



MANAGING PEACE IN WEST AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURAL REFORM AND SMALL ARMS CONTROL IN NIGERIA AND LIBERIA



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Abstract.

Conflict resolution ensures that peace is restored to conflict environments. Beyond this lies the need to manage the peace that was obtained via conflict resolution. Certain policies and structural institutions have emerged as key ingredients in managing peace. Redistribution of conflict resources and other structural reforms are crucial to the process which actively engages with peacebuilding and conflict transformation. This study comparatively examines the challenges to peace management in Nigeria and Liberia. It also interrogates the central role of small arms control in this process and how cooperative security, security sector reforms and institutional frameworks and structural reforms can enhance peace management. The paper argues that the absence of small arms can reduce the possibility of recourse to violence in settling disputes, however, the structural violence inherent in African societies retain the capabilities of sustaining demand-side aspects of small arms proliferation. This means that small arms control is futile without commensurate structural reforms.

Key Words: Peace Management, Arms Control, Structural Reform, Conflict Resources, Peacebuilding, Liberia, Nigeria



Introduction.

Peace management is an emerging strategy in peace studies that harness the various instruments of conflict transformation and peacebuilding to sustain peaceful or potentially fragile situations from regressing back into conflict. The applications are not necessarily restricted to post-conflict environments but cover potentially volatile situations. Essentially; it answers the question 'how is the peacebuilding process managed'? Small arms control happens to be crucial among the activities aimed at preventing the outbreak of armed conflict by removing the instruments of war. Consequently, the success of small arms control efforts impacts on the entire process of peacebuilding and peace management because it creates the platform of security on which peace must rest. The initial resolution of the security question in conflict zones is crucial to any peacebuilding process, thus a ceasefire and disarmament activities are central to resolving this.

Nigeria and Liberia have both experienced armed conflicts that have seen levels of post-conflict peacebuilding and security sector reforms involving reconciliation, disarmament, reintegration, police and military service reforms. The fourteen years of intermittent war in Liberia, Civil War and ethno-religious crises in Nigeria and the activities Terrorists and militants in the Niger Delta region have all raised the question of small arms control. However, there is the problem of institutional, structural and economic factors that have impacted negatively on the effectiveness of the control processes and the proper management of post-conflict peace.

Poverty, oppression and other forms of structural violence had inspired these conflicts in the first place. In the event of war, the economies of Nigeria and Liberia were devastated thereby completing the circle of poverty. This has been the case with several other African countries. Between 1987 and 1998, for instance, the number of poor people in Africa increased from 217 million to 290 million. Between 1974 and 1994 per capita incomes fell by 20%. (Ahearne: 2009. 14) As conflicts increased, the standard of living and per capita income of Africans seem to fall. (Ahearne: 2009. 14)

Environmental devastation and resource exploitation in the Niger Delta, for instance, have created economic insecurity leading to social and political insecurity. To address this, security sector reform must take into cognizance the structural violence that started the circle of insecurity. Economic security for individual Africans has gained increasing priority over almost every other consideration. The rise in poverty levels has driven individuals and groups to seek economic security through arms, raising the scales in favour of greed in the greed versus grievance debate over the causes of armed conflict. Considering the prevalence of endemic structural violence and the spiralling economic challenges facing West African countries, the keyword for acquiring arms is no longer 'grievance' or 'greed' but 'Survival'. This has made the contest for limited and shared resources a very important incentive for creating small arms demand. The stronger these demand incentives grow the more challenging the control of proliferation patterns for small arms become. Managing or sustaining post-conflict peace is consequently held to ransom as parties seek to obtain power and economic security via armed violence.

In Johan Galtung's theoretical postulates on peace, he maintains that conflicts erupt because of the search for basic human needs cited in Zein Al-abedine : 2017. Although he refuses the idea of scarcity he nevertheless refers to politics as the main determinant of priorities, goals and programmes of development. In other words, politics can create artificial scarcity. Galtung's position on peace and violence forms the theoretical underpinnings for the discourse on conflict resources, structural violence and demand-side aspects of small arms proliferation in the paper. The paper thus focuses on how 'politics of conflict' in the words of Galtung has led to

demand and proliferation of small SALW's. Sources of proliferation, however, form the vanguard of the study followed by the role of cooperative security in regional peace management. The importance of conflict resources to managing peace alongside other forms of structural and institutional reforms take the rear.

Small Arms Proliferation and Managing Peace

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW's) in Nigeria and Liberia during the war and post-war periods have primarily reflected conflict based patterns of proliferation. The Civil Wars in Nigeria and Liberia were fed by the international community of arms-producing nations and also through illegal arms brokers and merchants. While Nigeria's local arms production industry played a key role in the former conflict, the latter in Liberia had insignificant contributions from local arms industries. The Defense Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) represents the earliest standard source of home-grown production of small arms and light weapons in the West African sub-region. During the Nigerian Civil War, DICON upgraded its production capacity to 5000 units of BM 59 rifles per annum flooding home-grown supplies. (DICON: 2012)

Home-grown sources of arms have been on the increase and blacksmith industries in several West African nations, especially in Ghana, are beginning to rise to fill the gap for small arms demand. Western made weapons are expensive and local craft guns are gaining more acceptance. Production levels in Nigeria supersede those of Liberia with Awka, Nnewi, Abala and Mbaize emerging as major production areas in the South East of the country. (Wakil: 2005. 57)

In dealing with the sources of production as part of supply-side aspects of small arms control, a need for tighter controls on the local production of small arms is beginning to emerge. International instruments for curtailing global transfers of arms may be crucial in the control mechanism, it is never the less equally important to begin creating legislation that will regulate and at best stifle home-grown production, especially from blacksmiths. For instance, after legislation was passed illegalising the local production of arms in Ghana, this type of production went underground. (Agboton-Johnson *et al*: 2004. 12)

Control measures for all the sources of proliferation in both Nigerian and Liberia have largely been embarked on via collective/cooperative security and the efforts of civil society utilising Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) or Voluntary Weapons Collection Programmes (VWCP) set up by either government, the civil society of international organizations.

Cooperative Security and Peace Building

Efforts at small arms control during the various conflicts in both countries were unevenly dependent on embargoes. In Nigeria arms embargoes were largely

unsuccessful while the Liberian experience was more result oriented. The same factors that militated against the success of embargoes during the Nigerian Civil War featured prominently in the Liberian crises but could not completely subvert the efforts at controlling the flow of weapons to the combatants. In the case of Nigeria, the conflicts of economic and political interest prevented an international consensus on arms embargoes and most importantly the position of other African nations on UN involvement seemed to tip the scale towards no UN involvement. These factors presented themselves in Liberia in such a way that various nations sought to arm opposing factions in the light of their interests. The involvement of the UN is the key distinguishing factor that ensured greater success of embargoes in the Liberian War as opposed to the Nigerian Civil War.

Several factors may be responsible for this disparity in international involvement. The fact that Liberia was fast becoming a failed state seems to represent the most plausible reason for the quick intervention of the international community. Moreover, the foreign policy of the United States of America towards Africa came into sharp relief considering the fact that Liberia was created by the U.S and had always been militarily dependent on the US.

Also important is the role of regional cooperative security mechanisms involving Nigeria and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Unlike the case of Nigeria in 1967 when African nations kicked against any interference in the Nigerian Civil War, the Liberian situation attracted the interference of the United Nations and ECOWAS led by Nigeria. The regional cooperative security platform of ECOWAS which Liberia was part of became alarmed at the potential consequences of the spreading violence to economic and political stability in the sub-region. The Taylor government had instigated more violence in neighbouring Sierra Leone by supporting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) Rebels. The growing vortex consequently threatened to engulf Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire who were supporting various factions in the conflict.

Article 58 of the treaty of ECOWAS, stated that members should safeguard and consolidate peace and stability and in the pursuit of this objective member states must establish and strengthen mechanisms for the "...timely prevention and resolution of intra-state and inter-state conflicts.(Ayissi: 2001. 30) This provision clearly ensured the intervention of ECOWAS in the conflict. The regional body did not only intervene, but it also made a strong case for United Nations involvement via sanctions. In the light of the above, a clear case can be made for slack regional security governance during the Nigerian Civil War and the affirmation of a more mature structure for sub-regional cooperative security in the case of the Liberian Wars.

At the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War In 1967, regional cooperation and security governance were still at its nascent stage in Africa. The OAU essentially lacked the institutional structure and resources to sustain intervention in Biafra. Furthermore, the opposition of African states at the General Assembly to UN intervention sealed the fate of embargoes as a control measure for small arms during the war. In contrast, the Liberian conflict, on the other hand, took place when ECOWAS had financial backing from Nigeria and other countries. Nigeria's aspirations for regional leadership also encouraged huge commitments to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which represented the main intervention force. The United Nations had to depend on ECOMOG for the monitoring and implementation of the embargoes and sanctions since it had no structures on the ground to enforce them.

As a consequence of ECOMOG's action in Liberia, cooperative security has proved to be crucial to conflict resolution in the sub-region. The activities of ECOMOG and other UN agencies in Liberia's post-conflict era covered most aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding. Key aspects of this peacebuilding involved the removal of small arms and light weapons from the civilian populace. To accomplish this networking with government, NGO's and UN agencies was crucial with The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) providing the necessary platform for this cooperation.

Both Countries have continued to cooperate at the sub-regional level on small arms control through the framework of ECOWAS Small Arms Programme (ECOSAP)¹ the creation of institutional structures for the integration of small arms control into the fabric of government has been pursued with more vigour in Liberia than in Nigeria. After years of oscillating between ministries, Nigeria's National Commission (NATCOM) was eventually scrapped while that of Liberia was formally domiciled in the structure of government by act of parliament on August 15th 2012. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Liberia: 2012)

¹ The ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme, ECOSAP, was a replacement for the Programme for the Co-ordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED). This programme was structured around the principles that the UN Secretary-General outlined in his 'Agenda for Peace in June 1992. Its focus regarding conflicts in West Africa included the demobilisation and reintegration of combatants, enhancing law enforcement capabilities and reforming the security sector. PCASED would run for initial five-years under the sponsorship of UNIDIR, the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and UNDP before turning over its mandate to ECOSAP (See, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament, *The Making of a Moratorium on light Weapons*, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa Norwegian Institute of International Affairs Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers, UNRCPDA 2000. 18, 19 and 72)

It is also within this platform of cooperative security that the contemporary arms control theory finds a fulcrum in the study. All local and international efforts at small arms control are all geared towards both national and sub-regional security. The stronger and more effective the cooperation, the greater likely-hood that better solutions to proliferation will be found. As opposed to individual countries battling the scourge of small arms proliferation alone, cooperative security the bedrock of contemporary arms control theory has proven to be more workable in West Africa.

Conflict Resources and Structural Reforms

A common denominator of both conflicts is the role played by conflict resources in sustaining conflict patterns of arms proliferation that impeded negatively on control efforts. Timber, diamonds and rubber featured prominently in the Liberian Wars while oil was the mainstay of arms procurement in Nigeria during the Civil War. The crises of resource control and oil bunkering in the Niger Delta and contestation over the control of oil wells during the Civil War represent the use of resources to fuel conflict. This comparison is made in light of the fact that although the "Biafrans" did not get to use the oil in the way militants do today in the Niger Delta, the general principle of conflict resource runs through both situations. This essentially highlights a progression in the process of contestation over conflict resources from mere possession during the civil war to full exploitation during the crises in the Niger Delta.

Structural reforms in the area of resource control consequently impact greatly on the entire security platform and the process of managing peace in post-conflict societies like Liberia and Nigeria. In Liberia for instance, contestation over conflict resources like timber and diamonds may not necessarily have formed the root causes of the conflict but have nevertheless fuelled the acquisition of more weapons which prolonged the conflicts. Due to the role of these resources in fuelling arms procurements, it became pertinent to restructure the timber and diamond trade because of its security correlates. This consequently makes the restructuring of resource control and distribution an integral part of peacebuilding.

A central element of the structural reforms in Liberia was the forest review concessions that effectively blocked the ability of rebel groups to exploit these resources for the procurement of small arms. In 2003 the United Nations had placed sanctions on the export of Liberian timber. This had led to the Liberian government reviewing timber concessions in the Timber industry between 2004 and 2005. Consequent upon the report of the concession committee, all concessions were cancelled by president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Lomax: 2008.10) The FDA (Forestry Development Authority) in Liberia was promptly restructured and new laws were passed that codified the new forestry reforms. This led the United Nations

Security Council to lift its sanctions on Liberia in 2006 after acknowledging the effectiveness of the reforms. (Woods et al: 2003. 2-3)

Other structural reforms that impacted on post-conflict peace management involved the diamond trade. During the second phase of the war, Liberia had come under UN diamond trade sanctions that lasted for six years. By 2007 however, the country joined the Kimberly Process² thereby meeting the requirements for the sanctions to be lifted. After meeting the requirements, the UN Security Council voted unanimously for resolution 1753 (2007) lifting the ban. (European Community: 2014) The Kimberly Process is an international treaty involving participating countries interested in the control of blood diamonds used for the financing of conflicts. They all consent to following the regulations of the process and providing every shipment of rough diamonds with a certificate that establishes its origins and ensures that rebels groups are cut off from the trade. In the case of Liberia, the country joined the scheme when it amended its minerals and mining law, providing for a certification scheme for the Kimberly Process in Liberia. (Kimberly Process: 2014)

Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Amnesty

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) are very crucial processes to small arms control. They ensure that weapons are not only collected but the command structures that encouraged their use is dissolved to prevent further recourse to conflict. The impact of DDR was not felt after the Nigerian Civil War while in Liberia it formed the bedrock of post-conflict small arms control. It is difficult to measure the impact of the faulty DDR in Nigeria in relation to a resurgence of violence since other factors like a more inclusive federalism helped dispel the possibilities of recourse to violence. The same however cannot be said for Liberia because of the peace process and the transitional governments did not receive full confidence from the warring factions. This contributed to the inability of the first DDR process to conduct successful disarmament. The command structures of the warring factions were not properly dissolved rather they were used as prosthetic extensions of Voluntary Weapons Collections Programmes (VWCP). Since the process majored on a weapons buyback strategy, reintegration received little premium and as such ex-combatants were still primed for a return to violent conflict by the outbreak of the second Liberian war in 1999.

² The Kimberley Process is a certification scheme established in 2003 by a United Nations resolution, following a series of reports which first exposed the link between the diamond trade and the financing of conflict. (See David Rhode "Kimberly Process is a perfect cover for Blood Diamonds" The Guardian March 24th 2014, accessed 14th January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/diamonds-blood-kimberley-process-mines-ethical>)

Security Sector Reforms and Deficits in Peace Management

Lack of proper security governance in Liberia and Nigeria before and during the respective conflicts produced a human rights deficit in the security sector. The imperative of security sector reforms in peace management cannot be overemphasized. This is clearly demonstrated in the precedents to the conflict in both countries. The impact of the 'personalisation of security' by Liberian leaders; Tubman, Doe and Taylor as instruments of repression can be equated with the militarization of Nigeria's civil security forces. The semi-military mobile police units and the Joint Task Force (JTF) are mere extensions of the culture of military brutality that had characterized the long period of military rule in Nigeria. This militarization has had no respect for the rights of the people and has confronted protest and dissent with brute force. The Odi massacre and other military confrontation of Niger Delta are clear manifestations of this trend. The impact of faulty security governance on peacebuilding in both countries is retrogressive. In Liberia, it encouraged the "ethnicization" of the military and other security forces leading to the emergence of more rebel factions during the over fourteen years of intermittent warfare. In Nigeria, it has alienated the police from the population and led to the escalation of religious and resource-driven crises.

The personalisation of security in both countries created a huge security deficit that completely shattered the social contract upholding the people's confidence in their governments. This questioned the veracity of the post Civil War peace in Nigeria and put the federal character of Nigeria's union in doubt. Opposition in both countries picked up arms to fill up the security void as it related to their distinct circumstances. The conflict over economic, social and even ethnic security in some instances became the order of the day. The rise of dissent in the Niger Delta was as much an ethnic security drive as it was an economic security drive. The brutal repression of Ijaw and Ogoni youths by state military apparatus are classical examples that were mirrored in the Liberian process as seen in the Nimba purge carried out by President Doe of Liberia in the wake of General Thomas Quiwomkpa coup attempt. (The Advocates for Human Rights: 2012. 115) Thus in resolving these conflicts and building structures for peace management, a proper interpretation of government security must be outlined. The militarisation and use of security as tools of repression must be avoided. Security Sector Reforms (SSR) must reengineer security that people have confidence in.

The impunity and lack of accountability regarding human rights abuses remain one of the most important issues that security sector reforms need to address in post-conflict peacebuilding in both countries. This has created a huge problem for managing peace. The Liberian Judicial system is in need of a total overhaul. In the aftermath of the Liberian wars, the enforcement of transitional justice was untenable given the fact that the entire state structure had collapsed. It was in the post DDR

stage that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) could begin its work and recommend punitive actions against those found culpable in the war. In Nigeria however, the two major conflicts in question (i.e Civil War and Niger Delta Crises), resulted in general amnesties for rebels and ex-combatants. This does not downplay the need for accountability in the case of mounting human rights abuses by security forces in Nigeria and on the other hand Liberia's need to fully implement the recommendations of the TRC.

Structural Violence and Demand Side Aspect of Small Arms Control

Arms embargoes, DDR's and weapons collection programmes are essential in curbing easy access to small arms. However, structural violence will most likely ensure that belligerents seek and use small arms in settling disputes. Hence addressing the root causes of structural violence is a natural approach to resolving the demand side aspect of arms proliferation within communities that are likely to evolve into conflict.

In Nigeria, structural violence embedded in a faulty federal structure that dealt violently with the interest and aspirations of minority groups was at the root of the physical violence that emerged in form of military coups that led to the secessionist attempts of the Ibos from the federation. This was quickly addressed in the post Civil War period with a new constitution and federal structure that helped assuage the thirst for equalization from minority groups. Structural violence as a theory was put forward by Johan Galtung in 1969. He made a clear distinction between cultural, structural and direct violence. According to him, direct violence reinforces structural and cultural violence. Violence thus consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and/or prevent people from reaching their full human potential. (Bobichand: 2014)

Between 1970 and the dawn of the 21st century, increasing structural inequality and violence regarding resource control that was centred on the derivation formula had festered and grown into the core of violent conflict in the Niger Delta. The protest for resource control in the Niger Delta was played out on the background of environmental exploitation and degradation that pauperised the people of the Niger Delta. A clear incentive for small arms demand had been provided by these twin evils. The trigger for violence was however embedded in the government's violent and brutal suppression of dissent. The incentive for small arms demand haven been provided, the source of contention itself, oil, became the ready conflict resource that provided the means for arms acquisition. The Nigerian pattern that created small arms demand was not different from that of the Liberian state. Just like law enforcement handling dissent in Nigeria became militarised instruments of brutalisation against the people; the same was obtainable in Liberia before the outbreak of full-blown war. Tubman, Doe and Taylor all used the police and military as extensions of their alter-ego

with little attempts at affirming the rule of law. (The Advocates for Human Rights: 2012.115)

The control of small arms and light weapons from the demand side aspects is as challenging as the supply side aspects of small arms control. Conflict prevention strategies will essentially stem demand but a nexus between the supply and demand side must be arrived at to ensure good results. Stemming demand is not enough since availability automatically makes small arms an option in conflict escalation, raising two possibilities, namely violent resolution or peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Controlling the supply of small arms at the global level has a retinue of international instruments in its wake. The impacts of these measures can only be measured in terms of compliance from governments and not necessarily in the numbers of weapons taken out of circulation. These measures often restrict the amount and variety of small arms available to conflict parties but cannot completely stop proliferation. Certain levels of proliferation will always remain high because of legitimate arms transfers between states and more so, the grey lines of the small arms market that give room for the diversion of legitimate arms to illegitimate third parties. This was demonstrated in both the Nigerian Civil War and the Liberian Wars.

The onus for greater balance in small arms control thus rests with country-level control measures that include DDR and SSR. In Liberia over 20,000 weapons were decommissioned in the first post-war DDR (Nicholas:2005. 115), with 28,000 following in the second DDR process (Alusula: 2008. 9). These results indicate that the post-war DDR in Liberia was largely successful because Small Arms Survey estimates of arms in the possession of rebel groups by the end of 2003 was over 35,000, (Small Arms Survey: 2003. 82) hence disarmament figures of 28,000 definitely portend high levels of success by the end of the DDR process. Voluntary Weapons Collection Programmes (VWCP) by 2016 still pulled in trickles of weapons that escaped the DDR process. The recent increase in land disputes is also beginning to create enough attention to elicit clashes that might reactivate violent patterns of small arms proliferation.

For years after the war in Liberia, United Nations arms embargoes were maintained over the country holding up the international end of supply-side control measures while locally, DDR and VWCP's have been largely successful. Although this may portend good results for post-conflict peacebuilding, maintaining the status is a function of peace management. Although the embargoes have been lifted, there is still the need for more constructive cooperative security at the regional level to avoid Liberia returning as a conduit pipe for new proliferation patterns due to its proximity to nascent regional conflicts and most importantly its judicial system needs to be restructured to meet the emerging challenges of confronting the legal dynamics of reconciliation, reintegration and land ownership in post-conflict Liberia.

Estimates for small arms in Nigeria had increased considerably between 2003 and 2009 due to mounting conflicts in the Niger Delta. Post 2009, small arms figures had risen from 1 million to over 7 million. (Onabanjo: 2012) also due largely to the activities of a religious extremist like Boko Haram in the north. By 2010, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, (UNREC) reported a shocking deluge in small arms that numbered over 300 million. The Country office of UNREC in Nigeria stated that 70% of the 500 million weapons in circulation in West Africa could be found in Nigeria. (Adenubi et al:2018) The rise of Boko Haram terrorism, political “gangsterism” and the arming of ethnic militia have been a huge contributory factor to this increase in proliferation figures. The general tension in the country has also been largely centred on the debate over maintaining or dissolving the federation. Calls were made consistently for constitutional conferences and re-structuring to debate the issue while groups are secretly arming themselves in anticipation of war as a possible outcome. This is evidenced by the growing interception of arms by the police and customs at Nigerian borders.

Between 2000 and 2006, more than 8,500 small arms were reportedly seized by the police and customs services. In 2007 alone 7 trailers of arms were apprehended by security services. (Hazen et al: 2007. 45-46) This single impound alone could arm a fairly large rebel group. With the possibility of other consignments that might have gone unnoticed, it is fair to assume that some groups other than the Niger Delta Militants were preparing for imminent conflict. This is because 95% of all the seizures took place in western and northern parts of the country while only about 5% were intercepted in the eastern and Delta region. (Hazen et al: 2007. 45) Clearly significant mobilization for conflict was possibly going on in other parts of the country. In the light of this, disarmament during the Niger Delta Amnesty programme that decommissioned a mere 4000 weapons definitely falls short of the millions that are presently flooding the country.(Oluduro et al: 2012. 53) Between 2010 and 2017, independent investigative journalism placed smuggling figures for small arms at more than 21 million. (Adenubi et al: 2018) These are conservative numbers in the light of UNREC proliferation figures.

Institutional Framework for Small Arms Control

Unlike Liberia, the control of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria is far from being an active state policy, hence the poor figures of control statistics. Out of 16 ECOWAS countries only Nigeria and The Gambia do not have a functional National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NATCOM). (Iroanusi: 2018) While Liberia's NATCOM on small arms control has been effective, Nigeria's NATCOM has had a very depressing history indeed. Inaugurated in 2001 as a mere committee pending transformation into a commission, it was charged with small arms

control; promoting a peace based culture; more effective border controls and destruction of illicit arms. (International Alert: 2005) After the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium on small arms and light weapons was signed, all ECOWAS nations were mandated to domicile the requirements of the agreement by institutionalising the control of SALW through the establishment of a National Commission (NATCOM). Shortly after this, the principles of the Moratorium were legalized within the framework of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons which came into force in 2006. For more than seventeen years Nigeria's NATCOM subsisted as a committee within several ministries and parastatals. These included Ministry of Cooperation and Integration for Africa; The Department of Funds under The Ministry of Foreign Affairs; The Ministry of Defense and eventually in 2014 a Presidential Committee on the Eradication of Small Arms and Light Weapons (PRESCOM) was inaugurated. This did not survive for lack of legal backing consequently by February 2018, a bill that would eventually establish the Commission was floated on the floor of the National Assembly. Till date, the bill has not been passed into law, hence the institutional framework for the control of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria still remains lacking.

Conclusion.

The paucity of institutional structures for small arms control happens to be the most debilitating problem that faces SALW control in Nigeria. The impact this has on managing peace has clearly manifested in the burgeoning proliferation of SALW in the age of terror. While the Liberian framework has been in place for over a decade, it is plagued by acute lack of funds hence the vicious circle of underdevelopment, poverty and structural violence presents itself as the 'Achilles hill' of peace management in West Africa.

It is abundantly clear that the development of a 'group based' or 'ethnic gun culture' resulting from economic insecurity and structural violence, is definitely the primary source of small arms demand in both Nigeria and Liberia. It is this demand pattern that eventually leads to political insecurity and violence. Consequently balancing the power relations between social, political, and economic interest groups that have transformed into armed factions will serve as a major strategy for managing peace.

More importantly The emerging platforms for collective security in the sub-region and global stages represent an opportunity for a wider platform for managing peace in West Africa. Various United Nations collective security instruments like The United Nations Firearms Protocol, The United Nations Programme of Action (UNPoA), The International Tracing Instrument (ITI) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) all represent key avenues in which nations can engage with small arms control in the process of managing peace in West Africa. At the sub-regional level the

ECOWAS convention on small arms and light weapons since 2006 has also provided a framework for the domestication of local and international instruments for the purpose of small arms control.

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