

Conflict, Peace and Development in Africa: A Narrative Quagmire

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Abstract

Conflict has been the ingredient of building societies since the earliest beginnings of man to the dawn of civilization. Over the millennia, man has learnt various methods of dealing with conflicts even though conflict is universal and recognized as one of the outcomes of a social community. This paper explores and describes the debate, context, nature, dynamics and trends in African conflicts. It therefore enhances the understanding of these conflicts in terms of the historical, political and international dimensions within which they occur, zeroing in on the political, economic and social manifestations associated with the phenomenon on the continent. Arguably, the characterization of Africa as plural societies in the grip of centrifugal forces, is driven by ethno-religious forces that are been politicized, especially violence, atavistic nationalism, resource struggle, and satellization are sources of conflict in Africa. Ethnicity being a perception to profile group differences, is used by conflict merchants or entrepreneurs for the strategic manipulation of ethnic jaundice. Thus, these chauvinist conflicts are basically reflections of internal weaknesses, which addresses intra and interstate conflicts on ethno-religious grounds, among others. Somalia, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Libya and Nigeria are good examples. The historical materialism, human needs and rational theories are veritable tools used to analyze, describe and interpret the conflict phenomenon that occurred significantly in the African continent. Basically, depending on secondary sources of data collection reveals the crises of post coloniality are a function of Africa's conflict cycle and structural impediment to development of which some recommendations are proffered by the study.

Background to the Study

Conflict is a universal thing since the beginning of history, and, over the millennia, man has learnt multiple methods of dealing with conflicts. Conflicts are therefore universal and recognized as one of the outcomes of a social community. As a result of this realization, it is obvious that no two persons are on the same pedestal in mannerism, attitudes, likes as well as in the mental, moral and other attributes and capacities to understand why conflicts are endemically bound to occur in society. The consideration of prevalence of differences in culture, religion, resource endowments and even educational inequalities further widen the scope because conflicts are bound to occur among social groups (Uchendu, 2007:7). It is this basic truth of life in social formations that congregate at the international scene in institutions such as the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), European Union (EU), United Nations Organization (UNO), and so forth.

The underlying agenda of the creation of the above international institutions primarily was to foster solidarity, cooperation and support among countries and peoples in order to address the attainment of various interests of members, especially the resolution or management of conflicts. Dialogue remains the cornerstone of every conflict resolution or management, although every human society has its own peculiar way of resolving them. In Africa, as elsewhere, this involves the use of kings, chiefs and other leaders who are trusted and relied upon by those who they represent. Again, one of the bases of conflict management is to help parties involved identify the causes of the conflicts. Such empirical understanding makes it easier to deal with the problem and resolve or manage it. It is therefore common knowledge that society is dynamic and for this reason, change has become a prevalent factor in every human society. Africans today are relying less and less on dialogue and mediation as was in the past and are resorting to violence without first engaging in the time-tested traditional mechanism of resolving conflicts. Africa is gradually losing touch with our time-tested realities of conflict management. The viewpoint is that this development has contributed immensely to the present over-arching crises of post coloniality in Africa.

Conceptual Review

There are concepts that need be clarified in the context of this paper. They are conflict and peace. Taking them sequentially, conflict is derived from the Latin word 'conflictus', which means a fight or struggle for mastery, a quarrel, a combat, a striving to oppose or overcome, active opposition. Although the concept is cycled with variety of definitions by experts based on their ideological perspectives, nevertheless, there is a common thread in all these definitions. Conflict as defined by Francis (2006:20) is the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. He further noted that armed conflict is the resort to the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals. Conflict is a relationship between states or rival factions within a state which implies subjective hostilities manifested in many dimensions. The driving element is that conflict is a struggle, a strong disagreement, a clash between contradictory wishes, to be incompatible, to oppose (Huggett, 1998).

Joyce, Hocker and Wilmont (1997) have proclaimed with remarkable audacity that conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other part in achieving their goals (cited in Ronald et al, 2001). And that conflict is seen as a social condition in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the time and space, an available set of scarce resources. Accordingly, conflict is the overt, coercive interactions of contending collectivities (Ogadi, Raimi & Nwachukwu, 2012; Raimi, 2017). But such a dichotomy is the use of force and armed violence in pursuit of incompatible interests and goals is the function of armed conflict in Africa, as conflict is ontologically immersed in human insatiable and often incompatible wants. But Coser (1956) sees conflict as the struggle over values, claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aim of opposing parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or dominant the rivals. Coser is imploring us to look closer to home in trying to understand statehood in Africa, asking that we pay close attention to how scholars are interpreting conflict in Africa. This paper adopts Coser's view of conflict as the operational definition because it is very apt in the context of African.

Coser's conceptualization highlights the nature, content and context of conflicts as they occur in human social settings. The definition provides us the tool with specific meaning of these interests or goals for analysis in the context of the scope of study and area as well. Importantly, this it does by telling us that conflict exist over struggle for values, status, power, and scarce resources with the parties in contest seeking to eliminate each other by all means necessary. The implication of the preceding analysis according to Okoye (2018:496) is that just like politics, is required to manage it (or resolve it) is expressed as to what, when and how? This is especially because resources are not enough to meet the demands of all parties in the social space, which implies that for someone to gain, the other must lose syndrome leads to the emergence of conflict as a way of achieving some kind of unity even if it involves destructive forces of the conflicting parties (Ezirim, 2010:16).

As a result, two broad categories of conflicts have been identified in this study. One is the internal (intra-state) conflict in which the governmental authorities of a state are opposed by non-state actors within that state seeking to overthrow those authorities with force of arms. While the second category is international conflict (inter-state) in which conflict takes place between two or more states and involve forces of more than one state. It is however apt to subscribe that Africa has experience both typologies over the years. However, Africa has also witnessed a third typology of conflict, namely, internationalized internal armed conflict. Such conflicts, which are essentially civil wars, have varying degrees of externalization. The conflicts in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola, and Sierra Leone are good examples.

Peace like many other concepts have been analyzed differently by different scholars. Peace is a long-term project that seek to bring about lasting and constructive change of institutions that maintain society (Haavelsrud, 1996 cited in Kalama 2018:481). Adding

that peace is a tranquil, uncomplicated end state as well as only partly the absence of conflict. While the Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary subscribes peace as a condition or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in a country or an area, state of being calm, of quietude and living in friendship with somebody. The World Book Encyclopedia (1996) defined peace as the state of being calm, quiet and freedom from disturbance. Peace has also been defined as the state of freedom from war or freedom from civil disorder. Channeling peace is also security because when there is peace, citizens are free and have no fear, to develop their social and economic lives.

Of a truth, the breach of peace causes civil disorder such as riots, protests and other forms of disharmony are the banes of instability. Peace, and the search for, as Francis (2006:17) tells, is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means. Instructively, peace is a universal advocacy, a concern, desire of peoples the world over. For example, the establishment of the United Nations in the aftermath of the most devastating war in human history (WWII, 1939-1945) was an embodiment of this universal desire. At the regional levels, the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), and other organizations are geared for similar purposes. Among other things keeping peace and developing friendly relations among nations are the main objectives of world or regional peace. In light of the above submission, scholars are however, of the viewpoint that peace is better attained or maintained in democracies where rule of law and fundamental human rights of citizens are respected and protected.

Theoretical Postulation for Analysis

The political economy theories with an emphasis on historical materialism, human needs and relational theories provides the framework for analysis. These theories analyze, describe and explain the trajectory of African conflicts. Political economy is a standardize tool to the study of society, especially for economic and historical challenges. The theory is a collection of the 19th century German philosopher, Karl Marx. This is a material science that provides historical explanations to the material conditions of existence and the contradiction that arise from the inter-play of social forces within a given mode of production (Ake, 1981:1).

Historical materialism, which is a perspective of the political economy, stresses that economic factors determined the superstructure of any social environment. The viewpoint is that economic agenda or need is man's most important need. Flowing along this direction, and to meet this need, human beings engage in the production and reproductive chain of activities of their needs. These needs however became the basis of the social relations with other groups for survival is what Marx referred to as, "the struggle for control of scarce resources that causes conflict in society". Accordingly, in this entire social struggle for survival, instrument of varying degrees are utilized, among others alliance, diplomacy, the economics of power relations, and politics (Eferebo, 2022:3). Hence, social relations is hinged primarily on economic activities, as productive activity is how social groups need to sustain their social existence in society. This is in the theorist's viewpoint not their existence, but that the social existence determines their existence, is the core explanation of violent African conflicts.

While human needs theorists believe just as deprivation and frustration-aggression theorists that all humans have basic needs which they seek to fulfill and that the denial as well as frustration of these needs by other social groups or individuals affect them, thereby leading to violent conflict (Gaya, 2006:5). Lightening these needs according to scholars are somewhat basic to the survival of man, such as food, shelter, sex and reproduction. The list is further extended to include security, distinctive identity, social recognition of identity and effective participation in the process that shape those identities (Gaya, 2006:52). The realization of basic human needs, scholars therefore, contend that needs for survival, protection, affection, understanding, participation and identity are shared by all humans, are irrepressible and have components (needs for recognition, identity, security, autonomy and bonding with others) that are not easily given up hence, no matter how suppressive a social system tries frustrating these needs the end result is violent conflict.

Relational theorists attempt to provide explanation for violent conflicts in Africa. This they avers that violent conflicts are results of exploring political, economic, sociological and historical relationships between or among groups, with cultural values differences as well as group interests as drivers of violent conflict perspectives, especially the shared colonial past expressed in post-colonial African conundrum. The high point of relational theory is that difference between cultural values systemically challenges individuals or group's identity formation processes and creates conflict tendencies as one group sees others as intruders who have to be prevented from encroaching upon established cultural boundaries. It is the contention of rational theorists to analyze social environment from the perspective of social exclusion, where individuals and groups are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural activities in the social environment (United Nations, 2016 as cited in Eferbo, 2022:5). Of course social exclusion increases poverty by reducing groups access to vital resources such as health, education and social protection, livelihood opportunities. Social exclusion is also a causal factor of conflict and instability, especially when exclusion is based on religion, ethnicity and power. When particular groups of people are denied the opportunity to fully participate and have a voice in society, fractures and division arise (Yahaya, 2021:284), and this is the situational context of African conflicts.

What is significant is that the theories highlighted are not without challenges; but each of these theories, no doubt offer some useful perspective to the understanding of conflict in Africa as elsewhere. Although despite the similarities, each perspective only adds to the pool of conflict analysis there are analytical distinctions as static points of departure, there is sufficient overlap that blur their fine points of distinction. Therefore, to understand the conflict phenomenon in Africa must be situated in the socioeconomic, political, religious, cultural structures, as well as locating the nature, contexts and dynamics of Africa's colonial past. The synthesis of the above theoretical framework for analysis shows there is a connection of such social variables as socioeconomic, political, religious, and ethnic among other factors as drivers of African conflicts. This approach has enhanced the understanding of the forces influencing violent conflict behavior in Africa's social environments.

Causes of Social Conflicts

This segment takes a review of the causes of social conflicts in Africa from the general to specific. Taking into consideration the conflict equation reveals that pluralistic, structured relationships of dominance and submission, linked to a normative systemic competition and power, as structural catalyst for social conflicts, especially in Africa's post-colonial life. The concern is that Africa's post-colonial era is decimated with conflicts on many fronts, which invariably is constitutive of security, peace and development praxis (Kupolati, 1995:224). Such conflict typologies are regional or national manifests as civil wars, provoked by a number of factors among others ethnicity and irredentism that derived from social injustice, abusive inequalities, political repression and intolerance. Connecting factors such as ethnic-religious violence in Africa, like those of mob violence in the West, might be linked to the prevailing conditions of poverty, insecurity, and lack of opportunity for satisfying employment for the youths (Eferebo, 2022:10), are some of the dynamics that fuels violent conflict following the failure of government to address traditional ways of conflict resolution and to integrate diverse social groups into effective political processes.

The point is that the various ethnic division see the political setting as unjust and inaccessible to all (Abeki & Kia, 2019:28). The lack of consolidation of regional peace around commonly shared values and norms undermines the effort at building integrative unity. The results are everybody appears free to do as they deserve, a condition that generates violent conflict. In the event, each group sees itself as a distinct nationality with defined norms, customs, traditions and territories. These incompatible forces assert this distinctiveness collides with each other in the struggle for resources, power, and influence. This has been a major cause of African conflicts. There is, therefore, a remarkable absence of feeling of community and a common perception of brotherhood, as well as the interplay of deprivation and desperation fuels conflict on many fronts.

The core ingredient is the tremendous diversity presented by ethnic and religious composition, socioeconomic structures and physical characteristics arising from colonialism has far-reaching spatial consequences for the nature and spatial of violent conflict. This extraction spotlights the basis for violent conflicts prevalent in the African continent. The imperatives of violent conflict about African states tend to be generally between different ethnic groups, and even conflicts that are wholly free of ethnic jaundice involves factions and alliances built around relationships, for example, naturally ignite and reinforce conflicts. Away from this is acute scarcity of resources as another major contributory factor that aggravate social conflict among African countries. Such that scarcity fuels the embers of conflicts couples with its arch twins of demographic factor as the underlying causes of conflicts on the face of the African continent are not only political, but also economic, cultural and increasingly demographic as well (Mazrui, 1996:9). The emphasis is that Africa's high fertility rate without corresponding productive sector (employment opportunities) like the West, is conflict itself.

Much as Africa's population structure wears some economic and political implication, the youthfulness of her population is not being meaningfully engaged in the productive drive for self-reliance. This disproportionately explains away that the productive sector of the African population has often no productive value and there is high unemployment in these states. Conversely, on the political front the youths present a potent threat to political instability, being less amenable to nationalism as a panacea for the social threat. The foregoing are driving forces of much of the political unrest on the African continent can be attributed to corrupt leadership, poverty, unemployment, frustration and alienation of the vibrant youths in many states of Africa. The youth's receptivity to parties and groups that promise revolutionary change is of grave concern, in the 2023 Nigerian elections they have been at the forefront of pro-democracy, as they called themselves "Obi-dient", "Batified", and "Articulated" taking center position in that country's elections for the first time since independence, for examples.

Interestingly the aforementioned demographic concern is a perceived security threat to the countries of the North, which is a source of considerable anxiety (Ake, 1992:25-26), stresses "no hope of a better future, could nurture extremist political movements and military adventurism which could lead to national and regional wars and endanger international security". Also the role of the "child soldier" has had enormous literatures all over the contemporary conflict discourses in Africa, ranging from Liberia to Somalia and DRC to Mozambique. This of course substantiates the demographic ingredients as one of the underlying causes of the conflict is playing out in the series of military coup d'états festering the African continent divulging themselves from the neocolonial strangle holds of former colonial powers, especially Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The high point is that while African states are retracing their steps from neocolonial politics and the crisis of post coloniality, they are facing a new crisis of liberal or neoliberal democratic jaundices by key players in world politics, especially in the West, among other African joy killer states within the West African sub-region. The many calls for return to status quo anta in these countries, and the naked threats from ECOWAS countries, is likened to carrot and stick diplomacy that have no deterrent value.

Understanding Social Conflict Analysis

Broadly speaking, conflict analysis is the systemic study of the profile, causes, actors, trends, and dynamics of conflict which in turn helps development, humanitarian and peace building, for institutions to gain better understanding of the context in which they workout methods of dealing and their role in context of the conflict situation. Instructively, conflict analysis can be carried out at different levels say local, state, regional, national and even global, and seek to establish the linkages between these levels identifying the appropriate dimension is crucial while the issues and dynamics at the different levels varies yet linking it with the level of intervention, to establish systemic linkages with other interrelated levels of conflict dynamics since all of these different levels impact on each other. What is therefore key is conflict sensitivity, which is about understanding the context, interaction between intervention and the context, and acting upon the understanding of this interaction, for proper analysis to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts.

Conflict analysis is a central component of conflict-sensitive best practice, as it provides the foundation to sensitive programming for the understanding of the interaction between the intervention and the context. It is in shambles, if not why African conflicts have not deflated over the years. The contention is that if conflict-sensitive applies to all forms of intervention (development, humanitarian and peace building) and to all levels (project, program and sectorial conflict) analysis will help define new interventions and sensitize both new and pre-defined interventions such as selection of areas of operation, beneficiaries, partners, staff, and timelines. It also monitors the planning stage interaction between the context and the intervention as well as define project set up and daily routines (implementation stage). And measure the interaction of the interventions and conflict dynamics in which they are situated (monitoring and evaluation stage). All in all, conflict analysis is about the studying to know as much as possible about what happens in a given conflict situation (Fisher et al, 2000), as it is key to opening up the problem studied for clarity. The idea is that without a clear understanding of the conflict, it will be very difficult to proffer solutions to the conflict.

As such, conflict analysis can take case studies, which entail a detailed study of a particular conflict. A case study is a specific rather than undergoing the rigor, methodology and procedure of research. Fact finding is another method of gathering information about conflict. Fact findings are less rigorous research and could be achieved over a short period of time than case studies. This is because they are meant to provide quick information to interveners, to clarify areas of doubt and to help them gain firsthand information and understanding of the peculiarities, parties, involvements and personalities to transform the conflict situation. Analysis meetings are another approach of conflict analysis used by non-governmental organizations. Workshops and conferences are leverage to determine which parties to work with, assess potential risks and dangers, as well as, in the process stimulate future attempts to transform the conflict as much. The underlying objectives of every conflict analysis according to Kalama (2018:486), "is to empower the conflict analyst with the right information and tool to intervene in the conflict with a view to resolving the conflict."

Arising from the above elucidation of conflict analysis, and as every conflict situation entails a number of contexts and properties that are basic ingredients for conflict analysis. John Kalama (2018) has outlined some underlying features of conflict analysis, which are been highlighted and illuminated among others takes the following stages:

The background and context of the conflict.

- i. Stages of the conflict (the pre-conflict stage, confrontation stage, stage of crisis, outcome stage, and post-conflict stage).
- ii. The perspectives of the conflict.
- iii. Parties to the conflict.
- iv. Position, interests, needs and fear of the parties.
- v. Learn lessons from failures and successes.

The Dynamics of Conflict in Africa: Nature, Context and Consequences

The dynamics of conflicts in Africa especially the nature, context and consequences of the conflicts highlights the understanding of the conflicts, the historical, political and international trends and contexts within which they occur. This is so especially when the consequences of the conflicts are portrayed according to Mohammed (1997:121), “zeroing in on the political, economic and social or humanitarian manifestation of the tragedies”. The characterization of the Southern Hemisphere of which Africa is domicile that “...most countries of the south are plural societies in the grip of strong centrifugal forces, including secessionism, the south deeply divided by religious differences which are often polarized. It is prone to violence, atavistic nationalism, territorial dispute and struggle over natural resources. The satellization of the South by the wealthier nations of the North is another source of division and conflict in the South, now and then it leads to proxy wars” (Ake, 1992:15).

The expression is that the balkanization of African states into disharmonious ethnicity is a manipulative tool in the hands of certain class of society who wish to gain control of the social structures. Ethnicity being a perception of identity and so, the social boundaries between social groups (Tseayo, 1983:3), is blurred by conflict entrepreneurs for strategic merchandize of the ethnic question in Africa. These ethnic chauvinistic conflicts in the continent are reflections of weak institutional frameworks (Wanandi cited in Mohammed, 1997:133), is blamed on the decolonization process. Arising thereto from the political struggles among groups in different facets based on ideological, religious, ethnic leanings as is the case of Angola, DRC, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe for examples. Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Burundi are further examples of the African continent.

Conflict among African states also arise because of boundary disputes often blamed on the arbitrarily drawn boundaries of the colonial merchants, as against indigenous ethnic rivalries or relations. The Ethiopia/Somalia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Ghana/Togo, Sudan/Uganda, DRC/Burundi, Nigeria/Cameroon conflicts are examples. Zeroing in on the ethnic conflicts within a particular state deduced the manifestations of the problem more clearly. Among the structural impediments to Nigerian democracy is ethnic heterogeneity and a history of ethnic rivalry. Like DRC and many African states, Nigeria has a multiplicity of ethnic groups (aside the majors of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo), there are well over 300 minority ethnic configurations. The realization is that the fierce struggle for political power mediated by ethnic rivalries has been responsible for many of the social conflicts on the continent. Ali Mazrui emphasis this more captivately that “Democratic movements have begun to gather steam on the African continent; unfortunately, they have also led to intra-nation conflict, especially when political divisions are exacerbated by ethnic divisions. Unfortunately, such rivalry, instead of being confined to constitutional and political channels, has often been channeled into physical violence (1996:11), is a common phenomenon. A more worrisome operations of ethnic conflicts aside those of Rwanda and Burundi was the example of Liberia.

The colonization of the greater proportion of the African continent by European scavengers in the 19th and 20th centuries gave rise to three historical quagmires which underlie the contemporary ethnic conflicts in Africa. These forces are the creation of heterogeneous states from diverse ethnic configuration, erection of artificial boundaries across ethnic contours, and the divide and rule tactics. The colonialists created heterogeneous states whose major characteristic was ethnic plurality. These previously independent and diverse ethnic nationalities were foisted under one political entity by force for political and socioeconomic gains. Doing this many several single ethnic nationalities were partitioned between different political regimes. The implication was to draw a boundary across a single ethnic nation, with shared values (Asiwaju, 1984:2), the Yoruba for example. The colonialist's devised divide and rule tactics for maximum political domination and economic exploitation of these heterogeneous entities, without genuine re-socialization of the citizens into the membership of a larger conglomerates Nigeria for example. The combination of these forces tied Africa's colonial past sowed the seeds of instability, disunity, strife, and in some extreme cases promoted the ethnic hatred which gave rise to ethnic conflict across Africa.

No wonder Diop and Diouf drove the message home in a simple language when the duo declared that "the state in Africa is a borrowed institution" (1990:7). The idea of this modern state and its beginnings are steeped in the violence of self-assertion to the extent that "the greatest evil of the state is its tendency to become an engine of war, a hostile fist shaken in the face of a supposedly inferior world" (Durant, 1959:502). This theme of violence and its association with the state appears central to most African countries. This is because the states so created came to be organized as subsidiary states, and on becoming independent states adopted the European state system already introduced by colonialism as the best form of leadership provision not only blur but also undermines indigenous practices of conflict resolution. Thus letting lose extant best practices silent to Africa's peace building mechanisms to the fore.

The interface between ethnicity and politics took center stage during and after the struggle for independence in Africa; most of the nationalist's movement had ethnic colorations. After independence they resort to ethnic cleavages mediated the fierce competition for political positions (Nnoli, 1983:27-28), is deeply worrisome. The local elites to remain in power, they had to resort to ethnicity, and its twin sister, corruption. The viewpoint expressed is that the root cause of the elites' fierce struggle for political ascendancy, at the expense of the people and polarized along ethnic lines was the "stay put syndrome" for power and primitive accumulation of wealth via corruption while promotion of the supremacy of one ethnic group over others in majorly pluralistic social environment exacerbates ethnic jingoism within its confines (Mazrui, 1996:1). Another point of emphasis is the phenomenon of "failed states" syndrome. The existence of the state is a function of the social control it can exercise over its social milieu. This is especially that the more the state can mobilize all of its citizenry, promote overall development and gain tremendous capacity in engaging external forces (Mabogunje, 1996:7). The structural weakness prevalent in many African states tell of the failure of the

leadership to exercise control due to its illegitimate basis of authority, its inability to enforce compliance to its laws and the failure to mobilize the human and material resources for economic development provides the incendiary for conflicts to thrive. Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda, Angola, Mozambique, DRC, Sudan, and others are clear examples.

Of significant concern is the internationalization of African conflicts as the world is driven by forces of globalization. Among other things, economic interests and struggle for resources African conflicts are exploited by the big powers for their own selfish interests, the Mano River region (Liberia and Sierra Leone) for example. The involvement of foreign interests in the conflict, especially the supply of arms depends on the steady supply of money from the sale of principally diamonds, gold, rubber and timber with buyers from Belgium, France, and Malaysia of the illicit business (Twaddle, 1996:10). This is scholarly expressed by Margaret Vogt that “the growing importance of multinational companies in the exploitation of Liberia's natural resources has further externalized the conflict situation in Africa” (Vogt & Ekoko, 1993:203). Flowing with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in Rwanda and many other African states is an example of what comes with SALWs when sold to regions plagued by ethnic, religious and nationalist strife (Goose & Smyth, 1994:86). The viewpoint is that aside the killing and destruction of lives and property, SALWs sustain and expand conflicts in a world increasingly characterized by nationalist tensions and border conflicts daily.

The consequences of social conflicts have deflated African states capacity in fulfilling the basic functions of modern states, especially the preservation of lives and property, let alone the expanded functions of socioeconomic development. The examples of Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Angola and more recently Ethiopia, DRC and Sudan are glaring evidence of this fact. Ethnicity has been the bane of national unity, nearly every African state has had at least one serious problem of ethnic or regional separatism (Sklar, 1979:151). Civil wars were fought as a result of secessionist movements of Biafra rebellion 1967-1970 in Nigeria, is very much alive, Katanga in DRC of the 1960s among other examples. More recent rebellions are the Ethiopian and the on-going Sudanese conflicts are few examples that comes handy. These conflicts destabilize neighboring states and the regions in which they occur. The Liberian conflict had spill-over effects on neighboring states and the Mano River region, not only outflow of refugees but also the destabilization of the political and security in Sierra Leone, as a direct consequence of the Liberian conflict (Vogt & Ekoko, 1993:208).

The significantly loud economic consequence of social conflict in Africa is the rapacious exploitation of natural resources for purpose of prosecuting unwarranted civil wars, with special focus on the Liberian imbroglio. The magnitude of revenue available to Liberia's faction leader from commodity sales. From 1990-1994 Liberia's diamond exports averaged \$300 million annually. During this same period, timber exports averaged \$53 million annually, rubber exports \$27 million annually, and gold exports about \$1 million (Twaddle, 1996:10). Besides, there is huge destruction both private and public

infrastructure estimated running into billions of dollars. Actually, this is not good for African states that are already sick in trade deficit in international trade. This is because much of their produce are raw materials not manufactured goods, and more painful, those produces are at the mercy of market forces control by industrialized nations, they determine the price and exchange rate that creates deficit balance sheets for developing countries especially those of the African continent. There are documentary evidences that in June 1996, "over \$4 billion worth of properties had been destroyed within six years of the conflict (as cited in Mohammed, 1997:136).

Not forgetting multitude of refugee crises, it creates and the development of the phenomenon of "child soldier" are dominating the African conflict scenes; is really a monumental quagmire. These are children of school age who are conscripted into the military service of warring factions in armed conflict. Despite criticisms all over the globe this phenomenon has been increasingly utilize due to its gains and available; forgetting that it has the potential threat of destroying the future of any nation in which it is prevalent. This is because these children are taken out of the school system, dehumanized by the brutality of war and mentally disoriented by drugs can amputate the destiny of any nation whether rich or poor.

Understanding Peace and Development Challenges in Africa

Drawing from the taxonomy of conflict analysis in Africa has generated two major characteristics. They are identity-based and resources-based analysis. These have had the greatest potential for spill-over syndrome of the regionalization of domestic armed conflict. The negative perspective of both identity-based and resource-based post-Cold War conflicts have generated devastating consequences, and in some cases, instigated new wars in other states. However, from the positive perspective, these identity-based and resources-based wars have propelled quasi-states the imperative to build a regional peace regime. And, secondly, the generation of conflict analysis reinforces the need to development and focus on a case-by-case understanding of conflict. As no two conflicts are ever same, despite some identifiable commonalities in them.

Arguably, two important elements relevant to conflict explanation are the role played by external forces and the link between poverty, hunger and starvation, underdevelopment and conflict. External forces continue to play considerable and sometime, decisive roles in instigating violent conflicts in Africa. Development paradigms prescribed for Africa, in particular the latest stage of neo-liberal development framework, the "Washington Consensus", Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), have exacerbated conflicts in Africa. The imposition of SAPs and it negative effects in the opinion of Okaba and Bieh "sparked-off, and in some cases, fueled conflicts and hastened the collapse of states of Sierra Leone, Liberia, DRC, Somalia and Cote d'Ivoire". The duo further avers "the international economic environment has in most cases aggregated the problems of these vulnerable economies, because of the unfavorable trade climate and lack of access to the world market for primary producers, fluctuating terms of trade, increasing debt burden and debt service obligations have all contributed to the poor performance and devastation of

African economies. This has inevitably produced increasing poverty and depressed social and development indicators” (2018:544).

In light of this development experts sees a positive correlation between the nature and dynamics of conflict, and adduced that, the only sure way of dealing with armed conflict and its “associated pathologies of crime and terrorism” is to respond with development to reduce conflict maladies. Although there are many development agencies and analyst draw a positive correlation between poverty and risk of conflict, but recent debate have posits that there is no direct causal relationship between poverty and conflict. Arguably of a truth there is no automatic relationship between poverty and conflict even though they do have conflict instigating aspects. But in fact drawing from some of the country listed at the bottom of the United Nations Development Program Report 2003 such as Burkina Faso, Malawi, Benin and Tanzania have not degenerated into armed conflict due to poverty, hunger, starvation and others. This is not overlooking at some middle-income regions such as the Balkans are mired in conflict, is a clear indication that Africa is not alone on this.

Arguably, social conflicts create four undesirable dimensions, namely, the non-productive consumption of resources, disintegration of social systems, production and maintenance of dissociative sentiments and the development of social and individual problems (Himes, 1980:139-143). A reflection of each of these dimensions neither promotes political stability nor socioeconomic development. Also, the non-productive consumption of resources involves wastage for example, funds that could have been used for the provision of infrastructures would be channeled for the acquisition of armaments, and destruction of lives and property in conflicts are wasteful efforts. Thus, functioning of the social system in a conflict situation, cannot be positive because families are broken down while productive activities cannot be undertaken and eventually social community could disintegrate as evidenced by the collapse of the state in some conflict situation in Africa (Mohammed, 1997:128)

Of interest is that a conflict situation engenders in a social environment are usually destructive and disharmony. This is why after the resolution of conflicts a lot of effort has to be committed to the healing of what conflict analysts calls “the collective psyche”. Because at the center of conflicts breeds a lot of bad blood syndromes such as ill-feelings and hatred are generated between hitherto friendly and brotherly groups. Also, the damaging dimensions of social conflicts is the development of social and individual problems. As a result of the cluelessness and disorientation that arise therefrom conflicts, social problems could increase, among other things crimes, drug addition, prostitution, rape, divorce and starvation ignite more conflicts that harpers peace and development in any nation. Above all, the politics of systemic plunder characterized and blighted a number of Africa's postcolonial states cannot be dissociated from the self-centering blurring of public and private spheres responsible for the underdevelopment of the African continent.

More significantly, it has been observed that conflict wrecks various typologies of havocs wherever it occurs, which in most cases, negatively impacts in the area of development. This is because violent conflict not only destroys lives and properties, but it ultimately necessitates the reallocation of resources from infrastructural development towards: replacement, rehabilitation or reconstruction of damage social amenities after the conflict. Thus Awori (cited in Adetula (2006:383) remarks “it is now widely accepted that violent conflict is the major hindrance to the development of the African Development. Violent conflicts disrupt the process of production, create conditions for pillage of the countries resources and divert their application from development purposes to servicing war. Violent conflict is thus responsible for perpetuating misery and underdevelopment in the continent.” Linked to the preceding complex debates Samuel Ibaba (2011:1) observes “the literature on peace, conflict and development has highlighted violent conflict as a constraint to development”. The point of emphasis is that the conflict destabilizes peaceful and harmonious relationships between conflicting parties and undermines development by creating objective conditions that leads as well as enhance poverty, unemployment and inequality in the African continent.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has attempted to identify the nature of social conflicts in Africa by presenting the causes of the conflicts and have analyzed theoretical lenses in which these conflicts can be described, explained and analyzed. In order to provide a background for comprehending the problems, addressing the historical, socioeconomic, political, cultural and ethnic, and international contexts, as well as the consequences of the conflicts are deliberated. The piece however argues that conflict is deflating Africa to facing deeper and festering crisis compared to other regions of the globe. As a result, Africa now risk being marginalized in the global ranking as the poverty capital of the world. Rather than relying on standard that are of Eurocentric interpretation of African conflict, security and development paradigms, this piece has provided a clear analysis of the intrinsic dynamics of the causes and consequences of African development challenges which is reinforced by the linkage between bad governance, poverty, conflict and underdevelopment. Arguably issues of ethnicity, demographic and other related variables cannot provide answers to African conflict challenges. Thus, among other things, the piece recommended that citizen rights must be protected, promotion of democratic institutions, and an enabling environment for peace building and conflict resolution mechanism be put in place at all the levels. While poverty reduction programs must be vigorously pursued and matters of job creation and welfare of the masses must form the central concern of NGOs as well as the governments of African states.

Recommendations

- i. Citizen right protection must be taken into serious consideration in line with international best practices.
- ii. Poverty alleviation programs be established to curb the excesses of unemployment among the youths by the governments of African states.
- iii. Food security should be core ingredient for peace and stability for hunger and

- starvation menu for the ventilation of frustration.
- iv. Capacity building is an agent of peace building for the application of indigenous conflict resolution strategies to effectively utilize age-long Africa's peace building mechanisms.
 - v. Promotion of democratic best practices and the rule of law.
 - vi. International trade and payment relations that will promote efficiency of trade investment.
 - vii. Regional and sub-regional economic interaction, and
 - viii. Consideration of expenditure on arms and armaments by the governments of all African states. Rather the pursuit of productive economic venture to provide basic needs in the consideration of the high demographic factor is very essential.

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