

TITLE PAGE

**THE NIGERIA - BIAFRA WAR AND THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND
LIGHT WEAPONS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA, 1967-2007**

BY

UGWUJA, ALEX AMAECHI

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BY

UGWUJA, AMAECHI ALEX

2013047008P

DECLARATION

THE EXAMINERS DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:-

That this is the original work of the candidate. That the Thesis is accepted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in International Studies in the Department of History and International Studies.

..... Prof. Ngozi Ojiakor Supervisor Signature Date
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..... Prof. Dan O. Chukwu Head of Department Signature Date
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..... Prof. Dan Chukwu Internal (Internal) Signature Date
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..... Prof. Paul Ogugua External (Internal) Signature Date
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APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved, having satisfied the conditions for the award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in History and International Studies of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria by:

..... Prof. Ngozi Ojiakor Supervisor Signature Date
--	--------------------	---------------

..... Prof. Dan O. Chukwu Head of Department Signature Date
--	--------------------	---------------

..... Dr. Justin Nkem Onyekpe External Examiner Signature Date
---	--------------------	---------------

..... Prof. Tracy Utoh - Ezeajugh Dean of Arts Signature Date
--	--------------------	---------------

..... Prof. Harris Ike-Odimegwu Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies Signature Date
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DEDICATION

To my mother, Deaconess, Florence Nwachukwu
For the days of little beginning

To my Wife, Nkechinyere Vivian Amaechi
For the peace and ambience at home

And

My Son, Chinemeze Excellence Amaechi
For heralding unspeakable joy

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Alex Amaechi Ugwuja

Dip. Theo; B. A. (Hons.); PGDE; M.A.; PhD(UNIZIK)

+234 8063382070; ugwujalexander@gmail.com,

Awka, October, 2017.

ABSTRACT

The Nigeria-Biafra war, a protracted war which raged between July 1967 and January 1970 was fought, lost and won. Ostensibly, a “domestic” conflict, in a strictly narrow sense, the war has been described as ‘an intensely international’ conflict, engaging both world opinion and world powers. As with all major historical occurrences, the war has generated a lot of scholarly interest and has engaged the attention of not only historians – professional and amateur – but also scholars of other cognate as well as some seemingly disparate disciplines, who have written copiously on the subject-matter. Furthermore, like all significant historical realities, the consequences of the Nigeria-Biafra war continuously reveal themselves in hitherto unconsidered perspectives. Thus, newer studies are often seen updating the extant knowledge on some areas of the war and or broaching new and fresh themes altogether. One of the areas in which the effects of the war appears not to have received significant historical attention is the nexus between that war and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country, especially in the Southeast Region of the country. Given the naval and aerial blockade of Biafra by Nigeria as well as the international diplomatic odds against the secessionist enclave, the people resorted to local production of arms and weapons to supplement the meagre external supplies. In view of the fact that there was no serious arms mop-up/disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) after the war, these civil war arms quickly found their ways into the civil society, thereby creating the basis for unprecedented small arms and light weapons proliferation in the country, especially in the Southeast Region. This thesis, therefore, examines how the war and its aftermaths conduced to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeast Nigeria. The study employs the historical method which emphasises description, thematic presentation, interpretation and analyses of facts. It also engages the use of the quantitative method. Information for the study has been generated from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources derived from oral interviews conducted primarily in the Southeast Region of Nigeria, especially among the veterans of the Nigeria-Biafra war and importantly, scholars who have carried out researches in the area of study under investigation. Additionally, information was sourced from the National Defence College, Abuja, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru – Jos, National (War) Museums both at Umuahia and Benin as well as the National Archives in Enugu. Furthermore, information was quarried from the Nigerian Army Public Relations Unit as well as the Ministry of Interior in Abuja. Other primary sources that are used in this study include public reports, and government publications among others. Secondary sources included textbooks, magazines, academic journals and internet material, among others.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3MCD: Third Marine Commando Division

3Rs: Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction

ADC: Aide de Camp

AG: Action Group

ALU: Army Liaison Unit

APP: All People's Party

ATR: African Traditional Religion

BAF: Biafran Air Force

BOFF: Biafran Organization of Freedom Fighters

CBN: Central Bank of Nigeria

CC: Criminal Code

DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

ERW: Explosive Remnants of War

ESUT: Enugu State University of Science and Technology

FMG: Federal Military Government

GTW: Genocide Theory of War

HMG: Higher Machine Gun

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

IDPs: Internally Displaced Persons

IGP: Inspector - General of Police

IMSU: Imo State University

IPOB: Indigenous People of Biafra

ISMT: Integrated Security Management Theory

MASSOB: Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra

MBT: Mine Bans Treaty

MG: Machine Gun

MoI: Ministry of Interior

NA: Nigerian Army

NACSA: National Commission on Small Arms

NAE: National Archives, Enugu

NAH: Nigerian Army Hospital

NATCOM: National Taskforce on Small Arms Proliferation

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NAU: Nnamdi Azikiwe University

NCE: Nigerian Customs Excise

NCNC: National Council of Nigerian Citizens

NDA: Nigerian Defence Academy

NDC: National Defence College

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NIPPS: National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies

NMS: Nigerian Military School

NN: Nigerian Navy

NPC: Northern People's Congress

NPF: Nigeria Police Force

NSA: National Security Agency

OPC: Oodua People's Congress

PC: Penal Code

PCASED: Programme of Cooperation for Security and Development

PDP: People's Democratic Party

PRESCOM: Presidential Committee on Small Arms Proliferation

RAP: Research and Production

RMCS: Royal Military College of Science

SAFRAP: Societe Anonyme Francaise de Recherches et d'exploitation de Petrolieres

SALW: Small Arms and Light Weapons

SAS: Small Arms Survey

SITREP: Situation Report

SFSM: Shoulder Fired – Surface – to – Surface Missile

SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

SMG: Sub – Machine Gun

UAC: United African Company

UN: United Nations

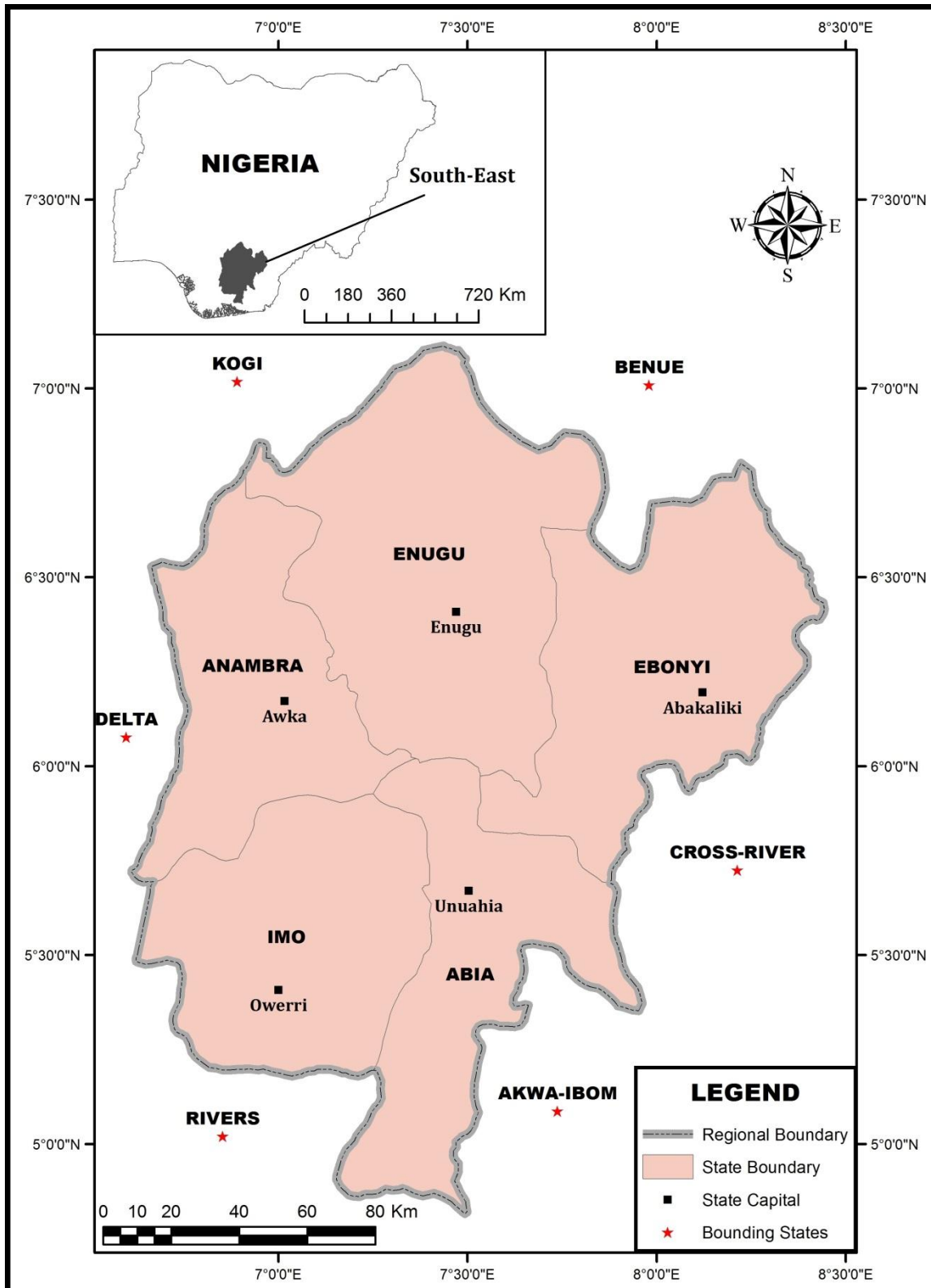
UNN: University of Nigeria, Nsukka

USDS: United States Department of State

WACA: West African Court of Appeal

WCC: World Council of Churches

Map of Southeast Nigeria



Source: Department of Geography, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The Nigeria-Biafra war, a long-drawn strife which lasted nearly thirty months (from July, 1967 to January, 1970), by all standards marked a watershed in not only the political history of Nigeria but also in several other dimensions some of which are yet to be fully examined. In any event, no one can deny that the war was a critical event in Africa's post-colonial history. Ostensibly, a 'domestic' conflict, in a strictly narrow sense, the war was, according to Gary Blank, "an intense international" conflict, engaging both world opinion and world powers"¹. Onwuka Njoku succinctly captures the staggering implications of the war when he contends that "the civil war, which convulsed the country for 30 months, was a collective human tragedy of sobering proportions. It brought the country to the brink of disintegration and left in a trail of reckless destruction of human beings and materials in Igboland, its central theatre"²

As expected, such a phenomenal tragedy has generated serious academic discourse and engaged the scholarly attention of not only historians – professional and amateur alike – but also scholars of other cognate as well as some seemingly disparate disciplines. While historians continue to churn out myriad of studies which focus on varying existential realities of the civil war, there are nonetheless, areas that are yet to receive significant historical attention. Among these areas is the nexus between the war and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country, especially in the Southeast Region of the country.

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are those weapons that can be operated by one or two persons, and can be carried by one or two persons or by a pack animal or light vehicles. Weapons that fall into small arms and light weapons include revolvers and self-loading pistols,

rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, light machine guns, portable anti-aircraft guns and recoilless rifles, among others³. Unarguably, small arms and light weapons proliferation is one of the most encumbering security challenges of most states of the world – developed or developing. It is recognised that the proliferation of small arms, munitions, and explosives have transposed into the greatest threats to human as well as national security and by extension, national development⁴.

It can hardly be gainsaid that from July, 1967 to January, 1970, a period not extending more than thirty months, the Nigerian geographical space as a result of the interplay of the civil war and importantly, the military and strategic twists of the civil war became a junkyard and a destination port of more than thirty per cent of global arms export. As facts from the recently declassified information from the British National Museum would attest to, the United Kingdom provided not less than 36 million rounds of arms amounting up to 60 per cent of the British Army's total reserves⁵. What is more, the secessionist Biafran Republic having been blocked aerially and navally, resorted to indigenous production of arms and munitions most of which fall within the category of small arms and light weapons.

The end of the war in January, 1970, did not attenuate the dangers inherent in a *post bellum* civil society. This is because there appeared not to have been a mop up of arms and weapons after the war; some of these weapons were under the custody of (especially, in the case of Biafra) demobilized persons and army stragglers - formerly Biafran soldiers or militias⁶. Furthermore, there were cases of erstwhile Biafran blacksmiths, gunsmiths and technologists – the Research and Production (RAP) Unit - setting up shops after the war to put their knowledge of indigenous arms manufacturing to good use. Johnson Ezenwaka gives a clue on this point thus:

I was an apprentice blacksmith at Amikwo Awka when the war broke out... it was through my uncle that I found myself with the Biafran Research and Production (RAP) Unit. At the end of the war, most of us had mastered all the intricacies of smelting, welding and gunsmiting. Although, I did not open a smiting shop when the war ended, I know a lot of friends who did...⁷

Consequently, the availability of small arms and light weapons in the country arising from the massive importation of arms in the case of Nigeria and to some extent, the Republic of Biafra and the indigenous production of arms in the specific case of Biafra has since then contributed to violent criminality and political instability in the country, since capabilities create intentions. This situation has damaged development prospects and imperiled national security in every conceivable way. It cannot be denied that most of the debilitating security challenges in which groups and communities have resorted to violence were encouraged by the availability of small arms and light weapons. Thus, small arms and light weapons proliferation has continued to serve as an inimical force, imperiling national security in Nigeria.

In the Southeast Region of Nigeria, the problems of small arms and light weapons proliferation have had significant deleterious impact on security and the overall functionality of the region. This could be seen in the high spate of armed robbery, armed banditry and kidnapping all of which have combined to impinge on the economic prospects of the region⁸. In any event, the people did not fold their hands in the face of the pressing challenges. Indeed, the various state governments, academia and other relevant stakeholders began to scour for the causes and more importantly, panacea for the problem of small arms and light weapons proliferation. In this search for the ultimate solution, the relevance of the historian cannot be gainsaid.

However, the connections between the Nigerian – Biafra war and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the *post bellum* Nigerian society appear not to have caught the

attention of historians of the Nigerian security sector. Nonetheless, combating the menace of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons cannot yield a fruitful result until the historical origins of the problem are dug out and properly scrutinized hence, the salience of this present study.

Statement of Problem

The Nigeria-Biafra war was fought, won and lost. However, the echoes still vibrate and continue to generate various perceptions and academic discourses that further analyse the essence of the war, given its impact on the political, social, political, economic and security domains. With the possible exception of the Congo debacle in 1960, the Nigeria – Biafra war had a profound influence on post-colonial African states .Thus, while the war, supposedly a local grouse between the Federal (Military) Government of Nigeria and one of its constituent units; it was to all intents and purposes an international war laden with myriads of implications for the international political economy, especially oil – politics. As stated above, such a phenomenal tragedy has engaged the scholarly attention of not only historians – professional and amateur alike but also scholars of other related as well as other seemingly disparate disciplines. Historians have continued to churn out myriads of studies which focus on varying existential realities of the civil war.

The above notwithstanding, in most of the extant literature on this area of Nigeria’s security scholarship, attention appears to have been often focused on the socio-political and economic implications of the seemingly intractable phenomenon of insecurity in Nigeria as well as the impact of insecurity on the overall functioning of the Nigerian state. Only few of these extant studies dwell considerably on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and even where this appears to be the case, the bent is always toward the identification of these weapons

as threats to the security of the country. Moreover, very few of these studies can be said to be historical in nature and perspective. In any case, it is clear that the identification of the threats posed by the ‘weaponization’ of the society is clearly not sufficient for the task of combating the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. Besides, it often seems to escape the imagination of the scholars who have worked on the challenge of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria to make linkages to the growth of unauthorised use of arms and weapons as a result of the arms deluge after Nigeria - Biafra war. Apart from Seth Ohene, Felix Aklavon, Theonas Moussou and Augustine Ikelegbe who in passing catalogue the sources of weapon supplies to the Federal and Biafran sides, not much has been done by other researchers. According to them,

During the war (the Nigeria – Biafra War), both the federal troops and the rebels received weapons from the West, Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, neighbouring countries, and arms dealers. In the absence of arms collection programme after the war, these weapons became the first source of massive proliferation leading to the emergence of violent criminality⁹.

There appears not to have been any detailed study linking the proliferation of small arms and light weapons to the outcomes of the Nigeria - Biafra war. Furthermore and with particular reference to the Southeast Region of Nigeria, the main theatre of the war, there is scarcely any study, (to the best of the knowledge of this present researcher) seen explicating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and its roots in the Nigeria - Biafra war. These observed lacunae calcified the interest of the present researcher and hence, constitute the problem which the research intends to solve.

Purpose of the Study

Wars, whether ‘domestic’ or ‘international’, have always produced a profound impact on the development of the immediate societies. This impact can either be negative or positive,

advantageous or disadvantageous. In all of these scenarios, attempts are often made by humanity to mitigate the gross impact of wars while the positive outcomes are embraced with outstretched arms. In addition, some of these effects require no more than a casual observation to appreciate while others are somewhat imperceptible and thus, require deeper investigations to underpin their varying dimensions and scope.

This study, therefore, undertakes to examine the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Southeast Region of Nigeria from the backdrop of the Nigeria - Biafra war. Field observations appear to suggest a panoramic nexus between the proliferation of these weapons and the fallouts from the civil war. Put differently, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeast Nigeria has its root in the aftermath of the Nigeria - Biafra war. And this has not been historically investigated.

Secondly and as a corollary to the above, this study attempts to discover the extent to which the war technologies of the erstwhile Biafran Republic, especially in the area of gunsmithing and munitions production filtered into and affected post-civil war Southeast Nigeria up to 2007. Thirdly, the study also aims to examine the efforts of the government at combating the menace of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in the country. Fourthly, the study seeks to examine the efforts that have been made by Nigerian governments at ameliorating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region.

Significance of the Study

It is recognised that the proliferation of small arms, munitions, light weapons and explosives have transposed into the greatest threats to human as well as national security and by extension, national development. In the Nigerian society, the availability of small arms and light weapons has in many cases contributed to violent criminality and political instability. These, in

turn, have damaged development prospects and imperiled national security in every conceivable way. What is perhaps more worrisome is the fact that several efforts have been made to attenuate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. These efforts cannot be said to have produced positive results. Since no ailment can be properly treated without a proper diagnosis and good understanding of the medical history, in like manner, can the problems of small arms and light weapons proliferation not be properly sorted out if its roots are not carefully identified and examined.

In the light of the foregoing, the significance of this present study lies majorly in the fact that it lays the foundation for understanding the proliferation of small arms and light weapons by linking it to the aftermath of the Nigeria - Biafra war. On this count, it contributes modestly to the literature on the Nigeria - Biafra war, especially as it concerns the question of illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria, especially in the Southeast region. The study would prove particularly useful to researchers who may wish to embark on newer investigations in the area of proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the study would be of considerable help to policy makers, especially the Ministries of Interior and Defence and the Nigerian Police as well as the Nigerian Immigration Service and other agencies who are saddled with the work of tackling of the menace of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. Additionally, the study would be useful to the members of the society who may want to find out more about the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is the geo – spatial region referred to as Southeast Region of Nigeria. The term Southeast Nigeria is the official geographical terminology for the region of the country inhabited almost exclusively by the Igbo. Again, the term Southeast is the latest geo – political epithet for what is somewhat the core Igbo territory. In today’s Nigeria, the Igbo people live almost exclusively in the Southeast states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The Igbo are also found in parts of Delta, Rivers and Cross River States of Nigeria. For the purposes of this present study, the reference to Southeastern Nigeria focuses on Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States which officially constitute the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

This study area is bound to north by Kogi and Benue states; to the east by Cross River State; to the south by Rivers and Akwa – Ibom States and to the west by Delta State. The Igbo occupy a geographic space of approximately 11, 310 square miles or 29525 square kilometers¹⁰. By 1967, when this study takes off, the population of the Igbo officially stood at 7. 966.559; with a population density of 799 persons per square mile. By 1999, the population of Igbo people living in the five Igbo States had risen to 20 million and by 2013; it has doubled to nearly 35 million¹¹.

The choice of 1967 as the take-off of the study is made in order to capture the historical undercurrents which gave rise to the importation and indigenous production of small arms and light weapons and the proliferation of these weapons immediately after the Nigeria civil war. The choice of 2007 as the termination date is chosen to capture the significant efforts made by both military and civilian administrations in combating small arms and light weapons proliferation. Moreover, 2007 is significant in studying the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeastern Nigeria because that year witnessed unprecedented levels of crime in which small arms and light weapons were put to use in the region. Forty years is considered

long enough to underscore the ‘legacy’ of the Nigeria - Biafra war vis â vis the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeastern Nigeria.

Methodology and Sources of Information

Historical studies of this nature have certain methods of presentation and analysis of information. Thus, the thematic method which emphasises the presentation of information in themes is employed in this study. The study also employs the interdisciplinary approach in the collection of information. The analytical method is utilized in the x-raying of collected information, while the chronological and quantitative method is used in the presentation and analyses of collected information.

The information for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were mostly in the form of oral interviews conducted in the Southeast of Nigeria, especially, among the veterans of the Nigeria – Biafra war and scholars who have carried out researches on the area of study under investigations. Additionally, information was retrieved from the National War Museums both at Umuahia and Benin respectively as well as the National Archives in Enugu. Furthermore, the researcher obtained information at the Nigerian Army Headquarters and the Ministry of Interior as well as the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru – Jos and also the National Defence College (NDC), Abuja. Other primary sources that were used in this study were newspaper articles, public reports, and government publications among others. Secondary sources include books, magazines, academic journals and internet materials.

Conceptual Clarifications

The key concepts in this study, although, generically related, have meanings which change under different contexts and situations. It is, therefore, important to explain some of these concepts as employed in this study. Moreover, explaining the specific and varied interpretations of the main concepts and terms used in this study would help to clear the terminological fogs thereby, making the study more comprehensible.

(i) The Concept of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Conceptually, small arms and light weapons have not lent themselves to a generally accepted meaning. This is because, according to Valentine Okoro, “the understanding of what constitutes these categories of weapons has undergone some changes due to the dynamics of technological development”¹². However, good working definitions are available. What perhaps appears more acceptable is the description of small arms and light weapons either by their configuration, characteristics, size, user perspective or a combination of some of these.

The Royal Military College of Science (RMCS) Handbook on weapons and vehicles defines small arms as follows. “Man – portable, largely shoulder controlled weapon of up to 12.7millimeter (0.5inches) caliber; such weapons generally have a flat trajectory and an effective operational range of 0 to 800 meters, although, this varies considerably with caliber and weapon type, certain weapons can also provide neutralizing fire up to 1800meters.”¹³

The UN panel of government experts on small arms has received more citations because of their conceptualization of small arms and light weapons. According to the panel, small arms and light weapons are “those weapons ranging from knives, clubs and matchets to weapons particularly below the caliber of 100 millimeter. Small arms are those weapons manufactured to

military specification and designed for use by one person, whereas light weapons are those used by several persons working as a crew.”¹⁴

In the United States, the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs of the US Department of State views small arms and light weapons “as encompassing man-portable firearms and their ammunition primarily designed for individual use by military forces as lethal weapons.”¹⁵ It further explains that a typical list of small arms would include self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, submachine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1983 enlarged the original Second World War definition of small arms as encompassing, “all crew-portable direct fire weapons of less than 50 millimeter and which includes secondary capability to defeat light armor and helicopters.”¹⁶ This NATO definition brings most automatic assault rifles such as the AK-47 series, US M16, the Israeli Uzi submachine gun: as well as all types of rocket-propelled grenade launchers, RPG-7, stinger, machine and submachine guns, and shoulder fired surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) under small arms category¹⁷.

In Nigeria, the Presidential Committee on Combating Small Arms and Light Weapons somewhat conceives SALW as those weapons that can be operated by one or two persons, and can be carried by one or two persons or by a pack animal or light vehicles¹⁸. Weapons that fall under small arms and light weapons include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, light machine guns, portable anti-aircraft guns and recoilless rifles among others.

Besides, in some conceptualizations of the small arms and light weapons, the twin concepts of ‘small arms’ and ‘light weapons’ have been broken up and conceptualized separately. Accordingly, small arms have been separately viewed as weapons which an

individual can use independently while light weapons have been underscored as those weapons which require two or more persons to use¹⁹.

A cursory look at these conceptualizations suggests that there is no consensus on the meaning of small arms and light weapons. Joao Honwana and Guy Lamb highlight these conceptual disparities better when they note,

There seems to be a lack of consensus in the literature with respect to identifying a small arm as opposed to a standard conventional weapon. This has led to the formulation of an alternative concept 'light weapons' which emphasizes a more technologically sophisticated category. However, despite the emergence of the light weapons concept, defining small arms still lacks clarity and even the distinction between 'small arms' and 'light weapons' is a matter of debate. There seems to be a certain amount of uncertainty as to where small arms end and light weapons begin or whether there is an overlap between the two²⁰.

These seemingly disparate views held by scholars notwithstanding, there remains a commonality of characteristics that permeates the various definitions. According to S.A Ocheche, it is from these characteristics that, the concept of small arms and light weapons can be better understood²¹. He identifies these common elements in all the definitions as follows: First, the focus is on lethal equipment that is, weapons and their ammunition, generally used by military and para-military forces, excluding items such as knives and hunting rifles. Second, the emphasis is on weapons that are man-portable or transportable by light vehicles, that is, on weight and size of the equipment. Third, this equipment is easy to maintain, can function without much logistical back-up and requires light training for use. Fourth, to be militarily and politically relevant, the definition comprises weapons that are in frequent use that is 'weapons that actually kill²².

Small arms and light weapons are seen in this study as portable weapons made or modified to military specifications for use as lethal instruments. Specifically, Small arms are broadly categorized as those weapons intended for use by individual members of armed or

security forces. Small arms *inter alia* include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and local pistols, dane guns, hand grenades, recoilless rifles and light machine guns. Light weapons on the other hand, are broadly categorized as those weapons intended for use by several members of armed or security forces serving as a crew. They include heavy machine guns; hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers; portable anti-aircraft guns; portable anti-tank guns; portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems; and mortars of calibers less than 100 mm. Some of these can be concealed in small bags and can be operated by anybody even without formal training. The methodological rifts and definitional problems have made the use of ‘small arms’ and ‘light weapons’ popular. This usage is retained in the study; notwithstanding that most of the firearms under investigation fall under ‘small arms’ definition.

(ii) The Concept of Proliferation

Proliferation is defined as a great increase in the number or amount of something. In other words it simply implies explosion, expansion or abundance of something. In the specific case of small arms and light weapons, proliferation has more often than not been considered from the inter – state traffic rather than intra – state flows. In most instances, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons arises during and at the end of a war – domestic or international. This study considers arms proliferation from the intra – state perspective.

There are three broadly established modes of arms proliferation. (i) Legal transfer of arms – which conforms to all legal formalities usually from one state actor to another or their accredited agents or from one military or quasi – military agency to another within a state. The second and third avenue is what have been dubbed grey channels or covert transfers hence; they are mostly referred to as illicit. (ii) Grey channel proliferations, are arrangements by which

government officials look the other way as their agencies arrange for arms to be sent to foreign groups or within a state for profit/ strategic calculation. (iii) Black market proliferation refers to unlawful transfers by private arms dealers and smugglers²⁴. In this study, arms proliferation is denoted as the illegal spread of small arms and light weapons within the confines of a sovereign state and with the attendant effects on the overall functioning of the Nigerian society.

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration are concepts which relate to the formal disbanding of military formations and, at the individual level, involve the process of releasing combatants from a mobilized state during which they are usually conveyed to their homes or new districts and granted small initial reinsertion packages to enhance their resettlement process.

(iii)The Concepts of Conflict and War

Often, the concepts of war and conflict are used as if they mean one and the same thing. Both terms are fluid and infinitely elastic concepts which can be twisted into any shape. That is why there is hardly any consensus among scholars on the definition of these concepts²⁵. For the purposes of this study, conflict is defined as an attitude, a behavior, process, or action that induces strains and stress in the relationship between two parties in the pursuit and attainment of a set of interests or goals.

War on the other hand, is defined as the use of organized force, (usually the military) between two human groups pursuing contradictory policies, each group seeking to impose its will on the other. Within these two conceptualizations one can see how different, wars and conflicts are. It follows that while conflicts precipitate wars, not all conflicts lead to war. Besides, while some conflicts may not be negative - when their resolution leads to greater peace

and development (some wars have brought about accelerated development in specific cases), all wars nevertheless, leave much misery in their wake²⁶.

(iv). The concept of Security

Security can be viewed from many perspectives and prisms but no single definition can lay claim to universality and perfection. In the recent past, the meanings of security have witnessed a metamorphosis; it has transited from being seen strictly within the realist purview to an interest in the vast population of the state. It is now generally understood that for security to be meaningful, it must be concerned with humans²⁷. Consequently, amongst the different taxonomies of security, human security is considered very crucial. Robert Mcnamara clearly explains the point when he opines that the “security of a nation or entity lies not solely or even primarily on its military preparedness but also in developing relatively stable patterns of economic development and political growth at home and abroad”²⁸. In this study security is conceptualized as the removal and protection of citizens from threats both internal and external and other encumbrances that impinge and jeopardize their lives. In this connection, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons with the attendant violent criminality that it encourages and promotes is antithetical to the security of Nigerians. Thus, its amelioration is a *sine qua non* for the security and development of Nigeria, especially, in the Southeast Region of the Nigeria which is the primary focus of this study

Theoretical Frameworks

In order to properly explicate the two variables of this study - the Nigeria civil war and small arms and light weapons proliferation, two theories are adapted and adopted. These theories are the Genocide Theory of War and the Integrated Security Management Theory. The Genocide Theory of War (GTW) draws from a plethora of studies on genocide. Recognizing that genocide

is the “crime of crimes” and an odious scourge which has claimed millions of lives in the last century (20th century), the Genocide Theory of War (GTW) appears to have been initially preoccupied with the causes of genocides and how genocides can be prevented²⁹. By the first decade of the 21st century (2000s), the theoretical frontiers of the GTW have been enlarged to include analysis of the conditions under which genocide is likely to occur, the multilevel processes of violent escalation and de-escalation, and the ways in which these processes are shaped by, connect to, reinforce, accelerate and impede one another. Furthermore, a recent thrust of the theory is to explain the variability in genocidal outcomes.

Particularly germane to the crux of this present study is the newest addition to the the GTW, especially, since the emergence of Ackam Taner, Scott Strauss, Donald Bloxam and Staub Ervin on the theoretical debate³⁰. The crux of this latest concern of the theory is an interest on how the victims of genocide react and seek to protect themselves from the incidences of genocidal onslaught and the lessons to be learnt from how victims seek to protect themselves³¹. Two basic assumptions have been percolated from the positions of the Genocide Theory of War. These assumptions are: (1). Victims of genocide are usually overwhelmed by the genocidal onslaught against them that they are unable to put up any meaningful resistance against their assailants. (2). Victims of genocide when they have the apparatus (state-like machinery) and courageous leaders, resist genocidal onslaughts against them³². Proponents of the latter proposition aver that under the circumstances, victims of genocide resort to whatever means of defending themselves including massive importations of weapons and also exponential increases in the domestic military industries.

Clearly, the second premise of the assumptions of the Genocide Theory of War highlighted above is quite percipient and applies to the case of Biafra during the Nigeria - Biafra

war. Nevertheless, the scaffold for a wholesome applicability of the theoretical assumptions of the Genocide Theory of War in this present study would to some extent depend on accepting that the Igbo were victims of a genocidal aggression. Fortunately, a significant number of researchers and scholars such as Frederick Forsyth, Elizabeth Bird and Fraser Othanelli, Emma Okocha and Emefiena Ezeani, among others, have buttressed the genocidal dimensions of the Nigeria – Biafra civil war³³. Whether the plight of the Igbo during the war had genocidal motivations is, of course, a theme which has continued to attract scholarly attention. Furthermore, even if the genocidal dimensions of the Nigeria – Biafra war cannot be sustained, the salience of the Genocide Theory of war is not imperceptible. This is because the theory helps to explain the production of arms and other frantic efforts made by Biafra in order to carry on with the war purportedly fought to save the Igbo from genocide. Thus, the abundance of small arms and light weapons (which were not mopped up after the war) suggests the extent to which the Biafrans believed they were fighting a federal government bent on annihilating the entire Igbo people. In any event, it is established that the vast number of small arms and light weapons and especially, the war – induced advancement in guns production in Southeastern Nigeria has since then composed a serious threat to the functioning of the Nigerian state, especially in the Southeastern part of the country.

What is more, to help in putting the phenomenon of small arms and light weapons in proper perspective in Nigeria, a second theory is proposed – the Integrated Security Management Theory. The central thesis of the Integrated Security Management Theory (ISMT) is that security is ensured by the maintenance of variegated functions in which the coercive apparatus of the state is only a part. Thus, the proponents of this theory which include: Robert McNamara, Paul Nitze, Charles Barton and T.A Imobighe among others, aver that the theory is germane to the

three levels of security concern, especially at the national level³⁴. At the national level, this theory encourages the broad public participation in the affairs of the state. T.A Imobighe posits,

The issue of public participation relates to the question of equal opportunity. A nation experiences frequent instability if the system is not structured in such a way as to ensure broad public participation in the affairs of the state. The point to emphasize is that non-participation, under participation or the lack of it on the part of the state or section of the state easily leads to alienation, the erosion of patriotism or revolt in extreme cases. Thus, to ensure internal stability, especially for Africa's heterogeneous societies, it is imperative that broad public participation in the affairs of the state be encouraged³⁵.

Corollary and related to the issue of public participation in the postulation of the ISM Theory is the issue of resource allocation. This, the theory contends should be given serious salience in the internal security calculus of any state; since no state, however well-endowed has enough resources to meet the needs and aspirations of the citizenry³⁶. Thus, the adoption of a judicious and equitable method of resource allocation becomes a critical imperative and a security strategy in itself; not to mention the obvious fact that Nigeria is woefully lopsided in resource allocation. This has been a serious and potent source of insecurity in Nigeria. There is no gainsaying the fact that when resources are allocated equitably, crimes and criminality are reduced. It also reduces the chances of a section of the state turning fifth columnist thereby attenuating the use and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In fact, a considerable factor in the use and proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria is the poor and skewed distribution of national wealth – the rich get richer while the poor become poorer.

Again, the Integrated Security Management Theory underscores the Nigerian security problems which actuates the proliferation of small arms as being primarily due to lack of purposeful leadership. T.A Imobighe notes:

...the ruling elite must endeavour to raise their level of contentment through purposeful leadership and a cost effective management of national resources.

Most importantly, they should realize that natural resources do not automatically translate into development; what African states must strive hard to attain, are technology and good management and imbibing the tenets of good resource management coupled with a deliberate effort to acquire modern technology...is Africa's only hope of reversing Africa's present technological marginality and worsening socio-economic conditions, which more than anything else, complicates the problem of internal security³⁷.

In retrospect, it is difficult to contemplate a civil war in Nigeria had there been purposeful leadership provided by the First Republic politicians. Chinua Achebe's avowal that the problem with Nigeria is squarely the failure of leadership clearly summarizes the point. As it relates to this study, the salience of the ISMT can never be gainsaid; first, it is clear, from the precincts of this theory that what is generally perceived as insecurity in Nigeria and mostly aid and abet the proliferation of illicit small and light weapons is not far from the crisis of underdevelopment; such that the panacea lies, not in establishment and empowerment of security apparatuses and systems and the unconditional importation of military and security hardware and gadgets but in the creation of favourable social and economic conditions which would enable the citizenry to develop love and patriotism for the country. When this is done, the entire citizenry would be transformed into a legion of security officers in their various communities since everybody has an interest in the well-being of the country. In this way, one can opine that a development oriented state is a security strategy in itself. Nigeria as it is constituted today, appears far from a development-oriented state and hence, the myriad security threats assailing the country most of which involve the use of illicit small arms and light weapons. It cannot be denied that there is a relative bias in favour of the elitist political regime as against the needs of the people in the allocation of resources in Nigeria. This tendency, coupled with the non- inclusion of the public in the affairs of the state, cannot be unrelated to the ebbing of security.

One can, therefore, see that the major security problems of Nigeria cannot be remedied by contriving more and more security systems: whether regional, state police or even vigilante outfits. The solution lies in safe-guarding and promoting the economic, political, social, religious and psychological interests of the generality of the Nigerian people who, according to the constitution are the ‘owners’ of Nigeria’s sovereignty.

The above should not be construed to mean that insecurity or small arms and light weapons that majorly breed or enhance insecurity can be totally eradicated in Nigeria or any other state for that matter. The point here is that when the citizens of a country are happy with the goings-on in their country, they help to do their best for the preservation of those liberties they enjoy. This is the centrality of the Integrated Security Management Theory.³⁸

Literature Review

Abundant studies exist on both the Nigeria - Biafra war and small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria. However, as stated elsewhere in this study, works are yet to be seen, which relate the deluge of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, especially, in the southeast as an aftermath of the Nigeria - Biafra war. In this section, a review of the related works is made to help in appreciating the extant opinions on focus of this study viz. the Nigeria - Biafra war and the proliferations of illicit small arms and light weapons.

In *War without End in Nigeria: Landmines, Bombs and Explosive Remnants of War*³⁹ Noel Agwuocha Chukwukadibia comes close to underscoring the security implications of the Nigeria - Biafra war for the Southeast region of Nigeria. Beginning with the historic declaration of secession by Ojukwu on May 30, 1967 and Gowon’s end of war broadcast as set – induction, the author goes on to analyse on the causes of the war. Thereafter, he moves ahead to examine

some salient security consequences of the Nigeria – Biafra War. Having identified the Nigeria-Biafra War as a war fought without due reference to the Laws of War and International Humanitarian Law, the author argues that both sides to the conflict were known to have used conventional and unconventional landmines as they engaged each in ground offensives and counter – offensives in the former eastern region in the thirty month civil war⁴⁰. He posits:

Beyond that, several millions of unexploded ordnances (bombs) were generously and uncontrollably deployed in various locations, sandwiched today within 11 states out of the 36 states of the federation. At the cessation of hostilities in 1970, majority of these landmines and bombs were neither removed nor destroyed, and had since then injured many people as well as claimed significant number of innocent lives⁴¹.

It is relevant to observe that Chukwukadibia’s study tended to be too legalistic, (being that the author is a lawyer by profession). The author devoted more than seventy per cent of the space to the legalistic and jurisprudential implications of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) as well as the *locus standi* of the victims of ERW to sue state parties to the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT). Nonetheless, the study appears to be the first of its kind to undertake a review of the security aftermath of the Nigerian – Biafra war. His study clearly observes that the war has not really ended since innocent civilians continue to be killed and maimed *en masse* by landmines and other explosive remnants of war left behind by both sides of the divide. In any case, it is instructive to that Chukwukadibia’s study does not examine the menace of small arms - which have particularly proven more dangerous. His study discusses only ordnances which are classified as light weapons. There is unmistakably, a dire need to beam the academic searchlight on the nexus between the Nigeria - Biafra war and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Fortunately,. Chukwukadibia has already laid the foundation of such an academic enterprise, *albeit*, with a jurisprudential foundation and ERW as the main concern.

In *The Challenges of Biafran War Technologies*⁴² Dan Okey Chukwu examines the conditions that propelled the defunct Republic of Biafra to innovatively embark on an indigenous production of goods and service chief among which were essential food commodities as well as small arms and light weapons which were of critical importance in executing the war. In his view, the Biafrans appeared to have been militarily unprepared for the war and this seriously affected their ability to execute the war; although, this obstacle appeared to have been cushioned by the high morale and determination of the Biafran citizenry⁴³. D.O. Chukwu examines on the inventions of Biafra majorly through the Research and Production (RAP) unit and consequently, bemoans the fact that the inventiveness of Biafrans was left to have no significant impact on the overall development of the country. Chukwu's study illuminatingly inundated us with the war technologies of Biafra and clearly buttresses the fact that Biafra massively and indigenously produced small arms and light weapons which it sure needed for the war. What the left out was what became of those weapons after the war. Additionally, the study made no linkages between the post-civil war challenges of the Igbo and the abundance of weapons which often were found in the hands of unauthorised persons. These gaps are what this present study intends to fill.

In *Technological Innovations in Biafra and Foreign Involvement*⁴⁴, E.C. Emordi and B.C. Osaghale appraise the level of domestic input in the much-vaunted technological innovations of Biafra. Emordi and Osaghale appreciate the critical role of the Research and Production Department in the survival of Biafra. However, they are inclined to see the technological feats as being less indigenous than the extant studies make them to be⁴⁵. Without being entangled in the polemics on the Nigeria – Biafra War, it may be useful to observe that Emordi and Osaghale seemed to have missed a salient point in the literature of Biafra's war innovations. The credit for

the feat are not claimed by the Igbo alone, as indeed, the Igbo were not the only citizens of Biafra but in fact, all the other ethnic groups that comprised the old Eastern Region.

Through Emordi and Osaghale's study one can understand the magnitude of the Biafran war technologies "whether copied or not". What is perhaps more disturbing, is the near neglect of the whereabouts of the small arms and light weapons produced by Biafra. There appears to be no clear account of the demobilization and mopping of arms of Biafran troops.

Chinedum Nwajiuba in *Why Biafra Went to War*⁴⁶ documents and analyzes the myriads of reasons that pushed Biafra into a secessionist war. He critically examines such causes of the civil war as crisis of governance and confidence of the First Republic as well as the 1966 pogroms, among others. The last part of his study examines the aftermath of the war and as in the case of other works on the war, Nwajiuba did not stretch his interest to what became of the weapons after the war thereby justifying the need for this present study.

In *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*⁴⁷, Alexander A. Madiebo who perhaps was the first senior Biafran Army personnel to put up any detailed analysis of the Nigeria – Biafra War, gives a concise account of the events that led to the civil war. He particularly draws from his rich experience both as former senior military officer in the Nigerian Army and later the Commander of the Biafran Army. The author succinctly attempts to adumbrate the tactics, battles and mistakes of Biafra and in the epilogue, he examines the consequences of the war not only for the Igbo but the generality of the Nigerian people. However, it requires to be said that not the faintest hint of the security implication of the civil war was made by Madiebo. There was not to be found any useful discussions of the wartime innovations and what did become of these weapons after the war. Alexander Madiebo's book clearly did not take all of these into its purview and thus, like many other works leaves a gap which require to be filled.

Much like Madiebo, J.O.G. Achuzia in *Requim Biafra*⁴⁸ sets out to document the Nigeria – Biafra war. Having served as senior combatant officer in the Biafran Armed Forces, Achuzia had rich sources of information at his disposal. Therefore, his study truly illuminates the understanding of the Mid-West Operation, the 54 and 57 Brigades of Biafra’s Army, the Otuocha and Nsukka sectors, the Port Harcourt sector, among others. Besides, the study strengthens what is known about Biafra’s surrender; however, Achuzia’s book does not make any reference to the arms used in prosecuting the war.

Achike Udenwa has in *The Nigerian – Biafran War: An Eye Witness Account*⁴⁹, added his own voice to the literature on the Nigeria – Biafra war. His book was majorly an eye witness account. Its strength is the author’s dispassionate approach to the issues at stake. Having served as a junior officer on the Biafran side of the divide, Udenwa’s work goes a long way in highlighting the roles played by the lower command of the Biafran Army – the platoons, companies, battalions and brigades, among others who were young officers aged 18 – 25 years, most of whom were neither trained in Sandhurst or Mons but exhibited a high sense of dexterity, maturity and leadership. However, in assessing the effects of the war, Achike Udenwa’s study only examined the social consequences. The need of examining the other consequences of the civil war cannot be overemphasised.

Furthermore, Paul Obi – Ani in *Post – Civil War Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970 – 1983*⁵⁰ examines the political and economic reconstruction of Igboland after the civil war, from 1970 to 1983. The author goes on to x – ray the post-civil war reconstruction of Igboland in detail. Amongst the central themes covered by the study were: the relief operations and its contradictions, the *de – Biafranization* of the Igbo, currency exchange after the war, the brutality of the Nigerian Army against the Igbo and the demonstration of resilience by

the Igbo. Additionally, the author examines the reconstruction of Igboland in such critical sectors as: education, commerce and industry, communications, agriculture, health, housing and banking.

Without doubt, Obi-Ani's study is a refreshing and insightful departure from the hitherto popular trend – the trend of concentration on causes of the war, tactics and strategies, offensives and counter – offensives of the contending forces. It is, nonetheless, silent on the security dimensions of the Nigerian – Biafran War, especially as regards to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the period under review. Even though the author notes the high spate of crime and criminality in Igboland, it generally fails to capture this in any detailed way neither did he bother about the underlying factors accountable for insecurity in Igboland.

Emefiana Ezeani in *In Biafra Africa Died: the Diplomatic Plot*⁵¹ retells the story of the Nigeria - Biafra war. His first preoccupation is to demonstrate that the diplomatic strangulation of the burgeoning state of Biafra signaled the death – knell of a “would have been Africa” – the trailblazer state. Thus, in his estimations, Africa died when Biafra died. He begins his treatise by giving a brief history of Nigeria as well as the factors that necessitated the war. Moreover, he examines the role Britain and the international community played in the war.

Emefiana's book, however, does not concern itself with either the production of weapons in Biafra or Nigeria nor does it bother about the implications of the arms produced or imported into the country. Although, this cannot be identified as flaws in the book because Ezeani Emefiana clearly states what his concerns are at the outset. The salience of Emefiana's study is in its avid interest in underscoring the Biafra – Nigeria War as a genocidal attack against the Igbo. With about seventeen appendixes, the author appears to have driven home his point that there were more than meets the eye in the war⁵².

In *Britain, Biafra and the Balance of Payments: the Economic Basis for London's Policy during the Nigeria - Biafra war (1967 – 1970)*⁵³, Gary Blank by using ‘recently’ released primary documents from the British National Archive opens up for reinvestigation the question of the motives that actuated the British Government of Harold Wilson to play the role it played in the Nigeria – Biafra War. Gary Blank notes that as a result of economic imperatives, Britain not only chose to ignore the pleas for assistance from several millions of dying Biafrans but proceeded to supply the Military Government of Nigeria with means to exterminate the Biafrans decisively. While the humanitarian implications of Britain’s support to Nigeria is outside the scope of Gary Blank’s study, he makes bold to state that the United Kingdom provided 36 million rounds of arms over a few months to Nigeria, which is equivalent to 60% of the British Army’s total reserve stocks to meet its worldwide liabilities⁵⁴. Gary Blank and other writers would of course, be too preoccupied with other “pressing” concerns to bother about the dangers of small arms and light weapons falling into the hands of unauthorised persons soon after the war.

Still on the diplomatic aspects of the Nigeria – Biafra War is Ikenna Odife’s *Burying the Divide: An Analysis of the USA and USSR Involvement in the Nigeria - Biafra war*,⁵⁵ the author begins his historical analysis by underscoring the international political environment of the Cold War era in which one would have expected the USA and USSR to confront each other by supporting opposite sides of the conflict. Indeed, the war did not appear to have intensified the tensions between the USA and the Soviet Union⁵⁶. Ikenna Odife goes on to explicate Nigeria’s relations with the superpowers prior to the outbreak of the civil war.

While Ikenna Odife’s study illuminatingly demonstrates that the Nigeria - Biafra war defied the superpower politics that pervaded the landscape of the international system at the time. The author does not consider the consequences of the war for the Nigerian domestic system

and its effects on Nigeria's international relations. On the domestic sphere, the author would have scored a high point if the security implications for post war Nigerian were highlighted.

M. Matusevitch's study, *Ideology and Pragmatism: the Biafra War and Nigeria's Response to the Soviet Union, 1966 – 1970*⁵⁷ examines the ways in which pragmatism acted as the most critical factor behind Soviet support for the Federal Government of Nigeria during the Nigeria - Biafra war. Matusevitch adumbrates in the study, the history of Nigeria – Soviet relations, particularly the ways in which ideological considerations took a backseat in the rapprochement between both countries shortly before the outbreak of the civil war in 1967. In this insightful study, aided by documents in the United States and the Former Soviet Union, the author shows masterly understanding of the international politics of the Nigeria – Biafra War⁵⁸.

Matusevitch's study is by all standards a good one. However, like most of such works on the diplomatic dimensions of war, the author does not discuss the implications of arms deals – some of which fall under small arms and light weapons – after the war. This has been a characteristic feature of such studies.

Christopher Ejiofor in his insightful book *Biafra's Struggle for Survival*⁵⁹, presents a somewhat, autobiographical detail of the Nigeria – Biafra War. Unlike most accounts on the war, C. Ejiofor's account is written from a participant - observer viewpoint. It is on record that Christopher Ejiofor was a combatant officer as well as an Aid de Camp (ADC) to Biafra's military Head of State, Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu⁶⁰. Thus, his experiences in the war generated a consequential percentage of the information for the study. Although, it is understood that personal accounts cannot in themselves constitute a basis for empirical knowledge, Ejiofor's accounts, nonetheless, appear to be corroborated by extant studies on the war. Through the lenses of the book, one is able to gain additional knowledge of how exactly life was in Biafra though the study would appear to have few passages which were intentioned to massage the egos

of Chukwuemeka Ojukwu. Nevertheless, the author chronicles the series of crises that ultimately pitched the rest of the Nigerian federation against the Igbo people of Biafra and proceeds to explain the forces that led to the birth of Biafra. The book takes ample time to investigate such issues as the Banjo Midwest (mis)adventure, external interventions for Biafra, the abortive coup against Ojukwu and the trial and execution of the coup plotters. Among other important concerns of Ejiogor in the book are the dastard atrocities of mercenaries employed by Biafra such as the notorious Colonel Steiner⁶¹.

Despite being a witness to the incidences and his easy access to primary sources, especially, his war notes and memoirs, it is rather bewildering that Ejiogor's book had no single chapter on the production of arms, munitions in Biafra apart from scant adumbrations of the heroes of Biafra in technological innovations. Again, it is somewhat uncomfortable that a book written by a war veteran has nothing to say about the security implications of the war. As usual, no one is to blame, for indeed, the psychological, social, economic and political consequences of the war appeared to have remained far more rewarding to the writers and scholars who have written on the war than the seemingly benign security implications of the war.

Before Chris Ejiogor could have ever thought of writing his memoir on the Biafran War, Fredrick Forsyth had published his book titled, *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafra Story*⁶². First published in 1969 as the *Biafra Story*, Frederick Forsyth's book could as well be tagged the first published account of the travails of the defunct state of Biafra. It was Fredrick Forsyth who boldly indicted the Nigerian government and their several foreign helpers notably, the British, the Soviets and the diplomatic Americans - who benignly sat on the fence in the day but proceeded to support the British position when men slept.

Forsyth clearly traces the origins of the civil war to its roots in the ethnic antagonisms created and nurtured by British colonial policies. It was probably Frederick Forsyth's study that

first highlighted the genocidal dimensions of the war against the Igbo people⁶³. Divided into two parts, Forsyth attempts to wade into the background and causes of the war. In order to do justice to this, he analysed the nature and philosophy of British colonization of Nigeria and therein discovers the asymmetries, contradictions and generally skewed patterns of British colonial policies which helped to ossify a permanent division in the socio – political psyche of the various peoples of Nigeria. This, in his viewpoint, was the locomotive that drove post-colonial Nigeria into political abyss and finally plunged the country into a fratricidal war⁶⁴. The second part dwells consequentially on the survival efforts of Biafra. It is relevant to observe that most of what is known about life in Biafra in the thirty month period derives from Forsyth’s insightful rendition of the Biafran struggle. His work is particularly helpful in its detailed assessment of the character of Biafra, the question of refugees and the attendant humanitarian assistance, especially, by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Caritas and World Council of Churches (WCC). Yet, for all the glamour, Frederick Forsyth’s study strangely has nothing on the security implications of the war for *post bellum* Igboland. This becomes exasperating when one considers that the latest edition was published in 1976 and a few new observations are added to the old version. Clearly, the near-total neglect and or lack of interest in the security implications of the Nigeria – Biafra War, especially as it concerns the proliferation of small arms and light weapons drives the urgency of the present study.

In *The World and Nigeria*⁶⁵, Suzzanne Cronje explores the diplomatic dimensions of the Nigeria – Biafra war. With a plethora of evidence, she argues that the war was grossly assymetrical in that, Britain decidedly armed Nigeria while Biafra was left an orphan in the international arms supplies world such that Biafran resorted to the black market. Cronje undertakes to unravel all other diplomatic twists of the war like the purported American neutrality, global oil politics among others. Cronje critically revealed how arms flowed into

Nigeria and Biafra from external sources but was not seen explicating the consequences or implications of the arms flows to post war Nigeria or Biafra.

Unlike most of the works on the Nigerian – Biafran War, Raph Uwechue’s work – *Reflections on the Nigerian Biafran War: Facing the Future*⁶⁶ appears to be the only work published while the civil strife raged on. Uwechue was preoccupied with thoughts of the measures to be employed in a post-civil war Nigeria in order to return the derailed ship of the Nigeria state on track. Raph Uwechue’s work dwells considerably on the solutions to the myriad political problems of Nigeria. This explains why in his opinion the solution to Nigeria’s multiple problems lies in creating a loose federation of six states which would be termed as follows: North Western State, North Eastern State, Central State, South Central State, South Western State and South Eastern State⁶⁷. Furthermore, Uwechue writes that “each of the states of the federation should be free to choose any name it likes. The former Eastern Region for example, if it so desired could retain the name of Biafra. The South Central could become the state of Benin, if the majority of the people so prefer. The Central state could become Niger State and so on”⁶⁸.

It, therefore, goes without saying that while Raph Uwechue’s book was majorly concerned with finding a solution to the political crisis that pushed Nigeria to warring against one of its constituent units, it could scarcely be expected to contain any meaningful assessment of the impact of the war on Igboland, not to talk of the attendant problem of small arms and light weapons as a consequence of the war.

In *The History and Legacy of the Asaba, Nigeria, Massacres*⁶⁹, Elizabeth Bird and Fraser Othanelli with the use of oral sources wade into the goriest tragedy of the Nigeria – Biafra War – the Asaba Massacres. They observe that though ethnically Igbo, Asaba was not part of Igbo dominated Biafra; notwithstanding on 7th October 1967, four months into the Nigeria - Biafra war, federal troops massacred hundreds in Asaba⁷⁰. Having given a brief background to the

Nigeria - Biafra war, Elizabeth Bird and Fraser Othanelli proceed to discuss the Asaba massacres; they investigate the rationale for the massacres, reasons why the gruesome massacres have remained largely undocumented and the significance of the Asaba massacres.

As must have been noticed, Elizabeth Bird and Fraser Othanelli could not have been interested in investigating the dimensions as well as the motives of the Asaba massacres and be expected to have time for such strategic and security concerns as the consequences of unmopped small arms and light weapons after the war. Indeed, their study goes to buttress the earlier observation made by this study that the bulk of the extant literature on the Nigeria – Biafra War appear to somewhat neglect the strategic and security consequences of the war on not only the post – civil war Igboland, that is, Southeast Region but in fact, the entire Nigerian state.

Furthermore, in *The Nigeria – Biafra War, 1967 – 1970: A Lingering Nightmare*⁷¹, Ejitu Nnechi Ota attempts to offer what he terms a valid historical context “of the causes, course and consequences of the Nigeria – Biafra War, 1967 – 1970. The study seeks to bring into focus the chain of events which culminated in the unfortunate events of 1967 – 1970. The salience of his study according to our quarry draws from the observation that ever since 1970, every debate on the future of the Igbo in Nigeria has, more often than not, involved a reexamination of the causes, course and consequences of the 1967 – 1970 war⁷². In an admirable exhibition of historical craftsmanship, Ejitu Ota reexamines the remote and proximate causes of the Nigerian – Biafran War and, *inter alia*, identifies the 1959 general elections in Nigeria; the lugubrious nature of post-independence party politics; the manipulation of census figures; the 1965 Western regional elections; the one – sided nature of the January 15 1966 coup; the promulgation of Decree No. 39 of May, 1966; the inability to honour the Aburi Accords as the remote and immediate causes of the war⁷³.

On the social consequences, he discusses the human losses, despondency and defeatism as well as the plight of women most of who were forcibly married to Nigerian soldiers. In the economic sphere, he examines the systematic pauperization of the Igbo through the notorious and doleful Bank Obligations (Eastern States) Decree of 1970 which provided that all monies lodged in Biafran banks during the war remain forfeited if part of any such money was ever withdrawn or any addition made to it in the course of the war. Through such economic policy and many more, especially, the Abandoned Property Decree, Ejitu Ota drives home his point that the ‘no victor, no vanquished’ slogan was nothing more than a euphemism concealing the shining political chicanery, duplicity and hatred of the Igbo⁷⁴. On the political consequences, Ejitu Ota has myriad of tales of the political marginalization of the Igbo as a result of the war.

Notwithstanding the salience and the craftsmanship of the author, Ejitu Ota’s study among all the already reviewed studies has the most ample opportunity to present the security consequences of the Nigeria - Biafra war; this is so because a sizeable number of pages were devoted to underscoring the consequences of the war on the Igbo. Nonetheless, the security implications of the war are conspicuously missing. However, Ejitu Ota need not be blamed since it has really not caught the attention of historians to undertake studies of the security implications of the Nigeria - Biafra war.

Again, in *The Economics of the Nigeria - Biafra war and its Prospects for National Development*⁷⁵, Nwabueze R. Ogbudinkpa considers the Nigeria - Biafra war from a fresh, hitherto neglected perspective which is that wars bring about some good things and not entirely destruction. Nwabueze Ogbudinkpa contends:

There exists today in the world many statements which condemn war. Some have merely denounced it as an inhuman and absolute means of settling political disputes. But such denunciation is as irrelevant as denouncing malaria without trying to wipe out malaria causing mosquitoes...war has likely beneficial consequences... the Japanese war makers of the latter part of the last century

foresaw the good effects of war and deliberately fostered wars so as to bring about beneficial consequences that the war conditions may elicit especially technological and, to some extent institutional⁷⁶.

Having thus made the above economic cum philosophical submissions, Ogbudinkpa proceeds to adumbrate areas in which the Nigeria civil war would have benefited Nigeria (which were nonetheless ignored and neglected). The most crucial of the areas in which the Nigeria - Biafra war should have benefited Nigeria according to Ogbudinkpa was in the area of weapons and munition production. The author avers that the military and economic blockades suffered by Biafra induced the nascent Republic to look inwards in such areas as weapons and munitions production and a host of other quasi – military and purely civilian innovations and inventions. Perhaps, more than any other study, Nwabueze Ogbudinkpa’s study gave a detailed assessment of the war – induced innovations and inventions in Biafra which in his opinion, Nigeria failed to learn and improve on for indigenous national development after the civil war. Deducible from his submissions is the fact that Biafra produced more arms, especially, double – barreled guns and semi – automatic rifles than it was able to use.

Whatever the case, the important point is the fact that Ogbudinkpa’s study clearly demonstrates that no meaningful appraisal of the menace of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria can afford to ignore the Nigeria - Biafra war as a crucial historical determinant. However, like other studies examined, Ogbudinkpa neglects to underscore the dangerous potentials of the use of these weapons in a post-civil war Igboland nay Nigeria.

Furthermore, in their book, *A Social History of the Nigeria - Biafra war*⁷⁷, Axel Harneit – Sievers, Sydney Emezue and Jones Ahazuem examine the Nigeria - Biafra war from the social dimensions. The book x-rays the social aspects of the ‘ups and downs’ and other social dislocations occasioned by the civil war. The book also highlights the role and impact of the humanitarians associations in the war as well as the plight of women and children during the

long thirty months that the war lasted. The authors provide a good reading on most of the important social themes of the Nigeria – Biafra War. However, it is needful to observe that the concern of the book does not appear to be related to security and its corollaries. Thus, the book contains little useful information on the question of small arms and light weapons neither could it be expected to underscore what became of these weapons after the war.

Again, in an interesting study titled *Nigeria Precedent in the Biafran Courtroom: The Legal Sources of Nigerian Nationality, 1914 – 1970*⁷⁸, Samuel Fury Childs Daly brings out an entirely new perspective on the Nigeria – Biafra debacle. The study is a foray into the legal history of Nigeria through the lens of the Nigeria – Biafra War. Therein, the author seeks to highlight an often neglected historical phenomenon in the literature on the Biafra War. Accordingly, the author argues that “historians often sublimate the everyday operation of the law to larger constitutional articulations of what it means to be a Nigerian or Biafran, which obscures how people understood their citizenship and nationality in the everyday”⁷⁹. Thus, through a detailed examination of the legal procedure in Biafran courts, from 1967 – 1969, Samuel Fury Childs Daly sets to enrich the extant literature on the Nigerian – Biafran War. Furthermore, the author discovers that the Biafran state from all legal indications, following the Montevideo Convention was a *de facto* sovereign state which used a wide range of sources to dispense justice as the embattled state continued to war for its survival⁸⁰.

In any event, the scope of Samuel Fury Childs Daly’s study cannot be said to be directly related to the issue of the security implications of the Nigerian Biafran War, its usefulness, however, derives from the fact that it helps in creating the awareness that the existing research interests on the Nigeria – Biafra War are narrow and should be expanded to accommodate other phenomena previously unthought-of. In this connection, Samuel Fury Childs Daly’s study has succeeded in filling a lacuna on the legal perspectives of life in Biafra and hopefully, this present

study would do same, on the issue of the security aftermath of the war, especially, as it relates to the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.

In this ongoing review of relevant literature, it is considered imprudent to ignore Karl Maier's *This House has fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*⁸¹. Although, not essentially on the Biafran War, (Karl Maier's prime concern was an analysis of the progressive decline of Nigeria). His work nonetheless brought under its purview themes related to the title of this proposed study. Karl Maier attempts to buttress, as the title of the work suggested, that Nigeria as a house has fallen. While the polemics of the failure or otherwise of Nigeria does not come under the scope of this study, it is nevertheless apposite to observe that the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons cannot but occupy the front burner in the mode of the frequency of factors accounting for the crises of the Nigerian state. Again, while Maier underscores the problems of illicit arms albeit, tangentially, he altogether forgets to adumbrate the roots and genesis of these weapons – neither could Karl Maier be heard factoring the security implications of the militarization of the Nigerian state following the Nigerian – Biafran War.

Having thus reviewed these relevant studies on the Nigeria – Biafra War and having highlighted the gaps vis a vis the phenomenon of illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation, it is only logical to review some extant studies on illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. This, *inter alia* would help to show the extent of the lacuna created in the existing studies on the two aspects of the present study- Nigeria - Biafra war and small arms and light weapons proliferation.

In *Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa: Routes and Illegal Arms between Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria*⁸², Seth Ohene, Felix Aklavon, Theonas Moussou and Augustine Ikelegbe examine the trade in illicit arms and weapons between Ghana, Togo, Benin

and Nigeria. The work is divided into four parts, termed country studies, with each of the parts discussing the menace of small arms and light weapons in great detail. These authors are of the opinion that “the illicit trade in weapons between Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo is fuelled by more demand by the people for self – protection, as a result of the feeling of insecurity throughout the region. This regional demand is being met by arms fabricators principally in Ghana and also in Togo, whose local revolvers, short guns and rifle type weapons flood the arms markets in the sub – region”⁸³

In the country study on Nigeria, the research reports that the abundance of massive small arms and light weapons as well as the absence of a systematic and comprehensive arms collection programme after the Nigeria - Biafra war became “the first source of massive proliferation leading to the emergence of violent criminality”⁸⁴. Having thus created the much – needed historical background for the study of the problems of small arms and light weapons, one expected the authors to proceed with the details of how the abundance of small of arms and light weapons led to the massive proliferation and the said violent criminality. However, one’s hope becomes dashed when the study veered off to discussing the economics of small arms and light weapons proliferation, demand, supply, type and distribution, ownership structure, arms agents and so on⁸⁵. Such a turn by the authors clearly suggests that the study is not a historical discourse and thus, producing a historical account of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons and its roots in Nigeria - Biafra war is not only timely but would also reinforce other existing study on SALW.

Furthermore, Michael Ogu in *Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Africa: Cause or Effect*⁸⁶ analyses the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as being both the cause and effect of the security situation on the African continent. Michael Ogu notes that the

response to proliferation of small arms and light weapons should be more national than regional or international. It also argues that there is a lot more to be done on the part of the citizens, and especially law enforcement officers, as well as the government institutions to ensure that the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons is reduced to its barest minimum and the security situation in Africa is improved⁸⁷. In any event, Ogu's study can be said to be a survey study which adumbrates how small arms and light weapons proliferation is both a cause as well as an effect of several conflicts in Africa. Thus, apart from highlighting the Nigeria - Biafra war as one of the wars that have had to be fought in Africa, the study attempts no delineation of the ways in which the Nigeria - Biafra war caused the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria or any part of Africa.

Ime A. John, Aminu Mohammed, Andrew Into, and Cele Nkanta in *Gun Violence in Nigeria: A Focus on Ethno-Religious Conflict in Kano*⁸⁸ investigate small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Africa by reviewing the situation in Nigeria and conducting a small study in one hospital in northern Nigeria. They report that several social, economic, and political factors have caused a marked increase in gun-related violence, including ethno-religious tensions – the response of security forces to criminal activity, and growing economic disparity. They observe that firearm injuries occupy the mode in the frequency of deaths in most hospitals in Kano State of Nigeria. The authors contend that “little has been done to understand the role of SALW in ethno-religious disputes and the public health implications of the widespread availability of firearms”⁸⁹. Accordingly, increased outreach to disenfranchised youth, addressing the use of firearms by security forces, and addressing the political and economic disparity between ethnic and religious groups are seen as the ultimate panacea to the increasing homicides arising from the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. From the above observations,

it is clear that the study did not undertake to underscore the genesis of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

In the same vein, Chukwuemeka E. Alaku in *Small Arms and Economic Insecurity in Nigeria, 1985 – 2004*⁹⁰ examines the nexus between the proliferation of illicit arms and the comatose state of the Nigerian economy. The study's *terminus ad quo* is 1985 when the Babangida regime corrupted the Nigerian state. The Babangida administration and its associated ills were according to Alaku, “responsible for the sharp increase in criminal activities, violence and conflicts that encouraged small arms proliferation, abuse and misuse”. The study, as the title suggests, concentrates on the economic dimensions of the impact of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. Chukwuemeka Alaku contends,

The proliferation of small arms has not only crippled the economy but brought negative consequences on the socio – political sphere of Nigeria. The cost to the nation has been tens of billions of naira. The unjustified expenditure on arms by both the government and civilians is nothing more than a distorted use of national resources thereby recycling poverty and underdevelopment⁹¹.

Alaku's study does not, however, consider the genesis of small arms in Nigeria since both the *terminus ad quo* and *terminus ad quem* postdate the Nigeria – Biafra War. The inability to factor the Nigeria – Biafra War in the causes of the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria and the sole appraisal of only the economic implications of the small arms in Nigeria are observed gaps in the extant literature.

Finally, Yakubu Moses in *The Impact of the Proliferation and Illegal Acquisition of Small Arms on Public Security in Lagos, Nigeria*⁹² underscores how small arms impinge on public security in Lagos State of Nigeria. The author sets his study from the backdrop of the relative lack of interest by scholars on how small arms affect the micro-public security of people in Nigeria. He notes that “most literature examine the impact of small arms on national development, political stability and the promotion of insurgency, militancy and armed

robbery”⁹³. “A more recent problem of small arms which has not been addressed in academic parlance is how small arms promote ‘one chance robbery’, ‘traffic/go slow robbery’ and ‘motorcycle (Okada) robbery’ in Lagos state⁹⁴.

Then, Yakubu Moses proceeds to show how small arms impinge on public security in Lagos state. He concludes that even though small arms proliferation studies have tended to be macro in outlook, its micro implications for public security in Nigeria require to be fully documented. Thus, the author considers how these small arms are acquired, moved and used in assaulting the residents of Lagos. It is instructive to observe that Yakubu Moses’ study is crucial because it blazes a new trail in small arms and light weapons studies in Nigeria in that unlike extant works, it presents a micro – security approach to the threats of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria. Nonetheless, it is also important to observe that the above study appeared not to have considered giving any historical appraisal of the origin and growth of small arm proliferation. It is clear that no meaningful assessment of small arms and light weapons proliferation can be made devoid of a clear historical roots of the phenomenon. This study therefore attempts to supply the missing historical links to the phenomenon of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

Having examined these studies and works, it requires noticing that none of these works have really attempted to x – ray menace of small arms and light weapons against the backdrop of the Nigeria - Biafra war. While a handful of these studies have grappled with small arms and light weapons production in Biafra during the civil war, they were not seen appraising the implications of these weapons in a post-civil war Igboland. Considering that the arms mop – up after the civil war was anything but systematic, the availability of these weapons, especially, in the hands of army stragglers and the Biafran militias posed a serious threat to post war Igbo society. This was compounded by discovery of Biafran arms caches by civilians in some villages

after the civil war. Additionally, the role of the Biafran Research and Production (RAP) Unit, especially its technicians and gunsmiths in the illicit manufacturing of small arms after the Nigeria - Biafra war appears not to have been given critical historical attention, especially, as seen in the literature reviewed above. These observations and gaps identified in the reviewed literature lend credence to the importance and salience of this study.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one provides the general introductory frame. It encapsulates the background to the study, the statement of problem, the purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, the methodology and sources of information, the theoretical framework, the conceptual clarification as well as the literature review and the organization of the study.

The second chapter is presented under the theme: History and Geography of Southeast Nigeria. In this chapter, such themes as the Geography, Land and Peoples of Southeastern Nigeria; A Historical Overview of Southeastern Nigeria up to 2007 and an Overview of War, Arms and Weapons in Primordial Igboland (Southeastern Nigeria) were examined. Chapter Three is titled: Secessionist Biafra and the Genesis of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeastern Nigeria, 1967 – 1970. Sub – themes x-rayed in this chapter include: Prelude to the Nigerian – Biafran War, The Biafran Republic and the of challenge of Weapons, Arms Importation as Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Biafra, 1967 – 1970 and War Technology and the Manufacturing of Small Arms and Light Weapons, 1967 – 1970.

The fourth chapter is entitled: The End of the War and the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeastern Nigeria, 1970 – 2007. In this chapter are Biafra's Surrender and Arms Mopping/ Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration; Causes of

Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria, 1970 – 2007; Biafran Blacksmiths, gunsmiths and Technologists in the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, 1970 – 2007, Ethnic militias and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeastern Nigeria, the Vigilante Outfits and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeastern Nigeria, 1970 – 2007.

Chapter Five, examines the Impact and Implications of Arms Proliferation to Southeastern Nigeria. Its sub-themes include: Security Implications of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria; Economic and Social Implications of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria. The penultimate chapter examines, Governments Efforts at Curbing Arms Proliferation in Nigeria, 1970 – 2007. The study is brought to an end in Chapter Seven which contains the Summary, Conclusion and the Recommendations. Additionally, the bibliography and necessary appendixes appear separately after the recommendations.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

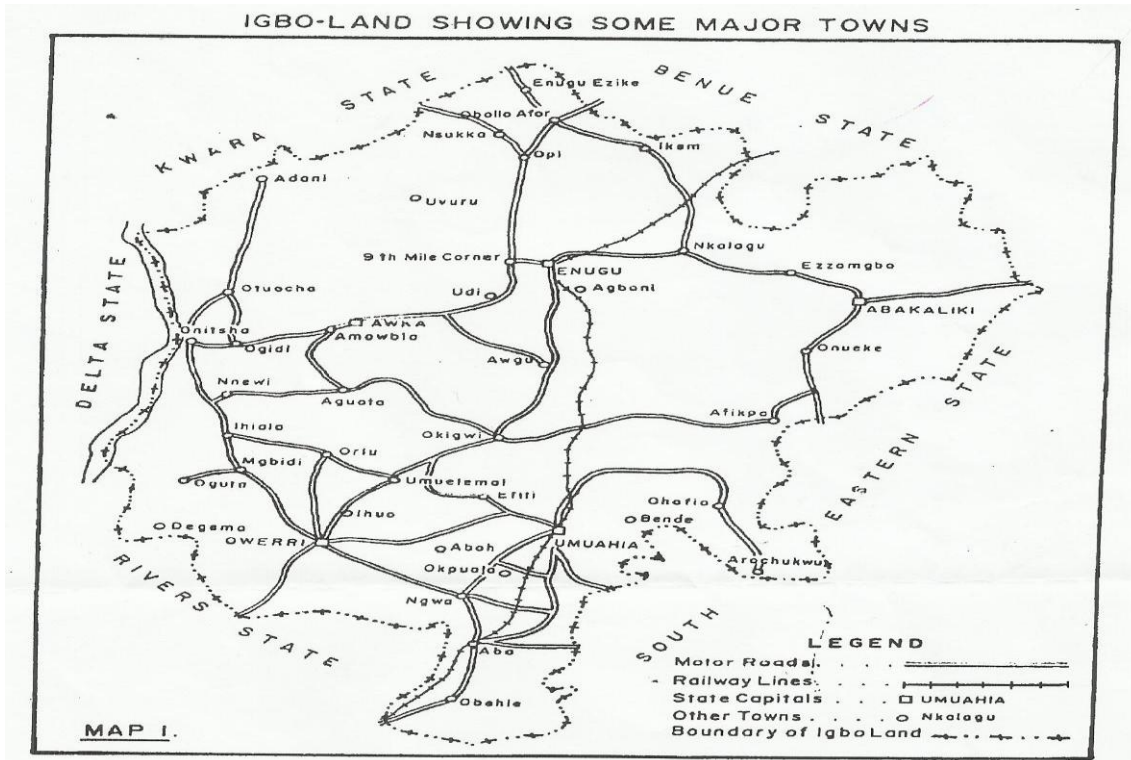
Geography, Land and Peoples of Southeast Nigeria

The area now referred to as Southeast Nigeria has undergone several mutations and alterations in Nigeria's political history. C.C Ifemesia opines that at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was called the Eastern Province(s), later it became known as Eastern Region, at some point it was designated as the Cross River Basin¹. The latest among the appellations is the designation, 'Southeast' Nigeria. It is also important to observe that as these modifications were effected, territories seemed to have been excised from the area. Accordingly, Ayo Davidson contends that "it is only in Nigeria that politico – geographic calibrations have little or nothing to do with geography proper...Otherwise, there is no such thing as South – South in geography, properly speaking, it is Southeastern Nigeria"².

Until 1967, what was referred to as Southeastern Nigeria inhabited the peoples of the coast and hinterland of Southern Nigeria as found in present day Southeast and South – South regions of Nigeria. Hitherto, Southeastern Nigeria included the five states of the present day southeast as well as the six states of the South – South regions. The principal inhabitants of the former Southeast Region included the Ijaw, the Andoni – Ibeno, the Efik, the Igbo, the Ibibio, the Ekoi, Yakurr and Ogoi peoples, among others³.

In the present political geography of Nigeria, the states of the Southeast comprises of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. This understanding does not imply that the Igbo live only in the five core states listed above. In fact, the Igbo people also inhabit parts of Delta and Rivers, oAkwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Benue and Kogi States⁴. Besides, it would also be misleading to assume that only the Igbo people inhabit the five core states of the Southeast. It is on record that non - Igbo people such as the Igala occupy the Nzam area of Anambra State while Ebonyi State accommodates some non-Igbo elements in its northern territories⁵. What is perhaps more apposite with regard to this study is that at present, the term ‘Southeast’ is often used interchangeably with ‘Igboland’⁶. Thus, for ease and expediency, this usage is retained in this study.

Map showing major Igbo towns



Source: National Archives, Enugu.

Southeast Nigeria or Igboland is located within latitudes 4 0 40' and 7 0 00'N and longitudes 6 0 40' and 8 0 15' E. This region has a total landmass of 16, 000 sq mi (40, 000 km²)⁷. The highest point of elevation in Southeastern Nigeria is pegged at 3,300 ft (1,000m); whilst the lowest elevation is 0 ft (0m)⁸. As at 2007 Southeast Nigeria was constituted of the indigenous homeland of about 89 per cent of the Igbo people of Nigeria⁹. It is a cultural as well as a linguistic region of Southern Nigeria.

Geographically, Southeast Nigeria is divided by the lower Niger into two unequal sections – an eastern section (which is the larger of the two) and a western section¹⁰. Additionally, it has been noted that in the Southeast, that is, areas east of the River Niger and west of the Cross River constitute a low tableland¹¹. Furthermore, areas in the southern Igboland or the Southeast are cut into three unequal parts by the Imo and Akwa-Ibom Rivers¹². In the

north, Igboland rises gently to the Awgu-Udi-Nsukka hill which runs in a south-north direction¹³. The region is primarily situated in the lowland forest region of Nigeria and is bound to the south by the Rivers and Akwa Ibom States, to the north by Kogi and Benue States, to the east by Cross Rivers State and to the west by Delta State¹⁴.

With regard to the landforms, drainage and reliefs of Southeastern Nigeria, G.E.K. Ofomata notes that the land surface of the region is dominated by plains under 200 metres above sea level¹⁵. Furthermore, Ofomata, who appears to have done extensive geographical studies of the area, reveals that the characteristic trend of the topography is that of gradual slow ascent from the east, south and west to the high areas of the Nsukka – Okigwe cuesta¹⁶. As he defines, “this rather gradual ascent is interrupted by a series of step – like scarps, especially on the western side, near the centre of the region, where they coincide with the scarps of the Oka (Awka) – Olu uplands and the irregular scarps of the Udi – Nsuka plateau”¹⁷.

Southeast Nigeria is littered with a many rivers and water bodies. These rivers include the Niger, Omambala, Imo, Ebonyi, Adada, Njaba, among others. Experts in earth sciences – geography, surveying, geology and geo-informatics – who have carried out researches on Southeast Nigeria seem to agree that all the river systems in Southeastern Nigeria are exoreic¹⁸ – (that is, drain into the sea) through areas outside Igboland. Additionally, the river systems in this region of Nigeria have been grouped into three: the Niger system, the Cross River system and the independent streams¹⁹.

With particular regard to the landforms of Southeastern Nigeria, two major landforms have been identified. These are plains and lowland; and cuesta landscapes²⁰. In line with the above calibration, Ofomata observes that “each of these groups is subdivided into a number of landform regions, giving a total of five such regions”²¹. Essentially, plains and lowlands occupy the greater proportion of the landscape of Southeast Nigeria and these plains and lowlands take

three landform regions out of the five mentioned landform regions in the area. These landform regions are the Niger – Omambala lowlands, undulating lowland, coastal plains and Cross River plains. Similarly, two cuesta landscapes have been identified in Southeast Nigeria namely, the Nsukka – Okigwe cuesta and the Awka – Orlu uplands²².

Without doubt, no other gifts of nature – hills, rivers, lakes, streams and mountains, among others are as precious to the Igbo as the soil. The people's attachment to the land is indeed very strong. According to Ofomata,

It is a priceless commodity and Igbos [sic] would rather lay down their lives than lose their land. This deep attachment to the land derives partly from the fact that the Igbos [sic] regard it as a deity – Ana (Mother Earth), the mainspring of the people's aesthetic consciousness and the sustenance of all life, and partly because Igbos [sic] are traditionally and primarily farmers who see the land as the basis of their agricultural endeavours and the main source of their wealth²³.

Broadly speaking, the soils of the Southeast have been divided into four distinctive types – (i) Lithosols; (ii) Juvenile soils; (iii) Ferrallitic soils; and (iv) Hydromorphic soils²⁴. The lithosols are shallow, skeletal and stony soils which makes its cultivation difficult. Although, it would appear that this kind of soil is somewhat cultivated in Maku near Ogwu in Enugu State²⁵. The Juvenile soils found in Southeastern Nigeria also pose slight problems in usage for agricultural purposes. This is because this kind of soil is relatively immature. However, it is on record that the Anam people as well as the riverine Ogbaru people both in Anambra state make intensive farming uses of the juvenile soil form²⁶. The Ferrallitic soils seem to be the commonest type of soil in the Southeast. This type of soil is usually reddish, and is not known to be particularly fertile, however, its availability, and the fact that it is easy to manure makes its usage indispensable in the Southeast Region of Nigeria. It would seem that the most fertile of the soil types in the Southeast of Nigeria is the hydromorphic soil type²⁷.

Hydromorphic soils are mineral soils whose morphology is influenced by seasonal waterlogging caused by underlying impervious shales. It is important to observe that the most fertile areas of Southeast Nigeria fall within the areas where hydromorphic soils are more conspicuous including the Abakiliki and Adani areas where rice is cultivated on significant quantities; the Ayamelum area – particularly in Omasi, Umumbo, Umuolum, Anaku and Umuluokpa, among others where yam and other food crops are produced in sizeable quantities have hydromorphic soils²⁸. For all its blessedness, the Southeast Region of Nigeria is prone to several kinds of soil erosion. The problem of soil erosion in this region is brought about by complex interacting components which include the environment itself, agricultural practices, urbanisation, industrialisation, road construction, among others.

As a tropical region, the climate and vegetation of this region manifest all the features of tropical zones. R.N.C. Anyadike submits that “two periods of relatively high temperature are recorded within the year, and these roughly coincide with the apparent passage of the sun on its way to and from the Tropic of Cancer”²⁹. The hottest months of the year in this region are February to April. The temperatures in these months are known to exceed 27⁰ C; however, the coolest month in the region is the month of August³⁰.

Climatically, two seasons are easily noticeable in the region – as obtainable in most of Southern Nigeria – the dry and rainy seasons. These seasons control all agricultural activities in the region. The accurate prediction of the onset of the seasons as well as their terminal is a great asset among the Igbo. According to Anyadike,

... the rainy season begins in the southern areas of the region and progresses steadily northward. The expected date of onset thus ranges from February 9th to March 11th in the North. In all, it takes about 34 days or five weeks for the rain to spread inland. The end of the rainy season however begins in the northern areas of the region and progresses steadily southwards. The earliest expected date of the end is November 8th– 10th, while the latest expected date of end is around

November 28th – 30th. It thus takes about 20 days or 3 weeks for the rainy season to end throughout the entire region³¹.

With regard to the vegetation of the Southeast Region of Nigeria, four major vegetation units are recognised. These include the Rain Forest – Savanna Ecotone, the Lowland Rain Forest, Fresh Water Swamp Forest and Salt Water Swamp Forest³². The Rain Forest – Savanna Ecotone belt covers almost half of the regions. The Lowland Rain Forest belt occupies the bulk of the bulk of the southern part of the region. The Fresh and Salt Water Swamp Forest occupies the parts of the Southeast Region along the River Niger valleys. As expected the riverine communities of Anambra State have this kind of vegetation³³.

What is perhaps more historically crucial about the vegetation of Southeastern Nigeria is that the Igbo who inhabit this region must have lived in this region for a fairly long time to have altered the physical environment to this extent. A.E. Afigbo drives home the point better when he posits that “all who have considered the matter agree that Igboland lies in what must have once been tropical rain forest vegetation”³⁴. This understanding of the natural and physical environment of the Igbo who inhabit Southeastern Nigeria as well as their adeptness in surmounting some of the challenges posed to them by the environment is crucial. Moreover, and as shall be seen later in the study, this knowledge is indeed indispensable in understanding the issue of indigenous weapons production in secessionist Biafra and consequently, the proliferation of these weapons during and after the Nigeria - Biafra war.

With regard to the peoples of Southeastern Nigeria, it has been hinted that the Igbo are not the only inhabitants of the region. The Igala people live in Nzam, and a cluster of islands in Anambra West Local Government Area of Anambra State³⁵. Besides, there are pockets of non-Igbo elements northwest of Abakiliki, Ebonyi State. Nevertheless, the Igbo are by far the most populous ethnic group in Southeastern Nigeria. In fact, they are about 97 per cent³⁶ of the total

population of the area and thus, in discussing the peoples of this region, the Igbo are expected to receive principal attention.

Since there is a separate sub – theme on the history of the Igbo in this chapter, it will suffice to introduce the Igbo people here as a distinct ethnic group who form one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria – the other two being the Hausa and the Yoruba ethnic stocks. Many attempts have been made at sub - dividing the Igbo people along clearly separated ethnographical lines. These attempts include those made by colonial anthropologists such as P.A. Talbot and C.K Meek³⁷. N.T. Nwaezeigwe on his part avers that the most popular as well as the most accepted effort at delineating the Igbo ethnographically was the one made by Daryl Forde and G.I. Jones in 1950. Forde and Jones are known to have classified the Igbo into five major ethnographic groups.³⁸ While a lengthy annotation of these groupings may not be necessarily relevant here, it would suffice to underline that the Northern Igbo, which is also referred to as the Onitsha Igbo is further divided into Nri – Awka sub – group, Enugu sub – group and the Onitsha sub – group. The Southern or Owerri Igbo ethnographic group is also sub - divided into Isu, Oratta- Ikwere, Ohuhu – Ngwa and Item sub – groups. The Southeastern Igbo, also known as the Cross River Igbo is composed of Edda, Abam – Ohafia, Abiriba and Aro subgroups³⁹.

While the above delineation appears somewhat neat on paper, it is important to observe that their actual use is replete with contradictions and controversies such that uniformity in their use by Igbo scholars is almost imponderable. What is perhaps incontrovertible in the words of N.T. Nwaezeigwe is that,

Ethnographically, the Igbo, when compared with the Hausa – Fulani and Yoruba presents a striking distinct socio – political outlook. Unlike the latter two groups where leadership was mainly based on hereditary culture within the framework of kingship and nobility class, the Igbo society in its traditional setting featured a relatively egalitarian but highly competitive socio – political leadership characteristics with the basic frameworks being on the constancy of gerontocracy and mobility of social title system⁴⁰.

As indicated elsewhere in this chapter, other ethnic groups also inhabit Southeastern Nigeria apart from the Igbo. These minority groups, as they are often called, nonetheless, require to be appraised. In the Southeast Region, the non – Igbo elements are mostly found in Anambra and Ebonyi States. They also live in Enugu State. In Anambra State, these are found in Anambra West Local Government Area. Most of the communities that make up this local government area have their history traced to the Igala of Kogi State⁴¹. Although, these communities in the recent times have been reconstructing Igbo origins for themselves, what is perhaps clearer is that the founders and early settlers of these communities crossed the Omabala River from Igalaland in not too remote times to found these Anambra West communities. Accounts of their departure from Igalaland are still recollected among the people such that their migration out of Igalaland could not have been more than two hundred years ago⁴². These Igala – speaking communities in Anambra State include Nzam, Inoma, Owelle, Ukwala, Ala, Odomagwu, Udi, Igbokenyi, Onugwa and Odegbe⁴³. The fact that Igala is still spoken as the major language in these towns is an indubitable pointer to the truth of the Igala origins of these communities.

Ebonyi State in northern Igboland also inhabits some non-Igbo elements. These non-Igbo elements include the Ntezi, Okpoto and Effium peoples⁴⁴. These communities have been part of the of the Kele people of the Cross River region of Nigeria. Variants of the language of these communities are traced to Kukelle, the language of the Kele people who live largely in Cross River State and the Utonkon areas of Benue⁴⁵. However, unlike the Igala elements in Anambra State who naturally migrated from Igalaland into the cluster of islands that make up what is known as Anambra West Local Government Area of Anambra State, the Ntezi, Okpoto and Effium peoples appear to have lived in their present territories for a fairly longer period. Their fusion into the Igbo area of Ebonyi is partly explainable by the artificiality of state creations and

demarcations in Nigeria as well as by reasons of interactions with the Igbo of Ebonyi State extraction⁴⁶. In any event, it has to be noted that the population of these non-Igbo elements in the Southeastern Nigeria constitutes no more than five per cent of the total population of the region⁴⁷. For this reason and for academic expedience, the Southeast Region of Nigeria is taken to be coterminous with Igboland in this study.

The Igbo People of Southeastern Nigeria up to 1967

An understanding of who the Igbo are and how they have come to occupy their present abode as well as how their lives have fared since the earliest times is apposite to the understanding of the Nigeria-Biafra war and the ensuing small arms and light weapons proliferation after the war. An understanding of the history of the Igbo is thus crucial in comprehending the actions and inactions of the Igbo during the Nigeria-Biafra war which, in fact, conduced to the production and importation of different calibre of arms as well as the proliferation of the weapons in post - *bellum* Nigeria.

Any meaningful effort at researching on the history of the Igbo must necessarily commence with what A.E. Afigbo calls the 'big question'⁴⁸ in Igbo studies. This big question is: Who are the Igbo? Put differently, how does one identify someone as an Igbo? For Elizabeth Isichei, "no historical question arouses more interest among the Igbo than the enquiry, where did the Igbo come from"⁴⁹. It has to be underscored at once that the origin of the Igbo is one of the most contested themes in Igbo studies. Alex Ugwuja opines,

The study of the Igbo people of Nigeria has acquired the most negative epithets *vis â vis* the study of other peoples of Nigeria. This is due not only to the lack of interest in the study of the group and the consequent dearth of material but also the irreconcilability of the few scholarly postulations of the few who have undertaken to do so. The nebulosity of the origin of the Igbo in particular and the history of the Igbo in general, arises from the fact that the Igbo did not evolve a literate culture until the imposition of colonial rule and their land was in the parts traversed by early travellers like the Arab and the Portuguese. Thus events that transpired throughout the millennia before 1900 went undocumented....⁵⁰

In any case, several speculations have been weaved on the origin of the Igbo. N.T. Nawezeigwe explains that “historians, after careful examination of the several traditions of origin and placing them on the cultural matrix, arrived at three schools or what is often called the theories of Igbo origin”⁵¹. A lengthy analysis of these theories of Igbo origin is considered impertinent for this study. However, it is necessary to adumbrate the basic thrusts of these theories of origin as they would help to show some of the crises that bedeviled the Igbo and their responses to these crises up to the Nigeria - Biafra war.

The primal theory of origin of the Igbo is the *epum/ efum* or autochthony theory which asserts that the Igbo sprout up from the ground in which they live or that they crawled out from holes inhabiting where they live currently. One major variant of this theory has been weaved around a mythical or ethereal figure called Eri who was ‘fabricated’ fully grown and sent down to found Igboland with his wife. These views appear to have been popularised by the anthropologist, Michael Angulu Onwuejiogwu, who like Bronislaw Malinowski used a participant observer method to elicit most of his information at Nri, in present day Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambra State⁵². The problem with the autochthony theory of Igbo origin as exemplified in the Eri myth is that, according to A.E. Afigbo, it is not to be taken as a historical account of the origin of the Igbo⁵³. In fact, Afigbo warns that they should not be taken at face value. “They cannot but mislead all those who are too ready to lap up their surface meaning. They are esoteric history, or history clothed in esoteric symbols, or codes, which therefore call for decoding and demystification”⁵⁴.

Another interesting theory on the origin of the Igbo is that which traces Igbo genesis to ancient Egypt. This theory gained popularity with the publication of a journal article by a colonial anthropologist and ethnographer, M.D.W. Jeffreys titled *Dual Organisations in the African project*⁵⁵. In the study, which was published in 1946, Jeffreys set before himself the task

of explaining the origin of the Igbo in terms of the similarities with ancient Egypt⁵⁶. In Jeffreys' opinion, the existence of dual structures in Igbo socio – political systems and the scarification “igbu ichi” custom among the Igbo point to descent from ancient Egypt⁵⁷. This theory of Igbo origin has been challenged in several ways. First, it is no more than a localised version of the discredited Hamitic hypothesis which was for a long time employed to impugn the achievements of the Negro by way of the jaundiced belief that he (the Negro) contrived no significant civilization of his own and therefore lacks any clear history. Secondly is the fact that the cultural similarities on which the theory is based is phony; given the evidence that such cultural resemblances are discoverable in many other societies of the world. Should one therefore suppose that any society that contrives dual structures and perform facial scarification originated from ancient Egypt? This question has not been addressed by the proponents of Egyptian origin of the Igbo.

Perhaps, the most popular theory of the origin of the Igbo is that which traces the Igbo origin to Jewish land otherwise called the theory of Jewish Origin. It may be admitted that unlike the Egyptian origin theory, the Jewish origin theory has permeated the consciousness of most Igbo people such that it is popularly held in many quarters that the Igbo are one of the lost tribes of Israel. So pervasive is this belief among most unwary Igbo people that the average Igbo man on the street would rather not entertain any other version of the origin of the Igbo. The propagandistic fervor of the defunct Republic of Biafra, 1967-1970 appears to have contributed to the ossification of the Igbo – Jewish connection. It may be recalled that it was probably in an attempt to bolster the morale of the Igbo during the war as well as to elicit the assistance of the state of Israel, the Biafran propagandists copiously dished out the view that the Igbo originated from Israel while the war lasted⁵⁸.

But what exactly is the aim of the purveyors of the Jewish origin theory of the Igbo? There seems to be various versions of this theory but the connecting thread in their submissions is that the Igbo, on account of the religious similarities, semantic and syntactical similarities in language, are an offshoot of the Jewish nation. This theory of Igbo origin appears to be one of the oldest speculations on Igbo origin. The Igbo ex – slave, Olaudah Equiano, in his *Interesting Narratives* is one of the first to canvass the Jewish origin for the Igbo⁵⁹. This viewpoint received serious canonical support from colonial anthropologists and missionaries such as the Reverend George T. Basden who averred that the Igbo were a branch of the Hebrew nation, or at least that their culture history could satisfactorily be explained in terms of Jewish impact⁶⁰.

So engaging was this Jewish origin for the Igbo that one Igbo scholar, Charles Ujah, took the pains of travelling to Israel in order to study the Hebrew language properly so as to explain the Igbo – Jewish connections better and by doing so, clear all doubts once and for all. After spending some years gleaning and collating information from the broad disciplines of Linguistics, Theology, Anthropology, and History, Charles Ujah reached the conclusion that the Igbo are direct descendants of the Biblical Abraham⁶¹. He maintains that that Jacob's (Biblical Jacob) seventh son named Gad (in Genesis 46:18) had seven sons whose names were Ziphon, Haggai, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areh. In his opinion, Eri was the fifth son of Gad and primogenitor of the Igbo. In his view, Eri left Canaan, traversed many lands and found himself in Igalaland where he married an Igala woman named Nono or Rinono. From Igala, Charles Ujah believes, that Eri finally travelled through the Omambala River to Aguleri where he sired the Igbo nation⁶².

Apart from the fact that Charles Ujah's submissions lack any clear understanding of basic anthropology, they are also lacking in historical precision. His submissions fail to give any date or even a clue as to when the Biblical Eri's migration took place. The importance of date(s)

cannot be over-emphasised. According to C.C. Agbodike, “history without date (s) and a sense of time is no history”⁶³. Subsequently compounding the problem, Ujah avers that “the date and time is not the issue here but the reality, date and time will generate controversy that may be diversionary”⁶⁴.

Having critically appraised the unsustainability of the submissions of the various theories of the origin of the Igbo, the late doyen of Igbo history, A.E. Afigbo asserts that,

Having regard to the fact that the Igbo are a Negro people, a highly specialised race of the human family, the origin of the Igbo can reasonably be discussed and determined only within the context of the origin of the Negro people of the world generally, and then within the context of the origin of the Negro peoples of West Africa among whom they are found specifically...⁶⁵

On the basis of the above assertion and also given the fact that the Negro people are known to have originated in Africa, particularly somewhere south of the latitude of Asserlar and Khartoum Afigbo declares that it would be absurd to look for the origin of the Igbo anywhere beyond Africa and in fact, anywhere northwards of the latitude of Asserlar and Khartoum⁶⁶. It is evident that Egypt and Israel lie north of this attitude of Asserlar and Khartoum and thus, any linkages between the Negroes and Egypt or Israel is either accidental or invented. Furthermore, Afigbo notes that the Igbo language falls into the language family known as the Niger – Congo. In this language family, there is a sub – language family referred to as the Kwa into which most of the languages of West Africa, including most of those in Southern Nigeria fall⁶⁷. Accordingly, Afigbo submits that

Among those languages in Southern Nigeria which fall into this sub – family are Yoruba, Edo, Igala, Igbo, Idoma and Ijo. The ancestral language of the Kwa sub – family of languages, at least those known as the Eastern Kwa to which the Kwa languages in Nigeria belong, that is proto – Kwa, originated in the Niger – Benue confluence. Put differently, the original speakers of this ancestral language, proto – Kwa, originated in the Niger – Benue confluence area and subsequently dispersed to the other parts of West Africa occupied by their descendants⁶⁸.

The import of the foregoing submission is bi-directional. First, it clearly indicates that the Igbo did not migrate into the present abode as Igbo speakers but members of the proto – Kwa speakers who over the millennia developed into Igbo – speakers in Igboland. Secondly, the relative antiquity of the Igbo is suggested by the above submission. What is more, it is posited from evidence from historical – linguistics and lexico – statistics that the Igbo language began to split from the proto – Kwa group around 5, 0166 to 016 years ago, that is from 3,000 B.C. to about 2,000 B.C.⁶⁹. “The emergence of an autonomous Igbo culture”, writes A.E. Afigbo, “goes back some 5, 000 to 6, 000 years ago”⁷⁰. Hitting hard on the Egyptian and Jewish origins of the Igbo with a view to silence them forever, Afigbo contends that “the dates returned for Igbo origin through linguistics and archaeology, make the dates of the events in Egypt and Palestine too late in the day for the would-be Egyptian and Jewish migrants to become ancestors of the Igbo. Before those events took place, the Igbo were already an established culture where we now find them”⁷¹.

There are many factors responsible for why this most plausible and academic account of Igbo origin has not gained popular acceptance and seems to be only known among professional historians and those in cognate disciplines. Suffice it to state that the level of illiteracy in the country, the Biafran – Igbo – Jewish propaganda, the rooted legacies of colonial anthropologists and writers and the not – too easy to grasp nature of the academic position on Igbo origin, among others, are determining factors why the above account of Igbo origin have continued to remain unpopular among the generality of the Igbo people.⁷²

The question may be asked as to why such a detour to the vexed issue of Igbo origin in a thesis on the “Nigeria-Biafra war and the Proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeast Nigeria”? It is important to observe that the autochthony of the Igbo (as established in these theories of their origin) help to understand the ease with which the Igbo astutely employed

their knowledge of their physical environment to confound the world in science and technology during the Nigeria – Biafra war. In any event, to understand the question of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Igboland as an aftermath of the Nigeria - Biafra war, not only the questions of the origin of the Igbo should be entertained but in fact, their history up to the period of incorporation into the colonial Nigeria, as well as the history of their membership of the Nigerian state should also be examined.

Corollary to the above, the question of the social, economic and political organisation of the Igbo becomes interesting. Put differently, how did the Igbo organise their primordial polities and what is the relationship between the individual and the community? Is there any nexus between the pristine Igbo socio – economic and political organisation and the crises in which the Igbo found themselves in Nigeria which ultimately led to a thirty month civil strife? Exploring the theme of social, economic and political organisation of primordial Igboland would help to answer these questions well.

It cannot be denied that every society has its own unique system of social, economic, legal and political control. The Igbo, like many other ethnic groups in Nigeria, had distinctive models for socio – economic and political control which subsists in various adapted forms. These systems were unavoidably interwoven with the culture of the people in an intricately indigenous matrix. This perhaps explains why Okechukwu Nwaubani opines that “no knowledge of the Igbo is complete without the knowledge of their political organisations and institutions”⁷³.

The pre – colonial political system of the Igbo has been variously labelled as acephalous, stateless or republican. Okechukwu Nwaubani notes:

The first term [acephalous] implies that Igbo communities do not have heads or institutions of government with persons serving as chief or ruling political authority. The second term [stateless] implies that Igbo communities do not possess formal structure of government with hierarchical organization based on persons charged with political functions⁷⁴.

In any event, the complexity arising from a poor understanding of the peculiarities and socio – cultural determinants of Igbo political organisations, especially, when compared with those of the Yoruba Hausa/Fulani and Bini peoples have made some writers to hastily conclude that the Igbo had no distinctive political structures⁷⁵. This notion is not only erroneous but in fact, presumptuous. The fact that a polity lacks a centralized or monarchical system does not mean complete absence of political or governmental authority. Besides, no community of humans can survive or maintain its turf without a governmental authority. The traditional Igbo concept of power and authority is structured and determined by their concept of the Umunna and the associations based on elaborate title systems such as *ichi ozo*, (ozo chieftancy), *ima muo*, (initiation into the spirit cult) *ozioke* chieftancy, among others.

Traditionally, Igbo communities lived in dispersed settlements; homes consisted of a collection of clay – walled and thatch – roofed houses, often fenced with a wall. A number of such clustered houses formed the village while several villages constituted the village – group or a town. Besides, most traditional Igbo towns were not large and inhabited only a few thousands of people⁷⁶.

In pre-colonial Igboland, political power was diffused and highly democratic, and this encouraged political dialogue, equality, communalism and egalitarianism at all levels of lineage segments. These characteristics, it should be noted, pitched the Igbo against some ethnic groups in the evolutionary Nigerian state. The seemingly intractability of the conflicts between the Igbo and other ethnic groups combined with other factors to lead to the Nigeria – Biafra war of 1967 – 1970. The point is that among the Igbo, political decisions were discussed at village meetings where all the people were free to air their views; impositions of any sort were repelled by all means. In line with the above viewpoint, Ngozi Ojiakor contends that

The political system of the Igbo has been described as being participatory democracy. In most parts of Igboland, the extended family system was the smallest unit of political organization. The unit was strictly exogamous. The eldest direct descendant was the Okpala. He was in charge of the sacred symbol. The Ofo was an important emblem of authority – both political and religious. The Okpala was regarded as the living representative of all the dead members of the family. He was the intermediary between the living and the dead; he poured libations and sacrificed to the spirit of the ancestors whose shrine was located in his compound⁷⁷.

Apart from the family unit, another significant political unit was the Council of Elders. The council of elders consisted of all heads of the extended family. Disputes between lineages and their members were arbitrated by the council which was presided over by the head of the most senior minimal lineage. Apart from the council of elders, another political unit reckonable in Igboland was the village /town assembly. This institution was a composition of kindreds and villages which were themselves clusters of kindreds. This institution did not have definitive constitutions. The machinery of government in the village and town assembly resided in the *okpara* (or *okpala*), who was the *ofo* holder. The village/town assembly concerned itself with matters affecting the solidarity of the community such as cases of abomination, common civic assignments like maintenance of roads, markets and the like. Matters discussed in this institution were an extension of what happened at the family and kindred levels⁷⁸.

The next socio – political institution worth noting was the titled societies. The titles taken, the rituals undertaken and the names which other members of the community addressed the titled people differed significantly from one part of Igboland to another. H.N.Nwosu observes that titled societies were the most important political and administrative body in Igboland; they were the law – makers and custodians of the people's customs and traditions. It was their administrative responsibility to ensure that individuals and groups conformed to the norms, ethics, customs and traditions of the community⁷⁹.

The titled society, like other institutions, managed conflicts and reconciled aggrieved parties. They reconciled one group with another and they sat as a court and had original jurisdiction over such serious issues as treason, arson and murder. Land disputes between two villages or families (if not resolved at the kindred and town level) were resolved by this institution. They mediated and resolved conflicts arising from the activities of other political institutions and occupational groups in the community. It was considered a taboo to report minor incidents such as those between married couples, stealing, fighting and the likes to the titled societies. These were often handled by the age-grade or the masquerade groups⁸⁰.

The secret societies such as the masquerade groups constituted part of the traditional political institutions. More often than not, they served as the community's policing outfit. Membership was only open to males, and members were often under oaths not to reveal the secrets of the masquerade society to non-members. That was perhaps why it was referred to as a secret society in the first place⁸¹. The masquerade societies did not only perform policing functions, they also served in the area of entertainment and aesthetics functions. Masquerading was a very effective way of community policing in primordial Igboland. It was effective in maintaining peace and order, settlement of disputes and served as intelligent and vigilante agents against crimes. Masquerade groups were the enforcement agency as they were used to enforce decisions against convicted persons. For instance, when a woman committed an offence and was sent packing from her husband's house, if she did not leave immediately, the masquerade was normally invited to chase her out of the village, down to her father's house. No single individual was above the powers of the masquerade. Disobedience to the masquerade was known as "ita mmonwu" or 'ikpo tu', among so other appellations.

The age – set or age group system was also a crucial pillar in primordial Igboland. In areas such as Ohafia, Abiriba and Eda, the age grade system was deeply ingrained into their

political and administrative system⁸². Elizabeth Isichei asserts that the age grade institution was widespread in Igbo society and each age grade had defined obligations in the community service. In political and administrative functions, the age grade served as law enforcement officers in their respective villages⁸³.

The umuada also played important roles in Igbo communities. This was an ‘all women’ political and social association. All first daughters of any nuclear family in the community are referred to as Ada. However, all married daughters of a nuclear family, lineage, village or village group are referred to as umuada. The umuada constituted a very influential social and political force. The rights they exercised in the kindred or village of origin were considerable. Regina Iwuchukwu explains that the umuada were effective in resolving conflicts in Igboland. They were arbiters in quarrels between women in the family; not only that, they intervened to settle disputes which the male authorities could not settle such as land disputes, among others⁸⁴.

It is also true of the pre-colonial Igbo that while these secular institutions were crucial for the society, all of them had their roots in the people’s understanding of the supernatural. As Ikenga R.A. Ozigbo has stated,

The supernatural and the magical pervaded every aspect of Igboman’s life. He believed in spiritual beings, Chukwu, deities, abstract spiritual forces and ancestral spirits) and their influence on human affairs. He believed in the need to offer them occasional and periodic prayers and sacrifices. He believed in medicine, witchcraft, reincarnation and divination⁸⁵.

The unsullied Igbo system was still evolving when it was caught up in the web of the British colonial design. Thus, through warfare, window – dressing as well as “protection treaties”, the British, through the activities of the consular agents and, of course, a standing colonial army, succeeded in integrating the Igbo as well as other Nigerian peoples into the British Empire, albeit, as a subject - people or colonised people. The British had been somewhat misled to believe that the Aro ruled over the Igbo. Since the Aro were mistaken by the British to

be militarily strong, the British colonial authorities believed that the conquest of the Aro would sound the death – knell of Igbo resistance to British colonial rule in the Eastern parts of Nigeria. Consequently, a large expeditionary force of 1745 troops was assembled against the Aro⁸⁶. The Aro expedition lasted from November 1901 to March 1902 and the British were totally victorious as they marauded and mercilessly brutalized the Aro and their mercenary fighters. However, the British had erroneously thought that the Aro expedition would secure the entire Igboland for them. This, according to Ikenga Ozigbo was not to be so. “In the `5 years after the Aro expedition, the British had to conquer the rest of Igboland village by village, inch by inch”⁸⁷.

The incorporation of Igboland into colonial Nigeria might have come with myriads of social, economic and political changes which affected the Igbo, their society and worldviews in significant proportions. Of particular note is the fact the capitalist system attendant on the British colonial system introduced new ways of living which were antithetical to primordial Igbo communalism. Thus, the acquisitive and accumulation tendencies inherent in the capitalist system created a negative ethnicity which plagued colonial Nigeria. This continued and seemed to have become more threatening with the attainment of independence in 1960. Olumide Ekanade and Tunola Ekanade put it better when they assert that,

The unequal access to and competition for scarce resources at the centre made politics become a dangerous enterprise. The ruling elite (Northerners) seized this opportunity to institutionalize iniquitous fiscal policies which snowballed into political tribulations in the first republic. Till date, the ethnic factor continues to play a pivotal role in the political economy of resource sharing in Nigeria⁸⁸.

It was this centrifugal problem of ethnicity in combination with other factors that led to the civil war from which the Igbo seem not to have recovered. In addition and more apposite to the kernel of this study is the fact that it was this same civil war that created the conditions that made arms proliferation a serious threat to the life of the Igbo. This cannot but be responsible for the reason why Noel Agwuocha believes that the war has not truly ended as these small arms and

light weapons, especially explosive remnants of war (ERW) litter the length and breadth of Igboland⁸⁹. Nevertheless, to understand the question of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Igboland since the end of the Nigeria - Biafra war, it may be imperative to examine the issue of war, arms and weapons in primordial Igboland.

War, Arms and Weapons in Primordial Igboland (Southeast Nigeria)

For an understanding of small arms proliferation in Igboland during and after the Nigeria - Biafra war, a brief discussion of the phenomenon of war, arms and weapons in the traditional Igbo society is important. Extant knowledge of warfare in pre-colonial Igboland is somewhat discoloured by the inelegant submissions of colonial writers and anthropologists such as G.T. Basden and M.D.W. Jeffreys. In addition, Elizabeth Isichei, although, not a colonial scholar, (in a strict sense of the word) appeared not to have clearly understood the Igbo society when she noted among other things, that 19th century Igboland was a century of continuous warfare⁹⁰. In a remonstrance with these foreign writers who seemed not to have fully grasped the internal workings of the primordial Igbo society before writing, Chinedu Mbalisi avers that “obviously, these writers have made some good study [sic] on Igbo life and society. But they appear not to have distinguished what really should be called wars, misunderstandings and skirmishes among the Igbo”⁹¹. It would, therefore, be totally egregious to present the Igbo as a people intermittently locked in wars (as M.D.W. Jeffreys and G.T. Basden have done). G.T. Basden for instance, did not understand the Igbo society and hence, did them a disservice when he wrote of pre-colonial Igboland in the following words:

In common, I suppose, with all salvage peoples, the Ibos [sic] prior to the British occupation of the country, occupied their spare time fighting, generally town against town. The evil of this was not so much the bloodshed, but rather the paralysing of trade and intercourse. It led to the isolation and independence of each town through perpetual state of fear which existed. It was never safe to venture far beyond the confines of the town, nor was this done except by bands of men armed ready to defend themselves. It was a rare thing for towns to remain at

peace for very long, and when quietness did happen to prevail for a time, the spell was broken on the slightest pretext and hostilities began again forthwith⁹².

Notwithstanding Basden's immodest views on the Igbo, the truth is that among the Igbo, wars were not embarked on casually or unpremeditated. This is because the spilling of human blood even during hostilities was a serious matter and to this end, all the permutations and implications of war were carefully considered by not only the council of elders whose prerogative it was to declare wars but indeed, by other critical stakeholders who were also involved⁹³. These stakeholders included the women and able – bodied young men. The foregoing reinforces S.C Ukpabi's observation that that once a war was declared, it became thenceforward, everyone's business.⁹⁴

The Igbariam - Achalla war of 1888 may suffice to buttress the cautions the average Igbo community exhibited before embarking on any war. From oral sources, it would appear that the relations between these two communities had begun to deteriorate long before the actual commencement of armed hostilities. The roots of the conflicting relations could be traced to the debilitating position the Nkwo Achalla market had faced compared to the Eke Igbariam⁹⁴. In fact, the Achalla people held their Igbariam neighbours responsible for the dwindling status of their weekly market. Consequently, the Achalla people began to ambush traders that went to sell their wares at the Eke Igbariam market. In the face of this provocative action, the Igbariam elders conferred and decided to construct a new pathway – one that would be far removed from any Achalla territory. The Achalla people nevertheless continued their blockade of the new Igbariam market route. The Igbariam community was said to have sent series of emissaries to their adversaries, which, as oral accounts collected at Igbariam indicated, the Achalla people rebuffed. This continued from 1885 to 1888 when the Igbariam people, faced with no alternative decision,

declared war on Achalla. The outcome of that war was, from all indications, colossal to both communities⁹⁵.

The fact that the Igbo were cautious about war – owing to its devastating aftermaths - does not suggest that the Igbo were fearful and cowardly towards war. This would be very far from the truth. Once a war was declared, the Igbo communities involved did all within their abilities to ensure that they emerged the winners in the war. Every form of preparation was made – physical and metaphysical – to ensure victory. In this regard, Basden may not be incorrect in his views on the preternatural preparations for war. In his words, “an interesting feature of the war was the preliminary preparation for a general attack. The day having been fixed, a medicine man of repute would be invited, whose business it was to concoct medicine, to provide charms, and offer sacrifices to ensure success”⁹⁶.

Writing on the specific case of Okpuje pre-colonial warfare, Joel Oke opines that “one can hardly find anyone going to war without any charm or medicine for protection. Prominent among them was the one called ‘Nsieba’. Every family prepared its own and gave directions on how it would work on the victim before he died”⁹⁷. He further avers that wars were a very serious business in pre – colonial Igboland⁹⁸. The point is that the Igbo left no option unexplored in order to emerge victorious in any war. This philosophy of war was to play a crucial role in the Nigeria – Biafra war. As a matter of fact, the tenacity and single – mindedness with which the Igbo carried on with any war irrespective of the gross disadvantages against them explain this better. Besides, this same philosophy helps to drive home the adeptness of the Igbo in the area of small arms and light weapons fabrications during the Nigerian – Biafra war.

Furthermore, the Igbo, like most West African peoples, did not have a professional standing army. They depended on volunteers for war efforts. This situation has been adduced in some literature as being responsible for why the Igbo did not evolve a strong or formidable

political empire. This submission is faulty on many accounts. This is because an acquaintance with the military history of West Africa would show that many historic empires of this part of Africa did not have professional or standing army. The Asante, who built one of the most powerful and resilient pre – colonial West African empires never had a standing army⁹⁹. The same was the case with the Yoruba who founded the Oyo Empire that rendered many of their neighbours tributary. J.F. Ade - Ajayi and Robert Smith note of the empire:

...there was no standing Yoruba army. The Yoruba host (rather like that of England in the days of ‘bastard feudalism’) was composed of essentially a number of important leaders, each chief bringing with him his personal armed retainers and also a much larger group bound to him by family or other allegiance and called from their peacetime occupations on the proclamation of war. Many chiefs, especially at Ibadan, also brought with their contingents household slaves trained for war, these constituting the nearest approach to regular troops among the Yoruba¹⁰⁰.

Again, the fact that the typical Igbo polity was small does not imply that their armies were correspondingly small. This, as Sydney Emezue has argued was not the case. In Igboland, “where there were ‘people’s armies’ recruited through *levee en masse*, and where fighting for one’s community was the highest of civic duties, a large percentage of the male population joined in fighting wars. In most Igbo warfare, social pressure was not only used to get men to the battlefield but also make them excel there”¹⁰¹.

What is more, among the Abam, Abiriba, Edda, Ezza and Ohafia Igbo, being formidable in war, especially returning home after a military campaign with a human head was an emulous virtue and, in fact, qualified one for participation in the politics of one’s place¹⁰². A man who faltered or failed to meet this requirement suffered many deprivations and indignities. He scarcely can get a decent lady’s hand in marriage neither was it allowable for him to speak freely at meetings of his age – grade¹⁰³. The precise point being made here is that the small size of most pre-colonial Igbo communities was not a serious handicap in raising a fairly large army. Besides,

Igbo pre-colonial warfare was not a small affair as the size of their communities and the distasteful studies of some colonial anthropologists and writers would seem to suggest. Oftentimes, relatively small communities were able to fight long and bloody wars that lasted for years. N.C. Nzewunwa studied one of such wars which pitched Obibi Ezena and some of its neighbouring communities –Ihiagwa and Nkede in such a bloody and exhaustive campaign that at some point, munitions were nowhere to be found. Having run out of ammunition, both sides began to experiment with ersatz bullets made from maize grains as alternatives for bullets. It was from this situation that the war got its name as *ogu mkpuru oka* (war of maize grains)¹⁰⁴. It may be argued that the parallels of this situation were found in the Nigeria - Biafra war – the situations when Biafran troops almost fought with bare hands¹⁰⁵.

The next important issue (directly related to the theme of this study) in primordial Igbo warfare is the question of arms and weapons. Unfortunately, this is one of the most neglected themes in Igbo military history. It is axiomatically accepted that the Igbo fought their wars with weapons but a review of the literature shows that the accounts are anything but precise. Put differently, what weapons did the Igbo fight with? How did they come about those weapons?

To start with, it has to be noted that Ajayi and Smith's view purporting that the use of firearms in wars filtered into West Africa from external sources appears not to be a ruddy submission. They seemed to have depended rather, uncritically on the works of H. Clapperton, R.F. Burton, and C.P. Niven, among others¹⁰⁶. The pioneering efforts of their quarries notwithstanding, they had serious racial bias against the African and somewhat alluded to the Hamitic Hypothesis. Elizabeth Isichei too, mistakenly assumed that the absence of gunsmiths in the Niger Delta in the eighteenth century implied that the whole of the Igbo interior did not contrive the technology of gun – making¹⁰⁷. O.N. Njoku has demonstrated that the knowledge and mastery of iron technology and its concomitants, especially gun-making have been with the

Igbo for more than 2500 years¹⁰⁸. G.T. Basden attests to this when he notes that “native guns and ammunition... consisted of flint – locks, cap guns and Snider rifles...”¹⁰⁹.

What can safely be deduced from the foregoing is that the arrival of European guns, especially the Danish-made, dane guns, longer range snider rifles, among others, and given the better precision and lethality of these latter weapons, preference for them outgrew the locally fabricated arms. Besides, the acquisition of guns in pre – colonial Igboland was quite financially demanding. Only relatively successful or wealthy individuals could afford them. In view of the fact that there was no community equipped – army, only a few men who possessed guns could deploy them for military purposes when the need arose. Furthermore, given the fact that the blacksmiths who made and repaired guns were scarcely domiciled in most Igbo communities, there was often the challenge of acquiring and repairing these weapons when the need arose. Nduka Onuora opines that in Akokwa and environs, for instance, blacksmiths who specialised in making guns were a rarity and for anyone to purchase a gun whether for hunting or for war, the person ordinarily had to go to Awka or arrange for an Awka or Nkwerre blacksmith to craft the weapon¹¹⁰.

The main weapons of war were bows and arrows, spears, clubs, and firearms, among others. Firearms became crucial determinants of the outcomes of war in the first decade of the nineteenth century due of course, to the increasing importation from European countries. However, little use was made of guns until the second decade of the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Isichei notes that the introduction (increasing importation) of firearms in Onitsha in the early nineteenth century gave the Onitsha people much success in their wars with neighbours¹¹¹. It may not be erroneous to submit that the firearm revolution in Igboland began in the second decade of the nineteenth century. This revolution saw the older types of guns like the smooth - bored and muzzle – loading guns giving way for better guns of precision such as the breach –

loading rifles. Most of the wars fought by most Igbo communities from the 1820s upwards significantly featured firearms¹¹².

The question may be asked: How did the Igbo make peace after their wars and what became of the weapons after a war? It is to be noted that peacemaking was usually conducted through priests or representatives of neutral communities under the supervision of mutually acceptable deities, of course, represented by their priests or priestesses. The involvement of the supernatural in peacemaking was to give force and irrevocability to the terms accepted for peace. Before the actual process of peacemaking was conducted, combatants on both sides to the conflict would meet at the boundary of the two communities, and if third parties were brought to arbitrate, the two sides would present their cases to the hearing of the third parties serving as arbitrators, mediators, or conciliators as the specific case may warrant¹¹³. Any of the warring party found guilty was asked to pay war indemnity. Thereafter, a goat, or cow would be slaughtered and the two warring parties would then use the victuals to make a covenant, *Igbandu*¹¹⁴. After this, peace would be declared and normalcy would ensue in inter – group relations of the concerned communities.

Additionally, the community, which had emerged victorious in a war, was by the people's philosophy of war made to be magnanimous in victory. The losers also, at least in theory, were expected to take their loss with equanimity¹¹⁵. The peace terms recognised the universal brotherhood of humankind. This finds parallels in the Igbo spirited embracement of Gowon's "No Victor, No Vanquished" offer of January 1970. The long-term effect of this was that in time, the Igbo were to spread to all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria¹¹⁶.

Finally and in respect to the issue of arms mop – up after wars in pre – colonial Igboland, it is important to note that firearms and, especially their possession were not criminalized. In fact, they were scarcely enough for the people's military use. Besides, since few men owned

these weapons, the issue of proliferation of arms cannot be said to have posed any serious threat to pre-colonial Igboland. The question of arms mop - up after the Nigeria – Biafra war, therefore, finds no easy parallel in the pre – colonial wars of Igboland. A number of factors are responsible as to why the pre – colonial wars of Igboland did not have any parallels with what obtained in the Nigeria – Biafra war. First, the pre - colonial Igbo society was essentially reconfigured in the colonial era. Besides, the criminalization of possession of certain types of arms and weapons did not obtain in pre – colonial Igboland.

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CHAPTER THREE

SECESSIONIST BIAFRA AND THE GENESIS OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS PROLIFERATION IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA, 1967 – 1970

Prelude to Secession and War, 1967 - 1970

The Federal Republic of Nigeria with a surface area of about 400,000 square miles is located on the West coast of Africa. The country is located between latitudes 4° and 14° north of the Equator and longitudes 3° and 14° east¹. The immediate neighbours of Nigeria are four Francophone countries: Benin Republic to the west, Niger to the north, Chad to the northeast and Cameroon to the east. Nigeria, according to M.A Onwuejeogwu has more than 250 ethnic groups². In fact, Onwuejeogwu has anthropological and linguistic evidence to support his thesis that there are up to 400 ethnic groups in Nigeria³. These groups, according to Daniel .A. Tonwe, Godwin Uyi Ojo and Iro Aghedo are divided into ‘ethnic majority’ and ‘ethnic minority’ based, of course, on their demographic strength. From both demographic and political considerations, three major ethnic groups dominate Nigerian politics: Hausa/Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the southeast and the Yoruba in the southwest⁴. Whilst the Hausa – Fulani are predominantly Muslims, the Igbo are mostly Christians. The Yoruba have almost an even proportion of both Muslims and Christians⁵. There are, nonetheless, a handful of adherents of the African Traditional Religion (ATR), especially in Yorubaland. In addition to the three major groups, there are other smaller ethnic groups that dot the country’s geographic landscape. These include the Tiv, Kanuri and Nupe in the north; the Ijaw, Efik, Edo and Ibibio in the south, among other numerous ethnic groups. Thus, Nigeria is aptly underscored as a “multi - ethnic”, multi - religious, multi - linguistic and multi – regional federation⁶.

These multifarious ethnic unions were brought together by colonial fiat in 1914 and from this period, several constitutional arrangements has had been contrived to keep the peoples

together. A history of Nigeria under colonial rule may not be relevant here. However, suffice it to state that by its very nature, colonialism was antithetical to the wholesome development of the various peoples fused together in what was called Nigeria. Thus, by 1960, the haste for independence had made myriads of fundamental national questions to be either ignored or swept under the carpet by the country's burgeoning leaders. According to Echeta Ibenne, "the intense desire for political independence by Nigeria's political elites made them to reach compromises which relegated or ignored their differences – in culture and religion. Their primary preoccupation was to achieve independence first and the hope was that after that, every other thing would fall into line"⁷. As with all hastily contrived projects, the immediate post-independence Nigerian state was to be bedeviled by many challenges which combined to push the country down the precipice – to a bloody fratricidal civil war. The consequences of that war – including the proliferation of small arms, especially in the Southeast part of the country - the main theatre of the war – have continued to haunt the country till date.

Myriads of studies have examined the causes of the Nigeria - Biafra war; however, most of these extant studies have not clearly shown whether opportunity factors were more relevant than grievance factors in the causes of that war, or vice versa. Therefore, through a structure-focused analysis of events that led up to the war, and events during the war, this present researcher submits that grievance factors such as ethnic rivalry and ethnic dominance, polarization and regionalism, perceived injustice were the most significant factors that fuelled the Nigeria-Biafra war. Opportunity factors such as weak democracy and state capacity, availability of arms are significant in assessing the outcome of the war than they are in assessing the outbreak of the war. The opportunity factors favoured the Nigerian side more than the Biafran side. Biafra's declaration of independence from Nigeria in 1967 is mostly based on

grievance factors. However, the Nigeria - Biafra war can hardly be discussed in isolation to the specific causes and to this we now turn.

Conventionally, historians examine the causes of wars from two major perspectives. This approach identifies the remote and the proximate or immediate causes of a war separately. A major advantage of this approach argues Ejitu Nnechi Ota “is that by placing such developments in a chronological order, the reader is offered the opportunity of following them in a sequential order”⁸. This style is adopted and used herein.

Remote Causes of the Nigeria - Biafra war

Broadly speaking, the remote causes of the Nigeria - Biafra war are traceable to several local as well as international political, social and economic variables that characterized pre - 1960 Nigeria. These factors are rendered in this study as follows: (i). ethnicity and urbanization (ii). British paternalism for the North (iii). Politicization of the military (iv). The nature of post – independence politics (v). Manipulation of censures figures.

Ethnicity and the growth of urban centres are central in the explication of the remote causes of the Nigeria - Biafra war. This does not suggest that there were no urban centres in pre – colonial Nigeria. Indeed, there were several urban settlements in pre – colonial Hausaland and to some extent in Yoruba and Bini empires. However, the urban centres created by the British colonial rule differed markedly from their pre-colonial precursors. First, the commodification of labour and the attendant mobility of human labour introduced by colonialism led to the migration of persons of different ethnic groups to these urban centres⁹. Besides, the availability of such social amenities as electricity, pipe – borne water, hospitals, cinemas and other recreation facilities lured not a few persons to the cities which were very few in colonial Nigeria – Lagos,

Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kano and a few others. In addition, the introduction of direct taxation, which was paid in the colonial currency, implied that one had to either produce what the colonial authorities required in order to obtain the colonial currency or sell one's labour to obtain the needed money to pay tax. Given the exploitation and manipulations of the colonial marketing boards¹⁰, majority of the people went into agricultural production, while many others migrated to the cities in search of white collar jobs.

The point being made above is that before independence, the cities had become a place for an assortment of Nigerian ethnic groups. Given the meagre investment of the British in infrastructural development of Nigeria, a serious struggle naturally ensued among the city – dwellers for access to these limited resources. Each of the ethnic groups contrived what often appeared to be mutually exclusive ways of dealing with the challenge¹¹. Furthermore, this tendency was worsened by intentional British policy, especially where a migrant group came in contact with an indigenous one. Ejitu Ota notes that with “time, ethnicism [sic] became more or less an ideological tool to be used in the competition for the scarce resources, and stereotypes were created for and by each of the ethnic groups in the town”¹². The gross impact of this development was that Nigerians progressively began to be suspicious of one another, ethnicity thus became crucial in all issues. In the specific case of Igbo – Yoruba relations, Ota opines,

As a matter of fact, the massive migration of the Igbo to the cities and their rapid rate of socio – economic achievement created apprehension in other Nigerians of their possible domination of Nigeria after independence. In particular, the Yoruba felt worried by the rate of Igbo upward mobility and this created in them a relative sense of competition with the Igbo¹³.

Compounding the matter, the early ‘nationalists’ of Nigeria often employed these ethnic sentiments in securing a political base for themselves. Alex Ugwuja and Kelechi Ubaku are of the opinion that most times, ethnicity was often sponsored by the rent-seeking ruling class to

generate group solidarity which ensured their continued political preeminence¹⁴. Those who lost out of this power game in the accumulation process also whipped up ‘fairy tales’ and ‘reactionary ethnicity’ to cultivate group solidarity so as to prop up and strengthen their contest for hegemony¹⁵. In this regard, Felix Acha contends that,

To the new leaders, nationalism was meant to serve their personal interests directly, or via sectional ethnic interests. The sectionalism which these people promoted was not founded on any patriotism at all, be it regional or ethnic, but on personal gains. Thus Ahmadu Bello’s preaching was not based on his immense love for the suffering people of Northern Nigeria but on his lust for power. The same thing applied to Awolowo who preached Omo Oduduwa. He was using the Yoruba to achieve his personal ambition and this brought about the conflict between him and Akintola. Zik aspired for the leadership of Nigeria for his own sake ...¹⁶

Whether negative ethnicity was created in the struggle for access to limited resources in the cities or whether it was foisted on them by their leaders remains to be resolved. What is unarguable is that by 1967 when the war began, the centrifugal forces of negative ethnicity had created such a big chasm in Nigeria, especially among city - dwellers that other factors only helped it to show how hostile Nigerians had really become to one another. The late literary giant, Chinua Achebe recalled the anguish he felt when his friends celebrated the fact that their Igbo countrymen were being flushed out of Lagos in 1967¹⁷.

Another significant remote cause of the Nigeria - Biafra war which appears not to have been factored in the mainstream discussions of the causes of the Nigerian - Biafra war was the issue of British paternalism for the people of Northern Nigeria. As they did in other parts of Africa they colonised, the British colonial authorities in tandem with their *divide et impera* motives, often behaved paternalistically toward one ethnic group against the interests of others. In their colonial philosophy of minimal input for maximal output, the British came to discover that the peoples of Southern Nigeria, especially the Igbo were not malleable to their interests.

Given the fact that the north offered a more conducive political climate, the British intentionally cultivated a paternalistic attitude toward the Hausa/Fulani of Northern Nigeria¹⁸. Additionally, Suzanne Cronje explains that on account of the subservience of the Hausa/Fulani to the interests of the British, the latter came to weave a tale purporting that the Hausa/Fulani were racially superior to other ethnic groups in Africa¹⁹. This fact explains why at the inception of colonial rule in Nigeria, the ‘pagan’ population of Bida and Kontagora had petitioned the British colonial authorities to free them from the oppression of the Moslem Hausa/Fulani. Contrariwise, the British decided that the Fulani race was possessed of such a genius for rule and so much intelligence that their continuance in positions of responsibility was best for the Bida and Kontagora kingdoms²⁰. Explaining this situation better, Fredrick Forsyth avers that,

It was not difficult to impose measures on the Northerners, accustomed to implicit obedience, but it did not work in the East. The whole traditional structure of the East makes it virtually immune to dictatorship, one of the reasons for the present war. Easterners insist on being consulted in everything that concerns them. This assertiveness was hardly likely to endear itself to the colonial administrations and is one of the reasons why the Easterners came to be referred to as ‘uppity’. By contrast the English loved the North; the climate is hot and dry as opposed to the steamy and malarial south; life is slow and graceful, if you happen to be an Englishman or an Emir, the pageantry is quaint and picturesque, the people obedient and undemanding²¹.

We may recall that it was submitted in the preceding chapter that the primordial attitude and egalitarian culture of the Igbo would pitch them against not only other ethnic groups but also, the British colonial authorities. The British found the Igbo presumptuous; but the opposite of the “stress” given to them by the Igbo obtained in the Hausa/Fulani area. Moreover, most of them came from aristocratic backgrounds and felt more comfortable with the aristocratic and leisurely political settings of Northern Nigeria. According to Forsyth, “they had no opposition by way of criticisms from the commoners, and they enjoyed an easy partnership and rapport with the highly aristocratic Northern emirs and other political figures in the traditional system”²². This perhaps

explains why Joseph Unegbe believes that it was the British that created a single Northern religious and political behemoth, Sir Ahmadu Bello, who “during the colonial era and up to his tragic demise in 1966 had the preponderance of power to determine what will be and what will not be in Nigeria”²³. “This deeply felt British preference for Northern Nigeria” contends Richard Sklar, “was without parallel in Southern Nigeria”²⁴. Thomson Ayodele further maintains that the sum – total of the ongoing situation was one in which through the active support of the British, the Hausa/Fulani leaders proceeded to stifle and muzzle the irredentist voice of the several minority ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria²⁵. This done, “the British proceeded to divide Nigeria into two uneven parts and handed one part to the leaders of the Hausa/Fulani whilst the Yoruba, Igbo and more than three hundred other ethnic groups in Southern Nigeria had to make do with what was remaining”²⁶.

One major implication of this development is that from the outset, the looming posture of the Northern Region left the Western and Eastern Regions with no viable options than to continuously play the game of balancing the northern hegemony. Sometimes this worked but most times it made the country’s national unity to be predicated on an elusive quest for regional and ethnic rapprochement. In fact, one of the incipient threats to the corporate existence of an independent Nigeria came years before the attainment of independence in 1960. That the Northern delegates to the House of Representatives debate in April 1953 in Lagos refused to endorse Anthony Enahoro’s motion for independence by 1956 remains a case in point to strengthen our argument. The uncomplimentary booing of these Northern delegates by Lagos mobs resulted in the retaliatory Kano protests of the same year. The Kano crises which led to the death of some hundred and fifty Igbo persons, created the mutual animosities that made an impending war inevitable²⁷.

Additionally, the British paternalism for the north seemed to have shown itself better at the London constitutional conference of 1957 when the northern delegates rebuffed independence with the rest of Nigeria except the north would be allowed to control fifty per cent of the seats at the Federal Legislature in Lagos²⁸. The British were known to have coerced the representatives of the west and the east to accept the ultimatum²⁹.

Furthermore, it cannot be denied that one of the most crucial remote causes of the Nigeria - Biafra war was the politicization of the Nigerian military. In the pre-colonial era, most West African societies had contented themselves with citizens' army recruited *levee en masse*. In pre-colonial era, the idea of the military or more specifically, the army hijacking the reins of state control was a near impossibility. However, with the introduction of European system of government and methods of defence and more importantly, the relative sophistication of the apparatus of violence, the salience of the military in the overall functioning of the state assumed a new dimension.

In Europe, the British through constantly adjusted civil-military relations, were able to subsume their military within civilian control. The last military involvement in English politics was that of the Cromwellian army of the seventeenth century which did away with absolute monarchy and enshrined constitutionalism. Ironically, the British came to Nigeria in the 19th century to reopen military rule as, in fact, majority of the colonial administrators – from Lugard onwards were either serving military officers or officers seconded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies³⁰.

In any case, it would appear that the growth in nationalism in Nigeria with the attendant birth of political parties was not based on an unquestionable patriotic motive. One of the institutions of the burgeoning state to become a victim of this situation was the military. Seeing

the salience of the military in the embryonic colonial Nigeria, it was clear that whoever controlled the military would have a supervening control on political power. For in the words of Mao Tse Tung, “power emanates from the barrel of the gun”³¹. The reality, nonetheless, was that not many ethnic groups in the country realised the importance of the military in an independent Nigeria. Victor Olatunji observes that “had all the ethnic groups showed early interest in the military, the balance would not have tilted so favourably to the North by 1966... it was the Northern military hegemony that set the stage for the civil war, a year later”³². Alexander Madiebo notes further that “unlike politics where the people thought they knew their rights and quite often fought for them successfully, the average Southern Nigerian had little interest in the Army”³³.

It would appear that the Igbo were higher in the officer corps of the Nigerian Army on the eve of independence. By October 1960, there were only 57 Nigerian officers in the Army of whom the North had only 8, the East had 37, and the West had 10³⁴.

Table 3.1: Some of the Officers of the Nigerian Army by October, 1960

North	East (Core Igbo)	West
1. Maimalari		1 Ademulugu
2 Kur	1 Nwawo	2. Shodeinde
3. Largema	2 Njoku	3 Adebayo
4. Gowon	3 Okonweze,	4 Fajuyi
5. Katsina	4 Okonweze	5 Ejoor
6. Akan	5 Ezeugbana	6 Ogundipe
7. Lawan* (cashiered in 1965)	6 Akagha	7 Olutoye
	7 Okoro,	8 Banjo
	8 Chukwuka	9 Sotomi
	9 Okoroafor	10 Obasanjo
	10 Anuforo	
	11 Madiebo	
	12 Okwechime,	
	13 Adigwe	
	14 Anwunah	
	15 Nzeogwu,	
	15 Ojukwu	
	16 Aguiyi – Ironsi	
	17 Unegbe	
	18 Aniebonam	

	19 Ifenso	
	20 Ogbonnia	
	21 Ude	

Source: Compiled by the researcher from Godwin Alabi – Isama, *The Tragedy of Victory: On – the – Spot Analysis of the Nigeria – Biafra War in the Atlantic Theatre*

However, the Nigerianisation of the officer corps of the military especially, the Army in 1962 saw a reverse in the status of the Army, and this has been seen to have created the conditions which in the long run got the military politicised. First, standards had to be lowered, especially educational standards in order to accommodate the northerners because the quota system had at independence made equalization in employment among others a crucial consideration in Nigeria. Adewale Ademoyega has documented some of the sundry problems with the quota system with regard to professionalism in the army³⁵. However, it may be important to note that the privilege of being a northerner conferred was so enormous that many southerners claimed northern origin in order to be recruited into the officer cadets of the Nigerian Army³⁶. For example, Godwin Alabi – Isama who eventually retired as a Brigadier – General

enlisted into the Nigerian Army in 1960 as a northerner whereas his father came from Utagba – Uno, an Igbo – speaking area in present day Delta State³⁷.

Before long, the rank and file of the Nigerian Army somewhat became dominated by Northerners. The highlighted issue of ethnicity, coupled with the fact that most of the military installations of the country were concentrated in the North soon created a north – south dichotomy in the army. Furthermore, the condition degenerated to the level where promotion and advancement in the army were based on political considerations rather than efficiency or competence. This forced army officers, who felt threatened to seek political patronage from politicians in order to gain military promotions and appointments. Being thus politicised, the military could not intervene in the body – politic as an independent entity³⁸. The military historian, Sam C. Ukpabi has this to say of the situation

Military intervention in politics has often been seen as an aberration. While this may be admitted, it does not mean that military intervention is an anathema in all contexts. What was certainly wrong with the way and manner the military intervened in Nigerian politics is that they did not intervene as an institution of the state but rather as divided segments of their ethnic bases... the actions, responses and inactions of the officers were conditioned by interplay of ethnic issues...³⁹

The salient point to note is that had the military acted indifferent to ethnic and political sentiments, the civil war would have been averted.

Table 3.2: Major Military Installations and their Locations before the Nigeria - Biafra war, 1967 – 1970.

1.	3 rd Battalion	Kaduna
2.	5 th Battalion	Kano
3.	1 Field Battery (Artillery)	Kaduna
4.	1 Field Squadron (Engineers)	Kaduna
5.	88 Transport Regiment	Kaduna
6.	Nigeria Military Academy	Kaduna
7.	Ordnance Depot	Kaduna
8.	44 Military Hospital	Kaduna
9.	Nigeria Military Training College,	Kaduna
10.	Reconnaissance Squadron and Training Headquarters	Kaduna
11.	Nigeria Air Force Headquarters	Kaduna

12.	6 th Battalion (while under formation)	Kaduna
13.	Ammunition Factory	Kaduna
14.	Recruit Training Depot	Zaria
15.	Nigerian Military School (NMS)	Zaria
16.	4 th Battalion	Ibadan
17.	2 nd Field Battery (Artillery)	Abeokuta
18.	2 nd Reconnaissance Squadron	Abeokuta
19.	1 st Battalion	Enugu

Source: Alexander A. Madiebo, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), 9.

Another remote cause of the civil war was the nature of post – independence – party politics. Chinua Achebe may not have been mistaken when he noted that “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership”⁴⁰. More than any other era, the First Republic politicians did not really help the ship of the Nigerian state. Anthony Nwabughuogu is correct to observe that what subsisted as political parties at independence were no political parties in the true sense of the word⁴¹. This was because all of the political parties were led by a class of competing elites whose unity was occasional and ephemeral. They were lacking in ideology, and the quest for ethnic hegemony was the driving motive for most of their actions. In 1962, the struggle for power between Obafemi Awolowo and Samuel L. Akintola led to the creation of the United People’s Party – a splinter faction of the Action Group⁴². The differences between Akintola’s party and the Action Group not only made the Western Region very volatile but also sowed the immediate seeds of the crises that befell the country until the military putsch of January 1966. It was expected that the euphoria that greeted the attainment of independence in 1960 would act as a catalyst to political and economic advancement⁴³. However, the nature and the activities of the political parties and those who controlled them did not allow this to happen. In fact, the activities of the First Republic politicians and the parties paved the way for most of the ills of the young state to bud until the nascent Nigerian ship of state crashed in 1967.

The last and perhaps most crucial remote cause of the Nigeria-Biafra war was the manipulation of the 1962 population exercise. It cannot be argued that from inception population census in Nigeria had been a vexed and hotly contested affair. The importance of population census became glaring for all Nigerians to see for the first time in 1905⁴⁴. In 1905, the population of Nigeria was given as eleven million; the north was known to have been credited with 7.16 million, the East 2.22 million, while the West and Lagos had 1.62 million⁴⁵. This was also the case in the 1952 population census. The implication of population census for development planning and political calculus became buttressed in 1959 when the 1952 figures were used to apportion seats in the House of Representatives shortly before independence⁴⁶.

When, therefore, time came for the first post - independence population census in 1962, all the three regions had underscored the implication of the exercise for the political and economic advancement of their regions within the highly competitive Nigerian federal structure. They were known to have thrown all caution to the winds as they tried all they could to produce the highest figures. G.N. Uzoigwe writes that,

...for the NPC, NCNC and AG leaderships a lot was riding, indeed, on the census result: control of the federal government because parliamentary seats were allocated relative to population; revenue allocation to the regions; recruitment into the armed forces (the quota system in recruitment was begun in 1962); distribution of federal offices and other opheimities associated with political power; and so forth – all were based on population figures. The other universal and equally important reasons for conducting a national census did not appear to have mattered to them... each regional government, therefore, adopted means fair and fraudulent to gain an advantage but, at the same time accused one another of cheating. Thus, from the first to the last, the controversy over the census was driven by the ambition of regional political leaders and their prefabricated elitist supporters to capture power at the federal level with all that implied in a developing democracy⁴⁷.

These politicians devised several notorious and ingenious methods to secure numerical advantage for their respective regions. One clever way in which they tried to bolster their

numerical strength was through what has come to be known as census migration – a situation in which regional politicians arranged for people of their ethnic stock residing outside their regions to return home solely for the purposes of the population census⁴⁸. This tactic, among others featured conspicuously in the 1962 election; when eventually the official result of the census was released, all hell seemed to be let loose in Nigeria. The north had 22.5 million while the South had 23.28 million. All the parties rejected the results⁴⁹. The north made proposals for verification of its figures. However, J.J. Warren, the ex-British civil servant who was contracted to supervise the exercise was not favourably disposed to the north's demands for verification of its figures. With the expiration of Warren's contract and the Federal Government's unwillingness to renew it, Uzoigwe writes, NPC leaders decided to teach their counterparts a lesson in inflating census figures⁵⁰. "The first step was Balewa, the Prime Minister, replacing Warren as Electoral Commissioner without officially assuming the title. With Balewa now in charge, he carried out verifications of the 1962 census"⁵¹. Accordingly, Walter Schwarz opines that the Northern government appeared to carry out its broad political policy: to do what the South does – only better⁵².

In the revised figures, while the south stayed substantially the same, the north claimed to have missed out all 8.5 million people, representing a new total of 31 million⁵³. Perhaps, on account of the alarming denunciations of the north's verification, the Prime Minister decided to do a fresh census in 1963. In the re – done census results, the north obtained 29.78 million, down from 31 in 1962 but still about 77% since the last population in 1952 – 1953; the east obtained 12.39 million, remaining statistical unchanged from the census of the preceding year but nonetheless, representing a 72% increase since 1952/3; the west had 10.28 million also remaining statistically unchanged but increased by almost 99% since 1952/3⁵⁴. The newly

created Mid-West had 2.53 million and finally, Lagos, the then federal capital territory, had 0.68 million⁵⁵.

While the west was not too vociferous in rejecting the new census figures, the East made it categorically clear that the results were “worse than useless”⁵⁶. In the ensuing political tussles over the census brouhaha, a lot of bad blood was injected into the polity. Additionally, the west appeared to have diplomatically acquiesced to the results while the leaders of the east had rather undiplomatically, continued to rail at the north, such that in the long run the debacle tended to have become a north/east affair. Chinedum Nwajiuba underscores this point when he posits that the tragedy that has befallen the Igbo is basically because they failed to realise that the drum beats had changed and so must the dance steps. In his words, “this inability is what is seen as Igbo naivety and lack of diplomacy in Nigeria”⁵⁷.

The Igbo naïve handling of the 1962-3 census debacle, according to Ikwuka Mbamalu is not unconnected to the series of pogroms on the Igbo living in the northern parts of the country⁵⁸. G.N. Uzoigwe has documented the series of vitriolic attacks on the Igbo by the NPC leaders on the floor of the federal legislature⁵⁹. The 1962-3 census crisis notes Rotimi Suberu, “provided further evidence of the ability and determination to go to any lengths [sic] to maintain its population majority and the political power that it conferred”⁶⁰. The census exercise of 1962-3 resolved the tussle for the control of the future of Nigeria, at least temporarily, in favour of the north to the chagrin of the south, especially the east. The census nonetheless paved the way for other crises that soon followed the census controversy, in which the climax became the civil war.

Immediate Causes of the Nigeria – Biafra War

What has come to be generally known as the immediate causes of the Nigeria – Biafra war had roots in the remote causes just like the remote causes themselves were rooted in the years of British colonial raj in Nigeria. These immediate causes, like their remote antecedents, may be grouped into five namely, the one – sided nature of the January 1966 coup; the promulgation of Decree No. 34 of May 1966 by JTG Aguiyi – Ironsi; the July 1966 counter – coup and pogroms of May and September 1966; the misinterpretations of the Aburi agreement; and the personality clashes between Yakubu Gowon and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu – Ojukwu.

Perhaps none of the causes of the Nigeria - Biafra war has been a subject of varying commentaries than the issue of the January 1966 coup *d'état* in Nigeria. A lot of factors were responsible for this situation. First, the key officers, especially Kaduna Nzeogwu and Emmanuel Ifeajuna that planned and executed the bloody putsch did not live long enough to make known their motives. Thus, the writers and commentators have to make do with accounts of such survivors as Wale Ademoyega, Nwaobosi, Ben Gbulie and a few others who were closest to the arrowheads. Second, the seeming contradictions in the accounts of the survivors suggest that human factors – political interests, ethnic bias, personal prejudice, and vainglory may have featured greatly in their accounts. These may have been responsible for the diverse and varying interpretations the January 15, 1966 coup has received in the explanation of the causes of the Nigerian – Biafra war. Whatever the case, there are certain inescapable deductions any careful observer would not fail to make.

For one thing, the putsch was led by an Igbo; the composition of its leadership was essentially Igbo. In fact, just one, Major Adewale Ademoyega, out of the five arrowheads was a non – Igbo; the rest such as Majors Kaduna Nzeogwu, Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Ben Gbulie, and Fred Onwuaturgwu were all Igbo⁶¹. The question, which a dispassionate observer may want to ask is:

Given Nzeogwu's purported amiable disposition in the Nigerian Army, could he not have found a few revolutionary northern officers to coopt into the leadership of his revolutionary clique? Besides, the casualties were mostly non – Igbo and included the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Premier of Northern Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the Western Region, S.L. Akintola and the Federal Finance Minister, Festus Okoti – Eboh. Was it a mere coincidence that Nnamdi Azikiwe, one of the politicians decried by the revolutionaries had to be outside the country when they struck? Given these suggestive factors, not a few scholars and historians believe that it was an Igbo pre – planned effort to take over power from the politically dominant Hausa – Fulani. Although, Adewale Ademoyega and other participant observers made spirited efforts to untie the ethnic factor in the January 1966 coup, these have appeared as footnotes and tangential in the literature of that aspect of Nigerian history⁶².

However, the main issue was the inability of the coup plotters to assume control of the nation. “What is not in doubt” writes Ejitu Ota “is that though the coup was Igbo – led, it was nonetheless, nationally well – received. Its chief executioners were a motley of troops from various ethnic groups...”⁶³. The point is that they did not succeed in their self – appointed mission of ridding Nigeria of her corrupt political class. Had they succeeded, Nigerians would as well have discovered the real motives for their actions. But being that they failed, they inadvertently had their Igbo kith and kin exposed to the wrath of the people whose leaders they did brutally assassinate. The apathy of the northern officers for Ironsi's government is explained by the one – sided leadership and deaths arising from the January coup – all leading to a dangerous precipice. Chinua Achebe recounts that “the naively idealistic coup of January 15, 1966 proved a terrible disaster”⁶⁴. Since coups beget coups, the January 15 coups unavoidably

begot another and these situations continued to clear the path for the eventual fall of Nigeria from the crag.

The next proximate cause of the Nigeria - Biafra war was the introduction of the Decree No 34 of May, 1966. We may recall that it took the decisive efforts of Johnson -Thomas Ummunnakwe Aguiyi – Ironsi to quell the January coup. Unfortunately, for reasons hard to decipher, Ironsi could not decisively punish the coup-plotters, thereby giving tacit sympathy for their act. To compound the already volatile situation, General Ironsi proceeded to proclaim his Decree No 34 of May 1966 which sought to forestall opposition to his regime by making the country a unitary state⁶⁵. This clearly unwise decision caused a serious uproar in the country, especially among the peoples of the north and the west. Given the alleged one – sidedness of the January coup, one cannot but understand the fears of the Hausa- Fulani and Yoruba people that the decree was a subtle ploy to foist Igbo domination on the country⁶⁶. With the help of the ever – present ethnic sentiments, a lot of anti – Igbo demonstrations were sponsored on May 24, 1966 and in the mayhem that followed, about one hundred and fifty Igbo persons lost their lives⁶⁷.

Considering the matter from a critical standpoint, one can see how politically naïve, General Ironsi was in not understanding the ethnic implications of the decree. Besides, one wonders why General Ironsi did not realise that a military government is by default unitary. He did not actually require infuriating his country people by pushing for a separate decree in that regard. All he could have required was to consolidate his power by either appeasing or ‘eliminating’ the questionable elements in the corridors of power. General Ironsi was known to have done the exact opposite of what he should have done – surrounding himself with those who were plotting his downfall.

The above being the case, the counter - coup of July 29, 1966, did not come as a surprise to many people. The result was that Ironsi was murdered in a bloody counter – coup led by Theophilus Danjuma, Murtala Mohammed and a host of middle – ranking and junior officers of northern extraction. Some fifty senior Igbo officers were also killed in the process⁶⁸.

There was, in addition, an unprecedented massacre of easterners, especially the Igbo in Northern Nigeria. Hundreds of thousands of the Igbo people were said to have been slaughtered between May and September 1966 in what was obviously a pogrom and between one to two million more scuttled to the east for safety, leaving behind their hard – earned assets and property which were either looted or vandalized⁶⁹. Those who survived never forgot the bitter emotions of their relations and friends who were killed or maimed and of the agonising spectacle of the wretched conditions in which they found themselves back home. In short, the situation just before the declaration of the birth of Biafra was a case of group insecurity and bastardised group pride on the part of the brutalised Igbo, which was not assuaged by memories of years of inspired hatred⁷⁰.

Another serious cause of the war was the seeming personality feud between the two main actors, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu and Yakubu Gowon. It is not clear what the actual cause of the misunderstanding between the duo is. What is perhaps clearer is that the war would not have broken out when it did if not for the obstinacy, unbending and uncompromising stance of both Ojukwu and Gowon. It has been argued that Ojukwu was not favourably disposed to the emergence of Yakubu Gowon as a successor to Aguiyi – Ironsi.

It is suggested that Ojukwu’s unwillingness to recognise the ascension of Gowon to the position of the Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Nigeria was because according to military tradition, Gowon was not the next in rank to succeed the fallen

Aguiyi – Ironsi. This was probably because, according to Achike Udenwa, Lt Colonel Yakubu Gowon was at that time only the most senior northern military officer but not in any way the most senior officer in the country. Brigadier Samuel Ogundipe, a Yoruba and in fact, two other Igbo officers were senior to Yakubu Gowon in the Army⁷¹. Ojukwu was galled by the intimidation of Ogundipe who had fled to a naval warship to take refuge and later re -appeared as a civilian to serve under Gowon as the High Commissioner to London⁷².

It has also been argued that Ojukwu's relative better education than that of Gowon may have played some role in the personality clash between him and Gowon. Ejitu Ota submits that "Ojukwu was himself not only Gowon's superior in the Army, but he also had a more auspicious family background and was more educated than Gowon. In fact, he was the first university graduate to join the Nigerian Army"⁷³. Whether, in fact, these submissions relate to the cause of the obduracy and personality clash of the duo are not easy to decipher; what is perhaps more important is the fact that these two men were unduly uncompromising in their capacities as leaders of Nigeria – which had at the time been enmeshed in several crises. Had they been more accommodating and conciliatory, especially within the context of the Aburi (Ghana) Accord, their concinnity would have averted the civil war but alas, this was not to be.

The last straw that broke the camel's back in the series of the proximate causes of the Nigeria - Biafra war was the varied interpretations given to the Aburi Accord. The counter – coup of 29th July 1966 undoubtedly put the political future of Nigeria on a grubby path. In an attempt to find a solution to the many crises which had engulfed the country, a series of meetings were held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Aburi in Ghana. However, the Aburi meeting is more historically crucial because it represented the last but failed attempt to find a peaceful resolution of the Nigerian political crisis⁷⁴.

The Aburi conference was held in Aburi, a Ghanaian town between 4th and 5th January, 1967. In attendance at the meeting were Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon, Colonel Robert Adebayo, Lt. Colonel Emeka Odumegwu – Ojukwu, Lt. Colonel David Ejoor, Lt. Colonel Hassa U. Katsina, Commodore J.E.A. Wey, Major Mobolaji Johnson, Alhaji Kam Salem, and Mr. T Omo – Bare. For clerical duties were Mr. S.I.A.Akenzua, Permanent Under – Secretary, Federal Cabinet Office; Mr. P.T. Odumosu, Secretary to the Military Government; Mr. D.P. Lawani, Under – Secretary, Midwest Governor’s Office; Alhaji Ali Akilu, Secretary to the Military Government, North; Mr N.U. Akpan, Secretary to the Eastern Government⁷⁵. Justice Louis Mbanefo and Elder Moujekwu accompanied Ojukwu to Aburi but it appears they were not part of the deliberations as their names seem not to have been documented in the official minutes. From the array of personalities gathered for the conference, it was by all indications a high – level governmental meeting. More important were the decisions reached at the conference. They include the following:

1. The re-organisation, administration and control of the army.
2. Procedures for making appointments and promotions to the senior ranks in the Armed Forces, the police, diplomatic and consular services and super – scale posts in the federal civil service and statutory corporations.
3. Creation of a committee to look into the problems of rehabilitation and recovery of property of displaced persons.
4. Payment of full salaries up to March 31, 1966, of employees of government and other statutory corporations, who had to leave their post as a result of the crisis, provided they had not found alternative employment⁷⁶.

Uchenna Elibe notes that these agreements were mainly made to heal the wounds of the aggrieved and displaced persons, especially the Igbo⁷⁷. However, the principal advisers of Gowon especially Obafemi Awolowo and Anthony Enahoro were not favourably disposed to the agreements reached at the meeting. They were known to have advised against honouring the Aburi Accord⁷⁸. The refusal to compensate the Eastern victims of the pogroms in Northern

Nigeria as agreed at the Aburi accord made the Igbo generally disappointed hence, they felt betrayed by Gowon's ambivalence⁷⁹. When eventually, the various agreements reached at the Aburi Conference could not be honoured, most especially the compensation to the Igbo in general, the way appeared to have been paved for the Nigeria-Biafra war, 1967-1970.

Clearly, the renegeing on the Aburi Accord showed that the debacle between Nigeria and the Eastern Region could not be resolved by any rapprochements, the Eastern Regional Government, having "received" the mandate of the people of the region declared secession from Nigeria on May 30th, 1967⁸⁰. Justifying the reason for secession, Lt. Colonel Ojukwu claimed that the Igbo had become convinced that they were no longer safe in a united Nigeria⁸¹. Gowon, on the other hand, countered that the task of keeping Nigeria as one united and indivisible sovereign state was a supreme task⁸². In this way, only a show of force could help to decide which side would have its way. Von Clausewitz could not have been mistaken when he conceptualised war as "the continuation of policy by other means"⁸³. Indeed, both sides of the divide chose to continue their policies by other means.

The Biafran Republic and the Challenge of Arms and Weapons, 1967 – 1970

It is usually axiomatically taken that Biafra was a state (as often is the case especially, among those sympathetic to the Biafran side) without providing evidence as to the legal basis of Biafra's statehood. Chinua Achebe's last published work was titled *There Was a Country*⁸⁴. The question is: Was there truly a country? Put differently, how does a state emerge on the international system?

Interestingly, the United Nations has no clearly articulated views or canons on the principles of statehood. It continues to rely on the Montevideo Convention of 1933⁸⁵. The Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States was signed on December 26, 1933 in

Montevideo, Uruguay⁸⁶. The meeting proper was the seventh International Conference of American States; it convened to consider the duties, functions and rights of sovereign states, especially as they applied to American states. However, the imprecise nature of other international frameworks or legislations on the duties, rights and functions of states have made the Montevideo convention to somewhat assume universal applicability instead of the intended regional framework it was contrived to be. Article 1 of the convention reads: “the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; (d) capacity to enter into relations with other states”⁸⁷. Importantly, article 3 states that,

The political existence of the state is independent of recognition by other states. Even before recognition the state has the right to defend its integrity and independence, to provide for its conservation and prosperity, and consequently to organize itself as it sees fit, to legislate upon its interests, administer its services, and to define the jurisdiction and competence of its courts⁸⁸.

Furthermore, article 6 expresses the view that “the recognition of a state merely signifies that the state which recognises accepts the personality of the other with all the rights and duties determined by international law. Recognition is unconditional and irrevocable”⁸⁹. Furthermore, article 4 of the Convention provides for the juridical equality of states irrespective of their differing power capabilities, “the rights of each state do not depend upon the power it possesses to assure its exercise, but upon the simple fact of its existence as a person under international law”⁹⁰.

How then do these provisions relate to the legality of the Biafran Republic – a breakaway part of Nigeria? As noted above, the Montevideo provisions are the only extant international convention on the specific duties, functions and rights of states. Up to 1967 when the Nigeria –

Biafra war erupted and even till date, no international jurisprudential framework had rendered the provisions of the Montevideo Convention obsolete⁹¹.

How do the above provisions affect the international legality of Biafra – a breakaway part of Nigeria? The contention of this researcher is that Biafra had a permanent population – comprising the peoples of the former Eastern Region; Biafra had a defined territory – consisting of the geographical domains of the former Eastern Nigeria; Biafra had a government – led by Chukwuemeka Odumegwu; Biafra had the capacity and did enter into relations with other states both those that recognised it and those that did not. It is, therefore, no distortion of facts to submit that Biafra was a country – a state and a person of international law by all standards. This thread of thought perhaps actuated Chinua Achebe to entitle his last book, *There Was a Country*.

In line with the above viewpoints, O.U. Umzurike opines that the provisions of the Montevideo Convention have led to the emergence of two theories of statehood – the Constitutive and Declaratory Theories of Statehood. The Constitutive theory holds that a state has only to possess the four qualities listed by the Convention in order to qualify for statehood. The Declaratory theory, on the other hand, states that apart from the possession of the four cardinal qualities, a state must also declare its statehood and importantly, have the wherewithal to withstand external attacks from those who may wish to oppose its emergence⁹². From the foregoing, this researcher submits that Biafra was a state from May 1967 to January 1970, when Biafra's war with Nigeria ended.

Having taken care of the question of the legality of Biafra's statehood, let us now return to the theme of the nascent republic of Biafra and her challenge of weapons with which to prosecute the war. To understand the dilemma of Biafra with regard to her challenge of weapons, two central points are inescapably worth highlighting. The first point, which contributed to the

challenge of weapons, was the agreement reached in August, 1966, between Gowon and other military governors. The agreement stated that all soldiers should be repatriated to their regions of origin without their weapons.⁹³ For this reason, all soldiers of Eastern Nigeria origin who returned to the Eastern Region expectedly returned without their arms⁹⁴. However, in a separate arrangement between Gowon and Ojukwu, the latter conceded that northern officers at Enugu were to go with their weapons for self – defence, but on the promise by Gowon that the weapons would be returned to Eastern Nigeria as soon as the soldiers were safely returned to Northern Nigeria⁹⁵. Alexander Madiebo records that the northern officers left Enugu in August, 1966 with their weapons and without any incident, under Major Benjamin Adekunle. What was left of the Nigerian Army at the Enugu barracks after the departure of the northerners continues, Madiebo, “amounted to about 240 soldiers, the majority of them technicians and tradesmen”⁹⁶. As weapons taken away by northern soldiers were never returned, most of the remaining eastern soldiers had no weapons. Specifically, Samson Ukpabi and Wale Ademoyega agree that the total number of arms after the departure of the northern soldiers was about 120 rifles and perhaps, a few personal revolvers and other specs of pistols owned by the senior officers⁹⁷.

It does not require any special military training to know that one – hundred – and - twenty rifles were not enough to defend a local government area where the assailants might possibly come with mortars and light and heavy weapons. Besides, the July 29th coup of 1966 created a situation in which the Eastern Region inherited a fair share of officers and men in technical grades but who were of little infantry use. Additionally, the federal side had inherited the command structure of the old Federal Army, with its headquarters and equipment – including the weapons⁹⁸. Furthermore, as if Nigeria knew that the Eastern Region would attempt to break away from the country in the late 1960s, it signed an agreement in 1964 with a West German

firm, Fritz Werner to build a munitions factory in Kaduna. *The Daily Times* reported that the Nigerian munition factory in Kaduna produced the first batch of made – in – Nigeria machine guns in May, 1967⁹⁹, This was coming in the words of Cronje, “Just at the right time for war”¹⁰⁰.

Secondly, the Biafran authorities were misled by the political configurations in Nigeria at the start of the war to believe that the fragile political edifice that Nigeria represented at the time would crumble before any significant attack would be made against the new state of Biafra and hence, no reasonable political strength would be mustered by Gowon to fight against the new state. We may recall that Obafemi Awolowo – whom Gowon had released from incarceration – had threatened that should the Igbo secede, the Yoruba would follow suit¹⁰¹. Ojukwu and the Biafran think – tanks had, therefore, supposed that with the Yoruba following the Igbo to opt out of Nigeria, Gowon and his Hausa dominated army might not have any military strength to fight the Yoruba and the Igbo at the same time. Arthur Nwankwo corroborates this view when he posits that initially, the Biafran leaders felt that a large army was not necessary¹⁰². Their argument against a large army ran thus: “the Federal Government is not prepared to fight... All we must do is maintain this pretence of power and make the Federal troops feel too defeated to start anything. Even if the Federal troops do attack, we have to resist only for a brief time before internal differences get the better of Federal rank”¹⁰³.

Since Biafra was not immediately interested in a large army, considering the two caveats discussed above, most young men who initially volunteered for enlistment in the Biafran Army were rejected¹⁰⁴. These young persons were known to have formed militia bands as outlets for their soaring spirits. Scores of these militia bands were known to have sprung up all over Biafra¹⁰⁵. What is remarkable about the Biafran militias (which were not initially intended to

serve as a combatant unit) was their role in the proliferation of arms immediately after the civil war (This theme shall receive attention in the next chapter).

In any event, when the federal forces struck on July 6, 1967, the foolhardiness of the Biafran military strategists was exposed – as, in fact, the Nigerian forces met borders defended by a few men, carrying rifles which could reach no more than thirty yards¹⁰⁶. At Garkem (a town near Ogoja in present day Cross River State) which sprawled three roads leading into Biafra from Northern Nigeria, only a platoon of thirty – six Biafran soldiers was detailed to defend it¹⁰⁷. Arthur A. Nwankwo notes that “if the Federal troops had known the true situation they would have made Enugu in less than twelve hours! Instead they attacked with fear because they expected a formidable resistance”¹⁰⁸.

The Biafran challenge with regard to the weapons to prosecute the war came more forcibly with the travails of the nascent republic in the Nsukka sector. The successive fall of Nsukka, Opi, Ukehe and Okpatu as well as the growing vulnerability of Enugu created a hysterical reaction among the Biafran populace. Thousands of militia youths were said to have travelled from Port Harcourt, Aba, Orlu and the remote parts of Biafra to Enugu to volunteer for deployment. “Nye anyi egbe” (give us rifles), they pleaded with the Biafran authorities. “But there were no arms”¹⁰⁹. In order to circumnavigate the challenge of arms, the Biafran authorities first contrived the idea of commandeering all the firearms – including dane guns available in the region. To this end, Aguocha Nwigbo informs us,

I was a small boy of not more than twelve years when the war began in 1967 prior to this time, my ancestors and in fact, the entire Agbaja clan are known throughout Igboland and beyond for their smithing prowess. But the colonial authorities and the succeeding post – colonial governments continued to harass and intimidate our people claiming that all the Agbaja blacksmiths produced firearms which were used to perpetrate crimes... Although, most smiths out of curiosity learnt how to craft firearms but not all of them in actual sense

specialized in gunsmithing... the irony of the matter was that the Biafran authorities came to rely heavily on the available firearms in Udi during the early months of the war... more than 40 per cent of the dane guns commandeered by Biafra in 1967 were made by Udi blacksmiths¹¹⁰.

It is indeed an interesting irony that 'statutory authorities' that occasionally sent expeditions to raid the forges of the blacksmiths in Agbaja Udi came to rely on the same people for the weapons to fight their war¹¹¹. What is the implication of this development on the discourse of small arms proliferation in the region? The first notable implication is that the dearth of arms and the urgent need to have them willy-nilly legalised firearms in Eastern Nigeria. Ezenwanne Umeobi asserts that arms and weapons of all sorts flowed from all the nooks and crannies of Eastern Nigeria to Enugu¹¹² (the implication of this inadvertent legalization of arms will receive attention in a separate chapter). However, suffice it to underline that all the commandeered firearms were grossly insufficient for the purpose required; as they could only arm a few persons. Most Biafran troops went into battle armed with machetes to face Nigerian soldiers armed with machine guns and automatic rifles¹¹³.

To better situate the arms as well as weapons challenges of Biafra, it may be necessary to overview the strength of Biafra *vis á vis* that of Nigeria. This would clearly help to appreciate the efforts put up by Biafra towards both indigenous fabrication of arms and more importantly, the nascent republic's frantic efforts at importation of arms. It is very important to note that at the outbreak of armed hostilities in 1967, the Government of Nigeria had an overwhelming preponderance over Biafra in terms of arms, weaponry and soldiery force¹¹⁴. During the course of the war, the ratio of the federal fighting forces to that of Biafra was pitched at 120,000 to 40,000 men¹¹⁵. The imbalance in military arsenals – especially small arms, light and heavy weapons was even more critical. As noted above, Biafra lacked enough arms and ammunition to fully equip her fighting forces. This perhaps supports the opinion of Frederick Forsyth that manpower

had never been the problem in Biafra. Forsyth opines that only about one tenth of those who turned out for enlistment were eventually enlisted¹¹⁶. However, J.J. Strelau appears to refute this position when he argues that the severest constraints which Biafran military planners had to face during the war (especially in 1967) was not the shortage of arms, but the lack of trained manpower¹¹⁷.

Also, Ubong Essien Umoh posits that “while positions vary as regards Biafra’s conflict capital (arms and weapons) and conflict labour (soldiers), it is highly likely that Biafra lacked a good concentration of arms to prosecute the war as well as time to adequately train the men available”¹¹⁸. The statement made by Ojukwu to the National Conciliation and Peace Committee at Enugu in May 1967 could not have been more than a bluff or at best part of Biafra’s mainstream war propaganda. Ojukwu averred *inter alia*:

I started off this struggle in July 1966 with 120 rifles to defend the entirety of the East. I took my stand...because I believe that this stand is vital to the survival of the South. I appealed for settlement quietly because I understood that this was a naked struggle for power and that the only time we can sit down and decide the future of Nigeria on the basis of equality, will be equality of arms. Quietly I built. If you do not know it, I am proud and my officers are proud that here in the East, we possess the biggest Army in Africa....It is not my intention to unleash the destruction which my Army can unleash. It is not my intention to fight unless I am attacked. If I am attacked, I will take good care of the aggressor¹¹⁹.

Ubong Umoh further notes that despite Ojukwu’s possession of the ‘biggest Army in Africa’ with the ability to ‘unleash destruction’, arms and ammunition were in relative short supply in Biafra¹²⁰. He adds that, “the exact concentration of arms in Biafra at the onset of the war cannot be ascertained beyond Ojukwu’s astute propaganda”¹²¹. The testimony of Joe Achuzia that Biafra possessed World War I Mark 3 and Mark 4 rifles with a few machine guns¹²² and N.U. Akpan’s submission that Biafra possessed only about 150 rifles clearly reveals the bluff in Ojukwu’s eloquent statement¹²³.

It is also said that the Biafran Air Force started with only two Nigerian Airways Fokker aircraft and was somewhat developed later with the assistance of a mercenary pilot (Count von Rosen) to a force consisting of 18 *Minicons* and six Harvard T-6 trainers fitted with machine guns¹²⁴. John Stremlau, however, argues that Biafra had two World War II vintage B-26 bombers, plus six French-built Alouette helicopters and a few civilian aircraft seized from the Nigerian Airways¹²⁵. Whichever way, the Biafran Air Force has been denoted as a toddler compared with the Nigerian Air Force¹²⁶.

The Biafran Navy had one gun-boat (NNS Ibadan), which was not up to the standard of a frigate, and a lone pilot boat – the *EKWERE* –which had served the Port Harcourt Ports Authority¹²⁷. This reality in terms of Biafran weaponry raises a big question mark on Ojukwu's assertion that 'no power in Black Africa could subdue Biafra by force'¹²⁸. Arthur Nwankwo reveals that,

A battalion of say 600 troops (administrative and fighting) generally had about 200 to 300 bolt action, ten to fifteen automatic Madison rifles (for officers), thirty or so automatic CETME rifles (captures from enemy and reserved for the 'shock platoon'), two to three light MG's and one Browning. Different calibres of mortars were owned jointly on the brigade level and were rotated to the battalion according to need. Fortunate battalions had one rickety vehicle and one or two cranky bicycles. The battalions were supported by a signal platoon, with no more than two shortrange signal sets...Ammunition for small arms and heavy guns was scarce and supplies erratic. Some brigades launched major attacks with no more than three shells for each of the heavy guns and ten to twenty rounds of ammunition for each of the small arms¹²⁹.

Nigeria, on the other hand, benefited considerably from her unrestricted external gun running and improved upon her arsenals base as the war progressed. This imbalance in force ratio is reinforced by Forsyth who laments that,

Never in modern history has war been fought between armies of such disparity in strength and firepower as the Nigeria-Biafra conflict. On the one hand has been the Nigerian Army, a monstrous agglomeration of over 85, 000 men armed to the teeth with modern weapons, whose government has had uninhibited access to the armouries of at least two major Powers and several smaller ones, which have been

endowed with limitless supplies of bullets, mortars, machine-guns, rifles, grenades, bazookas, guns, shells and armoured cars....supported by numerous foreign personnel of technical experience...[and] several scores of professional mercenaries¹³⁰.

Forsyth further notes that on the other side of the divide was,

The Biafran Army, a volunteer force representing less than one in ten of those who have presented themselves at the recruiting booths for service. The standard infantry weapon has been the reconditioned Mauser bolt-action rifle, supported by small quantities of machine-pistols, sub-machine guns, light and heavy machine guns, and pistols. Mortar barrels and bombs, artillery pieces and shells, have been minimal, bazookas almost non-existent¹³¹.

Given the gross asymmetries between Nigeria and Biafra *vis à vis* weapons and capabilities, it was not surprising that Nigeria regarded the conflict as ‘a limited police action’¹³² which would require ‘a quick surgical operation lasting only a short time.

From all indications, the survival of Biafra critically depended on her capacity to resist the attacks from the Nigerian side. To accomplish this military task, Biafra needed a good stock of weapons and ammunition. It may be argued that preponderance in weaponry gives a decisive advantage since weapons are the chief instrument of violence in the prosecution of any war. Accordingly, Ubong Umoh argues that superiority in weapons has significant influence on the military strategy and overall tactical operations during warfare. “Indeed, weapons do not only portend showmanship in force, it also provides an edge for contending dyads”¹³³. In Clausewitz’s view,

war is not the action of a live force on a dead mass. Absolute non-resistance would mean no sort of war at all. Both powers must be equal in power and tenacity to render the outcome uncertain for a while....War is not the action of a live force on a dead mass. War is the collision of two live forces with each other¹³⁴.

Umoh further submits that such equality in power and tenacity, which characterises Clausewitz’s conception of war, can only be attained through the strength of arms. Superiority in arms gives the capability to secure compliance through force. With approximately 120 rifles in the

Biafran armoury at Enugu and 40,000 soldiers at the onset of the war, Clausewitz's conception of 'nonresistance' became evident as the Nigerian fighting forces reflected a 'live force' against a 'dead mass' of the Biafran armed strength. In the light of this reality, Biafra's core values of the defence of home territory and strategically vital areas fell under a credible threat and the success of that threat spelt defeat¹³⁵.

Table 3.3: Top 15 Nigerian and Biafran Decision-Makers, 1967 - 1970

Nigeria	Biafra
1. Yakubu Gowon	1 Odumegwu Ojukwu
2. Murtala Mohammed	2 Philip Effiong
3. Benjamin Adekunle	3 Alexander Madiebo
4. Olusegun Obasanjo	4 Albert Okonkwo
5. Mohammed Shuwa	5 Victor Banjo
6. E.A.Etuk	6 Ogbugo Kalu
7. Shehu Musa Yar' Adua	7 Joseph Achuzie
8. Theophilus Danjuma	8 Azum Asoya
9. Ibrahim Haruna	9 Mike Ivnese
10. Alani Akinrinade	10 Timothy Onwuatuogwu
11. Ted Hamman	11 Rolf Steiner
12. Muhamadu Buhari	12 Festus Akagha
13. Ibrahim Babangida	13 Humphrey Chukwuka
14. Isaac Adaka Boro	14 H.M Njoku
15. Godwin Alabi – Isama	15 Ogbo Oji

Source: Researcher's Compilation

As deducible from the table above, the challenge of Biafra cannot be said to have come from a dearth of seasoned soldiery (as in fact, anyone with a lean knowledge of Nigerian military history could observe that Biafran military hierarchy did not pale in stature compared with its Nigerian counterparts). It was therefore, in the area of weaponry that the Biafran state fared poorly. Hence, the gross disadvantages against Biafra in terms of weaponry and power capabilities, worsened by the aerial, land and sea blockade propelled the people to look inwards. The result, as Dan O. Chukwu points out, was a series of scientific and technological inventions which dazzled the world¹³⁶.

Specifically, the Biafrans had to take to indigenous fabrication and mass production of small arms, light weapons as well as heavy weapons while at the same time hoping to resolve the diplomatic imbroglio that worked against the massive importation of weapons. It would be necessary to examine the issues of both the importation of arms as well as the locally fabricated ones in this chapter and to these themes we now turn.

Biafran Importation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Mao Tse Tung's dictum that "power emanates from the barrel of the gun"¹³⁷ could not have found a better explication and historical anchorage than in the Nigeria - Biafra war. As stated above, the ability to have a decisive victory in a battle or a war is decided by the amount of weapons available and the munitions to engage the enemy forces. From September 1967, it had become obvious to both the Biafran and the federal sides that the war was no longer that which could be contained by a 'surgical police action'¹³⁸, as both sides had come to recognise that the strife had assumed a full - blown conventional civil war and thus, the two warring sides were known to have made frantic efforts to import arms and weapons¹³⁹. Ikenna Odife has pointed out that "diplomatic activities surrounding the war started before the first shot was fired and continued as the war lasted"¹⁴⁰.

Plate 1: A federal soldier displaying Nigeria's superiority of ammunition



Source: Retrieved from the National Archives, Enugu.

It is, however, important to note that Nigeria operated from the vantage position of being an existing sovereign state whereas Biafra had to grapple with the problems of legitimacy and recognition. Prior to the war, Nigeria had made necessary friendships and contacts in the international arms trade and transfer systems. For instance, that in 1964 Nigeria bought recoilless rifles from America; sub – machine guns and other types of rifles from Italy; light machine guns from Germany; 105 MM howitzers from Italy; and 81 MM mortars from Israel¹⁴¹. In this way, Nigeria cannot be said to have been a toddler in the labyrinthine international arms procurement system. Although, like all conflict – ridden states, Nigeria and Biafra looked up to the goodwill and assistance of the superpowers for a favourable prosecution of the war since the friendly dispositions of the superpowers guarantee both material and psychological support. In line with the ongoing, Odife posits that “in the superpower politics that pervaded the landscape of the international system at the time, the support of the superpowers was crucial to the belligerents’ diplomatic success and the execution of the war. Therefore, each side of the conflict had to court their support and military assistance...”¹⁴².

Nigeria certainly benefited from the friendly disposition of the British towards the country as well as the international economic/oil politics of the late 1960s. For example, the British Government had lost several millions of Pounds as a result of the closure of the Suez Canal by Egypt in 1967¹⁴³. Given that a significant proportion of British energy was imported from the Middle-East and Nigeria, the closure of the Suez and other international economic and political considerations predisposed the United Kingdom to a total support of the Nigerian Federal Military Government. Thus, the many military blunders as well as politically egregious

actions of Nigeria notwithstanding, the British firmly stood by the country. The military support of Britain to Nigeria in terms of supplies of small arms, light and heavy weapons, tactical military hardware, bombers and naval warships continued to pour into Nigeria. By October/November, 1969, for instance, Britain was known to have supplied Nigeria with arms worth more than £6 million¹⁴⁴. This, according to Suzanne Cronje, “was more than the total quantity imported by Lagos from all sources since 1963 – including the hugely increased supplies which had been landed in the previous twenty – six months of war”¹⁴⁵. It should be noted that the October/November 1969 supplies were done barely two months to the end of the war. Its implications, in the absence of a systematic demobilization, disarmament and reintegration in the post- war years cannot be swept under the carpet. In fact, it left the entire country – both Nigeria and the former Biafra awash with small arms and light weapons since the end of the war in 1970.

Biafra, on the other hand, appears to have been the underdog in the strategic tussle for procurement of weapons abroad to prosecute the war. This is because as already noted, all the odds seemed to have been against her. Nevertheless, a handful of states most of which were propelled by their national interests had to align themselves to assisting Biafra. These countries included France, Portugal, South Africa, Israel, Tanzania, Gabon, among others. France was known to have provided weapons, mercenary fighters, and other assistance to Biafra. French Charles de Gaulle was quoted as describing the Biafran case as genocide¹⁴⁶. Although, France did not diplomatically recognise Biafra, she was reported to have supplied B-26 bombers, Alouette helicopters and pilots to Biafra. Additionally, France provided the Biafrans with captured Italian and German weapons from World War II, delivered through Cote d’Ivoire¹⁴⁷.

French involvement has been viewed in the context of its geo – political strategy (Francafrique) and its ceaseless competition with the British in West Africa. France was wary of Nigeria’s hegemonic potentials in West Africa and in fact, believed that a strong Nigeria would constitute a big threat to her interests in the sub- region and logically, any effort at dismembering Nigeria could not but be welcomed by the French¹⁴⁸. This geo-realist thought was clearly accountable for French involvement in the Nigeria - Biafra war.

Specifically, in the area of French export of small arms and light weapons to Biafra, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimated that more than 78, 000 rifles such as CETME rifles, and other classes of firearms came from France. The report furthermore indicates that about 30, 000 kinds of light weapons, including rocket launchers were shipped to Biafra from France majorly through Cote d’Ivoire and Gabon¹⁴⁹. Herbert Ekwe Ekwe notes that economically, France was incentivised by oil drilling rights for the Societe Anonyme Francaise de Recherches et d’exploitation de Petrolieres (SAFRAP), apparently arranged with the Eastern Nigerian Government in advance of its secession from the Nigerian Republic¹⁵⁰. Jide Oluwatoyin reports that with the outbreak of students’ riots in France as a result of the French government support of Biafra, the French Government declared an arms embargo maintained arms shipment to Nigeria under the cover of humanitarian aid¹⁵¹.

Whatever was the case, it may not be argued that France played a pivotal role in the political and military support of Biafra. In terms of supply of arms, its shipment of small arms and light weapons were so crucial to Biafra that on 10 August, 1967, the Biafran leader, Chukwuemeka Ojukwu suggested that Biafra introduce compulsory French classes in secondary, technical and teacher training colleges. This, according to Ojukwu, would help the Biafrans to

“benefit from the rich culture of the French – speaking world”¹⁵². Besides, a ‘Biafran Historical Research Centre’ was known to have been established in Paris in 1967¹⁵³.

Other states as earlier pointed out that significantly assisted Biafra in the area of weapons procurement were Portugal, Israel and South Africa. Their motivations for assisting the embattled Biafran Republic have received varying scholarly explications in extant literature. However, suffice it to add that in the case of Portugal and South Africa, the vituperation and actions of Nigeria’s leaders on becoming independent sent signals that Nigeria was not going to relate cordially with them. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Tafawa Balewa had on various occasions in the days following Nigeria’s independence in 1960 taken a swipe against the continued apartheid system in South Africa. They had also averred that Nigeria’s independence meant little or nothing if any part of Africa was left to continue under colonial rule¹⁵⁴. These postures expectedly pitched Nigeria against South Africa and Portugal – which was still a colonial power in Africa. As in the case of the French, the dismemberment of Nigeria was considered a desirable political outcome for South Africa and Portugal and thus, they rendered several forms of support to Biafra, in the hope that its secession would mark the end of the Nigerian threat¹⁵⁵.

As a follow – up to the line of thinking above, Portugal reportedly made weapons available to Biafra. These weapons transactions were arranged through the Biafran Historical Research Centre in Paris. Since the Portuguese arms supplies to Biafra were made on cash and delivery terms, it could only be expected that a significant number of Biafra’s imported arms came from Portugal. Besides, as Hammond Zenata has opined, “international arms sales and transfers are not exactly a gentlemanly affair”. More often than not, the real amount supplied is usually unstated¹⁵⁶. Whatever was the case, the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SPI) is of the view that three large shipments comprising mostly of small arms and light weapons were sent

to Biafra from Portugal from 1967 – 1969. The Gabonese State was used as the sub – station for this arms sale to Biafra¹⁵⁷.

The state of Israel also played a significant role in arming the Republic of Biafra. Contrary to popular notions of Biafran propaganda carrying the day in Israel right from the beginning of the Nigeria - Biafra war, newer researches suggest that Biafran propaganda never had any significant impact on the Israeli government until 17th July, 1968¹⁵⁸. From the moment of Nigerian independence, the Israeli Government had reasoned that Nigeria would be a decisive and crucial actor in West Africa and therefore, concluded that good relations with Nigeria would be in line with its interests in Africa¹⁵⁹. However, Nigeria's bi – religious divide appeared not to have favoured the state of Israel in its efforts to establish bilateral relations with Nigeria. The Northern Region of Nigeria which had also controlled the reins of governmental power was Muslem -dominated and had a serious bias for the Moslem Arabs who have had seemingly intractable wrangles with Israel. Some Northern Nigerian leaders went as far as banning Israeli diplomatic officials in some places in Northern Nigeria, particularly in Sokoto and Maiduguri¹⁶⁰. Nevertheless, the state of Israel continued scouring for inroads into the heart of the Nigerian government

Plate 2: Biafran Soldiers carrying Israeli made Madison rifles.



Source: Retrieved from the national archives, Enugu.

Although, the Igbo who were by far the majority *vis à vis* the ethnic composition of Biafra had prior to the civil war weaved a series of myths and tales purporting that the Igbo were a lost tribe of Israel, this appeared not to have had any significant implication on Biafra – Israeli relations¹⁶¹. The major triumph for the Biafran cause was, however, to come on 17 July 1968 – half way into the war- when on account of the continuous media reports that Nigeria was carrying out a comprehensive genocide against the Igbo, the Knesset decided to debate the matter in parliament¹⁶². The insistence of Right Wing and Left Wing political groups as well as the opinion of students’ representatives that genocide was going on in Biafra was to actuate the government of Israel to intervene on the side of Biafra because of humanitarian considerations. Thus, in August 1968, the Israeli Air Force overtly sent twelve tons of food aid to Biafra¹⁶³. Additionally, the Israeli government was known to have provided the Biafran state with \$100,000 through Zurich¹⁶⁴. Moreover, three shipments of arms were reportedly sent to Biafra using Ivorian transport planes¹⁶⁵. South Africa also for strategic reasons transferred a significant number of arms for the Biafran cause¹⁶⁶. On the issue of foreign assistance to Biafra in the area of arms and weapons, E.C. Emordi and B.E. Oseghale hold that,

...Available evidence shows that ... (Israel, South Africa Germany, Poland, Rhodesia, Portugal, Gabon, Haiti among others) joined France in arming or aiding Biafra... and the significance of this development in the execution of the war cannot be overemphasized. From May 1968, until the end of the war, the French government took direct hand in supplying weapons to Biafra, routing them through Ivory Coast and Gabon. Gabon and Ivory Coast, too, supplied some arms from their own stocks, which France replenished. Rhodesia and South Africa also aided Biafra. For instance, the Rhodesian government under Ian Smith, provided

the rockets for B. 26 bombers, which a Czech, Kamikaze Braun piloted, and which he carried out the first raids of the war on several Nigerian towns¹⁶⁷.

Furthermore, Emordi and Oseghale posit that “Biafra also had Saladins and Salacins, Italian cohete inta guns and 37 mm explosives, Soviet 7.6 mm AK sub – machine guns (SMG, Belgium FN9 mm rifle, the Israeli Uzi SMG landcoster 9 mm mark 1 SMG, among others”¹⁶⁸. The sales, transfers and exportations of arms and weapons into Biafra by the friends of the beleaguered Republic of Biafra were critical to the survival of that Republic. However, it would appear that these weapons and arms were scarcely enough to prosecute the war. Suzanne Cronch, J.J. Streamlau, John de St Jorre, Hebert Ekwe Ekwe, Gary Blank and Fredrick Forsyth all agree that the British military supplies to Nigeria were so decisive and unarguably decided the outcome of the war¹⁶⁹.

Although the Biafrans captured a significant number of the arms and ammunition of the Nigerian army in such battles as Onitsha, Azumini and Onne, among others¹⁷⁰ and imported arms, these two sources were not enough to fight such a prolonged war. Therefore, indigenous and indigenous fabrications of arms and weapons were given early consideration in Biafra.

Table 3.4: List of Countries that supported the Belligerents in the Nigeria – Biafra War and the nature of their support

Nigeria Name of Country	Nature of Support	Biafra Name of Country	Nature of Support
1. United Kingdom	85% of small arms, light and heavy Weapons, military intelligence, mercenaries, 2 bombers and 60 vessels	1. France	War weapons (two B26s Allouette helicopters), pilots, also provided captured German Italian WW2 weapons
2. Soviet Union	War weapons (20 MIG 15 fighters, trainers, 6 Czech L – 29 Delfin jet fighters and 200 Soviet technicians	2. Portugal	Allowed black market sale of weapons to Biafra

3. Egypt	Provided pilots to fly Nigeria's Soviet – made aircrafts	3. South Africa	Allowed black market sale of weapons to Biafra
4. Chad	Provided mercenaries	4. Israel	Sent twelve tons of food aid and a few consignment of small arms
5. United States	Provided sundry military assistance and intelligence mostly through the UK	5. Tanzania	Recognised Biafra as a sovereign state, sent relief, helped in purchasing fighter planes, sundry diplomatic assistance
6. Canada	Military intelligence and support	6. Gabon	Provided an inlet for French arms to get into Biafra, resold some French transferred arms and provided relief.
7. Syria	Provided mercenaries	7. Ivory Coast	Provided an inlet for French arms to get into Biafra, resold some French transferred arms and provided relief.
8. Saudi Arabia	Diplomatic support	8. Zambia (Rhodesia)	Recognised Biafra's sovereignty, diplomatic support, supplied a few consignments of small arms and light weapons, 2 B. 20 bombers and DC3 transport aircrafts.
9. Algeria	Diplomatic support	9. Spain	Sympathetic
10. Bulgaria	Diplomatic support	10. Haiti	Sympathetic

Source: Compiled by the Researcher from several sources.

War Technologies and the Manufacturing of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Biafra, 1967 – 1970

As already noted, the myriad of challenges which Biafra's legitimacy crisis threw up created several bottlenecks for easy importation of weapons and arms into Biafra. The few countries which supported Biafra were not as committed to arms transfer or sales as those who supported the Nigerian side. In the ensuing dilemma, Biafra had to contrive an indigenous arms fabrication and production system. With regard to how Biafra started the indigenous production of weapons and arms, two different opinions are popular. First is Felix Oragwu's and others'

position that Biafra started making inroads into indigenous production of weapons with the formation of a group called the Science Group¹⁷¹. The Group is noted to have comprised various people with scientific and technological background, formal and informal, who invested their devotion and patriotism to conduct research and fabricate essential material for the prosecution of the war¹⁷².

This Group according to Felix Oragwu was saddled with the task of technological innovation; their task was essentially to copy technological creativity and improvisation under extreme privation¹⁷³. The Science Group's membership was drawn from:

- i. Teachers from the Universities, Colleges of Technology and Secondary Schools;
- ii. Research scientists from research and technical establishments;
- iii. Scientists, technologists, and craftsmen from various public services, organisations, such as Railways, Ports Authority, Electricity Corporation, Petroleum Refinery and Geological Surveys;
- iv. Engineers and technicians from the private sector such as Shell BP, United Africa Company (UAC) among others;
- v. Ordinary artisans, blacksmiths, craftsmen and mechanics.¹⁷⁴

The purveyors of this account opine that at the onset, the 'Science Group' operated as two distinct independent sub-groups: the Enugu Group which was dominated by university scientists from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the Port Harcourt Group led by engineers and technicians from Shell-BP and other industrial establishments around Port Harcourt¹⁷⁵. After the loss of Enugu, the two sub-groups of the Science Group came together and set up their first headquarters in December 1967 at Umuahia¹⁷⁶. Ubong Umoh writes that it was the fusion of the two branches of the Science Group that came to be designated as the Research and Production (RAP) unit¹⁷⁷. This Research and Production (RAP) unit was known to have attracted an

exaggerated amount of attention when it took off operations in 1967¹⁷⁸. The Research and Production (RAP) unit according to Felix Oragwu's account was made up of three major divisions with responsibility for:

- i. Research and Technical Services;
- ii. Materials for Production and Services; and
- iii. Administration and Personnel Welfare.

Within these divisions, RAP also established specialised groups viz:

- i. Weapons Research and Production Group
- ii. Chemical Materials Research and Production Group
- iii. Airport and Road Development Group
- iv. Electrical and Electronic Devices Group
- v. Industrial Material Research and Metallurgy Group
- vi. Refinery and Fuel Group
- vii. Essential Food Processes and Production Group
- viii. Alcohol and Assorted Drinks Group¹⁷⁹.

The second opinion on the commencement of indigenous arms production in Biafra is the one given by Nwabueze Reuben Ogbudinkpa. Ogbudinkpa links the take – off of arms production in Biafra to a mythical character that he called “Uzumuo”¹⁸⁰. Accordingly, Ogbudinkpa purports that the Research and Production (RAP) was brought together by the mythical Uzumuo. In his view, Uzumuo “having gathered men of his thinking and imagination, most of whom were illiterates with innovative power and determination in a selected government – provided underground workshop, “Uzumuo” led his men in tinkering with every mechanical device that would help check the powerful Federal Army”¹⁸¹.

Why Reuben Ogbudinkpa chose to ascribe the feats of the Research and Production (RAP) unit to a mythical figure is not clear to the present researcher. For he, (Ogbudinkpa) had recognised that many hands must have really toiled for the dazzling achievements of the Research and Production (RAP) unit. Ogbudinkpa clearly recognised this when he wrote that “though many authors were responsible for different innovations, the author wants to attribute each to one innovator, a ghost innovator known as “Uzumuo”, that is “Fairy Smith”. Curiously, Reuben Ogbudinkpa in the preface to the same study in which he ascribed the technological achievements of the RAP unit to Uzumuo, thanked a Mr. “Uzumuo” “who helped to focus attention on the essentials of this research...”¹⁸² Furthermore and more remarkably, it is to be noted that Ogbudinkpa continued to refer to the Uzumuo in inverted commas throughout his study. It is therefore, the submission of this researcher that Ogbudinkpa’s account may not be taken seriously with respect to the constitution, make – up and mandate of the Research and Production unit of Biafra. Johnson Ezenwaka and Roy Ezeama – Okeke who worked with the Research and Production unit discountenanced Ogbudinkpa’s claims. Accordingly, Roy Ezeama - Okeke notes,

I am not a lettered man and have not read the Ogbudinkpa you mentioned. It is possible that he got his information wrong. I for one never as much as heard that a single person is credited with all the feats of our unit... The title “Uzumuo” is quite familiar. In fact, no one man answered to that title, it was a title used to celebrate yet another innovation by the men of the Research and Production unit... talking about code – names and aliases, these were very popular within the rank and file of the Research and Production. Almost everyone had a mythical title which was popularized by the Biafran Sun. This may be what the Ogbudinkpa misinterpreted¹⁸³.

The tenor of the above submission notwithstanding, what is understandable is that the Research and Production unit was a historical reality in Biafra and in fact, came to be identified with the development of an arms industry, which though lacking in sophistication, assisted the Biafran war machine from crumbling too soon. Again, some scientists (and not any mythical

fairy) have been credited with most of the dazzling feats of the Research and Production unit. These scientists include Gordian Ezekwe, Benjamin Nwosu and Willy Achukwu¹⁸⁴.

In any case, it is not arguable that the war demands led to the emergence of Biafran arms industry and stimulated the independent and domestic fabrication of small arms and light weapons which included hand grenades, cartridges, mines, and guns. It has to be observed that the Research and Production unit laboured to make dazzling innovations in not only the production of arms and weapons but also in such areas as critical domestic consumer goods and allied industrial products. However, our focus in the following pages would be strictly on the production of arms and weapons particularly, on small arms and light weapons.

It would appear that the first success which the men of the Research and Productions unit recorded was in designing and production of the Biafran ‘udala’ – an oval shaped hand grenade. This weapon according to Chris Okonkwo was a “Biafran technology from start to finish”¹⁸⁵. Essentially, the Biafran hand grenade was fashioned out of a hollow cast- iron filled with locally – made explosives and small metal objects. Reuben Ogbudinkpa explains that the prototype of the Biafran hand grenade was so designed that it fragmented or exploded at the expiration of a reaction time of two to five seconds¹⁸⁶. The Biafran hand grenade in the views of Echetam Onochie was an offensive as well as defensive weapon; it served as a miniature anti – tank and anti –personnel bomb which was nevertheless most suitable for short – range purposes¹⁸⁷. Furthermore, Ogbudinkpa posits that in assembling the constituents of the hand grenade, the inventors were careful to fit a delay – action fuse at the broad end of the weapon before linking the fuse to the tightly corked explosives in the cast iron by thread.

Launching the hand grenade for action requires removal of the delay action fuse with the teeth before throwing it at an on-coming enemy. As the fuse is removed the cast iron is scratched by the wire on the fuse, and the scratch sparks the explosive soaked thread. It is likely that... the innovation provided Biafran

soldiers with increased firing power and protection as well as the means to clear suspected enemies bunkers and trenches¹⁸⁸.

Given the dearth and murkiness of such military technology in pre – war Nigeria and Igboland in particular, it is somewhat surprising how the men of the Research and Production unit chanced upon the formula for the mass production of the hand grenade. It has been speculated that the Biafran manufacturing of the hand grenade came through trial and error methods. The view has been canvassed by many a veteran of the war that the idea for the indigenous production of the Biafran hand grenade came when the men of the Research and Production unit captured a foreign manufactured grenade from the Nigerians and diffused it and carefully studied its make – up. Whether in fact, the idea behind the production of the hand grenade in Biafra was a replicative technology or indigenous will continue to generate heated arguments. What is perhaps more crucial is the fact that the breakthrough in the development of such a delicate explosive was to have a consequential impact on the development of other types of arms and weapons most of which have continued to be illegally produced in some parts of Southeastern Nigeria. As in fact, Lucky Ewiwile has observed, “one of the areas in which the Biafran war impacted on the small arms proliferation question in Nigeria is in the opening up of the technology of making guns, especially, among the Igbo people”¹⁸⁹.

Before proceeding to examine Biafra’s gun making inventions, a caveat about gun making in Igboland is considered apposite. The historicity of guns and firearms origin had been treated in chapter two of this present study. Suffice it to recast that the technology of making guns was not new to Igboland and cannot at any point be seen as being invented during the Nigeria - Biafra war. For instance, Onwuka N. Njoku’s PhD thesis has shown that the history of iron technology and also gun making in Igboland, especially, in such areas as Agulu – Umana in the Udi area of Enugu State, Awka in Anambra State, Nkwere in Imo State, Abiriba in Abia

State among others date earlier than the sixteenth century¹⁹⁰. In fact, the first set of people who rallied round Ojukwu were the warrior clans of Abiriba, Ohafia, and Abam among others. J.C. Obienyem adds that “the blacksmiths of Awka, Nkwere and Udi areas – who had hitherto specialized in making of guns for hunting and cultural and as well as symbolic purposes were the first to place their unalloyed support and talents at the disposal of the Biafran State¹⁹¹. However, given that most of their guns and the technology for making them could not move beyond fabrication of the *egbe kwacham* (dane guns) which was popularly known as *agba awara oso*¹⁹², (shoot and run) a higher technological innovation in gunsmithing therefore had to be contrived by the technologists and researchers of the beleaguered Biafra.

It was thus, the inadequacy of the locally fabricated guns, especially, in offensive battles that propelled the men and researchers at the Research and Production unit to dismantle and study the make – up of some Chinese rifles smuggled into Biafran as well as captured Soviet Kalashnikov automatic rifle from the Nigerian troops¹⁹³. Rueben Ogbudinkpa writes that having dismantled and studied some of those rifles, they innovated the Biafran automatic rifle which they nicknamed ‘the Helicopter’ largely because of its resemblance to the helicopter as it dangled on the shoulder of a Biafran soldier¹⁹⁴.

It should be noted that guns themselves were as useless as logs of wood if there are no ammunition with which they will be used. The innovation of a Biafran automatic weapon came with the challenge of innovating a magazine for its use. In this case, the Research and Production unit produced a magazine, by casting the mould of the magazine on sand and subsequently on iron¹⁹⁵. The manufacturing and fixing of the magazine to the RAP - designed ‘helicopter’ converted the locally produced gun into a recoiling twenty – round automatic rifle. However, it should be stated that the Biafran helicopter had an unfortunate characteristic of being of a

disheartening low range; it never effectively went beyond a few yards. Besides, being a crudely manufactured automatic assault rifle, Nnacheta Agwu recalls that “sometimes the magazine refused to release a single pellet, at other times, it went off releasing a few pellets and would not complete the round, especially, those of them manufactured early into the war – they were really products of trial and error”¹⁹⁶.

Besides crafting of automatic weapons, the Biafrans also ventured into fabrication of double – barreled rifles which had been used in several parts of Igboland before the Nigeria - Biafra war, especially, for hunting, funeral and symbolic purposes. To this extent, it may not be pertinent to include the fabrications of double – barreled guns as part of the inventions of the Research and Production. It would seem that what the RAP technicians and inventors did was to dismantle, study and reassemble some of the available double – barreled guns. With the knowledge of the mechanics and functioning of the weapon system, and a little ingenuity, “they diced the barrels of out of old car steering rods, welded such two rods together, carved out the gun butts out of the common iroko tree and produced the double – barreled gun”¹⁹⁷. It has to be observed that apart from its rough hue and finishing, the Biafran double – barrel rifle did not differ much from the imported ones. However, there were basic issues with the deployment of the RAP made double – barreled guns for both offensive and defensive purposes by Biafra.

Charles Chigbata and Chukwuemeka Obienyem corroborate Ogbudinkpa’s account that the Biafran home – made double – barrel guns suffered several disadvantages. First, the double - barreled gun suffered from serious low range capacity; like the prewar dane guns and the Biafran ‘helicopter’, the double barrel gun could not effectively exceed more than 25 yards¹⁹⁸. Second and most apposite to the question of arms proliferation after the war was the issue of ammunition for the Biafran double – barrel gun. It should be recalled that owing to the suffocating

blockading of Biafra by Nigeria, the Biafran government that had hitherto depended on foreign imports for ammunition for the double – barrel guns, especially, through the Norwegian Count von Rosen, ran short of the cartridges for the Biafran made double – barrel guns. Thus, most of the double – barrel guns had to be set aside until the discovery of the technology of making the needed cartridges¹⁹⁹.

A significant number of the war veterans interviewed by the researcher agree that the double – barrel weapons did not feature much in Biafran offensive and defensive battles. Chukwuemeka Obienyem, an Army Major and Commander of the Biafran 13 Tactical Operations Squad stationed at Ogidi in present day Anambra State notes that “most of the Biafran - made double – barrel guns found their ways in the hands of the militias and other stragglers who eventually used same weapons to harass and intimidate people after the war”²⁰⁰. Whatever the case, available evidence suggests that even during the war, arms were illicitly proliferated within Biafra. The regular troops who captured weapons from the Nigerians often handed or sold some of these weapons to the members of the militias and the Biafran Organization of Freedom Fighters (BOFF)²⁰¹. However, the war situation did not allow these proliferation and their attendant maladies to be noticed. Its impact came to be seen more clearly immediately after the war.

In the meantime, it requires stating that Biafran war technologies did not stop at production of hand grenades and guns. In fact, a wide range of inventions and innovations were made both in the strictly military related areas, allied products and civilian goods as well as welfare materials. For example, Chukwu is of the view that the material resources made by the Research and Production unit included all categories of rifles such as pistols, revolvers, flint – lock guns, dane – guns, automatic rifles, single and double – barreled guns, artillery guns,

intercontinental ballistic missiles and rockets. While it is contestable that the Biafran RAP unit produced in intercontinental ballistic missiles, it is not in doubt that they made armoured tanks which was nicknamed 'red devil'. The 'red devils' were furthermore serialized into A1 – A5. There were the types B – D of the 'red devil'²⁰².

Additionally, the Biafran inventors made the Pinhard Armoured Vehicle which came to be known as 'Oguta Boys' including such artillery guns as 105, 106, 205 Howitzers²⁰³. In no area was the inventiveness of the Research and Production unit more notable and celebrated than in the making of bombs. Chukwu observes that all manner of bombs which came to be known as Ogbunigwe were made. These included the flying Ogbunigwe; All – Purpose Ogbunigwe; the bucket Ogbunigwe; the drum Ogbunigwe; the mini bucket Ogbunigwe; Coffin Box Ogbunigwe; the giant Ogbunigwe; Bobby Traps; Shore batteries and Charges²⁰⁴. In any event, and as indicated earlier, not all of the Biafran – indigenously contrived weapons fall under small arms and light weapons. From available evidence, is clear that the capacity of most of the Biafran bombs exceeded 100 mm and therefore cannot be classified as small arms and light weapons. The above notwithstanding several of these weapons produced by Biafra fall within the range of small arms and light weapons.

Another area in which the Biafran technologists proved their mettle was in the manufacturing of bullets. It has been submitted that the war would not have lasted so long were it not for the involvement of external powers support for both sides. The Nigerians, by all parameters were more supplied than the Biafrans and although, the Biafrans supplemented their meagre arms supply by occasionally raiding Nigerian troops, nevertheless, the Biafrans were to face the challenge of replacing the ammunitions after using the looted ones. The asphyxiating blockade and the federal diplomatic leverage had rendered the possibilities of replenishing

Biafran ammunition from abroad. In such a dilemma, the Biafran technologists studied the circumference of the foreign bullets and cartridges. They were known to have adjusted their drill machines to produce bullet butts which could suit the sophisticated guns. This was done by filling the butts of the bullets partially with explosives and attaching either spherical or conical lead missiles to the butts²⁰⁵.

It has been suggested by Emordi and Oseghale that the Biafran technological exploits were not a wholly indigenous Igbo contrivance. They posit that “there is no doubt that the war efforts of Biafrans were emboldened by the help from outside”²⁰⁶. They aver that foreign assistance as well as non – Igbo input was crucial in the inventions. While an outright refutation of their claims is outside the scope of this present study, it is pertinent to note that Biafra at any point in time was not an Igbo affair – as in fact, all the ethnic groups in the old Eastern Region were Biafrans. On the question of foreign involvement, available sources are clear that there was no direct foreign involvement in the inventions and innovations of the Research and Production Unit. As Felix Oragwu and Reuben Ogbudinkpa have documented, Biafrans can beat their chests on the autochthony of their inventions²⁰⁷.

Clearly, the trailblazing wizardry of the Biafran technologists was to a large extent contingent upon the knowledge of making explosives. In tandem with this viewpoint, Reuben Ogbudinkpa who perhaps has done the most detailed study on the inventions of the Biafran inventors has this to say,

As research scientists mostly, they exploited their previous knowledge in universities and research institutions in their bid to manufacture explosives. They could still remember that monovalent radical (OH) group of chemical is generally present in all hydroxides. Two chief sources of this chemical groups [sic] easily identifiable in the secessionist area were alcohol, starch and common cotton. They could still recollect the existence of the second group called the nitro group (NO₂) group whose two chief sources were nitric acid and sodium nitrate. Library

research revealed to the scientists of the de – facto government that the replacement of the (OH) group by the (NO₂) group would produce an explosive compound. Such an explosive was essential in the manufacture of gun cartridges, mortars, rockets, bombs, gunpowder and Ogbunigwe...²⁰⁸

Without doubt, it was this knowledge of basic chemistry that set the researchers of the Biafran RAP unit on their path in the varying degrees of inventions they made in the area of arms and munitions production. In all, it has been suggested that over one million rifles and other kinds of small arms were manufactured by the Research and Production unit. This does not include the tens of thousands of arms supplied to Biafra by its foreign friends and supporters and also those captured from Nigerian troops in several battles and raids by Biafran soldiers. The logical question to ask therefore is: what became of these arms and weapons after the war? What became of the men, especially blacksmiths of the Research and Production Unit who have been exposed to lethal technology and the intricacies of gunsmithing? And finally, what is the nexus between the Biafran arms and weapons used to prosecute the war and the high spate of criminal violence in the years following the end of the war? The above questions and their answers form the thrust of the next chapter of this study.

Plate 4: Biafran RAP - made Armoured Tank



Source: National War Museum, Umuahia

Plate 5: Biafran-Made Tank



Source: National War Museum, Umuahia

Endnotes

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203. Chukwu, “The Challenges of the Biafran War Technologies...” 97 – 98.
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CHAPTER FOUR

END OF THE WAR AND THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA, 1970 – 2007

Biafra’s Surrender

The Biafran revolution appears to have been lost before General Philip Effiong, Biafra’s second-in-command, surrendered to Lt Colonel Olusegun Obasanjo, Commander of the Third Marine Commando Division of the Nigerian Army on 12th January, 1970. Underscoring the loss of the Biafran revolution is crucial in understanding the issue of arms proliferation in post war Southeast Nigeria. As submitted in the preceding chapter, the enthusiasm of the Biafrans soared at the commencement of the military hostilities between the two sides. However, given the odds against Biafra, both militarily and diplomatically, the initial enthusiasm of the Biafran populace was to wane considerably before the end of that war¹.

Besides, the internal political squabbles among the political leadership of the Biafran Republic did not help matters². Again, the myth of the invincibility of the Biafran forces had by the end of 1968 become such a smokescreen that almost all the able – bodied men and boys

dreaded conscription into the Biafran Army³. Given the excruciating poverty and misery as well as the hopelessness that pervaded Biafra, the society seemed to have returned to a state of nature where the basest instincts of man re – surfaced to goad everyone to action. In fact, by the end of September 1968, life in Biafra had only one simple rule: survival. Bands of soldiers, militiamen, and the Biafran Organisation of Freedom Fighters (BOFF) dispossessed people of their belongings with impunity⁴. Private cars were commandeered even from fellow soldiers going to visit their loved ones. Edmund C. Obiezuofu – Ezeigbo captures the grim situation when he notes that “as the war dragged on and the Biafran enclave shrunk in size, refugees clustered in available villages, yet to be conquered by the enemy. The clustering of the refugees in these villages created problems. There were hunger, disease and frustration everywhere. To compound the problem, entering into the army changed from being voluntary to conscription”⁵. Obiezuofu – Ezeigbo further indicates that,

Conscription into the Army was a nightmare to young men. By conscription, a band of soldiers would swoop into the market and whisked away any able young man they could lay their hands on to join the Army against their will. As soon as the soldiers descended into a market, such market (sic) and be in disarray (sic) as the able young men would scamper away into a nearby bush and run for safety. Those who were unlucky and got caught would proceed to join the Army right from the market place. Those who were caught and assembled in an open space would look very tired with fear lurking in their faces...⁶

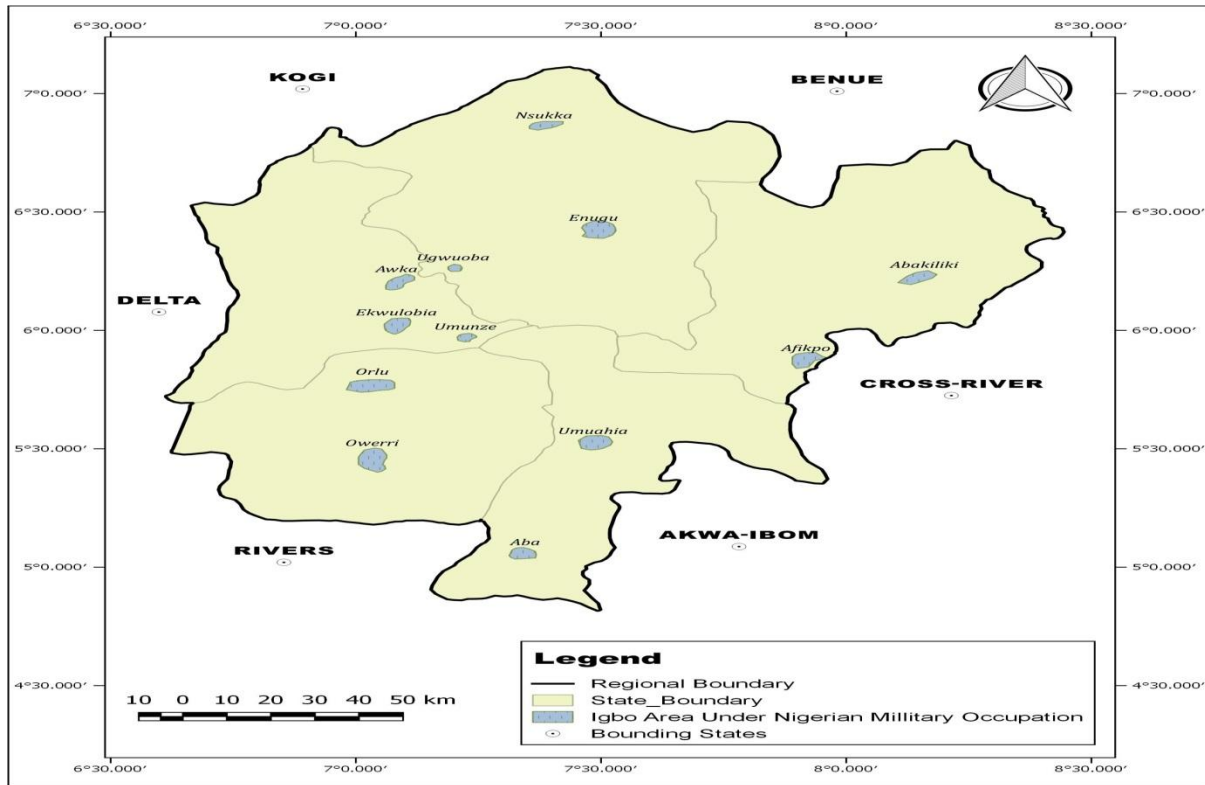
Towards the end of the war, especially, from December 1968, many Igbo communities had a hard time deciding who the enemies were – the harassing Biafran soldiers or the Federal Army. According to Wisdom Odinka, stories of some rows between marauding Biafran soldiers and civilians were rife⁷. Obiezuofu – Ezeigbo narrates one of such incidents in Owerri area. According to him, three Biafran soldiers pounced on a group of farmers to conscript them into the Army. The soldiers were said to be malnourished and suffering from crawl – crawl (rashes) and as they scratched their skin infections, the youths already arrested for conscription noticed

their dilemma and quickly pounced on them and subsequently disarmed them. The soldiers were said to have been beaten to a pulp; although, the farmers had to forsake their crops to the soldiers as they hurriedly ran out of their farms⁸. The point being made is that criminality, armed brigandage and lawlessness had become a salient psychosocial reality in Biafra before the end of the war. Most of the disorderliness and lawlessness were perpetrated with arms and unmistakably inherited from the psychology of people fighting a losing war.

These psychosocial dilemmas were to be worsened by the formal surrender of Biafra. Arthur Nwankwo has documented the debilitating lethargy that characterised life in Biafra. He notes that “the underprivileged fought the most, suffered the most and enjoyed the least... it seemed as if the duty of defending the nation was a lowly job meant for only the underdogs”⁹. Thus, the surrender of Biafra was to add another dimension to the plight of a people whose basest instincts had become the only means of survival and this as shall be shown later, played a significant role in the proliferation of arms and weapons in Igboland after the end of the war.

By the middle of December 1969, it had become clear to any discerning Biafran that the collapse of the beleaguered republic was imminent. Additionally, the capitulation of Colonel Anthony Eze and his 12 Division at the Aba front put the remaining part of Biafra in serious jeopardy¹⁰. With the 3 Marine Commando Division of the Nigerian Army under Colonel Olusegun Obasanjo swarming in against Owerri and strategically positioned to strike the Uli Airport – the last Biafran bastion, it was clear that the Biafran thirty months of blood and death was a lost cause, at least militarily¹¹. Seeing that the cause was almost irretrievable, the Biafran Head of State, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, had to flee to Ivory Coast on 10th January, 1970¹².

Map showing Major Igbo Areas under Nigerian Military Occupation by December, 1969.



What is more, having been surrounded on the crucial fronts by the Nigerian Army, the rest of the Biafran leaders seemed to have had no better option than to tinker on the best possible way to surrender to Nigeria. Thus, on January 12, 1970, General Philip Effiong to whom the departing Biafran leader, Emeka Ojukwu left the reins of the leadership, announced the surrender to Nigeria in an official broadcast¹³. In his broadcast to Biafrans and the world in general, Effiong recounted reasons that had propelled Eastern Nigerians to secede from Nigeria. In his words, “throughout history, injured people have had to resort to arms in their self – defence where peaceful negotiations fail. We are no exception. We took up arms because of the sense of insecurity generated in our people by the events of 1966. We have fought in defence of that cause...”¹⁴. In that crucial broadcast, General Effiong was known to have instructed for the “orderly” disengagement of troops. He declared that,

I am dispatching emissaries to make contact with Nigeria’s field commanders in places like Owerri, Awka, Enugu and Calabar with a view to arranging armistice. I urge on General Gowon, in the name of humanity, to order his troops to pause a

while an armistice is negotiated to avoid the mass suffering caused by the movement of the people¹⁵.

The unilateral and unconditional surrender of Biafra brought myriads of issues to the fore. Joe Achuzia captures some of these questions when he wrote that,

...several questions kept repeating themselves over and over again in my mind. Some of them were: will Nigeria accept our offer of surrender? If they will, what will be the price? And who will be the sacrificial lamb?... if Nigeria accepts our offer of surrender, whose responsibility will be the safety of Biafran citizens, who will within the next few hours to a few weeks, find themselves in the midst of frontline soldiers conditioned to kill and had been killing for the past two and half years. Would it be fair to say everybody to himself...?¹⁶

The above ruminations would be better appreciated if we consider that while the Biafran troops had been asked by Effiong to drop their arms their Nigerian counterparts had received no similar instructions from their commanders. However, through adroit resourcefulness and diplomacy, the Biafran leadership particularly, Colonel Achuzia and General Effiong were able to bring Colonel Obasanjo of the Nigerian Army to a gentlemanly meeting which resulted in the trips made by Effiong and some top Biafran leaders to Doddan Barracks in Lagos to meet with General Yakubu Gowon, Head of the Nigerian State¹⁷. In the meeting with Gowon at Doddan Barracks, General Effiong officially handed over the instruments of unconditional surrender to the Nigerian Head of State and affirmed that the Biafrans did not consider any government in exile thereby bringing the thirty months civil war to an end¹⁸. But how exactly did the Biafran troops take the news of Biafra's surrender?

Charles Chigbata observed that while General Effiong, Colonel Joe Achuzia, Lt Colonel Bernard Odogwu and Colonel Ogunewe were making efforts to bring the war to an end, the greater number of Biafra's military formations and units did not know anything concerning what the military command was up to. According to Chigbata, his C. company of Ben Gbulie's 7 Brigade was still in the bush engaging the enemy as at the time the news of Biafra's surrender

filtered to them¹⁹. Nwankwo Okoye and a significant number of the veterans interviewed by this researcher corroborate Charles Chigbata's view²⁰. In fact, majority of the Biafran fighting forces appeared not to have been carried along in the process of negotiation with the Nigerian side. Alexander Madiebo, Philip Effiong, Chris Ejiofor and Zednek Cervenka have documented how communication gaps were a major challenge to Biafra²¹. In the light of the foregoing, the deduction that Biafra's surrender was hurriedly contrived and poorly disseminated would not be out of order. In any case, the news of the surrender of Biafra produced too seemingly opposed reactions from the troops. The zealots in Biafra were said to have rued the military chiefs for chickening out of the revolutionary war²². J.C. Obienyem of the 2 TAC Command of the Biafran Army and Joel Amadi of the 1st Battalion were disappointed with the surrender of Biafra²³. Chris Ejiogu, who was an ADC to Ojukwu, wrote in his book *Biafra's Struggle for Survival* that he earnestly lamented the surrender of Biafra²⁴. J.C. Obienyem averred that

The news of the surrendering of Biafra like rumours had been rife for many months before the actual surrender. When eventually, the information got to us through the Army liaison unit, we were dug in at Afor – Igwe. We just had a successful counter – attack against the Federal Army a few hours to the news of the end of Biafran... the whole thing sounded like a huge joke. The question I kept asking was if the whole three years had been a wasted effort?²⁵

There were also those who thanked goodness for the end of the thirty months of bloodshed. To these set of people, it was the end of hunger and starvation and the hope of a better tomorrow. No matter what the Biafrans thought of the surrender, the reality that the majority of the people had to face was that the end of a war does not automatically conduce to betterment. Several material obstacles were central in driving the continued hardship of the people. First was the disposition of the 'conquering' Nigerian Army – who went about harassing the Biafrans, civilian and military alike. The explication of this ugly situation has been

documented in extant literature of the Nigeria - Biafra war. However, General Philip Effiong noted that,

In spite of the assurances of the General (Gowon) both over the radio and leaflets dropped over the territory, it would appear that the fears of the people (Biafrans) as to their lives and property are being made real by the behaviour of the soldiers (federal soldiers) who now roam the streets and by – ways commandeering and carting away young girls and ladies as well as private cars of those returning home from their place of refuge or endeavouring to report at the place of work as broadcast... it is recommended that the General should direct that all troops be confined to barracks...²⁶

From available sources, it does appear that the Federal Military Government of Nigeria did not employ any systematic policy to curb the harassment, brutalisation and debasement of the Biafrans by the victorious troops of the Nigerian Army. Augustine Eze has argued that instead of stopping these abuses, the federal government appeared to have given them tacit encouragement to plunder the people to the fullest. “After all”, maintained Eze, “a defeated and conquered people have always been at the mercy of the victors and conquerors”²⁷. Thus, the months and years following the Nigeria - Biafra war did not herald the anticipated succour to the Igbo who had hoped that an unconditional surrender to the Nigerian government would extenuate the sufferings they had undergone in the thirty months of the war. Several factors were responsible for this situation.

One of the main causes of the continued insecurity and hence, suffering in Igboland in the months and years following the civil war was the availability of small arms in the region. And this directly leads to the question of the nature of arms mop – up after the Nigeria - Biafra war. This is because no understanding of the question of the proliferation of arms after the war can be meaningful without enquiring on the nature of arms mop – up after the war. The question of arms mop – up in the months following the Nigeria - Biafra war and the larger issue of

disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) is crucial to the main thrust of this study and to this central theme we now turn attention.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)

As noted in the first chapter of this study, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration relate to the formal disbanding of military formations and, at the individual level, involve the process of releasing combatants from a mobilised state during which they are usually conveyed to their homes or new districts and granted small initial reinsertion packages to enhance their resettlement process. It has been noted that the enhancement of security for societies emerging from armed conflicts is to a large extent dependent on the effectiveness of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration²⁸. Caroline Ndiku has observed that for security in post war societies, practical disarmament is a *sine qua non*. She contends that

Disarmament measures are envisioned as a concept and framework that would comprehensively address the issue of illicit weapons. Practical Disarmament, therefore, is not just about the collection and management of weapons stockpiles but has to do with preventing conflicts, strengthening the rule of law and promoting public security. It is aimed at reducing armed violence and demands for SALW and improving the management of the State in dispensing its security function²⁹.

Agreed that the concept of DDR is relatively a new one, the question that begs for answer is: Was there any systematic arms mop up after the Nigeria - Biafra war? Seth Ohene-Asare, Feand lix Aklavon, Theonas Moussou, Augustine Ikelegbe and Francis Chigozie variously noted that there was nothing resembling arms mop up after the war^{29a}. Francis Chilaka went further to aver that “most of the weapons that were used in the years following the civil war were residue of arms that were used during the Nigeria - Biafra war”³⁰.

From available sources, only two White Papers issued in January and March, 1970 by the Federal Military Government had anything to do with the surrendered Biafran soldiers or their arms. These were the “White Paper on Civilian Conduct” issued on 16 January, 1970 and the

“Federal Military Government Guidelines on Demobilization” which came two months later in March, 1970³¹. The “East Central State Edict on General Conduct, 1970” of 12th January, 1970 may also be included. A perusal of these documents (which are documented at the National Archives, Enugu) indicates that no systematic thought was given to the issues of disarmament and demobilization talk more of reintegrating the erstwhile Biafran soldiers³².

The “White Paper on Civilian Conduct, 16th January, 1970” was a four – page piece containing instructions on how returning Biafran civilians should conduct themselves. Given that the announcement of Biafra’s surrender had created the impetus for refugees to return to their homes and villages; and also being that the Federal Government was aware that some Biafran soldiers who were still armed might attack Federal troops; the document thus, requested civilians to avoid clustering or crowding³³. The civilians were also requested to move in single files at all times³⁴.

Additionally, the document made incidental references on how Biafran soldiers who were yet to lay down their arms could go to the nearest police station and surrender them over³⁵. By and large, the White Paper contained no information on the systematic demobilization and disarmament or the mopping up of arms which were known to have littered the length and breadth of Igboland. It took exactly three months before the Federal Military Government came up with what it called; “Guidelines on Demobilization” which was published and made available to the public in March 1970³⁶. The document, containing about eight pages, was somewhat a reinforcement of the public broadcast that Colonel Olusegun Obasanjo had made from Radio Nigeria, Obodo – Ukwu, two months earlier, precisely on 16th January, 1970, in which the colonel ordered all former secessionist officers to converge at Owerri³⁷. No specific information on arms mop up was made or denoted in the government guidelines of March 1970. Chukwuka

Osakwe and Bem Japhet Audu contend that “there was no deliberate policy to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate ex – combatants”³⁸.

Some scholars have rather uncritically mistaken Gowon’s Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstructions (3Rs) to be synonymous with Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. Some have argued that the 3Rs embodied DDR. This is far from the reality; Gowon’s 3Rs have no direct bearing on the aims and purposes of DDR. The 3Rs were too encompassing to have addressed the specific needs of DDR³⁹. Besides, Gowon was known to have reneged on his promise on January 15, 1970, not to persecute or victimise the Igbo. In that particular broadcast to the nation, he had pledged *inter alia*,

I solemnly repeat our guarantees of a general amnesty for those misled into rebellion. We guarantee the personal safety of everyone, who submits to the Federal authority. We guarantee the security of life of all citizens in every part of Nigeria and equality in political rights. We also guarantee the right of every Nigerian to reside and work wherever he chooses in the Federation, as equal citizens of one united country. It is only right that we should henceforth respect each other. We shall all exercise civic restraint and use our freedom, taking into full account the legitimate rights and needs of the other man. There is no question of second class citizenship in Nigeria⁴⁰.

The tales of the political and economic tragedies that befell the Igbo, as a consequence of the renegeing on his pledge by Gowon is outside the scope of this present study. It may suffice to note, nonetheless, that the said renegeing affected the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of soldiers, especially those on Biafran side in the years following the war. This grossly impacted on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Southeast Region of Nigeria. It is unarguable that the Gowon regime had initially promised a general amnesty to the members of the Biafran armed forces who were “misled into rebellion”, however, the regime later made a *volte-face* on the matter. Two reasons, according to Paul Obi – Ani, were responsible for Gowon and his government’s *volte face* on their promise of unconditional

amnesty to the Biafran soldiers. The first was to avoid a situation in which it would appear as if secession paid. The second reason was that those who had served the Nigerian nation during crisis should not be forced out of office simply to create room for Igbo returnees⁴¹.

In line with the above reasons and in dissonance with the general amnesty offered the erstwhile Biafran soldiers, the military government of Gowon decidedly rounded up all the Biafran military officers who reported to Owerri as instructed by Obasanjo and held them in detention in the premises of what is now Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri⁴². Humphrey Chukwuka and Sam Ukpabi, who were part of the detainees, reveal separately that the Biafran officers under detention at the Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, were categorised into three. First were those that were involved with the January 15, 1966 coup; second, were those who played crucial roles in Biafra's military actions and the third were those who merely obeyed the orders of their superiors⁴³. Paul Obi – Ani asserts that,

...those in the first category escaped execution through the help of some Nigerians and international human rights organisations that championed their cause. Senior army officers, who were unhappy with the January 15, 1966 revolution, would have preferred to hang all the participants even after the war... the treatment of the other two groups depended upon the bias of the authority towards particular individuals. The result was that some who had friends in the Federal Army received light punishment such as retirement with benefits. Some of the junior officers were reabsorbed while the rest were dismissed without benefits. The Federal authorities no longer recognised the ranks of these dismissed officers⁴⁴.

At the end of a war, it may not be out of place to try some combatants whose activities during armed conflicts were egregious and ran afoul of international stipulations. However, the trial of Biafran soldiers after the war appeared to have had no concrete philosophical, jurisprudential or moral objectives other than being acts of vendetta intended to punish the Igbo for secession. Their detention and treatment ran counter to natural law and the principles of equity and good conscience. Obi – Ani further argues that

Under military rule, the detainees were subjected to strict prison rules. Initially, they were not even allowed to come out of their prison cells during the day to have fresh air and take exercises. Throughout their prison sojourn in Port – Harcourt Prison or in Shaki Maximum Security Prison, Lagos, their feeding condition was generally poor. Later they were moved to an old house at Broad Street Lagos...⁴⁵

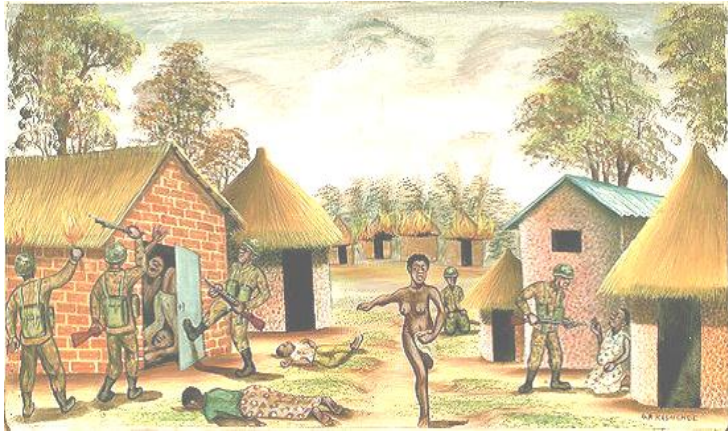
On the issue of the Biafran soldiers who were asked to report at Owerri and who they surrendered their weapons to and what in fact, became of those weapons (if any were submitted), it would appear that most Biafran officers never complied with that directives. From available sources, it would seem that not more than four hundred persons reported at Owerri as directed by Obasanjo⁴⁶. A greater number of Biafran junior officers feared that something sinister would likely happen to them at Owerri and therefore shunned the instruction to report at Owerri⁴⁷. Besides, only the officers were asked to report at Owerri and it took no special intuition to realise that in the military, the rank and file is usually about 87 per cent larger than the officer cadre.

Samson C. Ukpabi, in an interview with the researcher asserted that none of the Biafran officers reported at Owerri with any weapons^{47a}. Charles Chigbata noted that he did not go to Owerri but “of course, it would be suicidal for anyone to travel to Owerri with any arm”⁴⁸. Corroborating this viewpoint, Bem Japhet Audu posits that “most civil war combatants both on the Federal Government side as well as the secessionist side were not disarmed after demobilization at the end of the war just as no commensurate welfare package was given to them”⁴⁹.

The Nigerian Federal Military Government at the time did not make any arrangement for mopping up of arms in Igboland. As stated earlier, combatant officers were asked to go the nearest police barracks or police station to hand in their weapons. J.C. Obienyem has noted the problems with this seemingly injudicious instruction. First, it is demeaning and insulting to ask a soldier to go and hand in his weapon after thirty months of combat to the police. Corollary to this

point is the fact that the occupying Nigerian soldiers went about marauding and maiming people who were suspected to have fought for Biafra. “Are these the people we should have taken our weapons to?”⁵⁰ he queried.

Plate 6: An Artist’s Impression of the brutality of Nigerian soldiers at the end of the war



Source: Philip Emeagwali, Thunder Road to Biafra. Retrieved from <http://www.emeagwali.com> (Accessed on 12/7/2016).

The reality on ground as at 1970 was that those who had the guts took their weapons home to hide while those who had not the courage dumped their weapons wherever they could and fled for dear life. In fact, a sizeable number of the erstwhile Biafran combatants interviewed by this researcher opined that they returned home with their Israeli – made Madison rifles or Biafran – made double – barrel guns which they used to hunt games years after the war. Israel Okongwu, a war veteran, who served under Colonel Bernard Odogwu of the Biafran Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) disclosed that more than a million rifles and a motley of ammunition were available in Biafra at the time of the surrender of the republic in January, 1970⁵¹. This excluded other types of small arms and light weapons such as pistols, grenades, light machine guns, submachine guns and higher machine guns. It is not, therefore, out of place

to submit that the small arms and light weapons used to prosecute the Biafran war, especially in the case of Biafra were not properly accounted for. Samson C. Ukpabi suspects that some senior Nigerian officers might have done some shady deals with some of the collected arms in Biafra. According to him, two truckloads of arms were seen heading out of Owerri a few days after the Biafran surrender in January 1970⁵².

The evidence that the Nigerian government cared less about systematically mopping up the arms in the secessionist Biafra lies in the fact that civil war arms and weapons have been discovered in several parts of Igboland. For instance, the site of the present day Paul University at Awka until the capture of Awka in 1968 served as the headquarters of Colonel Nwawo's 54 Brigade of the Biafran Army, when the federal forces captured the town, the retreating Biafran 54 Brigade abandoned all their weapons and arms there as they fled⁵³. The Nigerian troops, which overran Awka, were also known to have used the site for their command headquarters. Charles Chigbata informed us that after the war, guns, rocket launchers and all sorts of weapons were heaped at the premises. Some of these weapons were dug out during a construction activity in August 2015⁵⁴. Additionally, Oliver Muoneke discloses that in 2000 at the Ogbohor Hill Primary School, Aba, serviceable guns were found wrapped in industrial polythene bags⁵⁵. In August 2016, one truckload of rusted Biafran made arms was dug out in a construction site at Nwagu, Agulu⁵⁶. Muoneke contends that the command headquarters of Biafran and Nigerian forces were usually primary and secondary school plants and that these were dumpsites of weapons and ammunition of all sorts after the Nigeria - Biafra war⁵⁷.

Plate 7: A sample of high calibre 55 mm projectile and 12.5 mm pellets ubiquitous at Paul University, Awka Premises



Source: Researcher's on – site snapshot

Plate 8: Ostensibly a church but served as the Armoury of Nigerian Federal Troops who captured Awka in 1968



Source: Researcher's on – site snapshot

From the foregoing, it is clear that there was no serious attempt at mopping up of arms neither was there any disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the combatant officers of Biafra. The implication of this situation for arms proliferation in the region shall be fully explored in the next chapter. However, in concluding this section, it suffices to note that practical disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration is a fundamental process, a *sine qua non* for security in any society transiting from armed conflict to peace. It enables a nation transit from armed conflict to peace and more importantly gives ex-combatants the opportunity to become stakeholders in peace, security and progress of their nation. It should be noted that a practical DDR checks criminal violence after a war. This is because after a war, if there is nothing economically yielding for the ex – combatants, considering their exposure and socialization in violence, they may turn to crime. There was no practical DDR for ex – Biafran soldiers and the police; in fact, it was not until 2003 that about 5,000 erstwhile police officers were paid any

entitlements by Nigeria⁵⁸. These officers had been wallowing in poverty and misery since 1970. The implication of this situation for the Southeast Region of Nigeria had been the development of a state of affairs in which small arms and light weapons grew to assume the cause and determinant of several kinds of violent crimes. It is, therefore, the submission of this study that the availability of small arms and light weapons after the civil war was the primary source of arms which could be proliferated in post war Igboland. In strategic studies it is known that availability create capability and capability consequently creates intentions.

Causes of Arms Proliferation in the Immediate Post-Civil War Southeast Nigeria

Many scholars have worked on the economic and political deprivations of the Igbo following the Nigeria - Biafra war. Paul Obi – Ani has, for example, studied the post-civil war political and economic reconstruction of Igboland and has documented the seemingly systematic policies put up by Nigeria’s government to ensure that the Igbo never amounted to anything, politically and economically in Nigeria⁵⁹. While it is not the intention of this study to revisit the myriad of contradictions and arguments raised in the reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes of Nigeria after the Nigeria - Biafra war, suffice it to note that the economic hardships and financial conditions of life in Igboland played a crucial role in the proliferation of arms and weapons immediately after the war. Ben Nwabueze underscores the point when he reveals that “at the end of the war in January 1970, there was a considerable amount of arms and ammunition lying loose about the country and also a large number of young people demobilized from the army with no gainful employment, for whom armed robbery provided a ready and easy means of making quick money”⁶⁰.

The snag in the above viewpoint is that the said weapons were not lying loosely in the whole of Nigeria but in Igboland. Thus, Nwabueze’s observation would have made better sense

if he had replaced the “country” with “Igboland or Southeast. This is because the real pangs of the war and its aftermath were hardly felt in the other regions of Nigeria. According to Sebastine Obeta, “the Nigeria - Biafra war was hardly felt in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria except the irregular movement of military personnel and the inchoate Mid-west (mis)adventure; life appeared normal within Nigeria during the war”⁶¹. Thus, any discussion on the abundance of arms after the civil war should majorly refer to the Southeast Region of Nigeria. The fact cannot be refuted that the end of the Nigeria - Biafra war was a period of unspeakable poverty and intense hardship for the Igbo, in whose domains the war had raged on for thirty months. The sincerity of the federal government’s peace building - efforts was to be doubted, given the strangling economic policies erected by the federal government of Nigeria. J.C. Obienyem observes that

Most families returned home to see their houses demolished; all the farms had been overgrown with weeds. The domestic animals had all grown wild. To make matters worse, the Nigerian authorities had rendered the Biafran currency totally useless, such that people moved about without money or reasonable property to barter. The most worrisome of these was the bestial attitude that the war conditions had introduced in the social relations of the Igbo. People only thought of survival and nothing more...⁶².

The excruciating poverty that bedevilled life in Igboland after the Nigeria - Biafra war had been hinted above, but its implication for the proliferation of small arms requires some amplification to be well understood. We may recall that the Biafran currency was what the bulk of the Igbo people possessed after the war. Obi – Ani has noted that no sooner had the war ended than the Igbo were compelled to deposit at the Central Bank of Nigeria both the old Nigerian currency in their possession as well as the Biafran currency which had been declared illegal by the federal government of Gowon⁶³. Obi – Ani further reveals that

It took General Gowon’s regime five months to decide what to do with the illegal Biafran currency of the Igbo. Initially, General Gowon insisted that nothing would be paid in exchange for the Biafran currency, describing it as worthless and

useless. He stated that payment would involve an expenditure of £200 million which, he alleged would benefit only a few people. Gowon later relented in his stand and the Igbo who deposited the old Biafran currency got a paltry sum of twenty pounds £20 each irrespective of the amount of Biafran currency an individual deposited⁶⁴.

The impact of this financial policy on the Igbo requires not much imagination to understand. From all sides, the Igbo were psychologically demoralised, financially distressed and with an uncertain future. Those who had some property to sell took the bold step to sell off their personal possessions such as sewing machines, bicycles and radio sets to start off small businesses; however, only a few persons had stuff to sell, and thus, the greater number of the Igbo were totally devastated by the federal government's financial policy. Additionally, the government showed no inclination towards the revitalization of the destroyed industries in Igboland. This situation produced unspeakable unemployment and poverty. Many people were known to have indulged in all kinds of vices in a desperate attempt to survive. The state of despondency was such that an Ohaji – Egbema woman was arrested at the Ochanja motor park in Onitsha, for attempting to sell her one- year- old daughter for £15⁶⁵.

The effect of this situation on the proliferation of the arms in Igboland has been expounded by many of the veterans of the Biafran army. Samson C. Ukpabi reported that two truckloads of weapons were seen leaving Owerri towards Port Harcourt. According to him these weapons could not have been officially accounted for⁶⁶. Joseph Nwankwo informed this researcher that even though the proliferation of weapons and arms after the Nigeria - Biafra war was mainly caused by the despairing and hopeless economic glum in which the Igbo people found themselves, “this would not have been a serious affair were it not for the emergence of some unscrupulous elements who came in from Benin and Lagos with the highly treasured new Nigerian currency to trade on arms, weapons and ammunition”⁶⁷. Nwankwo went further to reveal that since the Igbo desperately needed the new Nigerian currency, the arrival of some

traders interested in the illicit sales of arms and weapons was a major source of the new Nigerian notes and not a few persons indulged in this seemingly lucrative trade that lasted for nearly five years⁶⁸.

Nwankwo's revelation no doubt corroborates the testimony of S.C. Ukpabi who, as earlier noted, saw two truckload of arms exiting Owerri. The nexus between Nwankwo's revelations and S.C. Ukpabi's testimony is that the illicit proliferation of arms may have started even before the end of the war in 1970. The present researcher investigated this claim by interviewing as many as forty-six persons who witnessed the war – on whether the claim that illicit arms proliferation had begun in Igboland before the end of the war is sustainable. While most of the interviewees indicated very little knowledge about the possibility of illicit sales of arms and weapons during the war, they were unanimous in their opinions that the end of the war and the poor mopping up of arms/ lack of proper disarmament was the root causes of the proliferation of weapons in *post bellum* Igboland. For example, Friday Onyebuchi Eze avers that

The mismanagement of arms after the civil war was the root cause of both proliferation and the high spate of armed robbery in not only Igboland but also the length and breadth of Nigeria after the war, some Yoruba people who had wanted to profit from the economic conditions of the Igbo came to trade on illicit arms which were lying about in all the nooks and crannies of Igboland. Incidentally, they acquired these weapons and smuggled them out of Igboland into Edo and Lagos states where they were massively employed for criminal and deadly uses. When you hear about Ishola Oyenusi and his gang, you will know that this story is true...⁶⁹

Corroborating this viewpoint, the editorial of *Lagos Times* of March 1971, lamented the abundance of arms in civilian hands in Lagos, Edo and other states of Southwestern Nigeria. It linked these weapons availability to illicit trading on arms and weapons in Igboland⁷⁰. This development, no doubt, led to a high spate in criminality of all sorts in *post bellum* Nigeria, especially in Lagos and Edo states. Furthermore, N.L. Abanyam, David Bauchi and D.O.

Tormusa write that armed robbery as a social problem which undermined the progress of the Nigerian society inhered from the badly handled demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of combatant officers at the end of the country's civil war in 1970⁷¹. It is on record that violent criminality was so high in the early 1970s that in response, the Nigerian military Government of General Yakubu Gowon had to promulgate Decree No. 47 (The Robbery and Firearms Special Provision Decree) in 1970 - the first legislation on armed robbery and firearms in post – colonial Nigeria. The decree stipulated and recommended death sentence by firing squad for anyone convicted of armed robbery in Nigeria. This was followed by increase in number, size, and standard of the police force, courts and prisons⁷². Violent criminality, especially armed robbery in Igboland, however, had to wait for a while; until the people had sufficiently recovered from the economic downturns and slump imposed on them both by the war and the hostile financial and economic policies of the victorious federal government. After all, robbers do not rob people who have nothing at all to offer.

Biafran Blacksmiths, Gunsmiths and Technologists in the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, 1970 – 2013

The role of the former blacksmiths and gunsmiths (recruited for the purposes of assisting the Biafran arms industry) in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in post-civil war Igboland does not seem to have been studied in detail. While researchers such as Chukwuemeka Alaku and Francis Chilaka⁷³ have in their studies linked the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as a consequence of the exposure given to certain blacksmiths, especially from the Awka area, they nonetheless seem not to have given any significant details of the 'how' and 'why' of the matter. Other writers such as Seth Ohene - Asare, Feand lix Aklavon, Theonas Moussou, and Augustine Ikelegbe, Mike Okiro and Pontian Okoli, among others,⁷⁴ who have produced sponsored publications on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria

took the liberty of assuming that their readers already know of the details of the connection between Awka and Udi blacksmiths of Biafra and the proliferation of small arms in *post bellum* Igboland. For example, Mike Okiro who was Nigeria's Inspector - General of Police from 2007 to 2009, has argued that

The Nigeria - Biafra war provided a source for the proliferation of small arms in Nigeria. At the end of the civil war, most of the arms both in Biafra and in Nigeria disappeared into the civil society. Many soldiers carried arms (including captured arms) from the war fronts to various parts of the country. Besides, local blacksmiths who had produced massive arms of various sorts continued to produce firearms after the war⁷⁵.

It goes without saying, therefore, that the details of the nexus between the Biafran blacksmiths and the arms proliferation after the civil war have not been fully established in extant literature. Part of the snags derives from the ambiguities of the Nigerian firearms regime and also, the taciturnity of the blacksmiths themselves, perhaps, due to police harassment and arrests, among others. From the present researcher's investigations, it would appear that blacksmiths, gunsmiths and other technologists, who worked with Biafra's Research and Production unit (RAP), played a crucial role in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeastern Nigeria in the post war Nigeria.

In line with the above viewpoint, it should be noted that Igbo communities such as Awka, the old Agbaja-Udi Division, Nkwerre, Abiriba, and Ezza have been ancient blacksmiths who produced firearms of various calibres. For example, Uzoma Osuala contends that Nkwerre blacksmiths had attained a measure of sophistication by the middle of the 17th century. In his words:

The smith who had always produced *ola* (finger rings), *mkputu* (nails), hoes etc began to direct their efforts towards repairing and manufacturing of guns. Among such guns was *egbe cham* or flint gun. It had an ignition barrel into which the gun-powder was applied. Closely associated with the repair and manufacture of gun was the ability to make *mkponala* (small indigenous cannons). They could also repair *kurutu* or *egbe-ndu* (cannon of more complex composition). This *egbe-*

ndu was the latest of all the firearms and they appeared perhaps in the late 19th century. It would appear that by achieving this skill, Nkwerre reached the height of craftsmanship and from this excellence, the town derived its sobriquet - Nkwerre *Opia Egbe* (Nkwerre, the gun - makers)⁷⁶.

Although, O.N. Njoku persuasively argues that Agbaja – Udi blacksmithing and iron technology predated that of Awka, it is still generally agreed that iron technology and blacksmithing in Awka and the most parts of the smithing communities in Igboland predated European colonialism of the late 19th century⁷⁷. In fact, it was the advent of European colonialism that tended to stall and stifle the iron technology in Igboland⁷⁸.

The eruption of the Nigeria-Biafra war and Biafra's arms challenge (as discussed earlier) brought all these blacksmiths together to experiment on the local fabrication of arms in order to assist the nascent republic's war efforts. Akin to the Manhattan Project through which the United States developed the atomic bomb, the coming together of like – minds – seasoned blacksmiths and gunsmiths of Igboland – produced phenomenal results in arms and weapons production for Biafra.

What is more important is that the exposure and the synergy of the blacksmiths in the Biafran Research and Production Unit rubbed off on the skills, abilities and competencies of the men who worked for the Biafran Research and Production (RAP) unit, especially those who were not specialists in gunsmithing. Johnson Ezenwaka, a retired blacksmith at Nanka, in Anambra State, worked for the Biafran RAP Unit and informed this researcher that he was an apprentice blacksmith, not more than sixteen years old when the war started in 1967. Ezenwaka further reveals that at the end of the war, all of the persons who worked for RAP, either at Enugu, Umuahia and Ogboji had acquired multifarious skills in metal works, especially those involving smelting, welding and gunsmithing⁷⁹. It is known that like the lot of the combatant officers of the erstwhile Biafran Army, these blacksmiths, who toiled day and night for nearly

three years in RAP workshops, often had to move with their families - with the imminent attack of their stations/workshops by the federal forces.

When eventually the war ended, they returned home only to meet racking poverty and insufferable conditions. Hilary Ozor, an Eziagu blacksmith disclosed that blacksmiths were the worst affected by the hardships which engulfed Igboland following the end of the civil war. According to him most blacksmiths in the community before the eruption of the civil war were so preoccupied with smithing that they hardly learnt other engagements like farming, hunting or fishing⁸⁰. The economic hardships after the war pushed almost all Igbo people to farming; since no one had money to either buy or sell. In this situation, the professional blacksmith contended with a double tragedy – the tragedy of the general hardship and that of learning to support his family with a new vocation - farming.

The above being the case, one can imagine the indignation of the blacksmiths of the Research and Production unit. Charles Chigbata submits that several Awka men including those who were not practicing smiths before the war began to set up blacksmithing workshops as early as 1971. It is known that Awka people made guns prior to the civil war but their skills according to Robert Nzekwe were greatly sharpened by the Research Production unit (RAP)⁸¹. In line with the ongoing, Francis Chilaka asserts that “one primary centre for craft production is Awka in Anambra state. Awka has been a centre for craft production since the Nigerian-Biafran civil war in the late 1960s, when Awka produced explosives. Since this time, the expertise for local production has remained a family business, with knowledge of fabrication techniques passed down through generations⁸²”.

Furthermore, the impact of the Nigeria - Biafra war on Awka blacksmithing/ gunsmithing prowess is so crucial that the blacksmiths are said to have international connections and arrangements in which gunsmiths from neighbouring African countries are trained in the art of

gun and munitions – making⁸³. Additionally, the Small Arms Survey had opined that in the early 1980s, many artisans and technologists from Accra and other parts of Ghana came to Awka to provide additional training to Awka gunsmiths⁸⁴.

Although, it is not only Awka blacksmiths that locally fabricate guns in Igboland, Awka made guns have somewhat taken the trademark for all locally – made guns and weapons in Nigeria. The predominance of Awka in the production of craft weapons is evidenced through the common reference to craft weapons made in Nigeria as ‘Awka-made’ or more simply ‘Awka’⁸⁵. The production techniques employed in fashioning these guns and weapons have surprisingly, remained rudimentary. Machines are scarcely used in the production process. Vices, steel saws, manual drills, and files are mostly employed in the fabrication process, with small makeshift furnaces used to heat the metals. Fabrication of craft weapons usually takes place in the producers’ homes or backyards. These blacksmiths aged, as some of them have become, are found at Agulu Awka, Amikwo, Umuike and Umuogbu villages⁸⁶. Some younger persons are also involved in this business of gunsmithing in Awka. It is important to note that as a result of police and other security operatives’ raids, the local fabrication of arms in Awka is carried out in utmost secrecy.

More often than not, some of the blacksmiths who have furnaces at Odera Market as well as those at Obunagu – two popular areas in Awka, produce only household appliances and moulding of car spare keys. They, however, have nuggets of information about local crafting of weapons which are not known by the security operatives in the state. The real arms fabricators, according to Izu Ezekwe, often have furnaces outside the community, given the incessant raids by the police and other security agencies. There also seems to be some kind of connivance between the blacksmiths and some senior statutory security operatives. Izu Ezekwe hinted that Awka gunsmiths have ‘systems’ that enable them to know when the operatives would embark on

a major raid for craft arms in the community⁸⁷. Blacksmithing is so dominant a culture among the Awka people that the king of the community has the dynastic title of Eze – Uzu (king of blacksmiths).

The salience of Awka-made guns over those of other communities such as the famous Nkwere Opia Egbe (Nkwerre, the gunsmiths) and the Agbaja - Udi smiths also has a history linked to the Nigeria - Biafra war. Accordingly, Ejikeme Chiana has argued that the reason for this salience of Awka – made weapons was that the Awka people have been more daring than most of other blacksmithing communities in Igboland⁸⁸. After the war, precisely, from 1971, the government of Gowon began a massive crackdown on all known gunsmiths in Igboland and while most blacksmiths of other communities stopped the crafting of guns, the Awka people daringly continued to craft guns underground⁸⁹.

Table 4.1: Awka Craft Made Arms, Features, Ammunition and Cost (as at 2007)

S/N	Arm	Features	Ammunition	Cost
1.	Pocket single-shot handgun	Approximately 13 cm long; steel muzzle to wooden stock; extremely rudimentary hammer requiring cocking; effective only at a distance of 1-2m; uses single shotgun cartridge	Various calibers of shotgun cartridge	NGN4,000/USD32
2.	Four-shot Revolver	Available in manual and automatic configurations	9mm, 7.5mm, or 8.5mm	NGN8,000/USD64
3.	Eight-shot revolver	Available in manual and automatic configurations	9mm, 7.5mm, or 8.5mm	NCN12,000/USD96
4.	Single-barrel	Breech-loading	Various calibers of shotgun cartridge	NCN 10,000-11,000/USD 80-

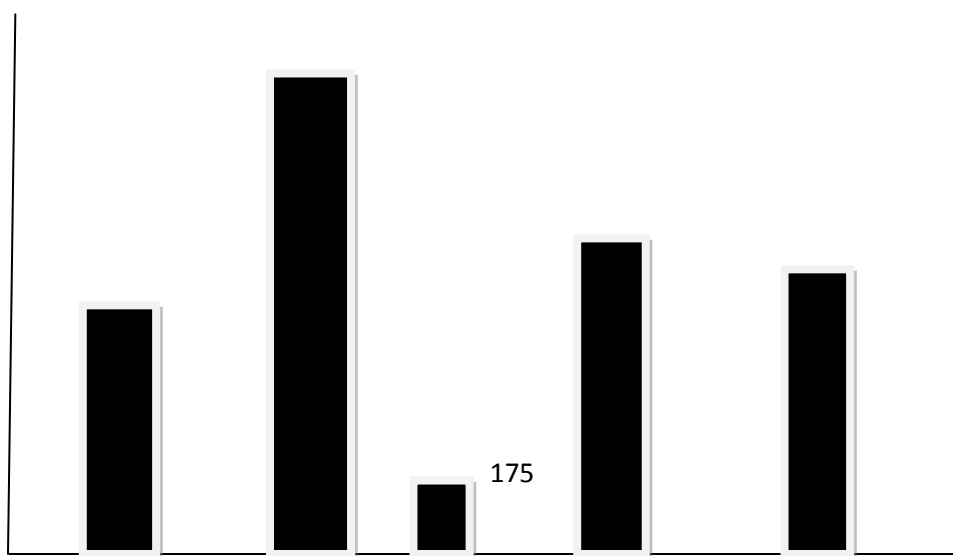
	shotgun	safety cocking mechanism		88
5.	Horizontal double barrel shotgun	Breech-leading; one trigger for each barrel; safety cooking mechanism	Various calibers of shotgun cartridge	NGN25,000-30,000/USD 200-240
6.	Vertical double barrel shotgun	Automatic configuration firing both rounds without need for cocking breech-loading	Various calibers of shotgun cartridge	NCN45,000/USD 360

Source: Col. Mohammed Ndeji Idris, Small Arms Trafficking and Violent Crimes: Implications for National Security (Dissertation: Senior Executive Course No. 31, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru – Jos), 85. Nota Bene: The prices of these arms must have changed since the survey was made in 2007.

From the available investigations on small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria, evidence indicates that a significant number of the illicit arms in Nigeria is crafted in the Southeastern part of Nigeria. For example, the 2007 Small Arms Survey suggested that there are about three million illicit arms in Nigeria. The report further revealed that most of these weapons were locally manufactured and that 60 per cent of these locally produced weapons were crafted in the Southeast Region of Nigeria⁹⁰. The folly in the management of the Biafran technological inventions after the civil war appears nowhere more deleterious than its creation of a skillful class of gun – makers whose commercial gunsmithing have proven difficult to track and yet very erosive to national security. As one observer puts it, “the ghost of Biafra has continued to haunt Nigeria”⁹¹. As stated in the introduction to this study, no effort at curbing the menace of small arms and light weapons proliferation will produce a reasonable result until the historical roots are taken cognizance of and factored in.

Aside, the arms fabricated by local blacksmiths in the Southeast, reports from the Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PRESCOM) and the Nigerian police indicate that illegal arms industries produce arms of different calibres and types in the Southeast⁷⁸. For example, in July 2006, a team of Nigerian police officers on security tip off, swooped on an illegal arms factory in Igbo – Eiti Local Government of Enugu. The police seized more than 700 different kinds of assault rifles including AK 47 rifles and numerous types of ammunition⁹². In Abia State, especially in the Ngwa areas, police sources show that illegal arms manufacturing is rife⁹³. This is supported by the number of weapons discovered in these communities when the police and other security personnel raided the area. On inspection, these seized weapons were said to have been so neatly crafted that very little difference existed between them and the imported ones⁹⁴. This perhaps validates the Small Arms Survey report which suggested that trade on locally produced small arms and light weapons is more lucrative than trade on imported arms⁹⁵. In addition, Uka Kalu reports that men of the Eagle Squad of Imo State Police command impounded large cache of arms at the armoury base of criminals in a bush located at the boundary between Amaraku, Mbano and Ikeduru communities⁹⁶. These small arms and light weapons have unarguably transposed into one of the greatest threats to the human security as well as the development of the region.

Graph 1: A graphical Representation of Local Fabrication of Arms in the South-East, 1970 – 2013



Anambra Abia Ebonyi Enugu Imo

Source: compiled by the researcher from several sources

The import of the above submission notwithstanding, it is obvious that availability of small arms and light weapons does not in itself constitute a threat to any society. Since guns do not shoot themselves, some other factors must be present before the availability of guns begins to threaten the society. Demand must intersect with supply before any economic activity will be worthwhile. Put differently, available small arms and light weapons must have a usage- need before they can become a social menace. Their usage – needs must be caused by something; to these causes we now turn our attention.

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CHAPTER FIVE

IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF ARMS PROLIFERATION FOR SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

War Psychology, Re – Socialization and Culture of Violence in Southeastern Nigeria

A significant but often neglected impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Igboland after the civil war was what has been termed the ‘civil war psychology and re-socialization’. The Psycho-social realities brought to the fore by the civil war have been seen as deleterious to the culture of the Igbo, especially, with regard to the use of arms and weapons. The civil war reworked the psyche of the Igbo people and tended to have re-socialized the Igbo. The Igbo culture and respect for human life appeared to have been negatively affected by the war such that people no longer cared what the consequences of their actions may be. Egodi Uchendu views this trend thus,

The Igbo communal attitude to death and dead bodies was disoriented by the war. Where previously dead bodies were treated with dignity and buried soon after death, with children shielded from the surrounding rites and often prohibited from gazing at dead bodies, Enyinta remembers that in Abakaliki ‘the sight of corpses was something many children were no longer frightened of or wailed over because they littered all corners of the town’. Ugwuogwu the carpenter agrees, adding that the war diminished the value of life. Frequent encounters with dead bodies forced children to grapple with issues of life and death at an early age. While it terrorised some mentally and emotionally, it caused in others some degree of indifference to the sanctity of human life. These impacts were carried over to peacetime and were blamed for manifestations of violent behaviour by young people immediately after the war...¹

Children, most of whom had seen unspeakable violence during the war, found it hard to adjust to peace – time socialisation. Besides this, children were known to have played significant roles as Biafra’s combatant officers. In fact, most of those conscripted to fight for Biafra from September 1968 onwards were children. Additionally, children worked as spies and featured prominently in the illegal trade across enemy lines known in local parlance as *ahia attack*².

Edmund Obiezufo - Ezeigbo did observe that some of these child – traders in the *ahia attack* were quite successful in their own right³. However, the end of the war and the return to normal life meant that those children should return to their prewar roles as children. As expected, this was not an easy task. Most of the children had lost parents and relations who would have cared for them. Those who were lucky to meet their parents soon discovered they were unable to return to being children again. Things had fallen apart and obviously, the centre could no longer hold. Some of these children were according to Ndubisi Ekegbo, the ones who grew up subsequently in the late 1970s and the early 1980s to unleash untold criminal violence on the Igbo in which arms were conspicuously used⁴.

What is more, it has been discovered that some of the bad habits like smoking of marijuana (variously known as *Igbo, Ganja* or *Weed*) which promote violent criminality including armed robbery and hence, arms proliferation became widespread after the war. Chukwunweike Onyikata, who revealed to have once been a marijuana addict, believes that the despondency and disillusionment that accompanied the end of the civil war pushed young boys of his generation into smoking all sorts of things. In this way, the war psychology and the re-socialization attendant on the introduced elements which were conducive to small arms proliferation in Igboland⁵.

In addition to the foregoing, it should be noted that some causes and sources of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Igboland may not be directly linked to the Nigeria - Biafra war but nevertheless draws inspiration from the conditions the Igbo have faced since the end of the war. One of these was the rising spiral of insecurity in Nigeria in the wake of the war. The insecurity in Nigeria is known to be more or less actuated by the country's political leaders. An examination of the political economy of the country's federal system reveals that Nigeria's

federalism has become a huge structural and systematic device, in which the ruling-classes are entangled in a desperate struggle and competition over national resources. In this deadly contest, the citizens are always at the receiving end. The elected ruling-elites do not give a care for the welfare of the people as they are ever horn-locked in the appropriation of the resources of the state⁶.

In line with the on-going, Attahiru Jega asserts,

Federalism has become the structural context for class struggle and competition between factions of the ruling-classes, of diverse nationalities, that comprise the Nigerian socio-economic formations. Its center is the apex around which power revolves and for the control of which struggles ensue, sentiments are mobilized, and conflicts arise, myths and 'fairy tales'... are the essential ingredients liberally sprinkled to nourish otherwise hollow rationalizations meant to mask the real nature of the conflicts and the struggles that characterize the quest for power at the federal level⁷.

What this means is that the political economy of Nigeria's federalism rests on the interface of the contradictions in the material conditions in Nigeria and in the struggles of the social classes. Leadership in Nigeria has been denoted as *prebendal*. Chinua Achebe aptly remarked that "Nigeria's problem is the unwillingness and the inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility and challenge of personal example, which are the hallmark of true leadership"⁸. Achebe further asserts that "Nigerians are what they are only because their leaders are not what they should be"⁹.

Most times, ethnicity is sponsored by the rent-seeking ruling-class to generate group solidarity which ensures their continued political preeminence. Those who lose out of this power game in the accumulation process, also whip up 'fairy tales' and 'reactionary ethnicity' to cultivate group solidarity so as to prop up and strengthen their contest for hegemony¹⁰. Accordingly, Matthew Kukah maintains that "the political class has defined democracy around their pecuniary interests. Democracy has been to them a tune to look after their selfish interests,

granting all manners of allowances to themselves”¹¹. Jega summarizes the argument when he submits that “what can be correctly said is that all poor Nigerians are ‘catching hell’ and becoming poorer while the Nigerian ruling classes are growing richer and fatter on their labour and national resources”¹². He further submits that;

Most African leaders have substituted their individual interests for those of their states, when they talk about national security; they are actually talking about their individual security as well as those of their families and close associates. It is this distortion of African security, by which the focus is almost exclusively on regime survival that is responsible for the lack of adequate coverage of the interests of the generality of the African peoples in the continent’s security permutation...¹³.

Claude Ake was closer to the point when he noted that, although, political independence brought some change to the composition of the state managers, the character remained much the same as it was in the colonial era. It continued to be totalistic in scope, constituting a statist economy. The Nigerian state represented itself as an apparatus of violence, and a narrow social base, and relied for compliance on coercion rather than authority. “The tendency to reproduce the past was reinforced by the dispositions of the dominant social forces in the postcolonial era. None of them had any serious interest in transformation”¹⁴.

The above being the Nigerian situation, the addition of the travails of the war created a situation in which the Igbo progressively relied on self – help for their protection. This has also impacted consequentially on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Igboland. In most Igbo communities, the phenomenon of vigilantism is entrenched. Several persons have been armed and operate under the guise of vigilante outfits. For example C.K. Iwuamadi posits that “Anambra state was among the first states in the southeast region to experience the gradual take-over of security by vigilante groups following the failure of the formal state security agencies to provide security as armed robbers and other criminal activities virtually took over control of key commercial centres and towns like Onitsha, Nnewi, and the state capital Awka”¹⁵.

Some of the vigilante operatives have been found to be involved in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region.

In addition to the above impacts, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Southeast Region of Nigeria did impact on electoral and political system, especially, since the transition to civilian rule in 1999. Although, not all the elections that have taken place from 1999 fall into the scope of this study, nonetheless, in the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections, there is abundant evidence to link the proliferation of arms to electoral politics in the Southeast. The armed brigandage that the 2003 elections for example, featured was so colossal that an international observer called the 2003 election, a ‘tokunbo election’¹⁶. Igbo politicians like most like politicians of other ethnic groups in Nigeria have been known to make use of armed thugs in the bid to emerge victorious in the polls. For example, in the preparation for the 1999 election, a band of armed thugs broke into the Custom Service’s armoury at Owerri in Imo State in December 1998 and carted away substantial quantities of small arms and other types of weapons stacked there¹⁷. These arms were known to have been later used for electoral thuggery during the 1999 election, as the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the All People’s Party (APP) battled for supremacy in the Southeast Region of Nigeria. The gun-wielding hoodlums who were recruited by these politicians were mostly unemployed and cared – less about the legal implications of their actions. According to Chukwuemeka Alaku, this was made possible by the sociology of several years of military rule, “the regime of generals produced stark poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment and alienation were potential forms of violence [sic]. Many of the youths had been reduced to the reasoning level of animals by an uncaring society and their sense of right or wrong is out of place”¹⁸. Since the return to democratic rule from 1999 to 2007 when this study terminates, there was not any gubernatorial or national election in the Southeast in which armed thugs have not featured. Thus, electoral malpractices have been one of

the causes of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria's Southeast Region. They have been made manifest in the following ways:

Campus Confraternities/ Street Cult Groups

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has also substantially impacted on the phenomenon of secret cults in the tertiary institutions and, recently, in secondary schools in the Southeast. More worrisome is the springing up of cult groups on streets, towns and villages some of which have no connection with the campus cult phenomenon. Bus drivers, okada riders, shop owners and artisans among others in Igboland seem to have embraced cultism (the hitherto exclusive preserve of tertiary students) within their domains. The use of small arms represents the major, if not the only means by which these cult groups register their presence in society. For reasons ranging from the absurd to the trivial, these cult groups declare war on each other and proceed to fight these wars with utmost ferocity. In these cult wars, the group that possesses the most lethal weapons often emerged victorious and in this way, an all – out acquisition of illicit small arms and light weapons became a normative pattern among the cult groups. In August 1989, one student of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) was killed behind the Margaret Ekpo Refectory in a violent gun battle involving two rival cult groups in the school¹⁹. In 2002, also, 15 students of the same university were brutally killed in violent clashes involving cult groups²⁰.

At Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Awka, the clash of security personnel with cult groups almost ruined President Obasanjo's visit in 2002²¹. The cult boys rendered the state government unpassable such that the president had to abandon the national tree planting campaign at Mgbakwu, a suburb of Awka capital territory²². One can only imagine the kind of arms the students had that conduced to their achieving such a feat. The cases of Enugu State

University of Science and Technology (ESUT) and Imo State University(IMSU),Owerri were particularly worrisome that an observer opined that cult boys in the two schools could sack the five governors of the Southeast²³. This is because apart from the unspeakable mayhem they intermittently unleashed on campus in the period under study, these secret cult groups were known to maintain ties with gangs of armed robbers and other criminals including illicit arms traders. An ESUT Vice – Chancellor on assumption of duty shockingly testified that the situation in the school was “near anarchy backed by force of arms”²⁴.The existence of secret cults in the tertiary institutions, communities and secondary schools in the Southeastpromote the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Southeast Region of Nigeria.

Table 5.1: List of Secret Cults believed to operate in the Southeast

1.	Agbaye	18.	KGB
2.	Air Words	19.	King Cobra
3.	Amazon	20.	Klu Klux Klan
4.	Buccaneers (Sea Dogs)	21.	Knite Code
5.	Baracuda	22.	Mafia Lords
6.	Bas	23.	Mafioso Confraternity
7.	Bees International	24.	Malcolm X
8.	Big 20	25.	Maphites/Maphlate
9.	Black Axe	26.	Mgba Mgba Brothers
10.	Black Beret Fraternity	27.	Mob Stabs
11.	Black Brassier	28.	Musketeers Fraternity
12.	Black Brothers	29.	National Association of Adventurers
13.	Black Cats	30.	National Association of Sea Dogs
14.	Black Cross	31.	Neo Black

15.	Black Ladies	32.	Night Mates
16.	Black Ofals	33.	Nite Hawks
17.	Black Scorpions	34.	Nite Rovers
35.	Black Swords	59.	Odu Fraternity
36.	Blanchers	60.	Osiri
37.	Blood Hunters	61.	Scorpions
38.	Blood Suckers	62.	Soko
39.	Brotherhood of Blood Fraternity	63.	Sunmen
40.	Burkina Faso Revolution	64.	Temple of Eden Confraternity
42	Canary	65.	Truth Seekers
43	Cappa Vendetta	66.	Panama Pyrate
44	Daughters of Jezebel	67.	Phoenix
45	Dey Gbam	67	Predators
46	Dey Well	68.	Red Devils
47	Dolphins	69.	Red Fishes
48	Dragons	70.	Red Sea Horse
48	Dreaded Friends of Friends	71.	Royal Queens
49	Eagle Club	72.	Sailors
50	Egbe	73.	Scavengers
51	Eiye of Lord's Fraternity	74.	Scorpions
52	Elegemface	75.	Scorpion Fraternity
53	Executioners	76.	Sea Vipers
54	Frangs	77.	Soiree Fraternity
55	FF	78.	Thomas Sankara Boys

56	Fliers	79.	Tikan Giants
57	Frigates	80.	Trojan Horse Fraternity
58	Gentlemen's Club	81.	Truth Seekers
82.	Green Beret Fraternities	90.	Twin Mate
83	Hard Candidates	91.	Vikings
84	Hell's Angles	92.	Vipers
85	Hepos	93.	Vultures
86	Himalayas	94.	Walrus
87	Icelanders	95.	White
88	Jagare Confederation		
89	Klam Confraternity Klans Man		

Source: Chukwuemeka E. Alaku, "Small Arms and Economic Insecurity in Nigeria, 1985 – 2004" (PhD Thesis: Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, December, 2010), 35 – 36.

The security challenges of Nigeria have made the Igbo who are, by far the most dispersed ethnic group in Nigeria to become major victims of most of the crises in Nigeria, especially, in Northern Nigeria. Samuel Nwobi reveals that in order to protect themselves, in Jos, Plateau State, the Igbo people resident there, especially, the traders were instructed by their leaders to procure at least two firearms - one to be kept in their shops and another to be kept at home²⁵. On the sources of the firearms, Samuel Nwobi further notes that the traders procured most of the firearms illegally from Igboland. During the last Jos crisis, these Igbo traders according to Nwobi assisted the indigenes of Jos against their assailants by availing their weapons for use in armed confrontations²⁶. Moreover, the possibility of some of the weapons finding their ways back to Igboland are not remote, given the exodus of the Igbo people from Northern Nigeria as a result of the terrorist onslaught by the Boko Haram reached unprecedented heights in 2010.

Inter-Community Feuds in Igboland

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the wake of the Nigeria – Biafra war have significantly impacted on inter – community feuds and clashes. The Aguleri-Umuleri war suffices to buttress how inter – community feuds aggravate the process of small arms proliferation in Igboland. The struggle over the ownership of Otuocha is known to have been the root cause of the war between Aguleri and Umuleri²⁷. The conflict between the two communities predated colonial rule in Igboland. During the colonial era, court actions were instituted by the communities in the Native Courts, West African Court of Appeal (WACA), and the Privy Council in London. With the dawn of independence, the cases went to Onitsha and Otuocha High Courts respectively, the Federal Court of Appeal and terminated in the Supreme Court of Nigeria²⁸. The crisis seemed to have defied legal remedies.

Intermittent scuffles were known to have occurred between both parties during colonial rule and after independence. However, the 1995 and 1999 battles proved more disastrous than all the preceding ones. Nwachukwu Obiakor writes that “the war of September, 1995 was an entirely different scenario from what obtained in the history of inter-communal wars in Nigeria. Sophisticated weapons were deployed to the battle field”²⁹. If sophisticated weapons were used in the 1995 war, the 1999 war was so destructive that it was tagged the “Total War”.

The 1999 war was a departure from what obtained in the previous wars fought by the belligerents. Both sides, especially, the Umuleri people were known to have hired mercenaries from Onitsha and environs. More than one hundred and seventy AK 47 rifles were used by both

sides of the divide. This excludes the several other arms such double – barreled rifles, pump action guns, pistols among others. The impact of the 1999 Aguleri-Umuleri war continued to haunt the Southeast several years afterwards. It should be noted, for example, that Eric Ndiwe (Alias Derico nwa mama) and Chiejiina Okoye (Alias Chiejina nwa muo) returned home to Onitsha after fighting as mercenaries in the Aguleri-Umuleri war to perpetrate the most terrible robberies in Onitsha and environs³⁰. The war would not have been such destructive were it not for the easy availability of procurable arms in the Southeast.

In addition to the foregoing, the Ezza-Ezillo crisis on the other hand, was inflamed by a disagreement over ownership of a piece of land on which a phone booth was erected in the Ezza-Eziilo communities of Ebonyi State. The disagreement soon escalated and several battles had been fought in which several Ezza gun-wielding combatants attacked the Ezillo community killing over 70 men, women and children including a local police chief in the area. In addition to the carnage, local markets in the area were razed to the ground, domestic animals slaughtered and churches totally destroyed. Furthermore, a bomb was later found at a building site of the disputed territory³¹.

Table 5.2: Selected Cases of Communal Violence where small arms were used in the Southeast, 1999 – 2004.

S/N	Year	Location	Nature of Crisis
1.	1999	Umuleri and Aguleri /Umuoba Anam	War of Attrition between Umuleri and Aguleri as well as Umuoba Anam communities of Anambra State over boundary disputes. Over 3000 deaths recorded, property worth millions destroyed. (See Tell 9/8/1999 pg 20; See also <i>Daily Champion</i> 22/10/99).
2.	2000	Nkpor, Anambra State	Conflict over the control of Nkpor main market known locally as Afia Nkpor or Afia Idemili. More than 10 lives were lost. Property worth millions were destroyed. 3 children belonging to traditional chief were burnt while asleep (See the <i>Punch</i> 4/4/2000. Pp 1 and 6.
3.	2000	Okigwe	Scores of heavily armed soldiers and mobile police stormed Okigwe in search of MASSOB leaders. In the conflagration that ensued scores of people were killed.

			Several cars were burnt. Thousands of people fled into the bush for days. (See <i>The Guardian</i> 6/1/2001. Pp1 – 2.
4.	2001	Onitsha	A gun battle that lasted for several hours. This was between the Bakassi Boys and the Nigerian Police. The Bakassi Boys challenged an order for them to leave Anambra State. 12 Policemen were seriously injured. (See <i>Vanguard</i> , 5/5/2001), pg.1.
5.	2002	Omasi/Iga	Omasi, a community in Ayamelum LGA Anambra State witnessed a civil strife over land disputes between itself and Iga, a community in Kogi. The bloody conflagration saw to death of more than 14 persons and property worth millions destroyed.
6.	2002	Ogborji/Ezzeagu	Ogborji, a community in Orumba South in Anambra State disputed their boundary with Ezeagu community in Enugu. In the ensuing mayhem many lives were lost, property were lost.
7.	2002	Enugu	14 worshippers died at Father Mbaka’s Adoration Ground when unknown gun men entered the premises and fired canisters of poisonous substances into the air that made people who inhaled it to collapse. (See <i>Newswatch</i> , 15/3/2002.
8.	2002	Aba	Annual Igbo Day celebration turned bloody at Aba when Uka/Ngwa and Ohaneze factions engaged themselves in a gun battle. (See <i>Punch</i> 5/10/2002).
9.	2003	Ifite Ogwari	The Ifite Ogwari community had a series of armed confrontations with the pastoralist Fulani over grazing issues. Many people were killed on both sides. Countless number of cows were shot dead by angry youths of the community.
10	2004	Izzi/Yalla	The Izzi people of Ebonyi State have boundary with Yalla community in Cross River State. Agitations over land resulted into an armed confrontation. Several lives were lost on both sides.
11	2004	Aku/Ikolo	These communities were embroiled over land disputes. Several confrontations led to the death of scores of lives.

Source: Culled by the Researcher from Disparate Sources.

Ethnic Militia(s) and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeastern Nigeria

That the Nigeria - Biafra war did not truly end on 12th January, 1970, has been manifested in the thriving of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, in the period under study. The ease with which these movement endeared itself to the ordinary Igbo man on the street is a theme for a separate study. The Movement for the

Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was founded on the 13th of September, 1999 by Chief Ralph Uwazurike, who is said to have trained in India as a lawyer³². Uwazurike claimed to have understudied Mahatma Gandhi's non – violence strategies for political emancipation of his people. The MASSOB leader also averred that he studied Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu's flaws which place him in a better position to lead the Igbo out of Nigerian slavery³³.

While the political ideology of MASSOB and its rhetorics with the Nigerian government is outside the scope of his study, suffice it to observe that fundamentally, the emergence of MASSOB may be attributed to the long years of Igbo marginalization, their inadequate representation at the national level, and the neglect of the federal government in terms of the provision of infrastructure especially, since the end of the civil war³⁴. The government's programme on reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation as submitted in the preceding chapter, was a total flop as the Igbo people continued to be discriminated against in the political, economic and social spheres of Nigerian life. It is indubitable that whatever reconciliation exists today was attained through the passage of time and not necessarily as a result of government policy. Eze Njemanze, a MASSOB official drives home the point when he observes that

Shortly after the war, ordinary Nigerians went about their normal lives and people who fled either from or to the war zone returned to where they fled from to continue their normal lives. However, rehabilitation was incomplete, people who fled to the war area abandoning their work and businesses were not rehabilitated, the combatants and the wounded on the Biafran side were not rehabilitated, and even those who were dismissed from services were not rehabilitated. Again the reconstruction of the war affected zone in terms of infrastructure destroyed during the war was not carried out. The worst aspect of it is that the punishment for engaging in the war was not limited to the combatants but when properly analyzed was directed at the populace through the deliberate policies of marginalization and this fact is what has created the condition for the flowering of this recent phenomenon (MASSOB)³⁵.

What is perhaps more germane to this study is that MASSOB, as a movement, has been tipped off as one of the enablers of small arms and light weapons proliferation in the Southeast Region of the country³⁶. Osita Agbu, for example, contends that “though the organisation claims to be non-violent in its activities, the potential for engaging in violent actions is extremely high in Nigeria’s volatile social and political environment”³⁷. From the actions of MASSOB members, their claim to pacifist strategies for the actualisation of a sovereign state of Biafra is seriously questioned. Moreover, the internationalisation of its struggle has added weight to its abilities to engage in international arms trade. For instance in February 2000, the group successfully established a “Biafra House” in Washington DC, United States of America, for the international coordination of its activities³⁸. The establishment of a Biafra House in Washington, America’s capital could not but have made the Nigerian government of Olusegun Obasanjo uncomfortable³⁹.

The extent to which the internationalisation of MASSOB’s struggle has helped towards the achievement of its stated objectives and how specifically, the internationalisation of the struggle helped the organisation in the procurement of arms is somewhat difficult to fathom. What is nonetheless, not in doubt, is that from May 2000, the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) and the Nigerian police have been consistent in their allegations that MASSOB imports arms into the country. Although, the movement continues to claim non – violence methods in its struggle and confrontations with the Nigerian authorities, it nonetheless has not publicly denied the allegations of arms importation levelled against it. In an interview, the MASSOB leader, Raph Uwazurike, was asked if the organisation truly imported arms, he retorted; “I will not answer that question. If MASSOB is importing arms will I tell you that we are or we are not? They have security agencies all over the place; it is their duty to find out because even if we are importing and I told you we are not, you wouldn’t believe it. So it is the duty of the security

agencies”⁴⁰. Again, when he was asked why the organisations avowed non- violent professions seem not to be in tandem with their actions, Uwazurike responded in the following manner:

Our non-violent posture depicts the fact that we will not attack anybody first but if you attack us, we have to defend ourselves. We are not trees you can just come and cut down anyhow. If you are bent on killing us, we have the right to defend ourselves because we have to protect, secure and preserve our lives. Our non-violent posture means that we shall not under any circumstance attack anybody. You understand it. So that explains our reaction to certain condition when our members have reacted violently. The circumstance depends on our being attacked and invariably we shall retaliate because we have to protect our lives and properties...If anybody attacks us, we attack the person. If you want peace prepare for war. If the Yoruba attack us, we shall reply by attacking them back. Their number does not outweigh our own number in Lagos. We give them whatever they want⁴¹.

Given MASSOB’s activities in the Southeast Region of Nigeria from 2000 to 2007, ample evidence abound to implicate the organisation in the proliferation of arms in Igboland. Damian Ozonwa, informed the researcher that since its establishment, MASSOB has had several occasions of shoot – out with members of the Nigerian police and occasionally, with the army patrol teams in Aba, Onitsha and Owerri areas. “Where do they get the weapons to engage security officials in armed confrontations?”⁴², Ozonwa queried.

Furthermore, Ozonwa who has worked as a security operative avers that MASSOB members possess sophisticated weaponry and this is why the Nigerian police and other security outfits in the region dread having to engage in any armed confrontation with the organization⁴³. This line of reasoning may affirm why most residents of Onitsha and Aba ceaselessly complained about the armed violence perpetrated by the members of the organisation⁴⁴. Between February and May 2005 for instance, when many of the members of the organisation were charged to court for offences related to felony, several buses (full of MASSOB members) numbering more than thirty would commute from Onitsha to Enugu to show solidarity with their members. Members of the organisation packed full inside the buses would often brandish deadly

firearms, especially at Onitsha and Awka and not once did the law enforcement agents intercept them for illegal possession of arms⁴⁵.

That MASSOB members own and use arms is not disputable. Chibuike Okafor states that in 2004, MASSOB wrote to all the landlords in Onitsha, giving them orders on the amount they were to collect as their house rents. Okafor further reports that "...in most parts of Onitsha here, these MASSOB boys possess all manner of arms and have usurped the functions of the police and have constituted themselves into a ready-made police organization and a court of law. They try cases ranging from ordinary street brawls to tenancy issues; they even extend their jurisdiction to criminal offences like theft and murder"⁴⁶.

What is perhaps a little knotty is how MASSOB procures or acquires the weapons they use. Damian Ozonwa believes that most of the arms and weapons MASSOB uses were locally crafted. This is because locally crafted weapons and arms according to him are usually cheaper than imported ones, although, according to him, a significant number of the arms in their possession may have been imported. Ozonwa asserts that anyone who has the money can buy any type of gun at the Onitsha main market⁴⁷. The addition of the small arms and light weapons in the possession of the MASSOB boys thus compounds the already volatile illegal arms situation in the region.

While the above viewpoint is true, it also requires to be noted that the specific emergence of MASSOB as a challenge to the Nigeria's sovereignty cannot be divorced from the marginalization the Igbo had faced since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war and also the poor leadership that has saddled the reins of governmental power in Nigeria. There is a history to the emergence of ethnic militias in Igboland and this is inextricably tied to the dynamics of its political governance and the underlying ethnic connotations. The point remains that millions of

Igbo people are dissatisfied with Nigeria as it is constituted today and it would be pretence to claim that this is not so.

Vigilante Outfits and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeastern Nigeria

The use of private individuals to maintain peace and order is not, so to say, an evil to Igboland and Nigeria, generally. A.Y Dickson has in fact, noted that it is traceable to the various practices of different ethnic groups in Nigeria in pre-colonial times. The *Dogari*, for example, performed such functions in pre-colonial Hausaland, the *Esu* performed similar functions in pre-colonial Yorubaland. In Igboland, able – bodied young men known as *Ndi Nche* performed similar roles⁴⁸. People variously contrived means of safe-guarding themselves from harm.

In colonial Igboland, vigilante groups, or whatever name associated with them did not constitute any problems to the colonial authorities thus, the colonial anthropologists and sociologists did not extend their intellectual beam light to this area. In fact, the colonial government was averse to any native military or quasi-military formation which could be canalized to hurt British interests. With the attainment of independence, however, things became different; the centrifugal forces of poor leadership and nepotism unleashed an unprecedented spate of insecurity such that the statutory forces could not keep the peace without help⁴⁹.

Officially, vigilante outfits registered their presence in Nigeria in 1970 and since then, vigilante groups have been part of the social, cultural and security system in Nigeria, especially, in Igboland. Usman Jahun Mohammed, erstwhile commander- General of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) - a loose association of vigilante groups, claims that vigilante groups began operation in Nigeria immediately after the civil war⁵⁰. Usman contends that since the end of the civil war, vigilante groups have functioned as informal police system in order to help the Nigerian police and other security operatives to create a better society⁵¹. Hamond Tell, on the

other hand opines that the use of vigilante outfits as an alternative to the regular police system was a 1980 development Accordingly, Tell holds that,

...In Nigeria 'vigilante' is a term initially proposed by the police in the mid-1980s as a substitute for an old practice known in the Western part of the country since the colonial period as the 'hunter-guard' or 'night-guard' system. Hence, instead of looking at vigilante groups as a response to a supposed increase in crime or a supposed decline of the police force, we should consider them initially at least as a first attempt to introduce forms of community policing in order to improve the appalling image of the police. As such in Nigeria, 'vigilante' is a new name for an old practice that should be considered in an extended time frame⁵².

The origin of vigilante groups from the foregoing, appear a little hazy. David Pratten may not be mistaken when he noted that "a comprehensive history of vigilantism in Nigeria ... in its localized plurality would prove elusive"⁵³. In any case, what is important to observe according to Pratten, is that "vigilantism has become an endemic feature of the Nigerian social and political landscape"⁵⁴. It may, therefore, be entirely superfluous for anyone to posit that vigilante groups began operations in any period of Nigerian history. This is because that which we call vigilante outfits have been operational in different parts of Nigeria, with different togas and methods. Donald Cage puts the argument straighter thus,

Vigilante is a term often used to describe any form of policing and ordering that is non-state and under analysis 'vigilantism' has often emerged as negative, associated with violence and violation of individual rights. However, a closer examination of the origin, practice function and structure of some of these groups often referred to as vigilantes in Nigeria has revealed that not all of them fit into our understanding, of vigilantes as gangs of youths that mete out violence and jungle justice to their victims. Some of these vigilantes have roots in the community and are a preferred form of policing in Nigeria⁵⁵.

In as much as we are encumbered by a dearth of information in tracing the genesis of vigilantism in Nigeria, one can, however, at least, hopefully attempt to trace its recent emergence in the Southeast. Its recent history in the Southeast derives the security crises in the region. The enthronement of a new democratic ethos on 29th May, 1999 had a number of consequences for the country. The country had been under the firm clasp and chokehold of the military from 1966,

with a short period of civilian rule which lasted from 1979-1983. From 1983 thence forward, it had been an unbroken succession of military brass heads until 1999. And as Claude Ake aptly remarked, “the military is nothing other than a highly specialized apparatus of voicence⁵⁶. Being a highly censored monopoly of force, the Nigerian military governments, one must agree, maintained a manageable level of internal security *via* the use of deterrent measures and the non-existence of cumbersome legislative processes. One can recall the horrors of the ‘operation sweep’ boys and the fearful “firing squad” phenomenon of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s.

However, with the return to democratic rule in 1999, many hitherto suppressed “interest groups” including armed hoodlums, kidnapers, domestic terrorists and ritual-killers emerged on the scene. This more than anything else increasingly worsened the problem of internal security of the country and the Southeast, particularly. Whilst the newly elected state governments in the Southeast as well as civil society organisations in the region were busy celebrating the return of democracy, the formerly suppressed men of the underworld became busy too in unleashing terror on innocent people in the region.

The steam of insecurity in Nigeria at this period appeared worse in the Southeast. Exasperated by the inadequacies of the police in the face of unmitigated harassment, torture and debasement of the Igbo people, Aba based traders in Abia State contrived the ‘Bakassi Movement’- a quasi - vigilante group. The operation of the Bakassi Boys helped to quell and drastically reduce the menace of armed robbery in Abia State. The Bakassi Boys also created the precedence for vigilante outfits involvement in arms proliferation. Before long other states in the Southeast began to transplant the Bakassi phenomenon from Abia to their own states. Anambra State was the first to request the help of the Bakassi Boys from Aba. By September 2002, the Bakassi Boys had been firmly established as trusted security apparatus in Anambra state⁵⁷.

Hamond Tell, succinctly captures the development:

Contemporary Nigerian vigilantism concerns a range of local and global dynamics beyond informal justice. It is a lens on the politics of post-colonial Africa, on the current political economy of Nigeria, and on its most intractable issues the politics of democracy, ethnicity and religion. The legitimating of vigilante activity has extended beyond dissatisfaction with current levels of law and order and the failings of the Nigerian police. To understand the local legitimacy of vigilantism in post-colonial Nigeria, indeed, it is also necessary to recognise its internal imperatives... In addition to mapping temporal and spatial communities in which young men are vested with the right to justice....⁵⁸

The Bakassi phenomenon was an enigma and this is largely because of their reported usages of preternatural powers. The Bakassi Boys were associated with charms and incantations and their sense of justice has been said to be equal to and or even lower than jungle justice⁵⁹. They operated in the Southeast of Nigeria from 2000 to 2002 when they were officially proscribed by the Federal Government of Nigeria⁶⁰.

The usage of that name “Bakassi” has been traced to the Bakassi Peninsula which is an oil-rich peninsula in the Anang/Ibibio region of the coastal south east of Nigeria⁶¹. Some local sources nevertheless believe that the choice of the name “Bakassi” was unconnected to the Bakassi Peninsula. They aver that, it was onomatopoeia of the Igbo word “Mbokasi” which means to “butcher”⁶².

The emergence of the Bakassi Boys came about largely as a result of the high spate of crimes in the Southeast. Commenting on the spate of crimes in the region, one observer opines,

I am a living witness to the fact that for three years before 2000, in my part of Imo state, life was made unbearable by the callous activities of armed bandits. They suddenly seemed to have multiplied, such that anyone found outside his door front after dusk was risking his life. Stories of torture, robberies, and car-snatching filled the air. Everybody had an experience to share in these orgies warranting the communities setting up local vigilante units⁶³.

Following the reported stories of their ‘effectiveness’ in combating crimes in Aba and other parts of Abia state, the Bakassi Boys were consequently, invited to such places as Onitsha

and Owerri. In due time, the regular law enforcement agencies, especially, became regarded as ineffectual and the Bakassi endeared themselves to many Igbo traders and merchants. However, a lot of strident voices began to accuse the group of extra-judicial killing. Besides, there were evidences suggesting that the Southeast governors were using the Bakassi group as handy tools for harassment and intimidation of their political opponents. The result of this politicization was the proliferation of the Bakassi group to the extent that no one could say which group was fake or genuine. Thus, the stage was set for unaccountable loss of human lives and the unmitigated destruction of valuable property as inter-Bakassi rivalries took the centre-stage⁶⁴.

Considering the tensions and human rights abuses associated with the activities of the Bakassi Boys, the federal government had to proscribe the group in September 2002. Nevertheless, since nature abhors a vacuum and the police was in no position to assure the people of protection, the proscription of the Bakassi group did not ensure its ultimate demise. In order for the Southeastern states governments to escape the hanging hammer slam of the federal government, the Bakassi project only assumed a new toga which became known as the 'State Vigilante Services' in most states of the Southeast - some sort of old wine in new wine skin.

In any case, the activities of vigilante groups in all the nooks and crannies of the Southeast have been strategically, a deterrent to petty-armed robbers and others of their ilk. In the rural areas, where effective governmental presence is marginally felt, the vigilantes act as the police and have been fairly successful in that regard. Onyibor Udemegbunam observes that in Ifite Ogwari, Ayamelu Local Government of Anambra State, "it takes indigenes more than three hundred naira to take a bike to Anaku to lodge the simplest of complaints to the police and sometimes, it takes the police three days to respond; we see no ill in using our vigilante"⁶⁵.

What is more, the salience of vigilante outfits is heightened by the fact that the demands of community policing in the 21st century appear to be ignored by the Nigerian police and the

government. In practical terms, the increasing threat to the lives of citizens had caused some of the so-called advanced countries to re-adjust the ratio per head of policemen of policemen to civilians. In the U.K, the ratio of policing is less than twenty citizens per patroller. In the U.S and Canada, the number is even smaller (about ten citizens per patroller)⁶⁶.

Using the total number of police personnel in the Southeast, as captured in the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics 2006 annual report, and pairing it with the total number of persons in the region, the ratio of policemen per person is about 522 persons per policeman. This is not surprising because whilst population is increasing exponentially, there appears to be no corresponding increase or development in the policing system in Nigeria. This is made more pathetic by the fact that a consequential number of policemen are permanently assigned to elected public officers as details and aides. In Nigeria, a member of the Federal House of Representatives (in the period under review) often had more than seven police officers in his retinue of orderlies. What is more, some senators (both in and out of session) had more than eight police officers in their entourage. A Governor’s aides and police orderlies were often for ostentation. Some states’ Governors had security aides more than the presidents of the so-called advanced countries.

The list is not exhausted, Federal ministers and state commissioners, personal and special Assistants and Local Government Chairmen all have police officers as orderlies. It is not only the ruling elites that are guilty of this; their cronies in the informal sector also have permanently assigned police details. The sum total of these on community policing has been harmful as the police incessantly complain of inadequate man-power.

Table 5.3: Geo- political distribution of Police Formations in Nigeria showing the relative marginality of the Southeast

Zone	No. of Police	% of Police Stations	No. of Police	% of Police	Number of Police	% of Police Divisions
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	Stations		Posts	Posts	Divisions	
North Central	349	21.7	604	22.93	166	15.96
North East	269	16.73	568	21.56	149	14.33
North West	188	11.69	671	25.47	216	20.77
South East	176	10.95	130	4.94	127	12.21
South South	288	17.91	282	10.71	185	17.79
South West	292	18.16	302	11.47	162	15.58
FCT	11	0.68	44	1.67	16	1.54

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2009 Annual Report.

Their seemingly positive utility notwithstanding, vigilante outfits have several gross implications for Igboland. One of these is their role in the proliferation of arms in the region. The freehand given to the Bakassi boys resulted in a situation where the boys carried out the task of curbing crimes in the region as they saw fit. With the politicization of the group and the attendant proliferation of the group, criminality was known to have been introduced in the system. Before their final days in the Southeast, the Bakassi boys were known to have been involved in several criminal engagements including political assassination of opponents of their masters as well as trade in illegal arms⁶⁷. Onyebuchi Nwankwo opines that “state governments maneuvered to procure sophisticated arms for the Bakassi boys when the going was good but when problems ensued from their operations, these arms were not recovered from them and were not accounted for”⁶⁸. What is more, Nwankwo avers that the Bakassi boys facilitated the illicit business of some arms traders at the Onitsha main market. He further asserts that “given their dreaded nature, they helped some of the arms sellers to move their death wares from one part of the region to the other”⁶⁹. The veracity of these claims may be a little difficult to ascertain, what is clearer is that with the dissolution of the Bakassi phenomenon, almost all the boys went home with their arms as souvenirs. In Obosi, for example, two indigenes who had worked with the

Bakassi boys returned home with pump action rifles and moved about with these weapons until their untimely death in 2004⁷⁰. Similar incidences occurred in Aba and Owerri areas.

With the proscription of the Bakassi Boys and the emergence of statutory vigilante outfits in the Southeast, several reports have been made on how vigilante operatives either lease out their guns to armed robbers or how they procure locally made weapons ostensibly for vigilantism but nevertheless proceeded to sell these arms to the men of the underworld⁷¹. Richard Nwaeze, for example, reports that in Enugu state, particularly in Udenu Local Government Area of the state, “vigilante outfits have served well in the area of crime control, however, there are some bad eggs among them; these bad eggs collude with armed robbers and other criminal elements... instances abound where vigilante operatives have been nabbed for leasing or selling firearms to criminals in the area”⁷². Several newspapers reported the arms proliferation propensities of the vigilante outfits in the region in the period under review. For instance, in 2006 alone, *The Daily Sun* reported more than thirteen incidents in which vigilante operatives were involved in arms proliferation activities in the Southeast⁷³.

During conflicts between communities in the region, these vigilante outfits were known to have served as standing armies for their feuding communities or made their weapons available to combatants thereby, fueling arms proliferation in the Southeast⁷⁴. The operations and activities of vigilante groups have generated currents which have been inimical to inter-community relations, and in most cases conduced to inter-communal armament and arms proliferation. Ikechukwu Aduba, Chairman of the Anambra State Supervisory Committee on Vigilante Outfits in the state revealed that many town union presidents illegally procured firearms for their community’s vigilante outfits⁷⁵.

It is particularly worrisome that vigilante outfits in Igboland continue to brandish newer weapons at a time when there is a total ban on the importation of arms and licensing of firearms.

The warning of Ikechukwu Aduba that no vigilante operative should carry pump action rifle in Anambra State seems to have gone heedless as vigilante operatives continue to brandish these rifles which are fired at public functions such as funerals and traditional marriage ceremonies. In fact, it has become normal for some vigilante operatives to carry arms without any training whatsoever on their usage.

It should be noted that pump action rifles are prohibited firearms which only the president of the country can sign for use on special conditions. Ideally, the firearms available for vigilante purposes are licensed double – barrel guns which should be kept in police custody when not in use⁷⁶. Ikechukwu Aduba reports that “the use of an unregistered firearm is a capital offense, especially in the case of pump action”⁷⁷. Aduba discloses that more than five thousand illegal firearms are in the possession of vigilante outfits in Anambra state⁷⁸.

The problem in the use of vigilante in Southeast arises from the recruitment of unqualified persons, lack of effective supervision and superintendence as well as their engagement by politicians. First, the recruitment of unqualified personnel with drug problems, ex-convicts, the unemployed and psychological unsound elements creates serious problem in the security sector of the Southeast. Discipline is at the lowest ebb in the vigilante outfits in the Southeast. This is because “some of them were picked from parks and markets, from garages without training and you don’t give such people firearms. If you do, as the situation is now, they will be looking for opportunity to fire and at any opportunity, they will fire and maim”⁷⁹.

Plate 9: An unidentified armed fellow serving as a vigilante operative at a funeral in Igboland



Source: Snapshot taken by the researcher at Nimo, Anambra State

Unemployed persons are not given the work of keeping the peace with highly lethal arms and weapons without good financial emoluments. The paltry sum of 7000 naira which was the average salary of vigilante operators in the region could lead them to steal. Police Commissioner, Usman Tilli Abubakar reports that in Ebonyi, state vigilante outfits had assault rifles and colt pistols⁸⁰. Furthermore, Abubakar notes that the increase in arms and weapons available to vigilante outfits did not produce a corresponding decrease in criminality in the state instead crimes, especially, armed robbery appeared to be on the increase.

The second problem with vigilante outfits in the region which had a colossal negative effect on the region is the fact that there was poor and ineffective supervision and superintendence of vigilante outfits in the zone. Even though there were statutory regulatory frameworks for vigilante outfits in all the states of the Southeast, most vigilante operators and observers believe that “the claim of effective supervision and superintendence of the activities and operations of vigilante outfits in the region is spurious”⁸¹. For example, Onyekwelu Franklin argues that,

As a participant-observer, one who headed a vigilante unit, I think there are lapses in that sphere. Why I say so is this, in most cases, when there arises a problem between vigilante and vigilante or vigilante and community or when they have internal crisis. When you call the statutorily supervising body to interfere, sometimes they exhibit lukewarm attitude or lackadaisical behavior towards the situation. This is where I find them wanting⁸².

Besides, the use of vigilante outfits for political purposes worsened the small arms proliferation dilemma. Several persons were known to have lost their lives as a result of the political use of vigilante outfits. The most popular case was that of Barr. And Barr Mrs Igwe Barnabas, which is still fresh in the memory⁸³. The political use of vigilante outfits was not peculiar to Anambra State but in all the states of the Southeast. In fact, so long as politics continues to be seen as a spring board for personal material accumulation in Nigeria, the possibility of eradicating political uses of vigilante groups will remain grim.

From all indications, the proliferation of small arms in Southeastern Nigeria is a historical fact which cannot be conjured away. Its inspiration and causes are deeply embedded in the aftermath of the Nigeria-Biafra war. This is the nexus often missed or casually treated in the extant literature on the small arms and light weapons proliferation discourse in Nigeria.

Security Implications of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria

The need for man to have an orderly and a well-structured and organised system aimed at achieving comfort, harmony and peace has been the pre-occupation of all human societies. Much as a society tries, some fundamental challenges have posed obstacles to man's efforts at the realisation of a peaceful and secure society. The need for a peaceful and secure environment, which allows harmonious co-existence and socio-economic and political advancement, cannot be overemphasised. The most essential function of any government is to provide peace and security for its people⁸⁴. There can be no development without security. In this connection, J. D. Obioma has remarked that "normally, citizens expect their governments to provide them with political

stability and socio - economic security, including employment, healthcare and shelter; the non-fulfilment of which breeds discontent and social unrest or even serious political challenge”⁸⁵. The non-fulfilment of the needs of Nigerians, especially the Igbo people of the Southeast, among other factors, pushed them to a secessionist war. The consequences of that war continue to affect both the Igbo people as well as the entire Nigerian society.

In the period under review, Southeastern Nigeria was plagued with social disorder, insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, poor health statistics, inter – communal clashes, corruption, crime and criminality and political crisis. All these challenges have roots in the Nigeria-Biafra war. Clearly, the pathetic condition of life of the Igbo after the civil war and the abundance of easy – to – move arms after the war created the conditions that made the illicit arms proliferation to thrive. This has continued to be one of the greatest threats to the security of the region.

However, it has to be observed that the availability of arms does not in itself constitute any threat to the region or any human society for that matter; rather, it is the use to which small arms and light weapons have been employed that determines their impact on any given society. Therefore, an assessment of the security implications of small arms and light weapons proliferation in the region cannot be separated from the crimes in which small arms and light weapons were used. A consequential number of the threats to Nigeria’s national security are made possible by the availability of small arms and light weapons in the hands of rogues and other criminal elements.

National security has been conceptualised in the first chapter of this study as the removal of threats and protection of citizens from threats both internal and external as well as other encumbrances that impinge on and jeopardize their lives. From the above understanding of national security, it becomes clear that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons with the attendant violent criminality that it encourages and promotes is antithetical to the security of the

people of Southeastern Nigeria. One of the critical implications of small arms proliferation is the promotion and facilitation of armed robbery. This explains why Halad Yahaya opines that from 1970, when the Nigeria-Biafra war ended, armed robbery had been a socio – economic reality in the region which has continued to grow in sophistication every year⁸⁶.

Defined as “deprivation wrongfully and forcibly using arms or weapons for threatening or disabling the person or persons deprived”⁸⁷, armed robbery owes its tremendous growth in Nigeria and particularly in the Southeastern part of Nigeria, to the abundance of small arms and light weapons and other socio – economic realities following the Nigeria - Biafra war. This does not suggest that armed robbery was non- existent in Nigeria before the outbreak of Nigeria - Biafra war. It is on record that armed robbery had been identified as a threat to Nigeria as early as 1904 when the Criminal Code was enacted for the Northern Provinces of Nigeria⁸⁸. However, it was only after the Nigeria - Biafra war that armed robbery developed into a monstrous phenomenon operated with ferocity never known before in Nigeria. “This is because it was only after the civil war that modern dangerous arms like the gun became easily available to robbers”⁸⁹.

It also goes without saying that before 1970, armed robbery and its major enabler – arms proliferation were such a minor threat to Nigeria that the colonial government and the succeeding post-colonial leaders enacted no law on armed robbery. It was thus the Gowon government that enacted the first law on armed robbery and its attendant enabler – arms proliferation in Nigeria – Decree No. 47 (The Robbery and Firearms Special Provision Decree)⁹⁰. But how did armed robbery and arms proliferation transpose to such a national security threat immediately after the Nigeria - Biafra war to warrant a special legal promulgation?

It has to be remembered that in the immediate post-civil war period, the average Igbo person had nothing important to armed robbers, Moreover, the emergence of arms traders,

(especially, from Lagos and Benin) brought in the highly needed Nigerian Naira in exchange for the arms which were readily available. In the light of the above situation, armed bandits such as the notorious Ishola Onyenusi group⁹¹ in possession of assorted types of sophisticated and lethal arms and weapons unleashed a reign of terror in Southern Nigeria, especially, in Lagos and Benin cities. The above conditions help to explain why armed robberies were not as menacing in the Southeast as they were in Lagos in 1970 and 1971.

However, by 1972, armed robbery in the Southeast began to grow at such a rate that by 1976, Imo State alone recorded 180 reported cases of armed robbery, second only to Lagos in the whole federation. It was thus from Lagos and the Southeast that armed robbers expanded their bases to the length and breadth of Nigeria. A local Newspaper puts the distribution of armed robberies in Nigeria from 1972 – 1976 thus: Western States including Bendel, 47.2%; Eastern States, 34.4%; Northern States, 18%”⁹². In line with the above, Halad Yahaya notes, that

By 1983, armed robbery frequency had risen appreciably in most parts of the Northern States and, as a whole, 29% of the national armed robbery cases were reported as against the 18% of 1976. Nigeria had recorded its largest number of armed robberies in 1976, when 2009 cases occurred... since 1976, Nigeria has been experiencing an average of 1633 armed robberies per year on 4.5 per cent daily. The explanation of the trend of armed robbery incidences and its spread must have been that the Eastern States were the battle areas of the civil war where there was consequently a severe relaxation of social norms and laws resulting in the emergence and persistence of armed robberies. In the Western States, the majority of the armed robbery was in Lagos because Lagos city is the capital of the nation as well as a sea port and a commercial centre where money, in large sums, exchanged hands with rapid frequency... in the Northern States, the situation that befell the Eastern States was non – existent... **One, this is obvious, that modern armed robbery started in the civil war battle areas and most armed robbers were indigenes of these areas**⁹³. (Emphasis added).

Table 5.4: Cases of Armed Robberies in which Small Arms were used in Southeastern – Nigeria, 1971 – 1985.

S/N	Year	No. of Reported Cases	Remarks
1.	1971	No Information	

2.	1972	372	The East Central State recorded the second highest number, second only to Lagos.
3.	1973	421	-
4.	1974	227	The effect of Decree No. 47 had begun to deter armed robbers.
5.	1975	309	-
6.	1976	376	Imo state recorded the second highest in the country, topped only by Lagos. Reported robberies in Imo state in this year was 180.
7.	1977	402	-
8.	1978	332	-
9.	1979	377	-
10.	1980	661	The unprecedented increase in armed robberies in this year is traced to Shagari's government relaxation of tough measures against armed robbers. This continued until the government was toppled on 31 st December, 1983.
11.	1981	550	-
12.	1982	812	-
13.	1983	772	-
14.	1984	670	Buhari's military junta was known to have reintroduced Decree No. 47. This seemed to have reduced armed robberies in the country.
15.	1985	512	-

Source: Halad Yahaya, Armed Robbery in Nigeria after the Civil War of 1967 – 70: Search for Effective Remedies (Dissertation: Senior Executive Course No. 6, 1984, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru – Jos), 6 – 12.

Clearly, the abundance of small arms and light weapons and the excruciating poverty the Igbo people faced after the war coupled with the entrance of some unscrupulous merchants from Benin and Lagos created the meeting point for the demand and supply of illicit small arms and light weapons in Igboland. Those who found this kind of business profitable have continued to engage in the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, even after the initial stock used in prosecuting the Biafran had been depleted. The point to note is that the civil war opened up the possibilities that arms could be acquired and sold. Saliu Abraham aptly underscored the point when he posited,

The civil war broke the chokehold of the colonial regime on arms and their usages. Evidence abound that in the colonial order firearms possession was mostly within the rubric of the law. All of this was to end with the eruption of the war and the vicious and merciless ways in which arms and weapons were deployed by both sides... After the war, the initial fear people had about guns were no longer there, this is not far removed from the rising spate of arms proliferation in today's Nigeria... In the Igbo areas, a professional clique of professional arms dealers consequently emerged from the brinks of the civil...⁹⁴

Since 1970, armed robbery has continued to grow in sophistication in Southeastern Nigeria. This could not have been so but for the abundance of small arms and light weapons in the country and the region particularly. Usman Tilli Abubakar contends that armed robbery is for many in the Southeast, a daily occurrence. This according to him constitutes a terrible threat and challenge to the Nigerian society⁹⁵. Abubakar argues that armed robbery has been in the limelight as one of the most dangerous crimes in the region; showing both an increase and decrease at an annual average rate of +23 per cent and – 37.6 per cent⁹⁶. Furthermore, Abubakar records that armed robbery in the Southeast soared to all time high of 62.3 per cent from 2000 – 2007⁹⁷. He notes that the sophisticated arms available to armed robbers account for the significant increase in both the frequency and lethality of armed robberies in Southeastern Nigeria⁹⁸. Consequently, armed robbery has affected all the sectors of the economy of the

Southeast. “It holds people in their rooms, scares travellers, brings poverty to the people, deprives people of their loved ones and makes the police somewhat inefficient and look like pawns. Citizens have simply become disillusioned...”⁹⁹.

From the above, the security implications of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons with regards to its enablement of armed robberies cannot be overemphasised. The number of lives lost, maimed or rendered useless by armed robbers in the period under review cannot be quantified. The quantum of property lost is staggering and may not be easy to statistically record. Besides the foregoing, small arms and light weapons use in armed robbery have also negatively affected the psychology of the people of the Southeast; often rendering the hapless people hopeless. Policemen, harmless low, middle and high-class citizens, prized professionals have fallen at the hands of these arm-wielding criminals, most of the time, in cold blood and merciless manner¹⁰⁰. Women have also been occasionally raped and on several instances were eyewitnesses to the gruesome murder of their loved ones and breadwinners¹⁰¹. Again, children have often had to see unspeakable violence, especially, when these robbers waylay travellers or raid people’s homes.

The fact that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons fuels insecurity is not difficult to fathom. One of the ways through which arms proliferation fuels insecurity is by creating what is called ‘security dilemma’ in a society. This refers to a situation whereby the availability of arms leads to wanton deaths through such criminal activities like assassinations, robberies, kidnapping among others. The security dilemma proper is created when several other persons resort to acquisition of small arms and light weapons as the only alternative of safeguarding themselves against armed hoodlums in society. The dilemma, therefore, is that abundance of illicit arms creates the need for more illicit arms – in the long run, the society becomes awash with illicit arms. In the Southeast, this situation was somewhat conditioned by

the actions and inactions of the statutory law enforcement agencies, especially the police. Chukwuemeka Alaku has argued that the inefficiency of the Nigerian police affects all facets of the Nigerian society¹⁰².

Another area in which the availability of small arms and light weapons in the Southeast has grossly affected security is in the phenomenon of kidnapping and hostage-taking. As an organized crime, kidnappings and hostage - taking thrive on the apparent quick financial rewards of the business and relative less risk which reinforce this criminal transaction. The spate of kidnapping in the Southeast made the security agencies look inept. As a result, there was a growing perception that the police and the other statutory security agencies and organisations were weak, corrupt, and unuseful¹⁰³. This perception, whether true or not, had a negative impact on the trust and confidence level of the citizens who ought to see the police as their defenders. The implication of this situation is that many people consequently began to see the Nigerian state as unable to protect its citizens. It does not take much to notice that a failing state is the state which is perceptively or seemingly unable to provide security for its citizens¹⁰⁴. Besides, a government that cannot, or that is unable to secure lives and property of the citizens, will find it difficult to govern or command respect from the electorate. Furthermore, Chukwuebuka Obi notes that,

Without much ado, one cannot help but notice that there is a failure on the part of the Nigerian government in the provision of security. The seemingly growing trend of kidnapping in the Southeast and other states of the federation have clearly buttressed how colossally porous Nigerian security arrangements are. A reinvention of Nigerian security sector is not only a necessity but unavoidably imperative¹⁰⁵.

In the Southeast, security operatives when severely criticized for their gross ineptitude proceeded to harass, torture and maim innocent civilians in the name of combating the problem of kidnapping. This perhaps explains why Okwudiba Nnoli opined that “Africans (nay, the

Igbo) have often seen the “force” and hardly the “security” in security forces¹⁰⁶. Nnoli further submits that,

Political exclusion, economic marginalization and social discrimination threaten the security of citizens to such an extent that they regard the state as the primary threat to their survival. In desperation, the victimized citizens take the laws into their own hands as a means of safeguarding their fundamental values from the threat of government... the decline of the state as the guarantor of protection and human security is serious; but its role as the creator of insecurity is more serious¹⁰⁷.

Adding more weight to the above observations, the Think Security Africa in one of their studies on Nigeria’s security, notes in part that the current security challenges facing Nigeria are evidence of the fact that “there is a severe readiness crisis within the Nigeria security establishments, manifesting in an ongoing failure to anticipate and dismantle threats before they materialize. This will only serve to further damage the reputation of Nigeria, and will embolden those seeking to destabilize the country”¹⁰⁸. Besides those who were directly affected by violence or forced migration, there was a larger number of people who were not directly affected but nevertheless felt threatened. The rising level of kidnapping in the Southeast worsened the brain-drain of the region. In fact, many intellectual and business people resorted to establishing bases outside the country; peradventure something goes seriously awry in the country¹⁰⁹. Without a serious arms mopping in the region and by extension, Nigeria as a whole, the recrudescence of kidnapping and hostage – taking is not in fact, a foreclosed possibility.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the abundance of illicit easy – to – conceal arms in the Southeast gave a serious booster to campus and street confraternities to maim and waste innocent lives in the region. These confraternities popularly referred to as cult groups peddle all kinds of arms and use same to assail the already deteriorated security of the region¹¹⁰. In 2004, a country – wide “war” was fought between the several cult groups in the country. The

Southeast seemed to have been more affected than other regions as the number of casualties in the Southeast was highest in the whole federation¹¹¹. Again, most of the arms used by these confraternities are yet to be retrieved from.

The security implications of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria from the above elucidations are myriad. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region contribute to the escalation of criminal activities and conflicts within communities. Small arms and light weapons are extreme tools of violence in Southeastern Nigeria and elsewhere. This is because they are durable, highly portable, easily concealed, simple to use, and extremely lethal. These features of small arms have made some observers to refer to them as the real ‘weapons of mass destruction’. The life span of small arm that is serviced and put to use regularly can be up to a century¹¹². The researcher came across informants who claim to still have their civil war rifles which they now use to hunt games. Finally and perhaps, most harmful is the fact that the proliferation and abuses of small arms and light weapons did create a culture of violence in the South. Gani Yoroms underscores this point when he observed that,

The proliferation and abuses of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria after the civil war have been on the increase at alarming rate. This has entrenched a culture of violence since 1990s when the Nigerian state unleashed violence and terror as small arms and light weapons rein in an increasingly restless population¹¹³.

In a reaction to state sponsored terror; aggravated by the spread of small arms and light weapons, the aggrieved in the society equally found rationality in arming themselves for both defensive and offensive purposes. Since the return to civil rule in 1999 political violence, particularly during election periods, has become endemic¹¹⁴.

The above views also call to mind the fact that small arms proliferation also had a serious negative impact on the electoral process in Southeastern Nigeria, especially, since

1999. Through the use of arms – wielding thugs, unpopular candidates and politicians who have not the interest of the masses at heart rigged themselves into political offices. Some of the political crises that engulfed the nation are not unconnected to the above problem. This was more especially true of Anambra State where armed bandits under the pay of political godfathers reigned for nearly three years and in 2004 succeeded in setting the Government House and some other crucial government facilities at Awka ablaze¹¹⁵.

Table 5.5: Reported Cases of Violent Crimes Perpetrated with Small Arms in the Southeast, 1999 – 2004.

S/N	Crime	Year 1999	Year 2000	Year 2001	Year 2002	Year 2003	Year 2004	Total
1.	Armed Robbery	468	405	802	1,120	2,210	2,715	7720
2.	Murder	235	224	322	292	4,001	2,441	7515
3.	Arson	51	73	120	220	318	1,121	1903
4.	Grievous Harm & Wounding	865	701	1,002	1,225	4,228	6,000	14021
5.	Rape and Indecent Assault	429	701	921	1,117	1,110	3,200	7478
6.	Kidnapping	63	31	50	61	86	107	398
	Total	2111	2135	3217	4035	10843	15584	38035

Source: Collated by the Researcher from Johnson Uzu – Egbunam, Impact of Violent Crimes on Development in Nigeria: An Assessment (Dissertation: Senior Executive Course No. 27, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru – Jos, November 2005), 47 – 59.

From the above table, one can observe the gradual but sustained growth of violent crimes perpetrated with small arms in the Southeast. It is equally noteworthy to observe that only a

fraction of these violent crimes carried out against the ordinary masses gets reported to the police, a significant number of these crimes are not reported to the police. This is mostly because of the attitude of the Nigerian police who often demand bribes from hapless citizens just in order to simply report a crime. Besides, most people had lost hope in the competency of the police and were thus, content to keep their travails in the hands of armed hoodlums to themselves.

Economic and Social Implications of Small Arms Light and Weapons Proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria

Although, it is often clichéd that the various criminal uses to which small arms and light weapons are employed deter investment in Igboland, in the period under review, the magnitude of the effect appears not to have been fully examined. Measuring or attempting to quantify the magnitude of the disinvestment brought about by the criminal use of small arms and light weapons and insecurity generally is, however, very important. As in fact, its policy implications and relevance are myriad. This is because the data so generated can explain why investment and capital flows in the Southeast continued to remain rudimentary since the end of the Nigeria - Biafra war. It can also help to explain why most indigenes of the states of the Southeast continue to move their investments outside the region. Mgbечи Uzochukwu has for example noted that the pervasive activities of armed hoodlums in the Southeast have further diminished the prospects of young graduates securing worthwhile jobs in the state¹¹⁶. This according to him is because investors prefer to have nothing to do with such a climate of insecurity.

It is an indubitable fact that the availability of small arms and especially, the criminal activities to which they have been used in the period under review scared away investors from the Southeast as no investor would invest in a region where his life and his investment are not safe. David Akwo revealed that wealthy Igbo indigenes resident abroad who had indicated

interest in investing in the region had to jettison the idea because of the level of insecurity that pervaded the Southeast¹¹⁷.

Insecurity discourages business investment as it makes investment unattractive to business investors. This is because it accelerates the cost of doing business either through direct loss of goods and properties or the cost of taking precautions against business risks and uncertainty. These costs could have a negative impact on business development and progress. This means that insecurity can be a huge blockade to business investment¹¹⁸. Such a situation had the damaging consequence of giving a negative signal to the international community that Igboland is not a safe and secure place and as such not suitable for investment and business activities. In this case, foreign firms and entrepreneurs declined to invest in the Southeast. So, it is a strong disincentive to business investment as it scares away potential investors. This is because such environments or economies are considered high risk zones due to the high level of uncertainty about the safety of investment and lives of the managers and their staff¹¹⁹.

The high spate of insecurity in the region stalled the prospects of small and medium scale businesses in the zone. Small and medium enterprises all over the world have been recognised for the contributions they make to the growth of their countries' respective economies. According to N. Ile, this class of enterprises account for over 95% of enterprises and over 60% of available employment in OECD countries¹²⁰. In Nigeria, these enterprises constitute the majority of companies in the private sector and account for about 55% of total employment and about 50% of industrial output¹²¹. The importance of small and medium-scale businesses to the economy of Southeastern Nigeria, and indeed Nigerian economy in general cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, in terms of contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment generation, the small and medium scale business sector appears to be more important than the large- scale business sector. The experience from India, China, South Korea and Singapore, perhaps, account

for the belief in business and government circles that the “surest route to industrialization is through small and medium scale industries”¹²². In line with the ongoing, Rita Okonkwo, Purity Ndubisi Okolo and Theresa Anagbogu aver that,

The insecurity situation can, and in many cases, actually halted business operations during the periods of violence and also caused the outright closure of many enterprises especially in the areas or zones where incidences of insecurity is rife and are on daily occurrence, in a bid to protect lives of operators and business property. Generally, if there is no peace and security, it is extremely difficult for businesses to survive. Ordinary citizens having small and medium scale businesses cannot open shops for business transactions. Insecurity everywhere is a risk factor which business owners and managers dread and wish to avoid by relocating their businesses elsewhere¹²³.

Further, Elis Idemobi notes that kidnapping and hostage taking was the most destructive of the challenges that confronted small and medium scale enterprises in the zone. Idemobi further submits that “taken as a whole, the nefarious activities of kidnappers have had a profound negative effect on the economy of the region. Cumulatively, there has been more relocation of businesses outside the region. Apart from the industries at Nnewi, Igboland state has witnessed a lull in industrialization as a result of criminal activities...”¹²⁴.

Over the years, the general insecurity – caused by small arms and light weapons use in the region has negatively affected the prospects and utility of small and medium - scale enterprises in the Southeast. What is more, studies show that over 50% of small and medium enterprises in the Southeast die within five years of establishment¹²⁵. Besides, the suffusing insecurity in Southeastern Nigeria in the period under consideration caused some of the big firms and industries to either close shop or relocate to other regions of Nigeria. For instance, ENERCO, a road construction firm formerly based at Okigwe, Imo State relocated its operational headquarters to Abuja after its Managing Director was kidnapped and a huge ransom paid for his release¹²⁶. Additionally, in Owerri, a legal practitioner and owner of a plastic industry at the Owerri Industrial Layout was killed, even after his abductors had demanded and

collected five million naira. The industry was known to have collapsed and folded – up shortly after the demise of the owner. Consequently, hundreds of the employees became jobless¹²⁷. Stories of this kind are well known in most states of the Southeast. The spate of insecurity was so high in Imo State that members of the state House of Assembly relocated to Abuja, themselves and their families¹²⁸.

The economy of Igboland had suffered from the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their criminal use. The extent of the damage to the economy will be better appreciated if it is considered that in three years alone, property and money worth more than eighty billion (80, 000,000,000) naira had been lost to armed robbers and kidnappers¹²⁹. “Most of the money obtained through armed robberies and kidnappings were not put to any meaningful use but spent by the hoodlums on the search for pleasure. Stolen properties (sic), especially, vehicles were sold, mostly outside Nigeria at half or even below half the actual value thereby depleting the nation’s foreign exchange unnecessarily”¹³⁰.

At the governmental level, the economic effects of small arms and light weapons proliferation involve the expenditure on security and security agencies. One cannot help but consider the resources that governments of the Southeast had to dissipate in curbing the egregious effects of small arms proliferation and their uses. The opportunity cost of this situation on development is quite staggering. Since 1999 when the country entered the so-called Fourth Republic, the governments of the states of the Southeast had injected so many resources into the security sector of the region with the aim of curbing criminality as well as the availability of small arms that encourage them. There has not been any governor in the Southeast who did not donate substantially to the police and other statutory security agencies in his state¹³¹. Such donations usually come in form of patrol vehicles, sundry security and communication gadgets; and morale bolstering packages for the officers. Besides, it is on account of the security

challenges that the kleptocratic ruling class in Nigeria earmark huge sums of money in what is called security. Most of the so-called funds in the security vote go to the personal coffers of the governors and their cronies. The overall implication of this trend to the economy of the region requires no soothsayer to notice. In the first instance, the development of the zone has had to become a secondary issue; since no economy can develop in the midst of monumental insecurity of lives and property. Most governors of the regime purportedly spend half or more than half of the money that would have been used to better the lives of the indigenes economically, on providing security. These resources used in combating insecurity could have been put to development projects and the region would have been better for it.

Moreover, the economic effects of insecurity are known to include direct and indirect costs. At the individual level, the costs include the economic value of money that is most certainly lost to kidnappers and armed robbers. Although, it may prove a little difficult to quantify the amount of money directly lost to kidnappers as ransom or what has been stolen by armed robbers in the Southeast in the period under investigation. A little tabulation of the sums of money disclosed as the ransom for five victims kidnapped in the region will give a clue as to the amount of money lost to kidnappers. In this connection, Casmir Ugwuanyi, a security operative noted that

it is not possible for anyone to give you any exact figures of the amount individuals have lost to kidnappers in any state in the country. Our experience here (Anambra state) emboldens me to state that the trust between security agents and the members of the public has not improved significantly... Some relatives of kidnap victims go behind our back to pay huge amounts of money to kidnappers and you now expect us to keep a data of what we know not?...¹³².

No matter how one sees it, the truth is that much money has been spent on ransom payments. The erstwhile Inspector – General of Police (IGP), Sir Mike Okiro, disclosed that about fifteen (15) billion have been paid as ransom to kidnappers between 2006 and 2009¹³³. The

large sum of money spent as ransom payment affects the states' economy drastically, as it could have been used for meaningful economic development.

Apart from the above implications, insecurity indirectly had a negative economic cost on individuals and companies in the state. These include expenditures on preventive measures, such as the employment of private security personnel. Out of fear, people tended to stay out of their work places and the adverse effect was felt by the economy, as in fact, productive man hours were lost. In most of the urban areas of the Southeast, many people were kidnapped and a lot of money was given out as ransom. This situation affected both the region and household economies. Some families went as far as borrowing to bail their relatives out from the hands of hoodlums¹³⁴. In many instances, it was the bread winners of families that were usually targeted, the consequence was felt particularly within the family, whereby members of such families would have to fend for themselves and adjust their normal daily activities, until they secured the release of their breadwinners. The victim's work-place would also be affected adversely. If the victim was a business man or woman, the business suffered setbacks pending his or her return. In a formal organization, the challenges were enormous as the absence of the victim would cause problems within the system, and the output will automatically be affected as well.

Besides, as a result of the trauma and sometimes torture in the hands of kidnappers, most kidnap victims often ended up spending months in hospitals and specialist clinics after their release were secured. Most of the victims of kidnapping in the region in the period under review were elderly people who took special diet and sundry medications. However, in the kidnappers den, they were made to take food which would cause havoc to their systems. In most cases, kidnap victims who were on drugs were hardly taken good care of whilst in the hands of their abductors, however, after their release, most of them were known to have taken ill. The summary of it all would thus mean more money expended on hospital bills and so on. The case of the late

Professor C.C. Agbodike (Pioneer Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka) is still fresh in the memory.¹³⁵ Several other Igbo people have lost their lives directly or indirectly through crimes which were in the main powered by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

With respect to the social systems of the Igbo people, it is on record that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons brought social activities to a nadir in the region. Social activities were known to have been reduced tremendously in the region. The Igbo are very cultural people and are also known for the elegance and colourfulness of their social functions. In fact, the Igbo blaze the trail in terms of pomp and pageantry in social functions.

What is perhaps more important is the fact the high - level insecurity in the region, grossly exacerbated by abundance/ proliferation of arms in the region had had a deleterious effect on the culture as well as other social dimensions of the life of the people of the Southeast. In the specific case of Anambra State, Paul Idehemin notes thus, “the people of Anambra State in my opinion are the most elegant people or if you like flamboyant people in Igboland and perhaps Nigeria, what I think the high spate of insecurity in the country has robbed the people in all these years is the atmosphere to showcase their elegance or as some people say, their flamboyance”¹³⁶. Igwe Callistus puts the point clearer when he argued that the lifestyle of an average Anambra person encourages hard work, this is because socially, “the people know how to enjoy their wealth, so if you ask me, I think insecurity has somehow limited the opportunities Anambrarians have in enjoying their wealth”¹³⁷.

Whether Anambra people are more flamboyant than other Igbo people or in fact, whether the Igbo are the most flamboyant ethnic group in Nigeria is not important. What is more important is the fact that insecurity in Southeastern Nigeria did rob the people of the region the interest and ability to live their lives the way they liked. For example, the new yam festival that

is highly regarded as not only religious but a unifying occasion with lots of symbolic rituals was in the period under review shunned like leprosy by the affluent or seemingly affluent indigenes of the region. The proliferation of arms, especially, their uses for the crime of kidnapping negatively affected social functions in Igboland. Kidnappers had through their operations demonstrated that even the royal fathers who convened the festivals were not exempted from the reach and fangs of gun – wielding kidnappers.

Additionally, it is on record that the major festivals which the Igbo people are noted for suffered major setbacks as a result of the high spate of insecurity. These festivals included the Afiolu festival in Nnewi, the Owu festival in Awo – Omamma, the Imo-Awka festival in Awka, the Nwafor festival in Ogidi, the Mgeagbor festival of Ogbunike, among others. Obike Douglas writes that,

With the possible exception of the Ofala festival yearly celebrated by the Obi of Onitsha, other festivals in the state were known to have witnessed poor and unimpressive turn-out by the people. The large number of security personnel deployed at Onitsha during the annual Ofala festivals from 2009-2012, may have acted as a booster in the morale of the people and thus the turnout has always been impressive. Even with these security agencies in town, few people were known to have been kidnapped in Onitsha during these Ofala festivals¹³⁸.

Kidnapping also affected the social life and social relations of the Igbo people. For fear of kidnappers, many Igbo people were held hostage in their homes from dusk to dawn. As a result of kidnapping, night travel became a high risk venture. Furthermore, many people absconded their newly completed houses because of fear of armed robbers or kidnappers. People were compelled to present a pretentious outlook of poverty. Some Igbo persons were known to have deliberately refused to paint the externalities of their houses. Many people were afraid to buy or use new vehicles because of kidnappers, armed robbers or car snatchers. It was reported that rich people in the region resorted to riding in taxi cabs and commercial motorcycles popularly called okada to market, school and social outings as a means to check kidnappers or hostage takers¹³⁹.

With regards to group relationships, insecurity contributed to a relatively high level of mistrust among the Igbo people. Only a few people still extended the traditional African hospitality to strangers. Some people did not acknowledge or returned greeting by strangers nor oblige strangers asking for directions; most people were unwilling to render help to persons in distress for fear of being either robbed or kidnapped. Few people would venture to stop to assist people calling for help on the express roads. Increasingly, many people nowadays barricade themselves in their homes¹⁴⁰.

It is important to note that the high demand for police escort by private persons and public officials in the region is caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Given that these weapons could easily be used to assassinate people. This situation further depleted the inadequate police personnel that could have been deployed to crime control. In the major cities of the Southeast, most people lived in fear, as criminals could just jump down from motorcycles to maim people with lethal arms. Most people developed a phobia for stepping out of their houses at night. Motorcyclists were been banned from operation before 6.00am or after 7pm due to the fear of their handy use by gun-wielding hoodlums

The grand sum of the foregoing is that the culture of the people was somewhat kept in abeyance, since the very individuals who encourage, promote and add colour to the culture of their towns became high targets of kidnapers and hostage-takers seemed to have taken over the region. Apart from the effect on new yam and other festivals, another area that was grossly affected by the level of insecurity in the region was the marriage institution.

The story of brides and grooms being kidnapped some minutes to their marriages were not uncommon in the region. This ugly trend gave many Igbo people the excuse of carrying out their traditional marriage ceremonies outside the region. Traditionally, it was a taboo for a freeborn Igbo man to give his daughter's hand in marriage outside his homestead¹⁴¹. The above

notwithstanding, the high level insecurity that pervaded life in Igboland somewhat gave room for traditional marriages to be contracted outside Igboland, in places such as Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, Warri and other cities of Nigeria. Chigbo Nwokolo, a village sage at Amawbia laments this appalling situation,

The other day my kindred man had the guts to invite me to his daughter's traditional marriage in Lagos, when I had the courtesy of asking him why the choice of Lagos, he simply counted the number of people that had been kidnapped a few days to their wedding day here in Amawbia. I couldn't help but understand his anxiety and fears... Igbo culture has suffered tremendously from kidnapers' activities in this state...¹⁴².

Furthermore, Chigbo informs us that even people who were unable to clear their indebtedness to their kindred and town unions in order to have the official permission to host social festivals like traditional marriages have resorted to having them in the cities, thereby creating a lot of social problems in the communities. Accordingly, Chigbo states that,

When my daughters and granddaughters all got married, all my kindred members were privy to it, presided over the weddings and drank the traditional up wine allocable to the kindred as well as kill and shared the traditional he-goat. These people now running to Lagos to have their children's traditional marriages are depriving us of our right of presiding over the marriage as well as the drinks and meat. In fact, only few of them have been courteous to give the kindred their traditional he-goats. As far as I am concerned, those whose children have done their traditional marriages outside this community are not proper members of their kindred¹⁴³.

The implications of the above situation for communal unity, social stability and development are not far-fetched. One can surmise that if these kind of social issues are not properly handled they have the tendency of creating social tensions that can destabilize communities and render communal cohesion and integration impossible.

Insecurity and its chief enablers – arms proliferation also had a negative impact on the religious life of the indigenes of the Igbo people. For example, in the early 2000s, when the victims of kidnapping and hostage taking were the only very rich, most of them quickly resorted

to the use of private guards and vigilantes, especially in attending church and sundry occasions. However, when kidnapers in the region widened their catch to average people, most people simply decided to avoid church programmes¹⁴⁴. Commenting on this, an interviewee admitted that he avoided attending Sunday Masses for several months, since more than three parishioners were kidnapped either on their way to church or when returning from mass. He avers,

I am a catholic and know how grievously unpardonable it is not to attend Sunday mass. But the activities of kidnapers made me not to attend Sunday masses for close to one year. I am from Ukpok in Nnewi south, and I usually return home from my base in Port Harcourt because of numerous engagements in the village. When I noticed that fellow parishioners were being kidnapped within or around the church premises, I decided to sneak into town on Saturdays and sneak back to PH on Sundays. It is not such a good thing to do, however, the imperatives of survival dictated that... my spiritual life suffered tremendously within this time...¹⁴⁵.

The case was also applicable to so many other people in Southeastern Nigeria. It can therefore be argued that small arms proliferation and their use for assorted forms of criminality had an adverse effect on different aspects of the life of the Igbo people since the end of the Nigeria - Biafra war.

Finally, it is necessary to recap the fact that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as evidenced from the explications made so far was certainly one of the most urgent security and developmental challenges of Southeastern Nigeria in the period under review. This is because the uncontrolled proliferation and widespread availability of small arms was a development that affected virtually every aspect of life in the region. As Akwo puts it:

the problems posed by small arms and light weapons proliferation are complex and multidimensional in character. They are entangled with other broad security and societal issues such as conflict prevention and resolution, poverty, gender, culture of violence, governance issues, criminal activity and links to terrorism. It also had serious implications for human rights and humanitarian activities¹⁴⁶.

The availability of these arms and weapons fueled dozens of local killing, injuring and displacing people primarily women and children in their homeland. The damage and destruction caused by small arms in the Southeast region of Nigeria was indeed staggering. Besides being a direct cause of deaths, the effects of small arms were far-reaching when consideration is given to its economic cost, social upheavals, resource allocation away from human needs, and the undermining of the legitimacy of the government, among others. There was also a psychological dimension to the damage that was perpetrated by small arms proliferation and use. Increasingly, among most Igbo people of the Southeast, there was the growing perception that the well-being and security of individuals and communities can only be guaranteed through the possession of small arms. This situation created what has been referred to in the study as a security dilemma. Given these challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeast Nigeria, the logical question that inescapably crops up is: what have the various governments that have statutory authority in the region done to combat the proliferation of these arms and weapons and how effective were the governments' efforts at addressing the challenge. This theme is the subject of the next chapter.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER SIX

GOVERNMENTS EFFORTS AT CURBING ARMS PROLIFERATION IN NIGERIA, 1970 – 2007

Governments Efforts at Curbing Arms Proliferation in Nigeria

It is important to start this chapter by observing that by virtue of Nigeria's peculiar federalism, state governments or the constituent units of the federation have little constitutional powers vis á vis the security sector of the country. For example, in the second schedule of the Nigerian (1999) Constitution, (as amended) otherwise known as the Exclusive List of Powers, 68 critical items are exclusively assigned to the federal government. Similarly, the second most crucial item on this exclusive list, wherein only the federal government has powers to legislate is: "arms, ammunition and explosives"¹ Consequently, the bulk of the efforts at combating the menace of small arms and light weapons proliferation have been done by the federal government as in fact, the state governments have no statutory power to make laws or policies on arms in their respective states.

The first attempt at checkmating small arms proliferation came in January, 1970². This came in form of Decree No. 47 promulgated by the Federal Military Government of Yakubu Gowon³. It should be noted that this decree was made to check the high spate of armed robberies which were made possible by the availability of civil war arms and weapons in unauthorised hands in the country. This explains why the decree was entitled '*The Robbery and Firearms Special Provision Decree, 1970*'. Thus, the federal government sought to kill two birds with one stone by the promulgation of Decree No. 47 of 1970. The government aimed at curbing armed robbery (especially, through deterrent measures) and its greatest enabler – availability of small arms. The decree had become imperative because of the high rate of armed robbery in the country immediately after the Nigeria - Biafra war. In line with foregoing, Halad Yahaya

observes that the crime of armed robbery and high spate of firearms trafficking was never a high priority problem for Nigeria until the end of the civil war in 1970. In his words, “before 1970, the crime of robbery and illicit ownership of firearms did not carry capital punishment but an imprisonment sentence with or without whipping”⁴. A glimpse at the legal systems of Nigeria prior to 1970 would attest to the truism in the above submission. The Criminal Code was applicable to Southern Nigeria while the Penal Code was applied to Northern Nigeria⁵. Section 401 of the Criminal Code, for example, provides that “any person who steals anything, and, at or immediately before or immediately after the time of stealing it, uses or threatens to use actual violence to any person or property in order to obtain or retain the thing stolen or to prevent or overcome resistance to its being stolen or retained, is said to be guilty of robbery”⁶. Section 402 of the Criminal Code further provides punishment for robbery thus,

The punishment for robbery is fourteen years imprisonment; there is life imprisonment if the offender at the time of the offence,

- (a) was armed with a dangerous or offensive weapon or instrument
- (b) was accompanied by at least one person; or
- (c) wounded or injured anybody...⁷

The Penal Code on the other hand states, in section 296:

(2). Theft is robbery if, in in order to commit or in attempting to carry away property obtained by theft, the offender for that end voluntarily causes or attempts to cause any person death or injury or wrongful restraint of fear of instant death or of instant hurt or of instant wrongful restraint.

(3). Extortion is robbery, if the offender at the time of committing the extortion is in the presence of the person and commits the extortion by putting that person in fear of instant death, or instant hurt or of instant wrongful restraint to that person or to some other

person and by so putting in fear induces the person so put in fear then and there to deliver the thing extorted⁸.

From the above, it is indubitable that armed robberies which were perpetrated with illicit small arms and light weapons were more or less a rarity in colonial Nigeria; as the tenor of the Penal Code and Criminal Code suggests. It is a fact that throughout the colonial period, the colonialists maintained a strong check on ownership of firearms in Nigeria. The colonial ordinances on firearms control were amended severally, especially, when Nigerians discovered the loopholes in the documents. The 1946 Ordinance for example, subjected all applicants for firearms license to rigorous processes; these applications were verified and documented⁹. From available records at the National Archives, Enugu, the colonial government could be given a pass mark in the area of controlling ownership and use of illicit firearms. However, it must be noted that the colonial government had several factors to their advantage. First, all imports and exports of Nigeria were easily made under government surveillance; nothing not sanctioned could easily enter the colony. Second, the local crafters of firearms in Nigeria were known and were in fact, fewer than what obtains nowadays. Thus, the colonial government carried out occasional raids against blacksmiths who produced firearms¹⁰. Third and importantly, the population of Nigeria was relatively more manageable in the colonial period. These and many other factors helped in controlling and regulating illicit arms and weapons in colonial Nigeria.

With independence closeby, there was the need to review the Nigerian firearms regime and thus, came the 1959 Firearms Act. The Firearms Act (1959) continues to remain the main legal instrument governing the production, use, import, and export of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria¹¹. Section 23 of the Firearms Act states that “subject to the provisions of sections 24 to 26 of this Act, no person shall manufacture, assemble, or repair any firearms or ammunition except at a public armoury or at arsenals established for the purposes of the armed

forces with the consent of the President, acting in his discretion”¹². It also prohibits dealing in firearms except by registered dealers as well as criminalizes the import and export of firearms and ammunition into Nigeria by sea or by air. In addition, the Act imposes a minimum sentence of 10 years for the importation, exportation, manufacture and repair of firearms¹³. An amendment to the 1959 Act was adopted in 1966, which increased the punishment for firearms related offences. Hitherto, the punishment was N400 fine or 12 months imprisonment, or both¹⁴.

From all indications, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons was to become a great source of worry to Nigeria immediately after the Nigeria-Biafra war. As noted elsewhere, for reasons difficult to fathom, the Nigeria government did not carry out any demobilization and disarming of combatant soldiers, especially, on the Biafran side thus, the entire Nigerian geographical space became flooded with assorted types of weapons. Given the excruciating poverty and miserableness in Igboland, most of the arms which littered the length and breadth of the communities in the area were put to criminal uses. Alfred Onwuneme notes that “in less than six months after the war, armed robbery grew to become a daily nightmare in Nigeria”¹⁵. Furthermore, Halad Yahaya puts the submission better when he avers that “after the Nigeria - Biafra war of 1967 – 1970, there was an eruption of robberies and armed robberies in the country especially in the war affected areas and in Southern parts of Nigeria generally. The arms used were no longer the native weapons known but guns, pistols and revolvers as well as other modern instruments which made armed robbery acquire the horrible and disturbing dimension it has today...”¹⁶.

It was, therefore, the poor management of the civil war arms that boomeranged on Nigeria immediately after the war; resulting in unprecedented levels of criminality, especially, armed robbery. Consequently, the military government of Yakubu Gowon on August 8th, 1970 promulgated Decree No. 47 permitting the imposition of capital punishment for the crimes of

armed robbery and illicit arms proliferation. As a result of the decree, the earlier provisions in the Criminal as well Penal Codes were repealed. Officially entitled, Robbery and Firearms (Special Provision) Decree 1970, the decree stated in section 1 that,

1. (1) Any person who commits the offence of robbery shall upon trial and conviction under this decree, be liable to imprisonment of not less than twenty – one years.
2. If –
 - (a) Any offender mentioned in subsection (1) above is armed with firearms or any offensive weapon or is in company with any person so armed, or
 - (b) At or immediately after the time of the robbery the said offender wounds or uses any personal violence to any person, the offender shall be liable upon conviction under this decree to sentence of death.
3. The sentence of death imposed under this section may be executed by hanging the offender by the neck till he be dead or the offender may suffer death by firing squad as the Military Governor may direct¹⁷.

It is on record that the first execution under this decree was done around November 1970 at the Bar Beach, Lagos. The notorious armed robber, Ishola Onyenusi who had terrorized residents of Lagos and Benin for months after the civil war was among those to be first executed under Decree No. 47 of 1970¹⁸. The convicted armed robbers were tied to stakes in front of large jeering crowds and at an order of the commander of the firing squad; volleys of bullets were pumped into the bodies of the condemned criminals. Moreover, apart from Lagos, these firing squads were also carried out in most of the states of the federation throughout the 1970s¹⁹.

The question that begs for an answer is: to what extent did Decree No. 47 of 1970 help to curb the proliferation of small arms and the attendant criminality, especially, armed robbery? First, it has to be submitted that the decree was not expressly on curbing firearms proliferation;

as a matter of fact, arms proliferation was only ancillary to the provisions of the decree. The primary aim of the decree was to arrest the high spate of armed robberies in the country by putting up a strong deterrence to it. From available newspaper reports and from the position of Halad Yahaya who had studied the matter, it would appear that robbery and arms proliferation for criminal purposes was not significantly reduced as a result of the Decree No. 47. Yahaya asserts that “besides a brief lull at the initial stage, armed robbery did not seem to diminish to a tolerable rate of occurrence”²⁰. Furthermore, he opines,

The brutality with which armed robbery was being conducted did not decrease either; instead, the armed robbers developed new techniques and methods of operation and became more dreadful. Besides, ambushing travellers on the highways at night, armed robbers could attack in daylight. As if that was not enough a terror to law – abiding Nigerians, the armed robbers developed the method of entering, by force, into the abodes of people suspected to hold money or valuables in their houses, waking them up and leisurely requesting them to bring out money or state where their money was hidden²¹.

From all indications, the Decree No. 47 of 1970 could be said to have achieved only a moderate success, especially, in deterring some robbers from carrying out their operations. In the main, it contributed nothing significant in the area of combating the menace of small arms and light weapons proliferation in the country. First, the decree failed to make any historical linkage(s) between the high spate of armed robberies and the abundance of civil war arms which were not properly mopped-up. Second, it attempted to cure the symptom and left the ailment intact. By addressing armed robbery primarily and neglecting to root out the arms and weapons that facilitated armed robberies, the decree thus made a *faux pas* by putting the cart before the horse. Similarly, Francis Chilaka observes that,

Although the provisions of the law are comprehensive in that they clearly spell out what amounts to legal and illegal possession and use of firearms (SALW), the penalties for breaching the law have, particularly in relation to fines, become obsolete, while the enforcement of the law has been constrained by corruption and inadequacy of institutional capacity on the part of the law enforcement agents. Consequently, even though the law can be considered adequate in terms of the

production, import, and export of SALW, the penalty is often insufficient to ensure deterrence and enforcement in the event of a breach.²²

In any event, the decree was soon suspended with the handing over power to Shagari in 1979. The Shagari government seemed not to have made any specific governmental efforts in the task of combating the trafficking/proliferation of small arms in the country. As one observer puts it “everything was on the increase in Shagari’s administration – the cost of governance, corruption, ethnicity, cronyism, criminality and what have you?”²³. It was, in fact, in Shagari’s administration that arms proliferation reached such a height in Nigeria that Ghanaian gunsmiths came to Awka to provide additional lessons to Awka blacksmiths²⁴.

However, with the sacking of Shagari’s government by Buhari on 31st December, 1983, in the following year, the new regime with Decree No. 5 of 1984 reintroduced the earlier Decree No. 47 of 1970²⁵. Under the newly reintroduced decree, illegal possession of firearms attracted a fine of N20,000 or a minimum of ten years imprisonment, or both. The Decree also reasserted that armed robberies were punishable by death (hanging or firing squad), and that offenders charged with attempted robbery involving the use of firearms should face life imprisonment/sentence²⁶.

From 1984 onwards, the military administrations in Nigeria continued to rely existentially on Gowon’s Decree No. 47 and in some instances reworking it without any major inclusions. Therefore, while the proliferation of small arms and light weapons continued to grow, the firearms regime continued to remain unchanged. In some instances, as Chukwuemeka Alaku opines, the military governments benefited from the absence of security that conduced to the exponential growth of small arms and light weapons. Alaku asserts that “President Babangida institutionalized the misuse of small arms because of the ill-gotten wealth or criminal wealth and social injustice that allowed such impunity and free rein in Nigeria”²⁷[sic].

Nevertheless, the Babangida administration was known to have impacted somewhat on the small arms proliferation regime. Following a bloody inter-ethnic clash in the northern city of Kaduna in 1989, in which small arms were used by the belligerents freely and with devastating effects, the federal government sought to curb the availability of firearms in the country. It therefore revised the regulations governing gun ownership, making them more stringent. Within the mandate of the Presidential Order, the administration withdrew the license of arms – dealers and arms – owners throughout country and enacted laws that made the restoration of licenses difficult²⁸. The new rules stipulated the categories of guns that could be owned by civilians, this included double-barrel and shotguns for game-hunting and sports. It also stipulated that “these must be licensed by the commissioner of police of a state, with the requirements that the applicant must be 18 years of age and above, of good address and a verifiable source of income²⁹. Nevertheless the effectiveness of the Presidential Order has been seriously questioned. It barely scratched the surface; most arms - dealers and owners simply refused to comply with the directives as some of them quickly went underground³⁰.

The advent of a new political dispensation in Nigeria on May 29th 1999 heralded a lot of hope in the country. Douglas Obike posits that,

When Nigeria transited to another democratic system on May 29th 1999, most Nigerians were hopeful that the attendant maladies of military rule were soon to be forgotten. Most Nigerians expressed the hope that Nigeria was soon to take a place commensurate with her human and natural endowments in the comity of states... The Nigerian state was dangerously challenged by disintegrating problems of ethnicity, fiscal incompatibility and more threateningly, insecurity. More than anything else, insecurity had become a characteristic feature of Nigeria: many lives were lost in the country on daily basis.³¹

It cannot be denied that one of the greatest enablers of insecurity in the country is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. With the new civilian government in 1999, it was hoped that something significant would be done in curbing the proliferation of small arms and

light weapons which had conducted to most of the crimes perpetuated in the country. This may explain why President Olusegun Obasanjo, in a memo dated 21 September 2001, requested the drafting of a bill setting out more stringent penalties for contravention of firearms laws³². He proposed a 10-year jail term, without an option of fine, for illegal possession of firearms and further proposed a cash reward for information that leads to the arrest and prosecution of anyone in illegal possession of firearms³³ However, no draft firearms law was eventually presented to the National Assembly from the presidency until Olusegun Obasanjo exhausted his tenure in 2007³⁴.

In fact, since the return to civilian rule in 1999, there appears not to have been any significant legislation or presidential directive on combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (with possible exception of the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms and light weapons). The Obasanjo as well as the Goodluck administrations were known to have established what they termed Presidential Committees on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2004 and 2011 respectively³⁵. In the main, these PRESCOMs as they have come to be known do not have statutory back – up and have little or no funding to embark on such an onerous task as combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Additionally, the National Taskforce on Small Arms and Light Weapons Trafficking had been denounced by the National Assembly as a criminal taskforce³⁶. This was because the agency had no statutory back-up and works parallel to the mandate of the Customs Excise. It is recognised that a significant number of weapons were surrendered in the post amnesty arms mop-up in the Niger Delta. These were not as a result of any proactive policy by government but rather, a reactive response conditioned by the need to have oil -Nigeria's life wire-to continue to flow in the region. What continued to obtain in the period under review was ad – hoc arms collection exercises which cannot in the main, stem the tide of illicit small arms and light weapons in the country.

In 2001, Federal Government of Nigeria carried out its first destruction of arms and ammunition seized by security agencies, which comprised of 428 rifles, 494 imported pistols, 287 locally made pistols and 48 Dane guns³⁷. It has been unable to conduct further arms destruction programmes ostensibly as result of lack of funds and equipment. In addition, the 2001 arms destruction exercise involved the burial at sea of arms, a destruction method which the government is reluctant to repeat for environmental reasons and which civil society and other stakeholders criticize for its lack of transparency. From January 2002 to June 2003, 1,902 assorted firearms and 13,271 rounds of ammunition have been collected and are now awaiting destruction³⁸.

Another of these arms collection exercises was the Plateau State arms collection of 2004. In May 2004, as a result of persistent settler-indigene and Christian-Muslim conflicts in parts of Plateau State, the federal government declared six months of emergency rule in the state and appointed Major-General Chris Alli (rtd) as the Sole Administrator of the state. The Sole Administrator appeared to have been exasperated by the number of civilians in possession of firearms which could lead to a relapse into violence. Consequently, on 21 May 2004 he was known to have ordered that all firearms in private hands should be submitted to the government under a “Guns for Cash” programme³⁹. Under the gun for cash programme, the government directed all individuals and groups in possession of firearms to come forward and surrender them at designated centers for cash rewards. The directive declared that whoever surrendered any foreign rifle was to be paid 100,000 naira while those who surrendered locally made arms would get 25,000 naira each. The government also directed that any person that had useful information on the whereabouts of hidden firearms could also come forward with such information to the nearest designated center for a cash reward of not less than 20,000 Naira. It added that anyone who voluntarily provided information leading to the recovery of firearms would be protected

against police action or prosecution, while his identity would not be disclosed. The date of 7 June, 2004 was fixed as the deadline for the voluntary surrender of the illegal arms⁴⁰.

Accordingly, B.E. Chukwu observes that,

The public response to the program, however, was very poor. As cooperation was not forthcoming from the people, the closing date for the voluntary surrender of the arms was extended by two weeks. During this period, and with strong assurances of amnesty and confidentiality by the Sole Administrator, some of the people voluntarily surrendered weapons and were issued receipts. They were, however, afraid of coming forward to collect their rewards openly. The open payment arrangement therefore had to be cancelled in favour of secret payment. In all, less than 300 weapons were voluntarily handed over to the security agencies. Thereafter, combined teams of the army and the police embarked on “cordon and search” operations in communities that were suspected to be harboring guns. However, there was no official record at the end of the exercise regarding the number of guns that were recovered⁴¹.

In that same 2004, precisely on 5 February 2004, the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) directed that all illegally acquired, prohibited and offensive weapons should be surrendered to the police within one month. He offered a “handsome reward” (later specified at N10, 000) to any citizen who would volunteer information about persons in possession of offensive weapons and assured that all information received by the police would be treated with “utmost confidentiality.” The IGP, however, warned that after the expiration of one month deadline, the force would commence raids on illegal owners of offensive weapons⁴². Following the expiration of the one- month deadline, on 14 March, 2004, he inaugurated a 60-man task force on the recovery of illegal firearms nationwide. The IGP ordered the force to commence a mop-up operation of illegal weapons all over the country. The terms of reference of the taskforce included: (a) Seeking and obtaining information on places where firearms are kept, sold or manufactured. (b) Obtaining search warrants from courts of competent jurisdiction to search and identify premises where illegal firearms are kept, manufactured or sold and confiscate them. (c) Collating and forwarding returns of recoveries to force Headquarters, Abuja, for further action

when necessary. (d) Collaborating with other sister organisations in all their operations. (e) Seeking and obtaining information on points of entry (Land, sea or air). (f) Approaching its assignment closely throughout the 12 zones of operation of the police, which must be closely monitored by the zonal Assistant Inspectors- General of police.⁴³

Table 6.1: List of Weapons Seized in Nigeria by the Nigerian police in 2004

S/N	Item	Number Recovered
a.	b.	c.
1.	Weapons Recovered	972
2.	Ammunition Recovered	111, 585
3.	Persons Arrested	190
4.	Suspected Killed in Operation	73
5.	Policemen Injured/Killed	12/19 respectively

Source: Bruno E. Chukwu, “ECOWAS and Arms Control in West Africa: A Focus on the Niger Delta Amnesty” (Master’s Thesis: Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, March, 2010.

Table 6.2: Summary of Arms Seized by the Police in the Southeast between March and May, 2004

States	Arms	Ammunition	Cartridges	Total
Abia	386	86	46	518
Anambra	26	3	Nil	29*
Ebonyi	77	30	22	129
Enugu	39	30	Nil	69
Imo	28	40	290	358
Total	456	189	358	1103

*The low figures for Anambra State were as a result of the leaking of official information about the raids to gun – owners and gunsmiths.

Source: Nigerian Police Records at Umuahia.

From the above statistics, it is not in doubt that the IGP's initiative on small arms and light weapons achieved but a limited success. There have been other arms collection exercises in Nigeria since 2004. The most popular of these was the Niger Delta case where the Federal Government tried to use grand – strategic thinking to woo militants of that region in 2010. This too, met a limited success. This is because according to B.E. Chukwu,

The disarmament process not only failed to disarm the factions, but also reduced confidence in the government, thereby making future disarmament measures more difficult. The key element preventing real progress on the disarmament process was the lack of attention to reintegration efforts and opportunities for former militants to earn gainful employment. Although over 4,000 jobs were promised, the posts that materialized were temporary, low paying, and oddly located in areas not directly affected by the conflict. As a result, the militants felt short-changed by the process. The failure of this disarmament process left armed groups distrustful of the government and its motives, and apprehensive about any future disarmament initiatives⁴⁴.

It appears that Nigeria has only made appreciable efforts in sub - regional arms proliferation control. This is because both sub –nationally and nationally considered, most of the country's engagements in the area of combating small arms and light weapons proliferation appear to have marked no significant watershed. Even though Nigeria has been an active participant in international and regional discussions on small arms proliferation and had in fact, signed a number of international measures pertaining to small arms and light weapons, the overall implication of Nigeria's engagements and its policy foci have often left much to be desired.

Additionally, Nigeria supported the adoption in 2005 of the *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*, and had made a case for the political document to be transformed into a legally binding instrument in order to control effectively and criminalize the illicit movement of small arms⁴⁵. However, up to the terminal date of this study, there had not been any efforts at overhauling or systematizing the national

legislation on small arms and light weapons in the country. President Obasanjo, admittedly, initiated a number of committees aimed at addressing the issues of proliferation, disarmament, and related matters, but these committees were known to have made little progress in tackling these issues⁴⁶.

For example, in July 2000, the government established a National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons to respond to the growing crime in the country and the proliferation of small arms. The purpose of the committee was to determine the sourcing of illegal small arms and collect information on small arms proliferation in Nigeria. The committee could not publish any report of its findings neither did the government act in the policy thrust of any recommendation arising from the work of the committee⁴⁷.

It is only in response to the sub-regional initiatives on small arms and light weapons proliferation that Nigeria could be said to have hope for combating the menace of arms proliferation. Yet the ECOWAS framework is fraught with many grey areas too. Arising from the ECOWAS 1998 Moratorium on trafficking on Arms, the Federal Government of Nigeria inaugurated the National Committee on the ECOWAS Moratorium in 2001⁴⁸. The Committee, writes Francis Chilaka “as of August 2003, is composed of representatives of the Ministries of Defence, Internal Affairs the National Orientation Agency, the Immigration Service, and various security and customs agencies such as the Police, the State Security Services and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency”⁴⁹.

However, despite having a wide representation, the National Committee did not appear to have satisfied the guidelines on the composition of National Commissions as stipulated by the Programme of Cooperation for Security and Development (PCASED). For instance, neither the Ministry of Justice nor the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was represented on it. The Committee’s mandate was to:

1. Control the import and manufacture of all small arms and light weapons;
2. Register and control the movement and use of legitimate arms stock;
3. Detect and destroy all illicit and surplus weapons; and
4. Permit exemptions to the Moratorium only in accordance with strict criteria⁵⁰

The Committee, however, managed to devise a 'Framework for the Implementation of the ECOWAS Moratorium' which contains several priority areas, based on PCASED's Plan of Action. This included, establishing a culture of peace, enhancing border controls, training, and collecting and destroying surplus and illegal weapons⁵¹. Chilaka writes,

Based on its mandate, the National Committee articulated its first work plan in 2003, which represents a viable basis on which an assessment of the National Committee's operations since inception can be based (*Nigeria NatCom WorkPlan*, 2003) The specific activities geared towards achieving this objective include awareness-raising campaigns involving a variety of organisations such as women's organisations, religious bodies, community groups and business associations. This aspect of the National Committee's programme comprises confidence-building measures which would de-emphasize violence and underscore the peaceful alternatives of resolving issues⁵².

In November 2002, the National Committee hosted a PCASED-sponsored national workshop on Modern Methods and Techniques of Illicit Small Arms Control through the Promotion of a Culture of Peace. It was broadly agreed that a necessary condition for the reduction of the circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons is the national determination to tackle the various socioeconomic and political issues responsible for widespread social discord and upsurge in crime. Similarly, it was agreed that the educational curriculum should be revised to incorporate a 'peace module' teaching the benefits of a culture of peace to society at all levels⁵³.

Besides, the introduction of a viable social security mechanism was also highlighted as a potential way of reducing armed criminality. The workshop called for a firearms registry, cross-

border collaboration among security officials, and adequate equipment and training for border security officials⁵⁴. During the April 2003 elections, PCASED supported the National Commission to place sensitization advertisements on gun-free elections in local newspapers⁵⁵. In 2004, the National Committee and the newly created presidential Committee on small arms were fused together⁵⁶.

However, experts in small arms proliferation discourse did bemoan the capacity of the National Committee. In their views, the capacity of the National Committee could not but be seen as insufficient to carry out the required awareness-raising activities in Nigeria on small arms and light weapons issues. Besides, its staff and budget were grossly inadequate to cope with the demands of drafting ‘peace curriculum’ for all levels of the education in the country, and to set up, train, and equip advocacy outposts in the 36 states of Nigeria⁵⁷.

The National or Presidential Committee, it must be noted, was originally conceived as a primary documentation committee on small arms and light weapons. The committee is yet to demonstrate its capacity to act in this role. There were renewed efforts in 2007 to revive the activities of the committee, and legislation seemed to be contrived to convert the committee into a national commission. However, nothing significant came out of the moves. Thus, the Presidential Committee on Small Arms (PRESCOM) is still at best an ad – hoc machinery for collating information on small arms and light weapons in the country. What can therefore be safely submitted is that the Nigerian small arms and light weapons proliferation regime requires a major overhauling as no effort had been put in place to systematize and or centralize the activities of the agencies which have a statutory mandate in curbing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country. Besides, apart from creating institutional mechanisms for collating information on small arms proliferation and collecting illicit arms in circulation in the country, there is an urgent need to put of psycho – social and economic policies that will soothe

the pains of the Igbo people. In fact, Igboland should be treated as a post war society – since the 3Rs of the 1970s was more or less a sham, a subterfuge in many crucial dimensions. Ukiwo Ukoha and Innocent Chukwuma support this viewpoint when they averred that,

Policy pronouncements on addressing the governance and security challenges of the South East should include designating the region as a post-conflict zone. The South-East qualifies as a post-conflict zone not just because of being the battlefield of the Nigeria Civil War but also being the constant destinations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing religious and ethno - regional violence in mostly northern parts of the country. No other zone in Nigeria has suffered the consequence of violent conflict as the South-East. The phenomenal growth of the informal sector of the economy of the zone is partly the product of adaptation and resilience that violent conflict imposes on its victims⁵⁸.

Meanwhile, with regard to the efforts of the governments of the states of the Southeast in dealing with the problem of proliferation of small arm and light weapons in Igboland, it must be noted that the states of the Southeast for reasons caused by the lopsided nature of Nigeria's federalism have no constitutional mandate in making edicts on arms. Besides, the huge financial implications of setting up any viable apparatus for curbing small arms implications would eat deep into the monthly allowance handed down to them by the Federal Government. Thus, the efforts of the state governments in the Southeast have majorly dwelt on purchasing patrol vehicles, communication/equipment gadgets for the statutory agencies in their domain. They had also employed some grand-strategic policies in the efforts to curb criminality in the states. However, it should be noted that, although, reduction in crimes and criminality has a positive impact on curbing arms proliferation; they are not exactly one and the same thing. For example, reduction in the crime of robberies may not necessarily lead to reduction in inter-communities clashes as the same arms and weapons could be used to execute the same operations. It is needless, therefore, to make the trite observation that the ultimate solution to crimes and criminality is a systematic withdrawal of illicit arms and weapons in the country. The recommendations on how to go about this are made in the concluding chapter of the study.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusion

This study has aimed at exploring the nexus between the Nigeria – Biafra War and the security challenges in post-civil war Southeast Nigeria or Igboland, especially, with regard to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the destructive ends for which they have been employed since the end of the war. As submitted in the study, there were no arms mop – up or what has come to be known as DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration), after the Nigeria-Biafra war. Consequently, the exposure of erstwhile RAP blacksmiths and gunsmiths to the intricate technology of gun-making and also, the extreme financial distress the Igbo faced after the war, propelled not a small number of persons to arms manufacturing and proliferation. This led to a situation in which a significant number of the locally fabricated arms and weapons in Nigeria became traced to the Southeast region of Nigeria. The fact that these small arms have imperiled the national security of the country in every conceivable way motivated the study to seek to explore the relationship between the Nigeria – Biafra war and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeastern Nigeria. Put differently, the study elected to examine the proliferation of small arms and light weapons from the stand point of the dearth of arms mop – up at the end of the fratricidal war that lasted for nearly thirty months and in which the main theatre was Igboland or the present Southeastern Nigeria.

Being a historical research, the study could not but have been written within the ethos of the historical tradition, that is, in a thematic and chronological order. The critical and analytic methods of presentation were employed. In addition, the study relied consequentially on oral sources, especially, from the war veterans and other experts for information. Besides this, significant information was obtained from the National Archives at Enugu; the collections of the

National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru – Jos; the National Defence College, Abuja; the National Peace Museum, Umuahia; among others. Other sources of information were also made use of, chief among which were textbooks and journal articles and also academic dissertations and theses.

The study was organised in seven chapters. The first two chapters established the basic frame and the historical overview which is necessary for understanding the Igbo, the Nigeria-Biafra war, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Chapter One for instance contains the primal motivation, need for and relevance of the study, among others. Chapter Two presented the history of the Igbo, in whose domain the civil war had raged on for nearly three years and who have continued to bear the brunt of the war given its colossal negative consequence several years after it had ended. The need for a history of the Igbo, their environment and philosophy of war in the study is defensible because the issues raised and information unearthed therein are crucial for understanding the civil war and, more importantly, the manufacturing of small arms and light weapons during the war, which graduated to pose serious challenges for post-civil war Igboland and even Nigeria.

The third chapter sought to demonstrate that the genesis of the proliferation of arms illicitly in Southeastern Nigeria could be traced to the war. This as the study argued, was partly occasioned by the arms challenge in which the nascent Biafran Republic found herself and partly because of the initial belief of the Biafran authorities that the fragile political edifice that Nigeria represented at that time would crumble before any significant attack would be made against the new state of Biafra and hence, that no reasonable political strength would be mustered by Gowon to fight against Biafra. Therefore, when the Biafran authorities realized the foolhardiness of their initial position, frantic efforts were put together to rescue the new republic and this conducted to several missions aimed at purchasing arms abroad¹. Some countries such as France, Portugal,

Israel, Tanzania, Gabon, South Africa, Zambia, among others assisted Biafra to purchase arms and secure arms abroad; however, there were several diplomatic, technical and other impediments against Biafra and thus, foreign arms importation proved to be grossly inadequate for the war needs of the nascent republic².

In order to remedy this situation, Biafra's authorities resorted to indigenous fabrication of arms and weapons. This as the study has shown, seriously increased the fire power of the Biafran military. Biafra's RAP activities improved upon the gunsmithing abilities of hitherto smithing communities of Igboland and introduced the technology of gun-making to some individuals whose communities did not craft weapons in pre-war Igboland.

Corollary to the foregoing, Chapter Four showed that the proliferation of small arms in Southeastern Nigeria cannot be understood without recourse to the question of arms mop-up or DDR in the post war society. As demonstrated, there was no deliberate policy to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants and as a result of this, many small arms fell into unauthorised hands – civilians or former combatant officers. This did not constitute an immediate problem until the biting economic policies of Gowon's military government gave it impetus. In the ensuing economic quagmire in Igboland, arms-dealers were known to have arrived Igboland with the needed new Nigerian naira; with this, they were known to have bought up large number of arms in Igboland and thus, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons began and grew in the years to come to become a threat to the socio-economic growth and security of Igboland. Besides this, Chapter Four of the study sought to examine the several causes of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Igboland since the end of the Nigerian civil. A source of small arms proliferation in Nigeria is the blacksmiths most of who worked for Biafra's RAP, who proceeded to pass their skills to their children and their wards.

The study historically explained the nexus between the civil war and the sophistication of the craft and artistry of local blacksmiths in Igboland, especially in Awka Anambra State. In addition, the role of ethnic militias and vigilante outfits in the small arms proliferation discourse were carefully ascertained and it would appear that these movements/outfits worsened the security of the region by their possession and use of several kinds of small arms and light weapons.

The fifth chapter was primarily interested in x-raying the implications of small arms and light weapons proliferation to Southeast Nigeria. The major areas in which the proliferation of small arms and light weapons seem to have assailed the region more were in the economic and social dimensions and more importantly, the security of the region. In the area of security, the implications of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons cannot be overemphasised. The number of lives lost, maimed by gun-wielding hoodlums in the period under review cannot be quantified. The quantum of property lost is staggering and may not be easy to statistically record. Besides the foregoing, small arms and light weapons use in armed robbery have also negatively affected the psychology of the people of the Southeast. Apart from armed robberies which were a menace in the immediate post war Igboland, small arms availability also facilitated a host of other crimes such kidnapping and hostage-taking, intra and inter – communal feuds among others. The sum total is that a significant number of the challenges of Igboland are caused by crimes in which small arms and light weapons feature much.

The penultimate chapter examined the efforts made by governments as well as their agencies in curbing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. As explicated in the study, several efforts have been made by the government in the area of limiting the criminal uses to which small arms and light weapons are employed in Nigeria. However, it would seem that no law has been made which dwell exclusively on curbing the proliferation of small arms and light

weapons in the country. What appears to be the case is that Nigeria's efforts – legal and practical attempts – at curbing small arms proliferation had in the main been ad – hoc in nature.

Although, efforts were made at establishing a National Commission on Small Arms (NACSA) during Obasanjo's presidency, nothing tangible came out of it⁴. As submitted in Chapter Six of the study, the state governments in the Southeast were seriously handicapped in the fight against small arms and light weapons. This was primarily because of the lopsided federal system operated in the country, in which the federal government has a near monopoly in vertical and horizontal index of power. The state governments are, *ipso facto*, debarred from making any policies on arms.

Apart from this, the fiscal relations between the centre and the federating units make it unlikely that the states of the Southeast can sustain any serious effort at combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region. Therefore, while the activities of the persons involved in small arms proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria have grown in leaps and bounds, government efforts at tackling it has remained rudimentary, skeletal and uncoordinated. There is thus a dire need to address this anomaly in the security architecture of the country vis à vis the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

First, is the fact that the Nigeria-Biafra war like all major historical occurrences has generated a lot of scholarly interests and has engaged the attention of historians – who have written copiously on the subject-matter. Furthermore, like all significant historical realities, the impacts and consequences of the civil war reveal themselves in hitherto unconsidered perspectives. Thus, newer studies are often seen updating the extant knowledge on some areas of the war and or broaching new and fresh themes altogether.

In the specific case of the Nigeria Biafra war, one of the areas that have not received a significant historical attention is the nexus between that war and the proliferation of illicit small

arms and light weapons in Nigeria. This consideration actuated this present study. However, being that the Nigerian geographical space is considered unwieldy for a detailed historical investigation; the spatial scope of this present was delimited to the Southeast Region of the study.

As already established in the study, the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in Nigeria has had several negative consequences, particularly in the Southeast Region of Nigeria, they have manifested in several forms of armed robbery, kidnapping and hostage – taking as well as encouragement of inter and intra community feuds – since capabilities create intentions. Additionally, and perhaps more important, is the fact that the Nigerian governments are making efforts at combating the menace of illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation; however, it is argued that without a historical consciousness and particularly, an understanding of the extent to which the Nigeria-Biafra war created a gun-culture and militarised the Nigerian state, such efforts at combating the menace of illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation will continue to have mixed success. In the case of the Southeast, it is submitted that a thorough historical appraisal of nexus of the civil war holds the key to combating the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in the Southeast. Therefore, this study elected to undertake a historical investigation of the nexus between the Nigeria - Biafra war and the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in Southeastern Nigeria, 1967 – 2007. Given that the conditions prevailing in the period under review still obtain today, the study considers it worthwhile to make some recommendations that may help policy-makers and other stakeholders in combating the menace of small arms proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria.

Recommendations

Measures aimed at controlling small arms proliferation requires appropriate diagnoses of all existing strategies in the context of the socio-economic and political circumstances. The

complexity, convolution and political economy of small arms proliferation requires a comprehensive and multifaceted response at all levels. Existing efforts at curbing small arms and light weapons proliferation have been categorized into two – statutory and institutional. Often, the historical dimensions to small arms proliferation have more or less been ignored. This study argues for the inclusion of the Nigeria-Biafra war the in permutations on arms proliferation in Nigeria, especially in the Southeast region. In fact, efforts at combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria and the Southeast in particular have had mixed success largely because the historical undercurrents have been neglected. With regard to the challenge of small arms proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria, the study recommends thus:

First, Southeastern Nigeria or Igboland should receive attention as a post war society and this must embody a full DDR (Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration). Even though the war ended more than four decades ago, Igboland did not receive any significant attention as a post war society. Most Biafran veterans simply took their weapons to hide and later these weapons resurfaced for criminal use in the post- war Nigeria.

A sine qua non for combating the menace of small arms proliferation in Southeastern Nigeria is the urgent need for economic uplift of the entire region. It has been submitted that the proliferation of arms is worsened by the poverty in the region. Although, this claim can be made for other regions of the country, the fact that the Southeast produces up to sixty per cent of the locally fabricated arms in the country should drive the urgency of turning around the economic conditions of Igboland. The truth is that after the civil war, the Igbo were not reintegrated into the Nigerian society at least economically. Resort to arms proliferation was partly because of the harsh economic conditions in which the people found themselves. Therefore, a systematic economic welfare for the Igbo who suffered untold hardship would go a long way in limiting the menace of small arms proliferation in the region.

Second, the lessons from history would reveal that among the Igbo people, and in fact, a host of other Nigerian peoples, the fabrication or individual ownership of guns and weapons was not a taboo. Guns and explosives had always been part of the material culture of the Igbo people. These were and are still used for ceremonial functions such as funerals, coronations and festivals. Any law on arms that fails to link-up with this historical reality may end up being observed in the breach. The need to have this historical truth built – into the legal provisions on arms ownership, crafting and use cannot be overemphasised.

Third, the federal government should set – up a special agency to examine the extent to which the Nigeria - Biafra war affected and militarised the Nigerian society thereby conducting to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Such an agency will be better equipped to tackle the menace of small arms and light weapons proliferation in the Southeast.

Fourth, there is an urgent need to overhaul the entire Nigerian firearms regime. The fact that the country still relies on the 1959 Firearms Act does help matters. While arms syndicates, local fabricators and other criminal elements in the arms trafficking world continuously evolve new methods and systems, the country's firearms regime has statically remained unchanged. Both the statutory and institutional responses of the Nigerian government to the menace of small arms and light weapons require being systematically overhauled. In the case of statutory overhaul, it is recommended that the 1959 Firearms Act should be replaced with a more proactive and modern document made after a thorough and in-depth study of the current trends in the small arms and light weapons proliferation discourse.

In the area of institutional overhaul, the study recommends for speedy establishment of a national commission on small arms and light weapons. The seemingly inchoate and ad-hoc

nature of institutional responses to small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria is also a big challenge. On both the institutional and statutory overhauling of the small arms proliferation regime, the onus lies on the National Assembly to make laws that will foster the urgent changes required.

Finally, the executive arm of government should see to it that the ECOWAS convention on small arms and light weapons proliferation is given more attention, especially, its implementation. The institutional mechanism (in the form of a Committee) to curb SALW proliferation as recognised by the ECOWAS Convention has been poorly implemented in Nigeria even though a National Committee was set up in 2001. The National Committee lacks autonomy and funds. In fact, the following needs were identified by the National Committee: Equipment for destruction of illicit/recovered arms; Equipment for arms register and Databank; Resources to execute arms for development projects; Training of Secretariat staff on arms registration; and Institutional support to border operatives to enhance surveillance and detection of SALW trafficking at the border post.

That small arms and light weapons proliferation have seriously affected the economy and security of Southeastern Nigeria has been clearly demonstrated in the study. The government responses to small arms and light weapons proliferation in Nigeria leave much to be desired. The study has articulated recommendations on how these can be remedied. What is required on the part of the government is the political will to carry out the recommendations; which are a *sine qua non* for winning the war against illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation in the Southeast and Nigeria in general.

Endnotes

1. Biafra's arms challenges were severe. The non – recognition of Biafra by European states and America proved a serious handicap to the nascent state. Biafra's woes were to be compounded when her first Chief of Army Staff, Air Marshal Kurubo defected to the Nigerian side with the only aircraft that Biafra had with several millions of dollars while on mission to purchase arms for Biafra from the Soviet Union.
2. Suzanne Cronje, *The World and Nigeria: The Diplomatic History of the Biafran War, 1967 – 70*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), 75.
3. Bruno E. Chukwu, "ECOWAS and Arms Control in West Africa: A Focus on the Niger Delta Amnesty" (Master's Thesis: Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, March, 2010), 113.

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Aguocha Nwigbo	c58	Blacksmith	Oghe	31 st June, 2015
Agwu Nnacheta	c69	Community Leader	Isuochi	1 st May, 2015
Alakwe Val	c63	Archivist	Enugu	3 rd March, 2015
Amasiokwu Obumneke	c34	MASSOB member	Ogidi	10 th January, 2015
Anikwe Oduche	c63	Village Raconteur	Nkpor	2 nd March, 2015
Anyanwu Uchenna	c53	Professor	Nsukka	23 rd May, 2015
Ayo Davidson	c44	History Lecturer	Ede	4 th July, 2015
Chiana Ejikeme	c58	Blacksmith	Ndiagu - Umana	18 th July, 2016
Chigbata Charles	c74	Ex – Biafran Major	Awka	12 th August 2015
Chukwunweike Onyikata	c69	Ex – Biafran Soldier	Igboukwu	11 th August, 2015
Echeta Ibenne	c52	Lecturer	Ede	6 th July, 2015
Ewiwile Lucky	c41	Security Operative	Kuru - Jos	14 th September, 2015
Eze Augustine	c64	Security Operative	Nkpor	11 th December, 2015
Eze Friday	c67	Retiree	Umuahia	3 rd May, 2016
Ezeama Roy	c71	Ex – RAP Staff	Ogboji	12 th June, 2015
Ezeja Obeta	c74	Ex – Biafran Soldier	Okpuje	19 th July, 2015
Ezekwe Izu	c43	Blacksmith	Awka	16 th May, 2015
Ezenwaka Johson	c70	Ex – RAP Staff	Nanka	10 th January, 2015

Ezeudu Chinedu	c34	Postgraduate Student	Awka	2 nd February, 2016
Ezeaku Ifeanyi	c73	Ex – Biafran Army Commander	Awka	21 st February, 2015
Izuakor Ifeanyi	c72	Biafran Air force Officer	Awka	13 th May, 2015
Mbamalu Ikwuka	c72	Ex – Biafran Soldier	Umunya	6 th December, 2015
Muoemenam Chimezie	c31	Trader	Aba	5 th May, 2015
Muoneke Onyima	c68	Retiree	Osina	15 th July, 2015
Nwobi Samuel	c34	Postgraduate Student	Jos	22 nd September, 2015
Nzenwata Henry	c42	Policeman	Umuahia	3 rd May, 2015
Nwosu Hilary	c54	Trader	Igboukwu	13 th May, 2015
Obienyem Chukwuemeka	c73	Ex – Biafran Major	Agulu	22 nd August, 2015
Okonkwo Chris	c75	Biafran Air force Officer	Ugwuoba	17 th August, 2015
Okoye – Agba Tochukwu	c43	Civil Servant	Awka	5 th June, 2016
Okoye Nwankwo	c72	Ex – Biafran Soldier	Mgbirichi	17 th July, 2015
Olatunji Victor	c37	Lecturer	Kuru - Jos	14 th September, 2015
Ozonwa Damien	c44	Vigilante Operative	Nkpor	2 nd March, 2015
Ozor Hilary	c56	Blacksmith	Akama - Oghe	18 th July, 2016
Ozokwe Richard	c70	Retiree	Nkpor	30 th July, 2016
Saliu Abraham	c55	Lecturer	Kuru - Jos	20 th September, 2015
Samson C. Ukpabi	c72	Professor	Enugu	21 st July, 2015
Sebastine Obeta	c67	Retiree	Okpuje	18 th August, 2015
Udegbunam Onyibor	c36	Farmer	Ifite - Ogwari	20 th June, 2012

Ugwuanyi Casmir	c33	Police Officer	Amawbia	11 th August, 2015
Umar Kakeem	c44	Lecturer	Kuru - Jos	22 nd September, 2015
Umeanosike Kevin	c42	Researcher	Kuru - Jos	22 nd September, 2015
Umeobi E.	c68	Retiree	Oko	17 th July, 2015
Unegbe Joseph	c35	Security Personnel	Abuja	11 th October, 2015
Uzochukwu Mgbechi	c51	Security Personnel	Umuahia	2 nd June, 2015
Wisdom Odinka	c74	Ex – Biafran Soldier	Ogboji	30 th June, 2015

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