

ETHNIC AGITATIONS AND ARMS PROLIFERATION: THREATS TO NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

The Nigerian state is an amalgam of several constituent parts with peculiar religious, ethnic, historical, resource endowment, and socio-cultural attributes. Ordinarily, these peculiar attributes would have been a source of strength against all forms of threats. In any case, the ethnographical differences amongst the component parts of the country have become a threat rather than an asset to its corporate existence. For instance, ever since they were lumped together into a one political entity, all the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria have been in a perennial war of attrition for supremacy. This manifests in constant agitation for power shift/rotational presidency, secession, resource control, restructuring, and the Islamization of the country. These agitations have assumed a complex dimension as the agitators have resorted to the amassing of weapons of mass destruction which they employ in unleashing terror and mayhem despite several measures taken to stem the tide such as the National Political Conference held in 2014. This study therefore, interrogates the persistence of the ethnic agitations and arms proliferation in Nigeria with a view to exploring options to escaping the collapse of the Nigerian state. Both primary and secondary sources, such as interviews and documents were utilized in generating data which were subjected to a rigorous historical and empirical explanation of the frequency of arms proliferation and ethnic agitations in Nigeria. The study anchors on the weak state theory based on its contention that there is a strong link between institutional weakness and ethnic agitations that threaten the collapse of the Nigerian state. Against this backdrop, the study advocates the strengthening of arms control laws as a key to curbing ethnic agitations through a referendum to decide the terms of co-existence amongst the diverse ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

Key words: Ethnic agitations, arms proliferation, threats, marginalization, restructuring.

Introduction

Agitations by the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria have assumed an alarming dimension as they pose a threat to the continued existence of the country as a political entity. Ethnic nationalities have peculiar interest, which they consider as most vital to their survival and thus do not compromise them. Any perceived infringement on them naturally elicits resistance and agitation for restitution or requisite compensation. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with ethnic agitations in a multiethnic state such as Nigeria. However, when such agitations portend a collapse of the state based on their

controversial nature and the dimension they become serious concerns.

Since they were lumped together into a one political entity, there has not been any love lost amongst all the diverse ethnic nationalities in Nigeria as they have been in a perennial war of attrition for supremacy. This disturbing trend has turned the ethnographic differences amongst the component parts of the country into a threat rather than a source of strength to its corporate existence.

Besides, some of the agitations by the diverse ethnic nationalities tend to be shrouded in controversy. For example, the agitation by the Igbo ethnic nationality for confederation is viewed from other quarters as divisive and a threat to the corporate existence of the Nigerian Federation. In the same vein, the agitation by the Niger Delta region for resource control is regarded as uncalled for and capable of disintegrating the country just as the agitation by the Northern part of the country for increased federal allocation is criticized by other parts of the country as insensitive and exploitative. More so, the resilient agitation by the Southwest and the Southeast extraction for restructuring of Nigeria through a sovereign national conference is being vigorously resisted by the Northern part of the country on the ground that it is being driven by hatred for the North and intended to deny the states from the north of their share of the revenue allocation accruing from the Federation Account (Yakassi, 2016:29). This has invariably made ethnic agitations in Nigeria to be explosive as the diverse ethnic nationalities have resorted to arms build-up to press home their respective agitation. Perhaps, this prompted Ambassador John Campbell in 2007 to poignantly predict that Nigeria would break up in 2015 (Abimboye, 2012:21). Even though, the country is still united, the specters of bloodbath that characterize the contemporary ethnic agitations in Nigeria eloquently signify a looming collapse of the Nigerian State. The escalating dimension of the attacks by the Fulani cattle grazers in many parts of the country, the resurgent menace of the Niger Delta militants, the lingering onslaught of the Boko Haram insurgents, and the resilient violent agitation by the members of the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) suffice to reinforce the threat to the collapse of the Nigerian State.

This study therefore, is spurred to appraise the implication of the ethnic agitations and arms proliferation on the corporate existence of the Nigerian State. This is with a view to exploring viable path to managing the disturbing trends while escaping the eventual collapse of the Nigerian state..

Conceptual Clarification

Two major concepts require clarification within the context of this study. These are ethnic agitation and arms proliferation. With regards to ethnic agitation, there is consensus amongst analysts that it generally connotes crave by ethnic nationalities for primordial interest. Specifically however, it conveys a different meaning to different analysts. For instance, Mustapha (2003) sees it as an expression of primordial interest by ethnic groups in a multiethnic state that is characterized by majority and minority ethnic groups dichotomy. This conveys the idea that it is propelled by a perception of domination and marginalization by the majority ethnic

groups on the one hand and neglect by the multinational state on the other hand. Invariably, ethnic agitation is inevitable in a multiethnic state characterized by inequity and dis-equilibrated social structure.

Accordingly, Otite (2004:2) asserts that ethnic agitation occurs in “a situation of co-existing diverse and basic compulsory institutional and cultural arrangements involving dominance and subordination in the same social setting”. This implies that structural imbalance of most multiethnic states in Africa is largely instrumental to the prevalent agitations by minority ethnic groups who allege real or imagined domination and marginalization, thus seeking to balance and restructure the State. According to Onabanjo (2012:16) ethnic agitation is geared towards a balance of terror in defence of the respective sectional, political and religious interest of the ethnic nationalities. But to Crighton (1991:127), ethnic agitation is identity driven and grows out of the feelings of powerlessness and memories of past persecution. In other words, ethnic agitation proceeds from the “fear of extinction”, “fear of dying off” and “fear of the future” (cited in Taleti, 2006). This position, largely mirrors the idea of Northrup (1989:65) that ethnic agitation is a defensive reaction by ethnic nationalities aimed at avoiding spiritual and physical exposure that threaten to remove the feelings of ‘safety’. In a similar vein, Dumoye (2016) linked insurgency to frustrations from fear of marginalization and annihilation. The bottom-line of the foregoing is that ethnic agitation is prevalent in the atmosphere of prolonged injustice; social exclusion and persecution which implies that it is driven by the quest to upturn the status quo and usher in a regime of equitable distribution of the natural resources and equal representation in the political scheme of things within the multi-ethnic state.

Concerning arms proliferation, scholars have also agreed that it is illegal movement of arms and ammunition. This implies that arms buildup by the state does not amount to arms proliferation as the state has the exclusive monopoly of arms possession and the use of force (Weber, 2002). Therefore, arms proliferation is specific to the production, trafficking and possession of arms and ammunition by the non-state actors. Meanwhile, arms that are susceptible to proliferation and trafficking fall into the category of what is described in the international circles as Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) (United Nations, 2001). In any case, experts and scholars accord different meaning to it. For instance, many of them share the view that they refer to any portable barreled and lethal weapons designed to expel a shot, bullet or projectile ammunition including destructive devices such as explosives, incendiary or gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missiles and mines (United Nations, 1997; Oche, 2005). But others such as the Royal Military College of Science (2003), Akuyoma (2003), and Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (2001) conceive SALWs as encompassing man-portable firearms and their ammunition, largely shoulder controlled weapons of up to 12.7mm (0.5”) caliber primarily designed for individual use by military forces as lethal weapons.

The arms that fall into this category share unique features that make them amenable to proliferation and trafficking. For instance, they are durable, affordable, widely available, lethal, portable, simple to handle and easily concealable (Gopalkrishna, 2008; Onabanjo, 2012). The implication is that these peculiar features

of the Small Arms and Light Weapons fuel their proliferation which is conceived by the United Nations (2001) simply as the “illicit trade in small arms”. In other words, arms proliferation refers to “both authorized transfers of small arms and light weapons (and their parts, accessories and ammunition) and illicit transfer of such weapons (Pearson, 1994; Oche, 2005). This implies that arms proliferation involves the gamut processes of illegal trafficking, or smuggling and the spread of contraband weapons or ammunition (Small Arms Survey, 2013).

As a result of their spread, these arms get into the possession of non state actors that employ them to unleash mayhem and threaten the State. Such non-state actors include guerrillas, ethnic militias, warlords, brigands and so on (Klare, 2016:2). Thus having been emboldened by the widespread availability and easy access to the Small Arms and Light Weapons, ethnic militias and warlords in Nigeria assert their agitation with reckless abandon to the extent of threatening the corporate existence of the country as a political entity. Yet the Nigerian State seems apparently overwhelmed to contain the torrential influx and flow of the arms which fuel the growing strength of the menacing ethnic militias and insurgents.

The driving force of ethnic agitations and arms proliferation in Nigeria

There is no shortage of theoretical orientation on the incidence of ethnic agitation and arms proliferation in Nigeria. For instance, most analysts have relied on the theory of frustration –aggression (Dollard, 1939) to contend that “the prevalence of ethnic agitation and arms proliferation is a consequence of the widening gap between expected need satisfaction and actual need satisfaction”. Ultimately, this scenario leads to frustration and the consequent aggression by the victims against the perceived thwarting circumstances (Anifowose, 1982:7). In the context of this theory therefore, ethnic agitation is a product of frustration arising from the perception of marginalization. A related explanation of ethnic agitation is deprivation theory (Gurr, 1970). The thrust of the theory is that ethnic agitation is a reaction against the blocked opportunities and circumstances that deny some ethnic groups within a multiethnic state their entitlements and privileges such as employment opportunity and political participation. Nevertheless, the theories fell short of explaining ethnic agitation from the prism of power drunkenness by some ethnic champions who hide under the cloak of marginalization to propagate their personal interest of becoming the emperor in their small empires. Equally, the theories ignored the tendency of complacency and laziness in denying certain ethnic groups of opportunities as they choose to depend on “manna” falling from the federal heaven rather than being resourceful and utilizing their talents to earn a living.

In the light of the inherent inability of these theories to adequately explain the prevalent incidences of ethnic agitations and arms proliferation in Nigeria, this study anchors its analysis on the weak state theory. This is considered suitable from its ability to capture the undercurrents of the ethnic agitations in relation to the widespread availability of arms in the hands of non-state actors such as the ethnic militias and warlords. The theory is credited to the World Bank categorization of countries under stress (Coyne, 2006). According to Uzoechina (2008:7), it also

extends to states that have weak institutions of governance which, undermine their capacity to deliver public goods and services to its citizenry, and states that are bereft of resilience in the face of conflict or political turmoil. In a nutshell, the weak states are associated with the following attributes.

Institutional weakness: A major feature of a weak state is that its institutions are inherently weak. As a result, the weak state lacks the capacity to provide the good life encapsulated in the basic essentials for its citizens. The inability of the weak state to provide the requisite basic amenities such as security and welfare turns it into a Hobbesian state of nature where life is solitary, nasty, brutish, poor and selfish given the spate with which the citizens resort to self help tendency. Equally, the institutional weakness translates to the incapacity of the weak state to mediate among competing interests that are characteristic of multiethnic states, thereby giving rise to the emergence of rebels in the garb of ethnic militias and the attendant spread of illicit arms.

Loss of legitimacy: Sequel to the inability of the weak state to perform the basic functions of the modern state, it loses its legitimacy and the confidence of the citizenry for the protection of their lives and property. This invariably results in the separatist agitation for self-determination which more often than not, culminate in the general lawlessness and eventual state collapse. In other words, the inability of the weak state to suppress insurrection and defend its sovereignty against external aggression pushes the citizens to rebel against it for ostensibly failing to keep its own terms of the social contract.

Susceptibility to conflict and political instability: In the light of the inherent weakness of its institutions to deliver services to its citizens and the resultant loss of its legitimacy, the weak states become vulnerable to conflicts and predominant presence of rebels in the form of warlords, ethnic militias, guerillas, parallel security outfits, and insurgents such as the members of Boko Haram, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign Sate of Biafra (MASSOB)/ Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) / Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Odua People's Congress (OPC). For instance, the weak states lack the capacity to manage and respond to minority agitation against the domination of the political and economic landscape by the majority. Consequently, the minority ethnic groups resort to violent agitation which renders the weak states susceptible to the spread of crimes, extreme political corruption, arms proliferation, separatist agitation and incessant threat to state collapse (Ottah, 2006).

Based on the weak state thesis, this study classifies the Nigerian state among the category of the weak states identified by the World Bank as being under stress as exemplified by its seeming inability to provide the greater good to the greater number of its citizenry. Thus the country is plunged into the vortex of high rate of unemployment and widespread availability of arms which are used to unleash mayhem and which threatens Nigeria's national security.

Dimensions of ethnic agitations in Nigeria

This study is largely qualitative in orientation and therefore, relies heavily on a wide range of secondary sources. In any case, opinions were randomly sampled from identified ethnic agitators within the six geo-political zones to ascertain their grievances. Their general position however, is that the agitation is a product of the structural imbalance of the Nigerian state. For instance, the country is an agglomerate of several tribes and ethnic nationalities that existed independently with all the paraphernalia of states prior to the colonial rule. Moreover, opinions are divided amongst scholars over the actual number of the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Thus while some scholars such as Bangura (nd) believe that the country consists of about four hundred and seventy ethnic groups, others contend that the country is populated by three hundred and seventy four tribes and ethnic nationalities (Otite, 1990). Nevertheless, the mythical number of two hundred and fifty ethnic groups seems to enjoy popularity in the domain of academic discourses. Moreover, it is incontrovertible that the Nigerian state comprises a medley of diverse people that mix but do not combine (Furnivall, 1948). This according to Ibeanu (1999:33) is because "Nigeria is not a people-nation but a nation of people". For instance, the diverse ethnic nationalities were lumped together into a one political entity in 1914 with utter disregard for their historical, political, cultural or sociological bonds (Nwankwo, 1979:5). In other words, Nigeria as presently constituted is a multinational state. Ever since this contraption, there has not been any love lost amongst these strange bedfellows as they regard one another with disdain and distrust. In particular, the apparent disproportionate size of the North against the South inflamed the fear of domination and triggered the agitation against marginalization. The mutual suspicion grew with the escalation of the agitation when the country in 1946 was regionalized into a three disproportionate sizes, reinforcing the largeness of the North over the split South of East and West combined. Rather than being assuaged by successive governments, the agitation increased in leaps and bounds and assumes the current complex dimension which threatens the corporate existence of the Nigerian state.

Secessionist agitation: Secessionist agitation is the expression of grievance by ethnic nationalities against perceived persecution, injustice and marginalization against the other ethnic groups in cahoots with the State. Accordingly, such ethnic nationality feels unsafe in the corporate state and resort to opt out on the ground that their lives and properties can no longer be guaranteed by the State. In Nigeria, the agitation for secession has become music to the ears of the Igbo ethnic nationality, including members of the regime in power (Nwagboso, 1995:1273). It began in 1967 sequel to the pogrom of the Igbos in the aftermath of the January, 1966 military coup d'état. Even though, the secessionist attempt was eventually crushed in January, 1970 after a catastrophic thirty months civil war, the agitation has resurfaced under the auspices of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB). Elsewhere in Africa, Katanga attempted unsuccessfully in 1960 to secede from the now Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of the resolve by the emergent African leaders to keep the inherited colonial boundaries sacrosanct. In 1990 however, Eritrea

successfully seceded from Ethiopia and became the first ethnic nationality in Africa to achieve the feat followed by Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) that is at verge of achieving same from Morocco. In any case, the predominant animist South Sudan recently seceded from the Muslim Northern Sudan.

The present agitation for the sovereign State of Biafra results from the apparent marginalization and incessant attacks on the Igbos. For instance, out of the six geopolitical zones in the country, the South East has five States while the other geopolitical zones are made up of six and seven States respectively. As a result, the South East receives the least of allocation from the Federation Account coupled with the fact that the Igbos of the South East Nigeria are mostly the victims of every ethno-religious and political cross fires in the northern part and elsewhere in the country such as the Sharia crisis, the Jos crisis, Boko Haram menace and the attacks by the Fulani herdsmen.

Resource control agitation: The imbalance in the natural resource endowment amongst the constituent parts of Nigeria has created the Lasswellian crisis of “who gets what, when and how”. The crude oil resource predominantly found and produced within the Niger Delta region in commercial quantity has remained the mainstay of Nigeria’s economy. This implies that the Niger Delta is the goose that lays Nigeria’s golden egg and suffers environmental degradation resulting from the oil production process. Yet there is no commensurate compensation, thereby provoking the agitation for resource control. Following the military action geared to crush the agitation, the agitation snowballed into a violent dimension in the form of pipeline vandalism, hostage taking of mostly expatriate oil workers, government officials and the audacious attacks on the oil and gas facilities belonging to oil companies. Although, the Amnesty deal of 2009 led to the suspension of the offensive by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the agitation by the Niger Delta to control their resources has recently resumed with ferocious intensity forcing many oil companies to shut down operation in compliance with the calls by the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) for the oil companies to leave the Niger Delta or face destruction and annihilation.

Islamization agitation: The Nigeria State is made up of people with diverse religious faiths. The predominant religious faiths in Nigeria are Christianity, Islam and the traditional variant otherwise referred to as Paganism. There has been a lingering rivalry between Christianity and Islam both of which are of foreign origin to Nigeria, resulting in many deaths and destruction of property. Successive governments including the governing instrument of the supernatural entity have tried in vain to contain religious violence by secularizing religion in the country. Yet, some sections of the Islamic faith who are predominantly of the Fulani extraction have continued to antagonize the Christian faithfuls in the Northern part of the country as they agitate for the Islamization of Nigeria. The present onslaught by the Boko Haram insurgents is an expression of the Islamaization agenda as symbolized by their official name *Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad* (JAS) which in Arabic

means “People committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings” and literarily translated in Hausa as “Western culture is fraud”. Since 2002 when the group emerged, they have wrecked havoc on the socio-economic life of Nigerians, thereby forcing the relocation of the Christian faithfuls who are mostly of the Southern extraction to the South. Unfortunately, the agitation has assumed a complex dimension with the ferocious invasion and attacks by the Fulani cattle grazers on the various communities in Nigeria populated by the Christian faithfuls in reinforcement of their Islamization agenda. This invariably poses a new threat to the corporate existence of the Nigerian State.

Rotational presidency/Power shift agitation: The apparent lopsided sociopolitical structure of the Nigerian state seems to have placed some ethnic nationalities at a vantage position in the political equation of the country. Thus, other ethnic nationalities allege that there is not and has never been popular participation and representations in political and economic decision making in Nigeria (Ake, 2003). For instance, available records show that between 1960 and 2016, the Northern part of the country has dominated the political scene producing ten out of fourteen Presidents/Heads of Government and leaving the South with only four slots. Equally, the North has Nineteen States and the FCT, while the South has Seventeen States. This over-bearing hegemony of the North has paved the way for their domination of virtually the entire space of Nigeria’s political structure, thereby undermining the application of quota system or federal character in the scheme of things. As a result, there has been a clarion call by the Southern part of Nigeria for rotational presidency, power shift or the restructuring of the country as a panacea for the imbalance and marginalization. The argument is that if power is rotated amongst the ethnic nationalities, it would dilute all feelings of rancour and mutual suspicion amongst them. Above all, the restructuring of the country would allay the fears of domination and create a sense of belonging in both the majority and minority ethnic nationalities. The case against this agitation is that power shift/ rotational presidency amounts to catching the wind as it would take a century or more for power to rotate to all the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Similarly, the argument from the Northern part of the country against restructuring is that the north has a higher population and land mass and thus deserves to dominate the rest of the country. Rather than pacifying, power shift has heightened the agitation for the polarization of the country into its ethnic pieces through the resort to armed rebellion and violence by armed militias and insurgents.

Arms proliferation as a threat to national security in Nigeria

Nigeria is one of sixteen countries located in West African Sub-region and by extension the largest both in size and population. Its current estimated population of 180 million explains the geographical mobility of most Nigerians in search of greener pasture so much so that findings have revealed that one out three West Africans is a Nigerian (Olagunji and Oyovbaire, 1991:272). Moreover, Nigeria is contiguously bounded by Cameroun in East, Benin Republic in the West, Chad and Niger in the

Northeast and Northwest respectively, and the Atlantic Ocean in the South. This geo-strategic location of the country largely accounts for the seeming unfettered influx of over 70% of the estimated 500 million illegal weapons circulating in West Africa (Vanguard, 3 August, 2016). According to Adeniji (2016), over two million of illicit arms are in circulation amongst non-state actors, especially ethnic militias, bandits and insurgents. This ultimately ranks Nigeria in the league of countries with high prevalence of illicit arms. These arms are categorized as Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) and the variants that are proliferated in Nigeria include Kalashnikov, otherwise known as the AK-47 rifle named after its inventor Col. Kalashnikov of the former Soviet Union in 1947. Others are automatic pump-action shotguns, shoulder launched rockets, berretta and browning pistols, G-3 rifles, General Purpose Machine guns, grenades, short guns, and sub-machine guns (Royal Military College of Science, 1993; United Nations, 1997; Renner, 1997). According to experts, this category of arms are the preferred choice of the non-state actors based on their unique features such as their simplicity, durability, affordability, wide availability, lethality, portability and easy accessibility (Gopalkrishna, 2008; Ajayi, 2012). The illicit arms circulate in parts of Nigeria through both the external and internal sources. The major external sources include Liberia, Libya, South Africa, Cote d’Ivoire, Ukraine, Turkey, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Russia, United States of America, China and Serbia. The Small Arms and Light Weapons from these foreign countries are largely smuggled into the country through the 3770km porous land borders shared with its neighbours, 850km maritime border on the Atlantic Ocean, and many airports (Park, 2003; Onabanjo, 2012). Meanwhile, the local sources of these arms are local fabricators such as the blacksmiths who are mostly plying their trade in the Eastern part of Nigeria particularly in Awka, Anambra State. Table 1 below vividly illustrates the varieties of small arms and light weapons being manufactured in Awka, Anambra.

Table 1: Locally-manufactured Small Arms and Light Weapons in Awka

Small Arms and Light Weapons	Ammunition
Pocket single-shot handgun	Various calibers of shotgun
Four-shot revolver	9 mm, 7.5mm, or 8.5mm
Eight-shot revolver	Various caliber of shotgun cartridge
Horizontal double-barrel shotgun	Various caliber of shotgun cartridge
Vertical double-barrel shotgun	Various caliber of shotgun cartridge

Source: Karp, 2007; Ikelegbe, 2014

Other local sources include armouries of government security agencies such as the Police, the military, customs, etc and the Defence Industrial Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) which officially produces light weapons such as pistols, rifles, short- guns, submarine guns, grenades, including bullets and cartridges and the Nigerian version of AK-47 branded OBJ-006 after former President Olesgun Obasanjo (Oche, 2005; Onabanjo, 2012). In addition, returnees from foreign mission fuel the proliferation of SALWs in Nigeria by stealing their weapons and selling them at give away prices to hoodlums (Saliu, 1999:18-19). The implication is that based on

the many loose sources of arms flow in the country which is compounded by the sheer absence of state control in the surrounding borders, Nigeria has become flooded by small arms and light weapons. Thus, even though, there is stark absence of comprehensive and reliable data on arms seizures, table 2 below portrays a gloomy statistics of intercepted and seized illicit arms in the country in the period between 1999 and 2012 for which record is available.

Table 2: Intercepted and Seized Illicit Arms in Nigeria, 1999-2012

Year	Arms	Ammunition	Location
1999	2	72,500	Lagos
2000	35	19,675	N/A
2001	1,908	3,002	Abuja/Seme/Badagry
2002	3,167	32,500	Seme/Badagry/Lagos
2003	3,465	353,381	Lagos/Minna?Seme/Badagry/Port Harcourt/Ogele-Shagamu/Ijebu Ode/Lekki Ajada beach
2004	11	500	Gwagwada (FCT)/Lagos/Idiroko
2005	2	38,966	Borno/Lagos/Abuja/Osun/Oyo/Jos
2006	N/A	750	Owerri
2007	35 + 7 trailers of arms	Unspecified	N/A
2008	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010	65	103	Maiduguri/Ibadan/Onitsha
2011	39+ 13 container loads of assorted weapons	N/A	Lagos/Uromi, Edo State
2012	133	84	Nenwe, Enugu State/Makurdi/Gboko/Otukpo

Sources: Small Arms (2007) Occasional Paper 20; Ikelegbe, 2014.

Aside this record, Small Arms Survey (2012) observed that between seven and eight million arms are in civilian hands, part of which were surrendered by the Niger Delta militants in lieu of the successful prosecution of the Amnesty Programme in 2009. For instance, a total of 2,760 arms, 287,445 ammunition, 18 gunboats, 763 explosives, 1,090 dynamite caps, and 3, 155 magazines were surrendered to the Federal Government by the militants. More so, the GIABA Report (2013) reinforced the prevalence of illicit arms in Nigeria by estimating the number were in and out of the country between 2000 and 2010 as follows: 2.5 million SALWs in circulation, 3,732 seized, between 1,257 and 20,000 surrendered, between 140 and 7000 lost by the various security agencies, and 6,491 of the illicit small arms and light weapons destroyed by the Nigerian army (Gunpolcy, 2011; Vanguard, 13 May, 2010; Punch, 28 November, 2008).

From the above findings, it could be concluded without equivocation that ethnic agitations and sundry national security threats in Nigeria are heavily fueled and being sustained by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Consequently, the country has been prone to insecurity and festering conflicts as the ethnic militias, insurgents and criminals audaciously brandish the illicit arms to unleash mayhem on their fellow citizens as well as threaten the collapse of the country through violent agitations for dismembering the country or a comprehensive review of the structure of the Nigerian State.

Route to escaping the collapse of the Nigerian state

Ethnic agitations and arms proliferation are to say the least the main challenges threatening the collapse of the Nigerian State. While the ethnic agitation is the consequence of the disequibrated structure of the Nigerian State, it is currently being fuelled by the wide availability and spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons to mostly non state actors who audaciously employ them to unleash mayhem and make outrageous demands capable of dismembering the multiethnic state of Nigeria. Some of these demands include the Islamization of the country, resource control, secession, restructuring and power shift. According to Belo (1995:1272), most if not all agitations rather than uniting and providing stability for the country has endangered the polarization of the Nigerian state into its village units. Moreover, the ethnic militias and warlords in parts of Nigeria have cashed in on the unhindered circulation of and access to illicit weapons to transform the country into a seeming hobbesan State characterized by the dark side of human nature.

In the face of the seeming failure of the extant measures rolled out to manage ethnic agitations and curb arms proliferation in Nigeria, this study concludes that the threat to the collapse of the Nigerian state through violent ethnic agitation and arms proliferation would persist unless drastic paradigm shift is taken. It is therefore posited here that the route to escape the looming collapse of the Nigerian state through violent agitation and arms proliferation is referendum to decide on the continued existence of the country as an encapsulation of the diverse ethnic groups or the restructuring of the country into equal constituent parts with fiscal autonomy and castrated centre. In addition, there is urgent need to mop up the illegal arms in circulation through the review of the existing firearms law and the strengthening of the security agencies with a view to safeguarding legitimate government stocks from diversion and illegal transfer (Akuyoma, 2003: 19-20). This is strongly believed to water the ground for enhancing efforts at building and consolidating national unity.

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