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## NIGERIA AND THE PROBLEMS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

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With a population of over 150 million people and a tag of the most populous black nation in the world, Nigeria has always seen itself as the big brother of Africa; the key principles guiding the conduct of its foreign policy equally reflect this stand. Nigeria strongly believes in the indivisibility of peace, that a threat to peace anywhere in Africa is a threat to peace everywhere on the continent. By extension, Africa at war and in distress is also a threat to world peace and security.

**Key words:** Nigeria and Africa, peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention, peace and security, West African region, Nigeria's security role, Nigeria and UN, AU and ECOWAS.

A conglomeration of numerous and diverse ethnicities, Nigeria attained the status of a sovereign state on October 1, 1960. Prior to that date, Nigeria was little more than a British appendage in the eyes of international law, with capacity to participate in the direction or orientation of world affairs, or in management of her own relations with other sovereign states, except in so far as such activities were undertaken on her behalf by the colonizing power. Even then, however, Nigeria already possessed all the essential attributes, which together could have marked her out, potentially, as a leading nation in Africa [9. P. 545]. Starting from independent, Nigeria has operated deductive foreign policy, "from particular to common", making West Africa and in extension Africa the cornerstone or centerpiece of its foreign policy, that is to say that West Africa comes first, followed by Africa as a whole before other countries of interest. In this era of globalization in which events and developments are broadcast instantaneously all over the world Nigeria can no longer be ignored.

With its enormous population of 150 million, it's established that one in every four Africans is a Nigerian, with that in mind it is therefore inevitable that Nigeria must, *per force*, be concerned with and engaged in the maintenance of regional peace, security and prosperity in Africa. Regardless of the nature of the Governmental bodies in Nigeria, there is a general consensus that African issues must remain paramount in the country's foreign policy calculations. It is therefore hardly surprising that Nigeria's peacekeeping initiatives in Africa such as the OAU engagements in Chad between 1979 and early 80's, and ECOWAS military interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, under Nigeria's leadership throughout the decade of the 1990's, were launched under the military administrations in Nigeria [4. P. 4].

The leadership in Nigeria shows interests in many conflicts in Africa: in Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc. The form of its participation in the settlement of contentious issues including appeal to warring parties, consultations, meetings, and negotiations, in many of such cases Nigeria acted and continues to act as an intermediary. Nigeria is equally constantly visible in Ad Hoc Committees formed within

the UN, AU and ECOWAS to find a lasting resolution to one or many of the conflicts plaguing the continent. If the policy of Nigeria with respect to conflicts, far from its borders, is dictated largely by considerations of prestige, on the contrary, whatever is happening in the West African region is viewed by Nigeria as having a direct effect on its own security problems. Not accidentally, in formulating its policy objectives in West Africa, Nigeria with an annual per capita income of less than \$ 2,750 [7] (2010 estimate) and until 2005, with external debt of more than \$ 30 billion, in the 90-s Nigeria spent billions of dollars on peacekeeping operation. President of Nigeria in Diaspora Organization, NIDO, Namibia chapter, Professor Edosa Omoregie said that Nigeria as a country has spent \$82 million in peacekeeping operations. He noted that Nigeria has lost about 2000 soldiers and more than \$10 billion in the same process in the last five decades. According to him, the history of Nigeria's participation in United Nations/African Union peacekeeping operations dates back to 1960 in what was then called Belgian Congo soon after independence [6]. On his part, the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike, confirming the initial assertion of Professor Edosa Omoregie reiterated that "Nigeria has spent a whopping \$10 billion in the last five decades in her active pursuit of global peace". Sadly, in spite of the laudable and selfless sacrifice, noted the CDS, the country had mostly reaped the pains without getting the full benefits of the gains of her unparalleled investment in regional and global peace and security. This reflects the new thought in the participation of Nigeria in international peacekeeping.

Paul Dike called for an urgent articulation of a national policy on Peace Support Operations (PSOs), including a review of the nation's selfless disposition to UN operations. He said that it is time Nigeria looks at the economic benefits of such operations as "the UN tacitly recognizes or accepts that economic benefit ought to accrue to States contributing to PSOs". This comment from a high ranking officer of the Nigerian defense apparatus expectedly generated lots of interest from watchers of events in Nigeria, some commentators in social networks reacted thus to the said remarks by Paul Dike, "yes we have to stop! We need that money more than anything" [11], "it should be restricted to Sierra Leone and Liberia for now" [10]. While many people seem to agree with the air marshal, the general consensus is that Nigeria should continue to champion peace operations in countries closer to its borders without any serious calculation of economic prospect of such actions.

Most of the West African countries deemed the Liberian crisis as purely internal affair of that country. Nigeria, however, immediately began to take diplomatic steps to prevent escalation of the conflict. At the suggestion of the then head of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Ibrahim Babangida on the ECOWAS summit in Banjul, in May 1990 the organization decided to establish a Mediation Committee of ECOWAS.

ECOWAS was created to checkmate the polarization of the sub-region along its colonial past. Olu Adeniji avers that "the 2 Protocols by which ECOWAS ventured into the field of security arose out of a later realization that for sub-regional economic co-operation, an atmosphere of peace and stability must pervade the area, and that unresolved disputes between member-states could escalate into armed conflicts" [2. P. 38]. The two protocols the author refers to are: (1) Protocol on Non Aggression, 1978, and (2) Agreement Relating to Mutual Assistance in Defense, 1981. These protocols, al-

though never fully ratified “by the required number of states, provided the basis for ECOMOG intervention; first in Liberia and later in Sierra Leone. These interventions had gone to prove that strengthened political relations and co-operation for peace and mutual security are critical components for the required environment for regional co-operation and integration” [2. P. 38]. Article 4 of the Protocol states that “in a conflict between members 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”. This provision clearly concern inter-state conflicts. In fact, Article 18 (2) states that the “community force shall not intervene if the conflict remains purely internal since the essence of the Protocol is to provide for regional security and not to threaten the security of the region”. The proviso was a hangover of the obsession by the immediate post independence African leaders for non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. It did not consider the spill-over effect of conflicts nor was it concerned with the not-too precise demarcation between internal and external conflicts. In the Liberian case, one of the parties that opposed the de facto government raised and trained its forces from outside; was maintaining the troops from outside; and getting external support for the prosecution of the war. Furthermore, the National Patriotic Forces of Liberia drew its strength from one of the transborder tribes and was indeed said to be in alliance with the Revolutionary United Forces of Sierra Leone, which it later went to assist in its own struggle against the government forces of that country. Moreover, several nationalities were trapped by the war in Liberia and their safety was raising tension in many countries. In the light of these facts, it was easy for the protagonist of the intervention to justify their decision, just as the antagonist held on to the non-interference clause.

At its inception, ECOMOG drew forces from only five out of sixteen member states. These are Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. Of the initial 6,000 man force, Nigeria contributed 3,500 and Ghana 2,000 with the others sending in token contingents. Apparently and in order to allay fears of Nigeria’s domineering posture, the position of forces commander was ceded to Ghana, Guinea nominated the Deputy Commander and Nigeria filled the position of Chief of Staff. Later development compelled Nigeria not only to build up its force disproportionately to other contingents but also to take over the command in conformity with military tradition, where the largest contributor of combat forces provides the commander. One main feature of ECOMOG was that rather than the community, it was the participating countries that were to meet the financial burden of the operations. The francophone countries were reluctant to bear the cost, which indeed explained why only Guinea and Mali later participated. Nigeria paid the price including the supreme sacrifice of her 480 troops to bring peace to troubled Liberia.

There is no gainsaying that Nigeria has lived up to expectation where security issues are concerned in Africa, even though its participation is coming at an enormous cost both in terms of human resources and financial expenditure, the largest black nation in the world cannot possibly fold its hand and watch an unfolding conflict that poses all it takes to destabilize the region go on unattended, but like Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike suggested, national interests considerations should start to play a vital role in deciding where, when and how to intervene.

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## НИГЕРИЯ И ПРОБЛЕМА УРЕГУЛИРОВАНИЯ КОНФЛИКТОВ В АФРИКЕ

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С численностью населения свыше 150 млн человек, являясь самой густонаселенной страной в мире, Нигерия всегда рассматривала и рассматривает себя как старшего брата Африки; основные руководящие принципы внешней политики Нигерии отражают эту позицию. Нигерия твердо верит в неделимость мира, в то, что угроза миру, исходящая из любой точки Африки, является общей для всего континента. Нестабильная Африка представляет собой угрозу международному миру и безопасности.

**Ключевые слова:** Нигерия и Африка, поддержание мира, гуманитарная интервенция, мир и безопасность, западноафриканский регион, роль Нигерии в безопасности, Нигерия и ООН, АС и ЭКОВАС.