

THE ROLE OF NIGERIA IN PROMOTING PREVENTATIVE DIPLOMACY IN AFRICA: (1999 – 2008)*

Abstract

The former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's administration was remarkable for its ability to enthrone peace where there is conflict, especially in Africa, and contributions to peace missions across the globe, thereby winning friends for Nigeria and earning Nigeria respect among the comity of nations. This paper will highlight the necessity for taking preventive measures in the form of peace-building as a sustainable and long-term solution to conflicts in Africa, with special focus on the Mano River Union Countries, and the Great Lakes Region. Apart from the foregoing, this paper will explore efforts at resolving other conflicts in Togo, Guinea Bissau, Rwanda and Congo Democratic that have suffered from a lack of attention on the post-conflict imperatives of building peace in order to ensure that sustainable peace is achieved. Given the often intractable and inter-related nature of conflicts in Africa; the paper argues for the need to revisit the existing mechanisms of conflict resolutions in the continent with a view to canvassing a stronger case for stakeholders towards adopting the Peace-building strategy as a more practical and sustainable way of avoiding wars in the continent. Peace-building is in consonance with its infrastructure and is a more sustainable approach to ensuring regional peace and stability and, therefore ensuring development for the peoples of Africa.

Introduction

It is axiomatic to posit that the last twenty years have witnessed major changes in the patterns of global conflicts and in the international community's responses to them. Today, more than 90 percent of armed conflicts take place within, rather than between states. With relatively few inter-state wars, traditional rationales for intervention have become decreasingly significant, while humanitarian and human rights principles have increasingly been invoked to justify the use of force in internal wars, not always with the authorization of the Security Council. Sanctions have been used far more frequently in the 1990's than ever before, but with results that are ambiguous at best¹.

One of the major encouraging developments of the last decades has been an increase in the number of conflicts settled by negotiation. As a result of these actions, it has reinforced the United Nations thesis that prevention is better than cure by addressing the root causes of conflicts and not merely their symptoms. Early warning is now universally agreed to be a necessary condition for effective preventive diplomacy. It is not, unfortunately a sufficient condition, as the tragedy in Kosovo has demonstrated. As the crisis unfolded, it is assumed that consensus could be achieved for effective action.

Security development in Africa continues to cause the gravest concern in the West and Central Africa. In particular, the threat that internal conflicts could spread and lead to armed confrontations between and among Sovereign African States is an

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¹ Annan, K.A., Preventing War and Disaster: A Growing Global Challenge, New York: UNO Publications, 1999, p.19.

especially worrying development. This risk is perhaps best illustrated by the on going hostilities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in which a large number of African Nations have become involved. The United Nations Special Envoy, Olusegun Obasanjo, has visited the region recently; working in support of the diplomatic solution put forward by the South African President, on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. He has the supports of the African Union and the United Nations too thereby the prospect for peace in the DRC has improved.

The peace processes in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Guinea and Liberia have also shown some progress. In the societies, whose people have been victims of the most brutal conflicts in recent times, the United Nations Observers Missions have worked assiduously to help facilitate a negotiated solution. In close cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and other interested members states have actively supported the process of negotiations between the Government and the Rebel Groups, which led to the signing of peace pacts. Recognizing the close relationship between the promotion of human rights and sustainable peace, Observer's Missions, in collaboration with the office of United Nations High Commissions for Human Rights, continues to monitor and report human rights abuses in these conflict zones with a view of ending further violations.

The media in Nigeria has apparently not done enough in terms of keeping abreast of the magnitude and dimension of the peace keeping efforts of the then Obasanjo regime. This may be as a result of the fact that facts and figures are not rolling in and the situation reports are sporadic, not allowing the citizens of Nigeria to evaluate for themselves the ground scenario in the frontlines. This is why this paper is relevant. To address this issue, there is a need for us to clarify our concepts.

Clarification of Concepts and Theoretical Frame Work of Analysis Conceptualizations of Peace-Keeping and Peace-Making

The responsibility of the United Nations to save the future generations from the scourge of war is listed in the U.N. Charter as:

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of peace, and to bring by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace².

In other words, peace-keeping operations are essentially one of the most important activities of the United Nations. The concept of peace-keeping was developed by the United Nations at the start of the Cold War in the late 1940 because of the unworkability of the original collective security system envisaged by the organization and the increasing disagreement among the major powers. It is therefore

² United Nations Security Council Resolution 733 (1992) of 23 January 1992, p.3.

safe to say that peace-keeping operations are essentially a practical mechanism developed by the United Nations to contain and control armed conflicts and to facilitate their resolution by peaceful means. As a mechanism for controlling inter-State conflict, peace-keeping has thus become an important instrument which the United Nations utilizes to exercise its vital role of maintaining international peace and security. Peace-keeping can therefore be rightly called the invention of the United Nations³. As a third party contingency approach to conflict management, peace-keeping is, according to Bassey⁴, “One of the novel techniques” of “Conflict Diplomacy” which has gained wide currency in the contemporary international arena. However, despite its extensive application, peace-keeping as a conflict control measure was not foreseen by the founders of the Organisation and therefore not reflected in the theoretical substructure of the U.N. Charter. Rather, it originated as an experimental compromise between collective security or permanent paralysis which confronted the Organisation as a result of the virulent ideological polarization of the international system.

As for the authority for establishing a peace mission, it is clear that the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security is vested with the Security Council as outlined in Chapters VI and VII of the Charter. Conceptually then, in the event of an international dispute arising between two governments or two authorities, the parties concerned have the obligation, under Chapter VI of the Charter, to seek a solution to their dispute by peaceful means, mainly by negotiation, arbitration or judicial settlement. Where such peaceful means prove insufficient and the dispute escalates into an armed conflict, then Chapter VII is invoked. That Chapter provides that in case of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression, the Security Council, acting on behalf of the international community, may take coercive measures to restore and maintain peace. Such measures include essentially, arm embargo, economic sanctions and, in the last resort, the use of armed force. Should the Security Council consider even these measures insufficient it could go further to take actions as provided by Article 42 such actions by air, sea and land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security⁵. With such pressures on the U.N. in its formative years and now, Onoja⁶ agrees with Larry Fabian’s argument on the historical position of the U.N. He says: The U.N. was born into a world soon to be transformed fundamentally and irresistibly. No where has the impact been greater than on the Organisation’s career as a peace preserver⁷. It is thus clear that the United Nations Peace-keeping Missions are established by an instrument of the Security Council, whose resolutions and decisions are binding on all member States. Even though the Security Council Resolution (SECCO Res.) is the Secretary General’s mandate for setting up the Peace Mission, there is still the need

³ Boutros, B. G., **An Agenda for Peace**. New York: United Nations Publications, 1993 p.28.

⁴ Bassey, C. O., “The Peace-keeping Approach to Conflict Management: A Conceptual Overview.” In Vogt, M. A. and Ekoko, A. E. (Eds.) **Nigeria in International Peace-keeping, 1960 – 1992**. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 1993 p.23.

⁵ Onoja, L., **Peacekeeping and International Security in a Changing World**, Lagos: Malthouse, 1995 p.3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Fabian, L. L., **Soldiers Without Enemies: Preparing the United Nations for Peacekeeping**, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1970, p.1.

for the resolution to be supported by the five permanent members of the Security Council that have veto powers.

Despite the authorizing instrument for the establishment of a Peace-keeping Mission, the approach to peace-keeping represents a different formulation of the United Nations role in the field of peace and security from those envisaged in Chapters VI and VII of the Charter. In other words, it has added a new dimension to the traditional diplomatic instruments of negotiation, conciliation and mediation. The peace-keeping approach has as its base series of assumptions bearing on distinctive conception of the nature of war. As in the policy of containment, the introduction of United Nations Forces into trouble spots helps to stabilize and prevent an exploding military situation until the atmosphere of a more durable settlement is established. As a confidence – building mechanism, peace-keeping activities (or to use Dag Hummarsk Jold’s categorization, preventive diplomacy), aim at removing all forms of mistrust, mitigate tension as well as open the way to further explore possibilities of security cooperation between belligerent States.

Onoja⁸ distinguishes two main types of peace-keeping operations. According to him, there is the observer mission which is normally composed of officers, who do not carry arms nor can they use force even in self defence. This was the case in UNMOGIP (Afghanistan and Pakistan), UNIMOG (Iran and Iraq), and UNAVEM (Angola). The second type of peace-keeping is the actual force, comprising officers and men who are armed and can defend themselves, the mandate and their equipment where necessary. Examples include UNTAG, UNEF and UNIFIL (in S/Lebanon).

Building on this categorization, Holsti⁹ identifies eight roles of peace-keeping.

These are:-

Prevention	of future conflicts or eruption of cold conflicts;
Interposition	by separating contestants and providing buffers
Restoration	of a deteriorated situation
Preservation	of a tenuous and threatened peace
Facilitation	of political resolution
Protection	of law and order, public safety and services
Enforcement	of the consensus of the Security Council
Punishment	of violations of agreements or Security Council Resolutions/Decisions ¹⁰⁰ .

According to Encyclopedia Britannica¹¹, peacekeeping is the use of international forces as a buffer between warring parties, pending troop withdrawal and negotiation. It further traced its origin to Kashmir and Palestine in 1948 and later formalized in 1956 during the Suez Crisis between Egypt, Israel, France and United Kingdom.

⁸ Onoja, L., **Peacekeeping and International Security in a Changing World**, Lagos: Malthouse, 1995, p. 4.

⁹ Holsti, J. J., “Enhancing Peacekeeping,” quoted in Briggs, D. A. “The Amorality of Power Politics: A Case Study of the U.N. Peace Mission in Somalia”, Paper Delivered at NIPSS Seminar, 1993 24th September.

¹⁰ Onoja, L., *op.cit*

¹¹ Encyclopedia Britannica (2006), “United Nations Peacekeeping Forces” (UNPF), Ultimate Reference Suite DVD, Retrieved, October 31, 2007.

As remarked by Kriesberg¹², peacekeeping as an operational mechanism of the AU is a recent innovation. International law codifies that securing international peace is the responsibility of the United Nations. The increasing peacekeeping demands around the globe have overwhelmed the UN. This underscores the relevance of the Peace and Security Council of the AU.

The demands of our time have altered the overall concept of peacekeeping to accommodate other key human issues. In the words of Fetherston¹³:

The major task of peacekeeping includes the monitoring and enforcement of ceasefires, observation of frontier-lines and interposing between disputants. However, the concept has undergone substantial changes since the end of the cold war; partly due to more flexibility in the UNSC and partly as a response to the changing nature of conflict.

The outcomes of any peacekeeping mission are of major significance to its planning and operation. This has complicated the understanding of relevant issues on effective peacekeeping. Fetherston¹⁴ persuasively surmised:

The difficulties involved in defining an effective peacekeeping mission are enormous. Such definitions become ultimately tied to the inescapable question of the envisioned outcomes of the mission. This mode of defining effectiveness has an impact on techniques and strategies used in peacekeeping.

In furtherance to this, Akindele and Ate¹⁵ posited: “Peacekeeping involves measures that help to create and maintain ceasefires at buffer zones between belligerent states or groups, thereby facilitating the search for a lasting peace through diplomatic channels.” According to Onoja¹⁶:

It is thus clear to view and adopt for use here the definition of peace-keeping as a conflict control mechanism whose principal aims are to diffuse tension and to contain international disputes or conflicts, or to stop them from escalating into armed confrontation. It is only when such a stabilized atmosphere is provided by a Peace-keeping Mission that negotiations through governmental, political and diplomatic machineries (which is the peace-making process) can be employed. It is worthy of note that peace-

¹² Kriesberg, L., **International Conflict Resolution**, New Heaven: C.T Yale University Press, 1992,

¹³ Fetherston, A. B., “Toward a Theory of United Nations Peacekeeping”, **Peace Research Reports**, No. 31, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, 1993 p.4.

¹⁴ Fetherston, A. B. (1993b), “Toward a Theory of United Nations Peacekeeping”, **Peace Research Reports**, No. 31, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, p.109.

¹⁵ Akindele, R. A. and Ate, B. E. (eds.), **Beyond Conflict Resolution: Managing African Security in the 21st Century**, Ibadan: Vintage Publishers, 2001 p.132.

¹⁶ Onoja, L., **Peacekeeping and International Security in a Changing World**, Lagos: Malthouse, 1995 p.5.

keeping, by the troops, and peace-making by politicians and diplomats, are complementary.

Akindele and Ate¹⁷, and Onoja¹⁸ (as aforementioned) added that two typologies are derivable namely, the unarmed military observer mission, like the ones monitoring ceasefire or elections and armed military based force, for example, the AU mission in Sudan. According to Parson¹⁹ peacekeeping has expanded in scope, blurring the boundary between peacekeeping and peace building. Corroborating the above, Akindele and Ate²⁰ added that the nature and intensity of the conflict to be resolved has engendered the agreement that favours other appellations beyond the traditional term of peacekeeping. These include peacekeeping (Cold war or traditional), preventive deployment helping to implement negotiated agreement, protecting delivery of humanitarian supplies, reconstruction and development, ceasefire enforcement and peace-enforcement. In the same vein, Fidlay²¹ asserted:

The expanded functions of UN peacekeeping forces in recent times include election observation and organization, humanitarian assistance and security safe conditions for its delivery, observation and separation of combatants along demarcated boundaries, disarming of military and paramilitary forces, promotion and protection of human rights, mine clearance, training and mine awareness, military and police training, boundary demarcation, civil administration, provision of assistance to and repatriation of refugees, reconstruction and development of war devastated areas.

According to United Nations²² problems associated with peacekeeping in Africa include that of acquiring troops, funds and equipment, commitment of contributing states and the very nature of conflict themselves. It becomes pertinent to observe here that two problems above are external factors that can easily negate the aims and objectives of the mission by rendering her strategies dysfunctional.

The future of Africa carries alongside it, traits of vulnerability to conflict. Effort should be geared towards an ensuring peace in future. Accordingly, Ake²³ enunciated conditions for peace in Africa thus:

¹⁷ Akindele, R. A. and Ate, B. E. (eds.), **Beyond Conflict Resolution: Managing African Security in the 21st Century**, Ibadan: Vintage Publishers, 1995.

¹⁸ Onoja, L. *op.cit.*

¹⁹ Parsons, A. (1995), **From Cold War to Hot Peace: United Nations Interventions 1947-1995**, London: Penguin Group.

²⁰ Akindele, R. A. and Ate, B. E. (eds.), **Beyond Conflict Resolution: Managing African Security in the 21st Century**, Ibadan: Vintage Publishers, 2001 p.132.

²¹ Fidlay, T., **Multilateral Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution**, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994 pp.25-27.

²² United Nations, **United Nations Chronicle: 1997 – 2002**, New York: United Nations Publications 2003.

²³ Ake, C., **Democracy and Development in Africa**, Washington D.C.: The Brooking Institutions, 1996 p.4.

- (1) Democratization should be a major part of the solution to conflicts in Africa because it guarantees the rule of law protects political rights, human rights, economic and social freedoms and fosters an environment conducive for the growth of peace and development.
- (2) There should be proper understanding of the international contradictions within individual African states to enable the correct assessment of threats and avoid pitfalls inherent in the unpredictability factors.
- (3) Conflict management should incorporate the principle of integrated security based on the proper management of national affairs, which, in turn, would inspire the populace and create legitimacy.
- (4) There is the need for socialization focused on education, particularly of the young with the aim of building a future generation disposed to peaceful co-existence. The teaching of civic education including constitutional democracy and the constitution should be made part of individual national education curriculum.
- (5) Africa states should be conscious of the dangers posed by the commercialization of conflicts in Africa by mercenaries, multinationals, foreign syndicates and local warlords who, by their profit-driven motives, exacerbate African conflicts.
- (6) The size of the national armed forces should be determined by establishing a rational balance between the public welfare and national security.
- (7) Poverty-alleviating programmes should be instituted by individual national governments as a major instrument for ensuring and protecting peace and stability.
- (8) Attempts at redesigning conflict management strategies should bear in mind the multifaceted nature of African conflicts.
- (9) An amendment of the “non-interference” clause is necessary for mechanism in view of the increase in intra-state conflict in the continent.
- (10) Personal diplomacy can be made more effective in conflict management through the intervention of “Eminent Persons’ Group” while seeking solution to conflicts.

This paper will adopt Encyclopedia Britannica definition of peacekeeping as its operational definition of peacekeeping. It will also adopt preventive diplomacy as its framework of analysis.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The idea of ‘early warning’ as “information that can provide a timely alert to potential conflicts,” have been emphasized by a number of scholars as an important component in conflict resolution²⁴. He goes on to posit that preventive diplomacy is action required to prevent the escalation of conflict. Annan²⁵ adds that it refers to efforts of outside nations, or groups of nations (for example, the UN) to prevent the escalation of conflicts between groups in a nation or with other nations. Although potentially effective, often nations feels that they should not intervene in the internal affairs if others of the situation has not yet become dire. By that time, preventive measures are likely to be impossible. Nongovernmental organizations can also engage in what is generally referred to as Conflict Prevention. Given their ongoing presence in much of the globe, they are in a far superior position to try to intervene in developing conflicts early enough to put them on a constructive, rather than destructive course. Put differently, the assumption with both conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy is that intractable conflicts are easier to avoid before they happen, rather than fix once they have occurred. There is a great deal of truth to this assumption, although some conflicts are likely to be unavoidable.

Shelton²⁶ has identified four critical elements that are of significant importance to any governments contemplations of involvement in preventive diplomacy or peace keeping including:

1. Early warning and the early response to a crisis – the key to preventive diplomacy;
2. Adequate financial support for peace keeping
3. An accurate assessment of casualty tolerance in peace keeping operations; and
4. Sufficient information for successful peacekeeping.

The above issues are fundamental to any political leader’s decision making process. Without dealing adequately with these issues, no decision maker can realistically be expected to make a major contribution to crisis diplomacy, or to undertake an even more risky peace keeping operation²⁷. Nnoli²⁸ adds that

The overall objective is to use preventive persuasion as a tool for preventing the emergence of violent disputes between parties, preventing existing violent disputes between parties from degenerating into full-blown violent conflagration, and limiting the spread of violent conflicts where and when they occur. Elements of the conflict prevention system include: (a) developing a data base and analytical capability to keep track of, and identify, events

²⁴ Shelton , G., “Preventive diplomacy and Peace keeping: Keys for Success’, **African Security Review**, Vol. 5, 1997 p.2.

²⁵ Annan, K.A., **Preventing War and Disaster: A Growing Global Challenge**, New York: UNO Publications 1999.

²⁶ Shelton , G., “Preventive diplomacy and Peace keeping: Keys for Success”, **African Security Review**, Vol. 5, 1997, p.2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Nnoli, O. **National Security in Africa : A Radical New Perspective**, Enugu : SNAAP Press Ltd., 2006, pp.202-204.

that could be precursors of conflict and violence (b) developing and using a communications capability to keep up with events throughout the country, and to communicate with teams assigned to work on specific situations (c) setting up and running a 24-hour watch centre manned by trained military officers (d) developing and using a capacity to plan and coordinate peace operations anywhere in the country (e) interposing peacemaking troops between parties to possible violent conflicts in order to prevent skirmishes between them (f) developing and harnessing a rapid response capability to deal with emergencies occasioned by natural disasters and other humanitarian crises (g) developing and utilizing a network of national mediators and other conflict managers capable of responding quickly when incipient conflicts are detected (h) and developing and harnessing a capacity for post-conflict consolidation.

The heartbeat of this conflict prevention system is an early warning sub-system or mechanism. It provides an opportunity to bring to the process of dealing with conflicts a new institutional dynamism that enables speedy action to take place in order to prevent, manage and ultimately resolve conflicts when and where they occur. One cannot prevent conflict unless one is well informed, and in a timely manner, what the potential conflict is all about. Early warning mechanism is essentially aimed at providing practitioners in the field of conflict resolution the possibility of anticipating and responding to crisis situations before they become violent, or in the very least, afford them the leverage to take remedial action to militate their negative effects once they are under way. The purpose of early warning is not to merely inform peace practitioners that a problem is developing, but also to create a political will and momentum to do something about the deteriorating situation. This implies that early warning should not only point to the problem but also suggest action. The information that it carries should not be captive or privileged information but just imply, or work towards the dissemination of reliable information in such a manner as to mobilize action.

Such a mechanism would be first and foremost a component off an integrated effort towards capacity building, and constitute part of the framework for data gathering and networking with other peace practitioners within the country. This system should be a tool for searching and interpreting information necessary to make informed judgments about possible sequences of events and outcomes. It should involve the sourcing of information, the coordination of such information as it comes from multiple sources, networking including who should be linked to such early warning networks, data development, especially developing electronic communications networks for information sharing, and how to enhance the credibility and impact of early warning. In developing such a mechanism it should be borne in mind that access to information on relief operations and emergency activities and resources is crucial to enhancing the response to acute and complex problems and to facilitating early warning, rehabilitation and development.

The Rules of Effective Diplomacy

Diplomacy as a communications process has three elements: **negotiation, signaling, and public diplomacy**. Delineating the three modes of diplomatic communications is easy. Utilizing them effectively is hard. There is no set formula that will ensure victory. There are, however, several considerations by looking, in this section, at the rules of effective diplomacy, then in the next section, by turning to the various options available for playing the great game of diplomacy. Some basic rules of effective diplomacy are:

- **Be realistic** – It is important to have goals that match your ability to achieve them. “The test of a statesman,” Kissinger²⁹ has pointed out, “is his ability to recognize the real relationship of forces.” Being realistic also means remembering that the other side, like yours, has domestic opponents. During discussions with North Korea in 1994, U.S. negotiator Robert Gallucci avoided pressing for non-vital, albeit desirable, concessions that, he said, “we recognized [as] serious [domestic] issues for [North Korea, but which] needed not be undertaken immediately.” When critics charged that the Clinton administration was being too soft, a U.S. official noted pragmatically that making some concession was “better than [going to] war.”³⁰
- **Be careful about what you say** – The experienced diplomat plans and weighs words carefully. The first draft of the speech to the nation that President Bush gave on September 20, 2001, contained the sentence, “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbour them.” Several top advisers thought that the words were too strident and favoured language that would give countries a chance to change policy and would not seem, as Secretary of State Colin Powell reportedly thought, as if “the United States would be declaring war on everybody.” This view led to the insertion of the words “continue to” before “harbour them” to distinguish between past and future behaviour. In another example, the president’s turn of phrase “axis of evil” to describe the “rogue states” off Iraq, Iran, and North Korea also produced a wide range of commentary. Parodied on late-night TV, in political cartoons, and elsewhere, this turned out to be one of his less well-chosen phrases.³¹
- **Seek common grounds** – Finding common ground is a key to ending disputes peacefully. A first step to seeking common ground is to avoid seeing yourself as totally virtuous and your opponent as the epitome of evil. As a study of how peace is made and maintained, puts it, “Wars are seldom a struggle between total virtues and vice.... But when so conceived, they become crusades that remove the possibility of finding common ground after the battles are over”³².

²⁹ Kissinger, H.A., “The Just and the Possible, In *Negotiation and Statecraft: A Selection of Reading*, US Congress, Senate Committee on Government Operations, 91st Congress Section, 1970, p.47.

³⁰ Rourke, J.T and Boyer, M.A., **International Politics on the World Stage, Brief**, Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003, p.208.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Kegley, C Jnr. And Raymond, G.A, **How Nations Make Peace**, New York : St. Martins, 1999, p.249.

- **Understand the other side** – There are several aspects to understanding the other side. One is to appreciate an opponent’s perspective even if you do not agree with it. Just four months after Ronald Reagan was inaugurated and began an arms buildup, the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, wrote to his American counterpart to protest the military expansion ‘aimed against our country.’ “Try, Mr. President,” Brezhnev asked Reagan, “to see what is going on through our eyes”³³. It was good advice. As a corollary, it is also wise to make sure that thine enemy knows thee. Errors that result from misperceptions based on cultural differences and the lack of or wrong information are a major cause of conflict.
- **Be patient** – It is also important to bide your time. Being overly anxious can lead to concessions that are unwise and may convey weakness to an opponent. As a corollary, it is poor practice to set deadlines, for yourself or others, unless you are in a very strong position or you do not really want an agreement. Throughout the negotiations with North Korea, which were frustrating and included many setbacks, the Clinton administration was patient and used gradual offers of rewards and threats of punishments. Critics called for stronger action. The steady course eventually carried the day, even if the crisis reoccurred almost a decade later.
- **Leave avenue of retreat open** – It is axiomatic that even a rat will fight if trapped in a corner. The same is often true for countries. Call it honor, saving face, or prestige; it is important to leave yourself and your opponent an “out.” Ultimatums, especially public ones, often lead to war. During the crisis with Iraq in 1998, Security-General Kofi Annan sought face-saving compromises that would allow Iraq to back away from its refusal to let inspectors into so-called presidential places. “Talk to some off your Arab friends,” he suggested to a journalist. “Ask them to talk about dignity. Its like Chinese losing face – it’s that important. It’s not a joke. The sense off humiliation or losing your dignity or losing face – they would die or go to war over that.”³⁴

Nigeria and Preventive Diplomacy in Africa (1999-2008)

The President Obasanjo’s administration was remarkable for its ability to enthrone peace where there is conflict, especially in Africa; and contributed to peace mission across the globe, winning friends for Nigeria and earning Nigeria respect among the comity of nations.

Ojewale³⁵, Ogunlowo³⁶ and Oba³⁷ have articulated these efforts in the following ways:

The eight years of the President Olusegun Obasanjo administration is likely to go down in history as perhaps one of the most effective regimes to promote peace in different parts of the world and restore confidence and credibility to Nigeria. Right

³³ Kriesberg, L., **International Conflict Resolution**, New Heaven, C.T Yale University Press, 1992, p.12.

³⁴ Rourke, J.T and Boyer, M.A. *Ibid.*

³⁵ Ojewale, O., “Making Peace Count”, **TELL** June, 2007, p.26.

³⁶ Ogunlowo, A., “Maying the Big Brother”, **TELL**, June, 27, 2007, p.28.

³⁷ Oba, A., “Obasanjo’s Stewardship on the Foreign Turf: The Gains and the Questions”, **Poverty Control**, June, 2007, pp. 32 -35.

from the time Obasanjo took over the reins of government, his message was clear: that peace and reconciliation would feature prominently in his agenda. Little wonder that at the summit of the defunct Organization of African Unity, OAU, in 1999, the President's proposal that 2000 be made the year of Peace, Security and Solidarity unanimously was adopted by the summit.

In September 1999, during the fourth extra-ordinary OAU Summit in Sirte, Libya, Obasanjo's proposal for the convening of a Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa, CSSDCA, was similarly adopted. The conference eventually held in Abuja in May 2000. Obasanjo's administration successfully led sub-regional cooperation of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, GGC, in Libreville, Gabon in 1999. The GGC has as its objective the strengthening of economic and political cooperation among member states. The country has successfully held many international conferences to demonstrate its full reintegration in the comity of nations.

In the same manner, Nigeria was largely responsible for dousing the ire created by the potentially dangerous land crisis in Zimbabwe, where President Robert Mugabe had ceded land to veterans of the state's struggle for independence. Obasanjo was able to achieve that using the instrumentality of the Commonwealth, which formally signed the Abuja Agreement which has remained the most credible mechanism for resolving the Zimbabwean crisis.

In Sao Tome and Principe, Obasanjo helped to uphold the sanctity of democracy when the military tried to torpedo its democracy in 2003. President Fradique de Menezes was on a state visit to Nigeria, July 16, 2003, when his government was toppled in a military coup d'etat. Using his diplomatic connection and statesmanship, Obasanjo restored De Menezes to power seven days later. The feat was hailed as the first of its kind in Africa. The regime equally contributed to restoring peace in Guinea Bissau in September 2003.

Similarly, the President played a prominent role in returning Togo to constitutionality in 2005. Following the death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema, February 5, the leaders of the nation's military quickly swore in Faure Gnassingbe, his son, as President, to serve the rest of his father's tenure. Leading other African heads of state, Obasanjo rejected the action and insisted that the country's Constitution must be upheld and preserved. The young Gnassingbe eventually stepped down and later won the presidential election held April 24. He was sworn in, May 4, 2005.

And in Ivory Coast, Obasanjo has worked tirelessly to ensure that the crisis in the country does not escalate to a full-scale civil war. The progress recorded in the country so far is attributed to efforts of the President in collaboration with President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa.

In the Mano River area, Nigeria under the leadership of President Obasanjo, helped to broker peace between Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, Nigeria is playing a leading role in the task of reconciliation after years of devastating civil war. Nigeria has also contributed the sum of \$100, 000 for the take-off of the Special War Crime Tribunal to try war criminals.

The 15-year-old crisis in Liberia was effectively brought to an end through Nigeria's ingenious diplomacy. It negotiated the exit of the then President Charles Taylor and enthroned an interim administration led by Gyude Brant. For permanent

resolution of the crisis, the Obasanjo regime gave asylum to Taylor in Nigeria. The former president's departure from Liberia facilitated implementation of the Accra Accord leading to successful conduct of presidential election in 2005 in which Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf emerged as first woman president in Africa.

To drive home the point that Nigeria will promote peace at all cost, the country under the Obasanjo administration showed its respect for the rule of law by ensuring the peaceful implementation of the International court of Justice ruling on the territorial dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon. The country successfully handed over the disputed Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon in 2006. The management of the exercise was hailed in the international community as a model resolution for boundary disputes in the world. According to the foreign affairs ministry, "The policy of conflict prevention, resolution and management is borne out of the realization of the imperative of peace and security for sustainable democracy and economic development in Nigeria and the West African sub-region"³⁸.

But it seems to be more than that. Nigeria's peace mission also covers every flashpoint across the globe. For instance, Nigeria is involved in peace mission in the war-torn Darfur in the Sudan, where more than 200, 000 people have been killed and no fewer than one million people made homeless. Even the President himself admitted that much when addressing the Third Biennial Leon H. Sullivan summit Dinner, June 20, 2002, about partnering with the United States on peace mission. "We have partnered with you in the peaceful and democratic transformation in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. We played our part in moving Sierra Leone from war to elections. We have worked diligently towards bringing peace in the Congo and in Angola. And thanks to the perseverance of President (Jose Eduardo) dos Santos and the people of Angola, we have finally claimed a victory after over 30 years off struggle in pursuit of freedom," Obasanjo said.³⁹ The regime also held a political dialogue between Nigeria and the European Union, EU Presidency in May 2004. Substantive agreements were eventually reached on peace and security, governance and development, as well as the restatement of the imperative for cooperation and commitment.

Chike Anigbo, a director in the office of foreign affairs minister, says although Africa remains the centerpiece of Nigeria foreign policy, Nigeria's assistance is usually sought on matters concerning international crises. Little wonder, Obasanjo has taken it upon himself to fashion out how to deal with numerous problems facing the continent and worked closely with other African leaders to solve them. "Poverty, disease, underdevelopment, lack of education, you name it, the problems are still there. So, if Africa is the centerpiece of foreign politics, it behooves on Nigeria to see how to ameliorate these challenges; that is what has propelled President Obasanjo, especially since his administration started. He has not relented. He has been to the length and breath of the African continent relationship; we have tried to build bridges with countries that were not in good terms with us earlier. We have also re-fraternized with countries that kept us at bay during the undemocratic period which was not

³⁸ Ojewale, O., "Gains of Diplomatic Shuttles", *TELL*, June 27, 2007, p.26.

³⁹ Ojewale, O., "Gains of Diplomatic Shuttles", *TELL*, June, 27, 2007, p.26.

acceptable by the entire world,”⁴⁰. Dokubo told TELL. He would like Nigeria’s diplomacy to include some means of helping the dependent countries and to give them what they would need to survive instead of showing the big brother image, which they resent. “Unless we conduct our diplomacy with such meaningful purpose, it will be difficult for Nigeria to create an impact,”⁴¹ he said. Nonetheless, he commended the Obasanjo regime for restoring peace to some countries where there were conflicts, and even nipped some crises in the bud before they could escalate.

Another research fellow at NIIA, Osita Agbu, patted Obasanjo’s administration on the back for its ability to reintegrate the country fully into the international community. “Looking from where we are coming from, Obasanjo has tried to ensure that the international community looks at Nigeria again favourably. The country has again begun to attract some form of expatriates and foreign investments,” he said. They also commended Obasanjo’s peace efforts. “Nigeria has been at the forefront of ensuring peace in such countries because she realizes that without peace in those countries, Africa cannot have progress. By doing so, Nigeria has created a better image for itself,”⁴².

Conclusion

Nigeria has since independence been actively involved in the management of international peace, either under the sponsorship of the UNO, OAU, AU or under the bold assumption of roles and certain specific responsibilities for the management of sub regional concerns. In its 51 years of flag independence, Nigeria’s decision makers have continuously designed, shaped and maintained a foreign policy which have continued to impact on the international system, especially in the area of facilitating peace-making at the international scene.

Before the “end” of Obasanjo regime in 2007, official records of the countries he visited during his diplomatic shuttles as the country’s chief diplomat are still being kept under wraps. Aso Rock sources maintained that it is being treated as a Security document. But unofficial sources put the number of countries at 64. Without caring about the dictum that foreign policy derives support from the aggregation of a nation’s domestic politics, the Obasanjo’s regime pushed Nigeria at the fore front of peace making in Africa.

Preventive diplomacy is the best response to growing regional low intensity conflict, especially in Africa where the economic, politico-social and geographical complexities make peace keeping unattractive. At the same time, preventive diplomacy requires early warning system and the speedy response to a crisis. Early warning should be provided by national government, and international information networks should support the international, regional and sub-regional organizations and advanced societies are further developed. Moreover, individual states should be encouraged to initiate preventive diplomacy, in consultation with regional and sub-regional bodies and comity of nations as well as the international agencies in order to begin peace negotiation before conflicts escalate. When this effort fails, peace keeping

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

may be the next best option. Adequate funding should be made available for decision-makers for successful preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping operations.