

## NIGERIA'S PEACE-KEEPING VENTURES: AN ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA'S PEACE EFFORTS IN AFRICA SINCE 1960

By

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### ***Abstract***

*Over the past two decades, Nigeria has shown herself not only as an important actor within the West African sub-region, but also discharges leadership responsibilities in the whole of Africa as well. These positions, as well as the commitment underpinning them, have been expressed more forcefully in the defence of West Africa which in cooperation with other countries within the sub-region and abroad has helped in protecting the social, economic and security sectors of West Africa countries, through her leadership of the ECOMOG operation in Chad and the subsequent ones in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire and Sao Tome and Principe, to its active involvement in Mali recently, Nigeria has demonstrated its will, ability and commitment to maintaining peace across West Africa. The country has also demonstrated its resolve for the promotion of economic, political and diplomatic cohesion in Africa by helping to secure the continent as well as rid it of protracted civil wars through her commitment of oil resources, political and diplomatic tactics. Hence, this study is aimed at highlighting Nigeria's peace efforts in Africa and also throws light on the various motivations behind such efforts. It would again look at the challenges that confront Nigeria in her various peace efforts in Africa. It would as well evaluate the gains earned and the losses incurred by Nigeria as a result of her peace efforts in Africa.*

***Keywords- Peace, Peace-Keeping, Nigeria, Africa and Conflict***

### **Introduction**

Over the years the state of peace in Africa has not been good at all. Between the 1950's and 1960's a good number of African states gained their independence, thus the task of managing state affairs fell into the hands of Africans, but unfortunately right from the 1960's there has been a prevalence of increased civil strife and military conflicts in many parts of the continent. As a result of the incessant violent political upheaval, African countries have been unable to achieve meaningful development.

Since the 1960's state collapse and failure, breakdown of law and order and various dimensions of conflicts have been in frequent occurrence in Africa. According to Dokubo (2012), by 1996 almost half of the war-related deaths in the world were in Africa and as a result, Africa accounted for over

8 million of the 22 million refugees worldwide<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore Enuka (2017) notes that, of the wars in Africa in the late 1980's and 1990's, those of Sudan, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Uganda and Angola were major, with death totals including civilian deaths ranging from 60,000 to 100,000 commonly reported in Angola, to the 3 million or more thought possible in Sudan<sup>2</sup>. In these wars, the victims were mostly civilians, including countless children who were deprived of food, shelter and access to healthcare.

It is these ugly and unpalatable security challenges in Africa that have made Nigeria arise to the occasion to ensure that peace and progress are restored in the various African countries undergoing security challenges. Even though Nigeria has got her own security challenges to deal with, over the years she has proven to be capable of shouldering peace efforts in Africa. Hence, Nigeria has championed the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and remained at the forefront of conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

This study is aimed at highlighting Nigeria's peace efforts in Africa and also throws light on the various motivations behind such efforts. It would again look at the challenges that confront Nigeria in her various peace efforts in Africa. Also this study would as well evaluate the gains earned and the losses incurred by Nigeria as a result of her peace efforts in Africa.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study would make use of Responsibility to protect (RtoP) theory to explain Nigeria's peace efforts in Africa.

The responsibility to protect (RtoP) doctrine was adopted at the October 2005 world summit by the Heads of State and Government of the United Nations. The responsibility to protect concept addresses the prevention of genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. It reiterates the responsibility of states to protect its populations from atrocity crimes and imposes a moral duty on the international community represented by international bodies and states, to prevent atrocity crimes, (Ifediora, 2016)<sup>3</sup>.

Hence the responsibility to protect doctrine provides the framework for analyzing Nigeria's peace efforts in Africa. According to Pattison (2010), the responsibility to protect norm is the premise that the international community has a responsibility to protect innocent lives in countries where governments are either unable or unwilling to provide that protection<sup>4</sup>. Enuka (2015), states that responsibility to protect is to respond regardless of borders, where victims of conflicts are calling out for help, where human beings are suffering and dying<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore Lang (2009), sees it as the use of military force to provide aid, ensure the protection of rights and or enforce a peace settlement often times without the express permission of the political authority of the states in which the intervention occurs<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, it is on the basis of this acknowledged doctrine that the international community expects countries such as Nigeria to take the lead in protecting endangered lives and states in Africa.

## **Nigeria's Peace Efforts in Africa**

### **Liberia**

Enuka (2017), notes that Nigeria spearheaded the formation of the sub-regional peacekeeping operation, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which intervened in Liberia. In August 1990, along with other countries in West Africa, Nigeria sent troops to Liberia to monitor and preserve an ECOWAS mediated peace arrangement in the civil war that was ravaging that country (Enuka, 2015). The civil war was ignited by the insurgent activities of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) under the leadership of Charles Taylor in December 1989 (Bukarambe, 2011)<sup>7</sup>. About three thousand five hundred troops with their basic equipment were lifted in the first phase of the operation on August 23 1990 and consisted of two battalions, each from Ghana and Nigeria, while Guinea and Sierra Leone provided a battalion each. Gambia came up with a rifle company (Aderiye 1992)<sup>8</sup>. Nigeria and Ghana provided the naval and air detachments for close support operations, patrol and transportation purposes. In February, the force consisted of eight thousand, four hundred and thirty troops organized into ten battalions. Of these figures, four thousand nine hundred and eight troops were Nigerians (Galadima, 2011)<sup>9</sup>.

By April 1993, Nigeria had 15,000 troops out of total ECOMOG deployment of 17,000 (Bukarambe, 2011). According to the Federal Government of Nigeria, Nigeria lost some 500 soldiers killed or missing in action in Liberia between 1990 and 1997. Other accounts record far more tolls than this figure. In cash terms, Nigeria spent about 12 billion US dollars in ECOMOG operations during the period (Bukarambe, 2011).

### **Sierra Leone**

ECOMOG operations were also extended to Sierra Leone. In 1997, the government of President Hmed Tejan Kabbah had been overthrown by the military, with the support of the rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). After the coup d'état which was lead by Major Johnny Koromah, the forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was formed as the replacement of the ousted government of Tejan Kabbah, (Enuka, 2017).

Compelled by the imperative for peace in the sub-region, the ECOWAS mandated its military arm, the ECOMOG to intervene in the lingering ugly situation in Sierra Leone. The mandate of ECOMOG was, among other things, to see to the early reinstatement of the legitimate government of President Tejan Kabbah as well as to return peace and security to the war torn country. The reluctance of other countries in West African sub-region, especially Ghana, to get involved in another prolonged operation like Liberia meant that though the peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone was administered by ECOMOG, it was a wholly Nigerian contingent, and Nigeria soldiers played heroic roles in the wars. In the process the situation got more escalated by the rebel group, the troop strength of the Nigerian military increased to 12,000 (Galadima, 2011).

Nigerian Alpha fighter jets flew over Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, intensifying pressure on the rebel forces of the AFRC. Three Nigerian frigates docked at Government Wharf in Freetown carrying hundreds of soldiers, demonstrating Nigeria-led ECOMOG's readiness to wage war in order to make peace in Sierra Leone. As the swift and decisive operation intensified, the Nigeria-led ECOMOG forces advanced towards Freetown and the State House with combination of ground and air assaults. The battle for Freetown took only seven days. Owing to the peacekeeping efforts of the ECOMOG heavily constituted and financed by Nigerian soldiers and the Nigerian government, in February 1998, the military government was driven from the capital, Freetown, facilitating the return of President Tejan Kabba, and restoring peace to the war torn Sierra Leone.

## **Togo**

According to Enuka (2017), Nigeria's peace roles in Africa extended beyond traditional peacekeeping involving deploying of military personnel to quell crises in war torn areas to capture issues of democracy, economic development and regional integration. Nigeria sees these elements as integrals of peace. In line with this, Nigeria played significant and committed roles in Togo, when in 2005, the country experienced political turbulence arising from what could aptly be described as rape of democracy. During the reign of Gnassingbe Eyadema, Togo suffered under one party dictatorship and a regime of gross human rights abuse that swelled the ranks of opposition leaders. Persistent demands for change both from within and without Togo were forlorn. The failure of the country to respond appropriately to internal and external pressures, heightened fears that the country could easily fall prey to the protracted conflicts and civil wars that swept through Africa in the 1990s. This was the circumstance under which President Eyadema died in 2005.

Following President Gnassingbe Eyadema's death, the military led by General Zachari Nandja, Chief of Staff, unexpectedly set aside the constitutional succession provision for the Speaker of the National Assembly to take over and installed Eyadema's son, Faure Gnassingbe as president. This action was rejected outright by the opposition and international community and met spontaneous street protests and riots (Osaghae, 2010)<sup>10</sup>.

To this constitutional and political crisis that engulfed Togo after Eyadema's demise, Nigeria responded using democratization as the arrowhead that would nip the crisis in the bud. Using both the ECOWAS framework, and the good offices of the then Nigeria's President, Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria assumed a tough posture on the issue, including the recall of the country's ambassador and the contemplation of military intervention and economic sanctions. Finally, the military authority in Togo bowed to this intense pressure, and accepted to allow election to hold in Togo, (Enuka, 2017).

Though an election was held, it was fraught with crisis when Faure Gnasingbe was declared winner of the election. Nigeria was again fully brought back in. Inter alia, Nigeria facilitated the negotiation of power sharing deal between Gnassingbe and the main opposition leaders. This

negotiation took place in Abuja. The resultant effect of this was a calmed situation which enabled Togo to embark on a peaceful process of democratic growth.

### **Challenges to Nigeria's Participation in Peace Keeping Operations**

There are so many challenges to Nigeria's involvement in peace keeping operations. The first and most critical is the issue of funding vis-à-vis Nigeria's economy. Nigeria today is rated as one of the twenty poorest countries of the world. Over 70% of its citizens exist on less than one dollar a day, (Obi, 2015)<sup>11</sup>. What this implies is that over 70% of its population is poor. The most important task facing every Nigerian leader should therefore be how and what to do with this unacceptable percentage of the country's population who are living below the poverty line and not to have more interest in what is happening in other countries. Presently Nigeria is known to have spent over ten billion dollars in ECOMOG operations alone. This amount is simply too much for a poor country like Nigeria to spend in solving another country's problems. The realization made Nigeria's former president Obasanjo to cry out in his address to the UN General Assembly in September 1999, where he declared that: "for too long the burden of preserving international peace and security has been left almost entirely to a few states in our sub-region... Nigeria's continual burden in Sierra Leone is unacceptably draining Nigeria financially. For our economy to take off, this bleeding has to stop", (Ani, 2003)<sup>12</sup>. Nigeria needs to scale down her involvement in these activities in line with her economic situation. This is because as Ate (1990) has pointed out clearly that: "for any country in the international system, it is important that its foreign policy initiatives be commensurate with the means of implementation at its disposal including its power in the international system. This is an old axiom in international relations, but one that applies with exceptional relevance to an underdeveloped country"<sup>13</sup>.

Other challenges facing Nigeria's peace keeping efforts according to Hamman, Mustafa and Omojuwa (2013) are manpower (lack of standardization) training and doctrine (different training techniques and doctrine among the different countries), logistics (lack of sufficient vehicles, medical facilities, communication equipment and individual soldier kiting), funding (lack of financial support for ECOWAS and AU peace keeping operations) and administration (poor handling of medical care, medical evacuation, burial pay and allowances)<sup>14</sup>.

One other serious challenge to Nigeria's participation in peacekeeping operations is Nigeria's internal security challenges. Nigeria in the past few years has been confronted with very serious internal challenges, represented by various kinds of terrorist activities and banditry in the various parts of the country, (Obi, 2015). All these are tasking the strength of the Nigerian armed forces. Since charity begins at home, it is expected that Nigeria should first solve its internal security problems before trying to help others. Nigeria's defence budgetary allocation is highly on the increase because of these challenges, while other important areas like health and education are deprived of funds. The Nigerian state should also address the fundamental causes of these

problems, which are mainly economic and political. The reason for this, is because this would help to solve the problems permanently and prevent a resort to the use of arms.

### **The Rationale for Nigeria's Peace Efforts in Africa**

A number of reasons had motivated Nigeria to play the various peace roles it has played in Africa over the years, they include:

**Normative Rationale-** As the largest black nation on earth, Nigeria has a moral duty to promote peace among all states and people. Its size and population has placed a moral burden on it to fight for equal rights and respect for all Africans and black people worldwide. If Nigeria does not fight for the black race, probably nobody would and that might prove disastrous.

**Political Rationale-** Nigeria's participation in peace keeping operations is generally conditioned by four cardinal issues. First, Nigeria's security, independence and prosperity centered on its immediate neighbours-Benin Republic, Niger, Chad and Cameroun. The second relates to events and stability in West Africa. The third has to do with institutions and countries outside Africa. As a result, the West African sub-region and then Africa are paramount to Nigeria and its calculations. Nigeria also believes that its active participation in peace keeping would strengthen its case for a permanent seat in an expanded UN security council, (Obi, 2015). Finally, Nigeria has been using the mechanism of peace keeping to boost its leadership credentials in Africa and its military and diplomatic status within the international community as it has used peace keeping as one of the activities through which it has assumed the position of a key player in international conflict management. This is not in doubt as Nigeria is one of the 5<sup>th</sup> ranking countries in peacekeeping.

**Security Rationale-** The need to protect Nigeria's territorial integrity, sovereignty as well as lives and properties of Nigerians at home and abroad is a major consideration for engaging in peace keeping operations. Thus, though when Nigeria plays a leading role in addressing Africa's security challenges, it also tacitly includes ensuring its own security, (Obi, 2015). In today's globalized world, what happens in one part of the continent or even the globe can have adverse effect on others both far and near. This fear of civil wars spreading to Nigeria and even the contagion effect of similar disturbances in other parts of the world have combined to push Nigeria into peace keeping operations.

**Economic Rationale-** The economic rationale for Nigeria's involvement in peace keeping has to do with the fact that the United Nations reimburses all country's involved in peace keeping operations. Even the soldiers are also paid some allowances for participation.

**Institutional Rationale-** By getting involved in peace keeping operations, Nigeria armed forces have been able to update the knowledge of its officers. Through joint operations with others, they learnt modern techniques and weaponry. Thus, Nigerian troops have been able to benefit from training programmes like the US-Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) and Africa Contingents

Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA), France Reinforcement of African Peace Keeping Capacities Programme (RECAMP). Perhaps without these involvements, Nigerian armed forces may not have the opportunity of such advanced training programmes given the country's resource constraints, (Obi, 2015).

### **The Gain and Losses of Nigeria's Peace Efforts in Africa**

No doubt, there are some gains that Nigeria has so far garnered as a result of her various peace efforts in Africa. It is globally acknowledged that Nigeria is one of the United Nations important and long standing contributors to peacekeeping missions. To that effect Nigeria ranks fourth among the contributors to UN peacekeeping missions in the world. According to Sanda (2010), through her interventions in Africa's peace, Nigeria's profile as a whole got enhanced<sup>15</sup>. She gained fame and international respect.

Nigeria's role in international peacekeeping, mostly under the auspices of the United Nations has developed very professional military commanders. Other political benefits that Nigeria has got from peace efforts in Africa include assignment to prominent positions within the United Nations leadership system. For instance, Professor Ibrahim Gambari was the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Angola and Dafur, also Ambassador Olu Adeniyi was the Special Representative of the Secretary General for the Central African Republic and Sierra Leone peace missions (Adebajo, 2011)<sup>16</sup>. Kuna (2012), notes that these types of positions translate to international prestige for Nigeria. It builds regional goodwill and leadership which establishes legitimacy for Nigerian military and government<sup>17</sup>.

Furthermore, there are economic gains that Nigeria has gotten as a result of her peace efforts in Africa. Enuka (2017), notes that even though economic considerations have not been the motivation behind Nigeria's contributions to Africa's peace, the financial gains accruing from these involvements have remained indubitable. Individual soldier receive allowances which contribute to their family's welfare. The economic gains accruable are so significant to the extent that soldiers actually lobby to be deployed on missions.

Again, the positive performance of Nigeria's peacekeepers has garnered increased foreign aid for the military. In the year 2000, the Nigeria military received as aid, the sum of sixty-six million US Dollars from the United States, (Wando, 2012)<sup>18</sup>.

In as much as there may be some gains made by Nigeria from the various peace efforts in Africa, there are indeed obvious losses that have been incurred. Even though Nigeria's involvement in Liberia and Sierra Leone has been lauded by international relations experts those mission as well soiled Nigeria's reputation and image in some ways. According to Mohammed (2015), Nigerian Soldiers and diplomats were considered by most Sierra Leoneans as destroyers of human and natural resources<sup>19</sup>. Some Soldiers were accused of involvement in the illicit diamond trade in

Sierra Leone. They were accused of deliberately prolonging the conflict because of the illicit trade gains. In Liberia, the troops were also accused of looting some economic assets from the country.

Again, Nigeria has incurred heavy financial losses in her various peace efforts in Africa. According to Gbor (2004), as well as Oluyemi-Kusor (2007), Nigeria had to underwrite about one hundred and seven million US Dollars in Chad and over eight billion US Dollars in Liberia<sup>20, 21</sup>. Mohammed (2015), also notes that when Nigeria intervened in the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Nigeria's GDP growth fell from 8.2 per cent to only 1 per cent. Furthermore, Nigeria as well incurred great losses in human resources. Enuka (2017), stated that by the end of May 1999, the war in Sierra Leone had claimed the lives of over 1800 regional peacekeepers, most of whom were Nigerians. The number of Nigerian soldiers killed in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars, was believed to be the highest casualties recorded in the history of any sub-regional peacekeeping operations since the cold war.

Although economic considerations were never the key motivations for Nigeria's peace efforts in Africa and other places, nevertheless nothing stops her from benefitting from such efforts like some other countries do. For instance, America and its companies recoup its dollars spent on peace campaigns with contracts of rebuilding such nations. Construction companies as well as human resources management firms are deployed to reconstruct and entrench values typical of America in those nations so that the losses occasioned by participation in peacekeeping is nothing compared to gains afterwards. But in the case of Nigeria and her companies, they end up like the hunting dog which ends up with bones from the game it labored to catch (Pwanabeshi, 2013)<sup>22</sup>.

In international relations and foreign policy, the principle of reciprocity states that favours, benefits or penalties that are granted by one state to the citizens or legal entities of another should be returned, (Eze, 2010)<sup>23</sup>. But in the case of Nigeria the reverse is the case. It is on record that Nigeria contributed 12,000 out of the 13,000 ECOMOG troops deployed to Sierra Leone between 1998 and 1999 and its treasury released nearly 400 million US Dollars annually for the mission (Uhomobhi, 2010)<sup>24</sup>. Nigeria provided at least 80 per cent of the ECOMOG troops in Liberia and 90 per cent of its funding (Obioma, 2013, Adebajo, 2008)<sup>25, 26</sup>. But contrary to the expectations of reciprocity in international politics, both Liberia and Sierra Leone voted against Nigeria's interest and candidature of non-permanent membership of the United Nations security council, (Enuka, 2017). This accentuates Nigeria's loss in her peace efforts in Africa.

## **Conclusion**

By the assessment of this study it is crystal clear that Nigeria has played a significant role in the peace process of Africa. It is also evident that Nigeria has spent a lot in terms of both financial and human resources in her peace efforts in Africa. But what is most evidently clear is that Nigeria's substantial commitments of human and material resources in conflict resolution and peacekeeping have not yielded the desired respect and influence for Nigeria in Africa. Neither has it yielded any

significant dividend in terms of investment opportunities for Nigeria in the countries that it helped. Hence, it lies on the Nigerian government and those saddled with the responsibility of structuring the Nigerian foreign policy to construct the Nigerian foreign policy using a framework that would position Nigeria properly to earn better gains in dividends as it continues to get involved in the peace process in Africa going forward.

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