
12	February 26 th , 2014	MMIA, Lagos	1,142 live ammunition of 12 grams were seized
13	March 11 th , 2014	Shaki, Oyo State	30,000 live cartridges of 7,2mm were intercepted
14	June 18 th , 2014	Sokoto State	120 jack knives were seized
15	December 24 th , 2014	MMIA, Lagos	1 Remington pistol and 20 cartridges were seized
16	July 8 th , 2015	Cargo Shed of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Air Port	2 Air Soft guns and 1 live ammunition were seized
17	July 24 th , 2015	MMIA, Lagos	2 Ak-47 Rifle and 60 live ammunition were intercepted
18	January 9 th , 2016	Agbara, Ogun State	510 live cartridges were intercepted
19	July 26 th , 2016	Tin-can port, Lagos	1 revolver gun was seized
20	November 10 th , 2016	Lagos Air port	3 unnamed Aerial vehicle drones was intercepted
21	December 30 th , 2016	Lagos Air Port	2 fighter jets helicopters were intercepted
22	December 16 th , 2016	Tin-can port, Lagos	7,504 premier hollow Air gun pallets/tactical rifles were seized
23	February 10 th , 2017	Lagos Air Port	150 live rounds of 9mm bullets were seized
24	January 30 th , 2017	Mile 2, Lagos	661 pump action were seized.
25	May 2017	Tin-can, Lagos	440 pump action guns were seized
26	September 2017	Tin-can port, Lagos	1,100 pump action guns were seized

Source: Tribune, 2017

The table shows a clear description of the large number of arms importations into the country. Conflict scholars believe that most of the arms are used during elections (Olayiwola, 2017; Okafor, 2021, and Agidi & Gbamwuan, 2022). Agidi & Gbamwuan (2022) study on the 2019 general elections in Benue state, North-Central, Nigeria revealed how desperate politicians sponsored and supplied thugs with arms and ammunition to distort the elections in that state. In the vein, Okafor (2021) study of the 2019 elections in Rivers state, South-South, Nigeria

point to the fact that small arms and light weapons were used by youths to influence the outcome of the election in the state. Olayiwola, (2017)) research finding shows that there is a connection between small weapons proliferation and election violence in Nigeria, and this relationship is mostly responsible for the country's electoral violence. According to Nyiayaana (2013), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)'s implementation of the Biometric Verification and Accreditation System (BVAS) resulted in innovative solutions, but their technological effectiveness and credibility were undermined by the conduct of armed political thugs. Thus, since returned to democratic form of government in 1999, electoral competitions in Nigeria have gradually and systematically degenerated into armed struggle often characterized by the use of violence to win elections (Nyiayaana, 2023)

Therefore, the struggle over the control of state power by the members of the political class has increased the spread of the use of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. Agagu (2004) describing the nature of politics in Nigeria stated that “post-colonial politics in Nigeria was scripted in the calculus of power, and this script has been the political template for the First, Second, Third and Fourth Republics”. Ake (1996) also stated that “the character of the state rules out a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism for the simple reason that the nature of the state puts too high a premium on capturing power”. He stated further that this form of politics does not know legitimacy or legality, only expediency”. Consequently, electoral contests in Nigeria have been governed by intimidation, harassment, rigging, arson and other forms of electoral violence carried out with the use of SALWs.

Democracy is believed to be the most preferred form of political administration in modern societies. This belief is anchored on the system's in-built principles that provide aggrieved individuals and groups the opportunity to come to a round table for dialogue and negotiate to resolve individual or group differences, without necessarily employing violent means to achieve intended goals. Given this understanding, the hopes, expectations and aspirations for better days with a democratic system in place were raised among the citizens of the country, when the country re-introduced democratic rule in 1999. Despite twenty years of democratic practice in Nigeria, the populace faces challenges such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, corruption, and inequality. Studies link these living conditions to a high crime rate, highlighting the need for improved governance and social progress.

In 2016, the National Bureau of Statistics reported 125,790 criminal incidents in 36 federation states, including property, law, municipal, and people offenses, including rape, manslaughter, infanticide, and physical abuse. The southern state of Lagos reported the most number of criminal acts—45,385—according to the study. Adetiba (2012, p. 181) observed that "a pathetic dimension to the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria is the growth of cultism, especially in tertiary institutions" in reference to the high rate of crime in the nation. Similarly, SALWs are "contributing to high levels of crime, violence, and insecurity in society," according to Eavis (2002, p. 251). Without a question, non-state actors' easy access to weapons in Nigeria has led to a rise in crime and other violent crimes that pose a serious danger to the nation's internal security and peace. In addition, the nation's precarious state of security and tranquility is an indication of a threat to the country's fragile democracy.

Concluding Remarks

The proliferation of small guns and light weapons poses a global threat to African nationalism, particularly in poorer African nations. In Nigeria, weak border security measures and ruling class involvement in weapon importation allow easy access to these weapons. The study reveals that the high number of SALWs in Nigeria and Africa is due to conflict over state authority, post-colonial state control of natural resources, winner-take-all politics, weak state institutions, and the political class's view of these tools for personal gain. In light of the aforementioned claim, the report recommends that Nigeria take a comprehensive strategy to the elimination or reduction of SALWs. This suggests that in order to stop the growth of SALWs in Nigeria, her strategy should incorporate all pertinent legislative, administrative, and judicial entities. Strengthening institutions with adequate budget, equipment, and professional staff is crucial for successful SALW reduction and control in Nigeria. International assistance and cooperation are essential, but the Nigerian government's dedication is crucial for success.

References

- Agagu, A. A. (2004). The Nigerian state and its development efforts: whose agenda? In Agagu, A. A. and Ola, R. F (eds). *Development agenda of the Nigerian state*, Ibadan, FIAG (Nigeria) Publishers.
- Adedayo, O. O. (2010). The state and the challenges of development in Nigeria's fourth republic, in Femi, O and Toyin, A. (eds), *Perspectives on state and development*. Lagos, Policy Development and Consultant Limited.
- Adeniyi, A. (2017). *The human cost of uncontrolled arms in Africa*, OXFAM Research Reports. March
- Adetiba, T. C. (2012). Socio-political and economic development under threat: The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*. 2(5), 179-189.
- Agidi, P. A. & Gbamwuan, A. (2022). The use of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria's election; An assessment of the 2019 general elections in Benue State, *Humanus Discourse*. 2(3), 1-19.
- Ake, C. (1996). Is Africa democratizing? In Mimiko, N. O. (ed). *Crisis and contradictions in Nigeria's democratization programme, 1986-1993*. Akure, Stebak Ventures Limited.
- Anayo, O. (2017). *United Nations: Nigeria account for 70% of 500 million illicit weapons in West Africa*. Vanguard online (<https://www.vanguardngr.com>) accessed May 25, 2019.
- Badmus, I. A. (2010). Oiling the guns and gunning for oil: oil violence, arms proliferation and the destruction on Nigeria's Niger Delta. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*. 2(1), 323-363.

- Cockayne, J. & Mikulaschek, C. (2008). Transnational security challenges and the United Nation: Overcoming sovereign walls and institutional Silos. New York. *International Peace Academy*.
- Duru, E. J. C. (2002). *The electoral process and democracy in Nigeria*, Calabar, BAAJ International.
- Eavis, P. (2002). Small arms and light weapons in horns of Africa and the Great Lakes region: challenges and ways forward, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*. 4(1), 251-260.
- Eke, P. P. (1975). Colonialism and the two publics: A theoretical statement, *Journal of Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 17(1), 23-31.
- Fadakinte, M. M. (2013). The nature and character of the Nigerian State: Explanation of election crisis in a peripheral state. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*. 12(11), 275-287.
- Human Rights Watch (2011). *Nigeria: Post-election violence killed 800*, <https://www.hrw.org> accessed May 25th, 2019
- International Peace Institute (IPI) (2009). Small arms and light weapons: Taskforce on strengthening multilateral security capacity. *IPI Blue Paper* No. 5
- Kehinde, M. O. (2007). *Democracy and political violence in the Nigerian federalism in Femi, O. (ed). Readings in political behaviour*. Ado-Ekiti, University of Ado-Ekiti press.
- Krause, K. (2007). *Small arms lights weapons: Towards global public policy, coping with crisis working paper series*, New York. *International Peace Academy*.
- Ladan, I. S. (2015). Electoral violence and the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, *Global Journal of Human-Social Science*. 16(1), 1-9.
- Morgenthau, H. J. (1973). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*, New York, Alfred A Knopf.
- Nigerian Tribune (2017). 21-million arms, ammunitions shipped into Nigeria in 7 years. [Tribuneonline.com](http://tribuneonline.com). accessed May 26, 2019.
- Nna, N. I. Gbara, P. B. & Friday, N. (2012). Arms proliferation and conflicts in Africa: The Sudan experience, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 4(4), 31-39
- Nna, N. I. (2000). *Contemporary political analysis: An introduction*, Port Harcourt: The Blueprint limited.

- Nyiayaana, K. (2023). Armed politics, small arms control and electoral violence in Nigeria, *African Journal of Social Sciences Education*. 2(2), 1-20.
- Obi, C. (2009). Nigeria's Niger Delta: understanding the complex drivers of violence oil-related conflict, *African development*, xxxiv (2), 103-128.
- Okafor, F. N. (2017). Arms proliferation and electoral violence in West Africa sub-region: A study of 2019 general elections in Nigeria, *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Sciences*. 5(10), 686-691.
- Olayiwola, S. S. (2017). Proliferation of arms and security challenges in Nigeria, *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies*. 3(3), 33-38.
- Oluwadare, A. J. (2014). The impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on West African States: an analysis of the Sierra Leone civil war, *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*. 7(2), 189-209.
- Oluwo, D. (1994). *The nature and character of the African State*, Paper presented for AAPM 15th roundtable at Banjul, Gambia, 24-29, January.
- Osaghae, E. E. (1989). The character of the state, legitimacy crisis and social mobilization in Africa: An explanation of forms and character, *Africa development*. 14 (2), 27-47.
- Pious, R. (1986). *American politics and government*, New York: McGraw Hill.
- Renner, M. (2002). *Curbing the proliferation of small arms*, www.worldwatch.org accessed May 26, 2019.
- Salopeck, P. (2001). *Leftover arms fuel continent's ruinous wars: Cold war surplus wreaks havoc*, Chicago: Chicago Tribune.
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)(2024). *Small arms transfer database*, Retrieved from; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55163/SAFC1241>
- Stohl, R. J. (2008). Targeting children: Small arms and children conflict, *Brown Journal of World Affairs*. 9(1), 281-292.
- Uwa, O. G. & Anthony, B. A. (2015). Small arms and light weapons proliferation and problem of national security in Nigeria. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*. 29(2), 12-20.
- Verma, S. P. (1975). *Modern political theory*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishers.
- Wenibowei, Mc. K. (2017). Bad leadership and institutional failure: Foundation of corruption in Nigeria. *Journal of Research in National Development*. 15(1), 14-34.