



Peace and Conflict in Africa: A Critical Appraisal of Theory and Practice

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Abstract

The state of peace and conflict in the African continent since independence remains a pre-occupying phenomenon, with development and continuing challenges both at the domestic level and international scale. Indeed, beside the steady progress in the establishment of the African Union continental peace and security design and the promising achievements, the geopolitical map of Africa continue to bear the marks of several latent crises. There are also multiple full-blown conflicts in the face of which peace efforts are often met with opposition or simply foiled by the existence of diverse challenges at the operational level, especially for the African Union. This paper aims to ascertain the state of affairs on all issues as regard armed conflict on selected countries of Africa.

Keywords: Africa, Peace, Conflict, Peace building, African Union.

Introduction

Armed conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa remains one of the recurring issues in the comity of nations and international cycle since independence process. Moreover, internal battle to gain control of an existing State that has eroded African continent and the insurgency of militancy leading to the destruction of lives and property have become an unending issue in the mind of democrats and policy cycle. Thus, Richard and Annie (2010) posits that violent activities in Africa is as results of explicit materials greed and policies failure in terms of physical infrastructure, roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and other social needs. This scenario has unfolded mass destructions, economic degradation, increase in poverty rate and uncontrollable corrupt activities.

In the global arena, it is obvious that many African countries are still backward when it comes to conflict management and development of strategic weapon to curb insurgencies. Although the formation of African union and indeed the regional economic communities signal continental integration and hope for Africans (Sam, 2009). It must be said here that the intervention of African union on crises prone and conflict driven states in Africa became imperative on the need to deepen development and finding a lasting solution to armed conflict zone. Consequently, this paper examines peace and conflict resolution process in Africa with a specific focus on Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa. These are among countries which have experience protracted conflict since independence. However before taking critical look into the selected countries an attempt shall be made to theoretically explain the causes of armed conflict and its implication.

Conceptual Clarification

The concept of peace and conflict

Peace is a situation whereby individuals enjoy basic human rights of security, prosperity, good food, good education, accessible healthcare and a clean planet free from catastrophic and overwhelming pollution. Some scholar described it as the elimination of violence which impedes people from realizing their potential and goals (Galtung, 1969). However, conflict is a struggle between and among individuals. The struggle may be physical or mental (conflicting ideas). It can either be within one person or it can involve several individuals. Conflict arises because there are needs, values or ideas that are seen to be different, and there is no means to reconcile the dispute. Very often, conflicts lead to fight or even war; in this case conflicts are solved with weapons and human wisdom. Conflict between ideas is usually fought with propaganda often arising from protest. A conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur one party is interfering, disrupting, obstructing or in some other way making another party's actions less productive (Deutsch, 1973). Conflicts do not invariably lead to mega violence or war. Even when negotiation, diplomacy and propaganda fails, individuals or nations can still voice their concern through collective protest, strike, sanctions and other nonviolent means. Conflict does not always start between two parties. Even within one individual, there can be conflict. This type of conflict theory is known as the dilemma type of conflict, that is, one person or actor pursuing two incompatible goals. When two parties or actors pursue the same goal this is described by Galtung (1996) as the dispute theory of conflict formation. The later theory has a sharp semblance with a zero-sum game or fixed sum game as noted by (Nwolise, 2004). In this context, actor hold antithetical desires. What one party wins means defeat or loss to the other party and process has been fundamental cause of conflict within states in Africa, that is, the winners take all and the losers go in pain and remain in unstable state (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013).

Conflict Management, Prevention and Resolution

Whenever disagreement arises, we say there is a conflict. While conflict is universal and occurs naturally, crisis (or violence) is almost always the key by-product of conflicts. If conflict is properly managed or resolved, there will be peace. If on the other hand, resolution and reconciliation fail, the conflict will degenerate to chaos, crisis or war.

Stages of Conflict

There are four established stages of escalation of conflicts to crisis: **DISPUTE** (or Latent) **STAGE**: when there is a bitter argument, but no fixed position taken. Conflict situation exists, but not yet recognized; **POLARISATION** (or Perceived) **STAGE**: When bitter arguments still go on and fixed positions are becoming discernible. We say conflict situation is recognized at this stage; **SEGREGATION** (or Tension) **STAGE**: When the disputants have taken fixed positions that cannot be compromised and they are ready to fight to maintain their positions; and **DESTRUCTION** (or Manifest) **STAGE**: The disputants take steps which are usually violent, to maintain their positions. However, it is important to note that conflict is not the only factor responsible for crisis/violence and that crisis/violence is not just limited to breaking of limbs and bones and spilling of blood. In fact, violation of various constitutional and civil rights of individuals (and groups) constitute violence against these persons. Thus apart from physical violence, we have: Social Violence (social inequality; denial of right to education, etc.); Economic Violence (state-induced poverty, etc); Environmental Violence (noise, degradation, pollution, etc); Mental/Psychological (keeping one in-communicado, etc); Sexual Violence (rape, weird sexual practices, etc); Verbal Violence (foul and aggressive language, curses, etc); Cultural Violence (unfair and discriminatory cultural practices, etc); Intellectual Violence (plagiarism, using the intellect to glorify violence); and Domestic Violence (child abuse, spouse battering, etc)

Conflict management differs from Peace Building, which aims to prevent conflicts from even arising in the first place, by engaging individuals, groups, parties and stakeholders in processes that enhance peaceful coexistence outside conflict situations (Gardiner and Simmons, 1992). Consequently, Jehn (1997) and Ostrom (1989) identified the following process as a mechanism of conflict management. **Conflict Resolution**: This deals with settlement of conflict that may have already taken shape. It can be by reconciliation or alienation. Conflicts should be resolved before they get to the destruction (or action) phase.

Peace-building also entails the reestablishment of a working economy and the institutional capacities needed to restore social and political stability in a country that has suffered serious damage through war, civil disorder, or natural disaster (Galtung, 1969). It can also be seen as number of strategic leverages established in order to form a formidable state structure (rule of law, democracy, human rights and security) and the creation of potential force for peace to thrive within civil society and other social networks or human endeavours.

Theoretical Frameworks

For the Marxists conflict is the interactions between the have and the have not. This dialectics is a creation of two or more opposing individuals in the society; the sequent arises from the thesis to the antithesis producing synthesis (social order). For Karl Marx, who saw society as fragmented into groups that compete for social and economic resources cause by slavery and ultimately colonization. The result of this social order was the creation of artificial states and societies. The states in Africa are a product of this process and artificial configuration, consequently, one can understand the genesis of the full blow and unending conflict in the African continent and it's environ. However, the forceful merger of different ethnic groups in order to create a sovereign state and without natural social order has been advanced as the primary cause of conflict in most African states that where formally under the stronghold of colonial powers. Consequently, the struggle for ethnic superiority and identities, economic and political power are some of the variables as a causation of conflicts most countries in the world both ancient and contemporary society. Social order is maintained by those who possessed the greatest political, economic and social resources. However, one of the leading idea of Marx, is on the concept of inequality within a given social setting (the proletariat and the bourgeoisie) and those in control of a disproportionate share of society's resources actively defend their returns. Marx, further noted that potential class conflict is inherent in every differential society such society systematically generates conflicts of interest between persons and groups differentially located within the social structure, and more particularly in relation to the means of production. Marx was concerned with the ways in which specific positions in the social experiences of their incumbents and to predispose them to actions oriented to improve their collective fate. Corroborating the above analyses, Ayoade and Oloruntimehin (2002) provide theories on the causation of conflicts. The first one is the additive theory, when the statements of actors have no logical or intelligible link to the trigger of conflict. The cumulative theory describes a situation where actor's actions are delayed till situation get unbearable, most social unrests involving especially the urban poor fall into this category. There is also the micro – macro causation theory of conflict. This is played out when a minor disagreement that could have been settle amicably are used as an excuse to violently replay the hostility between and among larger ethnic groups by individual at lower level.

Overview of Conflict in Burundi

Since her independence from Belgium in 1962, Burundi has been plagued by ethnic violence and the widening social divisions between the majority ethnic groups called the Hutu (85 per cent of the population) and minority Tutsi (15 percent of the population) ethnic group. Under Belgian rule, ethnicity was marked on identity cards and the Tutsi community or at least the Tutsi elites tended to be favoured by the colonial authorities. There was a great deal of historical controversy over to what degree colonial policies either created ethnic classification or merely existing divisions in Burundi society that remain potent to this day. A series of military and non-democratic regimes ruled Burundi after her independence in 1962.

It is believed that violent repressions of the Hutu population in 1965, when King Mwambutsa IV refused to appoint the elected Hutu Prime Minister and in 1972, when the armed forces again struck against the Hutu population happened

to be the main contributors to the political upheaval that produced the uncontrollable civil war in 1993. In that year, the assassination of Burundi's first democratically elected and first Hutu President, Melchior Ndadaye after just four months in office, led to widespread ethnic violence that lasted more than a decade. Around 200,000 people died in the process which also sparked an unprecedented refugee and internally displaced people. As the conflict raged internally, fighting also spilled over into neighbouring countries – Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo has been involved in some funding of rebel groups, while Burundi has been used as a sanctuary for rebels fighting the Kinshasa administration. Indeed it is because of the intertwined nature of the conflicts in the region that the international conference on the Great Lake Region was launched in Nairobi, Kenya, in 27th July, 2004. The conference supported by the international community, developed a master plan for lasting peace in the region. It did not only come up with regional mechanisms addressing everybody's concerns but also plans to address post-conflict reconstruction and development need in conflict areas.

Consequently, the numerous peace agreements – most notably the Arusha accords and the 2006 ceasefire agreement proven to be futile and inter-ethnic conflict violence intensified leading to the death of thousands of souls. Recent signs of hope came in April 2009 when Burundi's last rebel group, the Forces for National Liberation, laid down its arms and was transformed into a political party. And after 15 years, Burundi's recent progress in the political situation can be viewed with optimism. The current government is ethnically mixed with 60 percent Hutus and 40 percent Tutsis in accordance with the constitution. However, any optimism is tempered with caution and the situation remains very fragile. The 2010 elections saw the re-election of Pierre Nkurunziza amid calls of a fraudulent election by the opposition parties who boycotted the election. Meanwhile, peace process depends on the ability of the current government to build strong institutions to foster democracy and to sustain national unity. There are concerns that the government is too weak to control the situation as the extreme poverty and human right violations still remain as barriers to political stability and the bill for peaceful coexistence.

Furthermore, Burundi regional efforts, under the chairmanship of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, delivered the Arusha Peace Agreement in August 28, 2000, facilitated by the late president Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and later former president Nelson Mandela of South Africa and then South Africa vice president Jacob Zuma. The consistent regional efforts eventually brought on board the two remaining armed groups namely: CNDD and FNL/Palipehutu. Burundi has been a classic example of the success of regional efforts and also an example that incremental progress can build into a concrete solution. Burundi is now enjoying relative peace, but grappling with challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. Burundi has even contributed peacekeepers towards the Africa mission in Somalia, using their experience to drive the point home for peace.

Overview of Conflict in South Africa

South Africa social conflicts stem from the divisions in its population. The 2,335,000 Europeans were themselves divided, with approximately 60 per cent of Dutch extraction (Boers or Afrikaners) and 40 per cent of British stock. The 7,736,000 African natives are mainly of Bantu origin. What is known as the Coloured population, numbering 905,000, are of mixed white and black origin and live mainly in the Cape Province, while the 283,000 Asiatic, chiefly Indian and are concentrated in the east coast province of Natal.

Over sometime the government has carryout a restrictive immigration policy against the influx of British subjects as well as those from other countries. The government promotion of apartheid or segregation, in regard to the non-European population also aroused controversy some period ago. One was to abolish the system of native representation in the Union Parliament through three elected European representatives. The other was to take away the franchise, subject to literacy and property tests, which the Coloured population had long held, replacing it with the system used to represent the natives. Both of these means of representation were protected by the 'entrenched clauses' (requiring a two-thirds majority for amendment) of the 40-year-old South African Act by which the Union was created.

At this period one Dr. Malan tabled a memorandum in the lower house declaring that the non-European franchise might be abrogated by a bare majority vote and contending that insistence on a two-thirds majority would be a denial of Parliament's sovereignty. However, no further action was taken because it was not known whether the Prime Minister, who needed the support of the small Afrikaner Party delegation in Parliament, could raise a simple majority for his proposals. Finally, at the end of the year Nicolas C. Havenga, Finance Minister and leader of the Afrikaner Party, indicated that he would not support amendment of the entrenched clauses by less than a two-thirds vote, thus in effect vetoing the changes. South Africa was again in conflict with other members of the United Nations over the treatment of its Indian minority and the disposition of South-West Africa, held since the end of World War I under a League of Nations mandate. In May an Indian resolution in the General Assembly seeking the appointment of a U.N. commission to investigate conditions of the Indian community in Natal failed to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority. Instead a resolution was passed calling upon South Africa, India, and Pakistan to confer on the problem. By the end of the year tension between India and South Africa on this issue appeared to have decreased.

The dispute over South-West Africa drew greater attention. Whereas the Smuts government had also refused to submit a trusteeship agreement for the territory to the United Nations, despite U.N. resolutions censuring this course, the land policy. G. P. Jooste, the South African delegate to the Malan government went further, stating that it would stop submitting reports to the Trusteeship Council on its administration of the former League mandate. Moreover, it passed a bill by which the territory was to receive representation in the Union Parliament. The government contended that this did not constitute absorption of the area into the Union, as charged in the United Nations. The Trusteeship Committee of the General Assembly in November heard testimony from an Anglican missionary on conditions in the territory, which he said were marked by rigid segregation and restrictive land policy. G. P. Jooste, the South Africa delegate to the U.N., contested the legality of such a hearing for a private individual and boycotted the committee's meeting. The committee approved a resolution expressing 'regret' that South Africa 'has repudiated its previous assurance' that it would submit

reports on the territory. It also passed a resolution seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the status of the territory and 'the international obligations of the Union of South Africa arising there from. Dr. Malan issued a statement accusing the United Nations of 'interference mania' and condemning the principle by which 'agitators ... by-passing a country's own legal government' could obtain entrance to its chambers. South Africa's economic difficulties during 1949 stemmed largely from the fact that the price of its principal export, gold, was fixed while the prices of its imports had been rising in response to world inflation.

A heavy South African demand for capital goods for mining and industrial development, as well as domestic inflation characterized by Mr. Havenga as public 'squander-mania,' also contributed to an adverse balance of payment. To counteract the tendency, the Finance Minister introduced an austerity budget in March, imposing a surcharge of 20 per cent on the income tax and super-tax. New import restrictions came into effect for the second half of the year; only 30 million pounds worth of imports were allowed in from the non-sterling area for the six months, and only 25 million pounds from the sterling area. It was announced that import allocations for the first half of 1950 would be increased 30 per cent. Meanwhile, South Africa made an effort to gain relief by increasing its earning and by contracting for foreign credits. In February it negotiated the sale of a limited quantity of semi-processed gold at prices above that fixed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The organisation, objected to an extension of this practice. At the September meeting of the IMF, Mr. Havenga proposed that the international organization allow its members to sell one-half their newly-mined gold on a free market. United States Secretary of the Treasury John Snyder then opposed such a move. Finally, the proposal was referred to the Fund's executive directors for further study. Negotiations for a dollar loan from the Export-Import Bank fell through in the same month when South Africa objected to putting up a gold cover. The flotation of a 10-million-pound loan on the London market in November met with indifferent success. However, the Union was able to cover some of its needs by calling for the repayment of its 80-million-pound loan to Britain extended at the end of 1947. This was repatriated before September 18 when both the British and South African pound were devalued, enabling Britain to avoid paying a premium as the result of the change in currency rates.

Currently, civil society was one of the few options for the progressive change in apartheid South Africa and a range of peace and conflict resolution organisation (PCROs) explore this option. The PCROs were staffed mainly by middle class, white, university educated, English-speaking males, exhibited significant levels of formalization and centralization, depended heavily on international funding and were often harassed by the apartheid state. PCROs were active in anti militarization activities, mediation, promotion contact between white and black communities, encouraging dialog among elites. Extensive links developed among PCROs and other antiapartheid nongovernmental organisations and the mass based resistance movements. These organisations formed a multi organisational field for peace and conflict resolutions and a non-racial and democratic South Africa established channels of communication between the apartheid state and the resistance movement.

Overview of Conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo

The conflict in the Democratic Republic Congo assumed its momentum as at August 2, 1998. That conflict, pitting the government of Congo and armed rebel groups opposed to it, sucked in neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Uganda and Angola as well as Zimbabwe and Namibia. There were outcries of invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo by neighbouring countries and rebellion by the Congolese rebel groups. Ultimately, all the parties sat together in a regional effort and considered all internal and external dimensions to the conflict.

The resultant effect was Lusaka Peace Agreement that addressed the concerns of the rebel armed groups and those of the neighbouring countries withdrawn and eventually elections were held in DRC. However, Rwanda, in particular was concerned about the DRC's continued harbouring and supporting on its territory of EX-FAR/Interahamwe who committed genocide in Rwanda in April 6, 1994. This commission to a large extent explains why they are still grappling with the conflict in the Great Lakes Region. Indeed, it is only recently that Congo decided to do what it should have done in 8th August, 1998 that we have witnessed progress on front. The DRC and Rwanda agreed and undertook joint operations against EX-FAR/Interahamwe in December 14, 2008 and March 15, 2009. The same applies to DRC and Uganda with the participation of Sudan, in the joint operations against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the DRC in December 14, 2008-March 15, 2009. The joint operations signified a new spirit of regional commitment and cooperation what is being built on. The Tripartite plus Joint Commission involving Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and DRC played a key role in building confidence and trust among these countries and paved way for those bold measures.

Overview of Conflict in Nigeria

Nigeria with over 150 million people and over 300 ethnic groups who speak up to 500 languages (NPC, 2006) are said to portray a sociable, patrilineal and polygamous characters. All these similarities and convergences notwithstanding, the whole population is divided into multiple of inter-locking cleavages around which affinities are concentrated. Some of these cleavages include ethnicity, religions, cultural and regional communities.

A general appraisal and exploration of the historical antecedents of conflict in Nigeria since the advent of independence (1960) divulges the fact that religious and communal violence have received the highest number of occurrences and attentions. Communities in Nigerian rural areas are not only traditional but, spatially discrete and socio-culturally distinct. The differences in socio-cultural distinction cum economic and political calculations are the major sources of political violence among communities. In a more plain language, stubborn issues such as disputed tenancy as in the case of Jos feud and Ife-Modakeke imbroglio is a point to note.

Scholars such as Nnoli (1978) and Obah-Akpowoghaha (2013) opine that violence in Nigeria is a product of acrimony between social and economic classes. However, there is a popular belief that; major wars and violence are product of a cycle of hegemon that are destabilized by a great power which does not support the hegemon's control. That is the insurgency Boko Haram in Nigeria can summarily within the general assumption that unexpected shift of political

power from the northern hegemony to a minority geo-political zone (South-south) is a catalyst to violence and conflict in the country. The alteration of the northern perpetual claim on political power in Nigeria as a result of the death of president Yar'adua and the emergence of president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (South –South) as the president remains a point of reference. Moreover, some have argued that; a religious or linguistic minority might suffer disproportionately in a given society especially when the legal means of attaining political power is not demonstrated by the ruling elites, and this may form grievances that can lead to unrest across the social lines. Therefore, the failure of governance is a sure catalyst for political violence and a vital explanation for the emergence of the Boko Haram in northern Nigeria and other militancy in the country. It is also useful to note that the major area of operation (North-East) has the highest percentage of people living below poverty line (72:2%) (Danjibo, 2009).

However, another dimension to violence and conflict in Nigeria is situated on the youth bulge theory by Heinsohn. Heinsohn (2006) believes that youth bulge occurs when 30 to 40 percent of the males of a nation belong to the fighting age cohorts from 15 to 30 years. Since amenities, jobs, foods, etc, grow arithmetically and while population grows geometrically, this situation tends to escalate their adolescent anger into political violence and other social vices. The high birth rate that is partly attached to the polygamous value that is obtainable within the Islamic setting which predominate the northern part from where the Boko-Haram recruit their members, is a catalyst for political violence and not principally religion in Nigeria. Consequently, we can argue that religion, economic deformity and low educational status are mere medium or horses upon which Boko Haram rides. Hence, the structural configuration of most northern part on Nigeria in terms of economic deformity, educational backwardness and inadequate social amenities as well as religious dogmatism can be better blamed on the respective leaders of Nigerian leaders.

In a nutshell, the Nigerian government has employed the formulae of the state of emergency to curb the insurgency of the conflict in Nigeria and couple with amnesty programme. This method begins during the era of Olusangun Obasanjo in view of Odi-Crises and current the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan has also adopted same mechanism to manage the situation.

Concluding Remarks

The necessity for an extreme conflict resolution need not be over emphasized. Of course Africa countries continue to spearhead peace process aimed at conflict free of existing conflicts. The conflict resolution in Democratic Republic of Congo was a good example of a regional support by the AU, UN and different facilitators. The main challenge to Africa is lack of assured means of finance these efforts; especially peace support operations need huge funding. Support from development country would play significant role. Regional effort to seek support from UN would as well facilitate development, to ensure peace prevails on Africa continent for economic growth.

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