

## Nigeria's role in UN peace-keeping missions

Hadiza Mali Bukar, Bulus James Ngada

Department of Political Science and Administration, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Yobe State University, Damaturu.,

Department of Political Science and Administration Yobe State University

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**Abstract** – It is an established fact that Nigeria is a constant participant of countries for UN peace-keeping missions. From existing statistics, the country has participated in not less than thirty-eight peace-keeping missions since it attained independent in 1960. Twenty-nine of these missions are carried out under the United Nations, three under the OAU/AU and ECOWAS, two under bilateral agreement and one, which is presently going on in Darfur and Mali under a joint UN/AU arrangement. Since the end of the cold war in November 1990, the situation of peace-keeping missions has undergone remarkable changes, in the high-tech environment of the 21st century. This bringing into focus Nigeria's roles in UN peace-keeping missions; been the major key players in global peace-keeping missions. This paper is therefore attempted a critical analysis of Nigeria's role in UN peace-keeping missions, which she remain as an effective role-player in sustaining global peace. Among the role highlighted in the paper, which are by no means exhaustive are: finding ways of addressing Africa's conflicts under-representation in the UN Security Council, to ensure that Africa's interest is not compromised in any peace-keeping missions; improving Africa's domestic capacity to manage African conflicts through an integrated conflict management system, in order to minimise the frequent resort to prolonged peace-keeping missions for which Africa is unprepared to effectively handle; and promoting the culture of democratic governance in Africa to reduce the incidents of violent conflicts in the continent. The paper recommended that to sustain Nigeria in peace-keeping missions she should enlisted to enjoy the permanent member in the UN Security Council.

**Keywords:** United Nation, Peace-keeping, Security and International Community.

### Introduction

When the world through the United Nations established its first peace-keeping mission in 1948 following the Arab-Israeli hostilities in the Middle East, the operation was tagged United Nations ceasefire Supervision Organisation. Part of its function was to monitor the peace agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours through its "military observers" after the cessation of hostilities (United Nation, 1990:15). When in 1956 the world body undertook the first peace-keeping operation in Africa in response to the Suez Crisis, which was fuelled by the attempted tripartite incursion of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel, the mission was called "UN Emergency Force". Nigeria mission was to secure and supervise, howbeit, to end the hostilities and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Egyptian territory. When in July 1960 the UN embarked upon yet another peace-keeping mission in Africa, this time in the Congo (now Democratic Republic of Congo), the mission was simply called United Nations Operation in the Congo. The Congo operation has remained the largest peace-keeping operation the world body has been involved in. The multi-purpose force that was put together for the missions in Congo had an important civilian operations component. The mission was to provide the Congolese Government with the military and technical assistance it required following the collapse of many essential services and the military involvement by Belgian troops (Ibid. 1990:215).

In 2009, Nigeria under auspices of the international community's had undertaken 63 peace-keeping missions of various types and with various labels, with 16 operations on-going. These include the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) 1949; United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM) 1963-64; United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) 1978; United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP); United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) 1989; United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia (UNTAG) 1989-1990; UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) 1999; and UN Transition Authority in East Timor (UNTAET) 2000(Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2009:4). These various missions depict the range of activities that now constitute what has conventionally been labelled as peace-keeping mission.

Conventionally, the goal of peace-keeping was primarily restricted to maintaining ceasefires, separation of combatants and armistice monitoring. In fact, the UN defined peacekeeping as "a ways to help countries frayed by conflict create conditions for sustainable peace" (United Nation, 1990:15). Hence specifically, the mission of peacekeepers is to monitor and observe peace processes in post-conflict areas and aid ex-combatants in implementing the peace agreements they may have signed. Nowadays, peace-keeping missions involves a whole range of activities, which include not only maintaining ceasefire and related activities, but also peace-making, peace enforcement, human rights monitoring, rehabilitation of displaced persons,

humanitarian and relief supplies, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and helping to build sustainable institutions of governance, among others. Because of the varied activities now involved, the Nigeria peace-keeping mission, as traditionally conceived, has ceased to be an adequate concept for describing the quantum of activities involved in these operations. It is by way of finding a more encompassing term to capture peace-keeping mission. This encompasses peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace building operations and its basic element as its mandate to maintain peace and safeguard human existence and rights (Joint Warfare Publication 3-50:1-1). The Nigeria roles are more of military and civil-military relations, field services units, and humanitarian support. The Nigeria history of peace-keeping missions since 1948 when the UN first took place shows that it has had tremendous impact in saving lives, reducing human suffering as well as restored and maintained international peace and security (International Alert 2002:1).

So what exactly do we mean when we talk about peace-keeping mission? How is it different from the traditional peace-keeping operation? What is the extent and nature of Nigeria's involvement in peace-keeping missions? What are Nigeria's role peace-keeping missions? These are among the question that will be examined in this paper, with the aim of raising a number of tangible issues to provoke fruitful analysis.

### **Understanding Peace-Keeping Mission**

Peace-keeping missions can be regarded as an alternative term for peace-support operation, which has gained much relevance in recent time literature, especially since the mid-1990s. Notwithstanding this prevalence, no serious attempt has been made to specifically define the concept or try to distinguish it from the conventional peace-support operation. It seems there is very little to distinguish between the two terms other than to say that peace-keeping mission is an extended form of peace-support operation, embracing a mix of activities applied by a neutral third-party in its intervention in violent conflicts involving the separation of the warring parties. The idea is to create an encouraging atmosphere for the parties to resolve their differences by peaceful means. Although some authors tend to use the two terms interchangeably, peace-keeping mission is a broader form of conventional peace-support operation. Perhaps the point to stress is that as it responds to the demands of different conflicts and of a constantly changing political setting, conventional peace-keeping mission understandably witnessed substantial spreading out activities to sustained global peace.

By way of giving a working definition of the term here, we can see peace-keeping missions as an initiative by international body, a State or group of States to facilitate disengagement between parties involved in hostilities and lay the foundation for a sustainable peace between them. These activities form part of a peace-support operation now include assisting and encouraging parties involved in hostilities to negotiate and arrange ceasefires; armistice verification and monitoring; troop disengagement and withdrawals; creation of a shield zone between the parties and investigation of violations of ceasefire lines. It also includes peace-making, peace enforcement, human rights monitoring, rehabilitation of displaced persons, humanitarian and relief supplies, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, as well as helping to build sustainable institutions of governance. In this regard, our use of conventional peace-keeping mission in this study incorporates peace-support operations and all the other activities highlighted above.

Thus talking about Nigeria's participation rather role in peace-keeping mission in this study would be broad and not limited to those missions that have been carried out within the new strategic context

It is important to point out that the UN has sustained to use the term peace-keeping mission even though it recognises the fact that the concept now has many faces. Apart from military personnel, many of these missions now have administrators and economists, police officers and legal experts, de-miners and electoral observers, human rights monitors and specialists in civil affairs and governance, humanitarian workers and experts in communications and public information.

### **Nigeria's Role in Peace-Keeping Missions**

Nigeria has been an outstanding role player in continental peace-keeping mission. Among African States that have participated in peace-keeping mission, Nigeria position first in terms of the number of mission the country has been involved in. The country is also among the top bracket in global ranking; second only to India (Imobighe, 2005:370-371). Of the close to 130 that have contributed military and civilian police personnel to UN peacekeeping missions, Nigeria is among the 10 main troop contributing countries.

It could be seen that Nigeria's contribution in peace-keeping missions began soon after the country's independence. Apparently due to the excellent performance of its contingents in these missions, the country became a preferred candidate in the selection of countries to provide troops for UN operations. Thus within the first three and half decades of its independence, Nigeria had not only participated in numerous peace-keeping missions, but had also produced eleven "Force Commanders" in the process (Ogomudia, 1997:113). Fortunately, Nigeria's role in the various peace-keeping missions is commendable (Gbor, 2004: 227).

Nigeria has been in peacekeeping even before independence when the Nigerian Regiment which was to become the Nigerian Army was deployed to Ghana to contain a widespread disturbance by the Ex-Service Union in Accra. Then at independence,

Nigeria played very prominent role in peace-keeping mission both at international level and particularly in the sub-region of West Africa.

In all these missions, Nigeria's input has either been in full or at observer level (Adesina, 2004). With Nigeria's admission into the UN, her contributions to Peacekeeping began formally during the First Republic. Between her experience in the Congo peacekeeping operations in the early 1960s up till the year 2007, Nigeria's Armed Forces kept peace in over thirty (30) states of the globe and in twenty-five (25) out of fifty-one (51) UN peacekeeping efforts to maintain world peace and security (Ogomudia, 2007: 258).

At the Africa level, Nigeria was part of the only peacekeeping mission organized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) to Chad between 1981 and 1982. At the sub-regional level, Nigeria has participated in peacekeeping in Liberia under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This effort led to the formation of the ECOWAS monitoring group (ECOMOG) which maintained and later enforced peace in Liberia between 1990 and 1997 (Ogomudia, 2007:258). Under the sponsorship of the UN however, Nigerian contingents were deployed to Congo (ONUC) in 1960-64, Lebanon in 1978-82, Iraq-Iran (UNIMOG) in 1988-91, Iraq-Kuwait (UNIKOM) in 1991-till date, Angola (UNAVEM) in 1991-95, Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) in 1992-96, Somalia (UNOSOM) in 1993-95, and Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999. At a bilateral level, Nigeria has been involved in peace missions in friendly nations one of which is Tanzania (Tanganyika) in 1964. On the whole Nigeria, on account of her achievement in Liberia set the framework for subsequent ECOMOG led PSOs in Sierra Leone, and in other trouble spots around the globe such as in Rwanda, Cote D'Ivoire and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (Ogomudia, 2007:259).

At various levels of the different peace-keeping missions, Nigeria sometimes provides the leadership and Military Observers. In terms of manpower, Nigeria at the peak of the Liberian operation deployed over twelve thousand (12,000) officers and men to Liberia in March 1998. In the area of costs, over one hundred million naira was spent in Chad and over nine billion dollars in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Pogoson, 2007:259), for the maintenance of peace and security. In the last fifty years, Nigeria has committed more material and personnel in Africa and beyond towards peace operations than any other African state.

To have a comprehensive view of Nigeria's role in peace-keeping missions the paper reviewed Nigeria experiences in various peace-keeping operations, which encompass selected cases from the four categories of peace-keeping operations in which the country has been involved. In doing so, we shall start with those operations under the UN. This will be followed by the operations under the OAU/AU and ECOWAS.

**The UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC):** This was the first in which Nigeria participated. The operation was in response to the invitation from the Congolese government headed by Patrice Lumumba, following the multiple crises the country was thrown into soon after independence. The army mutiny against their Belgian officers, and the occupation of Congolese cities by Belgian paratroopers was to be compounded by the secessionist bid of mineral-rich Province of Katanga under Moise Tshombe, to throw the country into complete paralysis. The mission of the force was to help establish law and order and oversee the withdrawal of Belgian paratroopers, following the Security Council resolution 143(1960) of July 14, urging the Government of Belgium to withdraw its troops from the territory.

Nigeria was just emerging as an independent country with a relatively small army of five battalions when it took up the challenge of participating in the Congo operation. The country committed all its five battalions to the operation on rotational basis through out the duration of the conflict which started in June 1960 and ended in July 1964. In all, about 5,000 men of the Nigerian Army and some units of the country's Police participated in the operations. The Nigerian contingents, both military and Police, performed creditably well and earned a well-deserved commendation from the UN Secretary General, It was, no doubt, in recognition of the country's contribution that Major-General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi was appointed Force Commander; a position he held from January 1964 till the end of the operation.

**The UN Mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL):** This mission was occasioned by the volatile situation in the country, which was brought about by Israel's invasion of Southern Lebanon following a protracted Civil War in that country. The Israeli action was precipitated by the deployment of an "Arab Deterrent Force", made up mainly of Syrian forces. Israel was not comfortable with the prospects of Syrian troop deployment in Southern Lebanon and had to take a pre-emptive action by invading the region (United Nations, 1990:111-112).

Nigeria's input in Lebanon started in 1978 with the deployment of a battalion of 643 officers and men. By the time the country withdrew its forces in January 1983, Nigeria had committed 9 battalions totalling 7,000 men to the mission on rotational basis (Ogomudia, 1997 118-119). The roles played by the country's forces in their areas of deployment were purely conventional peace-keeping related functions, which included manning of check points and observation posts and mounting of patrols.

Generally, Nigeria's contribution in UN peace-keeping missions on some occasions helped some sister African countries in deploying their troops to the theatres of operation. Nigeria is quite comfortable with the peace-keeping missions sponsored by the UN. Nigerian peace-keepers have rendered good account of themselves and performed commendably well to the level of UN resource provisions and the extent to which political wrangling within the UN system permits.

### **Missions under OAU/AU and ECOWAS**

We have decided to discuss Nigeria's role in peace-keeping mission under OAU/AU and ECOWAS. As we shall focus on Nigeria's role and experience with the OAU operation in Chad in 1981/82 and ECOWAS missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

**The Chad Operation, 1981-1982:** All along, the OAU had shied away from mounting a peace-keeping force to support its conflict management activities in the continent. This had affected its ability to handle the crisis in Africa between Somalia and Ethiopian and in East Africa between Ugandan and Tanzania, among others. During the protracted conflicts involving these countries the OAU could not raise any peace-keeping force to supervise and sustain the many ceasefires agreements that were effected. Understandably, many of these conflicts, like the one between Uganda and Tanzania, had to be settled on the battlefield (Imobighe, 2003:69-73). Thus when in 1981 Nigeria under OAU Summit in Nairobi decided to mount the Chad peace-keeping mission, with positive posture towards mounting peace in the region.

Before, then OAU was still ill-prepared to mount a peace-keeping operation. Events happening in Chad became too compelling for the OAU to continue to stay aloof. After many years of protracted civil war in Chad and unsuccessful attempts at peace settlements, the OAU had to back the Nigerian initiative, which in August 1979 finally led to the signing of a peace accord in Lagos by all the factions in Chad, numbering about eleven, setting up a Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT). Under the accord, Goukouni Weddeye was to serve as President, Lt. Col. Kamougue as Vice President and Hissene Habré as Defence Minister. The transitional government was inaugurated on November 11, 1979; but it did not last as Hissene Habré soon broke out from the arrangement and took up arms against the government. Weddeye first approached Nigeria for help without success before going to Libya, where he got immediate response that enabled him to deal with the situation.

Libya's intervention helped to consolidate the Nigeria -backed settlement in Chad. The announcement in January 1981 of a merger plan between the two countries (Chad and Libya) provoked negative responses from many quarters both within and outside Africa. Instead of taking necessary measures to help to bring about peace in Chad, the OAU allowed itself to be cajoled from certain quarters into a new project in Chad with the sole aim of getting the Libyans out of Chad. The principal forces behind this anti-Libya project were the United States, Britain and France. The three powers viewed Libya as a Soviet surrogate and were prepared to offer whatever inducement was necessary to get the OAU to raise a force to replace the Libyans. Within the OAU, Egypt, Nigeria and Sudan were among those who collaborated with the anti-Libyan posture of the three Western powers named above. They shared in the fear of Libyan expansionism and hegemonic design in the region or more details, see Thomas A. Imobighe, "The Analysis of Political Issues Raised by OAU (Aminu , 1996: 245-248, Gabumo, 1992; and Gabumo, 1997)

Although the anti-Libyan moves generated a sense of urgency to dispatch a peace-keeping force to Chad, it was obvious that the OAU had neither the funds nor the administrative capacity to undertake such an exercise. Nonetheless, with the promise of resource support by the three Western powers, the OAU took the plunge and embarked on the peace-keeping mission. It was ill-prepared to manage. Nigeria and others rendered some logistic help, which enabled the peacekeeping mission to take off. This is understandable as their objective was limited to getting the Libyans out of Chad. After realising that objective, the fate of the OAU became of little or no concern to them. Rather than help the organisation to succeed in Chad, they preferred to aid Hissene Habré to fight his way back into Chad and seize control of the central government on June 7, 1982.

The consequence of the lack of preparedness for peace-support deployment in Chad by the OAU was that Nigeria's role apart from peace-keeping mission is that it had to face the challenge of bearing the burden of maintaining its troops in Chad through out the period of their stay in Chad as well as those of the other troop-contributing countries.

**The Liberian Operation:** The peace-keeping mission in Liberia is already well documented that one can afford to forgo the details here (Imobighe, 2003:18). The operation, which Nigeria masterminded under ECOWAS, was prompted by a revolt by a alliance of nationalist groups against the government of Samuel Doe. Samuel Doe came to power through a military and later turned himself into a civilian president after a disputed election. His cruel rule led the revolt of a group of nationalist under the umbrella of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia headed by Charles Taylor. The repulsion and depression that visited the civil war which eventually ensued were crying to heaven for intervention prompting Nigeria to take the initiative in mobilising ECOWAS' intervention through the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). One cannot quantify the amount of resources of men and material, including diplomatic, political, economic and military, expended by Nigeria to bring the Liberian crisis to the point of final resolution. And that the success of ECOMOG mission in Liberia depended, to a large extent, on Nigeria's liberal deployment of its resources to service the operation.

There is one important point that must be highlighted in respect of ECOMOG mission in Liberia that accounted for its relative success. This relates to the realisation of the proper boundary of peace-keeping mission. Very often conflict managers misunderstand the proper role of peace-keeping operation in a conflict management system. They see the operation as an end in itself instead of a means to an end. This, until recently, has been a basic limitation in conflict management system, as a result of which some UN peace-support operations have gone on for decades (Imobighe, 2003: xi). The important point to note is that, precisely speaking, the role of peace-keepers is not to resolve conflict, but to stabilise the situation in order to create room for the politicians and diplomats the congenial atmosphere to find a permanent solution to the conflict by resolving the fundamental issues involved. Of course we can raise a new crop of peace-keepers through logical training to combine their peace-keeping role with mediation role. In fact, the present writer has suggested that since international organisation connected with conflict management tends to find the creation of a mediation organ problematic, we should consider training our new crop of personnel for peace-keeping roles in the techniques of integrated conflict management.

The relevant point about the ECOMOG operation in Liberia which Nigeria take the leading role is that ECOWAS member States made good use of the opportunity of ECOMOG presence in Liberia to engage the parties in conflict in series of, even though protracted, negotiations to resolve the fundamental issues in the conflict. Although the process was tedious, they persisted and never gave up and in the end they achieved the desired result.

### **Nigeria under Bilateral Arrangement**

Nigeria has so far been involved in two of this type of operation—in Tanzania in 1964 and in Chad from March to June 1979.

**The Operation in Tanzania:** The Nigerian peace-keeping mission in Tanzania was essentially to help a sister African country in distress, following a mutiny by the country's forces against their European officers, which created general unrest in the country. In reaction to the situation, the government of Tanzania decided to invite British troops to quell the unrest and disperse the affected units. The move was greeted with hatred within the OAU. Rather than perpetuate a colonial situation in the country, the Council of Ministers felt that African States should be given the responsibility of taking care of the situation. They therefore suggested to the Tanzanian government that Algeria, Ethiopia and Nigeria should be approached to send battalions to replace the British troops, which the country accepted. Nigeria was the first to send troops for a six-month tenure (April-September, 1964) before the other two countries were to take their turns. Nigeria sent its 3rd Battalion made up of 24 officers and 533 soldiers. Apart from helping in establishing law and order, the troops were to draw up a training programme and help to build an entirely new Army for the country. The troops did so well that at the end of their first six-month tour of duty, the Tanzania government did not see the need to replace them with battalions from the other two countries as originally planned. This mission laid the foundation of the special relationship between the armed forces of the two countries that has existed up till date.

**Nigeria in Chad peace-keeping mission:** After years of prolonged civil unrest in Chad dating back to the creation of Front National de Libération du Tchad (FROLINAT) in 1966, Nigeria, in alliance with the other neighbouring countries of Chad, succeeded in bringing four of the leading factions in the Chadian civil war to the negotiating table. At the end of the meeting, which took place in Kano, a peace accord was signed by the leaders of the four nationalist factions on March 16, 1979. The peace agreement known as the Kano Accord made provision, among others, for a general ceasefire; a general amnesty for political prisoners and war prisoners; demilitarisation of N'djamena, the Chadian capital, to a radius of 100 kilometres; establishment of a transitional government of national unity to prepare a programme leading to the installation of a freely elected government; and the establishment of a neutral peace-keeping force to be provided by Nigeria.

So in accomplishment of its contract under the Kano Accord, Nigeria moved about 800 officers and men into Chad late in March 1979. The troops tried in bringing about law and order around the capital city. It could not do much in esteem of the task of ensuring free movement of people through out Chad, understandably, because of the enormity of the territory. The limited success of the nonaligned forces incurred the covetousness of the French forces that saw Nigerian troops succeeding where they had failed in the maintenance of law and order. Also not happy with neutral force were the Chadian factions who felt excluded from the main stream of the political process. The two groups succeeded in blackmailing the neutral force before the Chadian locals as an occupation force. And on June 4-5, 1979, Nigeria withdrew the troops from Chad, while the peace process masterminded by Nigeria moved into its second phase, that is, the OAU phase that was earlier discussed.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is observed that foreign owed debts are a serious threat to global peace and security. It is thus recommended that these debts owed by the third world be written-off for an enhanced global peace.

Of particular importance and further support of Nigeria in global peace there is a need to restructure the United Nation Security Council member, where permanent representation should be reviewed to include every region of the globe.

Nigeria has shown interest in the peace of the world through her participation in Peace-keeping missions, hence it is recommended that she be given a permanent seat on the Security Council of the UN as Africa's representative to strengthen her efforts.

### Conclusion

The persistence armed conflict through various avenues indicates that military power is an essential component of managing security. In many States, the military is a major tool for the pursuit of Foreign Policy as it provides a background of assurance and stability for conduct of diplomacy. Hence the international system is constrained to respond by generating a variety of strategies for protecting world peace and security. One of such means is through the efforts international organizations. I.e. the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in there different efforts put resources together to secure global peace. There have been efforts also at the levels of international law and the State. Howbeit, under these auspices Nigeria became relevant.

For decades, Nigeria's military besides others, had participated in peace-keeping mission to secure both continental and the globe from affliction of war. Nigeria under the sponsorship of the UN, the AU and the ECOWAS and on a few occasions under bilateral arrangements sought to achieve some important elements of her foreign policy objectives. These include the protection of Nigeria's national interest, the promotion of friendship and cooperation among states and the maintenance of international peace and security.

Finally, Nigeria has remained an active participant in Peace-keeping missions in the globe and as part of its strategy to sustained regional peace she ought to guarantee and remain relevant in the continental affairs.

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