Conflict, Democracy and Peace: Nigerian Perspective

[1]**Bashiru Musa Said &** [2]**Adamu Alhaji Shehu**
[1]*Department of Education, Waziri Umaru Federal Polytechnic, Birnin Kebbi*
[2]*Department of Business Education, Waziri Umaru Federal Polytechnic Birnin Kebbi*

Abstract

The concept conflict, peace and democracy can be said to be without each other. This is because one cannot talk of conflict without peace or talk of peace without democracy or talk of democracy without peace and conflict. In order words these three concepts are distinct but related in one from or the other. In order to rationalize whether Nigeria as a nation perceives these concepts differently there is need to understand the meaning and what are involved in the concept. It is a truism that most African conflicts have their roots in domestic politics. These conflicts have affected more than just the countries where they occurred. As a result of this, the problem of insecurity in Africa has not only made the pursuit of economic development difficult but also hindered the development of regional integration. To sum it all the paper also attempt to exray and discuss causes of conflict, Democracy the concept of co-existence, defect on the part of government, how to co-exist etc.

Keywords: *Conflict, Democracy, Peace, Civilization*

Corresponding Author: **Bashiru Musa Said**

Background to the Study

If it is observing closely that, there is no doubt that majority of the nation state reveals significant internal cleavages based upon ethnicity, race and religion. It is in the context that Rupenseng he (2002) stated, that there is no longer any justification for clinging to the belief that the array of processes commonly known as modernization would automatically lead to erosion of cultural solidarity ethnicity or religion. According to him, reverse may happen because social change tends to produce communal identities Onwuka (2012). This will bring us to the concept of conflict.

What is Conflict

Centre for advanced social sciences sees conflict as an inherent dimension of human relations and an undercurrent of social relations by the problem of scarcity that requires cooperation for its resolution David (2006). According to Rabie (1994), conflict is a relationship perceived by one or more concerned parties as unfair, unworkable or both. Conflict therefore occurs in a society when power, interests and values are distributed in a manner that makes certain groups feel constrained and discriminated against. What this suggest is that conflict in innate in manand it is part and parcel of existence. This is because there is no way in which people will always agree on everything all the times.

Causes of Conflict

There are so many causes of conflict. Various theories of conflict believe in one cause of conflict or the other. We can only state of the causes of conflict in this context. For structural conflict theories, when social, political, economic and cultural processes are monopolized by a group, it creates the conditions that make people to adopt adversarial approaches to conflict. According to Kholari (1979), the control and use of resources lies at the heart of the depending crisis in the world today. By resources, we mean natural resources. He describes this crisis as separating the world in to axes of material comfort and of deficiency with a concentration of poverty and scarcity and unemployment and deprivation in one large sector of mankind (under developed countries) and of overabundance and over production in another much smaller section (developed countries), David (2006).

On their own part, the realist theory of conflict highlights inherency and traces the root of conflict to a flaw in human nature which seen to be selfish and engaging in pursuit of personalized self-interest defined as power. Hence, Francis said that realists believes that "Competitive processes" between actors known as states, is the natural expression of conflict by parties engaged in the pursuit of scare and competitive interest.

Coming to the biological theorist, conflict is innate in social interactions, and among all animals, including human beings. The ologians in this innate theory when they say there is inner flow inhuman kind by way of sin that brings bitterness, violence and conflict. Thus, the whole purpose of religion is to regulate this sinful nature in relationship between men and men on the one hand, and men and Godon the other hand.

This is to say that conflict is inherent in man. The aggressive instinct in man will provoked when man is threatened and challenged etc. This idea is supported by Zinberg and Fullman when they said that a mature society must eventually accept violence as an essential part of human nature, essentially not because it is good or bad, but it is there.

There are other causes of conflict such as different loyalties, cultural values, ideologies, geopolitical consideration etc. These provides a fertile ground for planting and nurturing of conflict between the states. Disparities in wealth, natural resources, technology and power among social groups within and between states have also been causes of increased grievances and conflicts. With this, we can therefore look at democracy and how it can be used to manage conflict.

What is Democracy

Democracy according to Holden is set of thought and a mode of action directed towards the common zeal as interpreted and directed by the common will David (2006). For Paine and Kant, democracy is good for peace because wars are disadvantageous to the population at large. But if wars are caused by fear and distrust, then the link between democracy and peace is not obvious. Holden (1974) The international institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance stated that Democracy is in crisis worldwide at the very time when there are needs to renew emphasis on democratic practice as the key to the attainment of 21stCentury human security aims Holden (1974). Democracy matters for human security because well designed and inclusive political institutions and processes are the key to both preventing violence and managing conflict constructively, and because respect for human rights and public participation are essential for meeting human development objectives. Democratic practice refers to both formal and informal institutional arrangements for collective decision making and a wide variety of deliberative decision making processes that incorporate core values of democracy in efforts to build and sustain peace.

Democracies Tool for Managing Conflict

Democratic states employ three major tools in managing conflict. These include: bilateral negotiations, third party, and militarized conflict management tools. According to Ellis, Mitchell and Brand (2008), democratic states employ bilateral negotiations more often to resolve contentious issues when the issues has been militarized previously, when the issues is more salient, and when they are facing an equal adversary Kohlari (1979). Democracies seek out non-binding third party settlement more frequently in situations of power preponderance thannon-democracies although binding forms of their party settlement occur most often in relative equal democratic days.

Democracies again can employ militarized conflict management strategies when they have resorted to force over the issues previously, when the issue is highly salient, and when they are evenly matched. Looking at these tools our managing conflicts emphasis is on the democratic states to resolve things peacefully especially when their opponents are also democratic.

The question here is: why democratic countries refers to resolve interstate conflicts through direct bilateral negotiations. The obvious-answer relates to the ability of two democracies to strikes reliable bargains. To this effect David (2006) argues that there are four basictraits of democratic regimes which allow them to reach peaceful international agreements more readily; transparently, regime continually, audience costs, and constitutionalism.

The Concept of Peace
Peace connotes more than mere absence of war or hostilities. Kostla (1967) defined peace as the coexistence of different cultures tobe obtained by improved communication with others, common understanding and the ability to tolerate one another (Holden, 1974). When we talk of conflict, the other side of it is peace. Generally, peace is regarded as absence of war or violence. In this case, human engagements are conducted in an orderly manner. If any dispute arises from such engagements or interactions, it can be settled peacefully. According to Holden (1974), peace is a process of continuous and constructive management of differences towards the goal of more mutually satisfying relations, the prevention of escalation of violence, and achievement of those conditions that exemplify the universal well-being of human beings and their groups from family to culture and the state.

In order for there to be peace, social justice must be maintained forth is to be achieved, there is need for realistic peace. Realistic peace is described as he absence of violence under conditions and relationships that provide for the non-violent resolution of political conflict and the freedom to pursue legitimate individual and group goals without threat or coercion. Peace must therefore be understood and employed as a continuous process to lesson social tension, resolve political conflict and create conditions to pursue freedom and justice through a gradual evolution of human perceptions and socio-political institutions. Since human and organizational interaction is a continuous process of gradual change and transformation, neither conflict nor peace exists without the other, making them two societal and mental states in flux-conflict and peace therefore are said to be two interchangeable but always co-existing process that can, be enhanced or weakened accelerated or de-escalated, maintained or abandoned, but never eliminated.

Thus, according to Oruwari (2006), this is true strategy of conflict prevention to eliminate the most serious causes and changing the conditions that promote or facilitate in the first place, this process is achievable when pursuing positive peace. For Rabie (1994) positive peace is achieved when the process moves from the elimination of violence of dealing with the causes of conflict and proceeds to achieving universal happiness. Negative peace on the other hand is such peace that may be achieved after inflicting much injury on people and environment. Such peace normally come after war.

According to David (2006) peace is generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and about peaceful co-existence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintain a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violence means.

Different cultures and civilization have different interpretations of peace. The particular historical and political context of a country and community determines their perception of peace. For instance, a society fragmented and polarized by perpetual was and armed conflict will interpret peace as the absence of war. In the same way, a political community driven by unjust structures and policies will equate peace with justice and freedom. Again, people suffering from material deprivation and poverty will definitely perceive peace in terms of equity, development and peace in terms of equity, development and access to existential necessities of life.

The question is how can people live together in this imperfect world where violence and conflict seen out weight? Again has democracy ever solved the problems emanating from conflict to establish permanent peace? If there is no conflict can we talk of peace and vice-versa? What this indicate is to say that there is something like earthly paradise. In order words, peace and conflict are past parcel of human existence. Democracy is only a system being used for nations of the world to see if minimal peace can be achieved to make imperfect world a better place to live together.

The Concept Co-Existence
Co-existence for Rupesenghe (2012) means learning to live together to accept diversity and implies a positive relation to the other. Our identities are defined 1n relation to the other. When relationships are affirmative and equals. It enhances dignity and freedom and independence when relations are negative and destructive, human dignity and our own self-worth are undermined. Apart from this, Krushecheve (1959) sees coexistence as a continuation of the struggle between the social systems but by peaceful means, without war, without interference by one state in the internal affairs of another. It is competition of the two systems in peaceful field.

Numerous efforts are being made largely by citizens based groupsto create space for dialogue to improve coexistence between communities. For instance, the environmental movement is a classic example of extending co-existence to nature so that nature is seen as an aspect of our planetary existence. Another one is the gender movement which focuses on recognition, emancipation and the struggle for equality and freedom. All the efforts not withstanding to coexist seem to be impossible between individuals, groups and nations.

Conclusion
To break the cycle of violent conflict in Africa and in Nigeria in particular, efforts must be made to transform the socio-economic and political conditions that promote poverty in Africa. This may be the reason the paper warn that a transformation is not possible in situations of violent conflicts and/or those in which the institutions and processes of governance are unresponsive, unaccountable, or simply ineffective. The well cherished peace may be obtained in Nigeria but not until democratic process and electoral process are manipulated in such as way that fundamental human rights are recognized and respected.

Recommendations

1. Every child has to have access to quality education and participate in making decisions about his education.
2. The curriculum must adequately reflect international, national and local concerns in today's increasingly pluralistic, multicultural societies, curriculum development processes need to become more democratic adoption decentralized approaches which permit-input and participation by all interest groups.
3. Government must give priority to education or declare education as a state of emergency and spent 25'/o to 50'/o of its annual budget.
4. Welfare of security forces must be given priority including modern war gadget (weapons).

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