

Nigeria's prospects and challenges for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

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Abstract – At the end of world war 11, the United Nations was born with big five organs; such as Security Council which is the most powerful organ of the UN. But from 1955, there had been an increases demand for change of the UN Security Council which is regarded by many as a prominent exclusive club. The paper argued that the disregard for the principle of equity, justice, and fair play of United Nation incapacitate Nigeria interest for permanent seat statue in the United Nation Security Council; despite her role in 1945 World War 1 (WW1) and after the World War 11(WW11). At independence, Nigeria joined the international machinery for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts under UN status quo. Since 1960 to date Nigeria had participated in over 50% of all UN, AU, ECOWAS and other bilateral security Operations. In all these operations, Nigeria has made enormous sacrifices to ensure global peace to gain international relevant as means of securing permanent seat at the UN Security Council. This Military professionalism has placed Nigerian military above their counterparts in the region. Howbeit, the paper unraveled the proposal to make UN more democratic and more representative of diverse people of the world. In the light of Africa contribution to global security especially effort of Nigeria, the paper is set to give Nigeria a permanent seat as indicated for, while taking a holistic view of Nigeria's prospects for a permanent seat on the UNSC, also analyzing the challenges confronting Nigeria hope in obtaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. The paper recommended that Africa should strongly support Nigeria bid for permanent seat.

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

Introduction

The United Nations has been described as a vast and striking theatre of conflict, interests, contest of values, and mutual aid in search of solutions to common problems (Akindele, 1999:17). Given the potentially lawless nature of the global society in which it operates and the independent equality of its major and dominant State actors, the UN is arguably the most sophisticated political technology mankind ever constructed and developed to maintain international peace and security. But member-states of the organization have various perceptions of it. The few powerful States which designed it from time memorial to shown a determination to preserve the status quo, which historically has been in their favor, the vast majority of member-states, largely concentrated in the southern hemisphere.

As far as Nigeria is concerned, the importance of the UN has never been in doubt. The seemingly high profile of the global body in the conduct of the country's diplomacy is premised on the principle of multilateralism to which the Nigerian state has in the past attached great significance. Being a weak state with an underdeveloped economy, Nigerian decision makers held the belief that the best guarantee for the country to protect its independence and sovereignty was to identify with other countries under the platform of multilateral organization.

We acknowledged that in any State the military is a major tool for the pursuit of Foreign Policy (FP) as it provides a background of assurance and stability for conduct of diplomacy. Hence the international system is compelled to respond by generating a variety of strategies for protecting world peace and security. One such means is through international organizations: the Concert of Europe, the League of Nations, the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are some of the efforts aimed at securing the global peace. There have been efforts also at the levels of international law and the State. At these levels Nigeria has become relevant regarding her role in global peace.

For about six decades, Nigeria's military besides others, has kept the peace and secured the globe from another scourge of war. Nigeria under the auspices of the UN, the AU and the ECOWAS and on a few occasions under bilateral arrangements sought to achieve some important elements of her FP 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.

Fortunately, Nigeria's role in the various peace keeping is in line with her quest for permanent seat in Security Council (Gbor, 2004: 227).

Nigeria's prospects for a permanent seat on the UNSC was base on her role peacekeeping operations even before independence, when the Nigerian Army was deployed to Ghana to contain a widespread disturbance by the Ex-Service Union in Accra in March 1948 (Gbor, Ed al). Then and at independence, Nigeria played very prominent role both at international level and particularly in the sub-region of West Africa. In all these operations, Nigeria's participation has either been in full or at observer level (Adesina, 2004). With Nigeria's admission into the UN, 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 continental level, Nigeria was part of the only peacekeeping operation 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 auspices 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-till date. 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 operations, Nigeria sometimes provides the leadership in terms of Peacekeeping Force Commanders and Chief 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 global peace; with the hope obtained a permanent seat on the UNSC.

Today, Nigeria is able to play a critical and proactive role in various African conflicts, because it is itself, considered a democracy in good standing. We must now translate our growing stature in Africa into incontrovertible grounds for seeking and gaining a permanent seat in a reformed and expanded United Nations Security Council. But as we attempt to fast track our country into globalization with the promotion of socio-economic development, it is clearly evident that, charity must begin at home. We must meet the aspirations for domestic peace, security and prosperity.

If today there are pockets of agitation, political or otherwise, they can be traced to the real or imagined perception that the leadership has not done its utmost to uplift the people of Nigeria. And when I speak of the leadership, I am by no means referring to the present government, which is just one out of the many that has ruled our country since independence in 1960.

Today, as a nation, we face more challenges than we have known hitherto. Our population has ballooned from 55 million at independence to nearly 130 million. Yet, we are told that in our country, children still go to bed hungry and most families subsist on less than one dollar a day. It will, therefore, not be glib to state that in every household, community and state in this nation, where the top hierarchies of human needs are not being met, we certainly have a problem. In a world awash with affluence, yet mired in poverty and hunger we cannot escape our culpability. This is more so in Nigeria, which once boasted of having agriculture as its primary industry.

But apart from the basic challenges, that confront many nations, new challenges and threats are surfacing daily. Most of these are also trans-boundary and therefore, have consequences in how we interact with other nations. Whereas the older threats ranged from the fight against poverty and disease and conflicts between states, today we face pandemics of enormous proportion like HIV-AIDS and terrorism which might become a scourge if unchecked and even growing religious intolerance. It will certainly affect Nigeria prospect towards obtaining permanent seat in the united nation security council.

Nigeria and the un security council

The changes in the contemporary international system (the UN inclusive) no doubt have created both positive and negative impacts on the system. Such changes as the unification of East and West Germany, the defeat of Iraq by the coalition forces, the inclusion of new members into the UN – North and South Korea, Kosovo etcetera, are pointers to the positive aspects. On the other hand, the wanton rise in ethnic nationalism resulting in conflicts, internally displaced persons, refugee problems, poverty and hunger, have created the possibilities for disorder in the international system. These no doubt have created the need for a restructured UNSC. In the past, economic and military might played such important roles in determining the

membership of the UNSC but now factors such as regional representation in a democratizing world as ours must be viewed as crucial and inevitable.

Since its inception, the UN has undergone several structural changes. For instance more independent states (mostly non-European) have joined the UN. This is a departure from its dominance by European states at inception in 1945. The increase in the number of members of UN coming from diverse geo-political regions makes the enlargement of the SC a necessity which also should reflect geo-political representation. The present constitution of the SC is Euro-centric and grossly unrepresentative of the international system. Worse still Africa with its large number representing nearly a quarter (fifty-three states out of one hundred and ninety-two states) of the membership of the UN is not represented on the most powerful organ of the UN. The UNSC is the highest decision making organ and at the same time wields the most authority as it is vested with the power and responsibility to ensure global peace and security - the reason behind the formation of the UN. If so then it will only be fair to have all regions of the world represented on such an organ.

The international system is dynamic hence democracy is daily heralded as the acceptable system of governance. It is expected that the UN system reflects same in its workings. Africa presently is the only continent left out of the SC and this makes the SC slow in responding to Africa's problems. This is similar to the exclusion of the Axis Power from the membership of the League of Nations which led to the Second World War (WW11). It is thus hoped that when the Council is well represented geo-politically, Africa will have an effective voice in the SC and by extension the international arena.

The United States (US) Commission on Improving the Effectiveness of the UN established by the US Congress in 1987 captures the need for equal representation in the UNSC. Thus it called for adequate regional participation in the council. The commission stated in its final report in 1993 that even though reaching a consensus may be difficult on major issues in an expanded council, it still supported the need for a permanent seat for Africa, South East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean Islands. Similarly, the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) also called for an increase in both permanent and non-permanent membership in the Council based on economic and political considerations, regional representation and population. Hence such states as Japan, Germany, Brazil, India and Nigeria should be the first to be considered. This obviously can be understood as their unique contributions in Peace Support Operations and in the funding of the UN are glaring.

Recognizing the increased pressure to reconsider the composition of the SC, the UN in 1992 put up the issue for deliberation in the GA (Resolution 47/62). Later on in September 2003 the then Secretary General (SG) Kofi Annan announced to the General Assembly his appointment of a High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to identify what the key threats were to international peace and security and make recommendations towards the reform of the UN. The Panel's report, "A More Secured World: Our Shared Responsibility" was issued in December 2004 (Weiss, 2005). The Panel suggested ways in which to improve the Security Council including a two-tier structure with six additional permanent seats and three elected seats. This panel's recommendations which to the eyes of many are laudable have not seen the light of day.

Nigeria is thus recommended in this research to represent Africa on the SC. The reasons for this are not far fetched. Nigeria because of her location on the continent is the only African state that can be said to be truly African. Other suggested states are at the far ends of the continent and are either affiliates of Europe or the Middle East. Another reason put forward for Nigeria is as the saying goes, in every four blacks seen any where in the world, one is a Nigerian. This by implication means that Nigeria has a large population and going by the reasons recommended by the NAM, Nigeria qualifies to have a seat on the UNSC. Again the active participation of Nigeria in Peace Support Operations as discussed above makes strong reason for its permanent membership on the SC. Nigeria's large mineral endowments particularly its being a major producer of crude makes it the more relevant on the UNSC. For these reasons and perhaps more, Nigeria qualifies most in Africa to have a seat on the UNSC.

Nigeria's prospects for a permanent seat

In spite of the indisputably and remarkable records of these two countries Nigeria and Egypt, supporters of the Nigerian bid have gone ahead to submit that Nigeria's bid is unquestionable. First, of the three nations under consideration, Nigeria is the most representative of the black race. With complete black population of over 120 million people, it qualifies to be treated as the real black man's country because for every four black persons anywhere in the world, one of them is a Nigerian. This statistic, they contend, is very important if the black race is being considered for representation in the multi-racial global body (Ikhariale, 2002:35). Although Egypt is on the African continent, it is more ideologically identified with the Arab World than with Africa they profess. As for South Africa, It is contended that the country is not racially a pure African society since it is composed of blacks, white and Indians - the so-called rainbow nation.

Secondly, Nigeria is deemed to be ahead of the other contending nations because it has been fully tested in the responsibility and effective discharge of international obligations in the key areas of peace-keeping and peace-enforcement - two critical areas in which the Security Council had been very active. On this score, even the UN records confirm that Nigeria has acquitted itself very well (Gambari, 1997:9).

Lastly, Nigeria is considered the ideal African candidate for a permanent seat at the Security Council because, in addition to the points already highlighted, the country is strategically located almost at the middle of Africa; Egypt is too northerly to be effective in responding to a truly African situation, while South Africa, developed as it may be, is too southerly to effectively respond to many possible core African crises. From this abundantly strategic perspective therefore, none of these other countries is considered to enjoy the near equidistance to the "four corners" of the African continent which Nigeria does (Ikhariale, 2002:36).

Challenges to Nigeria's Quest for a Permanent seat on the UNSC

Successive Nigerian leaders by virtue of Nigeria's foreign policy stand, her size, population and natural resources, have demonstrated the Will to lead Africa particularly in the area of permanent seat on the UNSC. Nigeria has gained international acceptance in playing prominent roles in global peace. This has added to Nigeria's ability to participate more in Peace operations and thereby contribute to the over-all security of the globe. General Babangida in Onoja (1996) sums it thus: "Nigeria has evolved to the point of acceptance of the fact and reality that the conduct of our international relations and foreign policy may at times involve certain contractual military and obligations beyond our borders."

The possession of a virile economy, political will, the availability of manpower, and the support for Nigeria's role by Nigerians are some of the factors responsible for her level of preparedness. Apart from this, Nigeria government still has some challenges threaten her hope of obtaining permanent seat in the Security Council.

This includes leadership challenges. Howbeit, Nigeria live in an inextricably interrelated and co-dependent world, this becomes a fact of life, that our domestic challenges are intertwined in one form of the other with our external relations. We recall that many years ago one of our leaders said, almost prophetically, that the reflection of peace in African continent is possible with the exclusion of Nigeria. These realities have huge costs for us as a people. It also has enormous impact on how we handle our own domestic affairs and the resources we devote to our domestic and foreign policy. This has posed us serious challenge to meet UN condition for permanent seat. We must now translate our growing stature in Africa into incontrovertible grounds for seeking and gaining a permanent seat in a reformed and expanded United Nations Security Council.

The challenge of terrorism (Boko Haram Insurgency) in Nigeria poses threat to her quest for permanent seat. But as we attempt to fast track our country into globalization with the promotion of political and socio-economic development, it is clearly evident that, charity must begin at home. We must meet the aspirations for domestic peace, security and prosperity.

It appears to have been a consensus awaiting reorganization of the permanent seat of the UN Security Council reserved for Africa in the expansion of Security Council. Again, very constantly Egypt and South Africa have been touted as countries that may challenge Nigeria for the seat. To be sure, whether in terms of geopolitics, regional international politics and issues of stability and conflict, or size of population and culture, Egypt remains an important Arab and African state. It also shares with Iran, Israel and Turkey for many of the same reasons, the characterization of being one of the four most important countries in the entire Middle East including North Africa. Egypt until 1991 was the key hegemonic state in the international relations of the Middle East. It is the self identified chief peace-maker, and on occasions, chief war maker in the region. It was Egypt, for example, which crafted the unexpected Arab alliance against Iraq in 1991. It has 300,000 military combat and powerful in terms of size and quality of armed forces as well as its population size (Cantori, 2002:229). We acknowledged that Egypt had a strong voice in the GAU (AU). It was Egypt, for example, that prejudiced the diplomatic isolation of Israel in Africa, following the 1973 Arab-Israel war.

South Africa's qualifications are also quite remarkable. It is indisputably the regional hegemonic power in the South African sub-region; and secondly, it had an incredible economic performance relative to other African nations. But perhaps, its greatest strength can be located in the fascinating personality of its previous leader, Nelson Mandela. It is well-recognized that it will be difficult for any country to resist a lobby anchored by the legendary.

Recommendations

1. 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.
2. Of particular importance is the need to restructure the UNSC. Permanent representation should be reviewed to include every region of the globe.
3. Nigeria has shown interest in the peace of the world through her participation in Peace Support Operations, hence it is recommended that she should be given a permanent seat on the SC of the UN as Africa's representative.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the insecurity challenges faced in UN in Africa when compared with Europe and America can be attributed to the lack of Africa's representation on the UNSC. This perhaps explains the conflict of interest and lack of consensus between the members of the Security Council and the third world. This may be seen as the basic threat to global peace and security. The legitimacy of the Security Council is debated by the third world whose interest is hardly represented. When there is acceptance and consensus over views in the international system, where no region or group are aggrieved Peace keeping Operations will become less stressful and global peace can then be better sustained.

Finally, Nigeria has remained an active participant in Peace Operations in the globe and as part of its strategy as a leading regional power she must ensure stability first and foremost within and must be adequately prepared for the challenges of Peace in order to remain relevant and secured permanent seat in the UN security Council.

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