

Conceptual Issues in Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies: The Nigeria Experience

¹John Kalama & ²Jacob Ogedi

*Department of Political Science, Federal University Otuoke
Bayelsa State, Nigeria*

Abstract

Theories and concepts play a major role in the study and analysis of events hence; concept formation and operationalization provides the foundation for the empirical research exercise. As Hempel, (1966), rightly observes: “In scientific inquiry, concept formation and theory formation must go hand in hand”. This paper therefore, examined conceptual issues in peace and conflict resolution studies. The paper argues that peace and conflict resolution strategies can only be effective when key concepts in the discipline are well understood and analysed. Data for the study were drawn from secondary sources while analysis was done qualitatively through content analysis. Findings of the study revealed, among other things, that the concept of peace and conflict is a complex but dynamic concept that can be studied and analysed from different perspectives. Further findings also revealed that peace and conflict resolution strategies at the local, state and global levels involve different methods, processes and strategies. Peace and conflict resolution strategies can be improved if existing structures and institutions at all levels are made to function independently and impartially.

Keywords: *Peace and conflict resolution, Strategies, Concept, Conceptual issues, and Global level.*

Corresponding Author: John Kalama

Background to the Study

The term peace and conflict have been viewed and analyzed differently by different scholars hence; Haavelsrud (1996) defined peace as a long term project that seeks to bring about lasting and constructive change in institutions that maintain society. He added that peace can also be described as a tranquil, uncomplicated end state which is only partly the absence of war and conflict. In the same vein, Adidu (2006) defined conflict as the discord that arises when the goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups block or thwart each other's attempt to achieve their objectives. In their contribution to the subject-matter, Nelson and Quick (1997) cited in Kalama, (2012) conflict involves any situation in which incomplete goals, emotions, or behavior lead to disagreement or opposition between two or more parties. In simple terms, conflict means disagreement between two or more parties, individuals, groups, institutions or nations etc. However, conflicts are said to be “protracted” when they are not easily suppressed and continued to be pursued in the long term by all means available including the possible acquisition and use of destructive weapons”.

(Azar, 1990, Azar, 1984 cited in Bassey & Oshita 2007). It is imperative to stress that social dynamics of conflict means that conflict can produced positive or negative results hence, indicating that conflict can be destructive, functional or dysfunctional depending on the prevailing circumstances. It is equally instructive to add that peace and conflict resolution studies as a discipline evolved and developed in stages and phases through the formulation of concepts and theories which led to the establishment of research centers and institutes in Europe. Peace and conflict resolution as a concept received international attention when Boutros-Boutros Ghali, former Secretary General of the United Nations presented his “An Agenda for Peace document to the United Nations General Assembly in 1992. In the said document, emphasis was placed on:

1. Peace building
2. Peace making
3. Peace keeping
4. Preventive diplomacy and monitoring of early warning signs.

The argument of Boutros-Boutros Ghali and other conflict scholars is that nations should invest more in preventing rather than curing conflict when they occur hence; leaders and policy makers are encouraged to embrace dialogue and preventive diplomacy. In the light of the above, this chapter examined peace and conflict related issues in Nigeria and Africa.

Conceptual Analysis

Several theories have been formulated by scholars in different fields in order to explain the concept of peace. The instrumentalists view peace as a means to an end. To them, the absence of war serves the end of social progress and development on the other hand, Functionalists see peace as playing a social function, and from another angle as the product of the function of other social structures and institutions hence, peace is said to have the social function of integration and order. As such, for society and states to function properly

peace is an essential ingredient otherwise there would be stress on the social political systems. From the philosophical perspective, peace according to ST. Augustine Hippo is a divine state of perfection or an earthly expression of Gods Kingdom that is yet uncorrupted. Jacques Rousseau on his part conceptualizes a peaceful original state of existence of man in which there are no desires. According to him, in that state man was naturally good but was later corrupted by human desires and greed which undermined peace. The sociological perspective addresses the social context hence; peace refers to a condition of social harmony in which there are no social hindrances. Sociologists therefore argue that peace is a condition in which there is no social conflict and individuals and groups are able to meet their needs and expectation. In the same vein, peace from the political perspective is a political condition that makes justice possible hence, peace entails political order or institutionalization of political structures. According to Samuel P. Huntington cited in Ileana (2004) Institutionalization means that political structures acquire value and stability hence, in the absence of institutionalization there is politics and the enforcement of group rights and interests. Political scientists also see peace as a dynamic social process in which justice, equity, and respect for basic human right are maximized. And violence both physical and structural is minimized. Thus, peace is concerned with the elimination of all forms of violence (Reardon and Cabezudo, 2002). However citing Galtung 1996 and Mazrui 1995, Bassey and Oshita (2007) described a conflict-ridden state as a sick and a failed state. To get such a state out of potable condition, they contended that the conflict situation must first be diagnosed. Galtung (1996) therefore argued that peace as well as health studies, involve three important processes: diagnosis, prognosis and therapy. In their words: "A situation of conflict in this context is a state of illness. The problem must be treated in order for the problem (sickness) to go away.

At the macro or international level, Whaley and piazza-Georgi (1997) posited that the term peace building gained international credibility as a result of the 1992 United Nations Secretary General's An Agenda for peace document presented by Boutros-Boutros Ghali, the then UN Secretary General. It is instructive to note that the said document placed emphasis on the following areas: peace building, peace making, peace keeping and preventive diplomacy and the monitoring of early warning signs. For easy comprehension and analysis the following concepts were also reviewed and explained:

1. **Peace keeping:-** This is a form of peace support operation conducted following an agreement or cease-fire that has established a permissive environment where the level of consent and compliance is high and the threat of disruption is low. Peace keeping operations are conducted to monitor and facilitate the implementation of an existing true agreement and support diplomatic efforts to reach a long term political settlement, peace keeping therefore, is based on negotiation and mediation, which promotes consent and the active cooperation of all parties to the peace process.
2. **Peace Building:-** Peace building is a peace support operation that involves complimentary diplomatic, civil and where necessary, military means to address the underlying causes of conflict and the long term needs of the people hence, peace

building measures at any level require commitment to a long term process which may run concurrently with other types of peace support operations which may also involve military and civilian personnel. In practical terms, peace building activities include restoring civil authority, rebuilding physical infrastructure and re-establishing commerce, schools and medical facilities among others. The restoration of peace and the subsequent reconstruction of the economic, police and military institutions in Liberia and Sierra Leone by the Nigeria-led ECOMOG force is a classical example of peace building within the African sub-region.

3. **Peace Making:**-The ECOMOG operation led by Nigeria from 1989-1990 also embarked on peacemaking as part of its initial mandate in Liberia Sierra Leone. However, Bassey, & Dokubo, (2011) defined peacemaking as a form of peace support operation conducted after the initiation of a conflict to secure a cease-fire or peaceful settlement that involves primary assets. In their word: Military activities that support peace-making include infrastructure for civil- military relations and security assistance operations. Humanitarian institutions are assigned tasks of assisting aid agencies in providing security while the impact on the wellbeing of an affected environment.

They added that in most cases, such security assistance has to be forced through against armed opposition which is provided at a cost to the primary task of peace support operation which is often perceived as impartiality.

4. **Peace Enforcement:**-Unlike peace keeping, peacemaking and peace building, peace enforcement operations are coercive operations required in the absence of consent, or at least in the expectation of one or all of the parties failing to comply with agreed conditions. In any peace enforcement mission, the peace support force must be able and capable to apply credible coercive force and must also apply the provision of the peace agreement impartially. In other words, peace enforcement means the deployment of troops to compel obedience or force parties to respect and honor cease-fire agreements. It is usually achieved through the use of force especially when there is a breach of rules, agreements or procedure. It will be recalled that the failure of the warring parties in Liberia to adhere to the Akosombo and Abuja accords, propelled the Nigeria-led ECOMOG force to embark on peace enforcement mission in Liberia and Sierra Loene from 1988-1992. However, in the event of any peace enforcement mission or action, a Commander must be capable of over-matching whatever opposition it might be offered and the team carrying out the enforcement also needs the operational flexibility to be able to enforce compliance in the face of opposition, to promote consent where there is indifference and to maintain and reward consent where it exists.

Peace and Conflict Resolution Methods and Strategies at the Global Level

Contemporary international law gives the United Nations the mandate to maintain and promote international peace and security through a frame-work called “collective

security” which Inis Claude cited in Ukpe (1997) defined as machinery for joint military action in order to prevent or to counter an attack against an established authority. In the words of Ukpe, (1997):

The essence of collective security is mutual assistance and the establishment of mutual responsibility of all nations in the world for the maintenance of international peace and security. Collective security makes aggression or war the concern of all nations instead of that of one nation.

Collective security frame-work therefore implies that all nations of the world are obligated to unite to fight an identified aggressor in favour of the identified victim of aggression hence, the establishment of global structures and institutions such as the International Court Of Justice (ICJ), War Crimes Tribunals (WCT) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to ensure that leaders and states which violate international law and treaties are held accountable. However, the following articles in the UN Charter give the United Nations Organization (UNO) the power to maintain and enforce peace and security through collective security:

Article 1: The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, break of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Article 3 and 4, to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Article 2: In order to prevent an aggravation of the situation, the Security Council may, before making the recommendation or deciding upon the measure provided for in Article 39, call upon the parties concerned to comply with such provisional measures as it deems necessary or desirable. Such provisional measures shall without prejudice to the rights, claims or position of the parties concern. The Security Council shall dully take account of failure to comply with such provisional measures.

Article 3: The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions and it may call upon the members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partially interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio and other means of communication and the severance of diplomatic relations.

Article 4: Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade and other operations by air, sea or land forces of member states of the United Nations. These provisions give the United Nations the legal basking to maintain and enforce international peace and security through any means including use of military force through collective security approach/framework (Kalama, 2015). Other forms of conflict resolution applied and the global level include,

negotiation mediation, conciliation, arbitration and preventive diplomacy which is the major thrust of Boutrous-Boutrous Ghali's An Agenda for peace document.

Nigeria's Contribution to Peace and Conflict Resolution in Africa

This aspect of the study examined Nigeria's role in the management and prevention of conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone (1988-1992). Emphasis was placed on the training equipment, and funding Nigeria provided to the regional force, ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). It is on record that Nigerian military provided the necessary training logistics and equipment needed for the smooth operations of ECOMOG in the actualization of its mandate. Historically, Nigeria has been a regular participant in both regional and global peace support operations and has equally made valuable contributions to peace and security in Africa and around the world. The contributions of Nigeria to the maintenance of peace and security in Africa will be examined under the following headings.

1. **Promotion of Peace and Political Stability:** As part of Nigeria's effort to promote peace and political stability in the world hence, the Nigerian military has contributed immensely to the restoration and sustenance of sub-regional, regional and global peace. In the sub region for instance, the activities of ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone with the aid of Nigerian troops helped to stabilize peace in the sub region and also brought peace, economic and political stability to the people. During the post-conflict period, Nigeria also accommodates the highest number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP's).
2. **Promotion of Democracy and Good Governance:** The Nigeria military have also contributed to the sustenance of democracy and good governance worldwide. The institution of legitimate governments through elections in Liberia and the restoration of an overthrown government of Tijan Kabba in Sierra Leone including the recent deployment of troops in support of the democratically elected government of Al-Hassan Quattara of Ivory Coast are good pointers to the commitment of Nigeria to the rule of law and democratic governance in Africa. It is also on record that after restoring peace and political stability in the above mentioned countries, the Nigeria military in line with Nigeria's foreign policy thrust stayed back and engaged in several peace-making and post-conflict peace building activities which led to the reconstruction of collapsed infrastructure, rebuilding the police and military forces, economic and social development including electoral reforms which equally promoted rapid socio-economic development and promotion of the fundamental human rights of the people.
3. **Offering of Military Assistance:** The Nigeria military is also in the fore-front of rendering military assistance to African countries in the area of training and equipment required for better participation in peace support operations. Presently, the Nigeria military admits African soldiers, military and police personnel to the Nigeria Defense Academy (NDA), Police College, mobile police training centre and other Nigeria military institutions across the country. Thus, by this action, the Nigeria military has been able to increase military capacity of all the armed forces in Africa hence, preparing African military forces for greater contemporary global challenges.

4. **Lead Nation Role:** ECOMOG field operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone clearly revealed that Nigeria military has been assuming leadership role responsibilities in peace support operations within the sub-region and Africa as a whole. Nigeria has consistency demonstrated this, through the protection of its troops in various missions at the global, regional and sub-regional levels hence, indicating that the Nigeria armed forces is always ready to lead, coordinate and build consensus among her allies in the execution of joint military responsibilities. It will be recalled that Nigeria unilaterally initiated peace support operations in Chad 1979 and also spearheaded troop development in African Union peace keeping mission in Sudan among others. In the same vein, the Nigeria military provided a model peace support operation for other bodies like Southern African Defense Commission (SADC). Furthermore, the change of command and control from the Ghanaian-led ECOMOG under LT, Gen. Arnold Quinoo to Brig. Gen. Joshua Dogonyaro, Brig. Gen. Tunji Olurin and Col. Maxwell Kobe-led ECOMOG no doubt witnessed tremendous improvements which led to the early resolution of the conflict in the two countries. The above analysis clearly revealed that Nigeria military capacity to check challenges or threats to peace and security in Africa is not in doubt.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the concept peace and conflict is a complex but dynamic concept that can be analyzed from different perspectives. Thus, this study examined various concepts associated with peace and conflict resolution studies, peace and conflict resolution methods and strategies at the global level and Nigeria' contribution to peace and conflict resolution in Africa etc. It is therefore important to add that peace and conflict resolution mechanism at any level is supported by laid down rules, regulations and principles which guides all the parties. At the global level, the United Nations Charter serves as a guide while the sub-regional and regional level, the ECOWAS Protocol and the Africa Union Constitutive Act serves as a guide to all parties. Individuals and states are expected to abide by agreed peace and conflict resolution frame-works and principles in order to avoid escalation of conflict and war.

Recommendations

The issue of peace and security is no doubt a major challenge confronting individuals, communities and states hence, the following recommendations are hereby proposed:

1. Groups, communities and states should share intelligence and disseminate same in order to track perpetrators of crime and violence in the society.
2. Records have shown that violent military actions have not completely resolved conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya etc hence, nonviolent conflict resolution strategies based on reconciliation, mediation, arbitration and other pacific strategies should be adopted.
3. In the case of Africa, there is need for African states and leaders to embrace democratic principles and good governance which will in turn protect the fundamental human rights of Africa citizens. It is believed that when the welfare of citizens is taken care of crime and conflict will be reduced to the barest minimum.

4. Rather than build strong and wealthy individuals at the expense of the state, African states and leaders should build and develop strong political structures and institutions that can promote fundamental human rights of citizens, sustainable development and political stability. This is necessary and fundamental because most conflicts in Africa have been traced to the existence of weak political institutions such as the legislature, parliaments and electoral commissions/institutions.
5. At the regional and global levels, the African Union, ECOWAS, United Nations and other international organizations should endeavour to implement and enforce its charter and protocols on human and people's rights, terrorism, genocide etc. Thus, countries that violate and breach international law and conventions should be sanctioned accordingly. In the same vein, relevant international agreements and resolutions such as the United Nations Global Counterterrorism Strategy and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty should also be domesticated by African states without further delay. This will no doubt stop the spread of weapons and conflict in Africa and the world in general.

References

- Achebe, C. (1984). *The trouble with Nigeria*. Enugu: Hanemann Eduational Books.
- Adebanjo, A. (2002). *Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG and regional security in Africa*. London: Lynne Rienne.
- Ahmadu, S. (2003). *Civil wars, child soldiers and post-conflict peace building in West Africa*. AFSTRAG: College press and publishers.
- Arlinghaus, B. (1984). *African security issues*. Boulder: Westview.
- Atkinson, A. (1981). *Social order and general theory of strategy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Attahiru, M. J. (2007). *Democracy, good-governance and development in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Bassey, C. O. & Dokubo, C. Q. (2011). *Defense policy of Nigeria: Capability and context a reader*. United States: Author House.
- Bassey, C. O. & Oshita, O. (2007). *Conflict resolution, identity crisis and development in Africa*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited.
- Bassey, C. O. (2005). *Contemporary strategy and the African condition*. Lagos: Macmillian Publishers.
- Bernard, B. (1972). *War and politics*. London: Collier Macmillian.

- Boyd, J. (1971). *United Nations peace keeping operations: A military and political appraisal*. New York: Praeger.
- Buzan, B. (1993). *People, states and fear: The national security problem in international relations*. London: Harvester.
- Claude, I. (1963). *Power and international relations*. New York: Random House.
- Claude, I. (1971). *Swords into plowshares*. New York: Random House.
- Garnet, J. (1970). *Theories of peace and security*. London: Macmillan Press.
- GayaBest, S. (2006). *Introduction to peace and conflict studies in West Africa*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Harper, C. & Rex, C. (1992). *BBC English Dictionary: A dictionary for the world*. Lagos: Africana FEP Publishers Ltd.
- Kalama, J. T. (2007). *International law and global conflict prevention: The Nigeria-Cameroon experience*. Port-Harcourt: Pearl Publishers.
- Kalama, J. T. (2012). *Conflict resolution without violence: Emerging trends in Nigeria's political development*. Port-Harcourt: Pearl Publishers.
- Kalama, J. T. (2012). *Minority revolts: The Niger Delta crisis and the amnesty question*. Port-Harcourt: Pearl Publishers.
- Kalama, J. T. (2015). *The United Nations roles in international relations: Theory and practice of collective security in a dynamic world system*. Calabar: University of Calabar press.
- Okoro, J. (2002). *Understanding Nigerian foreign policy*. Calabar: CATS Publishers.