

# Nigeria: A Quest for a Permanent Seat in the United Nations Security Council

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**Abstract.** *Nigeria's bid for the United Nations Security Council permanent seat received a boost from the African Union (AU) at its Golden Jubilee Summit in Addis Ababa the other day. Africa sent an appropriate signal to the world that it could work in unity to pursue its collective interest. The country was endorsed by the AU Executive Council in a pleasant display of solidarity and consensus. Coming against the background of an earlier endorsement by the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), this new wave of solidarity is commendable. It should be harnessed to win the support of more member states of the global body at the crucial vote of the United Nations General Assembly. Hence, the argument that the Security Council membership be expanded to include major financial contributors and the equitable representation of the regional spread. There is every indication that Nigeria has all it takes to represent Africa in an enlarged Security Council. But considering the vagaries associated with international politics, a lot still needs to be done by Nigeria to garner the overwhelming support from Africa that will enable her to emerge as a consensus candidate for Africa.*

**Keywords:** *Nigeria, United Nations, Obasanjo, Legacy, Permanent Seat, Military, Diplomacy*

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## Introduction

Nigeria's expansive tradition of sending its troops in large numbers to international peacekeeping operations under the aegis of the United Nations has been rightly described as a paradox. The contradictions between Nigeria's role as a regional and an international belligerent or peacekeeper, its substantive participation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping from its very inception and its ambivalence about post-Cold War peace operations have been identified by scholars (Akindele, 2000). Even more interesting is the apparent tension between

its emphasis on non-intervention and non-use of force in international relations and its eagerness to send its troops out to keep peace between nations and between warring groups within states. Nigeria's first democratic, President Olusegun Obasanjo, resolved this tension by underlining Nigeria's responsibility to contribute to international peace and security.

The post-Obasanjo years saw a prolonged period of Nigeria's international military isolation amidst a preoccupation with territorial defence and a less hospitable environment for international peacekeeping. As the demand for international peacekeeping surged after the Cold War, Nigeria once again became a major contributor to international peacekeeping. The country has been at the forefront of international peace-keeping efforts. Indeed, it is the largest "exporter of peace" in Africa and the fourth largest worldwide. Nigeria is the fourth largest Troop Contributing Country to UN peace-support operations, surpassed only by Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. No African country comes anyway near Nigeria's record.

The Nigerian military and police have participated in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations in such places as Lebanon, Somalia, Croatia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Sao Tome and Principe, Guinea-Bissau and Darfur. Over 250,000 members of the Nigerian armed forces have participated in UN-sponsored missions worldwide. Having been involved in 40 of the 55 peacekeeping missions of the UN, Nigeria has now participated in 73 percent of all UN peacekeeping operations.

As a matter of fact, Nigeria single-handedly initiated the ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group) deployed for peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone from 1989 to 2002. The burden of those peace operations was borne largely by Nigeria. These credentials make Nigeria the most eligible African candidate for a UNSC permanent seat, according to the statutory objectives of the organisation itself, out of which nearly a thousand are police, including a women's unit (Saliu, 2005). Nigerian contingents have provided various services including medical and humanitarian assistance, peace enforcement, military observers, and peace building.

Nigeria is also one of the largest contributors of land troops to these UN missions (Gambari, 2005). Yet, Nigeria's participation in international peacekeeping has not got the intellectual and policy attention, either in Nigeria or abroad, that it deserves. More recent and rather limited, South African participation in international peace operations has attracted far more intensive discussion within the strategic global community. The discussion on the changing nature of international peace operations and its implications for Nigeria has been limited to a very small circle in the Foreign Office and the Nigerian Army. If the Foreign Office has in recent years seen participation in international peacekeeping as a valuable instrument in the quest for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the military establishment has

underlined the professional benefits to itself from the peace operations. This paper is an attempt to look at Nigeria's participation in peace operations from a broader strategic perspective, assess some of the new challenges confronting Nigeria in this domain and the prospects for integrating Nigeria's peacekeeping into a more effective national security strategy.

### **Past as Prologue: The Obasanjo Legacy in International Peace and Security**

Nigeria's intensive participation and that of other African nations, in international peace operations cannot be understood without a serious look at the military legacy of former President Olusegun Obasanjo. From the late-18th century to the Second World War, the armed forces of undivided Nigeria were at the very centre of the imperial defence system of Britain in the vast region. In the 19th century, the Nigerian Army helped the British expand their colonial possessions, put down frequent revolts in the empire and underwrote the economic globalisation of the Afro-European world. From West Africa to Europe, the Nigerian armies participated in the stability operations of the 19th century (Obiozor, 1985). In the 20th century, the Nigerian Army played a critical part in the two World Wars. More than a thousand Nigerian soldiers participated in both the World Wars. By 1980, the Nigerian Army was the largest volunteer army the world had ever seen.

Nigeria's material and human resources were of considerable value in tilting the war in favour of the victors (Uhomobhi, 2005). In the civil wars and post civil wars in Africa, the Nigerian forces served with distinction in African states theatres of conflicts. In the Apartheid period, the Nigerian Army fought in Southern Africa – in what is now called 'the forgotten war'. Besides the wars, the Nigerian Army's experience in managing rebellions against the empire has contributed to the emergence of contemporary military doctrines of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism (Saliu, 1999). Given this extraordinary legacy of the armed forces of undivided Nigeria, it is hardly surprising that its successor-states have emerged as the biggest participants in international peacekeeping in the post-armed conflict era. But it is not a legacy that is remembered let alone celebrated in Africa (thanks to the post-colonial rejection of the imperial legacy); and the rest of the world does not make an organic connection between Africa's military tradition from the Obasanjo period and its expansive contribution to international peace operations in the post-armed conflict period. The armies of Nigeria served many functions, including internal security, defence of the subcontinent's frontiers, and expeditionary operations in a vast region stretching from West Africa to the entire region (East, North and South Africa). The incessant military coups between January 15, 1966 and May 29, 1999, broke up the centrality of Nigeria in the security system of a critical region of the world, especially in Africa. The creation of new borders in West Africa states, the unresolved territorial issues and the unending war and conflict between DR Congo and Central African Republic meant that the military energies of the subcontinent turned inward.

Besides securing the post-partition borders in African states, Nigeria also had to contend with the entry of region and the eventual imperative of securing a long and contested frontier with North Africa (Saliu, 2006). Yet the fact remains that the subcontinent has been the largest contributor to the international peace operations since the end of the Second World War. Despite the Nigeria and Ghana preoccupations with territorial defence, both had sufficient military forces that could be spared for duties beyond their borders (Adigbuo, 2005). We must remember, however, that Nigeria was not the only one from West Africa that relished a military role beyond the subcontinent. Although it inherited only a fraction of Obasanjo's military resources, Pakistan acquired a strategic profile of its own beyond South Asian borders. Its military capabilities were strong enough to be an attractive partner for the West in constructing the Cold War alliances like the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Although these alliances did not survive for long, the Ghanaian Army found itself training security forces elsewhere and occasionally guarding the ruling families there (Adigbuo, 2012). Those who see Nigerian and Ghanaian military roles from the perspective of UN peace operations tend to miss the larger significance of the internationalist military tradition in the subcontinent.

### **Olusegun Obasanjo Years: Imagining International Responsibility**

The initial impulse for regional and international peacekeeping came from Nigeria's former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who had a strong commitment to liberal internationalism and a desire to strengthen the UN. Small, but influential, elite of the Nigerian national movement was deeply influenced by the Western critique of power politics that led to the First World War, disappointed by the failures of the League of Nations, and drawn to the idea of One World that shaped the thinking of the liberal opinion in the inter-war period. Obasanjo visualised an active international role for Nigeria, despite its many pressing problems at home. Punching way above Nigeria's real weight, Obasanjo lent a strong voice to the liberal calls for international peace through the UN (Adigbuo and Opone, 2010). Insisting that Nigeria must do its bit for the maintenance of international peace and security, Obasanjo launched Nigeria's active participation in UN peace operations. During the West African armed conflict crisis (Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc.), Obasanjo was quite clearly confronted with the difficulties of judging aggression by one party or entity against another, and injecting oneself into great power conflict that Nigeria so assiduously sought to avoid in the name of non-alignment. The armed conflict/civil war during 1980-90 severely tested Nigeria's commitment to international peace and security as well as its credentials as a non-aligned power. As the complexity of the situation in the African states became manifest, Nigeria sought to make its position more balanced. Obasanjo sought to promote a Western dialogue and called for Beijing's membership of the UN Security Council. Nigeria opposed the creation of a UN command for the use of force in Africa but decided to send a medical unit to the

war to contribute to the humanitarian relief. It was a clever stroke, for on the one hand it stood up to its earlier commitment to send a force which did really take the risks of war since it was engaged on the battlefield, while on the other, they were not belligerent troops fighting the war (Agbambu, 2010). The Nigerian military unit in the conflict raging African states involved a field ambulance unit and a small contingent of officers and troops. Their services received much international commendation.

If the first phase of Nigerian involvement in the African states armed conflict (1970-90) was complicated by the confrontation between the US and the Communist powers, its role during the second phase after the armistice agreement of 1990 turned out to be highly productive. Nigeria proposed the establishment of African Union to facilitate the economy of African post-war states, which was one of the key elements of the armistice agreement. Nigeria became the Chairman and Executive Agent of the African Union, whose task in 1963 was to assume custody of open borders transfer among African states. An African Standby force of troops was formed in 1963 to oversee peacekeeping and repatriation in the region. In a fulsome acknowledgement of the Nigerian role, former UN Secretary General-Kofi Annan wrote to Obasanjo: No military unit in recent years has undertaken a more delicate and demanding peacetime mission than that faced by Nigerian troops in Africa (Babangida, 1991). Nigeria learnt many lessons from the peacekeeping experience in developing countries all over the world which became instrumental in establishing the precedents for her participation in subsequent UN operations (Bill, 1998).

The Obasanjo years also saw Nigeria actively participate in a variety of peacekeeping operations in the world and Africa. Pursuant to Peace Accords, an International Control Commission (ICC) for many African states was set up. Nigeria was the Chairman of many Commissions, which implemented the ceasefire agreement in many African states. Nigeria provided one infantry battalion and supporting staff until the ICC was wound up in 1990. Nigerian troops were part of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Gaza for nearly 11 years after the aggression against Egypt by Great Britain, France and Israel in 1956. At one time, the Nigerian contingent was the largest of the UNEF. Elsewhere in the region, Nigeria also participated in United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNMSIL), during 1991-2000. Obasanjo provided Nigerian ceasefire observers for the UN Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) in Liberia. Nigerian armed forces also served in Congo (ONUC) 1960-1964, Battalion operations; New Guinea (UNSF) 1962-1963, Military Observers; Tanzania (Bilateral agreement) 1964, Battalion operations; India-Pakistan (UNIPOM) 1965-1966, Military Observers; Lebanon (UNIFIL) 1978-1983, Battalion operations and Staff Officers; Chad (HARMONY I, bilateral agreement) 1981-1982, Battalion operations and Staff Officers; Chad (HARMONY II, OAU) 1982-1983, Brigade operations; Iran-Iraq (UNIIMOG) 1988-1991, Military Observers; Liberia (ECOMOG) 1990- Division (-) operations; Iraq-Kuwait (UNIKOM) 1991, Military

Observers; Angola (UNAVEM II) 1991-1992, Military Observers; Sierra Leone (NATAG) 1991, Training Team; Angola (UNAVEM III) 1992-1995, Detachment; Namibia (UNTAG) 1989-1990, Military Observers; Western Sahara (MINURSO) 1991, Military Observers; Cambodia (UNTAC) 1992-1993, Military Observers; Somalia (UNOSOM) 1992-1994, Battalion operations and Staff Officers; Former Republic of Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) 1992, Battalion operations and Staff Officers; Mozambique (ONUMOZ) 1992 Military Observers; Rwanda (UNAMIR) 1993, Battalion operations; Gambia (NATAG) 1993, Training Team; Aouzo Strip (UNASOG) 1994, Military Observers; Israel (UNTSO) 1995, Military Observers; Liberia – ECOMOG; Sierra Leone – UNMIL; and Darfur peace initiative.

One of the major peacekeeping operations in which Nigeria involved itself was the UN Operation in the Congo, known through its French acronym ONUC (Organisation/Operations des Nations Unies au Congo) during 1960-64. The UN faced one of its worst crises when war between the government and the secessionist forces broke out in Congo. The UN operation in the Congo, ONUC, was unique in many ways. It was also the first time that the UN undertook an operation in an intra-state, rather than an inter-state conflict. The operation was aimed to uphold the national unity and territorial integrity of the Congo. The ONUC offered Nigeria the first taste of potential controversies that could arise from participation in complex international peacekeeping operations. Nigeria's initial enthusiasm for ONUC came from the strong support of the anti-colonial cause in Congo against the Belgian intervention. Nigeria was highly critical of the limited authority of the UN force and its general lack of remit to deal with the rising tide of anarchy in the country. Amidst the multiple controversies that affected the Congo operation, an increasing number of Nigerian casualties and the growing domestic opposition in Nigeria, Nigeria refused to pull out of the operation in 1964 amidst domestic and international criticism (Claude, 1964).

A variety of explanations has been given for the extraordinary Nigerian contribution to international peacekeeping in the early years after its independence. One explanation focuses on the liberal international ideals of the Nigerian political elite at the time of independence and the commitment to international peace and security enshrined in Article 51 of the Directive Principles of the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (Uhomiohi, 2012). A second explanation is Nigeria's commitment to non-alignment and the principle of solidarity with the newly-decolonised nations (Balewa, 1960). Other justifications included the absence of well-developed armed forces in the developing world and the existence of significant Nigerian military capabilities inherited from the British.

Obasanjo's quest for a larger Nigerian role in Africa and on the world stage is seen as another reason. Others have given a more self-interested justification and the benefits that the Nigerian military and diplomacy could gain from active participation in inter-

national peacekeeping (Musa, 2010). Some have argued that Nigeria played pivotal roles in various UN-African missions given the Nigerian perception of these areas being vital to its conception of... regional stability (Akinterinwa, 2005). Obasanjo, for example, justified Nigerian activism in African states by stating that Africa is a proximate region: "The crisis in respect to intrastate armed conflicts therefore moves us deeply and calls from us our best thoughts and efforts to avert the trends of this conflict towards its extension and intensification" (Akindele and Akinterinwa, 1995). Likewise in the West African affair, Nigeria gave Liberia its full support and in turn, provided strong statement supporting Nigeria in Monrovia. Furthermore, the enthusiasm for Liberia's nationalism in Nigeria matched the importance of the new nation in Nigerian external relations. Liberia's strategic location provided a defence of the Nigerian coastal areas. The island is within close range of Nigerian coastal areas. Also, the country was home to the largest number of foreigners (Akpotor and Nwolise, 2005).

The most interesting justification for Nigeria's military activism on the regional and global stage was the emphasis that Obasanjo put on the notion of Nigeria as a responsible nation, as a precursor to the contemporary phrase, Nigeria as a responsible power in providing peace and security at the regional and international arena. He told the Nigerian Parliament in 1999: "... how can we keep away from the United Nations where all nations are represented? ... we have to play an active role in regional and world affairs... We sent our troops to developing nations... Our forces are still stationed in many African states. We have sent some troops to DR Congo too... We get drawn into these things because we are a responsible nation." If Obasanjo envisioned Nigeria as playing a major role in world affairs, left-wing critics have seen Obasanjo's interest in peacekeeping as a continuation of two trends in the Nigerian mind – liberal internationalism as well as great power ambitions (Jinadu and Akinsanya, 1978). Whichever way one looks at it, the Nigerian activism on the peacekeeping front in the Obasanjo years was about Nigeria stepping into the breach generated by the Cold War rivalry between America and Soviet Russia, their inability to bear the full burdens of international peace and security, and sustaining the centrality of the UN in international peacekeeping. While the rivalry opened up space for Nigeria in international mediation and active peacekeeping, it had to carefully ensure a constant adaptation to the complex great power dynamic. Obasanjo, for example, thought that the UN had the right to use military force whenever and wherever needed. Yet, he recognised that the use of the UN as an enforcement agency amidst Soviet objections will not lead to peace (Agbambu, 2010).

In the Obasanjo years, Nigeria also had to wrestle with the tensions between the notions of collective security, which he strongly supported, and territorial sovereignty which was central to the newly independent Nigeria. Nigeria was reluctant to support proposals for a permanent UN Force, despite its embrace of the UN role in collective security. There was some concern in Nigeria that the West, then dominant in the UN

General Assembly, might deploy it against its great-power rivals. Nigeria was also worried that such a force might be used against African countries. Given Nigeria's troubles in some African states, there was also the apprehension that a UN permanent force might be targeted against Nigeria. From a tactical perspective, Nigeria saw that ad hoc peacekeeping arrangements would give Nigeria a greater voice than a permanent force (Aladekomo, 2005). In the post-Obasanjo years, both the demand and supply of Nigeria's troop contribution seemed to significantly decline. The 1970s and 1980s saw a steady reduction of peacekeeping activities. On its part, Nigeria itself was preoccupied with the aftermath of wars. It was only towards the end of the Cold War that Nigeria's peacekeeping operations would acquire a new salience.

### **Post-Armed Conflict Challenges**

The ending of the incessant civil war increased the push and pull factors for Nigeria's participation in UN international peace operations. After the end of the civil wars in African states, there has been a significant increase in the UN and other regional and international multilateral peace operations. The absence of great power rivalry and the reduction of inter-state armed conflicts were accompanied by a dramatic expansion of intra-state armed conflicts that were seen as the sources of new threats to regional and international peace and security. Since the late-1990s, there has been a dramatic surge in the number of peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN. Between 1990 and 2014, the UN authorised more than 20 peacekeeping operations around the African states in comparison to seven in the earlier years. Not surprisingly, the UN would turn to Nigeria for providing the military manpower. Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana and Rwanda provided the bulk of the UN peacekeepers after the civil wars (Udeh, 2005).

The expanded role for Nigeria in regional and international peacekeeping presented simultaneous opportunities and threats to the country. On the positive side, Nigeria believed that its substantive contribution to regional peacekeeping would enhance its credentials as an emerging power and claims for a seat at the global high table. The surge in regional peacekeeping coincided with the diplomatic efforts of the UN to expand the permanent membership of the UNSC as part of a comprehensive reform. Getting a permanent seat on the UNSC became an important political objective for Nigeria, and Federal Capital Territorial, Abuja spent much diplomatic capital on it at the bilateral and multilateral levels. In its regional campaign, its contributions to the UN Peacekeeping became a central argument (Gambari, 1997).

Nigeria's regional and international peacekeeping role also underlined the country's significant military potential and provided a basis for greater strategic cooperation with major powers, especially with the US. After Nigeria and the US formalised their defence cooperation in 1999, regional and international peacekeeping became a major theme of bilateral engagement in the defence arena. The greater American interest



in multilateralism, under the Clinton Administration, appeared to provide a potential area of convergence. This was further elevated during the presidency of George W. Bush when the two sides embarked on a more ambitious agenda for defence cooperation. The Nigeria-US Framework Agreement on Defence Cooperation, signed in 1999, explicitly referred to greater cooperation in regional and international peacekeeping and multi-national operations (Udeh, 2005). The absence of a reference to the UN in the document, however, created a political controversy amidst questions about Nigeria's potential participation in peace operations that did not have the mandate of the UN. Amidst the unilateralism of the Bush administration, there was much hue and cry in Nigeria about Federal Capital Territory, Abuja becoming a junior partner for the US. While Federal Capital Territory, Abuja finessed the controversy, the question of Nigeria joining the US in coalition operations remained controversial (Abdullahi, 2007).

Even before the Defence Framework was signed in 1999, Nigeria had begun to consider the deployment of its forces outside the UN framework and in coalition missions. In 2003, Nigeria actively considered the deployment of a division of its army to Central African Republic and DR Congo. Although Nigeria eventually declined, the debate broke through many of the traditional shibboleths on the use of force abroad. Nigerian military has also been deployed outside the UN framework for humanitarian missions, for example in the relief work for the Boko Haram victims in the Nigerian north-east region at the end of 2009. Nigeria actively coordinated its relief activity with the US, Britain and France. After the initial bold moves with the US, Nigeria under the People Democratic Party (PDP) government appeared to develop cold feet in considering any joint peace and stability operations with the US outside the UN framework.

Even as it underlined the importance of the UNSC in lending legitimacy for peace operations, Nigeria had begun to encounter a new set of problems. Nigeria's renewed interest in peacekeeping also coincided with a significant change in the terms and conditions for regional and international peace operations. The focus of the operations shifted to intra-state armed conflicts and the emphasis increasingly turned to peacebuilding and peace enforcement. The new muscular approach was justified in the name of new threats to international peace and security, the case for humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect populations against their own regimes (Ajayi, 2009). The new post-armed conflict agenda for peace raised many concerns in the African and non-African region, including Nigeria, about territorial sovereignty of the developing African states, dangers of regional intervention in the internal armed conflicts, and the temptation to use humanitarian norms in the pursuit of crass national interests (Chinedu, 2011).

Besides the developing African states, many in the world began to question the efficacy of intervention in the internal affairs of African nations and pointed to the mixed record of UN peace operations in promoting peace and stability (Arhewe and Fadeyi,

2013). Others viewed the return of regional and international peacekeeping as nothing less than a restoration of imperialism, in the name of liberalism and regional order (Editorial, 2013). The high point of the post-armed conflicts in African states, Western enthusiasm for use of force, with or without the consent of the African states concerned, to achieve political and humanitarian objectives may be behind us in the light of the experience in Somalia and Libya. Declining domestic public support and the difficulty of sustaining high levels of defence expenditures, amid the prolonged financial crisis, have inevitably cast a shadow over Western readiness to bear the burden of interventionist operations. US President Barack Obama, throughout his first term and in the election campaign of 2012, has insisted on the importance of nation-building at home. Increasing political resistance in the UNSC to such Western operations from Somalia and Libya has compounded the problem.

Nigeria, which was going through a difficult domestic period of instability and crises in such frontier areas as Plateau, Kano and the North East states, was deeply worried about the attempt to denigrate territorial sovereignty in the name of Boko Haram Islamitisation. Having faced hostile Western approaches in the past to Nigeria's territoriality, especially on the question of Boko Haram, Nigeria has had a genuine interest in preventing regional and international intervention in its own domestic affairs and guarding against complicating its necessarily-prolonged effort at nation-building. Realists in Nigeria, however, would argue that a UN intervention in the north-east region of Nigeria is unlikely to be defined by doctrine or precedent but by the nature of Nigeria's relations with the great powers and its geopolitical weight in the regional and international system. In the UN debates, Nigeria emphasised that peacekeeping should always be with the consent of the state concerned. Nigeria has also sought a clear distinction between peacekeeping operations which it favoured and the new interest in coercive peacekeeping. Nigeria, however, has not shied away from a debate on reforming the peacekeeping operations and in defining the role of the new Peace-Building Commission established in 2006 by the UN (Shuaib, 2013).

In fact, during its tenure as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Nigeria took the initiative to launch a wider debate in the UN on peacekeeping. Underlining its traditional emphasis on state sovereignty, Nigeria argued that national ownership is the key to success in peacebuilding. The international community has the duty to make available appropriate capacities to national authorities. Emphasising Nigeria's democratic credentials, its representatives at the UN argued that states that have undergone state-building and democratic transitions hold special relevance to our peace building efforts (Akindele, 1999). Pointing out that ambitious agendas are not being backed with the financial, operational and logistical resources, Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the UN, Prof. Joy Ogwu, argued that the lack of resources tells on the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping and casts a shadow on the credibility of the

Council's mandates (Fawole, 2000). Nigeria has also insisted that the troop-contributing countries like Nigeria should have a greater role in defining the mandates for the various peacekeeping operations and should not be treated as adjuncts brought in merely to implement the mandate.

The question of finances is a special concern for Nigeria. The UN owes scores of millions of dollars to troop-contributing states. Nigeria alone is owed nearly US \$30 million at the end of 2014 (Olorunlomu, 2013). Continued financial uncertainty has not until recently limited Nigeria's enthusiasm for peacekeeping operations. Meanwhile, there has been criticism of Nigeria and the African states that their main interest in international peacekeeping has been the financial and diplomatic rewards. For Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana and Rwanda, for example, peacekeeping is an inexpensive way to maintain large armies and boost the pay of select troops, while also building diplomatic inroads in poorer states that might be rich in resources that African states lacks (Fawole, 2000). Nigeria, which once paid the costs of peacekeeping in South Sudan and DR Congo, finds these charges galling. From the Nigerian perspective, whatever financial gain a Nigerian soldier might receive, it accrues to a negligible number. Today, these conditions do not constitute a major incentive for the Nigerian armed forces and are not an important reason for participation in UN peacekeeping (Gambari, 1997). It has also been argued that Nigeria's emphasis on community-oriented peacekeeping and its military doctrine of restraint in the use of force has contributed to successes in the increasingly difficult operating environment that the peacekeepers confront today. Yet, Nigeria's peacekeeping has occasionally invited negative reaction.

Despite the occasional negative reactions, the reputation of the Nigerian armed forces as effective peacekeepers has significantly expanded since the 80s. Nigeria's participation in UN peacekeeping operations is also significant for its response to demands relating to the conduct of new peacekeeping operations, which have complex and multi-functional mandates. Nigeria has carried out broad and non-military duties and tasks such as election supervision and monitoring (Liberia, Angola and Mozambique), policing (Sierra Leone, Angola and Congo), resettlement of displaced populations (Haiti, Bosnia-Herzegovina), de-mining (Lebanon and Cambodia) and civil administration and nation-building in Cambodia and Angola (Gambari, 1997).

Some analysts are calling on Nigeria to take on a larger and more active leadership role to shape the changed role of international peacekeeping. Instead of constantly criticising the UN for not formulating appropriate peacekeeping mandates in line with changing ground realities, Nigeria, as a peacekeeper, should think of ways to engage with the UN at higher levels, directly or indirectly. This will certainly mean conceiving of and pushing for innovative approaches to the overall management of UN peacekeeping (Garba, 1997). But amidst the demands for such leadership from external sources, Nigeria must now cope with the greater questioning at home of the relevance and value

of participating in international peacekeeping operations. What Nigeria confronts is not the problem of popular support at home, for the executive retains considerable leverage on the decision to deploy troops for peacekeeping, but criticisms from within the strategic community. Addressing these questions has become a challenge for the Nigerian security establishment.

### **Peacekeeping and National Interests**

Nigeria's peacekeeping has traditionally been debated in terms of its commitment to international peace and security, the ideals of non-alignment, the promotion of an area of peace, and Nigeria's self-image as a responsible power and its claim for a larger role in the international arena. In the post-Cold War period, the commitment to international peacekeeping got associated with Nigeria's campaign for a permanent seat in the UNSC. Many have begun to question the relationship between the contribution to peacekeeping and the prospect of a permanent seat in the UNSC (Ikhariale, 2002).

While the goal has become increasingly elusive, Nigeria's substantive participation in international peacekeeping no longer gives Nigeria a special cache in the global/international arena. Unlike in the Obasanjo years, when Nigeria seemed the lone middle power willing to bear the burden of international peacekeeping, today it keeps company with other major troop contributing nations from developing states including African states. Nigeria is increasingly seen as providing cheap military labour in pursuit of imperial objectives set by the West (Saliu, 1999). On its part, Nigeria has argued about the logic and nature of new peacekeeping operations and the need for more effective management at a variety of levels. All this diplomatic activity at the UN, however, has not translated into a significant say in how global peacekeeping is organised after the Cold War.

Some have questioned the geographic scope and the diplomatic utility of Nigeria's peacekeeping operations. If Nigeria needs to flex its muscles, pretensions to which it is credited with, or our diplomacy wants to strut and do its stuff, it should be done in the immediate neighbourhood where its writ is likely to run, where it will be of some benefit to at least a portion of its citizenry. Not halfway around the world in some remote corner of Africa (Tukur, 1965). Some other military officials have questioned the kind of special priority that Nigeria seemed to attach to international peacekeeping and wanted a more balanced consideration of domestic defence priorities and global diplomatic aspirations (Vogt and Ekoko, 1993). In the wake of the allegations against Nigerian troops in DR Congo during 2008, there were strong calls for a comprehensive review of Nigeria's policy on peacekeeping. Prof. Viola Onwuliri and Prof. Joy Ogwu, for example, argued that Nigeria's economic and geopolitical profile has charged far ahead of its peacekeeping policy. It is timely for a transformed Nigeria to review its policy on foreign troop deployments in the light of its national interests (Olorunlome, 2013). It has been insisted that Nigeria should immediately suspend

all further UN deployments. This should be followed by a graduated withdrawal of all Nigerian troops operating under the UN flag. There might be a case for a small, token presence, in carefully chosen theatres. Prof. Viola Onwuliri concluded that: "It is time for Nigeria to stop seeing foreign troop deployments as risking lives in the service of an ideal. 'Rather, they should be seen as being tightly coupled with vital foreign policy objectives, like for instance, securing Nigeria's construction crews in developing states. As Nigeria's economic interests expand globally, it is likely that the need for such deployments will increase" (Afrique en Ligne, 2009). These trenchant arguments were contested by others who underline the importance of ideals, the contribution of peacekeeping to Nigeria's soft power, and the importance of differentiating itself from other great powers (Daily Trust, 2010). Supporters of peacekeeping say the decisions to participate in a particular mission always take into account the question of national interest, affordability and the domestic requirements. They rebut the argument that national interests are not factored into the peacekeeping policy by pointing to the complex decision making that goes in responding to the requests from the UN for Nigerian contributions (Abdurrahman, n.d.).

The problem, however, might lie in the fact that Nigeria does not have a strategic understanding of peacekeeping (Taiwo, 2009). In the mid-1970s, Obasanjo saw peacekeeping as a means to project Nigerian influence on the global stage taking into account the particular context of the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union. The resurgence of Nigeria's peace operations since the 1990s has not been based on an overall strategic conception of Nigeria's interests. On the foreign policy side, it was seen as a useful device to promote Nigeria's interests at the UN. On the military side, peacekeeping was never a major priority for the Nigerian armed forces amidst the multiple challenges of internal security and territorial defence. There is no evidence despite its expansive participation in the peacekeeping over the decades, that the leadership of the Nigerian armed forces has recognised the value of codifying this experience, learning lessons from it and leveraging it for Nigeria's broader defence needs. Although some military analysts have highlighted the professional value of peacekeeping for the Nigerian armed forces, there has been no attempt to learn the lessons and create effective capabilities for such missions abroad. The Ministry of Defence has been a reluctant leader and shaper of Nigeria's strategic policy and has not made any effort to create a coherent set of guidelines and manage the complex inter-agency process involved. The political leadership, which was more focused on the diplomatic value of peacekeeping, has not sought to articulate a strategic rationale for Nigeria's international peacekeeping efforts. In contrast, the South Africa political leadership has proclaimed that international peacekeeping is an important element of PLA's new historic missions (Ayodele, 2012). The PLA, in turn, has embarked on a purposeful mission to develop peacekeeping capabilities, now seen as an integral part of its growing role in securing its interests beyond its shores (Nnoli, 1989). Nigeria's approach, in contrast, has been

driven by the inertia of an inherited tradition and short-term tactical considerations. Developed, the notion that Nigeria is a net security provider is beginning to gain some traction (Ogwu and Alli, 2007). Amidst the changing external context of international peacekeeping operations and the evolution of the domestic debate, Nigeria is likely to eventually recast its approach that was defined in the 1970s and modified somewhat in the years after the Cold War. The pressure for change will not come from a review of its peacekeeping tradition or its positions in multilateral forums. The sources of transformation, instead, are likely to be the new imperatives of Nigeria's national security, the changing nature of its great-power relations, the logic of maintaining a stable balance of power in the African region, its growing military capabilities, the renewed awareness of Nigeria's role as regional security provider and an increasing weight in international system. The nature of its participation in international peace operations can only be one element of the inevitable change in Nigeria's strategic conception of its place in the region and the world.

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