Research article

NIGERIA AND THE BURDEN OF PEACE-KEEPING AND SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA SINCE THE 1970S: A DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria, the largest economy in West Africa has been initiating for peace and security in the sub-region before her political independence. Since the 1970s, she has contributed both material and personnel resources for peace-keeping and security in West Africa by participating in all peace-keeping operations in the sub-region. Currently, Nigeria is in Mali to assist ward off Tuareg Islamist insurgency the legitimate government in Mali. The issue for attention is that Nigeria has been committing much of her resources to peace-keeping and security in the sub-region in the face of debilitating paucity of facilities and corrosive poverty in the country. At the end of each operation, she has nothing tangible to show her adventures except loss of personnel and huge financial expenditure put at about US$9 billion. This paper advocates that whereas Nigeria needs to secure peace, rebuild the beleaguered states and engender general development in West Africa, she should not loose sight of the weight of this enterprise on crucial domestic issues which have the potentials of creating implosions if left unattended to. Copyright © WJPDIR, all rights reserved.

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Introduction

The twentieth century appeared to be one of the worst centuries in human relations, especially, in terms of bellicosity. Between 1914 and 1945, various nations of the world, directly or indirectly, were engulfed in two world wars. Those wars were seen as classical wars where sophisticated instruments of war were freely used especially during the Second World War. People from various nations perished in millions, economies tumbled and it was like human existence was terminating (Greenville, 2000:93-293; Spodek, 1998: 595-598; Coleman, 1986: 187-203). Indeed, after the First World War, the League of Nations was formed to revamp battered economies and assuage centripetal tendencies across the globe but the League did not bring about the much needed peace. In 1939, the Second World War erupted because the conflicting issues that brought the European countries to collision before and during the First World War were still very much around together with the burden of war guilt and debilitating conditions which were placed on Germany (Greenville, 2000: 131-132).

After the Second World War however, a few pragmatic world leaders such as Winston Churchill of Great Britain, Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States of America and Josef Stalin of the Soviet Union came together and initiated the formation of the United Nations Organization to replace the League of Nations (Greenville, 2000). It should be noted that these three nations were superpowers in military, economic and political reckonings. This is not to undermine other big powers such as Germany, France and Japan, among others. The formation of the United Nations Organization was to seek for and superintend over a permanent peace environment throughout the world. In this connection therefore, every independent nation that sued for peace and growth was to be a member. Membership was however, not compulsory but since every nation sought for peace, one was persuaded to belong. Against this background, Nigeria, after gaining political independence from Britain on 1st October, 1960, became the 99th member of the United Nations Organization (Eboh, 1995: 180-182).

Indeed, Nigeria's first peace initiative was during the "World Wars" when she, like other countries that were colonized, was conscripted by their colonial masters to fight during the war. The term "World War" has oftentimes been contested as a misnomer. The argument is that it should be taxonomised as "European War". For one, the main theatre of both wars was Europe or in loose terms, Eurasia. Again, the main combatants were Eurasians. The major causes of the wars had to do with events in Eurasia. Colonized territories especially, which had no business fighting in those wars ab initio, were dragged into those wars by their colonial masters. Nigeria's second round initiative began when she gained political independence in 1960 and in the same year, she participated in the

United Nations peace-keeping mission in the former Belgian Congo. Since then, Nigeria has become a regular initiator, participant and supporter in the United Nations peace-keeping operations.

From the 1970s, Nigeria assumed regional leadership position in West Africa because of her comparatively robust economy at the instance of crude oil. With a vibrant oil economy coupled with a large productive population when compared to other West African states, Nigeria, has been ahead and in control of affairs in the sub-region. She therefore desires after the maintenance of the *status quo*. In this direction, she invests in peace and security across West Africa.

Conceptualizing Peacekeeping

The term peace-keeping was coined in 1957 by Lester Bowls Pearson, then a Canadian diplomat and later, prime minister. The term was used to describe the proposed United Nations Mission that supervised the 1957 truce reached between belligerents during the Suez Canal crisis following the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war (Perry, Scholl, Davis, Harris and von Laue, 1994: 760). Indeed, the concept was utilized to distinguish that larger operation (which deployed 3,600 personnel in military units) from individual observer missions earlier used in the 1948 United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) during the Arab-Israeli war (Okereke, 2009: 566).

Peace-keeping is the deployment of military and sometimes civilian personnel under the tutelage of international command and control, often when a ceasefire has been achieved through the consent of the parties involved (Nnoli, 2006: 200). Vogt (1992: 148) expresses that the concept "peace-keeping" was fully developed by the United Nations, although the concept predates the UN system and was mentioned in the charter by the founding fathers of the UN. It was first developed and used by the UN in the 1940s with the deployment of small observer missions to the Balkans, Indonesia, South Asia and the Middle East. Peace-keeping also connotes the preservation of peace, especially as a military mission in which troops are deployed and used to keep peace formally between warring factions, including the use of the armed forces of any country, to forestall further fighting or the escalation of already tensed situation (Agbambu,2010: 44). Again, it typifies a nation in relative peace sending troops – military, civil police and other civilians to a conflict area or zone to assist in bringing about peace between or among warring factions for the preservation of values and norms of modern civilization.

As a concept in the international system, it now involves the use or deployment of multinational military, civil police and in some cases, civilian personnel for the prevention, containment and termination of crisis which the UN or any major international organization feels might threaten international peace and security (Okereke,2009;

Akpan and Eminue, 2012: 6909-6912). It is also used to describe certain military actions and/or factions authorized by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and geared towards supervising ceasefire agreements and separating the warring factions. In the words of Boutros Boutros Ghali, former UN secretary-general, it involves the deployment of the UN "contributory" personnel on the field, however, with the consent of all parties concerned. The presence of these personnel is said to expand the possibilities for the prevention of conflicts and engenders peace-making.

A few distinguishing features of peace-keeping according to Nkwine (2002), as quoted by Nnoli (2006) have been noted. Although peace-keeping uses military force in areas of conflict, it nevertheless, employs some norms and means that are associated with pacific settlement of disputes. Apart from consent among factions involved, peace-keeping usually applies and adheres to the principle of impartiality. This principle derives from the fact that peace-keeping operations are supposed to be interim in nature. Thus they are not to interfere or alter the balance of power that exists in the conflict situation, but rather to interpose forces in between the belligerents in order to develop a favourable environment for peace-making efforts to be established or re-established. Basically, peace-keeping does not require the use of military force by military units, except in self-defense. Hence, peace-keeping operations are generally unarmed, and when armed, they are expected to approach any tensed situation or force in a minimalist fashion.

Conceptualising Security

The term security has been variously used, but really, it lacks a definite or precise definition. Imobighe; Bassey and Asuni (2002) see security as a feeling of being safe and protected, a feeling of freedom from danger, fear, anxiety, oppression and unwarranted violence. Security is relative freedom from war, coupled with a relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur (Collins, 2007: 2). McNamara sees the security of a nation not only as its military preparedness but also in developing relatively stable patterns of economic development and political growth at home and abroad. Security is also seen as "the degree of resistance to, or protection from harm. It applies to any vulnerable or valuable asset, such as person, dwelling, community, nation or organization" (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Nnoli (2006) sees security as a state of mind and not necessarily as an objective state of being. It has to do with a person's feelings, not whether they are justified by feeling that way. Again, it depends on the perceptions that people have about their environment, not necessarily on an objective view of that environment. Lass Well and Abraham Kaplan (1950) as cited by Nnoli (2006), conceptualize security as "high value expectancy". They stress

the subjective and speculative character of security by using the term "expectancy". The use of the term "high" is indicative of no definite level and by implication, the security seeker aims as a position in which the continued unmolested enjoyment of his/her values has considerably more than as even chance of materializing. Again, the subjective since of security or insecurity varies along a continuum. This shows that security is not a matter of either/or; either one has it or one does not, rather it is a matter of degree, of feeling more or less secure, or more or less insecure.

In sum, security is the condition in which individuals, groups of people and states are not under siege; free from war, freedom of people to express their feelings without molestation and participate in government and development of his/her environment positively. In this connection, Nigeria has persistently been involved in freeing people in so many states to have a sense of belonging within the confines of the law within the international system even before her political independence in October, 1960.

Nigeria's Participation in UN Peace-Keeping Operations since Independence

As pointed out earlier, Nigeria had contributed men and materials to the prosecution and victory of the first and second world wars. That was chiefly done under the tutelage of participated in the world wars. What is important, however, is that Nigeria even under the colonial yoke was able to contribute her quota in bringing about peace in the world. In any event, after obtaining political independence, she has been contributing troops to UN peace operations. The first UN peace-keeping mission took place in the Middle East in 1948. It was the year Britain withdrew from Palestine which she controlled since 1922 as a mandated territory. After the Second World War, the UN divided Palestine into two separate nations namely, Israel and Palestine (Perry, Scholl, Davis and von Laue, 1994: 759-760). The five Arab nations surrounding Israel - Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan (now Jordan) and Egypt – almost immediately attacked Israel. The UN later negotiated for a truce and since then, the UN has often sent observers to regions of conflict. Since independence, and up to 2010, Nigeria has had about 5,732 men and women serving under the blue helmet. Again, she has been reckoned to be the fourth largest troop contributing country to UN peace-keeping efforts, surpassed only by Bangladesh, India and Pakistan (Agbambu, 2010).

Since 1948, the UN has sponsored a total of 55 initiatives out of which Nigeria has actively participated in 40 which arithmetically translates to about 73% of peace-keeping missions around the world. As a matter of fact, Nigeria as an independent country had her first UN mission engagement in 1960 when she deployed her troops and policemen to former Belgian Congo under the command of Major-General Johnson Thomas Umunakwe Ironsi

following an outbreak of post-independence crisis in that country (Akinyemi, 1974: 48). Nigeria also participated in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), UN Operations in Somalia (UNCRO), UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) among others (Agbambu, 2010). Up to 2010, Nigeria deployed about 361 women to UN peace-keeping missions – the highest number of female troops under the blue helmet (Agbambu, 2010).

Nigeria's Security and Peace-Keeping Initiatives in West Africa Since 1970

In 1975, sequel to a series of sub-regional meetings aimed at viable regional development at the instance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Community for West African States was inaugurated. Nigeria under General Yakubu Gowon, was one of the principal countries which contributed immensely to its birth (Uwechue, 1991: 81). Since then, the issues of peace and security within the sub-region have been quite central to Nigeria's neighbourly policy. Many factors contribute to this posture. Firstly, Africa is central to Nigeria's foreign policy. Thus the West-African sub-region is therefore considered as a micro unit within the context of Nigeria's policy. Secondly, Nigeria is the largest economy in West Africa with a vibrant population with entrepreneurial skills and investment propensities. Many Nigerians engage in various kinds of businesses across the sub-region. Thus an atmosphere of peace becomes an essential matter for such ventures to thrive and be sustained. Anything on the contrary would spell doom for Nigeria in all ramifications. Against this backdrop therefore, Nigeria considers it quite germane to do everything within her capacity howbeit, in concert with the provisions of international law and the spirit of good neighbourliness, to sustain the initiative for peace and order.

It would be noted that in an event of an outbreak of war and general dislocation, the consequences would not only be dire but also manifold. Among the undesirable consequences would include the undermining of the internal security of Nigeria; pressure on economic and social facilities and opportunities; high crime rate, environmental pollution and degradation and so on. In the late 1970s and in the early 1980s for instance, the influx of Ghanaians into western Nigeria in particular, as a result of an unprecedented economic melancholy in Ghana culminated in the repatriation saga notoriously called "Ghana Must Go" by the Nigerian government. Again, the ingress of Liberian refugees into western Nigeria following the deterioration of conditions of affairs in that country led to Nigeria's eventual intervention in Liberia to restore normalcy under the aegis of Economic Community of West Africa Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

Nigeria and ECOMOG

On May 29, 1981, the Economic Community of West African States, conscious of the inevitability of conflict and sporadic and/or sustained armed threats in the human society, adopted a Protocol with regard to Mutual Assistance on Defense, in Freetown, Sierra Leone (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Article 2 of the Protocol states that, "any armed threat or aggression directed against any member state shall constitute a threat of aggression against the entire community". In Article 3, "member states resolved to give mutual aid and assistance to each other for defense against any armed threat or aggression". In this regard, Article 4 states that "in any conflict between member states, the Authority of ECOWAS shall decide to send the Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC) to interpose between the troops engaged in the conflict". With regard to internal conflicts, Article 18 of the Protocol emphasizes that "where an internal conflict in a member country is actively maintained and sustained from outside, member resolved to intervene invoking Articles 6,9, and 16". Accordingly, Article 6(3) empowers the Authority to "decide on the expediency of military action and entrust its execution to the Force Commander of the Allied Forces of the Community (AAFC)".

Above provisions gave impetus to the birth of ECOMOG at the instance of the Standing Mediation Committee of ECOWAS which met at Banjul, The Gambia from 6-7 August, 1990 (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). In point of fact, "ECOMOG represents the first credible initiative since the Organisation of African Unity tried to establish an Inter-African Force to intervene in Chad in 1981" (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Since its inception, ECOMOG – a multi-lateral force- has provided a legitimate platform for national armies within the sub-region to work together to engender peace and security.

ECOMOG forces were first deployed in Liberia on the 24th of August, 1990, with Lieutenant-General Arnold Quainoo of Ghana as its first Forces Commander. In 1991, then Brigadier-General Joshua Nimyel Dogonyaro of Nigeria succeeded General Quainoo. Since then, subsequent commanders have all been Nigerians. In 1997, ECOMOG was in Sierra Leone to quell the Revolutionary United Front's insurgency launched by Corporal Foday Saybana Sankoh since 1991. By 1999, ECOMOG was in Guinea to restore normalcy. In 2001, ECOMOG threatened to deploy troops along the troubled Guinea-Liberia border. Presently, ECOMOG is in Mali to suppress Tuareg and Islamic fundamentalist insurrection and put the country back on the path of democratic governance.

Cost/Benefit Analysis of Nigeria's Peace Initiatives

We have noted from the foregoing that Nigeria has been a front-liner in peace-keeping initiatives from the sub-regional level to the global arena. There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria's participation and commitment to global peace and security has been quite commendable and remarkable. Her achievements have positioned her positively in the reckonings of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). For instance, Chikadibia Obiakor, a Lieutenant-General in the Nigerian Army was appointed the Peace-keeping adviser to the Assistant Secretary-General at the United Nations the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon. In the same vein, Nigeria's Professor Joy Ogwu was appointed the Chairperson of the United Nations Special Committee on peace-keeping. These developments have placed Nigeria on the firmament of peace and security initiatives within the international system.

Indeed, members of Nigerian contingents to the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS peace missions have won several medals and awards for meritorious performances. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) presented the Nigerian Army with an award in recognition of its commitment to peace operations. In addition, about twenty-six gallant officers of the Nigerian Armed Forces have distinguished themselves in service as Field Commanders of several United Nations, African Union and ECOMOG peace missions.

The Nigerian Armed Forces has considerably become more professionalized through their experiences in peace-keeping operations in keeping with doctrinal and operational concepts of global best practices. It is also noteworthy to observe that Nigeria's commitment to sub-regional peace and security in West Africa has provided a lot of economic opportunities for Nigerian investors who have expanded their businesses beyond the shores of Nigeria. For instance, Nigerian banks such as United Bank for Africa (UBA), Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB), and Intercontinental Bank and so on have opened branches across West Africa and beyond. Globacom – a telecommunications service provider, wholly owned by a Nigerian, has extended services to other nations in West Africa. Again, the Igbo of Nigeria have been associated with the sale of mechanical spare parts across West Africa. Equally, the Yoruba have been reckoned to purvey a wide range of merchandise in the sub-region. These ventures, among several others, have created jobs for Nigerians and the nationals of the host countries thereby enhancing development in the sub-region given the linkage effect between job creation and economic development.

However, the huge resources Nigeria has expended in the pursuit of peace and security in the sub-region in spite of her domestic poverty and self-inflicted woes, has been called to question severally. At the end of each operation, she reaps no direct benefit for her efforts. Nigeria is not an arms producing nation hence, she does not directly benefit from the sale of arms to warring factions in the sub-region and beyond. Her efforts in peace and security initiatives in Africa generally and in West Africa in particular, have cost her a fortune. In the Belgian Congo crisis for instance, the total financial implication of the peace-keeping mission to Nigeria was put at more than fourteen million pounds sterling outside the US$1million UN bond she obtained to defray the cost of operations. Nigeria also had to write off the total cost of the then OAU peace-keeping operations in Chad in 1982 to make up for funds pledged by the United Kingdom and the United States of America which were no Nigerian-led ECOMOG operations in Liberia lasted for about six years. Nigeria committed far more than US$3 billion to the cause of ECOMOG in Liberia, yet, the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) requested for only N3 billion to attain a minimum level of teaching and learning in Nigerian Universities. It was not given. Akinterinwa (2004) regards US$3 billion figure as absurdly conservative and untrue. He rather puts the figure between US$10 billion and US$14 billion. This amount could have been used to defray part of Nigeria's external debt, fix some infrastructure and generally enhance the living conditions of Nigerians.

Besides the financial burden, Nigeria has almost been the sole provider of logistics such as food, fuel, medicals, clothing, equipment, etc. to troops and refugees. Health wise, some Nigerian troops returned from peace-keeping operations as victims of HIV/AIDS, while others lost their lives. It is contended that those infected soldiers have contributed to the spread of the dreaded disease in Nigeria with rather unquantifiable consequences. Many Nigerian soldiers lost their lives thereby inflicting untold hardship on their families back at home. Yet some members of the Nigerian contingent were pilloried for profiteering from the supply of logistics and contingences. Again, they were accused of collaborating with rebel fighters. In Sierra Leone for instance, Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, a Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commander, accused the Nigerian troops of compromising their terms of reference. He told the world press that "the Nigerians are selling arms and ammunitions. They collaborating with us" (Google). Again, ECOMOG troops preponderated by Nigerian soldiers were accused of stealing so much so that the acronym "ECOMOG" was divested of its original meaning and labeled "Every Car Or Moving Object Gone" (Google).

In Nigeria, the country's involvement in ECOMOG operations has not only been seen as a drain of her resources but also as an externalization policy (Rourke,) to divert citizens' attention from myriad internal problems. In point of fact, Nigeria's adventure in ECOMOG operations has been looked at with much suspicion. *The BBC Focus on Africa* (1999: 8), has it that,

> *Nigeria under military rule had good reasons for military adventures which performed the triple task of impressing the West (which was only too glad to see Africans dealing with African conflicts), keep over-ambitious army officers busy and far from home, and opening up huge money-making opportunities for the military elite.*

This corroborates the assertion that General Babangida midwifed the elongation of the conflict in Liberia by recalling then Brigadier-General Joshua Dogonyaro who commanded the ECOMOG forces which were on the verge of inflicting permanent disability on the rebels within his five months stay in Liberia.

For many years, above state of affairs became the terms of reference for both the military and civilian governments in Nigeria. In September, 1999, the burden of peace-keeping in West Africa on Nigeria had become quite cumbersome that the former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, while addressing the United Nations General Assembly remarked that,

> *For too long the burden of preserving international peace and security in West Africa has been left almost entirely to a few states in the our sub-region. Nigeria's continual burden in Sierra Leone is unacceptably draining Nigeria financially. For our economy to take off, this bleeding must stop (Obasanjo, 1999).*

Fourteen years on, the bleeding has not stopped, in spite of above remarks. Nigeria is still in the Darfur region in Sudan and in May, 2013, Nigeria went into Mali to suppress the Tuareg uprising and restore democratic governance.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we have showcased Nigeria as a country that is routinely committed to global peace and security generally, continental and sub-continental peace and security in particular. At the continental and sub-continental levels, she has spearheaded various peace initiatives and almost single-handedly bankrolled the pecuniary implications of peace-keeping missions. This posture has been reckoned in some quarters as an effort to lubricate her Afro-centric foreign policy thrust as well as the "big brother" agenda she has set for herself. In the sub-

region of West Africa, Nigeria has committed so much of her resources, human and material, to peace-keeping and

regional security initiatives. As noted by Saliu (2009: 89),

> Her relative buoyant economy has...led the country to be involved in the provision of social services such as roads and schools to some West African countries. Perhaps the greatest impact which the country has made in the sub-region is her deep involvement in the affairs of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) especially in the area of security functions. Not only is Nigeria the largest financier of ECOWAS, she also the leader in troops' contribution to ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) pioneered on Liberia in 1990. It is not an exaggeration to say that without Nigeria's role, ECOMOG would not have been brought about.

The pursuit of sub-regional peace and security is fundamentally a noble enterprise. However, it should be

pursued and accomplished with the co-operation and commitment of other signatories to the ECOWAS Protocol in

1975. This could be achieved through extensive consultations to enlist pandemic commitment. Nigeria's primus

position in the sub-region and the engagement of top government functionaries to maintain the status quo has had

untold consequences on the Nigerian economy in particular. High external debt profile, decadent infrastructure,

non-functional public utilities, poor health and educational standards, internal insecurity typified in the Niger Delta

militancy and the Boko Haram insurgency, high level of criminality, and unmitigated corruption are some of the

issues which perennially yearn for considerable attention vis-à-vis Nigeria's peace-keeping ventures in West

Africa.

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