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Interrogating the Nexus of Corruption and Regional Peacekeeping: Nigeria in Sierra Leone (1990-2002)

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ABSTRACT

This research paper interrogates the complex interaction between corruption and regional peacekeeping efforts, with a specific focus on Nigeria's involvement in Sierra Leone from 1990 to 2002. The nexus of corruption and regional peacekeeping has been a topic of much research and debate, particularly when considering the involvement of Nigeria in Sierra Leone from 1990 to 2002. This study aims to further investigate this relationship by analyzing the various factors that led to the presence of corruption during this period in question.

This study is situated within a qualitative interdisciplinary approach, employing primary source materials such as official government documents, military reports, and interviews with significant participants in the peacekeeping efforts. Additionally, the work incorporates secondary source materials like scholarly articles and analyses that provide context for Nigeria's involvement in wider regional issues. Preliminary findings suggest that while Nigeria's intervention was initially motivated by a commitment to regional stability, systemic corruption undermined operational efficacy. Instances of resource diversion for personal gain not only hampered military logistics but also fostered resentment among local populations towards Nigerian troops. Furthermore, the study highlights how these corrupt practices affected the overall success of the operations.

Maximizing the data collected, this study will offer insights and recommendations for future peacekeeping operations in the region. Some of which include, creating a robust governance frameworks within contributing nations to enhance the integrity and effectiveness of regional peacekeeping missions. More so, all future peacekeeping should be collectively funded and synergy be created with all government agencies to ensure that there are no loopholes for siphoning monies meant for peacekeeping purposes.

INTRODUCTION

The early 1990s marked a great watershed in global history with some strategic changes, which were precipitated by the end of the Cold War leading to the collapse of the former Soviet Union (USSR). These strategic changes were captured in clear terms, The apparent end of the Cold War brought some dramatic transformation in World History especially in Europe, Asia, and the Western World with the formation of the common Economic Union (the European Union), the emergence of a unipolar global world order with the United States at the forefront of inter-state relations, and many others facilitated the détente, the de-escalation of military confrontation and arms control, the settlement of outstanding disputes and greater interdependence among nations¹.

Ridiculously, while in most parts of the globe there was an increasing demand for peace, in Africa the reverse was the case with an increasing trend in the proliferation of conflicts and insecurity with most of these conflicts being internal in nature. These conflicts were reflected in the activities of the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the African continent in the early 1990s particularly, in Sudan, Somalia, Angola, Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone².

The sad consequences of these trends in conflicts in the sub region coupled with the past failures of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) Commission for Mediation, Reconciliation and Arbitration in management of conflicts in Sub-Sahara Africa due to lack of funds, inadequate organisation and the adoption of a judicial framework in resolving conflicts and the lukewarm attitude of the international community to these conflicts brought Nigeria with her strong position in ECOWAS in championing and adopting a model approach using regional multilateral peacekeeping

¹ Vogts M.A and Aminu L.S (ed.) Peacekeeping as a Security Strategy in Africa. Chad, Liberia as Case Studies Vol1 \$ 2 Enugu Fourth Dimension Co Ltd,1996, pp3

² Ibid, pp. 3

particularly at a time when most African nations have been gravitating for a way in which Africans can deal with their common problems using African model.

Nigeria's involvement in Regional Peacekeeping to curtail the political crisis in Sierra Leone and other conflicts that ravaged the West African Sub Region in the 1990s is not a novel thing as she has been at the forefront of International Peacekeeping Operations in partnership with the United Nations since her Independence in 1960³. Since then, Nigeria has been unequivocally committed to the goals, principles and objectives of the United Nations. This is evident in her contributions towards the promotion and maintenance of International Peace and Security. Beginning with the United Nations Mission in the Republic of Congo in 1960, Nigerian armed battalions have meritoriously served in many UN, AU and ECOWAS Regional Peacekeeping Missions⁴. Between 1960 and 2012, Nigeria has been actively involved in various ways in the struggle against disintegration of the African continent. This approach has motivated her to champion the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS in 1975, the Organization of African Unity [OAU established in 1963, now AU (2001)], the Non-Aligned Movement, and other organizations concerned with bringing peace to the region and across the world⁵.

The relationship between corruption and peacekeeping is a complex one, particularly in the context of Nigeria's involvement in Sierra Leone during the 1990s and early 2000s. This period was marked by civil war in Sierra Leone, which lasted from 1991 to 2002, leading to significant humanitarian crises and international intervention. Nigeria played a crucial role in peacekeeping efforts through its leadership in the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). This paper analyzes how corruption affected Nigeria's influence on peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone from 1990 to 2005.

BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE

³ A. Abiodun "Globalisation and Changing Nature of Conflict in Africa" In M. O. Ojielo (ed.) Rethinking Peace and Security in Africa, Centre for Peace in Africa, Lagos, 2002, pp. 14-22.

⁴ Amadu .S. Civil Wars and Post Peace Building in West Africa, Ibadan College Press and Publishers Limited, 2003, pp.40.

⁵ Sessay, M. (1999). Security and State Society Crisis in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In C. Thomas & P. Wilkins (Eds.), Globalization, human security and African experience (pp.143). Reiner.

Sierra Leone is located on the west coast of West Africa and is ranked amongst the poorest nations of the world. The country is characterized by contrast, dichotomies, and inequalities that broadly speaking fit into a 'centre periphery analysis. The complexity is reflective in its political history with an Anglophone colonial heritage, with socio-cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences. The colonial legacies and their accompanying diverse political and administrative orientations of Sierra Leone has often led to political disputes and tensions, to the extent that leaders are suspicious of the intentions of their counterparts if they are not from the same 'ethnic/linguistic bloc'. The colonial heritage has often played out in the area in her political development that it created a lopsided form of government that was not focused on developing its society instead it was centred around primordial sentiments.

Moreover, the striking historical cleavage of aboriginal settlers' communities, significance of the coastal regions is represented by the capital city Freetown, which was a product of European slavery establishment from freed slaves from the United States and United Kingdom and interior or hinterland densely populated by indigenous African communities. Rural-urban differences always have been sensitive issue in the political development of Sierra Leone. They have been tensions between settlers' communities of African origin from Europe and America who either came to dominate the society or enjoyed privileged positions than the aborigines.

Besides, there was the development of similarly exploitative clientelistic political system in societies with disparate communities were so much the product of internal regional variations as the need of political elites to develop the framework of dependable supporter to ensure regime survival. Worthy of mention is the fact that European imperialism in Sierra Leone has left a legacy of external dependence with largely cash crop, agrarian and extractive based economies relying heavily on Multinational Corporations (MNCs) for the exploitation of these strategic resources. Agricultural products are the primary foreign exchange earners for the majority of citizens, while others depend on strategic mineral resources such as diamonds, gold, bauxite, copper, uranium, iron ore and tin despite the vast mineral resource endowment, the country has been able to convert the strategic resources into sustainable economic growth and development.

The political history of Sierra Leone in the early years of her independence was full of uncertainty with Milton Margai of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party as Prime Minister; political structure of governance was in the hands of few individuals and their family members. Milton handed over to his younger brother Sir Albert Margai in 1964 which

led to political crises that brought about an election in 1967 with the emergence of All Progressive Congress as ruling party.

These internal contradictions led to a coup until 1971 when Siaka Stevens of the All Progressive Congress returned to power from exile in Guinea. Siaka Steven incorporated other political parties in a government of national unity, but this episode of peace was short lived as he started eliminating political opponents one after the other. This was captured in the words of Omagu thus: "In a climate of civil unrest fuelled by government scandals, and economic crises, President Siaka announced his retirement and General Joseph Momoh took over in 1985 under the All Progressive Congress.

The government of President Joseph Momoh was seen as a relieve because of his political strategy of constructive nationalism but this effort was bedeviled with wild corruption and indiscipline in governance leading to high inflation, devaluation of the currency, fuel shortage and total black out as a result of power failure. By 1991 it is evident from all indicators that the government of President Joseph Momoh was a colossal failure which led to attack on the government by a faction of Revolutionary United Front backed by President Charles Taylor of Liberia. The Revolutionary United Front was led by Finday Sankoh.

The Sierra Leone Civil War began in 1991 with killings and destructions of properties on both sides of the ruling government and the Revolutionary United Front led Sankoy. Describing the humanitarian situation that brought the intervention of Nigeria in Peacekeeping, an America Journalist Robert D Kaplan wrote in a paper titled 'The American Monthly' described the situation thus; About nations breaking up under a tidal flow of refugees, border crumbling and war becoming a continuation of crime in a massive scale. He went further to said: Tyranny is nothing new in Sierra Leone or in the rest part of West Africa⁶

These internal contradictions were fueled by a combination of factors including political instability, economic mismanagement, and social grievances threw Sierra Leone into a state of anarchy that snowballed into a civil war which led to the overthrow of the ruling government and the involvement of Nigeria in leading the West African Peacekeeping Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) into Sierra Leone. The war resulted in widespread

⁶ Clapham, C. S. (1976). *Liberia and Sierra Leone: An essay in comparative politics*. Cambridge University Press.

atrocities, including mass killings, amputations, and the use of child soldiers. The international community recognized the need for intervention as violence escalated.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In an attempt to comprehensively analyze the role of corruption in Nigeria peacekeeping in Sierra Leone from 1990 to 2002, several theories will be considered. These include institutional, peacekeeping and realism theories.

Institutional theory

This theory focuses on how both formal and informal institutions shape social behavior. In the context of Sierra Leone, institutional theory can help explain how corrupt practices within governmental structures influenced peacekeeping efforts and the overall stability of the region. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how institutions operate within their specific cultural and historical contexts.

Realism theory

Realist theory considers the principal actors in international arena to be states, which are concerned with their own security, act in pursuit of their own national interest and struggle for power. Realism posits that states act primarily in their own self-interest and that power dynamics dictate international relations. Realist theory opines that international security is best achieved with the actions of great powers which can create regional power balances in unstable regions across the globe, by force, or by 'geo strategic diplomacy'⁷. Henry Kissinger, former United States Secretary of State in the 1970s was a powerful advocate of this approach of conflict resolution. Sinai aptly captured it thus; ceasefire agreements which lay the foundation for the Camp David Accords and the Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979 were examples of settlement based on power politics or realism theory. Former United States Presidents like Jimmy Carter, George Bush Snr, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and George William Bush Jnr have all used America's muscles or power based approaches in resolving conflicts. Such mediatory actions may include nonviolent coercive approach like tying action aid, such as military aid. For instance, the United States' action in the spring of 1975 to freeze an Israeli request for \$300 million in military aid was meant to include Israel accepts an interim

⁷ W Burton and D. J. D Sandole, *Generic Theory: The Basis of Conflict Resolution*, Negotiation Journal Vol. 2 No. 4 London, Harper Collins, 1987,p.334.

agreement in Egypt⁸. Nigeria's involvement in Sierra Leone can be analyzed through this lens by examining its motivations for intervening militarily and politically, including regional stability, economic interests, and national security concerns.

Peace building Theory

This theory encompasses various approaches aimed at establishing lasting peace after conflict. It includes aspects such as reconciliation, rebuilding governance structures, and addressing root causes of conflict like corruption. Analyzing Nigeria's role through this lens allows for an exploration of how effective or ineffective its peacekeeping efforts were in mitigating corruption and fostering sustainable governance in post-war Sierra Leone. It is expedient to note that while each of the aforementioned theories of peace and conflict resolution provide an explanation for the influence of corruption in the roles of Nigeria in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, none of these theories could explicitly and comprehensively provide a detail analysis of the nature and pattern corruption influenced peacekeeping operations. While each theory provides valuable insights individually, a combination approach is the most convenient for analyzing "Corruption and Peacekeeping: Analyzing Nigeria's Influence in Sierra Leone from 1990 to 2005.

Institutional theory will provide a framework for understanding how corrupt practices affected both Nigerian interventions and local governance structures. Realism will contextualize Nigeria's motivations behind its involvement in Sierra Leone while highlighting the power dynamics at play during this period. Peace building theory will allow for an examination of the outcomes of Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts concerning corruption reduction and long-term stability. By integrating these theories, one can achieve a comprehensive understanding of how corruption impacted peacekeeping initiatives led by Nigeria in Sierra Leone during this tumultuous period.

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA'S PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS IN SIERRA LEONE

Corruption has been a reoccurring decimal within Nigeria's political landscape, affecting various sectors including military operations. During the period of study, allegations of corruption emerged regarding the management of resources allocated for

⁸ Ibid, p. 334.

peacekeeping missions. Reports indicated that funds intended for ECOMOG operations were often misappropriated or inadequately managed.

At another angle, there was unwillingness of key Nigerian actors in disclosing detail information on the finances and expenditure that were incurred during the peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone in the period 1990-2002. Moreover, extra budgetary expenditure by the Presidency as well as monies used to support other ECOWAS members states to deploy their troops in the peace missions areas were not disclosed by the Nigerian government officials. The primary reason being that those expenses were incurred during the military operations and there were no records to support the expenses. This attitude of Nigerian government officials led to wide spread speculation of over budgeting and padding of expenditures on peacekeeping mission. There were diverse speculations of the figures on governmental expenditures in peacekeeping mission, some sources indicated that Nigeria spent the sum of #4.7 Billion, #2.1 Billion, #2.2 Billion in 2001, 2002 and 2003 respectively. All these figures represented documented information released by the Budget Department of the Ministry of Defense after protracted efforts. These figures however, are below the speculated official Nigerian expenditure of #4 Billion in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the period of study.

This mismanagement not only undermined operational effectiveness but also eroded trust among local populations and international stakeholders. Nigerian Navy actively participated in the peacekeeping Operations in Sierra Leone by sea lifting troops from Nigerian and other members of contributing ECOWAS members to the ECOMOG forces. 231 Nigerian Naval officers participated in the process as crewmembers and officers that took part in the operations. Below is a breakdown of Nigeria Naval operations in peacekeeping Operation in Sierra Leone

Additionally, a British Journalist resident in Nigeria, Mr. Williams Keeling who revealed that Nigeria was using its 1991 Gulf War oil windfall to finance the war in Liberia was deported.

Besides, it was alleged that top government officials used ECOMOG operation as a medium to siphon money from the country into foreign accounts. Nigeria therefore would have spent a total of \$39 billion dollar USD and above from 1990-2004.

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TABLE 1: LIST OF NIGERIA'S NAVAL SHIP THAT PARTICIPATED IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN SIERRA LEONE FROM 2000-2003

SERIAL NO	SHIP NAME	CLASS OF SHIP	PERSONNEL STRENGTH
1.	NNS EKUN	FAC M	77
2..	NNS AYAM	FAC M	77
3.	NNS SIRI	FAC M	77
TOTAL			231

SOURCE: Nigerian Navy, Directorate of Peacekeeping Operations, 2011.

TABLE 2: TROOPS CONTRIBUTION LEVEL OF NIGERIA IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATORS IN SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA 1997-2005.

Serial No	Operations	No. of troops contribute
A	B	C
	NIGERIAN ARMY	
1.	ECOMOG in Liberia 1990-1996	12,000 all ranks
2.	ECOMOG in Liberia 1996-1999	9,620
3.	ECOMOG in Liberia 2002-2004	1,600
4.	ECOMOG in Sierra Leone	16,314
	Total No., of contributions	39,524
	NIGERIAN NAVY	
	4 Naval Ship	
	NIGERIAN AIR FORCE	

	1 X Air Force detachments		
	Logistics and supply services		

Source: Nigerian Army Headquarters, Abuja, 2011

Besides, the aforementioned cases of corruption in the involvement of Nigeria in the Peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, other key areas corruption were noticed include the following;

Financial Mismanagement: There were instances where funds allocated for peacekeeping operations were misappropriated. This includes allegations that Nigerian troops engaged in corrupt practices by diverting resources meant for humanitarian aid or operational support. Many of the Commanding Officers and even senior Military Officers within the hierarchy of power manipulated financial figures for their personal gains. sometimes monies meant for troop allowance and logistics were diverted for personal gains and other purposes which can not be clearly accounted for.

Bribery and Extortion were equally discovered from investigation carried out on the activities of Nigeria troops on peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone. Evidence is presented regarding Nigerian soldiers allegedly engaging in bribery and extortion against local populations. Reports indicate that soldiers would demand payments from civilians for protection or access to services, which not only eroded trust but also exacerbated local grievances.

Resource Exploitation: The paper notes that Nigerian forces were implicated in illegal resource extraction activities, particularly diamonds, during their deployment in Sierra Leone. This exploitation not only financed corrupt practices but also fueled further conflict within the region.

Political Patronage: The influence of Nigerian military leaders over Sierra Leonean politics is examined, with claims that they used their position to establish networks of patronage that benefited certain political elites while sidelining others. This created a culture of corruption that permeated various levels of governance.

Lack of Accountability: A significant theme throughout the paper is the lack of accountability mechanisms for Nigerian troops operating under ECOMOG's mandate. Without proper oversight, instances of misconduct went unpunished, fostering an environment where corruption could thrive unchecked.

IMPACT ON REGIONAL STABILITY

The nexus between corruption and peacekeeping is evident when examining its impact on regional stability. Corruption within Nigeria's military leadership created an environment where accountability was lacking. This situation contributed to operational failures that hindered ECOMOG's ability to stabilize Sierra Leone effectively.

Moreover, local perceptions of Nigerian forces were negatively affected by reports of misconduct linked to corruption. Instances of human rights violations attributed to Nigerian troops further complicated their mission and fueled resentment among Sierra Leoneans. Such sentiments can lead to increased hostility towards foreign intervention forces, ultimately jeopardizing long-term peace efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The interrogation of the nexus between corruption and regional peacekeeping, particularly in the context of Nigeria's involvement in Sierra Leone from 1990 to 2002, reveals a complex compromises that significantly influenced both the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions and the broader socio-political landscape of West Africa. This period was marked by a series of civil conflicts, notably the brutal civil war in Sierra Leone, which necessitated intervention from regional powers, with Nigeria playing a leading role through its leadership in the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

Arising from the above it is the view of this paper that for effectiveness of future peacekeeping and Nigeria playing a leading role to avoid the occurrence of corruption dominating its activities the following should be employed.

Firstly, development of a comprehensive national peace policy document which will streamline the roles of Nigeria in future peacekeeping operations. In the policy document there should be a modus operandi for documenting comprehensive records of all income and expenditures so that there will be detail accountability⁹.

Additionally, future peacekeeping operations should be collectively funded instead of allowing only one country to be at the forefront. More so, a clear frame of budgeting and accountability be developed by various agencies involved in peacekeeping operations to avoid double budgeting for the same thing in the process. All government

⁹ Agenyi E.M. The Role of Nigeria in peacekeeping and conflict resolution in West Africa 1990-2005. A study of Liberia and Sierra Leone Being an M.A Masters Dissertation at the School of Postgraduate Studies, Faculty of Arts, Department of History, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria, 2013.

officials caught in corrupt cases in the Ministry of Defense should be severely sanctioned including military officials.

In conclusion, while Nigeria's mediation and involvement in peacekeeping through ECOMOG played pertinent role in restoring some level of order in Sierra Leone post-conflict, the pervasive nature of corruption demonstrated systemic susceptibilities that must be addressed to enhance future peacekeeping efforts across a regional context like West Africa.

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