



# ISSUES IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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## Chapter Four

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### PEACEKEEPING IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION: RELEVANCE AND CHALLENGES

*Edet Joshua Tom*

#### **Introduction**

From immemorial the desire to live in peace is innate in man. This is true not only with individuals but also with the entire human family around the globe. Most people yearn for peace for good reasons. The world has never had peace; somewhere and often in many places at once there has always been war. As long as records have been kept, mankind has been embroiled in one war after another and conflicts become more and more destructive as men develop more efficient ways of killing one another. Conflicts are robbing hundred of thousand of their peace of mind, the belongings and often their very lives. People everywhere are weary of war, tension and turmoil. There is evidence, though that men have wanted peace. Politicians and policy makers at one time or the other had attempted and employed all kinds of ways to acquire and maintain peace, from the Pax Romana (Roman Peace) of Roman times to the policy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAC) during the Cold War.

In recent times, as observes Anyidoho (1997) the African continent has been plagued by many interstate and intrastate conflicts. Whereas the Cold War era witnessed mostly interstate and liberation wars, Post Cold War Africa continued to experience intensive intrastate conflicts, including genocide as evident in the civil war in Rwanda. More often than not the intrastate conflicts resulted from sharp differences among national leaders, poor governance, greed on the part of the leaders and despotic disposition of



some African leaders. In some cases these intrastate conflicts assume epidemical dimension and attract a third party involvement as a mediator,

### **Conflict: An Overview**

There would be no Peace Keeping Project without conflict. Therefore in relationship to peacekeeping, conflict is an independent variable. As a phenomenon conflict is older than peacekeeping (Onoja 1996). Conflict means contest, competition and dispute. The term is also applied to tension as well as manifest clashes between social forces, such as antagonism, struggle between parties, opposition processes, threat to cooperation etc. (Umoh 1996, 32). Coser (1956:8) regards conflict as "a struggle over values and claim to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals". Park and Burgess (1921:574) contend that conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism (and achieve) some kind of unity even if it is through the annihilation of one of the conflict parties. Otite (1999:1) on the other hand, conceives conflict as a way of settling problems originating from opposing interests and from the continuity of society.

Conflict occurs only in a situation where there are two or more parties contesting for what is available for one party. Thus, Umoh (1996:32) is correct when he postulates that all relationship between sets of individuals or groups that involve incompatible objectives are also known as conflict. Concurring, as it were, with Umoh, Nadler (1979:222) opines that "Conflict exists when one party... attempts to attain its own goals relative to some other party, and where the party interferes with other party's attempts to reach goals". Here the emphasis is laid on interference as a prerequisite for occurrence of conflict.

In any situation, conflict occurs at least at three levels. These levels are perceived level, felt level and conflict

behaviour level. (Umoh 1996). When conflict occurs at perceived level parties involved realize that conflict exists based on observation on the difference in their goals and that there is opportunity for interference. On the other hand, when there is passive or active interference by at least one party one is correct to conclude that conflict at the level of expression of behaviour has occurred.

It is generally agreed by the scholars that the subject matter of conflict or issue field or bone of contention is always a scarce resource. Conflict relations, therefore, always involve attempts to gain control of scarce resources. At interstate level, conflict is caused by acquisition of territory, national prestige, diversionary tactics, beliefs and ideologies, and mutual distrust and suspicion. When nations engage in projecting and guarding national image or prestige there is bound to be conflict. Attesting to this fact Kousoulas (1968:324) declares that if a government does not guard the prestige or image of its country, its future ability to influence other governments may diminish rapidly. Whether the source of the prestige is ideology, culture, technology, wealth, power, the nations always strive to sustain it using appropriate strategy including conflict.

The quest for acquiring additional territory always pitches one nation against another. This takes different dimensions such as imperialism and irredentism. Other sources of interstate conflict may take the forms of beliefs and ideologies. Conflict in this case occurs when agents of the state undertake to promote their state's own socio-economic and political values abroad or convert other peoples to a particular religious, cultural, or political faith. (Holsti, 1972). Other causes of interstate conflict are diversionary tactics and mutual distrust and suspicion. In diversionary tactics, the leaders in attempt to divert people's attention from unacceptable or unpopular domestic or foreign policy, exacerbate disputes with other countries deliberately. They

also stir up emotions of their nationals and turn the public attention away from domestic problems which they are unwilling or unable to solve (Kousoulas 1968:325). Mutual distrust and suspicion assume interstate conflict when "relatively minor dispute grows into a major conflict which defies all efforts aimed at its settlement only because the parties to the dispute distrust each other's intentions so deeply that neither side is prepared to grant good faith on the part of the other (Umoh 1996:48). The list of cause of interstate conflict is not exhausted.

Intrastate conflicts, however, take their root from a combination of many factors. Anyidoho (1997) identifies them to include issues relating to religious and ethnic differences, religious fundamentalism, dispute over traditional boundaries and resources as well as inequitable distribution of political and economic power. Others include struggles for reform and democratization of political and economic systems, negative legacies of colonial rule and ethnic competition stemming from the collapse of the old patterns of relationships that provided the framework for collaboration among the many ethnic groups of which African countries are composed. Others like Obono (1999) Best and Abdulrahman (1999) and Albert (1999) also either agree with Anyidoho or identify other causes of intrastate conflict mostly in Africa.

The impacts of both interstate and intrastate conflicts are enormous. Conflicts claim lives and turn substantial part of the population of the affected area into refugees (Bassey, 2005). As social contractors Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau agreed that conflicts leaves man in continual fear and danger of violent death. The life of man, according to these social contractors, in conflictual condition is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (Olafson 1961:79) Conflict as it does elsewhere has plunged many African countries into the depths of despair, penury, and destitution. Today Africa is the continent afflicted by the misery of thousands of

women and children in internally displaced camps and thousands more in over-crowded prisons.

History shows that Africans have their own ways of settling conflicts. Most of the times these involve using traditional rulers and leaders to solve such problems amicably. The advent of colonialism had introduced colonial methods of administering justice or mediating in conflict which has today eroded confidence in traditional measures used by Africans. In many instances methods adopted to resolve conflict are ineffectual and conflicts now persist and at times the situation become explosive, before attempts are made to stabilize the situation. One of such attempts comes in form of peacekeeping force.

### **The Imperatives of Peacekeeping**

Peacekeeping has long been used as a measure in peace process in conflict afflicted areas. Though it was United Nations Organisation that fully developed the concept of Peacekeeping, the concept predates United Nations. It was first developed and used by that organisation in the 1940s with diplomats of small observer missions in the late 1940s to the Balkans, Indonesia, South Asia and Middle East (Vogt, 1992; 142). As part of peace process, peace keeping was introduced to enhance the concept of pacific settlement of disputes and as Vogt (1992) observes, the concept has developed, over the years, certain characteristics and used within certain functional context, which over the years have come to distinguish these from others. Peacekeeping is essentially one of the most important activities of the United Nations. It is, however, to be noted that both regional (e.g. AU, and sub-regional (e.g. ECOWAS) International Organizations have the mandate to act on matters of international peace and security. The United Nations in Chapter VIII of its Charter recognizes the validity of regional arrangements and authority in matters relating to the security of their regions, provided they are

consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations (The Peace Maker 1991-1992).

As a concept, peacekeeping has been operationally defined by many scholars. Onoja (1996:2) sees it as essentially a practical mechanism developed by United Nations to contain and control armed conflicts and to facilitate their resolution by peaceful means. He goes further to stress that as a mechanism for controlling inter-state conflict, peacekeeping has thus become an important instrument which the United Nations utilizes to exercise its vital role of maintaining peace.

Expanding more on the concept Onoja postulates peacekeeping as a conflict control mechanism whose principal aims are to diffuse tension and to contain international disputes or conflicts or to stop them from escalating into armed confrontation. Based on this conception, peacekeeping mechanism is deployed or functional when there was no armed confrontation.

Inducing from classical responsibility of a peacekeeping, Vogt (1992:147) asserts that the concept is conceived as "an inter-positionary force emplaced between two or more warring factions, charged with responsibility of monitoring the compliance of the warring factions to the terms of predetermined ceasefire agreement". The scholar maintains that 'peace-keeping was designed as a confidence building mechanism meant to assure the contending parties that the cease-fire agreement would not be violated". Going by this definition, the deployment of a peacekeeping force normally presupposes the existence of a ceasefire agreement. In other words, the parties to the conflict must have agreed that their dispute be peacefully settled and that a neutral, third party observation of the process is required. Other assumptions which peacekeeping is usually predicated on according to Vogt who quotes from Urquhart (1990:198) are:

- i. Consent of the parties involved in the conflict to the establishment of the operations to its mandate, to its composition and to its appointed commanding officer.
- ii. The continuing and strong support of the operation by the mandating authority, Security Council
- iii. A clear and practicable mandate
- iv. The non-use of force except in the last resort in self-defence. Self defence, however, including resistance to attempts by means to prevent the peacekeeping from discharging their duties.'
- v. The willingness of troop-contributing countries to provide adequate numbers of capable military personnel and to accept the degree of risk which the mandate and the situation demand
- vi. Less often noted, the willingness of the member states and especially the permanent members of the Security Council to make available the necessary financial and logistical support.

Based on time and unforeseen occurrence, at times, those conditions are not always observed before peacekeeping force is instituted and employed (Africa Watch 1993). Anyidoho (1997) appears to agree with Vogt's when he says,

*'Traditional' peacekeeping involves the interposition of lightly armed forces between hostile parties after the cessation of hostilities in order to assist in the implementation of a cease-fire agreement, troop withdrawal or the establishment of a buffer zone as part of a negotiated settlement between the hostile parties. Both (or all) parties would normally have agreed to the presence of a peacekeeping force and to its mandate.*

Viewed from this context, those involved in traditional peacekeeping play diplomatic and military roles. Thus consent of the parties involved in conflict, impartiality of the peace keeping force, and non-use of force except in self



defence are the essential principles of traditional form of peacekeeping.

Another form of peacekeeping is what Anyidoho (1997) refers to as 'second generation'; multidimensional peacekeeping operation. The functions of second generation peacekeeping apart from involving the implementation of complex peace agreements, is often necessary in internal or intrastate conflicts. Second generation, may also include, in addition to traditional military observation and confidence building functions, various civilian tasks such as re-establishing state and civil institutions, assisting in the process of demobilization, determining, disarmament, repatriation of refugees and socio economic rehabilitation. Of course as in 'traditional' peacekeeping, the consent of parties, impartiality and the non-use of force remain the fundamental principles of this form of peacekeeping. It is to be noted here that these principles could in certain circumstances be challenged. This usually happens when humanitarian convoy being escorted a peacekeeping force is attacked or its free movement is hampered. In such cases, as Anyidoho (1997) observes that "the reaction of peacekeepers lies in 'grey zones' which vary from little or no action (indicating a strictly limited definition of self-defence) to more robust responses which require a more expensive notion of self defence, including actions undertaken in defence of the mandate of the peacekeeping force).

Erskine (1991) though recognizing two types of peacekeeping operation, however, differs with Anyidoho on the methods of operations. Hence, while in Anyidoho's typology, the two types of peacekeeping involve the use of force at least in self defence, in Erskine's classification the two types of peace-keeping do not involve the use of force. Concerning these types of peacekeeping Erskine declares that, "there is the observer mission which is normally composed of officers, who do not carry arms nor can they use force even in self defence". He gives examples to

include UNMOGIP used in Afghanistan and Pakistan, UNIMOG in Iran and Iraq and UNAVEM in Angola. The second type of peacekeeping involves the actual force, comprising officers and men who are armed and can defend themselves, the mandate, and their equipment where and when that is necessary. Some examples of this type of peacekeeping are UNTAG, UNEF, and UNIFIL.

On the need and function of a peacekeeping force, Vogt (1992) declares that it is designed to defuse tension, stabilize the conflict situation enough to enhance peaceful settlement and enable the dispute to be moved from the battle field to the conference table. Peace keeping helps to keep the peace though at the instance of the conflicting parties. The concept was introduced to enhance the concept of pacific settlement of disputes. Peacekeeping operations normally involve deployment of military personnel. Concurring, as it were, with Vogt in the constitution of peace keeping, James (1990:1) describing a peacekeeping force asserts that, "a peacekeeping body is a traditional looking military force composed of a number of battalions and authority. The battalion will have been detached from or supplied by various national armies and the commander is appointed by, and be responsible to the international authority which has arranged the operation".

Careful analysis of the operations of peacekeeping reveals that it involves many roles (Holst 1993). These are prevention role which Bassey (1998) opines, "lay more in its preventive rather than its therapeutic action". Another vital role of peacekeeping involves interposition. This has to do with the peacekeeping engaging in separating the conflicting parties and also providing buffers. Other are restoration of a deteriorated situation, preservation of a tenuous and threatened peace, facilitation of political resolution, protection of law and order, public safety and services, enforcement of the consensus of the Security Council where the peacekeepers are assigned by the United Nations, and punishment of

violations of agreements or Security Council Resolutions / Decisions. From all indications, Holst appeared to have limited this mechanism of peace maintenance to the United Nations only and ignored similar arrangements made by regional bodies to assist in conflict resolution. Moreover, the assignment of the above roles, which seems to be empirical in nature, appears to expose inadequacy of many definitions of peacekeeping that fails to incorporate these roles.

Mackinlay (1990), in enumerating other roles of peacekeeping apart from agreeing that it was designed as an interpositionary force deployed to separating warring factions and to ensuring that they did not fire at each other, concedes to the fact that peacekeeping is to enforce the decisions of the international community, enforce an observation of basic codes of humanitarian order and to punish violations of agreements. The changing roles of peacekeeping is re-emphasized by Vogt (1992:163) when she opines thus:

*The use of peacekeeping in internal security situations and even in the political organisation of societies such as supervision of elections, the management of interim political administrations pending general, internationally supervised elections and to provide effective cover for the provision of humanitarian assistance to victims of conflict are becoming a regular features of the international political order.*

### **The Challenges of Peacekeeping**

The success of peacekeeping as part of peace process depends much on the cooperation of contending or conflicting parties. As (Claude 1976:315) observes, peacekeeping as an experiment in international conflict management, 'helps to keep the peace so long as the contending parties are prepared to give priority to the stifling rather than the free expression of their tendency to conflict. Thus, where both

the subjective and objective requirements for peacekeeping operation have existed the results were fairly satisfactory, the causes of conflict having been eradicated (e.g. ONUC 1960 UNTEA 1962). Where protagonist in conflict situation, however, prefer the free expression of their tendency to conflict the results have been rather frustrating (e.g. UNPROFOR, ECOMOG) (Bassey 1998:14).

There are other factors that contribute to the frustrating situation or failure of peace keeping especially in Africa. More often than not member states of sub-regional organisation are resistant in contributing troops to peacekeeping missions. In the case of ECOMOG, of sixteen member states that make up ECOWAS, only five member states accepted to contribute forces for peacekeeping in Liberia with the sixth one joining only latter.

Some peacekeeping operations are funded entirely through voluntary contribution. This lack of a sound and broader financial base limits the effectiveness of peacekeeping forces and encourages any country willing to cover the costs to act with near impunity. For example, ECOMOG in Liberia received considerable financial assistance from Western countries, but Nigeria bore the greatest financial burden as it has in Sierra Leone.

Most sub-regional organizations including ECOWAS in Africa lack institutionized crisis prevention and management mechanism and as a result its military involvement has been ad hoc and not in accordance with specific operating procedure. Drawing from ECOWAS for example, in the Liberian conflict the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government established a Community Standing Mediation Committee which in turn created ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) at its inaugural session. In Sierra Leone in contrast, the ECOWAS Heads of States and Government did not formally approve of the ECOMOG force until some three months after its intervention. In Guinea Bissau, at the ministerial level, ECOWAS Defence

Council voted to extend ECOMOG's mandate to Guinea Bissau, but the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government had to yet address the issue (UN Monograph 1998).

There is a problem of neocolonialism and standardization of weapons and military doctrines. It is common knowledge that the military in all the independent countries of Africa have inherited the languages of their former colonial masters as well as their different military cultures and standards of training. Most of African countries are still aligned to them making it difficult for these countries to make decisions in matters involving security without consulting them. This of course creates factions among members contributing to peacekeeping force and creates a situation where groups in the peacekeeping force take side with conflicting parties. This also leads to problems of control, which relates directly to inadequate training and linguistic diversity (Anyidoho, 1997).

For any peacekeeping operation to succeed, there is the need for adequate intelligence, which will enable cohesive planning. In almost all African peacekeeping operations, troops have been dispatched to the mission area with very little information about the people, the culture, their beliefs, traditions, and customs. There is scarcity of basic geographic information. A few African countries have up-to-date maps especially those up the military variety, which are essential to any meaningful planning. A lack of meaningful intelligence contributes substantially to the failure of peacekeeping operations.

There has also been friction between the military components of peacekeeping missions and the media. It is said that the media portrays a partial and myopic understanding of the nature of possibilities and constraints, successes and failures, which have often resulted in distorted public perception of the peacekeepers' roles. These, in turn, have negative effects on the national policies of some Western countries towards peacekeeping operations. Military commanders

often choose to ignore the media. This is a dangerous strategy. The duty of the media is to inform and educate. If the correct issues are concealed from them, they will find some information to occupy the space in any case. On the other hand, when handled properly, the media can be a very powerful tool for commanders in a distressful and desperate situation. In a land-locked country like Rwanda, where borders were sealed off and airports closed, the UNAMIR force would have been completely stranded had the media not projected to the world the circumstances under which the operation was taking place. In this regard, Africa's media needs to play a more active role, despite the obvious financial constraints. With proper organisation and determination, they can perhaps achieve meaningful results in the realm of accurate reporting. (Anyidoho: 1997).

The problems facing peacekeeping operations as enumerated above, still exist despite the fact that they are well known and experienced. For the improvement and success of peacekeeping operation, many recommendations have been made by scholars as listed below:

- i. Poor governance on the part of African politicians creates fertile grounds for disunity and conflict.
- ii. When ethnic and religious identity becomes a basis for the struggle for political power, Africans must realize that, unless all the various factions in a society are willing to share power, peace will continue to elude the peoples of the continent.
- iii. Warning signals must be heeded, and traditional African methods of solving disputes should be balanced with whatever useful lessons are available from elsewhere.
- iv. In establishing peacekeeping missions, it is necessary to study and analyse the background to the conflict carefully before passing any resolutions to establish such a mission.



- v. Peacekeeping operations must be based on unambiguous resolutions.
- vi. Having learned from past operations, the international community and all other regional or sub-regional groupings must learn to intervene at the right time, before conflicts escalate beyond control.
- vii. Conditions that enable successful operations should be carefully weighted. Lack of consent on the part of the various factions could prolong peacekeeping operations, leading to a stalemate in certain cases.
- viii. Financial obligations must be honoured by member states of the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations.
- ix. African leaders must show a strong political will in resolving conflicts on the continent. To place every problem at the foot of the UN because it is the world body responsible for peace and security, is not a positive attitude.
- x. The role of the media must be understood, and never be ignored.
- xi. The OAU's mechanism for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflict must be vigorously supported.
- xii. Effective logistics support, as an essential element of peacekeeping operations, cannot be over stressed. Without it, contingents will always feel abandoned and unable to operate at their optimum. In this regard, the proposal for the pre-positioning of essential logistics items in the sub-regions of Africa is a step in the right direction.
- xiii. Intelligence gathering is a serious business and must be carried out by trained and competent staff in order to achieve coherent planning.
- xiv. Co-ordinated training for peacekeeping troops and civilian staff alike is necessary for success in future operations.

- xv. Periodic conferences, seminars and workshops should bring UN agencies, NGO's and peacekeeping troops together for a common good.

### Conclusion

Peacekeeping as part of peace process has been used by the United Nations, regional as well as sub-regional bodies for maintenance of world peace. Though it has been partially successful in some instances, in others it has woefully. Both past and ongoing peacekeeping operations in Africa have exposed some weaknesses in the way conflicts have been and continue to be handled. It has been established that if only timely intervention could be carried out, the escalation of such conflicts could be prevented and many precious lives and property saved. It is argued that both United Nations, regional, and sub-regional bodies sponsoring peacekeeping operations do not or refuse to learn from serious mistakes committed in series of peacekeeping operations they sponsored in order to avoid such mistakes in the future. What is required now, is a collaborative effort on the part of UN, regional and sub-regional organisations to make effective use of these and many other lessons which have emerged from a variety of peacekeeping forum in recent years for the purpose of truly improving attempts to prevent and manage conflict mostly, in Africa. Nigerian and indeed African leaders must show greater resolve and exhibit much stronger political will in their effort to end conflicts in the continent. This will bring about the much needed development socially, economically, and politically.

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