(REVIEW ARTICLE)

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Nigeria's efforts in peace support operations in Africa: Evidence from Liberia

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Abstract

The African continent has been plagued by numerous conflicts and crises, and Nigeria, a prominent African nation, has consistently been one of the key contributors to international peacekeeping effort and of particular interest in Liberia. Liberia's conflict was characterized by numerous warring factions, shifting alliances, and a blurred distinction between combatants and civilians. Hence the Nigerian troops found themselves in the midst of a volatile and multifaceted conflict, decimated infrastructure which constrained maintaining troops, equipment, and supplies in remote areas with limited infrastructure. This study interrogated Nigeria's efforts in peace support operations (PSO) in Africa with particular reference to Liberia, viz a viz Nigeria ability to achieve strategic alliance and post-conflict relationships to justify her limitless budget spending in almost all the continent PSOs. The study adopted exploratory research design while content analysis of publicly available archive documents was employed for the analysis. Secondary data were generated via journals publication and other documented materials relevant to the study. Finding that emanate from the study revealed that most PSOs by Nigeria was not informed by consensus strategic alliance of either economic nor political interest. The study also submitted that there is dearth of post-conflict relationships between Nigeria and war torn nations demanding for PSOs. The study therefore recommends that Nigeria military in deploying for PSO must be of strategic alliance whose end results must justify the expensive sacrifices in both human and financial resources, clearly spelt out in terms and consensus reached. Study also recommends that the exit strategies and the post-conflict relationships must also pave way to a full recovery in the least, of the investments made in the PSO intervention, as no country engages in a PSO without a reason.

Keywords: Peace Support Operations; Post Conflict Relationship; Strategic Alliance; War-torn Nation

1. Introduction

Peace Support Operation (PSO) is the broad collective of activities usually discussed as peace-making, peacekeeping, peace building, and preventive actions (Jonah & Zabadi, 2009 :4). A "peace support operation" as the term denotes, is an operation undertaken to enable peaceful environment free of war, strife and disorder. Internationa1 Alert defines PSOs as all dimensions of peace-keeping operations by the internationa1 community from the multi-dimensional complex operation to the more pointily visible observer operations. PSOs are therefore linked to the maintenance of international order, peace and security, especially since the 20th Century.

PSOs are therefore carried out so as to enable peaceful environment free of strife and disorder. Since the beginning of Peace Support Operations (PSOs) by the UN in 1948, it has been involved in 59 missions of which Nigeria has actively been significantly involved in 40 of the missions worldwide (Dike, 2010). Nigeria made her debut in the UN PSOs when she sent a contingent to the former Belgian-Congo, due to evolving crisis in that country in 1960, based on the UN Operations in the Congo (UNOC) after Nigeria's induction as the 99th member of the UN on 7th October 1960. Since then, Nigeria is still invo1ved in peace support operations, particularly in Africa, in partnership with other bodies and stakeholders.

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In the process, Nigeria has contributed well over 150,000 peacekeepers to various PSOs across the globe. In recent times, Nigeria's active participation is being threatened particularly by domestic security challenges, which have affected her contribution from the fourth to the current 37th largest troop contributing country. Analysis from 1990 to 2000 established that there were 19 major armed conflicts in Africa, as 16 of Africa's 53 countries were troubled with arm conflicts in 1999 and later evolving to 22 countries in the first decade of the new millennium being burdened with post-conflict conditions (Obwona & Guloba, 2009).

In terms of deaths, refugees and displaced persons, and lost economic prospects, African conflicts are one of the greatest tragedies of our contemporary era. As the Cold War ended in early 1990s, there came a paradigm shift in conflict within Africa from inter to intra-state conflicts which are more complicated and ambiguous than the former. With this, the sole responsibility was now that of Africa to find native solutions to its native problems as the big powers were reluctant to intervene as it were on African conflicts. This situation has led to a number of actors in Africa to assume the responsibility of PSOs. It is in this context that Nigeria has continued to participate in PSOs to resolve conflicts in Africa with regards to foreign-policy and dedication to international peace and security flourishing especially within Africa.

Liberia, a nation founded by freed American slaves in the 19th century, descended into a brutal and protracted civil war that began in 1989 and continued for nearly 14 years (Odidi & Silas, 2022). The conflict was characterized by ethnic tensions, power struggles, political instability, and horrific human rights abuses, leaving the country in ruins. By the early 2000s, Liberia had become a failed state characterized by lawlessness and misery, with people facing unimaginable suffering and despair. Nigeria's involvement in Liberia's peacekeeping efforts began in 1990 when it deployed a contingent of troops as part of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) (Oni 2002, Adekeye 2002, Ogah 2019). ECOMOG was established by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to restore peace and stability to Liberia- and was comprised mainly of troops from West African nations.

1.1. Causes, sources and types of conflicts in Africa leading to PSOS

Africa has had several violent conflicts that tried to cripple its peace and human development. Some of these violent conflicts go to the extent of recruiting child soldiers into militant groups all over Africa. Thus, conflicts usually occur basically due to clashing interests between relatives, groups, states, or individuals since they are rooting for incompatible goals. These clashes of interest could lead to several challenges that could be inimical to the interest of the state. It is true that 'war' is often times used as a conflict synonym; however, it is more typical to narrow war as meaning violent conflict, with armed forces involved. Similar to war, conflict has been existent with time, a conventional manner of disputes between political groups within a society. For many decades now, it has been quite obvious that the nation-states regime is fast fading. This is more obvious in Africa. The conflict types afflicting states in Africa is similar to those plaguing states in Eastern Europe and Asia than the other continents (Adeleye Oyeniyi, 2011).

1.2. Major sources of conflicts in Africa

Boundary Conflicts: African states' frontiers and borders have been fluid rather than fixed for many years, especially after independence. This has eased mobility around the continent for thousands of economic and political refugees.

Conflict of Governance: Africa has had many dictators trying to prop up ethnic autocracies. They are frequently being attacked by growing militant opposition groups facilitated by pro-democracy and human rights organisations within and externally. This is common in the Central African sub-region.

Conflict of Economic Development: This one is challenging as stress to partake in regional trading blocs and the development of cross-border trading networks terminally undermines the abilities of African states to be economically sovereign. This conflict also entails the competition evolving from production and distribution of resources.

Conflict due to Foreign Intervention: Africa has been a subject of foreign intervention and influence for many decades. The end of Cold War further aggravated problems as small and medium arms fell into the hands of many rebel groups.

Conflict based on Society Militarisation: With so much of weapons, trained soldiers and untrained volunteers were available to any intending warlord having means, courage and determined to fight a proactive war.

Within past three decades, sub-Sahara Africa has been the highest conflict-ridden region in the world, according to Consultation Document for the UK Department of International Development (2001), as armed conflicts on the continent, especially strife, increased dramatically. The sources of these conflicts have been complex and dynamic. With collapse of the Soviet bloc and consequent opening up of Eastern Europe to Western influence, Africa's strategic

importance has diminished and, unfortunately, this scenario was unfolding as Africa's security-related problems were proving intractable (Zabadi & Sanda, 2003).

The withdrawal of East-West patronage, aid and military assistance resulted in further instability as weak and over-centralised states in Africa became more vulnerable to internal dissent (UK Document, 2001). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, Africa began to experience the phenomenon of collapsed states in places like Somalia, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (Zabadi & Sanda, 2003). From the genocide in Rwanda, the prolonged civil wars in Somalia to the Darfur crisis in the Sudan and the civil war in the DRC, Africa paints a gloomy picture in its quest for peace and security sustainability.

Crises in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea Bissau and, most recently, Côte d'Ivoire exemplify vividly such conflicts in the West African sub-region. Economic, social, environmental, religious and ethnic related factors are most commonly the genesis of such conflicts. Nevertheless, when these conflicts occur, it is necessary that they are resolved for international peace and human security's sake. The evolution of diverse security arrangements with basic purpose of averting anticipated or ongoing threats and thus ending violent conflicts is as a result of the realisation of their existence between and within states.

1.3. Nigeria's Efforts

Following her independence in 1960, Nigeria has been assuming a critical leadership position in West Africa and indeed the African continent. Since her independence, the continent has been the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Having populace over 150 million people, very nearly twenty-five percent of Africa's population and enriched with abundant Natural and human resources, Nigeria is bound to assume influential positions in Africa's undertakings. Notwithstanding the challenges in finances, politics, social and diplomatic, the nation has actually been doing this for decades (Saied, 2011).

Consistently, succeeding Nigerian governments have given extraordinary regard to the quandary and state of other Africa countries, thus making Nigeria's foreign policy fundamental principles "Afro-centric" and seeing herself as a brother's keeper with this being embedded in all Nigeria's dominant cultures. West Africa remains the principal implementation subject in Nigeria's Afro-centric foreign policy. With massive size, natura1, economic, human resources and large market drive, Nigeria sees herself as possessing a lasting mandate to showcase authoritative impact on the Sub-region and definitely the black-world. In quest of Africa's authentic global politics interests, Nigeria's strength economically and vast extent of human resources available have given her a proportion of autonomy. This is evident in her role in the OAU, later transformed into the AU, Chad Basin Commission, Commonwealth of Nations, and the sub region - ECOWAS. Nigeria has therefore been supporting ECOWAS and AU in general with regards to conflict resolution. Nigeria's involvement in peace-keeping endeavours is evidence of her care and respect for the necessity to attribute priority and articulate reflection pertaining the value of the bond which shapes some portion of all Africa's history, especially that of the West African Coast.

In the ECOMOG peace keeping force, for instance, with immense human resources and finances to the force operations, Nigeria had the largest contingent. Nigeria's commitments with regards to peace and stability in Africa are substantial as she constantly assumes urgent mediatory positions in situations of crises in African nations and the international community at large. In particular, she partook in peace-keeping operations in the Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Darfur in Sudan, to specify yet a couple.

Generally, the PSOs Nigeria has participated in include the Congo (ONUC) 1960-1964, Battalion operations; New Guinea (UNSF) 1962-1963, Military Observers; Tanzania (Bilateral Agreement) of 1964, Battalion operations; India-Pakistan (UNIPOM) 1965-1966, Military Observers; Lebanon (UNIFIL) 1978-1983, Battalion operations and Staff Officers; Chad HARMONY I, Bilateral Agreement) 1981-1982, Battalion operations and Staff Officers; Chad (HARMONY II, OAU)1982-1983, Brigade operations; Iran-Iraq (UNIMOG) 1988-1991, Military Observers; Liberia (ECOMOG) 1990, Iraq-Kuwait (UNIKOM) 1991, Military Observers; Angola (UNAVEM II)1991-1992, Military Observers; Sierra Leone (NATAG) 1991, Training Team; Angola(UNAVEM III) 1992-1995, Detachment; Namibia (UNTAG) 1989-1990, Military Observers.

Western Sahara UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) 1991, Military Observers; Cambodia (UNTAC) 1992- 1993, Military Observers; Somalia (UNOSOM) 1992-1994, Battalion operations and Staff Officers; Former Republic of Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR)1992, Battalion operations and Staff Officers; Mozambique (ONUMOZ) 1992 Military Observers; Rwanda (UNAMIR) 1993, Battalion operations; Gambia (NATAG) 1993, Training Team; Aouzo Strip (UNASOG) 1994, Military Observers; Israel (UNTSO) 1995, Sierra Leone - UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL);

UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL); AU/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID); UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, UNOCI (UN Peacekeeping, 2013) and African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA).

A vital observation that needs emphasis here is that Nigeria's involvement in PSOs have been under the UN auspices while some others have been based on then OAU, the AU, and under ECOWAS. ECOWAS was subsequently established in 1975 for the coordination and promotion of trade, cooperation and sustainable development all through West Africa. The signed Lagos ECOWAS Treaty of 28th May1975, was in fact a sort of ultra-reaction to poverty and underdevelopment tormenting the sub-region. Therefore, it basically gave West Africa the much-wanted structure for the actualization of socio-political and economic development that is rapid and sustainable. Until very recently, ECOWAS was made up of the following member states: Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Republic of Togo. Currently, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Niger are having issues with their membership of the regional union.

2. The Case of Liberia

In 1989, internal power play between late President Samuel Doe of Liberia and Charles Taylor of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) put the nation in crises. The extent of this conflict resulted in devastating effects as it spread to Sierra Leone, neighbouring countries accompanied with enormous destruction of life and properties. While seeking resolution of the civil conflict in Liberia, the Banjul summit in The Gambia, ECOWAS set up the Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) following recommendation of General Ibrahim Babangida (then Nigeria's military Head of State) as a sub-regional strategy to resolve disputes and conflict scenarios in the sub-region.

It was also to investigate disputes and conflicts between states which disruptively affect life's normalcy inside member states and smooth community operations (Jemirade 2021, Nwachukwu 1991). This specially established committee was given the task of mediating to resolve the conflict in Liberia. The besieged president of Liberia, Samuel Doe, asked for ECOWAS' deployment of peacekeeping intervention force into Liberia to counter the expanding crises and unease thus guarantee a peaceful atmosphere for transition (Francis 2001).

ECOMOG was therefore formally established when the ECOWAS Authority at a community extra-session in August, 1990 decided to accept the agitated Liberia's president request. In response to this, the ECOWAS deployed peace support operation using ECOMOG to curb the situation. The ECOMOG mandate, be that as it may, was structured in the manner of orthodox peacekeeping or First-Generation peacekeeping, where peacekeepers are sent as indifferent force, interpositioned between two factions at war, in form of a strategy to build confidence and forestall regress into more conflict. In any case, the Liberian conflict was a complicated politica1 crisis with various parties battling to cease charge of a fallen state where most fundamental state actions and governing bodies were not carried out.

In such an intricate conflict situation such as that of Liberia, no peace was present to maintain, cease-fire monitoring and consent of major warring factions, the NPFL were absent, when intervening force, ECOMOG peacekeepers arrived in August 1990, since there was no viable constituted government to grant consent. Hence, traditional peacekeeping was of little or no significance, thus ECOMOG was incapable of filling in as an indifferent interposition force. This resulted in ECOMOG being unavoidably entangled into the conflict (Adibe 1997; Oni 2002, Okolo 1981).

Liberia at the time needed something much the same as the UN Charter Chapter VII peace enforcement mandate due to the complex form of the peacekeeping and PSO difficulties. From 1991-1997, the Liberia ECOWAS Peace Plan prompted the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to be deployed having Chapter VI peacekeeping mandate following joint deployment with ECOMOG, a few peace agreements signings, for example Yamoussoukro (1991), Cotonou (1993) and the Abuja Peace Accords (1995, 1996). These establishments, with ECOWAS, UN and the then OAU guidance resulted to the conducting of 1997 general and presidential elections won by the political party of Charles Taylor. Nigeria's then head of state, General Sani Abacha, rushed to acknowledge the absence of peace if Taylor was not Liberia's president. In spite of the fact that the elections were confirmed by international observers as credible, the truth remains that this peace was enforced which gave up matters regarding justice, reconciliation and basic scores for a 'handy solution' stability and delicate peace.

As at1999, Liberia's fallible peace disentangled and the circumstance was worsened with the nearby Sierra Leone's violent and bloody civil war. President Taylor pressured to step down on 11th August-2003 through a negotiated political settlement following the military assaults by anti-Taylor forces like Liberian United for Reconstruction and Development (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and overbearing pressures on Taylor internationally by the USA, ECOWAS, and other major players. A formed transitional government and Taylor's exile to Nigeria was mandated by the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, while the UN-backed Special Court issued an

international arrest warrant due to war-crime charges in Sierra Leone. Charles Taylor was indicted in June, 2003 on charges of serious crimes. On 26 April 2012, Taylor was found guilty of all eleven counts and a penalty of 50 years in prison.

After President Taylor's exit, US Marines and ECOMIL contingent troops were deployed for stability of the security situation on ground. With better on the ground security situation, the UNSC adopted Resolution1509 establishing a 15,000 strong UN force in Liberia (UNMIL) with a Chapter VII mandate to enforce peace. The enormous mandate was formed in acknowledgement of the complicated political crisis scene in Liberia and the multifarious form of peacekeeping difficulties in Liberia after the war (Olawale, 2015).

2.1. Confronting Challenges for Peace Support Operations in Liberia

Nigeria's peacekeepers faced an array of formidable challenges during their mission in Liberia (Azgaku 2015). Liberia's conflict was characterized by numerous warring factions, shifting alliances, and a blurred distinction between combatants and civilians. Nigerian troops found themselves in the midst of a volatile and multifaceted conflict.

Liberia's infrastructure had been decimated by years of war, making it immensely challenging to transport supplies and personnel. Maintaining troops, equipment, and supplies in remote areas with limited infrastructure was a persistent challenge.

The financial burden of contributing to the Liberia missions strained Nigeria's resources. Despite these obstacles, Nigeria remained resolute in its commitment to peace (Dauda et al. 2017).

2.2. Achievements and Contributions

Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts in Liberia yielded a range of significant achievements. The Nigerian troops, alongside other ECOMOG forces, played a pivotal role in stabilizing Liberia. Their presence in conflict-ridden areas instilled a sense of security among the populace and facilitated the delivery of humanitarian aid (Francis, 2006). Nigerian peacekeepers played a crucial part in the disarmament and demobilization of warring factions. They played a pivotal role in collecting and destroying weapons, paving the way for a more peaceful transition.

Nigeria actively supported the peace process and the conduct of democratic elections. The 2005 elections marked a turning point in Liberia's history, with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf becoming the nation's first female president. Nigerian troops also participated in efforts to rebuild Liberia's infrastructure and institutions. Their focus encompassed education, healthcare, and public administration, all of which were essential for the nation's post-conflict recovery (Aning, 199).

2.3. Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts in Liberia had a profound and lasting impact

A Model for African Peacekeeping: Nigeria's commitment to peace in Liberia served as a positive example for other African nations. It demonstrated that African countries could come together to effectively address regional conflicts.

Diplomatic and Soft Power: Nigeria's leadership in the peace process elevated its diplomatic and soft power status in the region and globally. The nation's reputation as a peacemaker and mediator was significantly enhanced.

Legacy of Stability: Liberia, once ravaged by civil war, has made remarkable progress towards stability and development. While challenges persist, Nigeria's contributions played a pivotal role in this positive transformation (Adedeji 2023, Adeleke 1995, Francis 2006).

3. Conclusion

The study submitted Nigeria's deployment for PSO should be strategic just as the French was in Mali because they wanted access to the Uranium mines of the Sahara. Nigeria, therefore, should continue to engage in PSOs, but must be focused on what she wants to achieve in the intervention as anything less would mean a waste of military personnel, time and other valuable resources.

Empirical analysis also revealed that Nigeria as a top country of ECOWAS membership, who has participated in the conflict resolution of the numerous crises troubling ECOWAS region and Africa at large, should leave trails of her local industries, and commercial presence as a way to further her national interest in post conflict resolution period.

Recommendations

That Nigeria's engagement in PSO must be a strategic alliance whose end results must justify the expensive sacrifices in both human and financial terms that the nation deployed in resources. Such that before engaging PSO resources, the policies and benefits must be clearly spelt out in terms and consensus reached.

That the exit strategies and the post-conflict relationships must also pave way to a full recovery (in the least) of the investments made in the intervention. As no country engages in a PSO without a reason. It is in this regard that advanced economies send troops for specific and strategic reasons and interests.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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