Nigeria's Peace Keeping Role in Darfur

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Abstract

Foreign policy of any nation serves as a mirror of its domestic reality. It begins with identification and articulation of national interests. It is very important to assert that whatever this nation's interest represents, serves the principal consideration in the formulation and execution of national policies both at domestic and international levels. One of the cardinal points of Nigerian foreign policy is the maintenance of peace and security in Africa .This has enabled her to play an active role in peacemaking and peace keeping in the continent since independence. Nigeria has participated in many peacekeeping and related missions globally. In line with her foreign policy, Darfur is not an exception. Nigeria has not only been a key actor in political efforts to mediate in the Darfur Crisis, but in addition has provided a bulk of her troops to the African-Union-United Nations hybrid peace keeping mission in Darfur.

The conflict in Darfur constituted a threat to Nigeria's security largely because of Darfuri links to neighbouring states which are close to Nigeria. The possibility of the flow of refugees from the conflict area into Nigeria could be a problem. The implication on the security and welfare of Nigerians is an issue that cannot be ignored. The maintenance of peace and security, especially on the continent of Africa, is an abiding interest which Nigeria is committed towards. All the above justify Nigerian involvement in resolving the Darfur crisis. Depending on the precise terms of mandate a key role for peacekeepers is to patrol the grey area zone during the climax of the conflict. But so far the evidence suggests that Nigerian contingent have not been able to effectively handle this aspect. The absence of a national policy on peacekeeping has made it difficult to define the nation's participation with clear political and economic objectives and without an exit option. In view of the issues raised above, it has become necessary to review Nigerian peacekeeping efforts so far, in order to ascertain the benefits and loss. There is no doubt that the Nigerian contingents faced serious challenges in the form of finance, equipment, and mandate which all affected her operation in Darfur. This paper will therefore look into these challenges and the Nigerian contingent's achievement against the backdrop. It will draw the attention of the leadership to the lapse and suggest improvements for the future.

Keywords: Nigeria, peacekeeping, Crisis, Darfur

Introduction

The foreign policy of any nation is a mirror image of its domestic reality. It begins with identification and communication of national interests. It is important to assert that whatever this nation's interests represent become the principal consideration in the formulation and execution of national policies both at the domestic and international levels .It is necessary to situate the general principles of Nigerian foreign policy and to highlight specific provision which enables it to play an active role in peacemaking and peace keeping in the continent since independence.

At the height of the cold war, many Africans persistently called for an African solution to African problems. They blamed their inability to achieve their aim on the pernicious proxy wars of the cold war era that engulfed parts of the African continent. Between 1960 and 1990, eighteen civil wars in Africa resulted in about 7 million deaths and spawned 5 million refugees. Though the then superpower rivalry of the cold war fuelled many African conflicts, their roots were internal: inept political leadership that manipulated ethnicity to favour or suppress particular groups, unresolved differences from colonially inherited artificial borders, weak and unproductive economics, inefficient bureaucracies, unstable or weak institutions and fragile political authority (Zartman 1997).

There is a new urgency among African policymakers in search of an effective mechanism for resolving African conflicts. As Francis Deng stated, "Africans…are recognizing that the world does not care much about them and that they must take their destinies into their own hands" (Kladiagala et al 2001). Coincidence of interests seems to have emerged and years of independence have led to the search to putting in the practice the concept of "Pax Africana" to overcome their inherent weakness. However, African States also constructed their own continental and regional institutions. For Africans and most post colonial states, building alliances is a well tested strategy for weak states in search of peace and security. African states banded together into blocs that would enhance their leverage in world affairs. These institutions became vital in solving problems collectively and in the quest for economic integration. As the most important institution, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was established to give meaning to Africa's collective action in matters of development, liberation and conflict resolution.

These newer institutions could only be as strong or weak as the constituent parts that make them up. This led countries like Nigeria, because of their pivotal role in African affairs, to prod, cajole and in some cases to entice regional states to take things into their own hands, and to work in concert to manage conflict in Africa. Nigeria has been involved in numerous peacekeeping operations all over the trouble spots of the world. In line with her foreign policy, Darfur is no exception.

The trust of this paper is divided into six. These are, Conceptual Clarification, Darfur Crisis, Nigerian and Darfur crisis, Challenges, Conclusion and Recommendation.

Conceptual Clarification

Peace Process

The totality of human experience over the years has shown in practical terms that there can be no societal development and human security without peace. However peace is defined not just as the absence of war and commotion, but also the presence of justice. This explains why Martin Luther King Jr (1968:12) posited that peace has become a value humanity has come to desire greatly. Even if you focus on the France revolution, the Nigerian civil war, the war in Darfur (Sudan), the story is the same and the story is that war and violence "kill" peace, destroy human lives and property, retard the rate of development and divert development resources to war execution (Alexander ,2007:2).

Conflict resolution is a range of methods for alleviating sources of conflict. The term "Conflict resolution" is sometimes used interchangeably with the term dispute resolution or alternative dispute resolution (Bar, 2004:54). Process of conflict resolution includes negotiations, mediation and diplomacy. The process of arbitration, litigation and formal complaint process such as ombudsman processes are usually described with the term dispute resolution, although some refer to them as "conflict resolution". The process of mediation and arbitration are often referred to as alternative dispute resolution. Peace process becomes vital in the process of achieving a sustainable peace in a troubled state.

Peacekeeping

In the view of Kirgis (cited in Fred Agwu 2007:23). "Peacekeeping consists essentially of observer missions and lightly armed forces monitoring ceasefires, operating in an

essentially static mode with the consent of the parties involved. It does not envisage involvement in an ongoing conflict and in some places can be adopted before any conflict breaks out".

Peacekeeping is thus, a peaceful third party intervention which operates with a set of guiding principles that include the consent of the parties to the conflict, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self defence. The conception was adopted by the Brahimi report in its submission that the consent of the parties, impartiality and use of force only in self defence should remain the bedrock principles of peacekeeping (Ibid).

The end of the cold war in 1945 brought a lot of radical change in the number of peacekeeping operations embarked upon by the United Nations. These significant increases in the number of peacekeeping operations were accompanied by a fundamental change in their single function associated with traditional operations. It has evolved into multiplicity of tasks at the same time, the composition of post cold war peacekeeping operations became more diverse and complex: peacekeepers were drawn from a wider variety of occupation (military, civilian, police and diplomatic), nations and cultures (Wibke et al 2004:3). In this instance, contemporary peacekeeping can now be appropriately characterized as multilateral, multidimensional, multinational and multicultural.

Since becoming a member of the UN in 1960, Nigeria has consistently committed itself to the cause of peacekeeping and peacemaking. She sent her first troops to participate in the UN peace mission in the Congo, only days to independence. The key thing in global peacekeeping is the men and women who risk their lives in the interest of peace. Nigeria has more of these people than any other country in the world (The Guardian May 31 2009). It has been Nigeria's belief that socio economic development and integration in Africa can only be attained under an atmosphere of peace and stability.

The implication of Nigeria's participation in peacekeeping in Africa is that African's problem is Nigeria's problem as some of these African countries have a common boundary with Nigeria. Take for example Ghanaians once immigrated to Nigeria during its crisis in 1983 this tasked the purse of the Nigerian Federal government.   These external problems have significant implication on the stability of the country. Nigeria cannot ignore African

problems rather she must maintain the principle of Afrocentrism. This is so because; one out of every five Africans is a Nigerian. In the entire African continent, no national economy has the numerous potentials that the Nigeria economy has strategically, Nigeria has to be involved in crisis management in Africa (Abiola,A.L and Salihu H.A 1998:63-78). The situation in Darfur region of Sudan is a reminder of Nigeria's continued commitment to peace keeping in Africa.

The Darfur Crisis

The Darfur region is in the western part of Sudan. It is a geographically large area comprising approximately 250,000 square kilometres with an estimated population of 6 million. Darfur borders with Libya, Chad and the Central African Republic. Since 1994 the region has been divided administratively into three states of North, South and West Darfur. Like all other states in Sudan, each of the three states in Darfur is headed by a Governor (Wali), appointed by the central government in Khartoum and supported by a local administration. The economy of the three Darfur states is based mainly on subsistence and limited industrial farming, as well as cattle herding.

The crisis in Darfur started in February 2003 when two rebel groups emerged to challenge the national Islamic Front (NIF) Government in Khartoum. The Sudan Liberation Army (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) claim that the government of Sudan discriminates against Moslem African ethnic groups in Darfur and has systematically targeted those ethnic groups since the early 1990s. The Government of Sudan dismisses the SLA and JEM as terrorists'. The conflict pits the three African ethnic groups, the Fur, Zaghasa and Massaleit, against nomadic Arab ethnic groups. The tension between the largely African Muslim ethnic groups and the Arab inhabitants of Darfur can be traced to the 1930s and most recented surfaced in the 1980s. Successive governments in Khartoum have long ignored the African ethnic groups in Darfur and have done very little to prevent or contain attacks by Arab militants against non-Arabs in Darfur. The roots of the conflict in Darfur are complex. In addition to the tribal feuds resulting from desertification and the quest for arable grazing land, the availability of modern weapons, issues relating to identity, governance, and the emergence of armed rebel movements which enjoy popular support amongst certain tribes, played a major role in shaping the crisis.

Non –Arab groups took up arms against successive central governments in Khartoum, albeit unsuccessfully. In the early 1990s the NIF government came to power adopted a policy of "induced social explosion" through the Janjaweed militias to destabilise and contain the uprising in Darfur.

In mid 2003, the government of Sudan increased its presence in Darfur by arming Arab militias, the Janjaweed and by deploying the Popular Defence Force (PDF). The Janjaweed, under the direction of regular government forces reportedly unleashed a campaign of terror against civilians. The Arab militia engaged in what United Nations officials have described as ethnic cleansing of the African ethnic group of Darfur. "Men have been executed, women have been raped, and more than 2000000 people forced into exile in neighbouring countries". In early February 2004, the government launched a major military offensive against the rebel forces and in mid-February 2004, President Omar Bashir, in a nationally televised speech, declared that the security forces had crushed the SLA and JEM and offered amnesty to the rebels.

The forceful expulsion of the mainly African ethnic groups from their homes was done in a deliberate, sequenced and systematic way. There was a total disengagement of administration and suspension of all government services. These included the suspension of most government functions, including payment of salaries to government workers and the abandonment of basic government services, such as healthcare and law enforcement. According to the United Nations, once government officials leave these communities, the people are then accused of being rebel sympathizers and are targeted by government backed militias. The Janjaweed burn villages, loot the properties of non Arabs, abduct children, rape women, and prevent people from returning to their homes.

Nigeria and the Darfur Crisis

The first international involvement was led by the Chadian President who was concerned about the effects of conflict –induced displacement in Chad and who had some standing both with the Government of Sudan, who had helped him achieve power and Zaghawa leaders within the SLA, his own ethnic group. He mediated a 45 –day ceasefire between the GOS and SLM in the Chadian border town of Abeche in September 2003. It is of interest to note that the ceasefire disintegrated and Abeche meetings collapsed as

President Deby blamed the failures on the demands of the SLM and JEM. This assertion severely comprised his credibility as an "honest broker" as the SLM and JEM demanded international observer presence at any further talks. Chad was able to assist with the help of the African Union. A ceasefire agreement allowed humanitarian access in Darfur at the Chadian capital N'djamena in April 2004 between the Government of Sudan and a joint SLM and JEM delegation, as GOS had objected to US, EU and UN participation and eventually compromised on the AU as mediators with international observation talks on humanitarian issues. For the AU, the Darfur crisis was the first test of its constitutive act and its conflict resolution provisions. It took over the mediation started by the Chadian government in April 2004. After the signing of the HCFA, the Assembly of Heads of state and Governments of the African Union (AU) in May 2004 backed the deployment of the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in Darfur to monitor the agreement and bring under control the humanitarian crisis.

The result of the agreement on the 28th of May 2004 led to the dispatch of the Armed Protection Force of about three hundred troops from Rwanda and Nigeria to the western Sudanese region of Darfur. In May and June 2004, it held peace talks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and from August the peace talks continued in Abuja, Nigeria.

The AU summit in Addis Ababa, on July 7, 2004 focused on the Darfur crises. When the issue of Darfur was raised before the AU's peace and security council, it mandated its chair person to prepare a plan for making AMIS more effective. Other issues considered were the need to disarm and neutralise the Janjaweed militias, protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian assistance. More importantly Obasanjo acting in his capacity as African Union Chairperson, appointed former Nigerian Head of State General Abdul-salam Abubakar as his special envoy to Chad and Sudan on the Darfur conflict. The Special envoy visited Darfur for assessment of the humanitarian crisis and the report of the visit was a major catalyst that spurred the AU to intensify efforts for peaceful negotiation (Adeniji, 2004:10). This gesture encouraged dialogue between rebel groups and the central government in Abuja in August 2004 for peace talks. This led to the signing of Abuja Peace agreement and consequently led to Darfur Peace agreement. This showed that Nigeria devoted enormous time, human and material resources to the

Sudanese peace process. With this development, one can posit that, Nigeria stays committed to the peace process through thick and thin more than any other state in the continent.

Nigerian's interest in Darfur

Nigeria was not only a key actor in the political efforts to mediate the crisis but also provided the bulk of troops as well as the former military head of the African Union-United Nations hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur. However, the robust nature of Nigeria's involvement in the mediation requires the identification of Nigeria's national interests with respect to the conflict, especially in view of the fact that Nigerian service men are ready to lay down their lives in the quest for peace in continent. This paper identifies one primary national interest and a number of secondary interests with respect to the Darfur conflict.

Primary National Interest

A country's primary national interest involves state survival and security, as well as the pursuit of wealth, economic growth and power. The conflict in Darfur was seen as a threat to Nigeria's security largely because of its potential to spill over into neighbouring states to Sudan and ultimately into Nigeria. It was said that the government of Chad accuses the janjaweed militia of crossing the border and attacking villagers and refugees from Darfur in eastern Chad. There were reports of the invasion of the Chadian capital of Ndjamena by anti government rebels whose intention was to topple the administration of Idris Deby. The Government of Sudan also accused Chad of providing support for Darfur's National Redemption front rebels and even fixing them into the Chadian army.

In a similar vein the Central African Republic accused Sudan of backing rebels of the Union of Democratic Forces for unity who launch incursions from Darfur and have seized towns in Chad. These development points to the possibility of a spread of the conflict, if it is left unresolved, to the north eastern reaches of Nigeria and a possible destabilation of the region between western Sudan (Darfur) and north –eastern Nigeria. The spread of conflict across international borders could cause a complex security situation of the respective states are interlinked.

The second major area of concern with respect to Nigeria's primary national interest arises from the possibility of the flow of refugees away from the immediate conflict and eventually into Nigeria, and the impact that will have on the security and welfare of Nigerians. It is estimated that the conflict has led to the displacement of approximately 2 million Darfurians, with over 200,000 having sought refuge in chad.With the attacks by Sudanese government forces on Darfurians it is anticipated that the flow of refugees will continue to rise. However, with Nigeria having the most buoyant economy in the continent, it is doubtless the country will eventually become a preferred destination for the Darfur refugees. There are currently Chadian refugees who fled from fighting in Ndjamena, in north-eastern Nigeria.

Secondary Interests

The maintenance of peace and security especially on the continent of Africa, is an abiding interest which Nigeria is signatory such as the United nations charter, the constitutive act of the African Union and the ECOWAS treaty .this has provided the normative and legal basis for Nigeria's leadership of, and contribution towards, several peacekeeping missions at the continental and global levels. The establishment of peace and security provide the necessary foundations for democracy political stability and development which are global values towards which Nigeria is similarly committed. This makes it imperative for Nigerian to be involved in resolving the Darfur crisis.Relatedly, Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat on the United Nation's Security Council is premised upon her contributions towards peacekeeping and conflict resolution in a war ridden continent. She has served as a non permanent member of the Security Council. This makes Nigeria's contribution towards global peace and security through her involvement in the resolution of crises such as that of Darfur an obligation. This will definitely enhance her credentials and improved her future chances of attaining the much coveted permanent UNSC seat. The contribution of Nigeria towards lasting sustainable peace in Darfur Sudan cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria was among the largest troop contingent support to the then African Union mission in Sudan –AMIS (HRW, 2006:52). However, Nigeria's contribution to the crisis in Darfur Region is significant and reasonable, the facts and data on ground reveals that more should have been done. This problem was attributed to the worst

humanitarian disaster and non implementation of peace agreement by Omar Al-Bashir's government was a problem.

Challenges Faced by Nigerian Contingent in Darfur

At the deployment of Nigerian's contingent she faced a remarkably complex operational and political environment as illustrated below:

The Absence of a Peace Support Operations Policy

Nigerian sends contingents without properly articulated and focused goals. This is due to the absence of a vibrant national peace support operation policy. This has resulted to losing resources and personnel, restoring peace, and withdrawing for other nations to enjoy the fruit of their labour. In addition there is no synergy between relevant ministries and agencies for carefully planned peace keeping operations to achieve set objectives. The absence of such a policy, strategic planning became a serious and recurrent   problem. Nigeria contingent encountered a lot of problem in the area of planning for PSO due to the absence of this policy.

Budgetary and Administrative Constraints

Peace keeping operations by their nature are costly affairs. The most important factor on the future of peace keeping in Nigeria is financing. UN standard of operation requires contingents from troop contributing countries to be self sufficient for 60 days, and may require or agree to fund, nationally held in theatre stocks of 30 days. As a result, contingents are expected to deploy with 90 days of stock.

According to Galadima, this does not take into account re-supply pipeline time and if for instance, there is a 14 day ordering, processing and pipeline time corded ship time) from member nation's depots it would be prudent for contingents to deploy with additional stocks to cover the time lag.   The AU experience with its military observer missions have proved to be expensive and could not be financed from the AU peace fund. It had to rely on donor funding to finance its peace missions. It is donor funded and as mentioned earlier on, the EU and USA have contributed to the bulk of the mission's budget. This creates a serious problem in the sense that AU dependency on external funding will not guarantee its freedom and independence on decisions relating to strategic operation and

even tactical aspects of peace operations it may wish to undertake. The reason for the AU depending on donor sponsorship is that the African Union has no effective mechanism for obtaining financial contribution from its members; this has affected the African Union on embarking on complex peace operations on their own.

 The management structure within the AU and those of its field operations have shielded away from delegation and adopted a micro management approach. This is not helpful when it comes to matters that involve peacekeeping operations. The effect of this has resulted to poor planning which has produced ineffective timetables for deployment. The aftermath of this has led to occasional clashes between its civilian and military mindsets of the organisation. Because conditions of deployment were not put into consideration alongside with the necessary numbers needed in field operations, peacekeepers were not able to understand their duties in the field. Parties in the conflict have taken advantage of this weakness.

MANDATE

The issue of clear mandate is another knotty problem, which we are often faced with, particularly in UN operations. The nature and scope of the mandate of a peace support operation to a large extent is a key determinant of its success or failure. The consequential mismatch between response options and the rules of engagement often leaves the troop in a quandary resulting in inaction. The mandate in Darfur generated criticism regarding the N'djamena agreement which was seen as insufficient and did not make adequate provision for the protection of civilians and said it was the duty of the Sudanese government to offer security for the population. It lacked the coercive power to deal with violent militias who were committing crimes against humanity and genocide. Some had rightly observed that AMIS 'protection by presence' strategy had not been effective so far, as protection of vulnerable civilians cannot be guarantee in an event of an escalation of security threat"(ICG 2005). One representative from the non-governmental organisation (NGO) community noted that 'there is a lot of confusion among Sudanese civilians and humanitarian aid organisations about the exact role the of the African Union mission"().

Disappointment with the AU's mandate and performance on the part of both the protection force within AMIS and civilians with regards to violence in the camp has been expressed. One of the Darfur Integrated Task force told Human Rights Watch that "we don't react, we don't go proactively" (Human Rights Watch 2005). AMIS personnel informed one independent assessment team that they want to protect civilians but under the current mandate the task is not practicable" (Ray Suarez 2005). One commander also told Human Rights Watch. "I need a stronger mandate, like a peace enforcement mandate" (Human Rights Watch 2005). An example of this was the situation in Darfur Where Nigerian troops were compelled to work within a framework that is highly inadequate.

Contingent Owned Equipment

COE are standard and specialized equipment prescribed by the UN for deploying contingents to take along to a mission area. Normally the UN reimburses contingents for the cost of such equipment and pays an agreed amount for their use. At the end of the mission, the equipment remains the property of the contributing country. In a situation when the equipment does not meet the standard prescribed in the MOU with the UN, the organization will not pay. We lost a lot in this area due to lack of strategic planning and budgetary constraint. A case in point was the initial deployment of our troops to Darfur in 2004, where the Nigerian contingent was deployed without the full complement of their requirement. Nigeria lost out in this area which would have been mouth-watering gains. This denied her to earn reasonable income for her involvement in Darfur. Russia has M18 helicopters serving UN PSOs which pockets $6m annually. Cote d'ivoire makes as much as $5m annually for its helicopters in the services of the UN. Ghana and South Africa make good income from the three helicopters they own. We do not have a warship on paid services at the disposal of the UN, whereas Bangladeshi warship generating money for the country in Sudan.

CONCLUSION

Nigerian involvement in peace keeping in Darfur has been reviewed as clearly stated in this paper and the fact speaks for itself. There is no doubt that Nigeria peace keeping

operation was a bold initiative. However, the challenges have been identified and must be addressed to ensure effectiveness in her peacekeeping operations. The UN needs to assist Nigeria in becoming more effective in its peace keeping operations in Africa.

We hope that Nigeria would profit from her performance in Darfur for better results in the coming years. Nigeria should take into consideration her domestic situation, her national interests and the dynamics of geopolitics in her subsequent efforts at peacekeeping. This will no doubt make her to be in tune with public opinion within the country and not to offend sensibilities on the international scene.

Recommendation

- If our armed forces are to participate in peacekeeping operations in the future, the mandate should be clear spelt out and achievable objectives, the mandate should be precise and finite; and there must be a reasonable arrangement for the safety and security of the Nigerian personnel.

- Our Afro-centric policy must be based on cogent and coherent strategic objectives. Africa is the second largest continent in the world and the one with the highest diversity of states but Nigeria has not been utilizing its manifest destiny to lead the continent effectively and to use such leadership to achieve her national interests and continental aspirations. As far as the Armed Forces are concerned, Nigeria should concentrate efforts on two roles ;regional security such as the Gulf of Guinea Guard force, the emerging sub regional standby forces and the upcoming Africa standby force (ASF) and secondly UN operation because Nigerian personnel have invaluable experience in peacekeeping operation.

- There is need for a total review of the nation's defence doctrine to take these into consideration .There is a readiness by policy makers to recognise that the world has changed, but is not to adapt institutions to new situation.

- As regarding peace keeping operation government should review the role of each institution plays and the relationships between the institution. In this regard,

government should create a national coordinating body to bring together relevant ministries and agencies for strategic planning as well as evaluation of peacekeeping missions with clearly spelt out goals to be achieved for each mission. Government should also work within the UN system to support the use of appropriately skilled civilian for peacekeeping missions.

- Government should also set up a coordinating body for Nigerian peacekeeping efforts within mission countries. The national coordinating body should help to consolidate some Nigerian enterprises in key sectors to make them able to meet international standards in terms of quality of staff, expertise and services so that they would be engaged in reconstruction works, be involved in genuine investments and participation in those countries economics and also government should consider strategic relationships with those countries to extract some specific mutually beneficial concessions and considerations.

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