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CONTRIBUTIONS

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JOURNAL AFRICAIN
SUR LA PREVENTION, LA GESTION ET
LE REGLEMENT DES CONFLITS
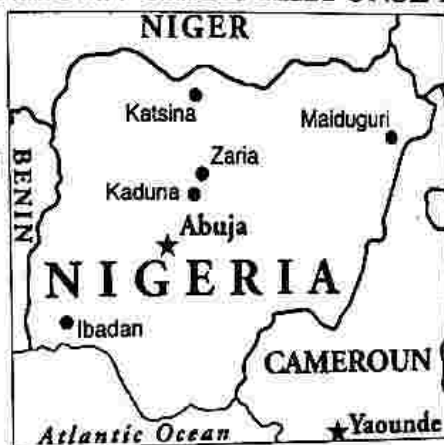
NIGERIA, AFRICAN CRISIS RESPONSE INITIATIVE, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

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NIGERIA, AFRICAN CRISIS RESPONSE INITIATIVE, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

The post Cold War period has brought about the emergence of two approaches towards conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. These are concentric-multilateral approach favoured by Nigeria and the one-polar unilateral approach which seems to be the preference of countries like the United States. In this paper, attempts will be made to analyse these approaches. From these analyses, we shall determine the nature and character of the African security regime we envisage. But first, let us understand the historical context in which these initiatives are emerging.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The unfortunate circumstance in which Africa finds herself today is rooted in her liberation and independence which occurred at the peak

of the Cold War period. Emerging from the colonial era, Africa was like a beautiful bride caught between two suitors: The Western World and Eastern Bloc led by the U.S. and the defunct Soviet Union. They scrambled for and partitioned Africa into their spheres of influence, in which looked like the second phase of Berlin Conference of 1884. This development turned Africa into a hotspot of Cold War conflicts. The beautiful bride was soon turned into a rape victim.

The Cold War era was also the era of neo-colonialism. This period witnessed the further plundering of Africa's Economic, Political and Social Systems. The resultant excessive exploitation of Africa further compounded the phenomenon of underdevelopment by making the continent poorer, politically unstable and socially degenerate. With such a situation, intra and inter-state conflict became a common feature of African life in the post-colonial period. As Colin Legum noted, looking ahead:

Africa is at a most difficult and volatile stage of development. During the 1980s quarrels within one country or between hostile neighbouring countries are likely to erupt into violent conflicts. Such conflict will affect not only the localities or countries directly involved, but in many cases also will involve foreign intervention. This is not to say that Africa will be the passive victim of international power politics. On the contrary, African factions will actively seek foreign military and economic assistance to bolster their fraile position (Wright and Brownfoot 1987:20)

To worsen the situation, African economic and military systems were drawn into orbits of either eastern or western alliances. The world therefore witnessed a vicious ideological battle on Africa soil, as otherwise minor battles soon became internationalised, thereby making intractable. In other words, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s became lost decades for Africa, and even so declared by the United Nations. The decades of the 1980s which was also the decade of structural adjustment ushered in significant decline and dislocation of the economics of Africa. This unleashed forces of friction conflict and destabilisation all over the continent. When the Cold War ended in 1989, it was expected that Africa, like other parts of the world would enjoy a peace dividend which was expected to come by way of economic recovery and political stability. However, contrary to these expectations, the continents witnessed an

unprecedented wave of conflicts, which has weakened many countries and in some even led to the phenomenon of the failed state. This made a former United States, Secretary of State for African Affairs to ask:

> What will be the place of Africa in this new world disorder? How will Africa cope with the collapse of old structures and familiar assumptions over the next decade? Will Africa - as doomsayers argue - become even marginalised, a region left behind by history as a sort of global slum? (Crocker: 1993:1).

Africa, today, is caught between "a rock and a hard place" (Callaghy: 1991 39). Africa's contribution to global trade account for only 1%; foreign direct investment fell from 4.5% in 1980 to 0.7% in 1990, with South Africa alone accounting for some 50%. In the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa about æ of the remaining 50% of the foreign investment is shared between five countries. "Given such a record, it is little wonder that Afro pessimism is fashionable today". (Crocker. 1993). Such Afro Pessimism is not only in connection with Africa's economic downturn but also with the increasing number, spread and intensity of conflicts in such places as Liberia, Somalia, the Great Lakes, The Congos, Angola and others.

NIGERIA'S PERCEPTION OF CONFLICT PREVENTION IN AFRICA

Nigeria has been a victim of the machinations of some extra-African powers especially during the Civil War and therefore understands the concentric-multilateral dimension of the approach to conflicts prevention and resolution in Africa. Her foreign policy goals or principles are basically framed to enable her contribute to Peace and Security in Africa. These principles include:

- defending her sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity,

- creating necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and in the rest of the world to facilitate the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of all African countries while at the same time fostering national self reliance and rapid economic development,

- promoting equality and self reliance in Africa and the rest of the world, promoting and defending social justice and respect for human dignity, especially the dignity of the black man,

- defending and promoting world peace.

Apart from the first of these principles, the rest are concerned with solidarity, promotion of mutual understanding and peace first in Africa, and then in the world at large. It is from this angle that Nigeria's perception of preventing and resolving African conflicts should be understood.

Moreover, Nigeria, as an African state and as a member of the African community, "must be very closely and very intimately connected with all things pertaining to the African continent". (Yoroms 1993:83). Given that Nigeria is at the epicentre of the West African sub-region, accounting for 55 per cent of the region's population, West African's security and stability is paramount to her. Nigeria, is also concerned with peace in the African continent because she is bound together with other member states of the OAU, by the spirit of Pan African brotherhood. Lastly, at the global level, Nigeria has been an active member of the United Nations organisation which itself serves as an instrument for defending Africans around the globe. Given this position, African's security is important to Nigeria: "for any threat to Africa's security is a direct or indirect threat to the survival of Niger..." Pan Africanism, therefore, is a security doctrine that "provides African States with common focus and a common forum in security development matters as well as in foreign policy" (Nweke. 1985:20-21)

In the pursuit of Peace and Security in the region, Nigeria recognises the Charter of the OAU, especially the principle of non-interference in this regard, she recognises and respects the right of other states to seek external assistance of the kind which will improve their peace keeping and peace-building capacity in Africa. At the same time, Nigeria has consistently rejected any action taken by any nation outside Africa to intervene in internal conflicts on the continent. Therefore, Nigeria has always supported the application of peace keeping force as a measure to intervene in internal conflicts in order to "deter weaker, vulnerable states from being driven into the laps of extra African powers for defence and security" (Pelcovits: 1983:265).

Nigeria's commitment to international Peace and Security as well as its pursuit within the framework of the United Nations, has seen her participate actively in many Peace-Keeping operations around the world. Since independence in 1960, Nigerian troops have been involved in about 15 UN-initiated Peace-keeping operations to date. The outcome of our participation has been mutually beneficial to the United Nations and Nigeria. Nigerian troops have distinguished themselves with a high degree of performance in all the UN Peace-keeping operations. Our standards compare favourably with the best around the world. This had been amply demonstrated by the fact, for instance, that Nigeria has provided 4 out of 9 UN Force Commanders from Africa. On our part, we have acquired a lot of expertise which stands us in good stead relative the most experienced countries in this area. We have put all this wealth of experience at the disposal of Africa through the OAU and the West African Sub-region through ECOWAS.

With regard to the OAU, our record in Peace-Keeping is impeccable and exemplary. Between 1960 and now, Nigeria played a leading part in Peace-Keeping Operations under the auspices of the OAU. The History of Nigeria mediation efforts in the OAU is well known to all. However, her burden was increased in the OAU Peace-Keeping operation in the Republic of Chad in 1981. Nigeria was called upon to lead this operation, by providing the Force Commander and the largest contingent. Furthermore, contrary to expectation, Nigeria also largely footed the bill for that operation. We have therefore counted on cost as too high to pay for Africa's Peace and Security, and we will continue to do so. But this will have to be within the framework established by the OAU. The framework for the management by the OAU will serve Africa effectively if it is allowed to work.

Here in West Africa, we have developed through ECOMOG, a sub-regional multi-lateral approach to Peace-Keeping which is unique and effective. Whatever anyone says, ECOMOG is a truly West African Peace-Keeping model which has served us well in Liberia and will yield desired result in Sierra Leone. The successes of ECOMOG were possible because member states cooperated and strengthened the Sub-regional arrangement for Peace-Keeping and our non-African supporters also channelled their assistance through the Sub-regional body. As a result, the ECOMOG operation afforded us the opportunity to co-ordinate our countries with different philosophical background and training, different

equipment, but under the same command. Today, we can justifiably feel proud that we in the Sub-region have enhanced our capacity for Peace Keeping, Peace making and Peace Building. The benefits of the ECOMOG experience are not being enjoyed by West Africa alone. Even Europe is now a beneficiary. For, it was ECOMOG which first demonstrated the skills to change an operation from Peace-keeping to Peace Enforcement and then to Peace Building. This method was borrowed by NATO in handling the situation in Bosnia. It will be recalled that it was not until the operations in Bosnia shifted to Peace Enforcement through IFOR, that the Dayton agreements were made possible. With Dayton in place, the operation shifted to Peace Building through SFOR. We note with satisfaction, that the ideas, skills and techniques which were successfully developed by ECOMOG have been put to effective use in Europe. In the light of this development, which we need in Africa today is the kind of external assistance which will strengthen rather than weaken the arrangements, already in place. The question to ask at this point is whether the US-sponsored African Crisis Response Initiative is likely to assist in this process or simply draw us back?

THE AFRICAN CRISIS
RESPONSE INITIATIVE (ACRI)

The idea of extra-African involvement or intrusion in the resolution of conflicts in Africa is not new. It will be recalled that in the mid 1970s when rampant mercenary attacks and foreign invasion of a number of African States were becoming a cause of concern, efforts were made by some external powers to work out a security model through which they intended to commit their military contingencies to the Security of Africa. The initial proposal was to construct an Inter-African security Force. This proposal was considered in Dakar at the summit of Francophone states in March 1977. Later in May 1978 it was further deliberated upon at the Franco-African summit in Paris. The proposal was finally presented to NATO meeting in Washington DC by the French President. At the end of the Washington summit some members of NATO, notably, United States, Britain, France, West Germany and Belgium who bought the idea decided to meet in Paris on 5 June 1978 to concretise actions on the plan. Nigeria reacted accordingly and "totally reject(ed) as an instrument of neo-colonialism any collective security scheme for Africa fashioned and

teleguided from outside Africa for the economic, political or military interest of any super power bloc. It is an insult to the dignity and intellect of the African man" (Okolo: 1984:74). Indeed the perception of Nigeria has been that her national security would best be promoted by a regional security arrangement developed and manned by Africans themselves (Okolo: 1984: 74). It is against this background that America's sponsorship of an African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) needs to be examined).

It may seem that the original conception of the initiative started in October 1996 when former United States Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, first outlined while meeting with officials of the Organization of African Unity, the intention of the US in peacekeeping. As earlier pointed out, the ambition of NATO, through some of its members, to control the security of Africa dates back to 1977. Prior to that in 1976, the United States government circulated a letter to individual African Heads of State and Government indicating her disapproval of the MPLA government in Angola which was being supported by the Soviet Union. In the letter President Gerald Ford stated that "the objective of US policy in Angola has been to counter efforts by the Soviet Union to impose one faction as the government of Angola. Our view has been that only a government composed of all groups can claim to represent that country. We have refrained from recognising any faction as the government ". (See Usman - 1980: 287). Accordingly the former Nigerian Head of State, General Murtala Muhammed reacted to the US position at the extra-ordinary summit of the OAU in Addis Ababa in 1976:

> If Africa does in fact rank so low in United States' concern, it becomes even irritating that an American administration should suddenly take upon itself to dictate to this august assembly how to settle an African problem... Not content with its clandestine support and outpouring of arms into Angola to create conflict and bloodshed, the United States President took upon himself to instruct African Heads of State and Government, by a circular letter, to insist on the withdrawal of Soviet and Cuban advisers from Angola as precondition for the withdrawal of South Africa and other military adventurers. This constitutes a most intolerable presumption and a flagrant insult on the intelligence of African rulers.... Africa has come of age. It should no longer take orders from any country, however, powerful. The future of Africa is in

our hands to make or mar (See Wilmont: 1980: 179-186).

From all indications, the same episode is about to replay in a situation where African initiatives in peace keeping are not appreciated. Rather, a new attempt is being made to pursue a one-polar - unilateral approach to Peace Keeping in Africa. This is what the US-sponsored African Crisis Resolution Initiative is all about. To us, the African Crisis Response Initiative has its origin in the American mentality that it is "Bound to lead" the rest of the world (Nye: 1990). In 1989, Alan Tonelson argued that the end of the Cold War would bring about a new version of American isolationism and predicted the end of "American internationalism" (Sokolsky 1995: 276). This argument, was however countered by Sokolsky, who noted that it is unreasonable to expect the Americans and their government to simply ignore 50 years of global leadership and retreat into mythical era of splendid isolation (Ibid. 27). The Americans have accused President Bill Clinton's administration of lack of consistency and leadership in foreign policy, especially over its position on international peace keeping in the wake of apparent failures and confusion in the former Bosnia - Herzegovina and in Somalia (Sokolsky 1995: 267). In the light of this accusation, the administration decided to come out with a Presidential Decision Directive (PPD - 25) which is now published as a "National Security Strategic Engagement and Enlargement" (NSSEE) in February 1995. The policy set out broad issues dealing with security, economic and political development in relation to patterning to American interests in the world. In Africa, the strategy is to seek to identify and address the root cause of conflict and disasters before they erupt (NSSEE 1995: 31-320. The Presidential Directive further noted that:

> In Somalia, our forces broke through the chaos that prevented the introduction of relief supplies. US Forces prevented the death of hundreds of thousands of Somalis and then turned over the mission to UN Peace Keepers from over a score nations. In Rwanda, Sudan, Angola and Liberia, we have taken an active role in providing humanitarian relief to those displaced by violence. Such effort by the US and the International Community must be limited in duration and designed to give the people of a nation the opportunity to put their house in order. In the final analysis, the responsibility for the fate of a nation rests with its own people (NSSEE: 1995:32).

In keeping with this Presidential Directive, the US National Security adviser for African Affairs, Amb Joseph Wilson, described the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) as "a capacity-building program" whose aim is to enhance "the African ability to respond to African crises quickly without having to wait for other laborious processes to kick in". The ACRI, he further explained would be "a peacekeeping mechanism that could be brought together on short notice" rather than a standing Army. The US explain that in implementing ACRI, the peacekeeping skills in selecting military units would be upgraded; an environment would be created to get African countries talking and working together about collective defence and security thereby creating confidence and trust, and consequently reducing political tension between and among neighbours in order to attain the goals of political and economic progress. (see Daily Times (Lagos), 15 September, 1997, The Guardian (Lagos) July 18, 1997, Corey 1996 and Fullerton 1997).

The initiative is expected to have an initial take-off force of about 10,000 African Soldiers with training and equipment assisted by the international community. Ambassador Marshall F. McCallie, former US Ambassador to Namibia was despatched to Europe to discuss with possible and potential contributors to the programme. The former US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who briefed the OAU in October 1996 about the programme, also pointed out to the African countries he visited, that the United States needed to work in partnership with Africa to meet the global challenges of our time. These include the fight against Nuclear proliferation, narcotics and crimes, and in working together to deal with the imperative of protecting and improving our environment. "We want to help Africa achieve its enormous potentials... We want to with Africans to avert the conflicts which claim innocent lives and thwart your progress toward democracy and prosperity," he said (Corey: 1996:1). Here, we note the ACRI is of more strategic interest to the US rather than an act of benevolence on her part towards Africa.

According to Susan Rice, then Clinton's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Affairs, a major focus of US strategic efforts in Africa is defending the US from the real national security threats that emanate from Africa. These include "State-sponsored terrorism, narcotic flows, the growing influence in Africa of such pariah states as Libya and Iran, weapons proliferation, environmental degradation and disease". (Daily

Times September 15, 1997). Indeed, some countries have accepted and offered their Armed Forces for training within the framework of ACRI. On the other hand, some African countries are opposed to the initiative. The question that bothers our mind is should we be concretising the existing structures to enhance African Security or do we build new ones?

AFRICA'S SECURITY REGIME AS INSTRUMENT OF CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION.

The violent conflicts and wars which the end of Cold War seemed to unleash have made the need for an African Security regime both obvious and urgent. To address this situation, a number of security arrangements are being put in place at sub-regional levels under the co-ordinating influence of the OAU.

Thus in West Africa, member states decided to sign the Protocols of Mutual Defence and Non-Aggression in 1978 and 1981 respectively. And in Southern Africa, SADC had in 1992, signed into existence an organ for political, Defence and Security System. By 1993 this was strengthened by a frame-work for building sub-regional community. As Guraba pointed out:

Though occasion has not arisen for testing SADC's security arrangement in terms of peace keeping, the experience of ECOWAS in the Liberian Crisis over the last seven years demonstrated the problems that could be encountered in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa, through the mechanism of sub-regional security arrangements (Garuba: 1997:13).

Thus Africa, form the Liberian Crisis has started to construct its own security regime. The building of a security regime from an African perspective is based on (Guraba: 1997:10):

(a) regional security complexes
(b) convergent expectations, and

(c) reciprocity

It is in the light of the above that ECOWAS, SADC, OAU and UN have become instruments of institutional capacity-building for the creation of an African security regime. The OAU has gone a step further to establish a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. With its Early Warning System, effective co-ordinating and logistics measures are being put in place to prevent the eruption of violent conflicts. ECOWAS is working towards setting up its conflict prevention and management system which will work hand in hand with member states to ensure that conflicts are arrested.

Given the performance of ECOWAS in the Liberian Civil war, James L. Wood, the African specialist at the US State Department stated, while briefing the US Congress in 1993 that:

The Nigerian contribution has been absolutely to the success of ECOMOG. Nigeria's manpower and logistics contribution are critical to the operational capability of the entire regional force ... of course, ECOMOG's operation in Liberia have not been flawless from either a military or political perspective, but the Nigerians have demonstrated capabilities that few other Sub-Saharan militaries ... have and none has ever been required to demonstrate: namely the ability to deploy and logistically support a division equivalent. Additionally Nigeria's ability to plan and conduct co-ordinated air, land and sea operations and to conduct a relatively effective counter-insurgency campaign has also been impressive... *If we ever want to engage in PKO (Peace Keeping Operations) using African troops, we should keep Nigeria's potential very much in mind* (The News, Lagos) August 1993.

The above statement has underscored the importance of Nigeria in peace keeping operations. Nigeria's potential however, can only be utilised under constituted institutions and not through any bilateral means with an extra-regional power.

CONCLUSION

What we have done in this paper, is to present our views on peace keeping

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in Africa. In doing so, we have argued that effective peace keeping in Africa can only work within the framework of sub-regional and regional organizations in the continent and the UN rather than one-polar-unilateral approach. If the US has Africa at heart she should entrust the OAU, ECOWAS, SADC and the UN with whatever material, logistics and support at her disposal. The one-polar unilateral approach to security by the United States has the tendency to over-secure a part of the whole and *"will almost certainly be limited by the insecurity of the rest"* (Ochoche 1997: 26-27). This will not augur well for African peace and security, neither will it be for the promotion of global understanding.

We therefore, wish to conclude with a few suggestions from the foregoing discussion. First, we suggest that those who truly want to help Africa in the era of peace-keeping should channel all their support through our typically African institutions such as ECOWAS, SADC and the OAU. This is with a view to strengthening the capacity of existing arrangements as the UN has done with ECOMOG in Liberia and now Sierra Leone.

Secondly, we believe that ECOMOG has established a model to be copied, developed, and used in Africa. Through our experience in ECOMOG, we have achieved a high degree of international military co-operation in joint operations which should be assisted and developed. The UN-sponsored ACRI is therefore, an obstacle to the development of indigenous capacity in the area of peace-keeping and peace-building.

Thirdly, we in Nigeria believe that we have the ideas, skills and experience required to assist in the capacity-building process in Africa. What we need is the logistic and material support to share our experiences with our fellow Africans as we are doing in West Africa at the moment. Nigeria has been in this business for a long time and has gained the necessary experience. Beside, there is attendance towards greater convergence among African countries today as we are all moving towards democratic governance and respect for human rights.

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