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# Global peace and security: Nigeria efforts through peacekeeping 1960 – 2010 and quest for a permanent seat at the united nations organization

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## ABSTRACT

*For very many years even before her political independence in 1960, Nigeria has been and is still involving in global peace initiatives. She offered support to Britain her then colonial master during the first and second world wars through human and material supports. Nigeria fought alongside with Britain in Burma (Mymnar), Egypt, India, etc. Nigeria, after gaining independence in 1960 and with the United Nations Organisation initiatives at maintaining world peace since 1945, she was not left out. Of the 55 peace initiatives undertaken by the United Nations so far Nigeria has participated in 40, a very high score. Nigeria has served under UN peace initiatives in former Belgian Congo, Lebanon, Cyprus, Kosovo, Greece etc. The issue involved is that Nigeria has committed huge resource to peacekeeping in the face of ravaging poverty in the country. At the end of each operation she has nothing to show except lost of personnel and huge financial expenditure quantified at about \$10 billion. For compensation in all these, the paper is advocating that Nigeria be offered a permanent seat at the United Nations Organisation as a way of healing the pains – in human and material resources. The paper uses historical analysis as methodology.*

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## Introduction

Twentieth century was a very disturbing era since mankind evolved and live together. It was an era that fierce wars involving nearly all nations of the world were fought. These wars were the first and second world wars (1914-1918) and (1939-1945) respectively. They were classical wars where sophisticated instruments of war were used especially the Second World War. Wars that saw people perishing in millions, economies tumbling and life on earth eroding to Principle-bearing and wearing symptoms of carcass (Grenville, 2000; 93-293; Spodek, 1998:595-598; Coleman, 1986:187-203). After the First World War, was formed the League of Nations. The league did not bring about the much needed peace in the world. Thus Second World War emerged because the conflicting issues in Europe were still very contentious (Grenville, 2000:131-132).

In 1945 after the end of the Second World War, few world leaders such as Winston Churchill of Britain, Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States, Josef Stalin of Soviet Union came together to form the United Nations Organisation in place of the failed League of Nations (Grenville, 2000). Every independent nation that sought for peace and growth in the economies of the world was to be a member. It was not compulsory but since every nation sought peace one was in itself compelled to belong. Against this background that Nigeria after political independence on 1st October, 1960, became the 99<sup>th</sup> member of the United Nations Organisation.

Although Nigeria's first global peace initiative was in 1914 and 1945 when she like other countries that were colonised teamed up with her colonial masters and fought the world wars. The second round initiative began when she had independence in 1960, and her first UN peace keeping participation was in the former Belgian Congo in 1960. Since then Nigeria became a regular supporter and initiator in the United Nations Peace Supportive Operations.

## Conceptualising Peacekeeping

The term peacekeeping was coined in 1957 by Lester Bowles Pearson, then a Canadian diplomat and later prime minister. The term was used to describe the proposed United Nations Mission that supervised the 1957 truce reached between belligerents during the Suez crisis following the outbreak of the 1956 Arab-Israeli War. Indeed, the concept was utilised to distinguish that larger operation (which deployed 3, 600 personnel in military units) from individual observer missions earlier used in the 1948 United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) during the Arab-Israeli War (Okereke, 2009:566). Peacekeeping is the preservation of peace, especially as a military mission in which troops are deployed to keep peace formerly warring factions, including the armed forces of any country, from further fight or escalating already tensed situation (Agbambu, 2010:44).

However, as a concept in the International System now involves the use or deployment of multinational military, civil police and in some cases civilian personnel for the prevention, containment and termination of crisis which the United Nations or any major International Organisation feels might threaten international peace and security (Okereke, Ibid). It is also used to describe certain military actions and or functions authorised by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and geared towards supervising ceasefire agreements and separating the warring factions. In the words of Boutros Boutros Ghali, it involves the deployment of the United Nations 'contributory' personnel on the field, however, with the consent of all parties concerned. That the presence of these personnels expands the possibilities for the prevention of conflicts and peace-making.

## Conceptualising Security

The term security has been variously used by people, but really it lacks a definite or precise definition. Imobigbe; Bassey;

Asuni (2002) see security as a feeling of being safe and protected, and a feeling of freedom from danger, fear, anxiety, oppression and unwarranted violence. Security is a relative freedom from war, coupled with a relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur (Collins, 2007:2). McNamara explains security of a nation not as its military preparedness but also in developing relatively stable patterns of economic development and political growth of home and abroad.

In sum, security is the condition in which individuals, group of people, states are not under siege, free from war, freedom of people to express their feelings without molestation and participate in government and development of his/her environment positively. In this connection, Nigeria has persistently been involved in freeing people in so many states to have a sense of belonging within the confines of law within the international system even before her political independence in October 1960.

#### **Nigeria's Human Resources Commitment to Peacekeeping since 1960 to Date**

As earlier discussed, Nigeria had contributed men and materials to the prosecution of the first and second world wars. That was chiefly done under the tutelage of the colonial master-Britain. It is difficult to ascertain the number of Nigerians who actually participated in these two world wars. But, what is important is that Nigeria even with the colonial yoke was able to contribute her quota to bring about peace in the world.

However, obtaining political independence, she has been contributing men (troops) to maintain world peace since 1960s. The first UN peacekeeping mission took place in the Middle East in 1948. That year, Britain withdrew from Palestine-which it had controlled since 1922-and the UN divided the country into two separate nations, Israel, and Palestine. The five Arab countries surrounding Israel – Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan (now Jordan), and Egypt-almost immediately attacked the new nation-Israel. United Nations later negotiated for a truce, since then, the UN has often sent observers to regions of conflict. In this connection at the international level, Nigeria has the strength of 5,732 men and women under the Blue Helmet, underscoring the fact that the country is the fourth largest troop contributing country to the UN peacekeeping, surpassed only by Pakistan, Bangladesh and India (Agbambu, 2010).

Since commencement of UN peacekeeping in 1948, the organisation has sponsored a total of 55 initiatives out of which Nigeria has actively participated in 40, translated to about 73 percent, of the missions around the world. Nigeria made her debut in UN peacekeeping with the deployment of a contingent to the former Belgian Congo, following the outbreak of crisis in that country in 1960, under the auspices of the United Nations Operation; and it was in that year that Nigeria was admitted as the 99<sup>th</sup> member of that august body. Besides Belgian Congo, Nigeria also participated in the UN interim force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), UN Operation in Somalia (UNISOM-11), UN Confidence Restoration in Croatia (UNCRO), UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL) among others (Agbambu, 2010).

Currently, Nigeria has two contingents in Liberia (UNMIL) and Darfur (UNAMID) respectively. Nigeria is the highest Troop Contributing Country (TCC) with over 3, 300 troops deployed; made up of 4 battalions and a level 11 Hospital. Indeed, not only provision of personnels to the UN peacekeeping, but quality personnels. For instance, Lt. General

C. I. Obiakor has been the Military Adviser on peacekeeping to the UN since 2008. In addition, Nigeria has provided a good number of the Force Commanders (FCs), Deputy Force Commanders (DFCs) and chief military observers. On the whole since Nigeria broke even and struck the first blow for peace in 1960, well over 250,000 members of Nigeria contingents have taken part in the UN peacekeeping. And with a deployment of 361 women, Nigeria currently has the highest number of female troops under the Blue Helmet (Agbambu, 2010).

At the continental level, Nigeria has been part of several peacekeeping operations organised by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU). The first of such engagements under the auspices of OAU was in Chad in 1982, to which Nigeria contributed two battalions. Indeed, Nigeria involvement in that operation was driven by the security imperative of her proximity to Chad. Though the operation in Chad came into abrupt end in 1982 without achieving the desired goals because of political developments in the country, the over-ambitions mandate of the mission and the inability of the OAU to financially support the operation. In this connection, Nigeria had to underwrite the estimated 80 million dollars, cost of her involvement in the operation. Apart from the peace support mission in Chad, the OAU never really sent any force to any other African country, until the deployment to Sudan in 2003 and Somalia in 2009. The incapacitation on the part of the OAU to send forces to war torn zones were as a result of paucity of funds and other vital logistics requirements (Agbambu, 2010).

Indeed, at the sub-regional level, Nigeria spearheaded the Economic Community of West Africa States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This initiative was the first test case of the efficacy of peace enforcement within the sub-region. She deployed about 12,000 troops at the height of the mission and spending well over \$9 billion. The leading role Nigeria played, in this enterprise was indicative of the length she was prepared to keep peace and stability in the sub-region (Okereke, 2009; Agbambu, 2010)

#### **Nigeria's Financial Commitment to UN Peacekeeping since 1960s**

Nigeria's role in UN peacekeeping have largely been altruistic, this is so because Nigeria is not an arms producing nation, hence has not encourage any violence. Besides, the huge resource has so far been committed to the peacekeeping in the face of ravaging poverty in the country is called to question, while at the end of each operation, so much is expended, Nigeria has nothing to show. Indeed, for the prosecution of war in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Nigeria committed as much as \$9 billion. This amount would have been used to offset part of Nigeria's debt owed the international community-the London and Paris clubs or to a large extent offset the internal debt. On the other hand such amount would have been used to rebuild the decaying infrastructures such as roads or the power sector, thus preparing the country on the path for development. Nigeria has, so far, spent a whopping \$10 billion in the last five decades in her active pursuit of global peace, in addition to losing about 2000 men in the process (Agbambu, 2010).

Besides, Nigeria in her commitment to peacekeeping has played reconciliatory roles in the settlement of disputes particularly in Africa. She has hosted several peace talks between belligerents especially in Chad, Sudan and the Great Lakes States – Uganda, Kenya among others. For instance, between March and August 1979, Nigeria hosted four peace conferences on the Chadian crisis. She also hosted several peace

talks aimed at solving the crisis in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan's Western Region of Darfur (Federal Ministry of Information). Hosting of these peace conferences meant much in financial terms to the nation. It also measures the level of Nigeria's commitment of maintaining and promoting international peace and security which is the nucleus to the UN – the reasons the organisations was found after the Second World War.

#### **Cost and benefit of Nigeria's participation in UN peacekeeping**

Nigeria's participation and commitment to global peace and security has been remarkable and positioned her positively in major international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). For instance, Chikadiloia Obioakar, a Lieutenant General in the Nigerian Army was appointed by the UN Secretary General, Banki-moon as the Peacekeeping Adviser and Assistant Secretary General at the United Nations. This is the highest military position in the United Nations. In the same vein, in July 2008, Professor Joy Ogwu, Nigeria's Permanent Representative at the United Nations was elected Chairperson of the United Nations Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. This has gone far into the annals of history and placed Nigeria on the firmament of peace and stability within the international system.

Indeed, members of Nigerian contingent to the United Nations, African Union and ECOWAS Peace Missions have won several medals and awards for meritorious service in mission areas. The United Nations Educational and Scientific Cooperations (UNESCO) and United Nations International Development Programme presented the Nigerian Army with an award in recognition of its commitment to peace support operations. In addition, about twenty-six gallant officers of the Nigerian Armed Forces have distinguished themselves in service as Field Commanders of several United Nations, African Union and Economic Community of West African States Peace Missions.

However, there is this operational and doctrinal concepts in line with the global best practices and experience in peacekeeping operations that Nigerian Armed Forces have imbibed and has enhanced their professional outlook. It is also noteworthy to observe that Nigeria's commitments to sub-regional peace and security in Africa has opened economic opportunities for Nigerian investors to expand their businesses beyond their shores especially in the West African sub-region. Currently, Nigerian Banks such as United Bank for Africa (UBA), Guaranty Trust Bank, Intercontinental Bank have opened branches outside Nigeria. Equally, other service industries such as Globacom (Telecommunication Service Industry) wholly own by a Nigerian have extended its services to reach some West African States such as Ghana. These ventures have generated jobs for both Nigerians and other nationalities. There is a linkage effect on employment creation and development of economies.

Conversely, Nigeria's participation in some peacekeeping operation such as the Chad Mission Harmony I of 1979-1982, ECOWAS Mission in Liberia 1990-1997, Sierra Leone 1998-2002 has cost her a fortune. For instance, in Congo, the total financial cost of this operation to Nigeria was put at about

14,785, 572 sterling. This figure is outside her \$US 1million UN bond issued to defray the cost of the operation. Nigeria also had to write off the total cost of OAU peacekeeping operations

in Chad in 1982 to make up for the funds pledged by the United Kingdom and United States of America which were no longer forthcoming, especially when Libya withdraw her forces (Akinterinwn, 2004: 46). Nigeria's under Economic operation in Liberia lasted for six years, Nigeria committed more than \$US 3 billion. Nigeria was on a dual mission in Liberia – peacekeeper and peacemaker. Come to think, 1996, Nigeria spent \$US 3 billion in Liberia, but the Academic staff Union of Nigeria Universities needed only ₦3 billion to attain a minimum level of learning and teaching in Nigerian Universities which never given. That was the sacrifice Nigeria has to offer for peace and security in the west African sub - region (Clark, 2009: 574; Akpan, 1997; Contrary to others, Akinterinwa put the Financial Commitment of Nigeria in EMOMOG Operations in west African Region at \$US 10 \$US 14 billion. Again this amount would have arrested part of the cripple infrastructural facilities, yet Nigerian were worst off in terms of human living conditions, and were owing international community billions of dollars.

Although the road to peace in the west Africa – sub- region in usually initiated by Nigeria. Nigeria desires peace in the region, agreed, but she usually bore the burden of peace initiative and maintainance , yet she has never cause the violence or engineer one. That helps to explain the issue of Nigeria former head of State, president Olusegun Obasanjo, in an address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1999 to observe that: “For too long the burden of preserving International peace and security in West Africa has been left almost entirely to a few states in our sub – region. Nigeria's continual burden in Sierra Leone in unacceptably draining Nigeria financially. For our economy to take off, this bleeding has to stop” (obasanjo, 1999).

Besides the Financial burden shouldered by Nigeria, she also supplied fuel and other logistics such as food, medical, clothing, equipment etc. to refugees. On a more negative lane, some Nigerian troops returned from peacekeeping as victims of HIV/ AIDS while others lost their lives. It is contended that the returning troops have contributed to the spread of HIV/ AIDS among Nigerians at home. Infection of HIV/AIDS to the productive population within Nigerian State has negative effect on productivity. On the other hand, the Nigeria Army lost some personnels in Somalia, also an estimated 80 percent of the 500 peacekeepers lost between 1990 and 1997 in Liberia were Nigerians. Nigeria has also lost several troops in peace mission in Sudan and Sierra Leone. Nigeria's lost of personnel in Liberia and Sierra Leone was caused by their attitude towards their functions – they tended to abandon their primary function of peacekeeping to materialism. They pursued wealth through acquisition of diamond in a manner that curry negative value by any standard.

#### **Nigeria and the quest for a Permanent Seat in the UN**

For every sacrifice made by people or group there is always a reward. The reward may be latent or tangible. Nigeria is an important place in the global system – not in the area of science and technology, not a super power or a propeller of inventions but a pillar to peacekeeping and security. Without peace and security, perhaps other indices for development would not be active. South Africa the biggest economy in Africa, Egypt the leader of the Arab League are contesting for the permanent seat. By contributions to global peace in African continent none of the two nations have done as much as Nigeria. For the sacrifice Nigeria has made in terms of human resource input and financial contributions she reserves a reward – that of offering her

permanent seat in the United Nations Organisation. In the midst of ravaging poverty, Nigeria foregone her internal developments to pursue regional and international peace makes her a leader and need to be encouraged through the permanent seat offer at the UN.

### Conclusion

In this work, Nigeria has been seen as one of the countries in the world desiring world peace. Nigeria had fought the two world wars that ushered in relative peace since 1945. Since the formation of the United Nations Organisation Nigeria has been committed to maintaining world peace at regional level in West Africa, in continental level in Africa and the World at large. She has committed in financial terms millions of dollars, and thousands of personnel's in the areas of human resources. She has lost many personnel's in the course of maintaining world peace and back home create social problems to these families. But over the years of these commitments Nigeria has nothing to show except agony for those who contacted HIV/AIDS, and those who died in the process. Against this background that this request for a permanent seat at the UN becomes inevitable. Nigeria therefore reserved it as the reward for her sacrifice for world peace.

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