NIGERIA AND PEACEKEEPING PROCESS IN AFRICA: THE DARFUR PEACE PROCESS IN SUDAN

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ABSTRACT

The recurrence of intra-state conflict in various regions of the world, most especially in developing states, has put to task the word sustainable peace. More than any region of the world, sub-Saharan Africa remains mired in series of intractable conflicts between state and ethno-national groups with devastating human and development costs. However, of all Africa's conflicts, the conflict in Sudan has remained the most intractable. Numerous third party institutions have intervened in the Sudanese conflict, while most of the peace accords so brokered have been violated repeatedly by parties to the conflicts. Nigeria, in line with its national foreign policy objectives, has had a long history of involvement in the Sudanese peace process. It is in recognition of Nigeria's long commitment that this article tries to assess her contribution to the efforts towards the crafting of sustainable peace in the Sudan. In specific term, it assesses the pivotal role that Nigeria has played in the peace processes in the Sudan vis-à-vis the humanitarian disaster before the eventual independence of the Southern part.

Key words: Peacekeeping; Sudan; Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Recurrence and re-escalation of conflicts in various parts of the world, most especially in the developing states, has indeed made the word 'sustainable peace' an illusion. A lot can be said on the havoc wrecked by these conflicts on the people and the devastating effects on the natural environment. Regrettably, all efforts made to put an end to wars, conflict and crises around the globe yield little or no significant results since conflict recur and the proclivity of conflict remained undefeatable (Adegbite et al, 2005:2). Put simply, the past and recent events in the

Darfur region of Sudan reveal that ethno-religious conflict, as ever before, still very much predominate in the contemporary world.

Be that as it may, the place of Africa in the New Millennium is characterized by recurring instability, inter/intra-state wars, political and economic problems. The intensity and destructiveness of Africa's conflicts accelerated tremendously, posing complex challenges to the peaceful resolution of conflict in particular, and the advancement of peaceful co-existence between groups in general (Adar, 2004:247). Put differently, most visible manifestation of the problems facing the continent is the invidious and intractable proliferation of conflict. In the view of Akinsanya (2005:109), Africa continued to witness protracted civil wars which have taken the centre stage in the political lives of the continent, with attendant devastating consequence for peace, security and sustainable development.

Undoubtedly, if the idea and practice of searching for peace are as old as humanity, then it follows that the history of wars and conflicts, which are its harbingers, is older (Onoja, 1996:1). Given that scenario, there is hardly any doubt that the United Nations Security Council remains the World's principal body vested with the responsibility of maintaining of International Peace and Security (UN 2004:33). Notwithstanding the success of the United Nations in resolving numerous conflicts across the world, the situation of violent conflict in Africa, Darfur region of Sudan in particular, has become a monster to be tamed. The region has become a theater of violent conflict with high level of humanitarian disaster.

However, in all of the cases, comprehensive picture has shown that accommodation, reciprocity and negotiation have been adopted as the best strategy for the management of such conflictual state-group relationship (Rothchild, 1997:1). While negotiation and dialogue offer the best possible way-out in a state-group conflict, internal conflict as in the case of Sudan remains the most difficult of conflicts to negotiate. Ultimately, no continent better shows the difficulties involved in negotiating a peaceful end to internal conflict than Africa. Experience from the continent shows that negotiating a peaceful end to civil conflict is fraught myriad problems and difficulties. Many negotiation processes on the continent collapsed at last stage while controversies and crisis dogged others from inception. Some led to the signing of landmark

peace agreements, only for them to collapse at the implementation stage, thereby leading to the re-enactment of a new phase of violent conflict (Agbu, 2006:3). Experience of negotiating a peaceful end to conflicts in Israel, Yugoslavia, South–Africa, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Congo, DR, Liberia, Sierra–Leone, Coted' Ivore, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, and other African conflict spots shows that a successful negotiating process requires a great patient, flexibility, political commitment, and utmost sincerity by parties in such negotiations.

Of all the African civil wars therefore, none has proved highly elusive at resolving than the decades long civil conflicts that ravaged Sudan. The history of the conflicts in Sudan is littered with numerous failed attempts at brokering peace. Unlike any other conflicts in the continent, the Sudanese conflict and its various peace processes have consumed enormous human and material resources (Omede and Saka, 2005:380). The conflict also witnesses the greatest involvement, from within and outside the continent, of which Nigeria remains prominent. This was not unconnected with the ranking of Nigeria as the fourth country in terms of military deployment outside her borders on peace-keeping operations (Saliu, 1999:52), and its commitment towards the African problem.

Put differently, one tragic consequence of the Somalia syndrome, according to Annan (UN, 1998b:11), "was the failure of the international community to intervene in order to prevent genocide in Rwanda". The same foot-dragging attitude has been a defining feature of the international community's response to the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan. This, perhaps, informed the leadership role of Nigeria in the region. Nigerian involvement notwithstanding, the situation in Sudan was what characterized or defined the Somalia debacle and Rwandan Genocide. The question that readily comes to mind is why the longest civil war in Sudan? What are the efforts of Nigerian federal government to restore peace in the region? In view of this, the paper looks at the Humanitarian disaster vis-à-vis peace process agreement in Sudan and assesses the contribution of Nigerian state to the various peace processes.

With the above overview, the rest of this paper is organized into seven segments. The first is conceptual clarification of peace-keeping, the second segment is devoted to the concept of peace process, the third segment discusses historical pattern of the conflict, the fourth segment is

humanitarian disaster and peace process in the region, the fifth segment explains the Sudanese peace agreement and assesses Nigeria's contribution in Sudanese conflict, the sixth segment explains Nigeria and peace process in Sudan while the seventh segment focuses on the lessons learnt throughout the years of conflict in Darfur. Hurriedly put, the paper infers that in spite of the tremendous effort by Nigerian federal government to provide lasting political solution to the Sudanese conflict, the facts on ground reveal that much more should have been done not just by Nigeria but also by the other entities that constituted the third party to the crisis to prevent the worst humanitarian disaster in the Darfur region of Sudan.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF PEACE-KEEPING

Peacekeeping is a term mainly used to describe actions sponsored by the UN charter with primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. The Congo intervention was the only occasion where UN tried to act as an independent power in its own rights (UN. 1999:89). A traditional peacekeeping operation is established when parties to a conflict, typically two states, agree to the interposition of UN troops to uphold a ceasefire. Limited numbers of lightly armed troops are introduced and situated between the combatants, and they provide a symbolic, guarantor of the peace. The security council maintains authority over the operation, expressed through the secretary – general of the UN and the military commander, authorized under chapter 6 of the charter, although the term 'peacekeeping' is conspicuous by its absence. UN troops, voluntarily provided by member states, can use force in self-defence or in defence of their mandate. They are   to be impartial throughout the operation and derive their legitimacy from representing the international community as whole.

Examples of traditional peacekeeping operations includes that of Cyprus, which have separated the Greek and Turkish communities in 1964, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, disputed by India and Pakistan (1949) and in the Golan Heights, between Israel and Syria (UN Disengagement Observer Force, 1974). Often referred to as 'Blue Berets' or 'Blue Helmet', the military units in peacekeeping operation remain members of their own national armies with their own command and control, but serve under a UN- appointed local commander. For a peacekeeping operation to succeed, it needs to secure not only the co-operation of the conflicting

parties, but also of the international community, including regional and non-governmental organizations, donors, and members-states.

Be that as it may, in its traditional sense, peacekeeping meant conflict containment and it adopted the form of neutral outside assistance to mediate and encourage belligerent parties to disengage. Activities carried out under this arrangements include the negotiation of ceasefires verification of truces including troops withdrawals and/or disengagement, interposition of barriers between hostile parties, investigation and mediation of violations and creation of buffer monitoring zones (Charles, 2005:253).

In the view of Kirgis (cited in Fred Agwu, 2007:23), "Peace-keeping consists essentially of observer missions and lightly armed forces monitoring ceasefires, operating in an essentially static mode with the consent of the parties involved. It does not envisage involvement in an ongoing conflict and in some places can be adopted before any conflict breaks out".

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

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

Since joining the United Nation in 1960, Nigeria has consistently committed itself to the cause of peacekeeping and peacemaking, she sent her first troops to participate in the UN peace mission in the Congo, only days after its independence. Today, Nigeria leads the World International Peacekeeping of the 80 countries contributing troops to over 20 global operations, Nigeria has more than 6,800 men keeping peace outside its borders in places such as Bosnia Herzegovina, Iraq, Kuwait, Western Sahara, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda. Nigeria troops have also, served in Somalia, Mozambique and Cambodia, the Congo, Chad Lebanon, India Pakistan. The key thing in global peacekeeping is the men and women risking their lives in the interest of peace. Nigeria has more of those people than any other country in the world (the Guardian, May31, 2009). Put simply, it is Nigeria's belief that socio – economic development and integration in Africa can only be attained under an atmosphere of peace and stability.

The implication of Nigeria's participation in peacekeeping in Africa is that African's problem could eventually become Nigeria's problem as some of these African countries have a common boundary with Nigeria. For instance, Ghanaians once emigrated to Nigeria during its crisis in 1983, the crisis in Liberia eventually led to Charles Taylor's Asylum in Nigeria in 2006/2007 which tasked the purse of Nigerian federal government. All these external problems have a significant implication on the stability of the country. However, Nigeria cannot ignore African problems rather she must maintain the principle of Afrocentrism. This is so because; one out of every five Africans is a Nigerian. In the entire African continent, no national economy has the numerous potentials that the Nigerian economy has. Strategically, therefore, Nigeria has to be involved in crisis management in Africa (Abiola, A.L. and Salihu H.A. 1998:63 - 78). This is basically of security purpose. It is because of the importance of peacekeeping the the Nigerian federal government will continue to participate in conflict management in Africa. The situation in the Darfur region of Sudan is a reminder of Nigeria's continued commitment to peace-keeping in Africa.

THE CONCEPT OF PEACE PROCESS

Indeed, the totality of human experience over the ages has shown in practical reality that there can be no societal development and human security without peace. Thus, peace is conceptualized

not just as the absence of war and commotion, but also as the presence of Justice. This explains while Martin Luther King Jr (1968:12), posited that peace has become a value humanity has come to desire greatly. Whether one focuses on the American war of independence, the France revolution, the Nigeria civil war, the war in Darfur (Sudan), the story is the same, and that story is that war and violence "kill" peace, destroy human lives and property, retard the rate of development, and divert development resources to war execution (Alexander, 2007:2). In general, peace process may refer to peace building and conflict resolution. Peace building is a term used within the international development community to describe the processes and activities involved in resolving violent conflict and establishing a sustainable peace. It is an over arching concept that includes conflict transformation, restorative justice, trauma healing, reconciliation, development and leadership under aim by spirituality and religion (Winslade and Monk, 2002:2). It is similar in meaning to conflict resolution but highlights the difficult reality that the end of a conflict does not automatically lead to peaceful, stable social or economic development. A number of national and international organizations describe their activities in conflict zones as peace building. Peace building therefore includes the following:

a.   Re-integration of former combatants into civilian society

b.   Security Sector reform

c.   Strengthening the rule of law

d.   Improving technical assistance for democratic development

e.   Providing technical assistance for democratic development

f.   Promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques.

Conflict Resolution is a range of methods for alleviating or eliminating sources of conflict. The term "conflict resolution" is sometimes used interchangeably with the term dispute resolution or alternative dispute resolution (Bar, 2004:54). Processes of conflict resolution generally include negotiations, mediation and diplomacy. The processes of arbitration, litigation and formal compliant processes such as ombudsman processes are usually described with the term dispute

resolution, although some refer to them as "conflict resolution". Processes of mediation and arbitration are often referred to as alternative dispute resolution.

In the final analysis, peace process involves the various activities in the making of peace. As it is, peace building and conflict resolution become paramount in the process of achieving a sustainable peace in a troubled state.

HISTORICAL PATTERN OF THE CONFLICT IN SUDAN

The conflict in Sudan is one of the most problematic and longest running civil wars in the world today. Since 1983, Sudan has been stained by blood of 2.5 million dead and 7 million displaced (Time Magazine 2009:8). Historically, the conflict evolved from a rebellion marked by post-colonial characteristics to a new kind of war in which the control of natural resources plays a significant role. In fact, the sources of conflict in Sudan cannot be reduced simply into one dominating factor be it religious, political, economic, cultural or historic. Therefore, the conflict has to be viewed as resulting from interaction between various sources that originate from tradition of Arab domination of the South dated back to the first contact between the Turkish ruled North and the Southern Black African peoples in the early decades of the 80s (Aleksi, 2004:2).

Put differently, since the eruption of conflict in 2003, Darfur, Western Sudan, has been ravaged by killings, torture, destruction and rape . Despite internal outrage and demands around the globe to end the brutality, the deadly conflict continues. Darfur remains one of the world's worst human rights and humanitarian catastrophes. Civilians have become victim of egregious human rights violations, primarily at the hands of the government of Sudan and the Janjawid, and allied Militia. Together, they have been responsible for killings, torture, rape, detentions, forced displacement, the burning of homes and villages and deliberate destruction of crops and cattle. Rebel groups have also perpetrated killings, rape, looting, abductions and other human right abuses (ICG, 2008:105-17). This can be explained in the following epoch:

In February 2003, two opposition groups called the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) emerged in Darfur and attacked government troops. The

SLA and JEM stated their attacks were in protest of the government of Sudan's (GOS) failure to protect Local Villagers from attacks by nomadic groups; and economic marginalization of the region. After initial indication that the government of Sudan was seeking a peaceful solution, it chose instead to resolve the conflict by force, beginning in March 2003. Since that time the fighting has continued.

In 2003 and 2004, Amnesty International supplied some of the earliest documentation-eyewitness testimony from the ground-that warned of the impending catastrophe in Darfur. By July, the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) began deployment charged with the mandate to monitor and report, it attempted to provide some measure of security for civilians and aid workers in Darfur. With a force of less than 7,000 deployed by end of 2007, for a region the size of France, AMIS was under-equipped, with too few personnel on the ground and too limited a mandate to provide security for civilians. On September 18, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1564, which called for a commission of inquiry on Darfur to assess the conflict. Chad brokered negotiation in N'djamena between the Sudanese government and the two rebel groups, JEM and the SLA, leading to April 8 Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement. Other signatories were Chad and the African Union. The ceasefire was to come in effect from April 11, 2004, but Janjawid and rebel attacks continued (Human Right Watch, 2006:89).

In January 2005, the UN secretary general's Commission of Inquiry on Darfur issued a well-documented report that indicated there were some 1.6 million internally displaced persons as a result of the ongoing violence and more than 200,000 refugees from Darfur in neighboring Chad. The report asserted that Government of Sudan forces and allied militia had committed widespread war crimes against humanity, including murder, torture, mass rape, summary executions and arbitrary detention. The commission also determined that the Janwid militia operated alongside, or with ground or air logistical support from the government of Sudan's armed forces.

In 2006, the Darfur peace Agreement was signed between the governments of Sudan Liberation Army/Mini Minawi faction (SLA/MM). Only a few other armed factions have signed. Though most of the peace agreement has not been implemented, the control of some government posts

and areas of Darfur were handed over to the SLA/MM and to other factions (collectively known as "the signatories") that accepted the Darfur peace Agreement on August 31, the UN security council approved a resolution to send a New Peace keeping force of 17,300 to the region, but the Government of Sudan refused to consent to its implementation. In November, the UN Secretary-General brokered a compromise for Joint UN and African union Peace Keeping mission (IGC, 2004 11).

In 2007, the International Criminal Court (ICC) indicted two Sudanese men, Ahmed Haroun, Sudan's minister of Humanitarian Affaire, and Al; Kushayb, a JanJawi militia leader, on 51 counts of war crime and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur. The government of Sudan refused to cooperate with the ICC, and despite warrants remained free in Sudan. On September 25, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1769 authorizing the deployment of 26,000 peacekeepers and police under a UN – African Union hybrid mission in Darfur (UNAMID). Deployment began soon after on September 25, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1778 authorizing a European Union Mission in Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic (EUFOR) supported by a small UN Peacekeeping Mission (MINURCAT). EUFORMIRCAT deployment has been very slow going. Widespread violence and insecurity persist throughout the border.

On May 10, 2008, Darfur rebels launched an attack on the capital of Khartoum causing further instability within the region. The government of Sudan continued to carry out aerial and ground attacks with complete disregard for the protection of civilians. It is in connection with this that Sudanese President Omar al Bashir was wanted for crime against humanity. However, Amnesty international and other human rights organizations are now focusing on achieving the full deployment of UNAMID Force, which Sudan continues to obstruct that half of UNAMID is on the ground, while civilians from Darfur, Eastern Chad, and the Central African Republic continue to suffer ongoing mass displacement, killings, rape, and other religious human rights violations. Continued U.S and international action is essential to ensure a full and speedy UNAMID deployment, unhindered humanitarian access, and attention to the broader conflict region (F C G, 2009). Although, February 24, 2010 marked another historical record of Sudanese peace agreement as latest one was signed in Doha where president Al-Bashir posited

that the "war is over", yet the situation on ground needs proper commitment and reasonable implementation.

HUMANITARIAN DISASTER IN THE DARFUR REGION

Internal armed conflicts all over the world are mostly accompanied by forceful displacement of civilians. This appears like a military and political objective of such wars. Looting, arson and willful destruction of civilian livelihood had become both a means of and an end in such conflicts. In the same vein, rape sexual violence, genital mutilation and mass murder had become prime war tactics employed with the aim of annihilating group or groups in conflict. From Bosnia to Rwanda, Kosovo and presently Darfur, the world has been treated to an orgy or violence and willful destruction of human life and property without restriction (Nwolise, 2004:10).

Be that as it may, large scale mass killing, massacre of civilians and extra judicial killing perpetrated by the government forces and her allied militia (Janjaweed) continues to take place throughout Darfur. According to Adeniji (2004:2), "the Sudan's Darfur conflict is unfolding one of the worst humanitarian crisis. A pro-government Arab militia, popularly called the Janjaweed aided and abetted by the Sudanese government is believed to be behind what appeared to be ethic cleansing directed against the Darfur's black population. The pro-government Arab militia has been accused of organizing systematic rape, widespread killing and destroying of villages deliberately polluting sources of water supply, forcefully evicting people from their homes and carting away their properties including livestock. Although, there have been series of peace agreement in the region yet, the conflict is far from over. It resulted in two point five million (2.5million) dead and the displacement of more then seven million (7 million) people as internally displaced within Darfur and refugees in eastern Chad. Hence, it is the highest stage of humanitarian catastrophe.

However, it is not unconnected with the above that Sudanese President comrade Hassan Al-Bashir is wanted by International Criminal Court for war crimes. He is wanted on five counts charges of crimes against humanity including murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture

and rape. According to Time Magazine (2009:15) some of Al-Bashir's gruesome record includes:

a.   Most death as a result of war strategies (2.5million in Darfur and Southern Sudan)

b.   Most people rendered homeless (7million)

c.   Most villages burnt to the ground (at least 1,500 in Darfur alone) add to this, the untold thousands who have been raped and tortured.

The question from the above is that how can a sustainable peace be achieved in the face of a heavy humanitarian disaster perpetrated by the government of the country?

THE SUDANESE PEACE AGREEMENT: AN ASSESSMENT

Indeed, the signing of peace agreement in Darfur conflict of Sudan is not a new phenomenon. A contributory effort by international community and most African leaders has been employed to offer a lasting solution to crisis in Sudan, the facts on ground shows that, there is still much to cover. For instance, in the search for peace in the region, Abeche ceasefire agreement, Chad, under the mediation of the Chadian President Idriss Derby was signed. However, the Abeche ceasefire agreement collapsed before the end of the year, leading to the launching of a massive military offensive on rebel positions by the government and her allies Janjaweed militia group (Saka, 2007:144).

Following the collapse of the 2003 Abeche agreement, Nigeria led African Union (AU) came to support Chad in organizing a new round of negotiations between the government of Sudan and the two rebel groups to which foreign observers were invited due to the worst humanitarian situation in the region. On April 8, 2004 the Sudanese government, the Sudan liberation movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equity Movement (JEM), signed the N'djamena ceasefire agreement.

In furtherance of its efforts to broker a political settlement, the AU, under the chairmanship of Nigeria's president Obasanjo, hosted peace talks in Abuja between the parties to the conflict. According to ICC (2009:1), "While, the first round of the talks was inconclusive, the second round led to the signing of two protocols on humanitarian issues and the advancement of security on November 9, 2004. The third round of talks expected to lead to the signing of a 'Political protocol', was abandoned due to escalating violence." Subsequent rounds of talks were held in Abuja, under the mediation of the African Union with the leadership of Nigeria and in the presence of international community. After much negotiations the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), was signed by the government of Sudan and the faction of the Sudan liberation Army, led by Minnin Arkou Minawi (SLA/MM) on the 5th of May, 2006 (Jooma, 2006:7).

However, the May 2006 Darfur peace agreement was a failure, too limited in scope and signatories. Those who signed – the government and a few rebel factions – hurt the peace process. After a highly publicized opening ceremony in Sirte, Libya on 27th October, 2007, new peace talks were put on hold. A new Joint AU/UN mediator, former Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso, Djibrill Bassole, was appointed in June 2008, and the Arab League in September 2008 initiated a new effort to resolve the crisis with peace talks in Qatar (ICG, 2009:2). With this, the Darfur Peace Agreement appears to have failed whatever promise it held as a step towards ending violence and creating power – sharing structures when it was signed by the National Congress Party and a faction of the insurgent Sudan Liberation Army, has long since evaporated. There is no settlement, and the international community has struggled to unify its approach towards one. Meanwhile, the situation on the ground has been deteriorating. This is not unconnected with National Congress Party strategy of divide and rule policies, rebel groups have splintered. After years of suffering brutal raids by government forces and their proxy militias, civilians are increasingly at risk from rebel groups, as are aid workers, African Union peacekeepers and even internally displaced persons in the camps (ICG, 2009:1).

In view of the lapses, attacks by both government and rebel forces still continue. For instance, the ground attacks launched by the government in West Darfur in February 2008 in turn led to an assault on Khartoum by Justice and Equality movement (JEM) rebel "in mid-May 2008 left at least 200 dead and was a milestone in the Darfur conflicts, constituting the first military strike on

the capital since 30 years. An attack by government troops on an IDP camp in Kalma, Southern Darfur in August 2008 killed more than 30 IDP and drew widespread international condemnation. Meanwhile the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) in Khartoum continued to deny the gravity of the situation and pursue destructive policies in Darfur. At the same time, it has continued to resist key provisions in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the North – South war, thus triggering a crisis in that process, with heavy fighting between government and Southern troops paralyzing oil-rich Abyel in June 2008 (IGG, 2009:1).

With this state of affair in the Darfur region of Sudan, the test of the Darfur peace agreement lies in the implementation of its provisions for security and disarmament. Therefore, the world seems to be in dilemma as to whether the Sudanese peace agreement will be implemented as stipulated. This is contrary to what was experienced in both Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. The party to the conflicts was able to agree with the term of peace process. The same thing happened to Liberia which eventually led to Charles Taylor asylum in Nigeria. Also force could also be employed like the peace keeping in Yugoslavia. The question that really comes to mind is how can the warring factions and the parties involved in the conflict be brought together to understand the content of peace? When would peace reign in Sudan? Put differently, the question of 'sustainable peace' in Sudan remained a controversial debate, as foundation for durable peace remains fragile (UN, 2008:2).

NIGERIA AND THE SUDANESE PEACE PROCESS

No doubt, Nigeria's participation in international peace-keeping has been a consistent theme in the conduct of her foreign policy since the attainment of independence. In the view of Saliu (1998:110), "while it is true that the country had demonstrated her peace-keeping role in the 1970s and 1980s through the UN and OAU, the decade of the 1990s has witnessed a significant expansion in the circumference of Nigeria's participation in peace-keeping operations. In that way, Nigeria has contributed immensely to the Sudanese peace process particularly through the platform of international organizations, the country has sought to give practical expression to its objective of foreign policy dealing with the maintenance of international peace. Thus, since 1960 when Nigeria achieved independent statehood, she has sought to pursue certain foreign policy

objective within the context of its overall national interest (Ministry of External Affairs, 1991:29).

However, Nigeria's involvement in the Sudanese peace process stems from her belief that socio-economic development and integration in Africa can only be attained under an atmosphere of peace and stability. It was this firm belief that informed most of their actions and effort towards the maintenance of peace, security and stability on the continent (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986, Akinyemi, Agbi and Otunbanjo, 1989, Saliu, 1999). Put simply, Nigeria's record as a vanguard of peace, within and outside the continent, speaks for itself (Saliu, 2000:30, Saliu, 1999:29 - 31).

Be that as it may, Nigeria has, for a long time, been a major stakeholder in the Sudan peace process. The major reason for this commitment has to do with the principle of Afrocentrism of Nigeria's foreign policy. Not only that, political reasons cannot be overlooked as African problem could eventually create instability in Nigeria being the neighbour. The benefit inherent in this is that security unfortunately does not carry a price tag (Abiola and Salihu, 1998:63–78). The argument therefore is that a crisis in neighbouring countries could eventually turn Nigeria to a refugee camp. Hence the successive regimes in Nigeria have been strongly involved in efforts directed at finding lasting solutions to the long-running civil war in Sudan. As an active interested party, Nigeria has hosted peace conferences on the Sudanese civil war on two occasions. Nigeria was strongly involved in the making of the Addis Ababa peace agreement of 1972, even though she was not a major mediator. After the peace deal was successfully accomplished, Nigeria closely monitored the implementation of the agreement before it finally collapsed. Upon the collapse of the 1972 agreement, Nigeria, in collaboration with the then Organization of African Unity was at the fore-front of efforts to bring the warring sides back to negotiating table. Since the inception, the IGAD collaborators and partners are resolving the foremost intractable conflict on the continent (Saka, 2002:96).

In furtherance of its efforts to broker a political settlement, the former Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo, a long time collaborator in the Sudanese peace process has vigorously pursued the realization of lasting peace in Sudan (Deng, 1998). The President attempted to convene in 2001 a Southern Sudan Political Force conference in Abuja, aimed at helping

Southern Sudanese leaders reach a local consensus on future peace negotiations. A possible national conference was envisioned as the immediate step after the Southern conference. Although these planned conference failed to materialize, the attempts offered, according to Alex De Waal was "the most promising peace initiative for some years" (ICG, 2002:196). Simply put, Nigeria continues her support for the IGAD process until it delivered the peace agreement of January 9, 2005, even though the conference was expected to materialize in 2001.

More importantly, Obasanjo acting in his capacity as African Union chairperson then, appointed former Nigerian Head of State, General Abdul-Salam Abubakar, as his special envoy to Chad and Sudan on the Darfur conflict. The special envoy visited Darfur, for assessment of the humanitarian crisis and the report of the visit, was a major catalyst that spurred the AU to intensify efforts for peaceful negotiation (Adeniji, 2004:10). This gesture encourages dialogue between rebel groups and the Central government in Abuja in August 2004 for peace talks. This led to the signing of Abuja peace agreement and consequently leads to Darfur peace agreement. This therefore shows that Nigeria devoted enormous time, human and material resources to the Sudanese peace process. With this, one can posit that, Nigeria stays committed to the peace process through thick and thin than any other state in the continent.

However, while the history of Nigeria's participation in peacekeeping and accompanying diplomacy have been appreciable, the country has not really come to terms with realities of new global polities. These realities include: the reluctance of dominant global powers to be involved in African security issue, the importance of mass mobilization to support peace keeping effort and the conduct of the domestic economy. The current posture of the African countries to accept and appreciate the leadership role of the country is another topic for debate. Hence, the controversy between or among the citizens remains unresolved, as some Nigerians agitate for the abolition of afrocentrism in Nigeria's foreign policy. The argument is that if Nigeria has a poor economic structure and she cannot maintain peace at home, then why peace keeping abroad? In that instance, Nigeria must find a diplomatic way of getting the African countries to support her leadership ambition in the world. The criticisms, notwithstanding, Nigeria has to be involved in crisis management in Africa. Strategically, Africa's problem could eventually become Nigeria's problem as some of these African countries share a common boundary with Nigeria. Also, the

situation in the Darfur region of Sudan is noticeable signal for Nigeria to stay committed with conflict management in Africa.

The table below shows the involvement of Nigeria in the Sudanese peace process:

Table 1:   Nigeria's Involvement in Sudan Peace Process

Peace Process	Parties	Venue	Movers of the Process	Date	Outcome
Abuja Peace Conference I	Government of Sudan, SPL/A Mainstream SPLM/A Nasir Facuc	Abuja, Nigeria	Nigeria Government	26 May – 4 June, 1992	Partly successful. A joint resolution was reached
Abuja Peace Conference II	Government Sudan, SPL/A Mainstream SPLM/A Nasir Facuc	Abuja, Nigeria	Nigeria Government	1 – 7 May 1993	Successful. Led to discussion on power and wealth sharing
Abuja Peace Talk I on Darfur	Govt. of Sudan SLM/A and JEM	Abuja, Nigeria	Nigeria Government and the African Union	August 2004	Laid the groundwork for talks on security arrangement and humanitarian access
Abuja Peace talk II on Darfur	Government of Sudan SLMM/A and JEM	Abuja, Nigeria	Nigeria Government and the African Union	Sept – Dec. 2007	Lead to the signing of the Humanitarian Access and Security Arrangement
The Libyan Initiative	Government of Sudan Libya, Egypt, Chad, Nigeria and African Union peace and Security council	Tripoli, Libya	Libya and Nigeria Government	October 2004	It produced a general statement of support for AU mediation efforts on Darfur, in Abuja

	chairperson				
Abuja Peace Talks III – IV on Darfur	Government of Sudan, SLM/A Minni Minnawi Faction SLM/A AbdulWahid Nour faction and JEM	Abuja Nigeria	Nigeria Government and the African Union	Nov. 2005	Led to the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and SLM/A mini Minnawi faction

Source: Saka Luqman, (2005).

No doubt, the contribution of Nigeria towards lasting sustainable peace in Sudan cannot be overemphasized. Put simply, Nigeria was among the first countries to send troops to the troubled Western Region of Sudan. She has the largest troop contingent support to the then African Union mission in Sudan-AMIS (HRW, 2006:52). However, the Nigeria contribution to the crisis in Darfur Region of Sudan appears meaningful and reasonable, the facts and data on ground reveals that much should have been done. This problem is attributed as the worst humanitarian disaster and non-implementation of peace agreement by Omar Al-Bashir's government is also a problem.

CONCLUSION

This piece examined the peace-keeping situation in the Darfur region of Sudan. Emphasis however, is on the contribution of Nigeria towards the enhancement of sustainable peace in the region. Simply put, more than any other state on the continent, Nigeria stays committed to the peace process through thick and thin in the Darfur Region of Sudan. Although the crisis in Darfur continued to defy all efforts aimed at achieving a lasting peace, but the commitment of Nigeria to the peace process in the region is commendable. Relieve may have eventually come the way of parties to the crisis with the independent status granted to Southern Sudan, but the strategic role that Nigeria played in the process cannot be ignored. This further explains Nigeria's big brother role on the continent of Africa and also lends credence to the assertion that Nigeria remains a significant actor in global peace keeping.

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