Beyond the West African Region: A Critical Review of the Nigeria's Leadership Role in Political Stability and Peace-Keeping

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A b s t r a c t

This paper examines the leadership roles Nigeria plays beyond her territorial borders. The paper recognizes the fact that the country suffers litanies of internal challenges reflected in prolonged Boko Haram crises, Farmers-Herders confrontations, ethno-religious crises, and the Niger-Delta militancy amongst several severe others. Despite these security limitations, the country still makes deliberate efforts at deploying both human and material resources in quelling crises-ridden nations in the globe. Nigeria has been involved in over 40 peace-keeping missions worldwide and has organized both military and police institutions to actualize this aims. The paper therefore takes a cursory look at the progress scored by the country in leading instances of political stability and restoration of peace/calm in warring countries worldwide. With the aid of secondary source of data, the paper concludes that the country has done all these because of the advantages of her population, economic resources based on crude oil and most importantly, due to her propensity to exert considerable influence as a *big brother* especially within the African continent.

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Background to the Study

This paper is interested in reviewing the leadership role and influence Nigeria wields beyond the West African sub-region and the African continent. The interest of the paper is vested on the premise that from the Congo (crises) in 1960 to date, Nigeria has been involved in over 40 peace-keeping missions worldwide in both military and police roles (Eghosa, 2010). The country's goodwill and utmost willingness to get involved at this level over the years has resulted in the proliferation of demand for its personnel. Peace-keeping has provided the country a "major redeeming point" in the global community. Confirming this, Martin Luther Agwai argued that:

> *The commitment to global peace has continued to define Nigeria's foreign policy since her independence in 1960. And nowhere is it more evident than in Africa which has remained the cornerstone of her foreign policy. Today, Nigeria is the leading peace-keeping nation in Africa and has shown tremendous leadership in all regional and continental efforts in conflict management (Agwai, 2010:2).*

Aside the nation's commitment to peace-keeping operation in warring zones around the world, Nigeria has demonstrated concerted efforts geared towards repositioning states with fragmented institutions especially in the West African sub-region. The country has been recognized as a strategic country in the world of peacekeeping operations. Through the nation's Technical Aid Corp personnel and material donations, Nigeria has been able to make influential and far-reaching policy decision in countries other than her's.

Though, the country is faced with serious internal security challenges ranging from BH insurgency in the northeast of the country, the reoccurrence of ethno-religious conflict in the north central area of the country and the climax of environmental degradation cum militancy in the Oil rich Niger-Delta region situated in the south-south of the country, it is still able support peace-keeping operations around the world.

Despite her internal challenges, the country has been able to engage in formal and informal activities beyond her borders. For instance, issues of peace-keeping, multilateral and bilateral economic relations, foreign trade, foreign economic assistance, external aid, the size and complexity of Nigeria's foreign loans, the rescheduling of these loans, debt-equity swaps, external grants, regional and sub-regional economic groupings, the quest for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), relations with the Group of 77 poor nations (G-77), relations with the European Economic Community (EEC, now the European Union, EU) and the Group of 8 industrialized nations (G-8), etc all occupied the country's external relations overtime(Mahdi, Nazariah and Muhammad, 2017).

Given the above, this paper is a modest attempt dedicated to exploring Nigeria's influence and exploits beyond her borders. It will for want of space, focus on the areas of peace-keeping efforts, democratization roles and membership of international organization by Nigeria since independence. It will crack a textual analysis of how the country has been able to play vital roles at regional levels and beyond while minding the challenges that have besieged her in doing so.

Conceptual Explications

The concepts of *foreign policy* and *diplomacy* are considered important to this discourse. They are briefly explored as follows:

Foreign Policy

Like many concepts in the Social Science, foreign policy does not lend itself to any generally accepted definition. It is a fluid concept and has different meaning to different scholars. According to Aluko (1981) foreign policy is simply defined as policies that deal with relations between sovereign actors in the international system and understanding the term in this way, he goes on to state foreign policy objectives to mean "a range of intended actions with the express purpose of influencing the behaviour of other sovereign actors within the international system".

Foreign policy is the process by which states carryout their intentions with other states majorly to achieve their national interests. This is a decision a country intends to take or has taken in the process of interacting with nation-state(s) across its national boundary. The aim is to satisfy its national interest which is the core of foreign policy (Agaba and Ukhami, 2015).

Foreign policy can also be defined as the reactions to external events which, to a large extent, affect a country's national interest such as security of the state, the welfare of its people, maintenance of its unity, physical or territorial integrity and independence. In fact, foreign policy has been defined in so diverse ways that it is now better to describe it than to define it. Foreign policy description affords us the privilege to bear in mind that interactions amongst states hinge on the reality that no country is in a state of autarky. That is to say there is no all-sufficient state. This reality necessarily compels interdependence amongst states in the international system. Holsti (1974: 377) trying to drive home this point asserts that "any British or Japanese foreign minister is aware that his country is a small island, heavily populated, unable to grow adequate food supplies and, therefore highly dependent upon foreign trade to maintain an acceptable standard of living".

Viewing from the interdependence thesis, it is almost an aphorism in international relations that transactions across state boundaries are a function of domestic exegeses and external realities. States may be compelled by the situation at home to take certain actions overseas but how those actions eventually take place, if they take place at all, depends on the situations outside the country. It is in relation to this general understanding of state's foreign policy being a product of the happening within its shores and event outside it that Holsti (1974: 375-77) explains that foreign policy objectives, decision and actions are formulated or taken to fulfil general social needs and advance more specific interests of domestic groups, political parties, and economic organizations.

Diplomacy

The concept of *diplomacy* has been variously misconstrued and misapplied. *Diplomacy* for Saleh (2011) is:

> *The means by which States throughout the world conduct their affairs in ways to ensure peaceful relations. The main task of individual diplomatic services is to safeguard the interests of their respective countries abroad. This concerns as much the promotion of political, economic, cultural or scientific relations as it does international commitment to defend human rights or the peaceful settlement of disputes.*

Diplomacy takes place in both bilateral and multilateral contexts. Bilateral diplomacy is the term used for communication between two States, while multilateral diplomacy involves contacts between several States often within the institutionalized setting of an international organization. Negotiation is the one of most important means of conducting diplomacy, and in many cases results in the conclusion of treaties between States and the codification of international law. The aim of such international treaties is primarily to strike a balance between State interests (Akinteriwa, 2009).

Nigeria: Beyond the Region and West Africa
Nigeria and Democratization Projects in West-Africa Sub-Region
Nigeria has contributed her bits to democratization process around West Africa especially in those countries that are remarkable for political instability and protracted civil wars in the post Cold War era. Between 1990 and 2008, over thirty peace accords involving ECOWAS, AU, UN and warring groups were signed in the sub-region (Obi, 2009) and Nigeria's role in these cannot be overestimated. In fact, the apparent contradictions of democratic recession in the countries like Congo, Liberia, Sierra-leone which have faced countless number of civil wars have not deterred the country's effort in advancing the course of democratic consolidation in these countries. Nigeria according to Eghosa (2010) assumed responsibility for democratization via the process of strengthening of conflict resolution interventions it originally initiated.

This was certainly the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone where the initial objectives for the military governments at the time was to end the civil war via peacekeeping, ceasefire, monitoring, peace enforcement and peace building and create room for negotiations and humanitarian operations. However, it was realized that no matter how effective these interventions were, it was difficult to establish enduring peace and stability without the democratic therapy. At that point, it mattered less whether Nigeria was itself democratic or not.

As Eghosa (2010) had argued, the situation of Equatorial Guinea and Togo was evidently different because the countries were not at war and Nigeria had buoyed its democratic credentials through political and economic reforms. But the interventions took place within the same conflict resolution/conflict prevention/political stability framework – and sought to nip the conflicts in the bud and prevent them from spreading to other parts

of the sub-region, which was the major lesson learnt from the earlier interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. From the literature, the conflict prevention genre of democratization involves interventions through preventive diplomacy initiatives such as fact-finding missions, quiet diplomacy, diplomatic suasions and pressure, and mediation. In fact, in the case of Togo, the country was willing to take the 'undemocratic' step of military intervention to bring the situation under control.

Nigeria succeeded in some instances not because it was more powerful and could wield greater influence. The progress recorded is not only hinged on Nigeria's status as a sub-regional and regional political and economic superpower, but also the fact that it provides a model of successful co-existence and diversity management in Africa then (Osaghae 1999), where coexistence "describes societies in which diversity is embraced for its positive potential, equality is actively pursued, interdependence between different groups is recognized, and the use of weapons to address conflict is increasingly obsolete" (Berns and Fitzduff 2007, p.2). Thus, as an example of a country that has the ability to manage cultural diversity, most of these democratically unstable states looked up to Nigeria as model to emulate in their quest for democratic consolidation and governmental efficiency.

In a continent where ethnic and religious diversities underlie conflict and war and has therefore been one of the most potent threats to statehood, Nigeria has often found itself having to play credible leading roles in African states torn apart by ethnic and religious conflicts. A case in point is Sudan where the country's long-standing mediation hinged on the exportation to that country of federalism and the federal character principle, which have worked relatively well as conflict management formulas in Nigeria. In the case of West African states where exclusionary politics are well entrenched, Darkwa identifies coexistence as a key democracy requirement which Nigeria, due to its familiarity with the challenges of diversity management, can always assist others in developing (Mahdi, Nazariah and Muhammad, 2017).

Nigeria's role in repositioning democratic ideals in these countries is made possible because of Nigeria's status as a regional power in terms of population, abundant wealth, level of development and long history of proven leadership within and outside Africa including material assistance to poorer countries, which gives the country enormous responsibility for the peace, security, stability and prosperity of the sub-region.

The lessons and benefits of Nigeria's role in democratization are fairly obvious. First, it strengthened the appreciation of the recursive relationship between democracy and conflict resolution which necessitated the building of capacity in this area both for peace-keeping forces and the foreign policy establishment. But this did not apply to Nigeria alone as ECOWAS also entrenched democratization and good governance as instruments of conflict resolution and peace building. Secondly, the interventions showed Nigeria as a promoter and defender of democratization, including peaceful coexistence, free and fair elections, constitutional rule and conflict resolution. Third, it

restored and enhanced Nigeria's status as a credible regional power, which increased its influence within regional and international organizations (Eghosa, 2010). Finally, the role served as a surety for Nigeria's own continued democratization as, increasingly, the strength of its voice and ability to influence events in other countries depended on the extent to which it remains a thriving and stable democracy.

Nigeria and Peace-Keeping Roles
A cursory look at Nigeria's involvement in the global arena since independence in 1960 shows that an activist anti-colonialism posture has been a distinguishing factor in her external relations. Pursued under the 'Africa as centre-piece' banner, Nigeria was in the forefront of anti-colonial and liberation struggles on the continent. A natural corollary to this pursuit became its activism in the arena of global security, specifically, peace-keeping. While peace-keeping *per se* is not a term mentioned in the Charter of the United Nations (UN), it has become a major instrument of conflict resolution for the UN and a major plank of Nigeria's external relations within and outside the African continent. Born in the Cold War era and steeped in the power politics characteristic of that era, peace-keeping has evolved from its traditional conception as a military operation to cover a plethora of activities which include a wide range of police, civilian and humanitarian roles (Sanda, 2010).

From the Congo in 1960 to date, Nigeria has been involved in over 40 peace-keeping missions worldwide in both military and police roles (Sanda, 2010). It has also contributed senior civilian leadership in a number of these operations. There is an increasing demand for peace-keepers worldwide, thus stretching global resources. Nigeria's largely good record and willingness to serve over the years has resulted in increasing demand for its personnel. Peace-keeping has provided the country a "major redeeming point" in the global community. Nigeria's level of participation in peacekeeping operations cannot be overemphasized ranging from deployment of army, navy, air force, police and civilians of various capacities as mission, observer, small size unit, battalion, brigades and divisions (Okereke and Ekpe, 2009).

Nigeria has actually committed huge resources both in terms of human and capital in the cause of building and promoting peace operations around the world. Nigeria had participated in over 40 UN peacekeeping operations in African and beyond to ensure international peace and security is maintained (Mahdi, Nazariah and Muhammad, 2017). Nigeria was involved in the settlement of social and political order in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (ONUC,1960-64), Indo-Pakistan (UNIPOM,1965-66), New Guinea (UNSF,1962-63), Lebanon (UNFIL,1978-84), Iran-Iraq (UNIMOG,1988-91), Iraq-Kuwait (UNIKOM,1991-93), Angola I, II & III (UNIVEM I,1991; UNIVEM II,1991-92; UNIVEM III, 1992-95), Namibia (UNTAG, 1989-1990), Western Sahara (MINURSO, 1992-93), Somali II & II (UNOSOM I, 1992-93; UNOSOM II, 1993-95) Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992-93), East Timor (UNTAET,2002-2005), Timor-Leste (2006-2012), Georgia (1993-2009), Central African Republic (CAR) (MINUSCA, 2014-to date), Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR, 1992-95), Mozambique (ONUMOZ, 1992-94), Rwanda (UNAMIR, 1993-96), Aouzou

Strip- Libya-Chad (UNASOG, 1994), Tajikistan (UNMOT, 1994-2000), Macedonia (UNPREDEP, 1995-99), Croatia (UNCRO, 1995-96), Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH, 1995-2002), Slovenia (UNTEAS, 1996-98), Kosovo (UNMIK, 1999), Syria (2012) South Sudan (UNMISS, 2011-to date) Ethiopia/Eritrea (UNMEE, 2000-2008), DRC (MONUSCO-2010-to date), Sudan (2011- to date), Mali (MINUSMA, 2013- to date), Cote D" Ivoire (UNOCI, 2004-to date), Prevlaka Peninsula (UNMOP. 1996-2002), Somalia (UNSOM, 2013 to date), Abyei (UNISFA, 2011 to date), Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL, 1999-2005), Liberia (UNMIL, 2003 to date), Dafur (UNAMID, 2007 to date) and spearheaded dismantling of apartheid regime in Southern Africa (UN TCCs, 2016)(Mahdi, Nazariah and Muhammad, 2017).

Nigeria's peace-keeping and peace-making role in Africa has a long history dating back to the early 1960's when Nigerian troops and police were deployed in the Congo during the country's political crisis, which culminated in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the assumption of power by Mobutu Sese Sekou. Since then, Nigeria has sent peace-keepers to Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Bosnia Herzegovina, Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda. Although there have been sporadic reports of problems, they have not been significant enough to lead to an abrupt end of Nigeria's peace-keeping operations anywhere (Mahdi, Nazariah and Muhammad, 2017).

Nigeria's involvement in peace-keeping, especially in Africa, may be a logical policy corollary to the commitment of its leaders to African independence from colonialism and foreign domination, its sense of itself as the regional power with a determination to keep other nations from exercising strong influence in what it considers its sphere of influence and, above all, its consideration of what constitutes its national (especially national security) interest. This may explain why Nigeria's commitment to peace-keeping in Africa has hardly wavered even during severe economic and political strains under varying administrations. Even when the Nigerian government was most isolated diplomatically by the international community in the 1990's, peace-keeping remained for it a vital link to the world (Sanda, 2010).

Nigeria's peace-keeping record on the continent includes operations in Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan. The missions severely tasked Nigeria's diplomatic, logistical and military strength and capacities. There were legitimacy questions, linguistic and geopolitical divisions and rivalries and operational challenges (Sanda, 2010).

Nigeria has long been ridiculed in UN peace-keeping operations for ill-equipping its troops. Not only have troops not been well-equipped, salaries and allowances have also not been promptly paid. In January 2008, the UN threatened to de-activate the two Nigerian Contingent (NIGCON) battalions serving in UNMIL in Liberia on account of inadequate equipment. This inadequacy resulted from Nigeria's failure to implement the MoU which it signed before deploying the troops. The UNMIL headquarters had called the inadequacy of logistics of Nigerian troops a "disappointment" adding that the country had "failed to meet UN-Nigeria MoU on equipping its troops with the right calibre of military and peace-keeping equipment" (Taiwo, 2009).

In fact, Nigeria was reported to have been losing $1.2 million monthly for deploying a battalion that was equipped below UN standards for peace-keeping. For example, an armoured personnel carrier earns a country $6,000 per month if it is equipped up UN standard. There were other problems. Nigeria did not deploy a full complement of forces and troops were often inadequately prepared for deployment. Staffing was also poor. For instance, rather than the UN standard battalion ratio of 800/25 (i.e. 800 troops to 25 officers), Nigeria's ratio was often 200/5 or 500/10. One of the troop commanders in both Liberia and Sierra Leone reported that he received only a 24-hour notice to lead troops to Liberia (Sanda. 2010).

The gains derivable from peace-keeping are both tangible and intangible. While some accrue directly to the individual peace-keeper, others are systemic and institutional. For example, individual soldiers receive allowances which contribute to the family's welfare, as well as awards which are personal to them. However, Nigerian soldiers alleged they been short-changed by commanders as the case of the 'Akure 27' illustrates. Twenty seven soldiers protesting illegal diversion of their allowances were convicted for mutiny in 2009 (Sanda, 2010).

Peace-keeping and Nigeria's National Interest
According to Sanda, (2010) many critics of Nigeria's foreign policy have focused on what they regard as Nigeria's inability or unwillingness to leverage its peace-keeping role in its relations with countries in the region, especially the beneficiaries of peace-keeping efforts. It is, therefore, important to examine this claim in some detail. An informed attempt at identifying Nigeria's national interest would include the following:
  a. Stability in the region and the promotion of greater regional cooperation;
  b. Prevention of refugee exodus from conflicts;
  c. Keeping foreign troops (national armies and mercenaries) out of the region;
  d. Developing markets for investments, goods, services and labour.

While peace-keeping has given Nigeria its best international polish, it is, paradoxically also a metaphor for Nigeria's numerous failings at home – lack of planning, short-attention span on critical issues of national development including foreign policy, the impact of over-reliance on oil revenues (leading to a lack of real interest in exploring markets for investment and export by Nigerian businesses) (Sanda, 2010).

Nigeria, OPEC and the Middle East
Nigeria has wielded considerable influence and has exploited reasonable gains from their involvement in OPEC. The country's membership in OPEC in the 1970s was partly influenced by the resource nationalism of the founding members of the organization – the drive for the control of their hydrocarbon resources – and the need to channel those resources towards national economic development. While oil policies – fiscal and participation regulations – were generally fashioned in line with decisions and resolutions of OPEC, Nigeria opted for a gradualist approach. The early phase of the development of the Nigeria's oil industry owed a great deal to the geopolitics of Arab North Africa and the Middle East and helped to modify the *reported force* between Nigeria and the oil companies operating in the country (Mohammed, 2010).

Although Nigeria was never directly involved in the major conflicts in the Middle East, which in most cases involved other OPEC member countries, it was not insulated from their outcomes. Conflicts involving member countries of OPEC such as the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s and the Iraqi invasion Kuwait on August 2, 1990, had the effect of paralysing the organization, inducing mutual destruction of oil facilities of belligerents and distorting prices of oil in the international market as operators reacted or scrambled for oil to guard against shortages. Nigeria, like other non-Middle East OPEC member countries has always been looked to, especially by the US, to meet the shortfall in supply. The instability in the Middle East and the need for uninterrupted supply of oil partly explains the intense pressure put on successive Nigerian administrations to quit OPEC (Mohammed, 2010).

Although Nigeria has cordial relations with OPEC member countries of the Middle East, and all subscribe to OPEC's objective of co-ordinating and unifying petroleum policies of member countries in order to secure fair and stable policies for petroleum producers, they have tended to act unilaterally in pursuit of their national interests. This could partly be explained by revenue needs determined by development strategies (Mohammed, 2010).

Nigeria, however, has remained a loyal member of OPEC despite the enormous domestic pressure its leaders have periodically come under to quit the organization, particularly on account of the export quota allowed the country since the mid-1980s. Gabon left in 1994; Ecuador and Indonesia suspended their membership in 1992 and 1999 respectively. To ease the periodic domestic pressure on Nigerian governments and keep it within the organization, some compromises will have to be arrived at, more so given the country's planned capacity upgrade and its on-going attempt at economic transformation requiring substantial public investment.

Conclusion
This paper has been able to underscore the exploits of Nigeria beyond her borders overtime. It has within the understanding of her foreign policy goals and the deployment of diplomatic instruments to actualize them, participated extensively in some global affairs. Nigeria has been able to help initiate and consolidate peace-keeping efforts in warring and conflict-ridden zones within the African continent and the globe at large. This, the country has done because of the advantages of her population, economic resources based on crude oil and most importantly, due to her propensity to exert her considerable influence as a *big brother* especially within the African continent. Hence, this paper has been able to, in addition to the above; explore the experience of the country in instituting democracy in countries of African origin where the system is apparently receding or unavailable. It has also been able to look at the participatory role of the country as a member of international organizations like the OPEC, ECOWAS and the UN. The paper discovers that even though the country is besieged with plethora of internal crises, it has not been found absent in the comity of nations at least as a member of peace-keeping operations in conflict areas.

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