

NIGERIA – SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS AND AFRICA'S SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria and South Africa are key actors in Africa's security discourse. Nigeria is the obvious leader in the West African region as South Africa holds sway in Southern Africa. Both nations have projected sufficient power in their spheres of influence to demonstrate their capability for tackling issues of security, not only in their regions but Africa at large. The extent to which the duo can go in succeeding to address the continent's myriad security challenges depend on their ability to cooperate and work together rather than engage in a contentious relationship as has been exhibited intermittently over the years and more recently in the deportation saga by both nations. This study focuses on the love-hate history that has characterised the relationship between these countries and its implication for security in Africa. It concludes that an unhealthy rivalry between the two nations that drive Africa's security agenda may delay or derail the hope of ushering the continent into a period of peace and security that will enhance its development as envisaged in the dream of an African renaissance.

Introduction

This study traces the history of Nigeria – South Africa relations from the apartheid era to the emergence of majority rule; the contributions of these States to security in their sub-regions and the African continent; the areas of conflict in their relationship and the implication for peace and security in Africa. It is said that when on March 2, 2012, South Africa sent back 125 Nigerians from the Oliver Tambo airport, it triggered an almost spontaneous reaction from Nigeria which responded with the deportation of South Africans from the Murtala Mohammed airport in Lagos, which by Wednesday 7 March 2012, had reached a total of 136. The days following, both nations' relations soured and appeared to be precipitating towards a major row before it was halted by Pretoria when it decided to apologise and sent a delegation to the Nigerian authorities on the debacle.

This is not the first time relationship between the two countries have experienced a downside. The history of Nigeria / post-apartheid South Africa relationship has been described as one of 'love/hate'

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because of the occasional brushing that has characterised it yet without leading to an end of the relationship. But to what extent will these two nations continue to put their delicate relationship in jeopardy considering the significance of their relationship to the wellbeing of Africa especially their significant role in addressing the security challenges of the continent?

The Evolution of Nigeria – South Africa relationship

Before the emergence of South Africa from apartheid rule, Nigeria appeared to have been the single most influential state in Africa. The adoption of Africa as the centre of its foreign policy meant that the security concerns of the continent were taken as the nation's direct responsibility. As early as 1960, Jaja Wachuku, then Nigeria's foreign minister declared that "Nigeria's objective in Africa is the total liberation of the whole of the African continent from foreign domination" stressing that "We will be failing in our duty if we do not use our full resources ... in the struggle for emancipation of the rest of the continent" (Ajala, 1986). The country is reputed to have spent US\$61 billion in its fight against apartheid alone apart from non financial expenses (Okolo, 2008). This was against the background that colonialism and white minority rule in Southern Africa was then a major security challenge to the continent.

Nigeria's commitment, according to Professor Bolaji Akinyemi was considered a moral and constitutional duty without expecting a return service or reciprocal treatment (Akinterinwa, 2001). The country's relationship with South Africa at that time could be described as totally antagonistic as it used every avenue to express its resolve to fight the regime and bring it to an end. In 1961, it spearheaded the suspension of South Africa from the Commonwealth and from the International Labour Organisation (Akinboye, 2005). It used the OAU at the continental level and the UN at the global level to mobilise support for this cause and assumed leadership of the struggle against apartheid in all its forms.

Nigeria's efforts paid off when the racist regime was forced to submit to majority rule in 1994 paving the way for Nelson Mandela to take over as the first Black African president of the country (Obiozor, 1984). Thus South Africa evolved from being a pariah state to a major player not only in the Southern African sub-region but in Africa and in fact, the global stage particularly because of its relatively developed economy and technological advancement which can be translated to political and military power.

The emergence of South Africa meant that era of Nigeria's dominant role in African affairs was over as it became obvious that the power equation on the continent would not remain the same especially as post-Cold War Africa was faced with the challenge of who should

occupy leadership in the security vacuum following the reluctance of western countries to intervene militarily in the continent especially after the UN/US debacle in Somalia in 1993 and the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Adekeye observed that Nigeria and South Africa were thought to be the successors but noted that both nations had major deficiencies to contend with: while South Africa had military and economic capacity, it lacked the legitimacy to play such role because of its past; Nigeria on the other hand had more legitimacy in its sub-region but lacked the military and economic capacity. Comparatively however, both nations were better suited for this responsibility than other states in the continent and had demonstrated this at various levels and fora (Adebajo, 2006).

It meant that both nations were faced with the task of providing leadership for Africa in a complementary manner as they strive to address its security challenges so as to bring the needed peace in the continent to create the conducive atmosphere for democracy, good governance and development. This collaboration has, however been threatened at various times making its realisation precarious to the detriment of the two nations and the African continent as a whole.

At the time of South Africa's evolution to majority rule, Nigeria was under the unpopular military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha which had assumed the status of a pariah state that South Africa once occupied within the comity of nations especially because of its gross human rights abuses. South Africa's Nelson Mandela's engagement with the junta was towards promoting the process of transition to democratic rule which included sending envoys to Abuja to parley with Nigeria's leadership. One of such was by Bishop Desmond Tutu who was sent to plead with the Abacha government on behalf of General Musa Yar' Adua and General Obasanjo who had been incarcerated on charges of treason (Daily Times, 1995 pg 1).

This reached its crescendo in 1995 when the regime executed the Playwright and Environmentalist, Ken Saro Wiwa and nine other of his Ogoni kinsmen which elicited a sharp response from Nelson Mandela who felt betrayed by the Nigerian leaders from whom he supposed he had succeeded in securing their release. The South African government spearheaded a move to suspend Nigeria from the Commonwealth and further (unsuccessfully) persuaded other nations especially in his own Southern African sub – region to impose sanctions on the country. It went further to recall its High Commissioner to Nigeria and insisted on its withdrawal from the Miss World pageant hosted by South Africa. Nigeria equally responded with a series of verbal vituperations and withdrew the Eagles, its national football team, from defending their title in the 1996 African Cup of Nations hosted by South Africa that year (Okereke and Emeh, no date).

The death of Sani Abacha and the ascendancy of General Abdulsalam Abubakar in 1998 saw a turn-around in Nigeria - South Africa relationship demonstrated in the latter's visit to Pretoria in August 1998 barely three months after his assumption of office. His handing over to Obasanjo in a democratic process in May 1999 further created a favourable environment for the promotion of a mutually beneficial relationship. It was the same year that Thabo Mbeki also succeeded Mandela as South Africa's president. The two men had known each other since the days of South Africa's struggle for liberation especially when Mbeki was the ANC's representative in Nigeria between 1975 and 1978 while Obasanjo was Nigeria's military head of State (Adebajo and Landsberg, 2004). The rapport between them translated into an asset for a flourishing diplomatic relationship that culminated in the establishment of the South Africa – Nigeria Bi-National Commission in 1999. This was engendered by a commitment by both countries to strengthen bilateral ties through strategic engagements and interactions among political leaders, diplomats and business executives from the two countries (Archibong, 2009). The Commission held several meetings annually from its inception up to 2005 when the relationship began to experience a lull.

South Africa / Nigeria cooperation and security in Africa.

Insinuations of an African leadership thrust on Nigeria and post apartheid South Africa has been expressed or implied in several fora by political, academic and civil society leaders in and outside the African continent. Former United States Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, observed in 2001 that no state in Africa except Nigeria or South Africa is in a position to play a major role outside its immediate region on issues of security and the management of the continent's conflicts (Kissinger, 2001). General Abdulsalam Abubakar as Nigeria's military leader called for South Africa and Nigeria to establish an 'axis of power to promote peace and stability on the continent' (Adebajo, 2007).

Similarly, Obasanjo asserted at a State banquet in honour of President Mbeki on a visit to Nigeria in 2000 that 'Our location, our destiny and the contemporary forces of globalisation have thrust upon us the burden of turning around the fortunes of our continent. We must not and cannot shy away from this responsibility' (Agbu, 2010). While addressing South Africa's national parliament in June 2008, President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria stated that "Our two nations have the historical and moral responsibility to be at the forefront of frontally confronting our continent's endemic developmental challenges ... I dare aver that this is not a matter of choice. It is an abiding duty which Nigeria and South Africa owe mother Africa." (THISDAY, June 4, 2008)

More than 25 representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations from South Africa and Nigeria affirmed this in a meeting at the Institute for Global Dialogue in South Africa in 1999 to strategise towards the achievement of continental leadership for the two nations (Ayere, September 14, 1999).

Indeed, South Africa and Nigeria have demonstrated their willingness, relative to their capabilities to address the security challenges in Africa by their various interventions, first in their sub-regional organisations (South Africa in the Southern African Development community-SADC and Nigeria in the Economic Community of West African States-ECOWAS) and other parts of the continent.

Nigeria and Security in West Africa

Since the creation of ECOWAS in 1975 by the Treaty of Lagos, Nigeria has spearheaded its role in tackling the security issues in the sub-region. Although ECOWAS was established to encourage economic, social, and cultural integration, and to fast tract development in the West Africa region, it became clear, however, that this ideal can only be pursued and accomplished in an atmosphere of peace and stability. Thus ECOWAS, through Nigeria's leadership has evolved several instruments and mechanisms for the enhancement of peace and security in the sub-region Nigeria. This includes the Protocol on Non-Aggression 1978 and the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence 1981 (MAD) as measures of resolving disputes between member states that could escalate into armed conflicts (Adeniji, 1997). These protocols were insufficient in addressing the security challenges of the sub - region in the 1990s particularly because they remained tied to the principle of sovereignty which made intervention in the internal affairs of any Member state unacceptable.

In the light of the large scale humanitarian emergencies at that time, in 1999, ECOWAS agreed on a Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security (MCPMRPS) as a replacement for MAD. This protocol provided that “ECOWAS shall intervene to alleviate the suffering of the populations and restore life to normalcy in the event of crises, conflict and disaster.” Moreover, it insisted that “where the environment of a Member State is gravely devastated, appropriate steps shall be taken to rehabilitate it.”

To further address the root causes of conflict such as corruption and instability, a protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was adopted in 2001 as a supplement to the MCPMRPS. ECOWAS has also established an early warning mechanism, ECOWARN, for early detection and prevention of conflicts in the region. It developed a regional conflict prevention framework to guide the conceptualisation,

implementation and evaluation of conflict prevention initiatives in the Commission and Member States. This framework aims at actualising the prevention of conflicts as an integral foundation for regional integration and development (ECPF, 2008).

To curb the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, ECOWAS adopted a Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other Related Materials in June 2006. Drug trafficking, money laundering and human trafficking have also received the attention of the sub-regional body and in many instances, Nigeria is one of the first to ratify and domestic such protocols leading the way for the others.

Due to the upheavals in the region beginning with Liberia in 1989 which latter spilled over to Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau in 1999 the organisation included military intervention among its objectives leading to the adoption of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as the military wing of the organisation to deal with the security dilemma that threatened the survival and well being of not only the particular States in conflict but also of West African states at large (ECOWAS Profile, 2010). This has served as the basis for the ECOWAS Brigade (ECOBRRIG) meeting the requirement of the African Standby Force of the African Union. It has managed to designate the 2 requisite numbers of 5,000 troops as standing by and has developed command and control mechanisms and a planning element (PLANELM). This is a high readiness component that can deploy within 30 days under Nigerian leadership (Stephen Burgess, 2008). This move has thus ushered ECOWAS into a new era as a fully-fledged security community in 1990 fashioned, to some extent, after the European Union (ECPE, 2008).

Funmi Olonisakin (2011) considers ECOWAS original transformation as an economic-focused organisation to being a strong force in the management of human security as a great achievement because it has positioned itself better to deliver on an issue that remains a challenge to the international community – how to better connect the security and development community. Indeed in the area of peacekeeping, ECOWAS has done exploits especially due to Nigeria's presence with its overwhelming military and economic muscle and willingness to contribute immensely to these efforts. Nigeria has led interventions in Liberia (1990-1998), Sierra Leone (1996-2000), Guinea Bissau (1998-2000) and Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2003) through the instrumentality of ECOMOG.

In the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone, it played an unrivalled leadership role with regard to both manpower and funding, providing eventually over 75 per cent of the troops and 90 per cent of the funding for the ECOMOG in Liberia. A former Nigerian chief of army staff, General T.Y. Danjuma argued that:

“Nigeria rightly believes that West Africa's instability is a function of poverty and underdevelopment. But in solving what appear purely political and economic problems, the physical challenges also have to be addressed. Whenever Nigeria makes calculated political, social, economic and military gestures to individual states or groups of states in West Africa, she is ipso facto addressing the security problems of the sub-region” (Danjuma, 2010).

The citing of the ECOWAS headquarters in Nigeria is a testimony to the country's commitment to the sub-regional body to which it has devoted enormous resources for its institutionalisation and operations since inception. This has made ECOWAS to become a role model on the continent in the area of conflict management as a means of addressing the security challenges in the sub – region (Fatah, 2009).

South Africa and Security in Southern African

Although South Africa has not demonstrated as much activism in SADC as Nigeria had done in ECOWAS, it has used its aggregate capabilities in economic, diplomatic and military spheres to influence the direction of events in the region. Within its short history, it has successfully employed diplomatic instruments between Angola and Zaire, as well as the internal crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. South Africa pushed for peace in the DRC in 1999 by introducing a clear plan for a ceasefire and troop standstill. It also sponsored a conference of reconciliation and reconstruction towards an all-inclusive transitional government, a new constitution and general elections. South Africa's efforts eventually saw the withdrawal of a number of countries' troops, and paving the way for a transitional government that would oversee democratic elections after two years (Flemes, 2007). Similarly, it has been involved in the Burundi peace process since 2000 including, contributing troops to an AU peacekeeping force in Bujumbura as a follow-up to negotiations in which former President Mandela and Deputy President Zuma played significant roles. It has also demonstrated its capacity and willingness to intervene by use of force to restore order in the 1998 military intervention in Lesotho (Likoti, 2006).

Southern Africa has also established frameworks for tackling the sub-regions security problems. The Declaration and Treaty of the SADC itself expressed hope that it "... will take the region out of an era of conflict and confrontation, to one of co-operation; in a climate of peace, security and stability" (Cilliers, 1996). Thus it created the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation on 28th June 1996 to

promote peace and security in the Region by specifically, among other objectives, protecting the people and safeguarding the development of the region against instability arising from the breakdown of law and order, intra-state conflict, inter-state conflict and aggression.

It's Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security was adopted in 2001. In principle the Protocol appears to affirm a conflict management regime that favours political, rather than military solutions. It includes committees and sub-committees and in particular, a department of politics and security at the SADC Secretariat and a conflict management unit including an early warning system and training capacity . (Schalkwyk, 2005). This was followed by the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation in 2008 to ensure close cooperation on matters of politics, defence and security at all times to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, conciliation, mediation or arbitration.

Furthermore, SADC launched a conflict management centre at its headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana. The centre will study early indications of crises, conflicts and natural disasters and link national crisis management centres of SADC member countries and also use internal centres within the organisation (SADC, 2010). SADC's brigade for the African Standby Force is SADCBRIG which was officially launched on 17 August 2007 in Lusaka, Zambia. The Brigade planning element is located in the SADC Secretariat. The leadership of South Africa in Southern Africa has therefore enhanced the development of the capacity of Southern African Development Community (SADC) the sub-regional body to face the security challenges confronting it.

Nigeria, South Africa and Africa's Security

At the continental level, Nigeria and South Africa have contributed and participated in several peacekeeping and mediation efforts beyond their regions. During the period of the leadership of Mbeki and Obasanjo in South Africa and Nigeria respectively, both countries stressed the importance of conflict resolution in Africa. Nigeria hosted a Commonwealth meeting which discussed land reform in Zimbabwe in September 2001 and also led peacemaking efforts in the Great Lakes region. South Africa was active in negotiations to restore constitutional rule to Côte d'Ivoire and contributed to the peace process in Liberia by persuading Charles Taylor to leave for exile in Nigeria in August 2003 (Adebajo, 2007).

With Nigeria's persuasion, South African leaders accepted to take greater peacekeeping responsibilities in Africa. This perhaps informed South Africa to provide the core of a planned UN peacekeeping force in DRC following the OAU summit in Algiers in 1999. Thus while Nigeria focused on the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra

Leone in the West African sub-region, South Africa sought to make peace.

Nigeria and South Africa have also played crucial roles in the transformation of the OAU to the AU and practically set the agenda for the new continental regime especially the provision in the Constitutive Act relating to the right of the Union to intervene in the internal affairs of its members in egregious cases of gross human rights abuses and to stem regional instability. They are key members of the Peace and Security Council of the Union. They have been instrumental in strengthening the capacity of the AU Commission to enable it perform its responsibilities including advocating for enhancing the staff force (Adabajo, 2007).

Both nations have driven the NEPAD process, and are key members of the implementation committee. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which is aimed at promoting African leadership in anchoring the development of the continent on the resources and resourcefulness of Africans also bore the strong impression of Nigeria and South Africa. Prominent among the objectives of NEPAD include conflict resolution, political governance, and human resource development all leading to the security of the continent. While the organisation has its headquarters in South Africa, Nigeria's Obasanjo was the chairman of the Government Implementation Committee. Similarly, whereas Mbeki's dream for an African renaissance (that will usher the continent into the 21st century as Africa's opportunity for growth and development) laid the foundation for NEPAD, Nigeria's Obasanjo's Conference on Security, stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa became the major document for the AU's Constitutive Act. Both nations were therefore instrumental in articulating the founding manuscripts that shaped these documents (Adebajo, 2006). This perhaps informed Landsberg's boldness to proclaim that "without the leadership role and diplomacy of Abuja and Tshwane, the establishment of the AU and NEPAD would have been impossible" (Landsberg, 2008:2011).

Between 1999 and 2006, the leaders of both nations worked assiduously to engage the international community especially the G8 to respond more actively in tackling Africa's challenges through increased peacekeeping and debt relief. In Evian, France, Mbeki and Obasanjo made a strong case for the G8 to back peace support operations in Africa and they received a pledge at their next summit in Sea Island in the US in 2004 to fund an African peacekeeping standby force to be deployed in 2010 (Landsberg, 2008:2011).

Nigeria and South Africa have been able to play an active role in the resolution of the conflict in the former Sudan especially the eventual implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which led to the peaceful ceding of Southern Sudan from the North as an

independent State. They have also worked together toward ending the Darfur conflict by spearheading the deployment of about 7,000 troops to Sudan's Darfur region in 2004 which the UN Security Council later turned into a 26,000 strong hybrid force in 2007 in a bid to bring about an end to the conflict in the region. This was a test case of the notion of legitimate intervention in the affairs of Member States as a defence of peace, democracy and human rights which they had championed to be included in the Constitutive Act of 2000 (Adebajo, 2007).

As prime members of the Peace and Security Council, they have been the driving force of the Union's defence and security cooperation, establishing powerful regional security mechanisms towards peace and stability in Africa and sharing a large part of the financial burdens of the union beyond the stipulated dues. They have also committed themselves to cooperate in all multilateral institutions and to enhancing closer relations between their sub-regional organisations-the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the areas of peacekeeping and peace support operations (Agbu, 2010). Indeed, Nigeria and South Africa are the driving force of the African Union's defence and security cooperation, establishing powerful regional security mechanisms towards peace and stability in Africa.

The drive of Nigeria and South Africa for continental leadership has, however, had areas and times of conflictual relationship especially towards the later years of Mbeki and Obasanjo who actually personified the rapport between the two countries. Domestic and external challenges for both leaders and their nations impacted negatively on their relationships that caused a setback to the synergy between these countries to forge ahead concerted efforts of mutual profit that would better the lot of the continent. These included democratic deficits that Nigeria suffered as a fall out of Obasanjo's failed bid for a third term and the glaring electoral irregularities that brought his successor to power. Similarly Mbeki lost political grounds in his African National Congress (ANC) which saw him losing out eventually toward the end of his second tenure. The change in leadership from Mbeki to Zuma also seemed to have adversely affected the relationship. While the former was inclined to continent wide and indeed global issues, the later was more concerned with regional issues which invariably weakened the once strong relationship under Mbeki (Agbu, 2010).

Under late President Umar Yar'Adua and President Goodluck Jonathan, the relationship does not seem to have recovered sufficiently. Only recently President Jonathan while receiving the envoy from the South African President Jacob Zuma headed by the Minister of Correctional Services, Mapisa Ngakula, spoke of the need to resuscitate the Nigeria-South Africa Bi-National Commission in order to avoid pit

holes in the relationship and further strengthen it (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012).

Apart from the internal issues in the two countries, a number of events and issues have contributed to the low-key in their relationship that has rendered it precarious. Firstly, in 2003, Nigeria's President Obasanjo refused to submit to Mbeki's wish to ensure Mugabe's invitation to the Commonwealth summit in Abuja. Furthermore, Nigeria along with others defeated South Africa's bid to replace New Zealand's Don McKinnon as Commonwealth Secretary-General with former Sri Lankan foreign minister Lakshma Kadirgamar. Secondly, Nigeria and South Africa were in competition for a slot in one of two opportunities for Africa in a possible reform of the UN that would enlarge the permanent membership on its Security Council envisaged in 2005 which eventually failed. However, the process was an acrimonious contest as both nations sought to undermine each other in a bid to outdo one another for the position.

Thirdly, South Africa's rather intimate relationship with Britain in the Blair's Commission to the exclusion of Nigeria and its invitation by Russia's Putin to the G8 summit in 2006 as Africa's only representative further created 'bad blood' between them (Adebajo, 2007). In the same year, Mbeki was reported to have opposed the suggestion for Obasanjo to continue for a third term as AU chair. The relationship was further strained because of the criticism of Mbeki's mediation efforts by Obasanjo (then AU Chair) in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire to which the later had initially invited the former. Mbeki's action of not reporting back to Obasanjo on the peace process was considered to be an undermining of the AU Chair in a bid to take the glory for himself. The South African President eventually stepped down from the responsibility (Adebajo, 2006).

Fourthly, is the failure of South Africa to successfully implement decisions concluded at the political level due to the domination of the technical and bureaucratic class by whites who may be averse to Nigeria's position on certain issues. This includes the refusal of South Africa to sign the agreement on non-visa regime for diplomatic and government officials and the granting of work permit to Nigerians who wish to work in South Africa (Agbu, 2010).

Fifthly, the stereotypical perception of Nigerians as criminals engaged in drug trafficking and the like which the South African media seemed to have publicised has resulted in Nigerians being subjected to ill-treatment by government officials and ordinary South Africans resulting in instances of friction that could jeopardise the relationship between both countries (Agbu, 2010). Even at the point of acquiring visa first time Nigerian visitors to South Africa were expected to deposit sufficient money with the embassy to ensure their repatriation at no cost to the South African government.

In particular, between January and October 2008, an average of 40 Nigerians was deported from South Africa monthly. Nigerian officials were disturbed about the indiscriminate nature of the arrests, detention and deportation of its citizens which were done without recourse to the Nigerian consulate in South Africa (THISDAY. Vol. 13, No. 4927, 2008). The xenophobia against mainly black Southern Africans in 2008 also appeared to have targeted Nigerians some of whom lost their businesses but managed to escape with their lives. Even before this, news of negative attacks on Nigerians in South Africa had been making the rounds (Okolo ,2008).

The Chairman of Nigeria's House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gbenga Odunwale, reported that within a period of one year (between 2007 and 2008) over 1,000 Nigerians had been killed in an extrajudicial manner. This led to calls from the National Assembly for the nation to take a tough stand on South Africa (Nigerian Tribune:2/5/2008 pg 17)

Sixthly, at the continental and global levels, the two giant States of Africa have not presented a united voice for Africa in tackling its complex security concerns. During the uprising in Libya and the post election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire between 2010 and 2011, the two nations adopted apparent contradictory positions. While South Africa supported a compromise stance between the parties in contention, Nigeria backed regime change. Such a divided house gave external forces the opportunity to intervene in such a manner that leaves a dangerous precedent with obvious negative security implications for the entire continent.

Way forward

Nigeria and South Africa should return to the era of mutual cooperation which they had demonstrated in the past such as the withdrawal of Nigeria from bidding for the 2010 World Cup hosting right and further expressing its declaration of support for South Africa (Mimiko, The Comet Friday, November 7, 2003). Similarly, when Nigeria was placed on the list of the Financial Action Task Force list (FATF) of Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories (NCCT) in 2001, South Africa which is a member of the global watch dog on money laundry, offered to use its presidency of the organisation in 2005 to help remove Nigeria from the list. Nigeria's de-listing in 2006 may not have been unconnected with this (The Punch. April 24, 2005 pg 11). Such gestures will go a long way in strengthening their relationship and therefore collaborative efforts of giving leadership to the continent.

One of the major challenges to security in Africa is the threat of piracy which has made navigation vulnerable. It has led to the lost of millions of dollars as ransom to pirates which go into worsening the criminal activities on the continent especially in the Gulfs of Aden(off

the coast of Somalia) and Guinea. Cooperation between these two countries with better naval capabilities than that of other African countries can go a long way in addressing the security challenge in the African waters as one time South African chief of the Navy Vice Admiral Johan F. Retief had identified in a visit to Nigeria (Nwosu, N. The Guardian Sunday 25 November, 2007).

Similarly, the defence intelligence of the two nations which were engaged in a cooperation programme aimed at strengthening and exchange of information involving officers of their militaries exchanging visits for periods of times can be further developed and made beneficial to addressing the security concerns of both nations and invariably, that of the continent (Onuorah, The Guardian, 2004 page 6).

The two states' Bi-national Commission and strategic coordination can also be used as a platform for reinforcing their positions for conflict management on the continent as it has created grounds for a strong symbiotic relationship between them in political and cultural ties (Obeanu, Umezurike, and Nwosu, 2007).

Furthermore, emphasis should be laid on how these two nations can cooperate to use their huge resources to eliminate poverty (the root cause of conflicts and insecurity in the continent) in their respective countries, ensure good governance and become a model for other African countries while assisting them to emerge from their own predicaments as well.

As long as States exist as sovereign entities, they will have national interests that are at variance with each other and the pursuit of these interests will at one point or the other result in conflicts especially when the realisation of such interests are incompatible. In the light of the multifarious issues at stake bordering on the security of the continent and the responsibility of the two nations in leading the other States to content with them, there is need to exercise utmost restraint when there are tensions as a result of such conflicts. The particular issues or interests should be specifically addressed while other areas should be spared so that it will not lead to certain unnecessary damages that will affect not only the parties themselves but the continent as a whole.

Summary and conclusion

The material dominance of South Africa especially in the economic sphere makes it the undisputed power in Southern Africa. Likewise, Nigeria in West Africa has demonstrated its capacity for power projection in the region. As a result, they are able to provide their respective regions with the requisite resources and political legitimacy to execute a regional response to conflict (Franke, no date) The two States have been the dominant actors in the African Union since its transformation from the erstwhile Organisation of African Unity (AU) especially in security issues which are the main concern of the

continental body. Both nations have demonstrated this over the years in the course of framing and operationalising various policies and instruments of the AU. However, the pursuit of national interests has at times tended to threaten this relationship and therefore the realisation of these objectives. This is not strange in international relations.

Much of the history of Europe up to the end of the Second World War was a history of warfare within and between kingdoms and States. But Europe has evolved into a security community concerning which war between them has become unthinkable because of the European Union driven by the concern of two of the, hitherto, most belligerent of the States: France and Germany (Mohammed, A., Tesfagiorgis, P., and de Waal, no date).

Although the context of Africa and Europe are different, the African Union used the European Union as the basic framework for its constitution. Therefore, Africa's dominant powers, South Africa and Nigeria, can cooperate by using the various institutions they have established so far to deepen their relationship rather than engage in destructive competition. Such institutions can be an attraction that will draw other States towards the emergence of Africa as a security community to the profit of all.

Adebajo (2006) likened the love/hate relationship between Nigeria and South Africa as a crisis in a necessary marriage of which divorce is not an option because without the two nations working together, any thought of an African renaissance will remain an illusion. Africa has remained the most insecure continent in the world due to poverty, poor governance and the attendant conflicts that have bedevilled the continent. It is desperately in need of peace so as to enhance development and better the quality of life of its people. Nigeria and South Africa cannot afford antagonism and competition to mar their chance of leading the continent to the desired haven but rather let amity and cooperation rule their relationship.

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