

DOI: 10.31857/S032150750013624-8

AU IN ADDRESSING REGIONAL PEACE AND CONFLICT IN DARFUR

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Abstract. *In era of globalization, the issue of peacekeeping and conflict resolution has become increasingly important in the policies of international organizations and national states, and ultimately has an impact on international peace and security. The relevance of this issue is determined by its significance not only for Africa, which is experiencing the negative effects of regional conflicts, but also for the entire sphere of international security.*

The study is comprehensive, and its key objective is to analyze the African Union's efforts to resolve the large-scale conflict in Darfur at three levels: global, regional and local. As a case study, the author refers to the experience of Nigeria, which, on the one hand, provides the largest number of peacekeepers for joint missions with the UN after Bangladesh, and on the other hand, is actively involved in establishing international continental and subregional peace and security.

Article focuses on the development of the AU as an organization that has played a huge role in resolving the conflict in Darfur. The genesis of the conflict in Darfur and the contribution of AU member states to its resolution are examined. The problems faced by the states during the missions in Darfur are analyzed. Based on the problem-historical approach to the analysis of the crisis in Darfur and the structural analysis of the AU activities, it is concluded that through the development of instruments of peacekeeping in Darfur. Nigeria has established itself as an important actor in the management of international conflicts.

Keywords: regional peace and security, peacekeeping mission, mandate, conflict in Darfur, African Union, Nigeria, United Nations, ECOWAS, ECOMOG

РОЛЬ АФРИКАНСКОГО СОЮЗА В РАЗРЕШЕНИИ ПРОБЛЕМ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОГО МИРА И КОНФЛИКТА В ДАРФУРЕ

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Резюме. *В статье основное внимание уделяется развитию АС как организации, сыгравшей огромную роль в урегулировании конфликта в Дарфуре. Рассматриваются генезис конфликта в Дарфуре и вклад государств-участниц АС, в частности, Нигерии, в его разрешение. Анализируются проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются государства в ходе миссий в Дарфуре. На основе проблемно-исторического подхода к анализу кризиса в Дарфуре и структурного анализа деятельности АС делается вывод о том, что благодаря разработке инструментов поддержания мира в Дарфуре Нигерия утвердилась в качестве важного актора в управлении международными конфликтами.*

Ключевые слова: региональный мир и безопасность, миссия по поддержанию мира, мандат, конфликт в Дарфуре, Африканский Союз, Нигерия, ООН, ЭКОВАС, ЭКОМОГ

The post-World War II era witnessed the emergence of intra-state conflicts as against inter-state conflicts especially in Africa which brought untold destruction of lives and property [1]. Africa has experienced numerous intra-state conflicts in countries like Liberia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda and Sudan to mention but a few with negative consequences on peace, security and development. Regional bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Africa Union (AU) have in most cases promptly intervened in crises in some African countries [2].

Foreign policy of any nation serves as a mirror of its domestic reality. One of the cardinal points of Nigerian foreign policy is the maintenance of peace and security in Africa. This has enabled her to play an active role in peacemaking and peace keeping in the continent since independence. Nigeria has participated in many peacekeeping and related missions globally [3, p. 76].

Africa just like other parts of the world is characterized by recurring instability, inter/intra-state wars, political and economic problems. The intensity and destructiveness of Africa's conflicts accelerated tremendously, posing complex challenges to the peaceful resolution of conflict in particular, and the advancement of peaceful co-existence between groups in general [4].

AFRICAN UNION

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the AU's predecessor, was established in 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. African leaders adopted a new charter in 2001 and the OAU became the African Union. The OAU had come to be known as the "Dictators' Club", reflecting the presence of numerous authoritarian Heads of states who had failed to relinquish power in their individual countries [5].

Though the OAU had African unity as a goal, it was both an unclear goal (as what constituted African unity was never clearly defined), and an insufficient goal (as the prevention of state-sponsored terror was not addressed). Non-interference and non-intervention in its member states served as OAU guiding principles. Unfortunately this head-in-the approach allowed nations to ignore the human rights violations of their neighboring governments [5]. When some of the countries ruthlessly slaughtered thousands of their own people, the OAU, bloated, bureaucratic, and mindful of its mandates, did not intervene. The recognition that the OAU was failing to provide not just a better life for the African people but, in many instances, even basic protection from several countries' reigns of terror was a major reason it was replaced by the AU in 2002 [6].

The promotion of "democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance" became one of the underlying AU objectives, along with promoting human rights and "peace, security and stability" [7]. The AU was to be empowered to initiate a peer review of countries suspected of genocide or war crimes and to impose sanctions [5].

The AU was going to actively engage its members, with military force if necessary, in order to prevent such occurrences. Today the AU comprises 53 members. The only African nation not a member is Morocco, which opposes membership of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara). The AU is modeled after the European Union, and aims to establish an effective parliament and create a single currency. Several organs comprise the organization, including the Assembly, Executive Council, Pan-African Parliament and the Peace and Security Council. This last one, composed of 15 members, is tasked with peacekeeping and peace building missions utilizing the African Standby Force which, according to the protocol that established the Peace and Security Council, is "composed of standby military contingents, with civilian and military components in their countries of origin and ready for rapid deployment at appropriate notice" [8].

Since 2003, the AU has conducted nine peace operations: a medium sized and small one in Burundi, four relatively small ones in the Comoro Islands, a fairly large one in Darfur followed by a hybrid mission with the UN in Darfur, and a very large one in Somalia. The AU operations in Burundi and the Comoro Islands have generally been considered a success. The initial mission in Darfur accomplished very little and even the hybrid AU/UN mission has had limited success. The large mission in Somalia had a slow and difficult start but has done surprisingly well in the past year.

The AU Peace and Security Council endorsed a plan to send 3,300 troops to Mali to join 5,000 Malian troops. The plan envisages 600 or 700 troops from Nigeria and 500 from Niger with the remainder from other African countries. It expects the US and France will provide technical, intelligence and logistical support. No date has been set to launch this peace operation.

The AU's first military intervention in a member state was the May 2003 deployment of a peacekeeping force of soldiers from South Africa, Ethiopia, and Mozambique to Burundi to oversee the implementation of the various agreements. AU troops were also deployed in Sudan for peacekeeping in the Darfur conflict, before the mission was handed over to the United Nations on 1 January 2008 UNAMID [9]. The AU has also sent a peacekeeping mission to Somalia, of which the peacekeeping troops were from Uganda and Burundi [8].

HISTORICAL PATTERN OF SUDAN'S CONFLICT

The conflict in Sudan is one of the longest running civil wars in the world today. Since 1983, Sudan has been stained by blood of 2,5 million dead and 7 million displaced [10]. Historically, the conflict evolved from a rebellion marked by postcolonial characteristics to a new kind of war in which the control of natural resources plays a significant role. In fact, the sources of conflict in Sudan cannot be reduced simply into one dominating factor be it religious, political, economic, cultural or historic.

Since the eruption of conflict in 2003, Darfur, Western Sudan, has been ravaged by killings, torture, destruction and rape. Despite internal outrage and demands around the globe to end the brutality, the deadly conflict continues. Darfur remains one of the world's worst human rights and humanitarian catastrophes. Civilians have become victim of egregious human rights violations, primarily at the hands of the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed, and allied Militia.

In February 2003, two opposition groups called the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) emerged in Darfur and attacked government troops. The SLA and JEM stated their attacks were in protest of the government of Sudan's (GOS) failure to protect local villagers from attacks by nomadic groups; and economic marginalization of the region.

After initial indication that the government of Sudan was seeking a peaceful solution, it chose instead to resolve the conflict by force, beginning in March 2003. Since that time the fighting has continued. By July, the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) began deployment charged with the mandate to monitor and report, it attempted to provide some measure of security for civilians and aid workers in Darfur with a force of less than 7,000 deployed by end of 2007.

On September 18, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1564 [11], which called for a commission of inquiry on Darfur to assess the conflict. Chad brokered negotiation in N'djamena between the Sudanese government and the two rebel groups, JEM and the SLA, leading to April 8 Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement. Other signatories

were Chad and the African Union. The ceasefire was to come in effect from April 11, 2004, but Janjaweed and rebel attacks continued [12, p. 89].

In 2006, the Darfur peace Agreement [13] was signed between the government of Sudan and Sudanese Liberation Army/Minni Minawi faction (SLA/MM) [14]. Only a few other armed factions have signed. Though most of the peace agreement has not been implemented, the control of some government posts and areas of Darfur were handed over to the SLA/MM and to other factions that accepted the Darfur peace Agreement on August 31, the UN security council approved a resolution to send a New Peace keeping force of 17,300 to the region, but the Government of Sudan refused to accept its implementation. In November, the UN Secretary-General brokered a compromise for Joint UN and AU Peacekeeping mission [15, p. 11].

In 2007, the International Criminal Court indicted two Sudanese men, Ahmed Haroun, Sudan's Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, and Al Kushayb, a Janjaweed militia leader, on 51 counts charges of war crime and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur. The government of Sudan refused to cooperate with the ICC, and despite warrants they remained free in Sudan. On September 25, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1769 authorizing the deployment of 26,000 peacekeepers and police under a UN - African Union hybrid mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

On May 10, 2008, Darfur rebels launched an attack on the capital of Khartoum causing further instability within the region. The government of Sudan continued to carry out aerial and ground attacks with complete disregard for the protection of civilians. It is in connection with this that Sudanese President Al-Bashir was wanted for crime against humanity. Thus, international action is essential to ensure a full unhindered humanitarian access, and attention to the broader conflict region [16]. Although, February 24, 2010 marked another historical record of Sudanese peace agreement as latest one was signed in Doha where president Al-Bashir posited that the "war is over", yet the situation on ground needs proper commitment and reasonable implementation.

NIGERIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN DARFUR CRISIS UNDER AFRICAN UNION

Nigeria's intervention and participation in Peace Support Operation in Darfur, Sudan, has been under the aegis of the African Union. The AU Mission in Sudan was actually the second peace mission embarked upon by the AU. The organization had earlier on embarked on its first peacekeeping mission when it deployed a 3,335 strong African Mission to Burundi (AMIB) [17, p. 5] in April 2003, which later became a United Nations Mission in April 2004 [17].

A fundamental reconfiguration of power in the AU in the first half of 2004 cleared the way for Africa's intervention in Darfur. In March 2004, South Africa and Nigeria, the two principal prompters of the new-look AU were elected to the PSC on a 2-year term. When the PSC was launched in May 2004, South Africa's D. Zuma was elected its first chairperson. The African leaders Summit in July of the same year also elected President O. Obasanjo of Nigeria as Chairman of the AU. With Africa's two most powerful nations at the helm of its power, the AU was emboldened to take a larger role in Darfur [17].

The former United State Secretary of State, Colin Powel believed at the time that the situation in Darfur was nothing less than a genocide [18]. He said his conclusion was based on evidence collected by State Department investigators who had interviewed over 1,800 refugees who has fled Darfur and accused the Government of Sudan (GoS) and Janjaweed militia of being responsible for the act. Others saw the "government made hurricane" [19, p. 1] as another Rwanda in the making [20]. The scorched-earth policy employed by the Janjaweed was seen as the worst kind of ethnic cleansing that Africa had ever seen [21].

By 2004, some 300,000 people had died as a consequence of the war. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council believed that there were over 6 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sudan with Darfur accounting for 2,5 million, with more than 200,000 refugees in Chad [22]. Article 4(j) of the Constitutive Act of the AU [23] provides for new principles and modalities for intervention in member countries in grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity [24, p. 292], with the non-intervention clause paramount in its activities.

AFRICAN UNION MISSION IN SUDAN (AMIS) I

An AU-led reconnaissance mission was sent to Darfur from 7th to 16th May 2004, and recommendations were made to dispatch monitors i.e. Military Observers (MILOBS) and military units to serve as their protection from African Troop Contributing Countries. Consequently, on May 28, 2004, the Sudanese parties to the conflict signed an agreement on the modalities for the establishment of its Ceasefire Commission and the deployment of MILOBS in the Darfur region [25, p. 17].

In accordance with the agreement, the parties accepted the deployment of 60 African MILOBS and 300 MILOBS protectors as well as observers from the Sudanese parties, and advisers from the European Union which was called AMIS I. Rwanda was the first Troop Contributing Country (TCC) to arrive in Darfur followed closely by Nigeria. Nigeria contributed 150 of the 300-Protection Force's contingent drawn from the Army Headquarters Garrison,

Abuja called Nigerian Company under the command of Lt. Col. A.O.Oluwadare. Later on, this number was increased to a full-fledged battalion in 2005.

AMIS I was established as a result of the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement reached in N'Djamena on April 8, 2004. However, it was in Addis Ababa on May 28 that the mandate of AMIS I was agreed on. The provisions of the mandate were to monitor the terms of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sudan and the main rebel groups in Darfur and to protect and monitor the ceasefire [26, p. 25].

The first of the 60 AU MILOBS arrived El-Fasher on June 4, 2004. However actual deployment in Darfur only started at the end of July 2004 with the MILOBS stationed at 16 group sites in the initially created 5 sectors i.e. Zamzam, Tawilla, Shangil-Tobaya and Um-Kadada, all in Sector 1;

Nyala, Graidia, Khor-Abeche and Kas in sector 2;

El-Geneina, Mournai and Foro-buranga in sector 3;

Kabkabiya, Sarifumra and Sortony, in sector 4;

Kulbus and Um Baru in Sector 5.

At this stage the mission had access to all part of Darfur and was not being restricted.

The main challenge was that of carrying out the required tasks effectively over such a large area of operation. The force was too small to carry out the required tasks effectively over such a large area of operation [27]. From the day of initial deployment to date Nigeria has continued to maintain and actually made corresponding increase in troops to Darfur as occasions demanded.

AFRICAN UNION MISSION IN SUDAN (AMIS) II

From the outset, AMIS I was beset with serious logistics problems [12, p. 39]. The first three AU MILOBS arrived El-Fasher on June 4, 2004, characteristically with only one hand-held Thuraya satellite phone to link them with Addis Ababa. They had nothing else, not even a vehicle, which was crucial to the conduct of patrols and show AU presence. The actual deployment which began at the end of July 2004, created the gaps that combatants exploited to attack civilians [28]. Acting on the advice of the AU PSC, the Chairperson of the AU Commission prepared a plan to guide the conversion of AMIS to a full-fledged peacekeeping mission with a large force and a stronger mandate. Such a robust force was needed to ensure the protection of civilians, disarm and neutralization of the Janjaweed militia, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Khartoum fervently resisted both a larger force and stronger mandate. In its bid to shoot down the idea of reinforcements, Sudan actively solicited and received the political backing of sympathetic Arab AU member states such as Egypt and Libya. Realizing the need for Khartoum's cooperation in order to deploy successfully in the country, the PSC of the AU backed away from its campaign for a strong mandate. It instead settled for a smaller force with no civilian protection capacity.

This took effect at the PSC meeting on 20th October, 2014, when it agreed on an enhanced AMIS mission, consisting of 3,320 personnel, including 2,341 military of whom 450 would be MILOBS, 815 civilian police and as appreciate civilian personnel, a substantial percentage of whom were contributed by Nigeria [29]. It was this force that has generally been regarded as AMIS II [29] commanded by a Nigerian, General Festus Okonkwo, a veteran of ECOWAS operations in Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively [30, p. 7].

The new mandate of what was to be called AMIS II mandated the force to monitor and observe compliance with the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement of 8 April, 2004, and all such agreements in the future, assist in the process of confidence building and contribute to a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian relief. Lastly, it was to assist in increasing the level of compliance of all parties with the Ceasefire Agreement and to contribute to the improvement of the security structure throughout Darfur [31].

It was not until April 2005, six months after the schedule date that troops began to deploy. In June, Nigeria approved the deployment of more than 2000 troops in three battalions for peacekeeping duties in Darfur [32]. On July 3, some 200 troops from the 6 Battalion of the Nigerian Army in Abak [12] were airlifted from Kaduna to Darfur. About a month later, Nigeria also sent more soldiers to Darfur from 4 Brigade Garrison in Benin [12] and 174 Battalion of the 81 Division of the Nigerian Army Ikorodu, Lagos [33]. Since this period Nigeria has sent scores of officers and men as MILOBS and several other battalions as Protection Force to Darfur.

On 28 April, 2005, President Alpha Oumar Konare, the former Chairperson of the AU commission, issued a report recommending the increase of AMIS to some 12,300 members by mid-2006, arguing that this would contribute to the secure environment throughout Darfur in order to enable full return of displaced persons. The same day the PSC approved a further extension of AMIS II personnel to 7,731 to be deployed by the end of September.

By October 2005, 6773 peace-keepers were deployed, including 4,847 soldiers in the Protection Force (PF), 700 military observers, 1,188 civilian police and 38 international staff of various kinds [12]. By 2006, Nigeria had a Protection Force strength of 2031 in NIBATT 4, 5 and 6 as opposed to 1756 by Rwanda, 538 by Senegal and 196 by the Gambia since 2006 [12]. Between 2005 and 2007, Nigeria provided three AMIS Commanders, in the persons of Major General Festus Okonkwo, Major General CRU Ihekire and Major General Martin Luther Agwai.

NIGERIA'S OTHER FACTORS IN AU PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DARFUR

Despite the commendable roles played by the Nigerian contingents during AMIS I and II in Darfur, the mission was beset by a number of problems. One of the problems of AMIS had to do with the mandate, especially the mandate for AMIS I. The mandate was not explicit and specific enough and its provisions were actually inadequate. The initial impression was that AMIS was going to be a peacekeeping mission, which naturally required the consent of the warring parties. However, the Darfur parties became aggressive and the Nigerian and other contingents found out that there was really no peace to keep, hence the calls for the mandate be expanded from peacekeeping to peace enforcement.

This had attracted an outright rejection on the part of the Government of Sudan. The issue was that the AMIS mandate, as agreed in Addis Ababa in May 2004, was quite restrictive. AMIS was mandated to monitor the terms of the Ceasefire Agreement between the GoS and the main rebel groups in Darfur and protect the monitors of the ceasefire and themselves [34]. With the enhancement of the AMIS mission to AMIS II, the mandate was not fully different from the earlier mandate for AMIS I, as the emphasis generally remained monitoring, investigating and reporting.

The Nigerian and other contingents in AMIS I, which deployed in Darfur, had logistical problems. They lacked some of the most basic things needed, like modern maps of the area. Maps made available to peacekeepers were out-dated and this affected the operations of the mission. Like most peacekeeping missions by the defunct OAU, the problem of logistics was almost insurmountable. The initial troops from Nigeria and Rwanda were even flown to Darfur in American C 130 Air Force planes [12, p. 1]. This was a reflection of the severe shortage of transport and other types of aircraft very necessary for successful operations in a terrain like Darfur.

The limitations in logistic and other areas were reflected in the deteriorating security conditions on the ground in Darfur. Nigerian contingents in AMIS were not immune from these as they were attacked on a number of occasions with consequent injuries and loss of lives. There was also inadequate knowledge of relevant laws of Sudan and generally inadequate orientation for the peacekeepers about the political situation in Darfur. Furthermore, they were apparently not certain what to expect especially from the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Darfur. This most probably accounted for the suspicion with which the latter regarded Nigerian and other AMIS operatives.

Such was the degree of suspicion that the average Sudanese in the Darfur area suspected that the AMIS contingent, including Nigerian officers and men, were pro-government. It took a little while to convince them of the good intentions of AMIS and get them to accept the latter. AMIS was grossly undersubscribed and too poorly funded to effectively cover the entire area of Darfur. Those countries like Nigeria which had the personnel lacked the means to deliver and maintain them. All of these cost huge sums of money.

While the operation in Darfur is termed one of Africa's major attempts at launching its own peace support operation, the operation is totally dependent on funds from donors such as EU and the USA. Every capital-driven project AU wishes to undertake must receive the blessings of the donors and this includes allowances for troops. This funding is not always readily available and is often sourced at donors conferences [35]. Most times troops allowances have to be delayed for two or more months due to non availability of funds. This issue of inadequate funding has become a fundamental challenge to the Darfur Operations.

Many of the peacekeepers including Nigerian peacekeepers in Darfur did not understand the local languages of the refugees and consequently had to depend on interpreters to be able to communicate with them [36]. In March 2007 some 150 Sudanese interpreters who act as language assistants between AU troops and the non-Arabic speaking refugees went on strike, claiming they had not been paid for three months [37]. Even though this was denied by AU officials, the fact still remained that for the period that the interpreters did not work, the troops found it difficult to communicate with the refugees.

CONCLUSION

Peacekeeping mission is an instrument for the maintenance of international peace and stability although not a substitute for a permanent solution to international conflict. As part of her contribution to global peace, Nigeria has participated in PKO under the UN, AU and ECOWAS. This decision by Nigeria to take part in PKO aptly describes her zeal to fulfill her foreign policy objectives to ensure global peace.

The conflicts in Darfur were primarily caused by the neglect of successive governments to provide essential services in Darfur. This marginalization was further aggravated by the continuous neglect and failure to implement policies to mitigate food insecurity and pressure on natural resources of the region by the GoS. This situation emanated to the age long war in Darfur. It is important therefore for the GoS to consider the provision of essential services and implement policies that would benefit the region for sustainable peace and security in the region.

Arising from peacekeeping therefore, more African countries and indeed the outside world have come to appreciate the centrality of Nigeria to African affairs. The achievements recorded by Nigeria in Darfur can better be understood and appreciated when considered from the holistic view of the activities of AMIS.

In this regard what may be considered as the greatest achievement of Nigeria's involvement in the Darfur crisis was the protection granted the defenceless civilians, as the protection of civilians in Darfur became one of the biggest challenges for both the AU and its international partners such as the European Union, the USA and the UN, since the conflict erupted in 2003. This was especially in the IDP camps and the nearby villages where there was occasional preventive deployment.

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