Adapting to Conflict: Nigeria's Impactful Peacekeeping Strategies in Liberia and Darfur

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Abstract
Peacekeeping operations are crucial for conflict resolution and global stability. This research examines Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts, the ECOMOG operation in Liberia (1989-1997) and the UNAMID mission in Darfur, Sudan (2007-2010). This study aims to provide insights into peace and conflict studies by analyzing Nigeria's tactical approaches and outcomes. It emphasizes the significance of context-specific strategies and regional actors' roles in international peacekeeping efforts. It addresses a knowledge gap in Nigeria's peacekeeping practices through document analysis, semi-structured expert interviews, and thematic analysis. Findings demonstrate Nigeria's ability to adapt its approach to address the complexities of each conflict situation. Nigeria demonstrated "enforcement peacekeeping" during the ECOMOG mission in Liberia, combining military force with diplomacy. The strategic shift significantly ended the First Liberian Civil War, demonstrating the effectiveness of forceful intervention in conflicts requiring a decisive response. Nigeria's contributions to the UNAMID mission in Darfur demonstrated the efficacy of long-term diplomatic efforts. Nigeria played a crucial role in mitigating the humanitarian crisis and protecting civilians in the volatile Darfur region by facilitating negotiations between conflicting parties. The comparative analysis highlights the significance of context-specific peacekeeping approaches and recommends a flexible and adaptable paradigm for future operations. Accordingly, research recommends a flexible intervention approach tailored to each conflict's dynamics. Furthermore, it highlights importance of ongoing diplomatic endeavors in attaining concrete results in resolving conflicts. It emphasizes Nigeria's contributions to peacekeeping missions, highlighting the role of regional actors while providing practical insights to improve international peacekeeping operations. Policymakers and practitioners can use findings to design better and implement peacekeeping operations that address the dynamic challenges of modern conflicts.
Keywords: Nigeria, peacekeeping strategy, ECOMOG, Liberia, UNAMID, Darfur, international security, Global South.

1. Introduction
Nigeria, in the post-colonial era, has emerged as one of the key actors in the management, avoidance, and settlement of international crises. Nigeria's overall foreign policy, which prioritizes friendship, collaboration, global peace, and national interest, includes peace operations as a key element. Moreover, Nigeria stayed at the forefront of African conflict prevention and resolution after supporting the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975. Nigeria worked to stop and end terrible conflicts that engulfed many nations on the African continent as a whole and the West African region in particular (Ebegbulem, 2011).

The latter half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century witnessed substantial sociopolitical disruptions in different parts of Africa (Musa, Aide, Bayero, & Shuaibu, 2023). Particularly, violent civil wars in Liberia and Sudan's Darfur region were significant focal points of these confrontations (Kalu, 2018; Kieh Jr, 2016). Liberia experienced a profound civil war that began

in 1989, marked by tension between endogenous and Americo-Liberian (Cook, 2003). At the height of the conflict, more than 200,000 individuals died, and approximately half of the population was displaced. Intervention of regional bodies was necessary in response to this humanitarian disaster. Therefore, ECOWAS formed and deployed the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia in 1990. Nigeria, as one of the most influential members of ECOWAS, played a significant role in the peacekeeping mission (Agbo, Lenshie, & Boye, 2018). In a different time and zone, the region of Darfur in Sudan emerged as another focal point of a conflict that began in 2003. The conflict in this region originated from long-standing grievances between non-Arab rebel groups and the Sudanese government, resulting in violent clashes that caused significant casualties and widespread displacement. In light of the complex nature of the conflict and its significant impact on regional stability, the United Nations (UN), in partnership with the African Union (AU), established the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in 2007. Nigeria has emerged as a significant contributor to the UNAMID force in line with its dedication to peacekeeping efforts in Africa. This highlights the country's important role in regional security operations (Paterson, 2008).

Considerable research has been done on comprehending peacekeeping missions and their consequences. However, there needs to be a more comparative examination of the strategies employed by nations, particularly Nigeria, in various conflict zones. Therefore, the examination of Nigeria's peacekeeping strategies, the equilibrium between forceful intervention and diplomatic negotiation which frequently determines the outcome of peacekeeping endeavors, has not been adequately examined in comparative analysis, particularly about the conflicts in Liberia and Darfur. Most academic studies typically adopt a holistic approach when analyzing missions, often neglecting to give adequate attention to the individual nation's contributions or downplaying their significance within abroader narrative. Therefore, the objective of this study is to address the existing knowledge gap by examining strategies employed by Nigeria, their adaptability in various contexts, and the complex relationship between military enforcement and diplomatic initiatives. Moreover, it aims to investigate strategies employed by Nigeria in the ECOMOG mission (1989-1997) in Liberia and the UNAMID mission (2007-2010) in Darfur, which is an area that has received little attention. It also seeks to understand how regional and subregional countries impact the development and implementation of peacekeeping strategies. In this regard, the study will answer the question: How did Nigeria adapt its tactical strategies for ECOMOG and UNAMID missions? What was the outcome of the interaction between military action and diplomatic efforts, and how did it impact the results of the interventions? To answer the questions, this study aims to analyze Nigeria's contributions to peacekeeping missions, highlighting the role of regional actors. It eventually provides practical insights to improve international peacekeeping operations.

2. Conceptual Clarification: Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement

Peacekeeping missions, both at regional and global levels, have been instrumental in addressing and resolving worldwide conflicts. The recurrent events in Africa, especially West Africa, have implications for security, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement. It is, therefore, necessary to pay attention to the contextual nature of the concepts of peacekeeping and peace enforcement (Agbo, Lenshie, & Boye, 2018). The idea of enforcement is intricately connected with the UN Charter, serving as the legal foundation for distinguishing between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Traditional peacekeeping, which allows the use of force solely in self-defense, aligns with Chapter VI of the Charter, addressing the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Conversely, enforcement actions are outlined in Chapter VII of the UN Charter (Karlsrud, 2015). These two concepts, although

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frequently used interchangeably, have distinct differences. Peacekeeping is a method specifically aimed at restoring peace in previously hostile societies. It involves the deployment of military, police, and civilian personnel primarily to monitor ceasefires among conflicting parties. The role of peacekeepers is to establish conditions that prevent hostilities between and among involved parties in the conflict. Crucial to peacekeeping is ensuring mutual respect for the rights and freedoms of the people while actively working to facilitate lasting, peaceful relationships in war-torn nations (de Coning, Aoi & Karlsrud, 2017).

UN peacekeeping operations are guided by three essential principles: firstly, the consent of the main parties involved grants the UN the necessary freedom to act and prevents peacekeepers from becoming active participants in the conflict. Second, impartiality is paramount, ensuring fairness while penalizing violations and avoiding compromising their appearance of neutrality. Moreover, peacekeeping operations are not intended for enforcement. Still, they may employ force at the tactical level if authorized by the Security Council, particularly for self-defense or of their mandate. In certain volatile situations, operations with "robust" mandates are allowed to use force at the tactical level, deterring disruptions to the political process or protecting civilians under imminent threat. It's important to distinguish these operations from peace enforcement, where military force at the strategic or international level may be used, a measure that generally requires Security Council authorization and does not depend on the consent of the main parties. These principles ensure that UN peacekeeping remains impartial, consensual, and, when necessary, capable of robust responses within its designated mandate, distinguishing it from peace enforcement actions (U.N. Peacekeeping, 2023).

Before peace enforcement, there is peacekeeping. Peace enforcement occurs when peacekeeping fails to achieve its objectives of bringing parties to the conflict to the point of restraint. Therefore, using various forms of coercion, including military force, is what peace enforcement entails, especially when there is a threat, a breach of peace, or aggressive behavior (de Coning, Aoi & Karlsrud, 2017). Peace enforcement is a strategy used to stop conflicts. But first, the Security Council must approve it. This happens when the situation between conflicting parties becomes very tense and there are violations of human rights and freedom (de Coning, 2017). The Council can, when suitable, employ regional organizations and agencies to enforce its decisions in line with the UN Charter (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2023). The aim is to eliminate threats to life and property that could potentially spread to neighboring states in the sub-region. However, before resorting to peacekeeping or peace enforcement, there must be a well-defined and justified existential threat, necessitating exceptional measures to address it (Wæver, 1995). Since joining the UN in 1960, Nigeria has consistently shown dedication to peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts. Shortly before gaining independence, Nigeria deployed its initial troops to participate in the UN peace mission in the Congo. Nigeria believes that social and economic progress and integration in Africa can only be achieved in an environment characterized by peace and stability. Nigeria's involvement in peacekeeping in Africa signifies that challenges faced by other African nations are regarded as challenges for Nigeria as well; therefore, it takes prompt actions in crisis time (Ngwube, 2013).

3. Methodology

A qualitative comparative research method is conducted to examine Nigeria's peacekeeping strategies in the ECOMOG mission in Liberia and the UNAMID mission in Darfur. The methodology is based on several academic methods that allowed the data to be analyzed thoroughly.

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3.1. Research Design

A qualitative comparative case study approach is conducted in this study because of its appropriateness for conducting a detailed examination of real-world contexts, especially in situations involving various variables and stakeholders. This method increases our ability to describe and is central to contextualization by focusing on relative similarities and comparisons between case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The countries of Liberia and Darfur, characterized by their unique geopolitical landscapes and the diverse peacekeeping challenges they posed, required a comprehensive investigative approach. The case study method, well-known for its ability to illuminate complex decision-making processes, offered exceptional insight into the events and strategies discussed (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Furthermore, through a comparative analysis of two case studies, the research sought to derive findings that could be applied more broadly, providing a comprehensive comprehension of peacekeeping endeavors in analogous situations elsewhere (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

3.2. Data Collection

Document Analysis: A selection of documents, such as official military and diplomatic correspondence, policy documents, and mission summaries from the past about Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts in Darfur and Liberia, were thoroughly studied. Also, journal articles offered on-the-ground reporting, and critical analyses are used. The sources of these papers were chosen to provide a thorough rundown of tactics and measures used in each operation. The records were carefully examined to extract relevant data on tactical strategies, choices taken, and results of peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, the documents above have provided insights into results and significant milestones attained throughout the missions. Semi-structured expert interviews were conducted to enrich the study and embed a nuanced understanding of the operations. Semi-structured expert interviews: Due to the complex nature of peacekeeping missions, gathering firsthand accounts was essential. Consequently, comprehensive interviews were conducted with individuals directly involved in the missions or with extensive knowledge. Diplomats who fulfilled mediatory roles, military strategists accountable for tactical planning, and scholars specializing in West African geopolitics were approached. This approach facilitated an insightful range of perspectives (Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022). Most of the interviews, which ranged from 60 to 90 minutes, followed a semi-structured format. The inquiry commenced with broad questions regarding peacekeeping, subsequently focusing on specific facets of Nigeria's participation in both missions. Participants could utilize their expertise to address the research questions effectively.

3.3. Data Analysis

After data collection, a thematic analysis approach is utilized. This approach involved a systematic procedure of identifying, categorizing, and interpreting patterns or themes within the data. The author generated initial codes after transcribing data, particularly the information obtained from the interviews. The codes were subsequently organized into potential themes, which underwent further examination and refinement to ensure they aligned with the original research objectives and questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. Findings and Analysis
A significant understanding of Nigeria's peacekeeping strategies is achieved through analysis. These findings offer a thorough understanding of the strategies and adaptation used in the missions in Darfur and Liberia.

4.1. ECOMOG in Liberia and the Enforcement Peacekeeping Strategy (1989-1997): An Analytical Exploration

The founders of the modern Liberian state are "Americo-Liberians". In 1821, the American Colonization Society (ACS) relocated formerly enslaved people on Liberia's coasts with the U.S. Navy's help. A blend of indigenous and "Americo-Liberian" cultural and political influences can be seen in modern-day Liberia's state structure and society (Cook, 2003). Despite never making up more than 5% of Liberia's population, the "Americo-Liberians" dominated the country's politics. After Liberia gained its independence in 1847, American Liberians' True Whig Party (WP) quickly started an uninterrupted domination until 1980 (Liebenow, 1969; Liebenow, 1987; Clapham, 1976). On April 12, 1980, native non-commissioned officers triumphantly overthrew the American-Liberian government. Initial support for the coup was broad. However, Samuel Doe, who rose from Master Sergeant to General, provoked further interethnic conflict, economic collapse, and the outbreak of the Liberian civil war (Howe, 1996: 147-148). Following Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) entry into Liberia on December 24, 1989, a confrontation that eventually turned into a seven-year civil war broke out. The fighting resulted in 150,000- 200,000 fatalities as well as widespread population displacement. Thousands of youngsters were forced to join fighting factions as combatants, and they perpetrated many crimes (Cook, 2003).

The Liberian war was a crucial test of Nigeria's commitment to peacekeeping operations and the resolve of the West African sub-region. When examining Nigeria's involvement in the ECOMOG, it is observed that its role is characterized by a combination of proactive and reactive actions, encompassing both direct combat and intricacies of peace diplomacy. The intricate socio-political landscape of Liberia during its civil war required a peacekeeping strategy that was adaptable, responsive, and occasionally assertive (Hunnicutt, 2023).

In response to the crisis in Liberia, in August 1990, the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was established and sent to some of the conflict zones as a regional force for peacekeeping and intervention under Nigeria's leadership. Most of the ECOMOG's conflict resolution process has featured multidimensional or conventional peacekeeping by overseeing the execution of peace accords made by parties engaged in conflict (Ebegbulem, 2011). The ECOMOG operations in Liberia included peace enforcement, mediation, cantonment, disarmament of factions, and protection of humanitarian aid (Eugene & Abdussalam, 2022). Nigeria has contributed significantly to the West African sub-region by deploying its powerful military, most notably by providing the majority of the troops and leadership for the ECOMOG, the ECOWAS-sponsored peacekeeping operation in Liberia (Ebegbulem, 2011).

Several nations took part in the Liberian mission; Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Niger, Uganda, Tanzania, Senegal, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Senegal, and Gambia were among them. However, Nigeria supplied most of the mission's troops, equipment, and funding (Eugene & Abdussalam, 2022: 211). Approximately 84% (5,000) of the 6,000 troops dispatched to Liberia in October 1990 were Nigerian. Nigeria provided 10,000 soldiers, or around 83% of the total ECOMOG forces standing in 1991, 1992, and 1993 (Salami, 2015: 190). About 90% of the ECOMOG multinational forces comprised Nigerian troops. Nigerian officers controlled the force's command posts and fielded the most significant number of soldiers during the ECOMOG operations in Liberia (Salami, 2015).

A comprehensive mandate, including peacekeeping and peace enforcement, was given to the ECOMOG (Howe, 1996). One can comprehend the conflict's scope and gravity by considering the insights. The intricate web of alliances and conflicts between different factions in Liberia created a situation similar to a chessboard and required peacekeeping forces to reevaluate their strategies constantly. The ECOMOG's original mission was to oversee a ceasefire that the NPFL had yet to agree to at the time of deployment. After Doe's execution in September 1990, though, they quickly switched to a peace enforcement stance, driving out the NPFL and securing Monrovia for the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) accession. Also, mutual defense and non-aggression constituted the ECOWAS protocol. In an attempt to end the bloodshed, the ECOWAS dispatched its ECOMOG by September 1990. However, when Taylor's fighters attacked Monrovia once more in October 1992, named "Operation Octopus," the ceasefire that had been signed in November collapsed utterly, and the peacekeeping force retaliated with heavy bombing raids (Armon & Carl, 1996; Human Rights Watch, 1993).

Taylor initiated "Operation Octopus", which targeted AFL, stationed at its Schiefflin barracks on the city's outskirts, and the ECOMOG positions surrounding Monrovia. What has been referred to as "the siege of Monrovia" was difficult for the ECOMOG to repel for nearly a month. Around the city, there was a great deal of fighting, but it was especially bad in the suburbs of Gardnersville, Barnersville, New Georgia, and Caldwell. Due to the urgency of the situation, the ECOMOG had to change its strategy and accept support from other Liberian factions to combat the NPFL. Also, Nigerian Alpha jets had been used by Nigerian dominated-ECOMOG to carry out several bombing and strafing raids on Taylor territory. Since Taylor lacked an air force, the ECOMOG aircraft could readily strike targets nationwide (Human Rights Watch, 1993).

In addition, a common theme that surfaced from the senior Nigerian officers' interviews was the ongoing difficulty of navigating challenging circumstances. When fighting was at its worst, a Brigadier who was positioned close to Monrovia stated, "It felt like we were walking on a tightrope with every decision we made not only would our soldiers be in danger, but the mission's fundamental values would also be compromised in the event of a mistake." To provide more information, a Lieutenant Colonel was interviewed and provided insight into the tactical difficulties encountered in the field. "Our mandate was peace," he explained, "but the reality was war." Being on the front lines, the battalion frequently had to modify its plan. After a major incident, they took a calculated retreat from a key position and then used diplomacy to negotiate a return of power with a warlord, thus preventing more bloodshed. These incidents demonstrate the dynamic situation and how the Nigerian contingent, working through the ECOMOG, must have employed flexible measures. After this, things happened very quickly, resulting in more armed groups, ongoing hostilities, several national and international conferences, and the signing of more peace treaties (Armon & Carl, 1996).

Nigeria participated actively in all the peace negotiations with Liberia on a diplomatic level (Salami, 2015). The parties signed multiple cease-fire and demobilization agreements starting in November 1990 with the goal of transition to civilian rule. In 1994, the Cotonou Peace Agreement was held before the elections. The Akosombo Agreement was a supplement to the Cotonou Agreement and was accepted by faction leaders in September 1994. In December 1994, different groups involved in the conflict signed the Accra Agreement, which was meant to supplement the earlier Akosombo Agreement. However, disagreements persisted, and fighting continued. After ongoing efforts to resolve the conflict, the Abuja Accord was ratified in August 1995. Seven faction leaders and civilian representatives signed this agreement in the Nigerian capital, following extensive negotiations led by Nigeria and Ghana under the ECOWAS. On August 31, three civilian representatives and three

prominent rebel leaders, Taylor, Kromah, and Boley, were inaugurated. ULIMO-J leader Roosevelt Johnson was appointed as the head of the defense department. The Council's duties included enforcing a cease-fire pact, disbanding all fighters, and organizing presidential elections (Cook, 2003). Experts had viewed the Abuja Accords as a strategy to restore peace in Liberia at any price, enticing warlords with attractive cabinet positions within an interim government (Adebajo, 2002).

According to the interviews, a highly experienced Nigerian diplomat offered valuable insights. The narratives he presented were filled with accounts of discreet gatherings, late-night discussions, and diplomatic efforts involving frequent travel. About a tense period, he provided an account of their successful efforts to negotiate a temporary ceasefire between two conflicting factions by employing a strategic blend of incentivizing measures and assertive tactics. He stated, "Juicy promises such as aid, development, and cabinet positions combined with a veiled threat of targeted military action often worked well." Another finding was the "chameleon" diplomacy Nigerian envoys used, highlighting the adaptable approach they had to maintain by changing colors depending on the faction they were dealing with.

Therefore, the integration of military action and diplomacy yielded concrete outcomes. It emphasizes the delicate equilibrium that Nigeria had to uphold, employing necessary force while consistently keeping the avenue for dialogue open. The "Operation Octopus" in 1992 is an example of a military campaign that aimed to recalibrate the balance of power and foster a favorable environment for dialogue (Bustin, 2006).

Building upon analysis of the document and integrating it with an array of interviews, it becomes evident that the situation involved a dynamic combination of evolving military and diplomatic strategies (United Nations, 1994). The Liberian theatre served as a platform for the convergence of hard and soft power, where the sounds of gunfire frequently transitioned into whispers of diplomatic discussions. Despite the tragic backdrop of war, the pursuit of peace remained a steadfast guiding light. Additionally, Nigeria's involvement in peacekeeping efforts was diverse and complex. Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeepers were required to assume various roles, including combatants, mediators, and humanitarians (Connell, 2001). One particular incident, as narrated by an authority from the Nigerian contingent, served as a notable example. During a temporary cessation of hostilities, his team provided medical assistance to wounded soldiers and civilians, including individuals from opposing factions. This highlights the contrasting nature of their role - serving as fighters during the day and healers during the night. Therefore, in general, the ECOMOG was successful in keeping Monrovia somewhat orderly. The capital regularly hosted independent media, religious institutions, and human rights organizations until April 1996 (Armon & Carl, 1996).

In conclusion, Nigeria's involvement in peacekeeping operations in Liberia under the ECOMOG was a multifaceted endeavor that required a combination of military strategy and diplomatic acumen. The enforcement peacekeeping strategy was a lived experience shaped and refined in the crucible of conflict and guided by the overarching goal of peace, which had been achieved. It finally enforced an end to hostilities, disarmed opposing parties, evacuated and protected civilians, and established a setting that allowed for free and fair elections (Adeboye, 2020). On February 2, 1998, the ECOMOG mandate ended in Liberia (Tapitapia, 1998).

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4.2. UNAMID in Darfur and the Diplomatic-Peacekeeping Strategy (2007-2010)

The intricate nature of the Darfur conflict required implementing a strategy that combined conventional peacekeeping methods with a significant focus on diplomatic involvement. Two rebel factions, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), arose in February 2003 and began to oppose the National Islamic Front (NIF) government in Khartoum, marking the beginning of the Darfur crisis (Ngwube, 2013). The genocide in Sudan's Darfur region was the continent's biggest crisis. The violence left over 200,000 dead; 90% of them were women and children, and 2.5 million homeless. Beginning in 1983 with the outbreak of the 20-year civil war, there has been a rift between the government of Arab Sudan and the Christians/anti-Muslims of Darfur. Begun by rebel groups who claimed the central government ignored the region and discriminated against its people, the conflict started in February 2003 with attacks on military posts in the area. Janjaweed, or "men on horseback," were local Arab militias that the government used to attack and pillage villages in retaliation. The Janjaweed slaughtered civilians, raped women, and set fire to villages while having the backing and weapons of the government. By the end of 2006, over 2,000 Darfuri villages had been destroyed by the Janjaweed (Paterson, 2008). Complex factors are at play in the Darfuri crisis. The availability of contemporary weaponry, problems with identity and governance, the rise of armed rebel parties that had the public backing of some tribes, tribal feuds brought on by desertification, and the need for fertile grazing land all contributed significantly to the crises (Ngwube, 2013).

Given the complex circumstances at hand, according to Nigeria's attitude of good neighborliness, then-president Chief Olusegun Obasanjo sent a military expedition to Sudan as a first step in showcasing Nigeria's commitment to settling the conflict (Ebegbulem, 2011). Nigeria acknowledged from the outset that relying solely on a military strategy would be insufficient and potentially have adverse effects. Therefore, a strategic approach known as "Diplomatic peacekeeping" has emerged. Nigeria has shown her commitment to ending the crisis in Darfur by sending a military team to Sudan and organizing many peace talks between the rebel groups and the Sudanese government (Ebegbulem, 2011). Nigeria has been actively seeking peace in the nation ever since the Southern Sudanese civil war began in the early 1980s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, it organized several Peace Talks in Lagos, Abuja, and Kano to assist in settling the protracted war. Those peace negotiations laid the groundwork for the conclusion of a comprehensive peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) (Ebegbulem, 2011). After signing the Humanitarian Cease Fire Agreement (HCFA) on April 8, 2004, the African Union (AU) established the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) as a peacekeeping mission (Adeniji, Agaba, & James, 2015). Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president of Nigeria and chairman of the African Union, designated General Abdusalami Abubakar as his Special Envoy to Sudan to initiate a peaceful resolution to the Darfur issue. The purpose of this appointment was to give the peace process more legitimacy and sound judgment by demonstrating Nigeria's readiness for an active role in the Sudan. A significant impetus for the African Union (AU) to step up efforts for peaceful discussion was the special envoy's visit to Darfur to examine the humanitarian situation and report from that tour (Adeniji, 2004).

On August 23, 2004, under the African Union's sponsorship, the first round of inter-Sudanese political talks was held in Abuja following initial contacts, fact-finding trips, and discussions with all parties involved in the Darfur issue. The Sudanese government, JEM, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) were all at Peace Talk in Abuja, where political and humanitarian topics were discussed (Ebegbulem, 2011). Therefore, Nigeria helped the Sudanese Government and

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the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) sign a comprehensive peace accord to bring peace back amongst warring factions. Nigeria's determination to resolve the ongoing Sudanese crisis in Darfur is demonstrated by the appointment, on separate occasions, of General Abdusalami Abubakar, former Head of State of the Nigerian military, and Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, as Special Envoys to Sudan by former President Obasanjo (Ebegbulem, 2011).

With the passage of Security Council resolution 1769 on July 31, 2007, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)for a hybrid mission was established (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2007). Therefore, this resolution combined the United Nations Mission with the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) (Adeniji, Agaba, & James, 2015). Nigeria contributed most troops to the UNAMID; 3,700 Nigerians, including staff officers, four military battalions, a military hospital, and observers, were dispatched to join the UNAMID mission. Nigeria had progressively supplied AMIS with around 2,000 troops before UNAMID (Henke, 2016). Moreover, President Obasanjo participated in the Darfur peace negotiations while serving as the African Union's chosen chairperson (Henke, 2016).

In addition to providing most of the military and police troops to the UNAMID in Darfur, which replaced AMIS in the region, Nigeria maintained solid political support for the peace process. Nigeria has contributed seasoned leadership to peacekeeping operations in Darfur and the political side of the international community's peace efforts. General Martin Luther Agwai of Nigeria was named Force Commander of AMIS in July 2007 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairperson of the African Union (United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur [UNAMID], 2023). As the first Force Commander for hybrid operations, General Agwai supervised the conversion of AMIS to UNAMID. Until August 2009, General Agwai oversaw the mission. General Patrick Nyamvumba of Rwanda was positioned as mission commander. Between June 8, 2011, and August 1, 2012, Ibrahim Gambari, a Nigerian diplomat, held temporary Joint Chief Mediator and the UNAMID Joint Special Representative positions. As part of its attempts to support international efforts to resolve the crisis in Darfur, Nigeria has also sent a mission to evaluate political and security conditions. The last one of these delegations was headed by Dr Bello Mohammed, Nigeria's minister of defense, in April 2012. The delegation's tasks included reviewing Nigeria's involvement in the UNAMID and developing fresh plans of action to support the improvement of security and peace in Darfur (UNAMID, 2012).

Additionally, interviews with experts provided a source of firsthand experiences on peace talks, "Tribal interpreters often accompanied our armored vehicles, our defense strategies were intertwined with community engagement sessions, and our outposts became zones of dialogue," said one retired Nigerian General who served in the early stages of the UNAMID. His strong memories suggested a general approach to building discussion and trust even in the face of sporadic escalation. The tales about Nigerian contingents putting up Darfur evenings were quite educational because these cultural exchanges aimed to promote understanding among people. These seemingly little acts have been critical in fostering an environment favorable to peacekeeping operations. Diplomatic tactics were emphasized in a thought-provoking discussion with a Nigerian peace envoy. The person recounted many incidents of trilateral talks between the UNAMID delegates, rebel chiefs, and Sudanese government officials. " All three objectives—acquiescing to rebel concerns, maintaining Sudan's sovereignty, and sustaining the UNAMID's missions—were at stake in each delicate dance-like conversation.," he claimed.

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Furthermore, the result of two and a half years of talks, debates, and consultations with the main Darfur conflict parties, all pertinent stakeholders, and international partners is the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). In May 2011, the All-Darfur Stakeholders Conference concluded by adopting the DDPD in Doha, Qatar. The Document, which currently serves as the foundation for the entire peace process in Darfur, was committed to by the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement by signing a protocol agreement on July 14. The UNAMID provided technical assistance for the process, and it still supports the Document's distribution and encourages groups that are not signatories to accede to the DDPD. The DDPD covers several issues, including power and wealth sharing, human rights, justice and reconciliation, compensation and return, internal dialogue, and origins and effects of the war (UNAMID, 2023). Furthermore, the UNAMID promoted peace messages via sports activity, spread the DDPD through workshops, convincing tribal leaders, and making relations between mission and academics in Universities by Ghambari are among activities to impact communities (Manuel, Shuaibu, Mayyahi, Rijal, & Lukunka 2012).

In sum, Nigeria is crucial to the efficient handling of geopolitical problems. As a leading regional force, Nigeria has always endeavored to preserve a careful balance between its responsibilities to the Continent and the more extensive international community. Nigeria emphasized the importance of localized solutions for what can be fundamentally characterized as a conflict with localized origins. In essence, the Darfur experience provides a comprehensive perspective on contemporary peacekeeping efforts. While military components play a crucial role, the Darfur operation distinguishes itself by emphasising diplomatic, cultural, and community engagements. The role of Nigeria within this intricate framework, as demonstrated by documentary evidence and expert testimonies, highlights the nation's dedication to promoting peace, flexibility in strategic approaches, and a fundamental belief in the efficacy of dialogue.

4.3. Comparative Reflections: Liberia's Enforcement vs. Darfur's Diplomatic Peacekeeping

Within the extensive realm of peacekeeping operations, Nigerian efforts in Liberia and Darfur exemplify how strategies tailored to specific contexts can significantly shape the resulting outcomes. A comparison of these two missions highlights Nigeria's ability to address distinct challenges effectively within various socio-political environments.
Liberia experienced a complex landscape characterized by power struggles and aspirations at the regional level (Hunnicutt, 2023). The historical theme of ethnic rivalries, which were further aggravated by Doe's rise to power and the later chaotic period of Charles Taylor, gave way to a conflict characterized by intense factional warfare and complex geopolitical dynamics (Reilly, Banton, & Stevens, 2023; Young, 2022). In contrast, the region of Darfur has been characterized by a complex interplay of historical ethnic grievances, state-supported militia aggression (specifically through the Janjaweed), and deeply rooted tribal politics. The tensions were intensified by marginalization and competition for limited resources, resulting in a complex civil war (Brosché, 2023; Yahaya, 2019).

In Liberia, the urgency and severity of the conflict and the dynamic nature of alliances among the warring factions necessitated adopting a proactive military approach. The ECOMOG, led by Nigeria, frequently found itself engaged not only in peacekeeping operations but also in active combat situations (Adeboye, 2020). But in the case of Darfur, due to multiple parties involved, intricate geopolitics, and the vast scope of the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region, a strategy that deviated significantly from direct military conflict was required. Nigeria's approach, within the framework of

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the UNAMID, was centered on encouraging communication, assisting in negotiations, and interacting with local tribal dynamics (Paterson, 2008).

The conflict in Liberia witnessed a predominantly West African response. The intervention by the ECOMOG primarily focused on regional context, with Nigeria playing a prominent role. The broader international community, mainly Western nations, predominantly maintained a peripheral role, providing diplomatic or logistical assistance while refraining from direct engagement (Howe, 1996). On the other hand, the Darfur region garnered considerable global recognition. The severity of the crisis and Sudan's geopolitical significance led to close monitoring and frequent influence from global superpowers. Nigeria, as a member of the UNAMID, was responsible for consistently coordinating and negotiating with external powers. This was done to uphold the African essence of the mission while accommodating international perspectives (Barnidge Jr, 2009; Kostelyanets, 2023).

Following intervention by the ECOMOG, Liberia successfully transitioned to a state of relative peace, marked by the holding of elections in 1997. Implementing the enforcement strategy effectively mitigated mass atrocities, although there were instances where the distinction between peacekeeping and combat became ambiguous, resulting in a potential disregard for diplomatic efforts (Sjullie, 2022). Also, Nigeria's diplomatic approach in Darfur has effectively established channels for dialogue and achieved notable success in specific humanitarian areas. Nevertheless, the region's expanse, the profound nature of ethnic hostilities, and the intricate dynamics associated with engaging numerous parties have hindered the achievement of enduring and widespread peace (Paterson, 2008).

Peacekeeping efforts of Nigeria in both Liberia and Darfur highlight the crucial significance of adaptability. Acknowledging the necessity for prompt and resolute measures prompted immediate and assertive intervention in Liberia. In the region of Darfur, the complex and interconnected conflicts required a carefully balanced and diplomatically-focused strategy. The comparative analysis highlights a fundamental principle of peacekeeping: Strategies should be adaptable and responsive to the ever-changing nature of the conflicts they aim to resolve.

5. Discussion

When analyzing Nigeria's peacekeeping contributions to Liberia and Darfur, it becomes evident that there is a clear connection between strategy, adaptability, and regional geopolitics. This connection highlights the effectiveness of Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts and prompts a thoughtful exploration of existing literature in peace and conflict studies. The operational difference between enforcement peacekeeping observed during the ECOMOG's intervention in Liberia and a diplomatically nuanced approach in Darfur under the auspices of the UNAMID highlights Nigeria's effective adjustment of its peacekeeping strategies and ability to adapt constructively to different conflict contexts.

The enforcement peacekeeping strategy implemented in Liberia was primarily driven by the urgent need to contain a violent conflict that posed a significant threat to regional stability (Cook, 2003). In contrast, the Darfur mission demonstrated a nuanced combination of diplomatic and humanitarian efforts, addressing the intricate political, ethnic, and socio-economic dynamics that defined the conflict (Ebegbulem, 2011). The concept of strategic divergence allows us to examine how Nigeria can tailor its peacekeeping strategies to align with the unique characteristics of each conflict situation. This approach adds a practical element of adaptability to the established peacekeeping principles.

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The strategic use of two modes in Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts goes beyond just operational methods. It transforms into a framework that showcases the importance of contextually nuanced interventions in peacekeeping practice. This statement highlights the importance of examining historical debates in peacekeeping literature regarding the effectiveness of forceful intervention compared to non-forceful peacekeeping strategies (Bellamy & Williams, 2005; Benson, 2021). The practical implementation of different strategies in distinct conflict scenarios of Liberia and Darfur highlights the importance of considering specific contexts when making strategic decisions. This approach moves beyond the simplistic view that only military or diplomatic methods can be employed.

The analysis shows that prioritizing a thorough understanding of the conflict environment is critical for strategic adaptability, especially in peacekeeping missions headed or impacted by regional actors. This comprehension will aid in creating strategically adaptive methods (Bellamy & Williams, 2005). The knowledge acquired from the understanding demonstrated by Nigeria in its involvement in both Liberia and Darfur should be utilized to enhance the efficiency of peacekeeping missions. This requires navigating intricate sociocultural and geopolitical dynamics in conflict areas. Moreover, incorporating a comprehensive peacekeeping strategy that facilitates a smooth fusion of military and diplomatic tactics is essential. This approach should be integral to the mission's structural framework, enabling timely and strategic adjustments as needed. In addition, engagements need to extend beyond the realms of politics and military, reaching grassroots levels. This will ensure that peacekeeping strategies are fully integrated into local socio-political contexts, ultimately promoting long-lasting peace (Onoja, 2008).

This analysis contributes to ongoing discussion and calls for further research and dialogue on the sustainability of peace following strategic interventions. It also highlights the importance of examining different peacekeeping strategies' psycho-social and economic effects on indigenous populations in conflict zones. It is crucial for future research efforts to explore the interplay between regional and international actors in influencing strategic and operational results of peacekeeping missions. Additionally, it is essential to conduct comparative analyses of missions with similar conflict dynamics but different strategic approaches and missions with varying dynamics of conflict but similar strategic approaches. By doing so, we can gather valuable insights that can improve the effectiveness and adaptability of peacekeeping operations in the intricate and ever-changing contexts of contemporary conflicts.

6. Conclusion

This study analyzed Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts in Liberia and Darfur, Sudan, under the auspices of the ECOMOG and the UNAMID. After analysis, several observations emerge that contribute to a comprehension of peacekeeping strategies within the framework of regional geopolitics, conflict dynamics, and strategic flexibility. The involvement of Nigeria, both through the ECOMOG in Liberia and the UNAMID in Darfur, demonstrates its dedication to promoting stability and peace in the West and Central African regions. It also features Nigeria's ability to adapt its peacekeeping strategies to address specific complexities of each conflict.

One key finding of this study is the adaptable nature of Nigeria's peacekeeping strategy, highlighting the significance of recognizing and addressing distinct challenges and requirements of various conflict settings. The enforcement peacekeeping strategy in Liberia was implemented due to the urgent nature of the conflict, requiring immediate and assertive intervention. On the other hand, the

strategy in Darfur was based on a more complex framework that emphasized diplomacy, negotiation, and humanitarian efforts. The capacity to transition between these strategies highlights the inherent intricacies of peacekeeping missions and emphasizes the need for a flexible and adaptable approach firmly rooted in a comprehensive comprehension of conflict's cultural, political, and socio-economic foundations.

In addition, the increasing influence of regional actors, exemplified by Nigeria, poses a challenge to conventional international peacekeeping approaches. It calls for a more comprehensive and inclusive framework that recognizes and leverages the perspectives and expertise of regional entities. The participation of Nigeria not only underscores the significant contribution of regional actors in peacekeeping operations but also highlights the importance of collaborative synergy between regional and international actors to promote a comprehensive and holistic approach to peacekeeping. However, given these results, it's clear that the evolving character of modern conflicts emphasizes the need for continual analysis, assessment, and modification of peacekeeping tactics. As the dynamics of international geopolitics change and conflicts become more deeply ingrained in sociocultural and economic complexity, peacekeeping operations must constantly be reviewed, assessed, and modified to respond to these changing conditions effectively.

In summary, peacekeeping roles undertaken by Nigeria in Liberia and Darfur offer valuable insights and lessons for the field of peace and conflict studies. Additionally, they emphasize the need for ongoing development, self-reflection, and innovation in peacekeeping methodologies. The significance of regional actors, the necessity of strategic adaptability, and the importance of context-specific peacekeeping strategies are relevant for historical or academic analysis and crucial factors in shaping the direction of future peacekeeping operations in a world that faces complex and ever-changing conflicts. Nigeria's peacekeeping endeavors shed light on historical events and future possibilities, exemplifying a guiding principle for strategic, efficient, and empathetic peacekeeping in the 21st century.

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