
Peace Keeping Role of Nigeria in Sub-Sahara Africa

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ABSTRACT

The contributions of Nigeria to international peace keeping operations cannot be over emphasized, since her independence from Britain in 1960. Nigeria became a prominent actor both within and outside the international system .Nigeria by all standards is committed to regional peace and global security, despite the fact that the world is conflictually structured as a result of high technological advancement specifically from the western world. This is not to say that modern technology and other discoveries are harmful to all facet of human existence, but is the development and manufacturing of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction by the developed countries that serve as a yardsticks to measure the supremacy and strategies designed to lord themselves over the under developed nations through which all kinds of threats are expressed on the African continent. Soon after the cold war era, the under developed countries began to experience more conflict than they could ever imagine, as a result of these, dangerous weapons of mass destruction and in the attempt by this super powers to sell out their surplus harms especially when the USSR decided to create anarchy and conflictual situations in the developing world, thereby making the ever peaceful world become more violent and unsafe for mankind, while the security of lives and properties assumed a chaotic dimension. Therefore, it is on this backdrop the paper explored the role of Nigeria in curbing the conflicts in Sub Sahara Africa. The paper recommended that there is an urgent need to deal with this structural problem, if we are to be able to deal with the predicament of conflicts in Africa.

Keywords: Conflict, Peace Keeping, Nigeria, Africa

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria first provided UN peacekeepers to Congo (ONUC) from 1960 to 1964. Since then, Nigeria has been an active participant in UN peacekeeping missions, deploying military contingents, unarmed military observers, military staff officers, formed police units, police advisors and civilian experts to over 25 UN missions. Nigeria is currently one of the largest UN contributing countries with military and civilian personnel deployed in ten UN peacekeeping operations and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Nigeria has also played pivotal roles in other non-UN missions in Africa. As the preponderant power in West Africa, Nigeria has been the main provider of military and other resources for ECOWAS peace operations to the tune of US\$8 billion in its various missions in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, and Sierra Leone. During the peak of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars in the 1990s, Nigeria provided over 70% of ECOMOG's military and civilian personnel, as well as logistical support. In 2003, it deployed 1,500 troops to the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL), and a medical and signals team to the ECOWAS Mission in Cote d'Ivoire in 2003 (ECOMICI). In 2004, 1,500 Nigerian troops were deployed in Darfur as part of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Recently, Nigeria also provided 1,200 troops to the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), and 200 police officers to AMISOM. Nigeria deployed the first set of individual police officers (IPOs) in Africa in ONUC in 1960 while the pioneer Formed Police Unit (FPU) of 120 officers was deployed in Liberia in 2004.

A peacekeeping venture, by itself, does not resolve a dispute; it is a stop-gap measure or a holding action. The primary purpose and function of peacekeeping is to contain and constrain violence to provide an atmosphere of calm and stability in which peacemaking and peace-keeping efforts may be able to resolve the roots of the conflict. Thus, peacekeeping is essentially a third-party supervised tools that enables a peaceful settlement to be negotiated. Used in isolation, or where other modes of conflict management are ineffective, peacekeeping only freezes the status quo but does not resolve the

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dispute. The security challenges are increasingly diverse, differentiated and fragmented. It is more evident that developing a conflict resolution mechanism that will contain and Manage conflict as well as its violent effects is more paramount. However, the increasing dispersion and regionalization of threats are not confined to Africa alone. Many of the security challenges are generated within individual societies, spread across borders to their surrounding environment, and exacerbated by unhealthy regional dynamics. In the western hemisphere narcotics syndicates, originate on one side of the world but target and exploit vulnerable societies on the other side. To deep further, the current security threats encompass challenges to human security and a whole series of social and environmental degradation along with traditional military security challenges. And they occur in a time of bewildering connectivity and advancing political complexity as the world becomes increasingly and simultaneously interlinked and multi-centric. During the cold war, there was little official interest in conflict management – that is, the use of non-military means such as a mediation, 'good offices' or pre-emptive diplomatic engagement to promote negotiated alternatives to violence and political upheaval. Although nuclear deterrence was underpinned by diplomacy and the credible threat to use of force, conflict management was generally viewed in one-dimensional term.

The dominant powers in a Bipolar international system sought to 'manage' their conflicts in order to avoid a loss of face or strategic setbacks and to prevent their conflicts from escalating 'out of control' (Deibel, 2007). However, they had little interest in using the tools of negotiation, mediation and preventive statecraft more broadly to promote durable settlements, institution- building, good governance, development and the promotion of the rule of law. In history, moments of geopolitical change often produce new institutions as a response to that change.

The question is whether the world needs another institutional approach to conflict management and security? Would a new institution be capable of responding to the complex challenges of present day conflict? Do we understand the nature of the challenge well enough to design a capable institution? There may be growing recognition that local, regional and global security are linked and that national security is connected to preventing or managing conflicts, the exact nature of these links remains obscure. Also obscure is the road ahead as far as reform and innovation in global institutions are concerned. There are three reasons for this: first, there are huge political hurdles to real reform, as the example of the UN Security Council makes clear; second, security has become divisible, making the quest for consensus and coherence elusive; and third, many actors prefer that the current institutional endowment remains weak and imperfect. Instead of looking to a new institution or a new set of responsibilities for an existing institution, we need to recognize that new collaborative patterns of behaviour are becoming apparent in the conflict management field. In these new patterns, approaches which depend on only one country or institution have been replaced by a growing network of formal and informal institutional arrangements that operate across national, sub-regional and regional boundaries. These arrangements occur for a variety of reasons – some encouraging, others less so – and the results appear to vary widely.

Conflict mitigation and resolution has thus become the dominant governance activity in almost every part of Africa. Many of these conflicts seem intractable; conflict mitigation and resolution initiatives are at best yielding modest success. Even so, such successes typically provide peace in the short term but hardly lay the foundation for the reconstitution of order and the attainment of sustainable peace.

The Recurrence and re-escalation of conflicts in various parts of the world, most especially in the developing states, has indeed made the word '*sustainable peace*' an illusion. A lot can be said on the havoc wrecked by these conflicts on the people and the devastating effects on the natural environment and even on the economic strength of the state involve. Regrettably, all efforts made to put an end to wars, conflict and crises around the globe yield little or no significant results since conflict recur and the proclivity of conflict remained undefeatable (Adegbite et al, 2005:2). Be that as it may, the place of Africa in the New Millennium is characterized by recurring instability, inter/intra-state wars, insecurity, political and economic problems. The intensity and destructiveness of Africa's conflicts accelerated tremendously, posing complex challenges to the peaceful resolution of conflict in particular, and the advancement of peaceful co-existence between groups in general (Adar, 2004:247). Put differently, most visible manifestation of the problems facing the continent is the invidious and intractable proliferation of conflict. Africa continued to witness protracted civil wars which have taken the centre stage in the political lives of the continent, with attendant devastating consequence for peace, security and sustainable development. Undoubtedly, if the idea and practice of searching for peace are as old as humanity, then it follows that the history of wars and conflicts, which are its harbingers, is older (Onoja, 1996).

Africa is the most conflict-ridden region of the world and the only region in which the number of armed conflicts is on the increase. Conflicts have assumed epidemic proportions and an impediment to development. A few facts may help to illustrate the immensity and destructiveness posed by these conflicts. By 1966, average percentage of war related deaths in the world were in Africa. As a result, Africa accounted for over 8 million of the twenty-two million refugees' worldwide (World Refugee Survey, 1998). During the 1980s, Africa witness nine wars, numerous other instances of large-scale violent conflicts, and a kaleidoscope of coups, riots and demonstrations. These hostilities exacted a great toll on Africa in terms of the destruction of human life, cultural damage, economic disruption, and lost investment opportunities. Indeed, it is difficult to foresee significant economic and social development over wide stretches of Africa until the burden of violent conflicts is eased. Of the nine wars, Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique and Uganda – were major, with death totals, including civilian deaths, ranging from 60,000 to 100,000 commonly reported in Angola, and three million in Sudan. In these large wars, the overwhelming majority of victims were civilians, including countless children, who were deprived of food, shelter, and access to healthcare because of the war. Three other wars, in Namibia, Western Sahara and Chad, probably resulted in deaths numbering in the 10,000 to 20,000 range. Since these wars took place in highly populated territories, it seems likely that the civilian toll was less. Little is known about the situation in northern Somalia, although the flight of 350,000 refugees to Ethiopia suggests that substantial fighting has taken place (Africa Watch Committee, Somalia, 1990). A human rights organization estimates that 50,000 to 60,000 civilians have been killed in the above- mentioned conflicts.

Post-colonial governance institutions in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia have been shaped by their domestic and external contexts and circumstances. Among the relevant constituent factors, four seem critical: these include the nature of the colonial experience, the pattern of interaction among internal actors, the structure and response of the regional and international environment within which they operate and the quality of leadership in each country. Although colonial experience initially helped to shape governance structures, other elements have become important since the attainment of independence. The degree of success in aligning and reconciling interests among various elites and the predispositions, orientations and leadership strategies employed by the leaders have elicited domestic and external responses that have not always ensured peace and advanced development .

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concepts of conflicts and peacekeeping are main concern of this paper hence, some scholarly work are reviewed. Conflict is used in two senses. It refers to an incompatibility in a multi-party or multi- issue situation, in other words, a state of affairs in which two or more irreconcilable views or options are posited towards the solution of a particular problem. In the second sense, conflict refers to the violent expression of this incompatibility of irreconcilability. Even though the two conceptions overlap, it is in the latter sense that the term conflict is used within the context of this work.

The term 'conflict' is derived etymologically from the Latin verb *confligere* (to clash, engage in a fight). It refers to a confrontation between individuals or a group resulting from opposite or incompatible ends or means Alex Schmid (2001.). Schmid added that, conflict as an antagonistic situation or adversarial process between at least two individuals or collective actors over means or ends such as: resources, power, status, values, goals, relations or interest. To him, the range of outcomes includes victory, defeat, domination, surrender, neutralisation, conversion, coercion, injury or destruction and elimination of opposite party, or alternatively the solution, settlement or transformation of conflict issue. According to Diller(1997:6) conflict is any form of confrontation between two or parties resulting from a situation where (these) two or more independent groups or system of actions have incompatible goals. Dahrendorf (1959:135) sees conflict as "a contest competition, dispute and tensions as well as manifest clashes between social forces". Boulding (1962:5) "is a situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of the potential future position and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other". Coser (1956:8) interprets conflict as "the struggle over values or claims of status, power, and scarce resources in which the aims of the group or individuals involved are not only to obtain the desired values, but to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals"

The term "Peacekeeping" involves the deployment of military or police, and frequently civilian personnel to assist in the implementation of agreements reached between governments or parties who have been engaged in conflict. Peacekeeping presumes cooperation and its method are inherently peaceful.

Agwu (2007) indicated that peacekeeping consists essentially of observer missions and lightly armed forces monitoring ceasefire, operating in an essentially static mode with the consent of the parties involved. In its traditional sense, peacekeeping meant conflict containment and it adopted the form of neutral outside assistance to mediate and encourage belligerent parties to disengage (Dokubo, 2005: 253). Peacekeeping in this context, is a technique that expands the possibilities for both the prevention of conflict and the making of peace. Hence peacekeeping as a third contingency approach to conflict management, according to Bassey is "one of the novel techniques" of "*Conflict Diplomacy*" which has gained wide currency in the contemporary international era. Demurento & Nikitin (1997:124) explained peacekeeping forces in their own view as "*civilian and military personnel designated by the national governments of the countries participating in the peace operation*". These personnel are placed at the disposal of the regional organization under whose mandate the given operation is being conducted. Peacekeeping forces are made up of national contingents under the regional command. Each national contingent is assigned either a zone of responsibility or specific functional deities. For Evans (1993:11-12)

"Peacekeeping involves more than unarmed or lightly and military contingents been engaged in the monitoring, supervision and verification of cease-fire, withdrawal, better zone and related agreements."

Fung argues that peacekeeping requires a well-defined focus to ensure greater political sensitivity and susceptibilities. This is because the interests of countries tend to affect the perception and attitude of contingents in conflict situation. He reiterates the need for an appropriate and well-defined legal framework for peace keeping at the regional or sub-regional levels. To achieve this goal, the issue of the theory of hegemonic stability of states which "*assumes that the world as a system requires a dominant leader for all its subsystems to function smoothly and to be stable,*" comes to the fore. Peace-keeping efforts therefore, will often be embarked upon in stabilising peace and security in areas adjudged to be replete with conflicts. The ECOWAS has made concerted efforts towards stabilizing regional peace and security but her approach has often been fraught with problems resulting in more failures than successes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper considered the, liberal peace theory. Indeed, in an attempt to construct zones of stable peace (Boulding 1978), both the theory and practice of peace operations are informed by an often unspoken commitment to the liberal peace (Paris 1997, 2002, 2004). At the interstate level, liberal peace is based on the observation that democratic states do not wage war on other states they regard as being democratic. This is not to argue that democracies do not wage war at all or that they are less warlike in their relations with non- democracies; only that democracies tend not to fight each other. In addition, liberal democracies are said to be the least likely states to descend into civil war or anarchy. Exponents of this theory generally present two reasons to explain why that might be. First, through their legislatures and judiciaries, democratic systems impose powerful institutional constraints on decision-makers, inhibiting their opportunities for waging war rashly. These inhibitions are further strengthened by the plethora of regional institutions (such as the ECOWAS) to which liberal democratic states are tied. Democracy prevents civil war primarily because it guarantees basic human rights and offers non- violent avenues for the resolution of political disputes. The second explanation of liberal peace is normative and holds that democratic states do not fight each other because they recognize one another's inherent legitimacy (ibid.) and have shared interests in the protection of international trade which are ill-served by war. Within states, the legitimacy associated with democracy makes it very difficult to mobilize arms against the prevailing order, reducing the likelihood of civil wars. In arguing that peace operations are informed by liberal peace theory, we mean – by and large – that peace operations have tried to create stable peace by promoting and defending the principles that underpin liberal peace. This is most apparent in those peace operations that seek to build peace within states – which are increasingly becoming the norm. These operations try to build stable peace by enabling the creation of democratic societies and liberal free market economies. They are often supported in this endeavour by Western NGOs (Richmond 2003: 1). There is also, however, a broad consensus that fostering liberal peace can contribute to reducing violent conflicts between states.

Liberal peace is one of the dominant theories that underpin contemporary peace operations, its application remains controversial. China and many states in the global South, for example, argue that

peace operations should be limited to assisting states and other actors to resolve their differences and should not be used to impose a particular ideology (Morphet 2000). From this perspective, stable peace can only be built on the maintenance of peace between states, and this requires respect for the sanctity of national sovereignty. Because of these concerns, overt support from the UN for a broad liberal agenda in its peace operations has been limited to one of three situations. In 1997 it likewise found that the overthrow of the elected government of Sierra Leone was a threat to peace, demanded that it be restored, and welcomed an ECOWAS intervention that did just that. Finally, the UN and other actors have sometimes attempted to create liberal peace in places where the state has failed to exert effective authority, such as Bosnia after 1995 and Kosovo and Timor-Leste after 1999. There are other problems with the logic of liberal peace besides these political problems. Roland Paris (2004) found that the rapid democratization and marketization of post-war societies could have destabilizing effects and undermine the chances of long-term stable peace. Others deny liberal peacekeeping basic empirical assumption by pointing to wars between or within democracies or arguing that the dataset remains too small to draw statistically relevant conclusions. Echoing realist sentiments expressed by E. H. Carr ([1939] 1995) in the late 1930s, a third group of critics argue that the values underpinning liberal peace are not universal or causally connected to peace but reflect the ideological preferences of the world's most powerful actors.

NIGERIA'S PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING; CASE ANALYSES

Nigeria's Peace Efforts in Rwandan Crisis

In 1994 in Rwanda, approximately 800 thousand men, women and children were brutally massacred within 100 days. It is estimated that in four months, 1.75 million people, or a quarter of the country's pre-war population, had either died or fled the country. The massacre escalated into a Genocide that started on April 7, 1994 resulting in the death of up to one million people. This horrifying event affected mainly agriculture, the main occupation of the population, as civil strife heightened in the middle of the growing season. NGOs estimated that the overall loss of harvesting during the period of the Genocide was as high as 60%. Rwanda, commonly referred to as the land of a thousand hills, is populated by three ethnic groups – 84% Hutu, 15% Tutsi and 1% Twa. Historically, Hutus have been mainly agricultural labourers while the Tutsis were landowners. The Rwandan civil conflict can be traced back to the Belgian colonial rule of 1916-1962 which was characterized by poor or dissimilar divisions between the two principal ethnicities by the colonial administration.

Tutsis were favoured in terms of education and employment over the Hutus who were neglected. Also, the Belgian administration introduced identity cards to distinguish one's ethnic origin. These acts unsurprisingly led to tensions between the Hutus and Tutsis. In 1959, civil war led to the overthrow of the then ruling Tutsi King, and the granting of independence three years later paved way for a Hutu-led government. Over the next several years, thousands of Tutsis were killed, and an estimated 150,000 fled to neighbouring countries. The children of these exiles later formed the rebel group Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) which was predominantly Tutsi. In 1990 RPF invaded Rwanda in the name of democracy, good governance and the right of refugees displaced from earlier violence to return to Rwanda. The war waged by RPF continued until 1994. In a bid to solve this conflict, the government and the RPF entered into Arusha Peace Accord (APA) in 1993.

The contributions of Nigeria, through her leadership of the ECOMOG operation in Chad and the subsequent ones in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Cote d'voire and Sao Tome and Principe, to its active involvement in Mali recently, without doubt demonstrated its will, ability and commitment through United Nation Peace keeping Mission and the African Union Mission to maintaining peace and security in Rwanda.

Nigeria's Peace Efforts in Liberia Conflict

The Liberian crisis was pre-conceived in the womb of the Commonwealth and Americo-Liberian oligarchy whose contraptions of power resulted in the unbearable monopoly of political power to the total exclusion of the exploited indigenous Liberians. The oligarchy system was genetically been modify by the military coup of 1980 which brought the government to No Commissioned Officers (NCOs), having Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Deo as the Chairman of the People's Redemption Council, marked another water shed in the history of the country which degenerated into conflict interest thereby, resulting to destruction of lives and property.

Nigeria contributed immensely to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), an interventionist mediation force to end the protracted Liberian civil war, where the government of Nigeria puts the financial cost at 8 billion dollars (over N800 billion) apart from a large number of lost and maimed soldiers in 1987. The civil war in Liberia is significant for two reasons. First, it served as an important example of a new type of external intervention – intervention by a sub regional organization. Second, it has led to a re-examination by African leaders, of the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of states. Non-intervention in the internal affairs of states is one of the principles underlying the OAU (now AU). African leaders are, however, far more aware of the threat to regional security posed by internal conflicts. This was reflected in the second principle of the 1991 Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa which stated that the security, stability and development of every African country is inextricably linked with those of other African countries. Consequently, instability in one African country reduces the stability of all other countries. Nigeria shared the joy of the return to democracy by Liberia. Additionally, The then Nigeria's president, Gen. Babangida served as the Chairman of ECOWAS thrice while the community's secretariat in Abuja - a project mainly funded by Nigeria was completed (Yakubu, 2011:101)

Nigeria's Peace Efforts in Sierra Leone Crisis

The historical landmark of Sierra Leone as it is today is basically a composition of generation of tribes and settler.... which started in 1787 when 450 freed slaves and 60 white prostitutes were settled at Graville Town, a piece of land purchased from the Mende King Tom. The protectorate administration of the British over the Sierra Leone from 1787 was extended to the hinterland in 1896. Constitutional draft was instituted in 1951 after which political power was gradually gained from 1953 until full independence on 27 April 1961.

There are two fundamental reasons responsible for the immediate eruption of the Sierra Leone crisis, which began, with the mutiny of May 25, 1997 and the widely held grievance within the military especially among the non-commissioned officers.

Following a long period of military rule, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was elected president of Sierra Leone on 17th march, 1996. Little more than one year later, On 25 May, 1997 he and his democratically elected Government were overthrown in a bloody coup led by dissident military officers and rebels from Sierra Leone's long standing insurgency. In March 1998, a peace keeping force under Nigerian leadership with considerable help from a British/Africa mercenary from a local paramilitary (the (Kamajor), entered Freetown, and restored Kabbah and his government. The motives of the Nigerian intervention were twofold: there was a natural desire for regional security, but General Sani Abacha then the Head of State in Nigeria, also wanted international legitimacy for his regime which was being discredited by the international community. The initial success of the peace keepers helped obscure some of the troubling aspects of the intervention - the lack of an international mandate, the use of mercenary in peace keeping operations and the very undemocratic nature of the Nigerian regime. At the peak of the operations, ECOMOG had 13, 000 troops in the country which conducted the operations. Late in 1999 the disputants in the sierra Leonean conflict signed an agreement in Lome, Togo to end the crisis; thus paving the way for UNAMSIL (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone).

Nigeria's Peace Efforts in Sudan Conflict

The crisis in Darfur started in February 2003 when two rebel groups emerged to challenge the national Islamic Front (NIF) Government in Khartoum. The Sudan Liberation Army (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) claim that the government of Sudan discriminates against Moslem African ethnic groups in Darfur and has systematically targeted those ethnic groups since the early 1990s. The Government of Sudan dismisses the SLA and JEM as terrorists. The conflict pits the three African ethnic groups, the Fur, Zaghosa and Massaleit, against nomadic Arab ethnic groups. The tension between the largely African Muslim ethnic groups and the Arab inhabitants of Darfur can be traced to the 1930s and most resented surfaced in the 1980s. Successive governments in Khartoum have long ignored the African ethnic groups in Darfur and have done very little to prevent or contain attacks by Arab militants against non-Arabs in Darfur. The roots of the conflict in Darfur are complex. In addition to the tribal feuds resulting from desertification and the quest for arable grazing land, the availability of modern weapons, issues relating to identity, governance, and the emergence of armed rebel movements which enjoy popular support amongst certain tribes, played a major role in shaping the crisis (Egwu, 2007).

Non-Arab groups took up arms against successive central governments in Khartoum, albeit unsuccessfully. In the early 1990s the NIF government came to power adopted a policy of "*induced social explosion*" through the Janjaweed militias to destabilize and contain the uprising in Darfur. In mid 2003, the government of Sudan increased its presence in Darfur by arming Arab militias, the Janjaweed and by deploying the Popular Defence Force (PDF). The Janjaweed, under the direction of regular government forces reportedly unleashed a campaign of terror against civilians. The Arab militia engaged in what United Nations officials have described as ethnic cleansing of the African ethnic group of Darfur. "Men have been executed, women have been raped, and more than 2000000 people forced into exile in neighbouring countries". In early February 2004, the government launched a major military offensive against the rebel forces and in mid-February 2004, President Omar Bashir, in a nationally televised speech, declared that the security forces had crushed the SLA and JEM and offered amnesty to the rebels (Egwu, 2007).

The conflict in Darfur appears like a recent development, but a deeper examination reveals that the crisis is deeply rooted in ages of resources and racial conflict between Durfurians of Arab and African descent. The Arabs who allegedly use state apparatus to ensure their dominance have continually short-changed the people of the South, predominantly those of the African natives and of Christian faith in the process of resource distribution. The Southern Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), as was constituted and run by John Garang was to form the platform that would be needed to mobilize the marginalized people of the South to seek the right of self-determination, a principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, giving a people the leverage to determine the right to self rule. The resistance of the Sudanese government, and consequently her use of organized state violence to displace and deny the Southern people of their right for self-determination surely would be the focal point that would continue to provide reasons for the extended conflict in Sudan (Darfur Monitoring Group 2005).

As a first step in demonstrating Nigeria's commitment in resolving the conflict, the then president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo deployed military expedition to Sudan, in line with Nigeria's spirit of good neighbourliness. The President canvassed for an African solution to the worsening humanitarian crisis in Darfur where the government-supported militia group, the Janjaweed has killed more than 300 thousand non-Arabs. The principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states of Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) which prevented the Organization from putting pressure on the successive Sudanese government, dominated by the Arabs in the Northern part of Sudan, to refrain from carrying out policies that appear to be genocide against its own people, particularly the natives from the Southern Sudan was ignored by the A.U. under Obasanjo's leadership of the A.U. This paved the way for the A.U. and other members of the international community to get involved in finding a peaceful resolution to the Darfur crisis.

Beyond its pan-African policy of maintaining peace and security on the continent, Nigeria has additional reasons to be concerned about developments in the Sudan. The two countries share a long history of relations in Islamic learning and exchanges. It is believed that there are a large number of Sudanese Nigerian origins in Sudan, totalling about 3 million, many of who took permanent residence in the country. There are second and third generations of Nigerians whose ancestors left Nigeria in a bid to perform the Holy Pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia by land over the years. As a result of difficulties of making the long journeys in those days, many of these Nigerians had little or no alternative but to remain in Sudan (Ugwu, 2008). Since the advent of the civil war in Southern Sudan in the early 1980s, Nigeria has been engaged in the search for peace in the country. It hosted series of Peace Talks in Lagos, Abuja and Kano in the late 1980s and early 1990s, all intended to facilitate the resolution of the long raging conflict. The seeds that have now germinated in the signing of a comprehensive Peace Accord between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) were sown in those peace talks.

As a start in finding a peaceful resolution of the Darfur crisis, former President, Olusegun Obasanjo, while in office as President of Nigeria and AU Chairman appointed his predecessor in office, General Abdusalami Abubakar as his Special Envoy to Sudan. This appointment indicated Nigeria's poise for an active engagement in the Sudan, in a manner that was intended to inject credibility and sound judgment into the peace process. After preliminary contacts, fact-finding missions and consultations with all stakeholders in the Darfur crisis, the first round of inter-Sudanese Political Talks was convened in Abuja on August 23, 2004 under the auspices of the African Union. At the Peace Talk in

Abuja, the Government of Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) were all represented.

Nigeria's hosting of series of peace talks between the Sudanese Government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement at various times in Abuja and other major cities in Nigeria is predicated on her efforts to understand the nature of the conflict after listening to the positions of both parties. George's assertion could be the major reason why Nigeria did not waste time in injecting greater impetus to the search for peace in Darfur while the international community was still debating over the nature of the conflict

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the past two decades, Nigeria has shown herself not only as an important actor within the West African sub-region, but also discharges responsibilities as regional leader. 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 West Africa by helping to secure the sub-region as well as rid it of protracted civil wars through her commitment of oil resources, political and diplomatic tactics. It is recommended that,

Selection process for peacekeeping mission should be done based on merit and competence to ensure optimum result; Part of the resources expended on peacekeeping missions should be channelled for the maintenance of internal security, as every nation has to survive before pursuing other interests in the international .In spite of the tremendous effort by the Nigeria The OAU/AU and the sub-regional organisations should work harder to address the root causes , patter and consequences of these conflicts in Africa. It should intensify the application of diplomacy and related non-coercive approaches to conflict resolution. Finally, ECOWAS should promote efforts geared towards sensitivity to early warning indicators and put in place proactive and problem solving mechanisms for addressing security issues in the sub-region.

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