

The Sudan Conflict and Sustainable Development in Africa

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Abstract

This work examined the Sudan Conflict and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa. The Sudan conflict is one of the numerous conflicts recurring in Africa. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals Set a new road map for global cooperation towards a more prosperous and sustainable world. For African States, the new agenda presents solutions to many long-standing development challenges. Sudan's Strategic location in a volatile region bordering the Red Sea, the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa and her agricultural wealth have attracted regional and other external power plays that have complicated the chances of a successful transition of government. The SDGs can be activated through governance properly articulated in a peaceful environment Africa has been engulfed in conflicts in various shapes and forms as exemplified in Sudan. Conflict is no doubt an obstacle to progress, political stability and economic prosperity because of its destructive consequences. The attainment of the SDGs in Africa can only be possible in a peaceful atmosphere. It is on this known fact that the study recommends the cultivation and sincere propagation of the African peace and conflict resolution concept of Ubuntu at the individual, local, national and regional levels for peaceful coexistence and mutual development. It is in this spirit that the SDGs can be fulfilled in Africa.

Keywords: *Sudan, Conflict, Africa, SDGs, Development etc.*

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Background to the Study

Conflict is generally struggling over values and rights. Conflict is the pursuit of incompatible goals or interests by different groups or individuals. Sudan became Africa's 54th country in July 2011 after decades of civil war that ended with the creation of Sudan and South Sudan. Despite this peaceful separation, political and economic tension have persisted leading to the raging crisis since April 15 2023. Africa is the world's second-largest and second-most-populous continent, after Asia, which shares the same colonial experience. The African continent is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Isthmus of Suez and the Red Sea to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Africa is a most centrally located continent that steadily attracts foreign interests. Africa has been in the midst of conflicts from colonial conflicts to the persisting conflicts over political participation, access to resources and ethnic identity as in the Sudan crisis.

The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the United Nations (UN) in September 2015 set a new road map for global co-operation towards a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable world. According to Anam 2020, for African States, the new agenda suggests solutions to many longstanding development challenges, as well as opportunities to showcase progress and strengthen regional challenges. There are indeed forces impeding the realization of the SDGs in Africa, and conflict occupies a dominant place as the exercise of power and authority in the tenets of governance by political leaders for the wellbeing of their citizens cannot be properly discharged in the atmosphere of conflict. The study aims to analyze the Sudan conflict to determine the implications for the realization of the SDGs in Africa. The study contents that Sudan's strategic location in a volatile region, bordering the Red Sea, the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa as well as her agricultural wealth have attracted regional power plays and external contests as a common feature in Africa, that is threatening resolution of the crisis indicating a major obstacle to the actualization of the SDGs in Sudan and African as a whole.

Conflict and Africa

Conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence. Conflict simply is defined as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. Coser (1956), defines conflict as a struggle between two or more people over values and claims to status, power and resources in which the opponents aim to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. He explained that conflict arises whenever one party perceives that one or more goals or purposes or means of achieving a goal or preference are being threatened or hindered by the activities of one or more parties. Conflict is the result of interaction and contact among people that make it an inevitable part of human existence. Notwithstanding, conflict is obviously an obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall socio-economic development because of its destructive effects.

Africa has been ravaged by conflicts that have come in phases. Historically, during the Cold War, there were subsisting anti-colonial conflicts and wars of national liberation; conflicts between the people and colonial powers. Examples were Kenya's Mau Mau uprising and the liberation wars in Portuguese territories of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. Other

variants of the Cold War conflicts were the anti-apartheid wars in South Africa, Namibia and the war against the racist regime in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). These wars were waged largely against foreign interests all through the 1970s, and in the case of Namibia, all through the 1980s till independence in 1990. In the 1970s, there were other Cold War related conflicts where the East-West confrontations came by proxies. In the post-Cold War 1990s, the nature of conflicts manifested in the struggle for political participation, access to resources and struggle over identity. Kahior (2002), added persistent attachment to territory as an added conflict trend in Africa. The conflicts in Somalia, Rwanda, Chad, Uganda and Sudan are rooted in the struggle for political participation and inclusion. Conflicts over access to resources or distribution of resources are the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria. Identity and citizenship conflicts are typified by the many conflicts in Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Sudan. For Sudan, the conflict led to the creation of South Sudan and Sudan, creating another trend of conflict in Sudan. Identity conflicts are more common in Africa because our colonial heritage has been a major tale for Africa.

The Rwanda and Burundi and the Darfur region of Sudan assumed genocidal proportions. Many of the intra-state conflicts in Africa are communal in nature. Since Africa's economic crisis deepened in the 1980s there has been a proliferation of ethno-regional and religious organizations and movements with pronounced political agendas all over Africa; including Sudan, Burundi, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda, Nigeria, Ethiopia etc. Most of these ethno-regional and religious organizations in these States have metamorphosed into ethnic militias that have further complicated Africa's political landscape. These groups make claims that have far-reaching implications for the States and Africa as a whole. The end of the Cold War in 1989 led to the escalation of conflicts not only in Africa, but the world over. The African case has been compounded by the various new colonial economic programmes of the IMF and the World Bank. These programmes aggravated the poor economic conditions of the people and became a major cause of many of the conflicts in the continent that in most cases degenerate into violence that leads to the destruction of lives and property. Amid these travails, the governments to a large extent become paralysed (Alli, 2006; Pp. 330-335).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The term sustainability means meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generations. Sustainable development goals are couched in the 2030 Agenda agreed by the United Nations Member States in September 2015. It set a new road map for global cooperation towards a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable world. The SDGs, officially known as Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a set of 17 Global Goals with 169 targets including:

- Goal 1 - No poverty
- Goal 2 - Zero hunger
- Goal 3 - Good health and well-being
- Goal 4 - Quality education
- Goal 5 - Gender equality
- Goal 6 - Clean water and sanitation

Goal 7	-	Affordable and clean energy
Goal 8	-	Decent work and economic growth
Goal 9	-	Industry, innovation and infrastructure
Goal 10	-	Reduced inequality
Goal 11	-	Sustainable cities and communities
Goal 12	-	Responsible consumption and production
Goal 13	-	Climate Action
Goal 14	-	Life below water
Goal 15	-	Life on land
Goal 16	-	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.
Goal 17	-	Partnerships to achieve the goals (Anam, 2020: Pp. 1-2)

One of the key commitments agreed at the 2012 UN Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development was the formulation of sustainable development goals.

In the Rio+ 20 outcome document; The Future We Want (UN, 2012c), it recognized that the development of goals would be useful for providing focused and coherent action on sustainable development. It also emphasized that the goals should address and incorporate all dimensions of sustainable development and their linkages in a balanced way. It also maintained that the goals should be consistent and integrated into the UN Post-2015 development agenda with an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process that is open to all stakeholders. Generally, the sustainable development goals are a global call to action to end poverty, protect the earth's environment and climate and ensure that people everywhere can enjoy peace and prosperity.

The formulation of the proposed goals considered the vision, principles, guiding framework and criteria set out at the global and regional levels. At the global level, the UN Secretary-General's High-level panel proposed that the framework for the goals should meet several criteria to address sustainable development concerns effectively. It emphasized that the goals must be universal in character and incorporate a range of key areas that were not fully covered in the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the goals must reflect equally the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and the interconnections between them and include progress metrics and scope in the light of evolving knowledge and evidence. The Rio+20 outcome document also provides guidance on what the goals should seek to achieve. Foremost is poverty eradication and sustained inclusive and equitable economic growth in developing countries as a necessary requirement.

Sustainable Development Goals and Africa

As a follow-up of the Rio+20 meeting in 2012, in January 2013, the UN General Assembly established an Intergovernmental Open Working Group to steer the proposals. In May 2013, the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government established the High-level committee on the post-2015 Development Agenda to oversee and provide political guidance on the Africa process at the regional level. The high-level committee was also mandated to finalize the common African position and ensure that the priorities were integrated. The

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs UNDESA organized the Africa Regional Implementation Meeting (Africa-RIM). This meeting brought together regional stakeholders on sustainable development to deliberate on the main outcomes of Rio+20 and their implications for Africa. Sub-regional and regional consultations on the post-2015 development agenda were organized to guide the identification of priority areas that would enjoy broad consensus across the region's diverse stakeholders. The regions were North, West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa with their various sub-regional priorities for sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed by the United Nations set a new roadmap for global cooperation towards a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable world. For African nations, the new agenda suggests solutions to many longstanding development challenges, as well as opportunities to showcase progress and strengthen regional challenges. There is a shared global understanding of the urgency of addressing the many economic, social and environmental issues standing in the way of achieving sustainable development. The SDGs, as earlier stated officially known as Transforming Our World is a set of 17 Global Goals with 169 targets including; No poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being Quality Education, Gender Equality clean water and sanitation affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on Land, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, Partnerships to achieve the Goals. Several forces are hindering the achievement of these goals in Africa. According to Anam 2020, these forces include; persistent poverty, corruption, infrastructure deficits, insecurity, high imports, rapid population growth etc.

The Sudan Crisis

Sudan became Africa's 54th country on July 9 2011 after decades of Civil War that produced a peaceful secession creating Sudan and South Sudan. Despite this peaceful separation, political and economic tension have persisted leading to the ranging crisis since April 15 2023. The crisis started when violence broke out between the country's army and the paramilitary group; Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that killed hundreds of people and thousands fleeing for safety. Clashes erupted as a result of the power struggle between the two main factions of the military regime; the Sudanese armed forces loyal to Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the Country's de-factor ruler, and the RSF, a collection of militias, under the former warlord Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo known as Hemedti. The power struggle had its foundation before the 2019 uprising that ousted the former ruler Omar al-Bashir. The RSF was also known as Janjaweed. In 2013, Bashir transformed the Janjaweed into a semi-organized paramilitary force and gave their leaders military ranks before deploying them to crush a rebellion in South Darfur and later Yemen and Libya. In 2019, both forces; RSF led by Hemedti and the regular military forces under Buhari, co-operated to oust Bashir in 2019. A power-sharing deal with the civilians as part of a transition to democratic government, was interrupted by a coup in October 2021. The coup enhanced the military's hold on power in the

country which led to protests and deepening economic woes. The Civilians are in support of the oversight functions of the military as well as the integration of the RSF into the regular armed forces.

Sudan's strategic location in a volatile region bordering the Red Sea, the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa and her agricultural wealth have attracted regional power plays, complicating the chances of a successful transition to a civilian-led government. Also, political upheavals and conflict prevailing in most of Sudan's neighbours including Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad etc. have endangered spillover effects to Sudan. The other external forces including Russia, the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other powers are also battling for influence in Sudan. The Saudis and the UAE have seen Sudan's transition as an opportunity to reinforce Islamic influence in the region. Their alignment with the U.S. and Britain formed the “Quad” that has sponsored mediation in Sudan along with the UN and the African Union. Western fear of a potential Russian base on the Red Sea to which Sudanese military leaders have expressed near consent is also a force to reckon with in the Sudan crisis. Many political analysts, (Fulton and Holmes 27 April 2023 Guardian) assert in part that the present crisis in Sudan is a battle for the control of the strategic region between the West and Russia, that each of the embattled two Army Generals in the strife are funded and supported by these external powers.

All the forces in the crisis have heightened anti-government demonstrations in Khartoum. Violence intensified in the peripheries, especially in Darfur and Abyei areas in 2022. According to Sudan Mid-Year Update, demonstrations against military rule and the worsening economic outlook have compounded Sudan's political and economic gridlock (acleddata.com) Sudanese citizens have remained steadfast in their aspiration for a civilian-led government. The Sudan crisis has created a dire humanitarian crisis and threatened the relative peace and stability of the region. Conflict is not new to the region which has been on between the government and opposition groups for over 15 years. More than 70,000 people have been displaced in the latest conflict. The region's fertile land, diverse forests and critical minerals have long been sought after to support agricultural and pastoral livelihoods. Most often, the region's extractive resources, like gum Arabic and gold contribute directly to financing operations of the different armed groups. The violence causes the population to turn to armed groups as a last resort since the country has been without a fully functional and civilian-led government that can establish the authority of the State across the country. A vicious cycle where the lawless situation that derives from conflict leads to unequal control, exploitation and overuse of natural resources which in turn fuels the conflicts has emerged. The conflict constitutes a political crisis with severe consequences for other longstanding tensions centred on access to and control of natural resources (unep.org). In the midst of all these, we can identify, the challenge for Sudan, including;

- i. The existence of numerous armed groups with different visions.
- ii. worsening economic crisis
- iii. Massive debt
- iv. Presence of large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees (socialwatch.org)

Conflict and the SDGs in Africa

Conflict is naturally destructive as it inflicts injuries on, neutralizes, or subverts the aspirations of opponents. It hinders progress in society because it encourages individuals to resort to unfriendly behaviours and encourages “win-by-all means necessary attitudes, where emotions take precedence over reason. It leads to the disintegration of groups and the scuttling of national development projects (Faleti, 2006:36). Adetula 2006, contends that conflicts can severally constrain development endeavours by destroying infrastructure, interrupting the production process and diverting resources away from productive uses. According to him, in the Horn of Africa, Civil wars in the 1980s and 1990s hindered development by affecting not only State structures but also other sectors. In three decades, life expectancy went down by 10-20 years. Per capita income decreased by 50%, famine became endemic, and other welfare indicators, health and education were worsened.

According to a World Bank report as noted by Adetula 2006, resources diverted by conflict away from development are estimated at One billion dollars a year in Central Africa and more than eight hundred million dollars in West Africa. Donors and development agencies have insisted that development assistance projects have suffered in many African countries due to incessant conflicts. The concern has been that resources that are originally planned for the funding of development projects are diverted to conflict management and peace-keeping activities (Adetula pp. 384-385). Ravaging conflicts in Africa have led States to commit a disproportionate percentage of their national resources to the purchase of arms, and diversion of human resources to the battlefield, which deprive the productive sectors of the economy of the necessary support, in addition to the crisis of refugees and humanitarian tragedy and other social problems associated with it. Adetula further posits that in the Horn of Africa, Civil Wars in the 1980s and 1990s hindered development by affecting not only State structures but also other sectors.

The evolving security consciousness of a peaceful atmosphere as a necessary condition for development obviously makes the prevailing conflicts in Africa a real impediment to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. The new security consciousness sees a peaceful atmosphere as a necessary precondition for the pursuit of development in its broadest conception. Peace and development are closely tied together. Conflicts can severely constrain development endeavours by destroying infrastructure, interrupting production processes and creating conditions for the pillage of resources that get diverted from their development purposes into servicing war. Conflicts inflicted on countries face a range of unique context-specific challenges that constrain both capacity and resources and prevent the accrual of sustainment of development gains.

Conflict damages countries' rich cultural landscapes and undermines human security and prospects for sustainable development. Peace, peace dividends and stability at the community level are essential for development in Sudan. Unfortunately, competition for natural resources and other assets, poverty, inequality and unemployment, food insecurity and a changing climate are all potential igniters of armed conflict and violence as obvious in Sudan. Major challenges to achieving SDGs include war that of course breeds instability, poor governance

mechanisms, poverty and unemployment, the global economy etc. Challenges for Africa range from conflict poverty, desertification, increased food insecurity, hygiene and sanitation etc. All the factors are fallouts from conflict situations. Analysis of the 17 Global Goals shows almost all of them cannot be attained in a conflict environment. Conflict breeds poverty, hunger, and destruction, and affects general human wellbeing. The struggle for survival is a major consequence of a conflict that impacts terribly on human well-being and development as a whole.

Conclusion

Conflict is an inherent part of man and society at large because of the constant competition for scarce resources. Mismanagement of conflict situations has been a ban on development. Sudan has witnessed conflicts in various forms because conflict is not a static phenomenon. Conflict in Sudan has been dynamic and dialectical from the Civil War that led to the split into South Sudan and Sudan to the present crisis that started on April 15th 2023. The situation in Sudan is not just a peculiar Sudan case but a raging situation in Africa from colonialism to the persisting conflicts over political participation, ethnic identity and entitlement agitations.

The SDGs lined up for progress in human and capital upliftments cannot thrive in a hostile environment. Peace and development are two inseparable forces. The SDG's new road map for global cooperation is tied up to a peaceful atmosphere as the issue of peace is a global concern. SDGs will remain out of reach without a comprehensive approach to address the unique humanitarian, development and peace-building challenges faced in conflict-affected areas. Without enhanced efforts to understand and mitigate the impacts of conflict, the prospect of the 2030 Agenda may not materialize for conflict-affected populations and nations across Africa.

Recommendations

Based on our analysis above, we make the following recommendations. However, the peculiarities of the African situation that is playing out in Sudan today enhance our recommendations which above all restart the following;

The African peace and conflict resolution concept of Ubuntu widely used in East, Central, Horn and Southern Africa should be realistically imbibed. This peace thought operates at the individual, local/societal, national, regional and global levels. The essence of Ubuntu is to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, peaceful co-existence and mutual development based on the principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between peoples and communities. The concept is all about reconciliation building peace in divided societies and promoting democratic participation. Peace in Africa should not only be the absence of war, conflict, violence, fear, destruction and human suffering but include the absence of unequal and unjust structures and cultural practices, security, democratic participation, respect for human rights, development, social progress and justice. These are all the ethos of sustainable development.

- i. Structural arrangements must be undertaken to enhance the progress of the SDGs.
- ii. The focus must be on building and restructuring effective and transparent institutions.

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