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# Regional Voluntarism: The Sustainability of Nigerian Afrocentrism

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## Introduction

Beyond slavery and colonialism with attendant negative impacts on Africa, postcolonial African leadership is core to its unending economic and political woes, as Asian states with similar colonial history are making increasingly giant strides. Generally, a study of African leadership climate yields a profile of absence of democratic culture, repression, human rights violations, and underperformance.[i] State governance lacks effective and strong institutions, as power is personalized and managed at the whims and caprice of rulers. Sit-tightism and life rule aspirations largely characterise governance occasioning electoral malpractices and constitution manipulation. Neopatrimonialism, prebendalism, and economic mismanagement are recurring leadership detriments. Global corruption ratings consistently highlight African states' unimpressive standing, which is an indictment of the ruling class.

African states are suffering endemic problems. There is a widespread lack critical infrastructure necessary to galvanize growth and improve standards of living. The prevalent bad socio-economic climate and consequential weak standing in the global division of power and labour has occasioned Africa's standing as the 'periphery of the periphery' in the global south.[ii] Leadership failings have incubated deep poverty, instability, and conflict in the region. Africa's spate of violent conflicts and attendant painful dislocations has fittingly earned it the reputation of a continent perpetually at war.[iii] This conclusion mirrors the frequency and magnitude of (often protracted) intra-state armed conflicts in most of Africa with calamitous national and regional consequences.

Africa lost \$300 billion to wars in 15 years, as 23 African states, between 1990 and 2005 were involved in violent conflicts, which on the average imposed an annual cost of \$18 billion on their economies.[iv] Another account estimates \$100 billion as the economic costs of an average African war.[v] The unprecedentedly high incidence of conflicts, a feature of the post-Cold War African reality,[vi] according to Kofi Annan, "undermined African efforts to ensure long-term stability, prosperity, and peace for its people." [vii]

Conflict as a generator and consequence of poverty with negative regional impacts largely motivated the construction of African Union peace and security architecture highlighting an institutional interventionist mandate for security challenges. Considering their background, self-interestedness, and uncompromising stance on sovereignty, it is surprising that African states would cease to be wholly sovereign by voluntarily delegating security functions to regional organisations. Against this backdrop, this paper overviews Africa's response to challenges of insecurity and Nigeria's catalytic role through its Afrocentric foreign policy. This paper shows that Nigerian Afrocentrism, though an avenue for promotion of its national interest, is largely humanitarian, indicating solidarity and charity, and therefore weakens a realist thesis on purely political objectives of inter-state behaviour. Finally, this paper discusses Nigeria's domestic political and socio-economic conditions, which undermine the political sustenance of an Afrocentric foreign policy.

## Regionalization of security in Africa: The Search for peace and security

Regionalisation of insecurity through spill-over effects of domestic conflicts, namely exportation of violence and illicit

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arms to neighbouring states, presence of cross-border rebel groups, influx of refugees, and associated burdens on host states, among other issues, characterize African conflicts. As 'no nation's security is self-contained,'[viii] regional dynamics and impacts of African conflicts are more critical considering its artificiality of inherited borders and fragility. Conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda, Congo DR, Burundi, Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Uganda exemplify this reality.

Regionalisation of solutions for threats to peace and security embodies some advantages over other initiatives. Regional strategies could be more effective, relevant, legitimate, and quicker. In particular it not only can, "counter perceptions of external imposition by a distant global UN," also commitment can be assured as the "region has to live with the consequences of unresolved conflicts and cannot simply withdraw from the conflict." [ix] This typifies Africa's experience, which necessitates cooperative action through regional organisations.

Although the Organization of African Unity (OAU) made minimal contributions to sundry interstate conflicts through pacific measures consistent with its Charter Article XIX, it was highly deficient in responding to domestic circumstances due to insistence on principles of state sovereignty.[x] Lacking institutional capacity and discredited by peacekeeping experiments in Congo (1978-79) and Chad (1979-1982), attempts at self-redemption yielded the 1993 Cairo Declaration of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution which occasioned its military observer missions.

The death of Western peacekeepers in African conflict theatres triggered the West's concern fatigue in the region's conflicts.[xi] Furthermore, Africa seemed to be less strategic with the end of Cold War. The numerous African conflicts in the post-Cold War era characterised by Western apathy, UN inadequate responses and burgeoning burdens necessitated experimentation with the 'African solutions to African problems' borrowing from Ali Mazrui's *Pax Africana* idea for continental assumption of responsibility for its destiny, particularly in conflict management.[xii] The timeliness of the vision was internationally acknowledged, according to Francois Mitterrand, former French President, 'the time has come for Africans themselves to resolve their conflicts and organize their own security.' [xiii] Rwanda and Burundi conflicts with mass atrocity crimes and negative regional implications greeted with international community's neglect inter alia provoked AU reversal of principle of non-intervention in member states' internal affairs.[xiv] This metamorphosis, especially in conflict management, was encouraged by the Cold War's termination, an inter-state conflicts recession, intra-state crises prevalence, and the need to address 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. OAU transformed into the AU following the adoption of 9 September 1999 Sirte Declaration and was formally launched on 9 July 2002, at the Durban Summit.

The AU's unique commitment to conflict management manifests in the peace and security architecture, notably Peace and Security Council (PSC), Panel of the Wise, Continental Early Warning System, Peace Fund, and African Standby Force.[xv] It is the realisation of its enormous challenges and institutional capacity inadequacies that spurred the establishment of AU African peace and security architecture. Apparently, member state consensus on AU oversight in human rights protection indicated their political will to 'surrender' aspects of their national sovereignty to the AU. Moving from theory to action, the PSC, which oversees its peacekeeping missions, has incrementally operationalized the AU's supporting organs while the sub-regional brigades that constitute the African Standby Force (ASF) are at various levels of development.

The PSC is empowered to promote continental peace and security through peace support operations even in domestic circumstances, as demonstrated where the AU Constitutive Act Article 4(h) states that:

the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity as well as a serious threat to legitimate order to restore peace and stability to the Member State of the Union upon the recommendation of the Peace and Security Council.[xvi]

The huge threats from security and non-traditional security sources pressured African states to abandon exclusivity to security maintenance embodied in the norm of sovereignty and non-interference in their domestic matters to support humanitarian intervention, which was unthinkable earlier. It is within this framework that operations were

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mounted in Burundi (AMIB), Darfur (AMIS), Somalia (AMISOM), Comoros (AMISEC) and Central African Republic (FOMUC).[xvii] This decision became a forerunner of UN emerging norm of 'Responsibility to Protect'.

The challenge of peace maintenance in Africa's troubled landscape is not left to AU alone as its various sub-regional economic communities (REC) are involved in complementary development of security mechanisms. These organisations include the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); the East African Community (EAC); the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); the Southern African Development Community (SADC); and the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA).[xviii] In particular, SADC intervened in Lesotho (1998) and some of its members mediated in Congo DR conflict; IGAD engaged in peacemaking missions in the Horn of Africa, especially in Sudan; ECOWAS initiatives in Liberia (1998, 2003), Sierra Leone (1997-2000), Guinea-Bissau (1998-1999), and Cote D'Ivoire (2003-2004) were widely acknowledged.[xix]

ECOWAS Articles 22 and 40 authorise inter alia intervention 'to alleviate the suffering of the populations and restore life to normalcy in the event of crises, conflict and disaster.'[xx] This development closed the gap which existed during its mission in Liberia. The strong commitment to its conflict management protocol reflected ECOWAS recent decision to engage the succession crises in Niger and Cote D'Ivoire. However, characteristic absence of consensus among its member states largely prevented ECOWAS military action in Cote D'Ivoire, until France intervened to bring the stalemate in the country to an end.

The AU and sub-regional bodies' experiences so far confirm that African solutions are not enough. Regional peacekeeping initiatives have continuously been limited by lack of logistics, funding, difficulty in building consensus, and inadequate professional manpower.[xxi] The impact of resource constraints led to AU withdrawal from Burundi, transition to UNAMID from AMIS, and inability to end Somali conflict. As a result of evident limitations, they often depend on EU and G8 benevolence. US, Britain, France and Canada while not committing troops lead in the provision of logistics, training, and diplomatic support during peace talks.[xxii] The situation also gave rise to the unprecedentedly co-deployment schemes with the UN in Liberia (UNOMIL), Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) and Sudan (UNAMID).

Despite commendable security architecture and swift condemnation of unconstitutional change of governments, AU initiatives have tended to privilege regime security over human security in status quo promotion. The tendency explicates its non-robust engagement of Government of Sudan on the Darfur conflict and reluctance to support International Criminal Court's oversight in Darfur. The AU was also reticent about Zimbabwe post-election crisis instigated by Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's adversarial politics, as it appeared indifferent to recent people power-inspired Arab spring in North Africa. Also, African regional organisations are yet to make impact in peace-building programmes and robust commitment to governance and development issues to ensure sustainable peace.

In addition, allegations of parochial interests, impartiality and other unprofessional conduct dogged, especially ECOWAS operations. Internal divisions with associated tensions occasioned by suspicions of 'Hegemons', like South Africa and Nigeria, undermine the progress of SADC and ECOWAS in Security management.[xxiii] However considering their weak capacity, African regional organisations have contributed significantly to the peace and security of Africa through their frontline roles.

## **Nigerian Afrocentric Foreign Policy**

The development of mechanisms for Africa's peace and security, informed by increasing security interdependence and vulnerabilities, is largely driven by key African states. Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa are considered states with prospects for regional leadership.[xxiv] While Egypt's influence is more notable in the Arab world, South Africa and Nigeria are more central to coteremporary African diplomacy. Both nations' sub-regional activities led to their categorization as regional hegemons. But their clear lack of overriding economic, political and military capacity to influence their regions' relations invalidate such conclusions. Rather both are 'pivotal states' in view of their disproportionate capacity relative to their sub-regional neighbours.[xxv] However, South Africa is a latecomer in the

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African struggle for peaceful order and sustainable development, considering its apartheid history. Its rich economic potential is a source of strength for Africa.

Before independence, Nigeria's African leadership potential was anticipated internationally and domestically. Foremost Nigerian nationalist and first president, Nnamdi Azikiwe, referred to Nigeria as 'Nigeria-Africa' a symbolism of Nigeria's inseparability from African interest, and in January 1960, Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa noted Nigeria's aspirations: 'Nigeria will have a wonderful opportunity to speak for the continent of Africa.'<sup>[xxvi]</sup> Also the West referred to Prime Minister Balewa as the 'Golden Voice of Africa,' owing to Balewa's spirited profession of African interests.<sup>[xxvii]</sup>

Nigeria from independence promoted Africa-centred foreign policy expressed through aggressive decolonization and anti-apartheid campaigns, economic aid, identification with African unity and development initiatives, and solidarity with black diaspora. Afrocentrism implies an African spirit of brotherhood or being ones brothers' keeper. Nigeria emphasised African cooperation and liberation, and perceived its national interest to be inextricably tied to Africa's interest. Nigerian external affairs minister, Jaja Wachuku's address at the October 10, 1961 UN General Assembly underscores the point:

Our foreign policy is based on three pillars: the concept that Nigeria is an African nation; it is part and parcel of the continent of Africa and therefore it is completely involved in anything that pertains to that continent... The moment Africa is affected we are involved... Nigeria finds itself involved in anything affecting the African continent anywhere, any square inch of African territory—we are involved...The peace of Africa is the peace of Nigeria. Its tribulations are our tribulations and we cannot be indifferent to its future.<sup>[xxviii]</sup>

Beyond the rhetoric of connectedness of Nigeria's identity and position of influence to the destiny and importance of Africa in global matters, Section 19 of the 1979 constitution mandated Nigeria to 'promote African unity, as well as the total political, economic, social and cultural liberation of Africa and people of African birth or descent throughout the world.' The current 1999 constitution reaffirms such commitment. These provisions underpin the agenda's priority and importance.

Besides its African nationality, it also assumed such responsibility because, according to Jibril Aminu, former Nigerian Ambassador to USA, 'Africa is a terribly exploited continent, very poor, very backward in the world, and still is exploited and cheated by colonial legacy and capitalist manipulation, and ridden with poverty. So Nigeria was being urged by the total circumstances to do something.'<sup>[xxix]</sup> Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy, an extension of Pan-Africanism, aimed at promoting and defending an African agenda to end colonialism and racist regimes, achieve unity, stability, and sustainable development. Implicit in its ambition is the idea of voluntarism. In the sense that "the actions taken are not coerced or compelled by other agents or agencies and that they occur because of the choices and decisions of the individuals whose conduct it is, because of desires and interests, beliefs, values and reasons that are in some sense the individual's own."<sup>[xxx]</sup>

Relatedly, Nigeria's self assumption of African interest promotion responsibility is indicative of the role of a volunteer. Volunteering entails altruism, where individuals engage in unpaid services. However, in practical terms volunteering can be a mutually beneficial endeavour as it accords participants with psychological sense of patriotism, humanitarianism and usefulness, as well as opportunity to build capacity. But the primary goal of volunteer service is not self-gain. It is self-sacrifice of time, resources to assist others or promote a cause. Therefore at the international level, volunteering is read as altruism, which to political realism is an aberration. Realists believe that states are rational egoists who act solely in pursuit of material interests, therefore, purely humanitarian engagements are rare international behaviours of states.<sup>[xxxi]</sup> The assumption re-enforces Morgenthau's observation that "the actions of states are determined not by moral principles and legal commitments but by considerations of interest and power."<sup>[xxxii]</sup> But it is not improper to render humanitarian assistance or promote community interest while at the same time realise personal agenda. However, considering Nigeria size as the 'giant of Africa', the potential demands of such huge population might have necessitated Afrocentrism to create stable regional order for its highly mobile citizenry and markets for goods and services.

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But why should Nigeria assume or be expected to play a 'big brother' or humanitarian role from independence, despite its at the time agrarian and undeveloped economy? Some countries like Ghana which achieved independence before it never had such agenda, and its Kwame Nkrumah was notable figure in the Pan-Africanist movement. General Aguiyi Ironsi, Nigeria's first military leader provided an answer thus:

In the whole sphere of Nigeria's external relations, the government attaches the greatest importance to our African policy. We are aware that because of our population and potentials, the majority of opinion in the civilised world looks up to us to provide responsible leadership in Africa, and we realise that we shall be judged, to a very large extent by the degree of success or failure with which we face up to this challenge which this expectation throws on us. We are convinced that whether in the political, economic or cultural sphere, our destiny lies in our role in the continent of Africa.[xxxiii]

While population is an ingredient of strength, countries like China and India do not perceive their size as primarily a factor in regional leadership and humanitarian role. Arguably no other country except Nigeria has had such foreign policy emphasis. Specifically, Nigeria gained independence from Britain on October 1, 1960, becoming thereby the sixteenth African nation to do so. It possesses an heterogeneous population of over 250 ethnic nationalities (500 indigenous languages) with highly entrepreneurial traditions,[xxxiv] and huge Christian and Muslim affiliations. Nigeria is the most populated country in the Africa, growing from 55.67 million at independence[xxxv] to over 160 million currently.[xxxvi]

In the 1970s Nigeria's military size was 230,000 considerably the "biggest standing army in Black Africa and twice than any African country"[xxxvii] and has been downsized to 94, 000. It lacks industrial military capacity. Nigeria is the largest oil exporter in Africa with an estimated 3.4 trillion cubic meters gas reserves with projected lifespan of 114 years.[xxxviii]

These attributes informed its engagement in sundry seemingly pro-African initiatives. It led various campaigns against apartheid regimes and their Western sponsors, notably offering technical, financial, material and general diplomatic support to anti-Apartheid movements. These initiatives helped in the establishment of majority rule in South Africa and Zimbabwe, decolonization of Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.[xxxix] The country's role for which it made huge financial commitment enabled its membership of the South African 'Frontline States' and permanent chairmanship of UN Anti-Apartheid Committee.[xl]

Nigeria is in West Africa and not Southern Africa (the theatre of the obnoxious minority regimes). Neither was there recognisable population of Nigerians in Southern Africa then. It equally does not share borders with the sub-region to necessitate commitment to the cause. Before its opposition to Apartheid regimes and severance of relations with them, Nigeria's commercial transactions with South Africa and Rhodesia outsized other such undertakings within Africa in 1960.[xli] Why did it volunteer for the role against its economic interest? A soft element of humanitarian interest is implicit as "derogation of any African or black man on the account of his or her colour reduced the humanity of the Nigerian."[xlii] President Robert Mugabe's declaration in 1982 that "Africa is hollow without Nigeria,"[xliii] was an acknowledgement of its influential standing in Africa owing to the anti-racist campaigns.

Nigeria's West African relations aim at the zone's economic, political, and social development. The fulcrum of the relations is its policy of good neighbourliness. Despite its size and neighbourhood of small states, Nigeria harbours no territorial or expansionist intentions as many had feared, thereby promoting the independence, sovereignty and equality of states. Specifically, it exemplified uncommon will for peace and respect for international law by complying with the ICJ unfavourable 2002 judgement in its Bakassi territorial dispute with Cameroon[xliv] rather than resorting to war considering its relative military superiority. Pan-Africanist agenda also encouraged Nigeria's economic programmes, aid and technical schemes for African and black diaspora states.

However, economic and security considerations also inform Nigeria's sundry bilateral and sub-regional initiatives. Its porous borders make Nigeria vulnerable to consequences of conflicts in the neighbourhood. Nigeria championed the creation of ECOWAS to integrate and develop the economy of West Africa. But beyond that, the Community was also intended to reduce growing French regional influence which encouraged the establishment of *Communaute*

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*Economic de l' Afrique de l' ouest* (CEAO).[xlv] Nigeria's national interest was intended to be served as ECOWAS would provide markets for Nigerian goods and services.

In the area of sub-regional peace and security, besides successful mediation in conflicts between Benin and Togo, Togo and Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso, and President Joseph Momoh of Sierra Leone and Samuel Doe of Liberia[xlvi] and intervention on invitation of Presidents to reverse military seizure of governments in Tanzania and Sao Tome and Principe, Nigeria's Afrocentric interest provoked its leadership of ECOWAS interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, a framework for later missions in Guinea-Bissau and Cote D'Ivoire. These missions created conditions for exemplifying the valuable potential of African capacity in conflict management. This is consistent with the idea of 'African solutions to African problems'. The Liberia mission was predominantly funded and executed by Nigeria "on a conflict that did not directly affect its own security, at a time when its 1995 foreign debt stood at \$35 billion," hence the conclusion that, "No Western nation, especially following the Somalia intervention, could match such commitment." [xlvii] Nigeria accounted for over 70% of the force and 80% of the funding expending about \$11 billion in the process.[xlviii] But some of these operations particularly Liberia negated institutional procedure. In Liberia there were questionable legitimacy, poor diplomacy, inadequate funding and logistics, and unclear mandate.

Considering Africa's endemic conflict profile and Nigeria's role, it could be asserted that a study of its conflicts would imply a partial study of Nigeria's catalytic role in African conflict management. The country's experience in military operations pre-dates its independence. Nigerians participated under the British colonial flag in World Wars on the North African and Asian fronts, and in quelling uprisings in Ashanti, Ghana and in Southern Cameroon.[xlix] Since independence, Nigeria participated in over 42 global peace operations, notably committing over 250,000 soldiers in UN operations and with current global record of highest involvement of female peacekeepers.[l] Nigeria consistently ranks fourth out of 118 UN troops contributing countries in missions.[li] Besides financial and material resource investments, it has experienced over 2000 human losses in peace operations.[lii]

In the area of diplomacy and development of African peace and security structure, Nigeria hosted several summits and conferences from OAU to AU. Nigerian Attorney-General, Teslim Elias, drafted OAU Charter, which equally borrowed from the content of the January 1962, Afro-Malagasy states' summit hosted by Lagos.[liii] Nigeria led the popular Monrovia bloc, which won the Casablanca group during OAU formation. Examples exemplifying Nigeria's commitment include, when the nation also played an instructive role in the emergence of the AU, its statesman's held the inaugural chairmanship of the AU PSC, and when its officials lead the AU/UN hybrid mission in Darfur.

The philosophy driving Nigeria's peace operations is its belief that, "the threat to international peace and security from any corner of the globe should be considered a threat to the peace and security of the world as a whole." [liv] If this is the case, how come other nations in Africa do not show the same commitment? According to John Mearsheimer, "For better or for worse, states are rarely willing to expend blood and treasure to protect foreign population from gross abuses, including genocide." [lv]

Nigeria's contributions seemingly challenge that assumption. Nigeria is not in geographic adjacency with most of the conflict theatres where it made critical contributions, like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan. For example, between Nigeria and Sierra Leone and Liberia are 3 and 4 countries that are more susceptible to the effects of the conflicts. In these countries, Nigeria did not participate in reconstruction contracts, neither were there noticeable business investments by Nigerians before and after the interventions. The interventions did not pretend to protect its nationals nor result in their evacuation. In Liberia, despite its traditional relations, US evacuated its citizens leaving the country to its fate. Trade relations between Nigeria and most of the post-conflict states before and after the conflicts were comparably marginal and unfavourable to Nigeria.[lvi] However today some Nigerian Banks have made measured inroads into Liberia, and Nigerian-led initiatives attracted international recognition and afforded its troop's capacity-building.

## Challenges to Afrocentrism

The attainment of regional peace and security has been cardinal goal of Nigerian foreign policy; hence successive governments maintained consistency to the doctrine despite variance in style and tone. Nigeria's regional

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contributions were informed largely by Afrocentrism which contemporary dynamics are redefining and making unsustainable.

The challenges to Nigerian Afrocentric policy are not external but domestic. Initially some Francophone West African states fearful of Nigeria's potential dominance were instigated by France to object to its initiatives especially during ECOWAS formation and Liberia operation. Nigeria's avoidance of conflicts with these nations, growing trade relations with France, and the latter's redefinition of its inter-African engagements improved their relations. Former President Obasanjo underscored the challenge facing Nigerian operations:

For too long, the burden of preserving international peace and security in West Africa has been left almost entirely to a few states in our subregion...Nigeria's continual burden in Sierra Leone is unacceptably draining Nigeria financially. For our economy to take off, this bleeding has to stop.[lvii]

However, the 1999 statement did not prevent Nigeria from leading the Darfur operation (from AMIS to UNAMID). But the implication is that rather than regionally organised operations which task its manpower and economy, Nigeria would involve in mainly UN missions at the expense of regionally-authored quick response to humanitarian emergencies.

The parlous state of the Nigerian economy and polity has necessitated calls for re-evaluation of its foreign policy, seeking a departure from Africa-centred concerns. The huge resource investments in peace initiatives at the expense of domestic developmental needs without commensurate returns underline its public's growing opposition. The government's attempted dilution of Afrocentrism with policies of 'economic diplomacy' and 'citizen diplomacy' remained mere rhetoric as they were not matched with effective action.

Nigeria by any standard has the potential to be among leading economies in the world. It possesses vast fertile landmass, bordered by the Atlantic oceans with rivers and seas crisscrossing its territory, year-round warm climate, enterprising huge population, and is a leading oil and gas exporter. Despite these attributes which can easily catalyse growth and development, Nigeria stands amongst the poorest countries in the world, and has huge domestic and external debts.[lviii] It measures consistently poor in every aspect of the human development index and is characterised by decaying infrastructure, high mortalities, low standard of living and illiteracy, among others. In the current UNDP quality of life index, it placed 156 out of 186 countries, and 149 out of 169 in 2010, indicating a position among "least human development" countries[lix] when its contemporaries are G20 members. Restating the irony recently, former Nigerian Head of state, General Muhammadu Buhari, lamented that, "The level of poverty in Nigeria is unimaginable. I have not seen this level of poverty anywhere in the world where a country rated as one of the highest producers of oil in the world, harbours most of the poorest people in this part of the planet." [lx]

Despite its standing as a leading producer and exporter of oil and gas, Nigeria imports petroleum products due to collapse of its refineries. Its public and privately owned industries have collapsed with a number of remaining firms relocating to Ghana.[lxi] There is absence of stable electricity despite huge budgetary appropriations, lack of reliable transportation and communication infrastructure, which impose constraints on enterprise.

The high poverty level in Nigeria is largely a function of leadership failure. Civilian administrations have not improved on the climate of bad governance bequeathed by its long ruling military leadership. Elections are characterised by malpractices and violence as victory is opportunity for self-aggrandisement. Leadership incapacity manifests in the neglect of the Niger Delta, its oil region which occasioned violent campaigns against state institutions and oil companies. There are increasingly low foreign direct investments, lack of investments in technological infrastructure, low capacity for industrialization, and economic mismanagement.

Corruption is the bane of its development as state leaders engage in competition for oil revenue misappropriation. According to former World Bank President, Paul Wolfowitz, Nigeria lost \$300billion in 40 years to corruption.[lxii] Relatedly, Nigeria has featured prominently among most corrupt countries in the World, sometimes maintaining the first position.[lxiii] Yearly budgetary allocations are largely siphoned with impunity. Weak and compromised institutions make public accountability unrealisable. It is from this position that critics allege that Nigerian peace

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operations' budgets are largely inflated and misappropriated by Military leaders.[lxiv] The associated widespread poverty and unemployment make untenable public support for robust commitment to regional interventions for peace and security.

Nigeria has also been enmeshed in insecurity going by cases of seeming intractable sectarian crises particularly in its northern region. Yearly there is outbreak of ethno-religious conflicts with tragic consequences fuelled by huge population of willing, hungry, desperate, unemployed youths seeking avenues for expressing discontentment over underperforming governments at every level. Also, it has since 2006 consistently ranked 15<sup>th</sup> on the Failed States Index,[lxv] an indication of its growing susceptibility to collapse.

The grave threats posed by the Niger Delta militants for development of their region, which affected oil production activities, have been mitigated by the current government's programmes and the election of their kin as president. However, a more potent and vicious challenge to the stability of the country is posed by the Al-Qaeda-linked 'Boko Haram' militia. The Islamist group populated by foreign nationals from Niger, Chad and Sudan, as well as Nigerian retired and serving soldiers, policemen and Immigration personnel has orchestrated relentlessly bombings and gun attacks on Nigerians and government assets.[lxvi] While politicians, religious leaders and influential Nigerians have been assassinated by the group, the Nigeria Police offices, Army Barracks, Abuja UN House, churches, and relaxation joints have also been variously bombed, with recent attack leading to over 100 deaths.[lxvii] The extension of the attacks to churches will potentially widen the scope of insecurity as customary retaliatory violence could be employed by Christian groups.

Nigeria's porous borders and neighbourhood proliferation of small arms and light weaponry and availability of insurgents enhance capacity of the militants. Nigerian security personnel are ill-motivated, ill-equipped, and inadequately trained; hence lack capacity for effective response. The government seems overwhelmed by the rebellion, which some analysts allege could lead to the nation's disintegration.[lxviii] In the atmosphere of growing domestic instability and declining economy, maintaining a foreign policy which privileges Afrocentrism would be untenable. The situation equally raises moral dilemmas and limits the government's normative commitments to outside peace initiatives as Nigeria cannot promote peace and development in other states when they are absent at home. The maxim 'Physician heal thyself' becomes instructive. However, the government is hopeful that Nigeria can overcome these challenges as it did during its civil war, 1993 succession crisis, and restiveness in the Niger Delta.[lxix]

## **Conclusion**

Peace and security are prerequisites to socio-economic development and critical to the realisation of national and regional objectives. Security vulnerabilities and interdependence necessitated greater concerns for regional collaboration to manage Africa's endemic conflicts, which the AU exemplifies. The Nigerian-led ECOWAS pacesetting initiatives, which helped to restore peace to the subregion, created further impetus for an AU interventionist agenda. AU peace and security mechanisms complemented by its RECs largely aim at conflict management through intervention in domestic circumstances to stop mass atrocity crimes and restore peace to embattled states. The operationalization of the AU doctrine occasioned peacekeeping operations in a number of states and usually challenged by material inadequacies underscoring Africa's weak economic profile and indispensability of external support.

However, achievement of peace and security is a multidimensional process not limited to conflict management. The AU governance and development agenda which informs programmes like NEPAD and APRM necessary for creation of infrastructure for achievement of just peace and security has not yet been impactful. Therefore, the AU should consolidate its efforts to drastically reduce corruption, poverty, unemployment, disease, impediments to democracy, environmental degradation, and social injustice in order to realise its peace and security goals.

Regionally, Nigeria has demonstrated its commitment to Africa, particularly in promotion of regional peace and security through economic aid, institution building, and leading operations at a very high cost to its domestic welfare performance. Characteristically, Nigeria got (and is expected to be) involved in African affairs both in times of



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economic boom and decline in pursuit of Afrocentric agenda. As this paper highlights, the apparent altruistic nature of its African contributions provokes domestic public campaigns for abandonment of Afrocentrism in order to mainstream Nigeria's national interest. Importantly, the position is more a reflection of growing domestic poverty than hatred for African brotherhood. If Nigeria's Afrocentric role is regionally important, therefore substitution of the policy due to its domestic economic and governance challenges would certainly have negative implications for African security and development.

Sustainable commitments to African security and development from Nigeria as well as achievement of its national interest are not incompatible. But both demand improvement in Nigerian local politics and economic management, as effective regional security community requires strong, stable states. Despite a likely reduction in financial and material investments in African initiatives, Nigeria's huge population will remain a source of dependable manpower for regional management of security challenges.

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[i] R.L. Feldman, 'The Root Causes of Terrorism: Why Parts of Africa Might Never Be at Peace,' *Defense and Security Analysis*, vol. 25, no. 4 (December 2009), 355–372.

[ii] D. Francis, *Uniting Africa: Building Regional Peace and Security Systems* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), p.1.

[iii] A. Adebayo (ed.), *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts: The Search for Sustainable Peace and Good Governance* (London: Zed Books, 1999), pp. 4-7; D. Francis, 'Peace and Conflict Studies: An African Overview of Basic Concepts,' in Shedrack Best (ed.), *Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2006), p.16.

[iv] The Guardian, Friday October 12, 2007, <http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/news/article08>.

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