



THEORETICAL AND DOCTRINAL CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA'S PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS: A COMPREHENSIVE CRITIQUE

Chiamaka Akintola

Department of Political Science and Defence Studies Nigerian Defence Academy P.M.B. 2109, Kaduna, Nigeria

ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: Nigeria has played a prominent role in peace support operations (PSOs) within Africa, particularly in regions marked by conflict, instability, and humanitarian crises. However, despite its active participation, there remain critical gaps in the theoretical and doctrinal foundations guiding Nigeria's involvement in these operations. This paper critically examines the theoretical frameworks and doctrinal approaches that have shaped Nigeria's peace support operations, with a focus on identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Drawing from a comprehensive review of policy documents, military doctrine, and case studies, the paper highlights the challenges faced by Nigeria in translating international peacekeeping theories into effective on-the-ground operations. Furthermore, it explores the limitations of Nigeria's peace support doctrines in addressing complex modern conflicts, including those involving non-state actors, asymmetric warfare, and regional cooperation. The analysis suggests that while Nigeria's contributions to peacekeeping are commendable, there is a pressing need for doctrinal reform and greater alignment with emerging global standards and regional peace strategies. The paper concludes by proposing recommendations for refining Nigeria's approach to peace support operations to ensure better outcomes in future missions.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has long been a key player in peace support operations (PSOs) across Africa, particularly within the framework of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). As one of the continent's most powerful and resource-rich nations, Nigeria's involvement in peacekeeping and conflict resolution has significantly shaped regional stability, most notably through its contributions to peace missions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. Despite the scale of its participation, however, Nigeria's peace support operations have often faced criticism and operational challenges that highlight shortcomings in its theoretical foundations and doctrinal approaches to peacekeeping.

The theoretical and doctrinal underpinnings of Nigeria's peace support operations are often criticized for being inadequately aligned with contemporary peacebuilding needs. While the country's military doctrines have evolved over time, they remain heavily influenced by traditional models of peacekeeping, which are increasingly inadequate for addressing the complex and fluid nature of modern conflicts. This is particularly evident in the rise of asymmetric warfare, the involvement of non-state actors, and the intricate dynamics of regional cooperation that increasingly define African conflicts. As a result, Nigeria's ability to effectively execute peace support missions is sometimes compromised by these outdated frameworks, which fail to fully account for the political, social, and economic dimensions of conflict.

This paper seeks to critically analyze the theoretical and doctrinal challenges faced by Nigeria in its peace support operations. It aims to provide a comprehensive critique of the theoretical frameworks and military doctrines guiding these operations, shedding light on the areas in need of reform. Through a review of policy documents, military strategies, and case studies of Nigeria's peacekeeping engagements, the paper highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the country's approach, and provides recommendations for improving the effectiveness of future peace missions.

By critically examining Nigeria's peace support operations from a theoretical and doctrinal perspective, this study contributes to a broader understanding of the evolving role of African countries in international peacekeeping and the necessary adaptations to meet the demands of modern conflict resolution. The paper argues that a re-examination of Nigeria's peacekeeping doctrine is essential not only for enhancing the country's role in peace operations but also for strengthening Africa's collective capacity to address regional instability.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design that combines document analysis, case studies, and expert interviews to critically examine the theoretical and doctrinal foundations of Nigeria's peace support operations (PSOs). The methodology is structured around three primary components: a comprehensive review of relevant literature, an analysis of Nigeria's military doctrine and policy documents, and an exploration of case studies from Nigeria's participation in international peace missions.

Document Analysis

The first component of the methodology involves a detailed analysis of key documents that shape Nigeria's approach to peace support operations. These include Nigeria's defense and military strategies, national security documents, peacekeeping doctrine, and key policy frameworks such as the Nigerian Army's doctrine of peacekeeping. These documents are critically examined to identify the guiding principles, theoretical frameworks, and operational strategies that inform Nigeria's participation in PSOs. The review also includes evaluating Nigeria's adherence to international peacekeeping standards, particularly those outlined by the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), and ECOWAS. This analysis will help to understand how Nigeria's peacekeeping doctrine has evolved over time and the extent to which it aligns with global and regional trends in peace support operations.

Case Studies of Nigeria's Peacekeeping Missions

The second component focuses on specific case studies of Nigeria's involvement in peace support operations in Africa. Nigeria's role in the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as its participation in the African Union's peacekeeping efforts in Darfur, provides valuable insights into the practical application of Nigeria's peacekeeping doctrines. These case studies allow for an in-depth examination of the theoretical and doctrinal challenges faced by Nigerian peacekeepers in real-world conflict settings. In each case study, the research will focus on key factors such as the political dynamics, the role of non-state actors, the military strategies employed, and the overall success or failure of the missions. The analysis will also assess the impact of Nigeria's peacekeeping doctrine on the operational effectiveness and outcomes of these missions.

Expert Interviews

To gain further insights into the theoretical and doctrinal challenges in Nigeria's PSOs, the study will include interviews with experts in military strategy, peacekeeping, and African security policy. These experts will include Nigerian military personnel with direct experience in peacekeeping missions, scholars of African security studies, and international peacekeeping specialists. The interviews will focus on understanding the practical challenges faced by Nigerian peacekeepers in the field, the limitations of existing military doctrines, and the possible reforms required to enhance the effectiveness of future operations. The interviews will also explore the role of institutional and cultural factors in shaping Nigeria's approach to peacekeeping, as well as the broader implications of doctrinal gaps on the success of peace support missions.

Comparative Analysis

The final aspect of the methodology involves a comparative analysis of Nigeria's doctrinal approach to peacekeeping with those of other leading African countries such as South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, which have also played significant roles in peace support operations. This comparison will help contextualize Nigeria's theoretical and doctrinal challenges within a broader African peacekeeping framework. By identifying best practices and shortcomings in the approaches of other African nations, the study will provide recommendations for refining Nigeria's peacekeeping strategies.

The data collected from document analysis, case studies, and expert interviews will be analyzed thematically. A coding system will be used to categorize the data into key themes, including the effectiveness of military doctrine, the challenges of modern peacekeeping operations, the role of non-state actors, and the adequacy of institutional support. This qualitative approach allows for a nuanced

understanding of the theoretical and doctrinal barriers that hinder the success of Nigeria's peace support operations and provides insights into possible reforms and improvements.

This mixed-methods approach, combining document analysis, case studies, expert interviews, and comparative analysis, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the theoretical and doctrinal challenges faced by Nigeria in its peace support operations. The study aims to offer both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for improving Nigeria's approach to peacekeeping, which could contribute to enhancing its role in regional and international peace and security efforts.

RESULTS

Gaps in Theoretical Foundations of Nigeria's Peace Support Operations

The analysis of Nigeria's military doctrine revealed significant gaps in the theoretical foundations guiding its peace support operations (PSOs). While the country has a long history of participation in peacekeeping missions, its doctrinal approach remains rooted in traditional peacekeeping models that are increasingly inadequate for contemporary peace operations. The reviewed documents emphasize principles of neutrality, impartiality, and consent, which are foundational to classical peacekeeping, but fail to address the complexities of modern conflicts. Notably, Nigeria's doctrine places limited focus on multi-dimensional peacebuilding, such as post-conflict reconstruction, governance, and human rights, which are critical in today's peace operations.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework underpinning Nigeria's PSOs largely overlooks the rising importance of non-state actors, asymmetric warfare, and hybrid threats, which increasingly characterize modern conflicts. In contrast, contemporary peacekeeping frameworks emphasize the necessity of flexible, adaptive strategies that incorporate both military and civilian approaches, an area in which Nigeria's current doctrine is underdeveloped.

Doctrinal Challenges in Peace Support Operations

A prominent doctrinal challenge identified in the study is Nigeria's reliance on the ECOWAS-led peacekeeping model, which is often criticized for being reactive rather than proactive. In missions such as the ECOMOG deployments in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Nigeria's military forces were primarily tasked with stabilizing environments post-conflict, rather than preventing conflicts or addressing the root causes of violence. While Nigeria's military strategy emphasizes swift interventions, it lacks the robust framework for long-term peacebuilding and conflict prevention that is increasingly central to modern PSOs.

Another challenge lies in Nigeria's limited integration of regional and international cooperation within its peacekeeping doctrine. Despite participating in multinational peace missions, Nigeria's approach tends to be insular, with limited emphasis on leveraging collective regional capacities or aligning with the broader strategic objectives of the United Nations (UN) or African Union (AU). This lack of cohesion often undermines the effectiveness of Nigeria's operations, especially when confronted with complex, multi-layered conflicts involving external actors, local militias, and transnational threats.

Political and Institutional Challenges

The study also highlighted the political and institutional challenges that hinder the success of Nigeria's peace support operations. One significant barrier is the lack of political will and consistent funding for peacekeeping missions, which often leads to inadequate resources and operational challenges. Additionally, the Nigerian military's traditional command-and-control structure sometimes clashes with the need for flexible, collaborative approaches in complex peace operations. Institutional resistance to change and reform, both within the military and government, remains a critical issue, as doctrinal reform and adaptation to new peacekeeping paradigms are slow to take hold.

Perceptions and Limitations of Nigeria's Peacekeeping Contributions

From the case studies analyzed, it is evident that while Nigeria's peacekeeping forces have often been praised for their bravery and dedication, the country's operations have been less successful in terms of achieving sustainable peace. In Liberia, while ECOMOG helped restore stability, it struggled with issues of legitimacy and local acceptance, particularly in the early stages of the mission. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, while Nigerian forces were instrumental in stabilizing the country, the operation was hampered by logistical challenges, inadequate planning, and insufficient integration with civilian peacebuilding efforts.

Moreover, Nigeria's peace support operations have faced criticism for their limited capacity to address the long-term social and economic rebuilding required after peace enforcement. The country's doctrine and military training emphasize combat effectiveness rather than the multifaceted peacebuilding processes necessary for comprehensive recovery and rebuilding in post-conflict environments.

DISCUSSION

Relevance of Traditional Doctrines in Contemporary Peacekeeping

The primary finding of this study suggests that the theoretical and doctrinal models that have historically guided Nigeria's peace support operations are increasingly misaligned with the demands of modern conflict environments. Traditional peacekeeping, which focuses on maintaining ceasefires and overseeing troop withdrawals, is no longer sufficient in a world where conflicts are often protracted, involve non-state actors, and are marked by complex political, social, and economic challenges.

While Nigeria's peace support operations have often focused on military intervention, contemporary peace operations require a more integrated, comprehensive approach that includes political, humanitarian, and developmental efforts. The ability to integrate these various dimensions of peacebuilding into a cohesive strategy is crucial for long-term success. As conflicts in Africa continue to evolve, Nigeria's peacekeeping doctrine must adapt to include new methods of conflict prevention, stabilization, and rebuilding.

Institutional and Political Reform Needs

The political and institutional barriers to reform are substantial and deeply entrenched. However, without addressing these issues, Nigeria will continue to struggle with inefficiencies and gaps in its peace support operations. The lack of cohesive and long-term planning for peacebuilding is indicative of broader institutional challenges, including inadequate training for peacekeepers in conflict management, governance, and civilian-military coordination. Nigeria's leadership in peacekeeping must move beyond a reactive posture and take a proactive stance in preparing both military personnel

and civilian experts for peacebuilding tasks. Enhanced collaboration with international organizations like the UN and AU, as well as better integration with regional actors, will be essential for increasing the scope and sustainability of Nigeria's peace support operations.

Social and Cultural Adaptation in Doctrine

The study also highlights the need for greater social and cultural understanding within Nigeria's peacekeeping strategy. In peace support operations, local dynamics, including ethnic and social divisions, often play a significant role in perpetuating conflict. Nigeria's military doctrine should emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity, local engagement, and the inclusion of indigenous peace processes. Failing to integrate local actors and address the root causes of conflict can lead to unsustainable peace and the resurgence of violence, as seen in past Nigerian peace missions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Nigeria's peace support operations have made significant contributions to regional stability in Africa, but the theoretical and doctrinal challenges identified in this study indicate a need for substantial reform. The gaps in Nigeria's military doctrine—especially in terms of addressing modern conflict complexities such as non-state actors, asymmetric warfare, and post-conflict peacebuilding—highlight the limitations of current frameworks. Furthermore, institutional and political barriers, such as insufficient funding and lack of strategic planning, continue to hinder the effectiveness of peace operations.

To enhance Nigeria's capacity to conduct successful peace support operations, it is essential to update and refine the country's doctrinal approach, integrating broader peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategies. Additionally, Nigeria must work to strengthen regional cooperation, improve the integration of military and civilian efforts, and enhance cultural sensitivity in its peacekeeping approach. By addressing these theoretical, doctrinal, and institutional challenges, Nigeria can continue to play a crucial role in regional peace and security, adapting its approach to meet the evolving demands of modern peace support operations.

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