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Peacekeeping From a Realist Viewpoint: Nigeria and the OAU Operation in CHAD

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A successful multinational peacekeeping operation needs the cooperation of states willing to contribute men and women to field the mission. The Nigerian government, located in the new capital of Abuja, is the most frequent African provider of observers, police, and military contingents for multinational peacekeeping operations around the globe. Between 1964 and 1997, Nigeria contributed personnel to a total of 23 multinational peacekeeping missions —12 on the African continent and 11 outside of the continent. The Nigerian peacekeepers have served in missions fielded by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). All nine Nigerian prime ministers or presidents, military and civilian, have either personally participated in a peacekeeping operation or have held the title of commander in chief of the Nigerian armed forces during an Abuja supported peacekeeping mission. Why would a relatively new and underdeveloped state such as Nigeria participate so heavily in international peacekeeping operations?

The realist and idealist views of international relations provide interpretations for Nigerian participation in international peacekeeping. Realists believe that the center of international relations involves states struggling over conflicting national interests. States constantly attempt to increase their power, maintain their power, or demonstrate power (Rourke 151). Thus, peacekeeping would be an attempt to exert state power through the introduction of a multinational military force. Idealists, on the other hand, believe that states do not have to struggle over conflicting interests. International relations should be based on cooperation and moral standards (Rourke 156). Idealists would see peacekeeping as a cooperative effort to halt hostilities in order to allow negotiators to settle a crisis. However, statesmen rarely practice one form exclusively over the other. The realist view offers a better explanation for Nigerian peacekeeping contributions on the continent of Africa while the idealist

view offers a better explanation for Nigerian military contributions outside of the African continent.

It can be argued from a realist point of view that Nigerian contributions to multinational peacekeeping operations on the African continent are extensions of Nigerian foreign policy attempts to increase, maintain, or demonstrate power. What Abuja is not able to accomplish through negotiations or threats, it may be able to perform via the use of international military efforts including peacekeeping. In order to fully understand this point, one must review how Nigerian politicians and academics view their country's African policies.

Ambassador Ibrahim A. Gambari, Nigeria's foreign minister under Major-General Buhari, and Margaret Vogt, a senior Research Fellow at the government sponsored Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, advocate the use of a geographical based "concentric circles" framework when examining Nigerian foreign policy on the African continent. The framework, originally devised to understand Nigerian defense policy, has been expanded to include the political and economic dimensions of foreign policy (Ekoko 133). In explaining the utilization of concentric circles, Vogt writes that:

> Nigeria cannot take on itself the responsibility of guaranteeing African security without first ensuring its own territorial boundaries, of the states contiguous to it, of the West African sub-region, and then one can operate with confidence at the regional [African continent] level (Vogt 94).

The framework divides Nigerian foreign policy goals in Africa into three geographical regions — the core, the West African sub-region, and the rest of Africa. The first circle, referred to as the "core" by Vogt and the "innermost circle" by Gambari, includes Nigeria itself and the contiguous states of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The second circle refers to the other states in West Africa or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region. The final circle represents the African states not included in the other categories (Gambari 230 and Vogt 94-95).

Although the concentric circles model is helpful for foreign policy analysis, a modification based on another geographical framework

advocated by C.M.B. Utete is even more useful. He places the four states bordering Nigeria into the second category (or sub-regional area) rather than in the core area. This modification allows for a review of the foreign policy aims which directly affect the physical territory, people or government of Nigeria to be separated from an examination of interests in other states.

For the purposes of this research, the framework begins with the core goals which center on Nigeria itself. Utete's core category refers to the security and preservation of the state's territorial integrity and independence (Utete 47). Thus, the core value refers to foreign policy goals related to the protection and preservation of Nigeria and Nigerians. The second category includes the states in the core country's perceived sub-region of interest, namely West Africa. The third category, continental issues, matches the last grouping under the concentric circles model and includes the African states not listed under sub-regional issues.

According to the model, Nigerian interests intensify the closer a country is situated to its borders. Nigeria, in order to maintain its security and project power, uses multinational peacekeeping as a tool to settle crises that could have an impact on its foreign policy goals. States outside of the African continent tend to play a smaller role in Nigerian power politics than those on the continent.

Realist based foreign policy descriptions do not fully explain Nigeria's involvement in every peacekeeping operation since 1960. A review of Nigeria's foreign policy pronouncements and a national conference on peacekeeping reveals an idealist rationale behind its contributions to international peacekeeping operations outside of the African continent. Some Nigerians view their participation in international peacekeeping as the result of treaty obligations. Second, international conflict is damaging to global political and economic relations and all states should be willing to pull their weight in the attempts to check such turmoil. These statements warrant further explanation.

First, Nigerians have viewed contributions to multinational peacekeeping as treaty obligations. If a state joins an international organization, it should pull its weight in the work of that body and not be a "free rider". Dr. E. I. Nwogugu, a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, commented during a Nigerian national conference on peacekeeping that "Nigeria is obliged to send out a peacekeeping force

in accordance with treaty obligations, especially as, under Article 25 of the UN Charter, all members of the UN agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the Charter" (Nwogugu 17).

Many Nigerians also view international conflict as damaging to all states on the globe. In response, international peacekeeping is seen as a tool to stabilize a military crisis while negotiators seek a solution to the outbreak of hostilities. Therefore, it is in the interest of all countries to support the formation and fielding of peacekeeping operations which can provide the conditions conducive for conflict resolution. Nigerian scholar G. O. Olusanya stated that "it is in the pursuit of world peace that Nigeria has taken part in important peacekeeping operations [outside of the African continent]" (Olusanya 86). Dr. A. Bolaji Akinyemi, a former Nigerian foreign minister, remarked that:

> it is not Western Europe alone [in contrast to the Soviet Union and United States which rarely contributed to peacekeeping missions prior to 1989 due to Cold War politics] which has the responsibility of playing this [peacekeeping] role. In a situation where the survival of the world is threatened, states, no matter how far away from the scene of conflict, cannot ignore this threat and cannot profess the luxury of burying their heads in the sand, ostrichwise....Underdeveloped states may of course claim, quite wrongly in my view, that there is no role for them to play....For our part at the Institute [Institute of International Affairs in Lagos], we will not be tired of reminding Nigerians that the boundary of the world is not at Idiroko or Sokoto or Maiduguri or Calabar. We will never be tired of reminding Nigerians that the boundary of the world is not just the ECOWAS sub-region or even the African continent (Akinyemi 2).

This article will now turn to a brief review of Nigerian peacekeeping participation in Chad. The Nigerian rationale behind this African operation was based on a realist viewpoint of international relations under the concentric circle model rather than idealist principles.

Nigeria organized the 1981-1982 OAU peacekeeping operation in Chad and contributed approximately half of the total manpower devoted to the mission.

The chaos in Chad stemmed from two sources — one internal and the other external to the country. Internally, the Chadian civil war evolved into a feud between major clan and political faction leaders. By the late 1970s, the conflict can be seen as a struggle between Goukouni Weddeye and Hissene Habre with other leaders swearing allegiance to one of the two men. Nigeria, desiring to end the civil war across its border, sponsored an agreement known as the Lagos Accords in 1979. The various political factions formed a coalition government under the nominal leadership of Goukouni as a result of the agreement. Habre split from the coalition in 1980, withdrew to Sudan with his faction, and initiated a new phase of the civil war.

The turmoil in Chad attracted the attention of three external powers. France, the former colonial master of Chad, desired to protect its political and economic interests in the country. Libya, interested in the potentially mineral rich Aouzou strip and later political union, viewed the chaos as a prime opportunity to spread its influence. The United States under President Reagan perceived any involvement of Libya's Colonel Qadaffi outside of his state's borders as a challenge to the West. Thus, Libya's involvement in the Chad conflict ignited American interests and concerns in the country. All three states became even more active in Chad after Habre's renewal of the civil war in 1980. Libya approached Goukouni with offers of assistance while France and the United States courted Habre.

The instability of Chad and the attraction of external states to the area interfered with Nigerian foreign policy goals. President Shagari of Nigeria remarked at the 1980 OAU summit that his country had a "legitimate interest and concern about the grave situation in Chad" (Tijjani and Williams 53). Chad directly affected Nigeria's core value and sub-regional goals.

Core Value

The renewed turmoil in Chad interfered with Nigeria's needs for internal security. Chadian refugees burdened Abuja's financial resources

and endangered the lives of Nigerian citizens. The conflict also provoked Islamic unrest in northern Nigeria and led to a spillover of the violence from Chad into northeastern Nigeria. General Gowon, a former president of Nigeria, regarded West Africa as the first line of defense of Nigerian territorial integrity (Aluko 196). Former Nigerian External Affairs Minister Ibrahim Gambari summarized the direct threat to his country by the conflict in Chad when he remarked in 1984 that "Chad is not a theoretical case, it is a very real problem. What happens there affects us directly" (Akinrinade, "Threats" 55).

Refugee Issues

Nigeria took the conflict in Chad seriously. Each time the civil war intensified, thousands of refugees streamed across the international borders into Sudan, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Niger, Libya, and Nigeria. The largest number of refugees fled the country when the conflict shifted to the region around N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, forcing people to flee across the Chari River into Cameroon or further west into Nigeria. By 1981, the unregistered refugees in Nigeria's Borno state numbered somewhere between 30,000 and 110,000. The officials were not sure how many refugees entered Nigeria due to the Chadians' habit of melting into the rural population, with whom many were ethnically related, and/or taking refuge in remote areas ("Tragedy" 421).

The registered refugee population became a burden on the Nigerian government which did not initially receive any outside assistance from the United Nations or Western donors. As the numbers increased, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) established an office in Maiduguri in an attempt to assist Nigeria and to help prepare a repatriation program for late 1981. However, many of the Chadian refugees supported Habre and refused to be repatriated to a situation in Chad where no one could guarantee their safety from Goukouni's allies. By December 1981, only 600 refugees had taken advantage of the repatriation program while many others did return home on their own ("Tragedy" 422).

Besides being a financial burden which Nigerian officials declared as "taxing their patience", the refugees were also a threat to the security of the state ("Flurry" 10475). Chadian refugees were often armed

due to the proliferation of weapons in their home country. Some armed refugees turned to banditry in Nigeria making travel in rural eastern Borno state hazardous and all were seen as potential pawns subject to the manipulation of external enemies of Nigeria (Sesay 14 January 1991). Clashes with armed Chadian refugees peaked in October 1982 when Nigeria blamed the former for disturbances in Kano, Maiduguri, and Kaduna (Baker 85).

Conflict Spillover

In addition to a refugee problem, Nigeria faced armed Chadian dissidents who periodically crossed the border and attacked Nigerian civilians, forcing a military reinforcement of the Borno state border area ("Flurry" 10475). "Chadian bandits" periodically "deprived" Nigerian fishermen of their catch, rustled cattle, and killed Nigerian citizens (Nigeria 3).

Nigeria displayed concern as late as February 1981 that hostilities in Chad could spread across the border as various factions, including Habre's Northern Armed Forces (FAN), retreated before Goukouni and his ally, the Libyan army ("Strong" 10399). Ambassador Olu Sanu, the Secretary of the Lagos Accords Chad Committee, reaffirmed this concern when he remarked to the author that Nigeria feared a spillover effect from the civil war in Chad (18 January 1991). However, Habre retreated into western Sudan where he was covertly welcomed and re-supplied as a counter to Libya. Despite crossing an international border, Habre's presence prompted Libyan military action in Sudan which substantiated Nigerian concern about conflict spillover across frontiers. Following Habre's defeat of Goukouni in 1982, Nigerian concerns were fully realized when its troops clashed with those of N'Djamena in the Lake Chad region, resulting in the officially reported deaths of at least nine Nigerian and seventy-five Chadian soldiers (Nigeria 3).

Nigerians did not trust the French military units that were based in Chad until 1980, but having Libyan military forces so close was intolerable. The Libyan presence in Chad impacted on Nigeria's core values of security, territorial integrity and self-preservation. Libya viewed the Chadian conflict as an opportunity to spread its influence into

Sub-Saharan Africa (Ndovi 146-147). Nigeria viewed the fundamentalist Islamic riots in Kano by the Maitatsine sect in December 1980 as having Libyan roots (Adebayo 29 and Irelewuyi 25). Nearly one thousand people were killed in Kano before calm could be restored to the area. Two months later, Nigeria and other West African states ordered Libya to close its embassies following their conversion to "People's Bureaus" that many believed would become centers for Libyan instigated destabilization (Baker 84).

Nigeria, like many states with an army of occupation on the other side of its border, had to consider the possibility of armed attacks or subversion across the frontier. Although the Libyan army did not threaten Nigeria while in Chad, Tripoli did have a reputation for military adventurism in Africa. Well equipped Libyan soldiers occupied Chad's Aouzou Strip in 1973, engaged in a brief border war with Egypt in 1977, intervened in the Tanzanian-Ugandan War in 1978-1979, and frequently violated Sudanese airspace and territory in pursuit of Chadian factions including Habre's FAN. Tripoli also practiced a policy of aiding dissident groups in other states. Between 1975 and the 1980 Libyan intervention in Chad, Tripoli assisted dissidents in Niger, Sudan, Tunisia, Somalia, Egypt, Zaire, and the Western Sahara (LeMarchand "Introduction" 9).

Olajide Aluko informs readers that one of the lessons of the Nigerian civil war included the "need to have friendly governments in neighboring countries" in order to eliminate interference in Nigerian domestic issues ("The Civil War" 178-179). Nigerian interest in Chad's internal turmoil, French intervention, and Libya's military support for Goukouni resulted from this concern to have friendly as well as stable governments in neighboring states.

Sub-Regional Goals

General Gowon stated that the West African subsystem was Nigeria's "special area of interest" (Aluko *Essays* 234). This "interest" included regional economic cooperation and integration with which Nigeria stood "to benefit greatly from the increased trade" (Wright 95). The civil war in Chad had implications for Nigeria's attainment of regional foreign policy goals. As discussed earlier in this study, Abuja requires political and economic stability in West Africa in order to

promote its own self-development and security. In order to build regional economic cooperation under its leadership, Nigeria needed to reduce any external influence in the area which normally increased during periods of instability as in Chad.

Associated with the need for internal stability is a concern about external military intervention in West Africa. The two are related since an unstable state can attract external military involvement while foreign intervention can promote or prolong destabilization in a country.

Regional Economic Development

Instability and civil war in Chad had a negative impact on Nigeria's attempts to promote regional economic development in the Lake Chad area. Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria formed the Chad Basin Commission in 1964 to coordinate the utilization of valuable water resources and to protect the environment in this Sahelian region. However, the turmoil promoted by the civil war served to weaken the organization due to a lack of security in the area around Lake Chad (Ofoegbu 87-88). In addition, when the Chadian civil war flared up in 1979, the Commission's records were destroyed during an attack on the headquarters building in N'Djamena. The signatory states found enforcement of agreements in the region impossible since the Chadian government in N'Djamena did not effectively control its territory and water assets. Local Chadians, acting independently of the weak central government in N'Djamena, often ignored restrictions on water usage and boundary demarcations (Nigeria 3).

Instability at the Chadian central government level helped promote a disagreement with Nigeria over their common border across the shrinking Lake Chad. As new islands rose above the receding water, the two states originally agreed to conduct joint border patrols to ensure citizens of each country remained on their respective sides of the international frontier. However, according to an official Nigerian government document, "this arrangement broke down with the breaking down of law and order in the Republic of Chad" (Nigeria 3). Border tensions culminated in early 1983 when Nigerian and Chadian "national" soldiers of the Habre government clashed while the latter were conducting anti-rebel operations in the Lake Chad region (Nigeria 3).

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French Military Intervention

The civil war attracted the attention of France — the former colonial ruler of Chad and, according to former Nigerian External Affairs minister Akinyemi, the "number one enemy of Africa" (*West Africa* 12 Oct 87 p 2045). France, whose motivations include economic, strategic, and cultural concerns, has maintained closer relations with its former colonies in Africa than have the other former colonial powers (Martin 9 and Botte 4). Nigeria lies in the heart of what I. William Zartman calls the "Active Zone" of French domination in Africa ("Africa" 43). Paris, according to Zartman, maintains relations with Africa based on three zones.

The Active Zone stretches from Senegal to Zaire and is an area of French economic and political dominance ("Africa" 43). All four states that border Nigeria are listed in the Active Zone. The second area, the Passive Zone, covers the states southeast of Zaire which attract less French interest because they were not French colonies. The Mixed Zone, the third grouping, includes states along the Mediterranean and the Red Sea some of which experienced French colonization while others did not (Zartman, "Africa" 50-53).

The significance of the Active Zone to French foreign policy can be seen in the military relations between Paris and the states in the area. France maintains defense arrangements with eight African states — six in the Active Zone; technical military assistance agreements with twenty-five African states — thirteen in the Active Zone; permanent troop basing rights with five African states — four in the Active Zone; and between 1977 and 1979, launched or continued five military operations in Africa — all in the Active Zone (Chipman 23). France, which mans military garrisons in the Active Zone states of Senegal, Gabon, Cote d'Ivoire, and the Central African Republic, has not hesitated to deploy or threaten to deploy these forces when its perceived interests are at stake (Chaigneau 53). Between 1977 and the 1979 unilateral Nigerian peacekeeping operation in Chad, Paris militarily intervened twice in Zaire (1977 and 1978); reinforced its detachment in Senegal in support of Mauritania against the POLISARIO (1977-1978); maintained a garrison in Chad; and supported a coup in the Central African Republic (1979) (Moose 68-84).

Nigeria has never fully trusted French ambitions in the region. During the Nigerian civil war, France and many francophone states actively supported the breakaway region of Biafra as a means of reducing the potential power of the anglophone state (Mazrui and Tidy 206). The francophone states of the Active Zone have always been wary of their giant anglophone neighbor's ambitions and dominating army (Nicol 12 June 1990 and Wright 107). These francophone countries still look to France for their security in this Zone as shown by the number of defense agreements and the basing of French troops in the area ("Summits" 52). Nigeria faced the implied threat of French military intervention after becoming embroiled in a brief border dispute with Cameroon in May 1981. France "rattled its sabers" by conducting a series of naval maneuvers with Cameroon and thus persuaded the Shagari government to move quickly to a diplomatic settlement of the potential crisis (Bach 82).

A major goal of Nigerian foreign policy in Chad as well as the rest of West Africa has been to minimize the "corruptive" influence of France (Sesay 14 January 1991). General Gowon mentioned that Nigeria should do everything possible "to stop African countries [from] being used as tools by imperialists [e.g. France -- author] ..." and he added that if Nigerian persuasion failed to change African countries from allowing imperialist intervention then "other methods" would be employed (Aluko *Essays* 240).

In order to promote its regional foreign policy goals, Nigeria needed to eliminate the instability in Chad and the resulting French military presence the turmoil attracted. Nigeria's regional requirements prompted the Kano and Lagos Accords and a 1979 unilateral peacekeeping operation to replace French soldiers in Chad before the OAU operation in 1981.

Libyan Military Intervention

Libyan adventures in Chad, like French interventions, countered Nigerian sub-regional foreign policy goals. Unlike France, Libya did not have a historical role in Western Africa and thus exhibited a different set of priorities. Libya's military interventions and aid programs in Chad can be seen in support of Tripoli's foreign policy goals of establishing a Tripoli dominated Sahelian state; securing the Aouzou Strip and its

potential mineral wealth; and propping up "friendly" and/or anti-Western governments. Tripoli's actions helped prolong and intensify Chad's civil war through support for Goukouni's faction.

The attempts of Colonel Qadaffi to establish a greater Sahelian state made a considerable impact on Nigeria. The formation of a greater Sahelian state would present a new, direct challenge to stabilization efforts in the area since Nigeria would face economic and political competition from a rival regional hegemon. To make matters worse, the new regional hegemon would be under the guidance of a man who has demonstrated a zeal for military and political adventures in other states. Libya, under Qadaffi, exhibits a history of aborted or unsuccessful political mergers with other Islamic states. Failed Libyan mergers in Africa prior to the 1981 attempt with Chad include agreements with the states of Egypt (1972), Algeria (1973), and Tunisia (1974) (LeMarchand "Introduction" 7). However, the 1981 declaration of a political merger between Tripoli and N'Djamena directly challenged Nigeria's perceived area of interest and established the possibility of a permanent Libyan presence on the border of the state.

Libyan interests also stemmed from the desire to annex the Aouzou Strip in northern Chad. The contest over the Aouzou Strip resulted from a historical border dispute dating back to 1899; the potential mineral wealth of the area; the need for a southern security zone; the desire to reunite a divided ethnic group; and the personal pride of the charismatic leader, Qadaffi. Libya took advantage of the Chadian civil war and the removal of French soldiers from the northern Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti (BET) to occupy the Aouzou Strip in 1973.

Tripoli's interest in the Aouzou Strip became a springboard for further moves in Chad and the establishment of another occupation army on Nigeria's border. In mid 1980 when a French military intervention force withdrew from Chad, Tripoli used the occasion to physically intervene on behalf of Goukouni's coalition against Habre's FAN and in January 1981 announced a proposed political merger of the two states.

Libya originally worked with Nigeria to remove the French army from Chad. However, Qadaffi surprised Nigeria with his 1980 unilateral intervention in Chad on behalf of Goukouni. Nigeria, relying on diplomacy, refused to directly condemn the Libyan occupation until Tripoli and N'Djamena announced the proposed political merger in January 1981. Once Tripoli declared the new political merger, Libyan

soldiers became even more intolerable than French troops had been in Chad and Nigeria actually coordinated its policy with France in the attempt to remove the occupation army across its border.

Qadaffi demonstrated in Uganda (1978-1979) and Chad that he would not hesitate to use his military, including the African recruited Islamic Legion, to aid friends on the continent (Foltz "Libya's Military" 62). Nigeria took this observation into consideration and the removal of the Libyan army after the announced political merger became an important objective of the Shagari government (Tijjani and Williams 53).

Nigeria needed to intervene and stabilize the civil strife in Chad. Ofoegbu and Ogbuagu identified a problem facing Nigerian planners. How could Nigeria justify a military intervention in the domestic affairs of another African state? A peacekeeping operation offered a logical choice since it presented the picture of a peaceful, legitimate source of military intervention. Nigeria decided to act to restore the status quo in its neighbor but rather than overtly intervene with military forces, the government and military chose to separate the warring factions with a "peacekeeping force". The image of multinational soldiers under the banner of an international organization to separate the warring Chadian factions presented a more acceptable tone than a unilateral Nigerian invasion. Ofoegbu remarked in 1978 that:

> ...Nigeria found itself in great difficulty, justifying any Nigerian action likely to be interpreted to mean interference in the internal affairs of other African states [e.g. Chad -- author]...and required limited intervention by Nigeria in order to restore order, normalcy, and good neighborliness (Ofoegbu 122).

Peacekeeping is a means of projecting the power of a state in cooperation with others and, depending upon the mandating international organization, allowing someone else to pay the tab. Nigeria intervened in Chadian internal politics with a multinational peacekeeping force based upon realist views of international relations. The crisis in Chad, an adjacent state, threatened Nigeria which, in turn, acted to project its power and restore the status quo.

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