

**REGIONAL PEACE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF COOPERATION AND  
INTEGRATION IN AFRICA**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Africa has been a hotbed of conflicts, sometimes violent, in the last two decades. Concepts like coup d'état, conflict resolution, peace-keeping operations, peace enforcement, early warning signals, conflict prevention, conflict management, human security, instability, ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group), the failed state, violent regime change, etc. are used daily in discussions among the citizenry. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was initially set up to address the economic problems of the sub-region has been preoccupied with peace-keeping operations through ECOMOG. This is because of the many violent conflicts in West Africa. ECOWAS cannot concentrate on its initial mandate of enhancing the economic prosperity of the sub-region because there is no peace. Without peace, there can be no development. Without peace, there can be no regional economic integration within the continent, Africa. NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) is the strategic policy framework and socio economic development programme of the African Union (AU). However, a large chunk of NEPAD's fund is devoted to conflict prevention, management, resolution and post-conflict peace building. To be sure, the Peace and Security Programme of NEPAD has six priority areas:

- \* Early warning and database systems
- \* Strategic analysis assessment
- \* Policy and institutional reforms,
- \* Post conflict reconstruction and development
- \* Illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons.
- \* Mobilization of funds for peace and security interventions in Africa.

The large concentration on issues of peace, security and conflict resolution in NEPAD, and by extension the AU, is as a result of the realization of the fact that without peace, all the other problems that NEPAD/AU is mandated to ameliorate cannot be effectively dealt with.

When two or more individuals, groups, nation-states, etc. interact there are bound to be differences of opinion, strong enough to warrant disagreements which could lead to conflict. As stated earlier, more than one person is needed to generate conflict. It follows therefore, that conflict itself is not "bad". What then should we be wary of? Clearly, it is the way these conflicts are resolved that determines whether the relationship remains cordial or the conflict escalates to a "mini-war". Conflicts arise "between parties" (however defined) who perceive that they possess mutually incompatible objectives. The more valuable the objectives, the more intense the conflict. The more numerous the objectives, the greater the scope. The more parties are in conflict, the larger its domain. It is important at this stage to clarify some concepts.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### ***Understanding Conflict***

There are various definitions of the universal phenomenon of conflict, which derives from the Latin word *Conflictus*. It has been defined, for instance, by Mitchell as:

*A situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other, but not both. This compact definition can be opened out and clarified by saying that there must be at least two parties; each party is mobilizing energy to obtain a goal, a desired object or situation, and each party perceives that other as a barrier to that goal<sup>1</sup>.*

(Mitchell, 1981)

It is necessary to state at the outset that conflict is a part of any human interaction. When two or more individuals, groups, nation-states, etc. interact, there are bound to be differences of opinion, strong enough to warrant disagreements which could lead to conflict. As stated in the above quotation, more than one person is needed to generate conflict. It follows therefore, that conflict itself is *not bad*. What then should we be wary of? Clearly, it is the way these conflicts are resolved that determines whether the relationship remains cordial or the conflict escalates to antagonisms, which could lead to *mini-war*.

Conflicts arise *between parties* (however defined and organized) who perceive that they possess mutually incompatible objectives. The more valuable the objectives the more intense the conflict. The more numerous objectives, the greater its scope. The more parties are in conflict, the larger its domain. Mitchell explains that there are three aspects of conflict: (a) a conflict situation, (b) conflict behaviour and (c) conflict attitudes and perceptions.

Implicit in the foregoing discourse is a contentious or controversial issue/situation between one or more individuals or groups leading to a clash, confrontation, quarrel or battle/war. Conflict can, and usually does not arise from various sources. William Zartman<sup>2</sup> provides useful insight into possible sources of (international) conflicts, which are also applicable for understanding common, day to day social and urban conflicts. Accordingly, conflict is seen as:

*An inevitable aspect of human interaction and an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions. Although conflict is inherent in decisions even when there is only one person, social conflict is necessarily brought on by the presence of several actors and compounded by several choices<sup>3</sup>.*

(Zartman, 1991)

Thus, the universal human experience of conflict is part and parcel of human nature and the environment in which people find themselves. It arises from the tugs and pulls of different identities, the differential distribution of resources and access to power, as well as competing definitions of what is right, fair and just. (Stedman, 2000)<sup>4</sup>.

Specific to, and in relation to social conflicts, Dudley Weeks sees conflicts as a relationship between parties who disagree over matters that they value. Such parties also perceive that

their power to attain that which they value is threatened by the other party's values, goals, perceptions, behaviour, and/or degree of power (Weeks, 1994)<sup>5</sup>. Clearly, every conflict situation, especially when it is of ethnic and/or religious or indigene/settler nature needs to be tactfully managed. Many of the African conflicts belong to this category – they are either ethnic, religious, over resource control, indigene/settler, etc. (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), 2003)<sup>6</sup>.

### Understanding Peace

The word “peace” is not only commonly used, but also poorly understood. This poor understanding is found among many peace and conflict practitioners. Like other concepts, peace has several perspectives and concepts, such that a clear definition could prove stubborn. A major contribution of peace and conflict research to the concept of peace is its ability to bring about an understanding of peace in two broad ways: **positive peace and negative peace**.

Negative peace has come to mean the absence of violence and war. This can be brought about through the methods of conflict resolution; good governance, communication, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, litigation, and crisis management through the coercive apparatus of the state. Negative peace is not an end in itself, but provides a transition stage to positive peace.

Positive peace on the other hand, begins with the absence of violence, but also includes concerns for social justice, autonomy, access, participation, human rights, environmental protection, gender equality and assorted forms of equity and diversity etc. As Galtung has pointed out, achieving positive peace involves removing structures that are not egalitarian, any socio-economic structures that breed discrimination and disadvantages for one group vis-à-vis others. (Galtung, 1969)<sup>7</sup>.

Peace is derived from the Latin word **pax**, a word that was commonly used by the Romans. The word **pax** was also used in the ancient contact between the Greeks and the Indians. It connotes a state of calm and tranquility in all of nature. It is from this perspective that St. Augustine defines peace as the **tranquility of order**. Order is the distribution which allots things equal or unequal, each to its own place (Augustine, 1952)<sup>8</sup>. He suggests that peace is not only the absence of hostilities, but tranquility in order. Peace could range from **absolute to relative** peace.

From our discourse above, it is clear that since the important and related issues of peace and conflict affect the whole society, it logically follows that all hands must be on deck to achieve **sustainable peace**.

### Security

The end of the cold war, perhaps, provided the greatest momentum for the expansion of the ‘democratic space’ across the globe. Many authoritarian regimes have either been drowned in the deep ocean of democracy, or swept up by the democratic tide. The expansion of the democratic space has brought with it attendant decrease in inter-state conflicts, especially as democracies do not go to war with each other. This is close to the proposition of the eighteenth – century German Philosopher, Immanuel Kant, that “democracies are more

peaceful”. Paradoxically, the international environment is becoming more peaceful, while the domestic arenas of states are increasingly becoming more anarchical and prone to uncontrolled violence, especially in emerging democracies where threats to security within the state are on the increase.

Similarly, with the end of the cold war, the concept of security has come under serious scrutiny from scholars and practitioners alike. There is a gradual conceptual expansion of *security* from the traditional military conceptualization to include *human security*. The 1994 Human Development Report, which is one of the most far reaching attempts to rethink security, defined human security as people’s *safety from chronic threats and protection from sudden hurtful disruptions in patterns of daily life*. Seven types of security were listed as components of human security: economic security; food security; health security; environmental security; personal security; community security; and political security. This conception owes much to Barry Buzan who has been preoccupied with the broadening of the concept of security.

The traditional notion of security sees threats entirely in military terms. Security was synonymous with the survival of the State and its officials. Security was therefore shrouded in secrecy and was seen as an activity belonging exclusively to experts in the *security sector*. Thus, the security sector, especially in Africa, was seen as instrument for the protection of regimes in power, whatever their idiosyncrasies. The security sector became personalized instruments of dictators who found them convenient for state abuse, violence, suppression of human rights, repression and corruption. Rather than protect the society, they were pre-occupied with protecting the oppressive regimes in power at all cost and by all means possible. Previously, in many African countries, changes in government were generally achieved by force, and those who do not accept the junta became security threats to those regimes. Opposition became treasonable. The security sector became a source of insecurity to its people. It became an important obstacle to democratization in many African states. Previous authoritarian regimes maximized the use of the security sector to scuttle attempts towards democracy in Africa.

With the tidal wave of democracy in Africa, there appears to be a unique opportunity to change this complexion of the security sector in Africa, especially through the parliamentary oversight of the security sector. What then is parliamentary oversight? Essentially, the parliament is entrusted with three overlapping responsibilities in a democracy viz., representation, legislation and the exercise of oversight over the executive. Parliamentary oversight is a process of continuous monitoring and review of the activities of the executive arm of government, especially in the exercise of its powers over the security sector, with a view to holding it accountable for its actions. Oversight powers include the threat of impeachment (or removal by votes of confidence). Committees could compel testimony and request information from security officials and review some administrative regulations. The exercise of parliamentary oversight of the security sector is dependent on some conditions, which include: clearly defined constitutional and legal powers; customary practices; resources and expertise; and, political will.

### Security Sector

What constitutes the security sector? The first is the *minimalist approach* which sees the security sector as being composed of those *statutory forces* that have traditionally had the responsibility for ensuring the *physical security of the state* – the armed forces, the police, paramilitary organizations, and, where they exist, militia organizations. The second is a *maximalist approach* that includes *all institutions (statutory or non-statutory)* that have the provision of physical security as their focus (armed forces, police, gendarmeries, border guards, militia and paramilitary institutions). Such institutions include those that contribute to the development of conditions of national security (the intelligence services); ensure a climate of peace and stability (the criminal justice system) and even, with a broadened definition of human security, those civilian government departments concerned with the provision of welfare services. Also included in this broader definition are any institution of a non-statutory nature whose security potential and political significance merit its inclusion within the definition of the security sector. For the purpose of this paper, the second, broader definition of security is adopted.

From the foregoing, we can deduce that the issues of peace, security and conflict resolution are inter-twined. How are they related? Conflict resolution is method of achieving peace, albeit an expensive route to peace. Conflict prevention is the preferred cheaper option in terms of material and human cost. The old adage that prevention is better than cure is relevant here. The minimalist definition of security which sees it in terms of only the statutory forces is not very useful here because it leaves out other germane sectors that impact on human security like the legal system, protection of the civilian population, etc. The broader definition of security can only be applied when there is *sustainable peace* in the society. The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) has been at the forefront of enthroning sustainable peace through viable conflict prevention, management and resolution strategies and direct intervention in conflict within and outside Nigeria. IPCR is conscious of the fact that sustainable peace is a sine qua non for human security in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Let us now examine the prospects for peace and human security in some countries in Africa which have been embroiled in conflict.

## **CONFLICTS IN AFRICA**

### **West Africa**

How the actors in a particular conflict situation behave to one another depends to a large extent on the scope of the conflict and the nature of the issues at stake. Let us take a few practical examples here. We start with Liberia. The conflict started as a struggle for power between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous people that eventually degenerated into an ethnic conflict between the various ethnic groups. Fourteen years on there is still conflict in Liberia. In August 2003, Charles Taylor had to leave the country for political asylum in Nigeria.

Post conflict peace building has been intensified in Liberia under the leadership of Gyude Bryant, Chairman Interim Government. The disarmament and re-integration process resumed February 30, 2004. Bryant is to hold elections October 2005 and relinquish power in 2006. He has gone to the United Nations to seek funds in aid of his programme to strengthen the peace process in Liberia. February 7, 2004 was a good day for Liberia. Gyude Bryant asked for \$488 million at the UN, but got \$520 million in pledges by over

ninety countries. Taylor's presence in Nigeria remains part of the peace plan. The funds pledged at the UN would be used for peace keeping operations, disarmament, rehabilitation of child soldiers, resettling refugees and internally displaced persons, infrastructure and preparation for elections. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of April, 2004, the Chairman of the National Interim Government of Liberia, Gyude Bryant gave a lecture at IPCR titled: From Continuous to Sustainable Peace in Liberia. The content of that lecture indicated that Liberia could well be on the road to sustainable peace. However, recent development in that country put a question mark on this line of thought.

Heavily dependent on donors for his budget, and faced with the task of rebuilding the state from scratch, Liberia's transitional government, due to give way to a new administration after the 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2005 polls, says it is struggling to find money. Meanwhile, delays in demobilizing Liberian soldiers have raised the risk that disgruntled former combatants may try to disrupt the forthcoming elections. It is hoped that these constraints would not adversely affect the elections.

Another example is the conflict in Sierra Leone. That one is rather confusing. This is because if what the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) wants is to capture power, or at least having a share of it, then their burning down Freetown, and indeed other parts of the country and maiming the people they want to rule over is sickening. In the heat of the renewed hostilities in Liberia a similar situation occurred when the LURD (Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy), virtually sacked Monrovia, pushing MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia) to a corner of the city. Their explanation could be that all is fair in war. But where does that leave the people?

The dynamics of conflicts depend upon the range of parties that involve themselves in the process. Every new participant adds or subtracts from the balance of forces, from the resources committed to the struggle and to the definition of the issues at stake. The security situation in Cote d' Ivoire is a good example of this. The Ivorian crisis resulting from the September 2002 failed coup to oust President Laurent Gbagbo still lingers on. The Lina Marcoussis and Accra II Accords have enumerated procedures for the restoration of an enduring peace in Cote d' Ivoire. However, their implementation has become problematic due to President Gbagbo's uncompromising attitude. The political atmosphere in Cote d' Ivoire is currently very tense with the rebels, especially New Forces, (FANCI), threatening to pull out of the Government of National Reconciliation over the appointment of the Security and Defence Ministers, among other things. On his own part, the President would appear to prefer a military solution rather than a political settlement. This is because he considers it humiliating for a democratically elected president to make such sweeping concessions to decedent rebels who should be treated as terrorists.

Despite these odds, the peace efforts have continued and the international community is getting more interested and involved in the search for peace in Cote d' Ivoire. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2003, a meeting was held between the Secretary –General of the MPCCI, Soro Guillaume and President Olusegun in Obasanjo in Abuja after a similar meeting with the Ghanaian President in Akosombo on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2003. Obasanjo had also received in Abuja the Cote d' Ivoire President before Soro's visit. The visit to Cote d' Ivoire on 31<sup>st</sup>

October 2003 by President Kuffour and Obasanjo would appear to have yielded some positive results. President Gbagbo is likely to take some conciliatory measures designed to bring the rebels back into government. The constant pressure being mounted on Gbagbo by President Kuffour and Obasanjo have kept the Ivorian situation under control. The road to lasting peace in Cote d' Ivoire seems to be far away. The ECOWAS summit tagged Accra III, and held between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> November 2003 addressed some thorny issues hampering the peace process.

In Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, governments have had to deal with Tuareg rebellion, even as the low intensity conflict in Senegal's insurgent Casamance region continues to defy attempts at peaceful resolution. In neighbouring Guinea-Bissau, peace is only just returning after a violent struggle for power that almost plunged the country into full scale civil war.

The reversal of the coup in Sao Tome and Principe (July 16, 2003) needs to be mentioned here. This has brought a new dimension into the whole issue of violent regime change through military coups in Africa. President Fredrique de Menezes was in Abuja to deliver a lecture at the Leon Sullivan Summit. Consider this scenario. Immediately the coup was announced while the democratically elected President, Manezes was still at the Abuja meeting, President Olusegun Obasanjo issued a strongly worded condemnation of the said coup. Other Presidents while still at the Abuja summit followed Nigeria's example. Within forty-eight hours the news filtered through that the coup had been reversed. The fresh dimension here is that African presidents at the summit made it clear that coups are no longer fashionable.

Let us say more about the coup in Sao Tome and Principe. An otherwise successful coup was reversed. How was this done?

- (a) African Union chairman, Joaquim Chissano invoked a resolution of the Union that any government that is not democratically elected will not be recognized by African countries and their leaders.
- (b) The coup was condemned by all African leaders, the UN, US etc.
- (c) Immediate steps were taken to address the root cause of the conflict which led to the coup viz., the discovery of the off shore oil. The soldiers wanted to be sure they would not be shortchanged when exploration begins.

Negotiation with the soldiers was successful because other African presidents, including the chairman of the AU were involved. The fact that the Minister for natural resources (which includes oil) was arrested and detained during the putsch gave an indication as to what the bone of contention was. The lesson here is that the coup **could** have been **unnecessary** if the early warning signal, restlessness in the military was addressed early, and with precision.

That Nigeria had a relatively peaceful election in 2003 is particularly cheering news for Africa. As the most populous country on the continent, the successful civilian – civilian transition could go a long way to encourage other countries to pursue peaceful regime succession. Let us say more about Nigeria. Since the civil war (1967-1970), Nigeria has not engaged in any war of that dimension. However, there are some conflicts in the country.

In Nigeria, there are conflicts in Aguleri-Umuleri, Ife-Modakeke, Warri/Ijaw etc. The Ife-Modakeke conflict for example, has been on since 1835. This makes it one of the oldest conflicts in the country. A long standing conflict like Ife-Modakeke has “psycho-cultural”



variables further aggravating the conflict. The real cause of conflict may have been transcended, but because much animosity and blood had attended the earlier efforts of the protagonists, being in conflict with a particular community simply becomes a fact of life that needs no explanation.

### *The Great Lakes Region*

The Great Lakes Region which comprises Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, DRC, Kenya and Tanzania has been the scene of violence and protracted conflict for over a decade. These countries became more involved in a war in the DRC in which Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi sought to remove the Late President Laurent Kabila from power.

The major effects of the conflict in the sub-region have been the destruction of the socio-political order in the region, wide spread looting of economic resources, the erosion of states' legitimacy, the weakening of international borders, empowerment of militia and private armies and the massive displacement of refugees across borders. In the DRC, the main theatre of conflict, an estimated 3.5 million people have reportedly died due to the war and war-related issues. The war has produced 500,000 refugees and 2 million IDPs.

In many of the conflict ridden areas of this region, peace has been elusive even though peace efforts have been initiated. Rwanda's democratic transition remains fragile after the 1994 genocide in which almost one million people, mostly Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed. The South African led African Union (AU) at the time made peace keeping and mediation efforts in Burundi and sought to implement the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for the country. There was also the Pretoria Protocol on Political Issues, Defense, Security and Power Sharing in Burundi of August 2000 and November 2003 respectively. However, with the continued fighting between Parti Pour La Liberation Du Peupla Hutu-forces, Nationales de Liberation (PALIPEHUTU-FNL) and the Tutsi dominated army, this peace agreement did not enjoy the consent of all parties. Below are some of the strategies adopted to entrench sustainable peace in Burundi and Rwanda.

The Arusha Accords, the power sharing arrangement agreed to in 1993 by most of the key political forces in Rwanda, were perceived as threats to the existing power bloc that the genocide was planned and executed to forestall its implementation. With that historical context and the wide spread participation in the genocide by the previous ruling class, the Rwanda government did not view negotiation as sufficient to achieve peace and reconciliation in Rwanda, particularly with elements associated with those that organized the 1994 genocide.

The National Reconciliation Commission, headed by Aloysie, Initiated consultations throughout the country on issues related to co-existence. It sought to highlight common problems and solutions and to promote a common history for Rwandans. Inyumba also tried to remove myths, and confront bigotry in all its forms. Its most innovative mandate may be to monitor all government programmes to determine how they affect peace, reconciliation and national unity.

By contrast, in Burundi, external and internal processes of negotiation are the principal means adopted to achieve conflict resolution. With former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere as convener, the Arusha Peace process got underway in mid-1998. Its objectives was to negotiate a transitional arrangement and time-table for elections. To its credit, Arusha made progress in getting various opposing groups to sit together and begin to talk about needed reforms. But many observers said that substantive negotiations took a back seat in Arusha. Procedural manoeuvring, posturing, and horse-trading over future positions were the order of the day.

Arusha process remains, however, the most significant initiative. But a number of enhancements are needed to increase its chances of success, including expanding the number of professional mediators, reducing the number of parties represented at the talks, and increasing the effectiveness of the committees. Both donors and regional governments have worked to create incentives designed to push the negotiations forward.

The most significant pressure on the Arusha peace process was the economic sanction that the region imposed on Burundi, lifted at the beginning of 1999. These sanctions were not able to reverse the coup that brought Pierre Buyoya to power, but they did increase the pressure to reach a negotiated settlement. At the local level, a handful of organizations, many of them church-based, are involved in grassroots reconciliation efforts in Rwanda and Burundi. The elite driven nature of the conflict and manipulation of ethnic differences, the context of genocide, and the hierarchical structure of these societies often inhibit meaningful discussions at the local levels on the issues.

In Rwanda, government carefully managed the post-genocidal political transition process, and despite the effort to achieve greater ethnic parity in the cabinet and among *prefects* (regional governors), the government has been seriously criticized for the narrowness of the ruling clique and its silencing of certain voices of dissent. The challenge for the government was to increase meaningful Hutu participation while maintaining security for Tutsi populations.

Rwanda tried to destroy the old elite-based political leadership structure. It also attempted to outlaw ethnically based parties. This was a prerequisite for building a new, broader and more participatory base of authority. However, this new disposition ran the risk of human rights abuses in the interim and the entrenchment of a new elite in the long run. In Burundi, institutional reforms received very little attention. In general, Hutu politicians and military leaders sought an end to Tutsi domination of the political system.

### Central Africa

Uganda and Central Africa Republic (CAR) are two countries in Central Africa which have been embroiled in crisis. The insecurity across CAR and skirmishes between government forces and the former rebels are likely to continue if the compensation issue for demobilized combatants on both sides is not resolved. The rebels and mercenaries from Chad who helped Bozize oust President Ange-Felix Pastasse in March 2003 continue to roam the countryside,

harassing civilians. The militias have refused to disarm or to surrender their weapons to Central Africa Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) peacekeeping force. An estimated 25,000 – 300,000 have become refugees and 42,000 others are internally displaced.

The conflict in Northern Uganda is often referred to as the forgotten conflict. This is because the problem has been in existence for the past eighteen years. The fighting has been sporadic and unconcerted. In Northern Uganda, eighteen years of conflict have devastated the region and displaced up to 1.6 million people. Crisis is still the order of the day. Many lives and property have been lost and the number of displaced people has tripled over the last few months as conflict between the Lords Resistance Army, (LRA) rebels and government troops continues. On April 30, 2004, eleven people were killed as rebels raided camps in Northern Uganda. Eighty percent of the displaced are women and children, many of whom had been subjected to sexual violence and other forms of exploitation. The Ugandan Army has arrested two battalion commanders following the killing of forty-two internally displaced persons in April, 2004. The forgotten war rages on with little attention from the International Community.

#### North-West Africa

Mauritania has resonated the bitter taste of Africa's political dilemma. The recent unconstitutional overthrow of President Ould Taya by the military junta led by Colonel Mohammed Vall, tells this ugly tale. Sit-tight President Taya defines African pseudo-democracy in its brazen content. Hence, his stranglehold on that country lasted for more than two decades. He came in through the same unorthodox door of coup d'etat and transmuted into a civilian dictator. The irony, however, is that we cannot rationalize the correction of evil with evil. It remains a trite norm that two wrongs can hardly make a right.

The immediate damning of the coup in Mauritania by the African Union (AU) and the international community is commendable. Coups and other unconstitutional modes of seizure of power have become a political tragedy of Africa that should not be condoned by the international community.

#### Horn of Africa

Sudan is the scene of two separate but related civil wars. The one between the north and the south has been on for half a century. The other in Darfur, Western Sudan, started in February 2003. Since April 2004, about 115,000 people have been displaced. The renewable 45 day cease-fire agreement signed April 8 between Khartoum and Darfur's two rebel groups was not going according to plan in either military or humanitarian terms. The political process, including the cease fire which was supposed to facilitate peace was still-born. In May 2004, the human rights group, Amnesty International, said that fighting was persistent in Western Sudan despite a cease-fire agreement between the government forces and rebels. The majority of the estimated 1.2 million people forced out of their homes are kept in poorly managed government controlled Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps within Darfur, where they remain vulnerable to attack by the Janjaweed militia. It appears the Janjaweed militia are sponsored by the government in Khartoum to eliminate black Sudanese from the Darfur region. It is instructive to note that the Janjaweed militia are Arabs. Approximately 200,000 of the victims who have fled across the border into Chad as refugees are not safe either. The Janjaweed have followed them, and the resulting clashes with Chad's army

threaten to destabilize Sudan and produce a full-scale war that could spill over into neighbouring countries. Refugee camps in Chad are overcrowded as influx from Darfur escalates. Tens of thousands could die from hunger and disease.

Meanwhile two powerful delegations from the United Nations and the United States visited Darfur towards the end of June 2004. the message to the Sudanese leaders was clear: stop the killing in Darfur and remain in power or ... Kofi Annan in face cap and T-shirt was in the scorching sun in Darfur to see things for himself. He has repeated his working visit to Darfur in June this year. The situation remains the same.

The death of Dr. John Garang, leader of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement Army (SPLM/A) as a result of a helicopter crash on his way back to Sudan from Uganda 21 days after he was sworn in as the Vice President of Sudan could stall the peace process already in place in Southern Sudan. Making the leader of the SPLM/A Vice President of Sudan was a compromise in the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) put in place to end the 21 year civil war between the North and the South. The conflict in Western Sudan, Darfur, continues while the peace process negotiated by the Central Government remains threaten by the death of John Garang.

#### *Southern Africa*

Since President Mugabe of Zimbabwe embarked on the redistribution of land in the country, he has been in conflict with the displaced white farmers and some Western countries. Mugabe claims that the white farmers do not own the land and that the portion of land owned by them in the country was disproportionate to that owned by blacks who he claims are the authentic owners of the land. The land has been reclaimed for the blacks, but the controversy rages on. It is not yet uhuru in Zimbabwe.

#### **THE ROLE OF IPCR**

Nigeria has set up the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), located in the Presidency to deal with the prevention, management and resolution of both internal and external conflicts. In the year 2003, IPCR published the Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) of Nigeria, the first of its kind in Africa. The publication is basically a mapping of conflict in the six geo-political zones of the country with a view to making recommendations for the prevention of such conflicts in future, the effective management of same when they do occur and viable strategies for resolution of such conflicts. I recommend such a study for other African countries.

It is important to put on record how the SCA came about. In May 2002, at the 1<sup>st</sup> Stakeholders Workshop of Peace Research and Conflict Resolution, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) was mandated to conduct a strategic conflict assessment (SCA) of Nigeria to:

- a. assess the incidence and impact of conflict in all the go-political zones of Nigeria.
- b. assess the responses to conflict by government at all levels in Nigeria, civil society and the internal community;

- c. make recommendations to governments at all levels in Nigeria, civil society and the international community on appropriate responses to conflict in Nigeria.

Between June and July of the same year, a desk-based inquiry was conducted in furtherance of the above mandate and between August and September, field inquiry was done by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development, United Kingdom's Department for International Development, World Bank and United Nations Development Programme, and representatives of civil society. The final edition of the Report of the SCA was finished early in 2003. the methodology employed in conducting the SCA was an adaptation of one used by DFID elsewhere which analyses conflict in terms of causes, actors and dynamics; responses to conflict; and, policy options and strategies at the levels of government (different tiers of government in this case), civil society, and international organizations. How the actions and refusal or inability to act of the above levels have impacted on conflict, their responses to ongoing conflict and policy options and strategies for them are essayed in the SCA Report.

1. Military rule impacted in a common manner on all the geo-political zones of Nigeria in terms of the issues and feelings of deprivation and marginalization that gave rise to the widespread and multi-faceted conflict being witnessed today;
2. This has led to a political crisis in which political actions are often dominated by self-interest and money (prebendal politics);
3. The nation's dependence on oil revenues from a relatively small part of the country has exacerbated this crisis;
4. Violent conflict represents a serious threat to democracy;
5. Until now (and the setting up of IPCR represents a paradigm shift), government's response to conflict has been limited – in practice – almost entirely to suppression by the military;
6. Civil society (with support from international donors) has been active in research in local peacemaking but lacks strategic vision and engagement;
7. The media have not yet played a constructive role;
8. Business leaders and investors, although potentially critical stakeholders, are not playing a role in conflict resolution now;
9. The result is that government and civil society work in isolation or even a spirit of mutual distrust;
10. Closer collaboration between the parties, led by government's strategic vision could unit significant forces to limit violent conflict and support the development of democracy as the best long-term protection against the spread of violence in society.

Divided into six sections, the SCA lists five structural causes of conflict as follows:

- a. Security – related manifestations of conflict which include proliferation of small arms and light weapons, corruption of law enforcement agents, and vigilante groups.

- b. Political manifestations of conflict which include territorial disputes, succession/dethronement conflicts, disputes about representation and equity in resource (including office) sharing, and electoral issues;
- c. Economic manifestations of conflict which include poverty and inequality, resource competition, unequal development and market competition;
- d. Social manifestations of conflict which include ethnic and communal conflict, religious conflicts, unemployed youth and gender issues, breakdown of social values and psycho-cultural dispositions; and,
- e. Absence of a well-ordered and structured framework for conflict anticipation and prevention.

After the production of the SCA Report, following the successful wrapping up of Phases One and Two of the SCA, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stakeholders' Workshop of Peace Research and Conflict Resolution was totally devoted to working out a Plan of Action of the Report. Six syndicates were tasked with various themes at the workshop viz: (a) Security Sector Reform; (b) Early Warning and Preventive Action; (c) Political Conflict; (d) Social and Economic Causes of Conflict; (e) The role of civil society; and (g) Mainstreaming Conflict Prevention.

As mentioned earlier, the SCA report was published in March, 2003. In order to ensure that the report does not go the way of similar reports, that is gathering dust on the book shelf, a Presidential Implantation Committee (PIC) on the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria (SCA) was inaugurated by President Olusegun Obasanjo on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2005. The Chairman of the PIC is the Vice President, Atiku Abubakar. The Secretary of the PIC is the Director General of IPCR, Dr. Sunday Ochoche. The PIC has seven Federal Ministers as members.

Since its inauguration, the PIC members have been working tirelessly to implement the recommendations in the SCA report. To actualize this aim, five sub-committees were set up viz., Security Sector Reform, Early Warning and Early Response, Political Conflict, Social and Economic Conflict and Mainstreaming Conflict Prevention. Each of these sub-committees has a Director in IPCR as Secretary. Each of the sub-committees has set up a number of Technical Committees for the actualization of the Terms of Reference. It is clear from the foregoing, that the PIC work addresses critical issues of conflict in the Nigerian environment.

So far, the Technical Committees have presented their interim reports to the sub-committees. The sub-committees have in turn presented these reports to the PIC. The PIC is at the stage of sorting out those items for immediate implementation from those that are capital intensive and need personnel and more time for implementation.

The SCA further talked about the importance of an Early Warning System which would anticipate and nip in the bud any problems that could lead to conflict. What then is an Early Warning System?

## **EARLY WARNING SYSTEM**

Early Warning Signal, EWS, a part of Early Warning System has been defined as “a warning at an early stage of an event or a set of circumstances that will avert a negative consequence”. An analogy of the daily weather report is often made with respect to EWS. Such signals are therefore expected to provide useful information about possible negative developments that require, in the case of conflict, taking necessary precautionary measures (to avert/reduce such probable harmful and negative consequences of an impending or potential conflict). For EWS to be of any meaningful value, there is the alert function. The Early Warning System is a totality which involves the Early Warning Signals, interpretation of the signals, addressing the identified problems to avert conflict etc.

My position in this paper is that many of the signs of impending conflict are usually there in many of these countries **but** there is **no early action** to avert the crisis/conflict. Why is that so? There are a number of reasons or combination of reasons viz.,

- (a) the **signs** are **not identified**
- (b) the **signs** are **identified** but **not fully interpreted**
- (c) the **signs** are **identified** and **interpreted** but there **are no trained personnel** on ground to **mediate** and avert the crisis.

Therefore, to ensure the effectiveness of the early warning mechanism in Africa, the EWS should be identified, interpreted and personnel should be trained to mediate in such “brewing crises”. It is necessary at this stage to mention the Monitoring Centres set up by ECOWAS, the most active of which is located in Banjul. Here, Early Warning Signals of conflict are identified, analysed and relevant countries contacted. Such centres should be further empowered to carry out their functions. Mediators are sometimes referred to as Democratic Intercessory Agents, DIA’s, they intercede to avert crisis. These DIA’s should be respected men and women in society e.g. religious leaders, teachers, community leaders etc who could be trained for such purposes. We therefore need to identify some of these EWS and their root causes. Every EWS has a root cause. If any EWS is not addressed, there could be conflict. Although early warning signals are important, the root causes need far greater attention.

## **CAUSES OF CONFLICT**

There are many causes of conflict viz., bad politics and governance, social/cultural intolerance, poverty of political economy, weak security apparatus, media abuse, judicial and human rights abuses, foreign presence etc. If these causes of conflict could be consciously avoided in African countries, the desirable goal of sustainable peace and durable human security is achievable. The list of the causes of conflict enumerated below is not exhaustive but we need to examine each of them more closely.

### **Bad Politics and Governance**

The Early Warning Signals of this are war-like politics, divide and rule politics, political apathy, political assassination, intolerance of opposition, objections to draft/approved constitution, demonstration and pressure for change of government, election gerrymandering, misuse of state power by the ruling party and violent provocative utterances.

### **Social/Cultural Intolerance**

The Early Warning Signals are extreme form of ethnic intolerance (ethnocentrism), religious intolerance, stereotypes, institutionalized corruption, lack of or withdrawal of subsidies on social services, migration of refugees, grievances and protests against the lack of essential items, rising crime rate and discrimination against women in politics and development.

### **Poverty of Political Economy**

The Early Warning Signals are protest against IMF loan and foreign macro-economic policies, protest against land reforms, excessive state control of the economy and declining quality of life index. Other indicators are organised youth movements against unemployment, threats by organised trade union movements, multi-digit inflation, protest against marginalisation, exclusion and neglect and protest against resource control formula.

### **Weak Security Apparatus**

The Early Warning Signals are insecurity, high influx of small and light weapons, emergence of government sponsored militias, emergence of civil defence forces and vigilante groups. Other indicators are emergence of private security outfits, militarisation of children, high spending on gun over bread, lack of appropriate punishment to perpetrators of violence and porous security borders.

### **Media Abuse**

The Early Warning Signals are monopoly of the media by the ruling party, exaggeration of issues, ethnic hatred, poor response to media alert, detention of journalists and closure of private media houses.

### **Judicial and Human Rights Abuses**

The Early Warning Signals are, disregard of court orders by government/groups/individuals, imposition of draft constitution, execution of people without trial, disenfranchisement of citizens in elections and denial of right to meetings and assemblies. Other indicators are lack of freedom of expression, discrimination and segregation of all types, lack of press freedom, inadequate legal framework for fair treatment of refugees, militarisation of minors (children), war crimes and acts of genocide.

### **Foreign Presence**

The Early Warning Signals are foreign military gifts, foreign military assistance, foreign arms sales, humanitarian intervention, military support for authoritarian regimes, military support of rebel forces and foreign imposition of unpopular macro-economic policies.

What then happens when there are conflicts? In other words, what are the effects of conflict?

### **EFFECTS OF CONFLICT**

It is clear from the foregoing that prevention is better than cure. By extension it is better to prevent conflict from escalating to war through proper mediation and arbitration. The cost of war in human and material terms is enormous and sometimes unpredictable. Conflict has made Africa highly volatile and unstable with the attendant effect of grinding poverty among the people, alienation of the citizenry, destruction of existing infrastructure etc.



Conflict deters progress. Development can occur only when there is peace. Conflict encourages the planning of military coups. Youth unemployment is rampant in many countries in the sub-region. There is declining quality of life index. There are also threats by organised trade unions. There is high spending on gun over butter. There are porous security borders and rising crime rate.

All these are antithetical to the development goals of any society. The lack of peace makes human security an uphill task. What then is to be done to mitigate the effects of conflicts? How can we effectively prevent/anticipate such conflicts in order to ensure sustainable regional peace and human security?

### **WHAT IS TO BE DONE AND SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In order to effectively address issues in Regional Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution in Africa, we need to note the following:

1. Studies like the Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) of Nigeria, published by IPCR is recommended for other African countries with the view to identifying the root causes, actors, variables, intervening variables etc. responsible for these conflicts. IPCR could make her expertise available to such countries.
2. The concept of human security is beyond the military perception of same. Therefore sustainable peace is a sine qua non for the actualization of effective human security in every country.
3. Early Warning Signals of conflict should be identified, analyzed and such information used for proper selection of mediators to nip the brewing conflict in the bud. Such mediators should be trained.
4. In cases of conflicts that have already escalated to war, proper modalities for deployment of troops for peace-keeping by the countries of the sub-region should be put in place. The ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution should be utilised in practical situations. Each country should have its own strategy for constructive engagement in peace-keeping operations, PKOs.
5. Women who bear the brunt of many of these wars should be mainstreamed into the peace process in its entirety.
6. As much as possible, small arms and light weapons should be mopped up in the region. Special attention to be paid to post-conflict zones. The ECOWAS Moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) should be studied and implemented in relevant situations.
7. Democratic ideals should be seriously pursued in these countries. Some hide under “home grown” democracy to engage in all sorts of atrocities. Democracy has a number of signposts viz., periodic free and fair elections, checks and balances between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, supremacy of the rule of law, etc.
8. It should be made abundantly clear that coups d’etat are no longer fashionable. We need more of the decisive reaction of all African Heads of State, the United Nations and the United States to the coup in Sao Tome and Principe. This contributed immensely to the “reversal” of the coup and the incumbent democratically elected President’s triumphant return home. The leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo

- role in that scenario was the catalyst needed to emphasize the fact that coup plotters would no longer be treated as heroes.
9. The relatively successful civilian-civilian (democratic) transition in Nigeria in 2003 is a good omen for the region. If the most populous nation can do it successfully, then others can.
  10. In post conflict situations, child soldiers should be properly re-oriented and eventually rehabilitated so that they can be useful citizens.
  11. The phenomenon of the “failed State”, a situation where human security (HS) cannot be guaranteed should be avoided. Human security encompasses food security (FS), Security of Life and Property (SLP) etc.
  12. The weak “state theory”. Many of the West African states can be said to be weak. There are three major characteristics of such states which are present in those that have experienced conflict viz.,
    - (a) Low level of “vertical hegemony” – substantial portions of the society fail to display any loyalty to their rulers.
    - (b) Personalisation of the State – such states are characterized by patrimony and personality politics in which the political elite manipulate state structures.
    - (c) Absence of “horizontal hegemony” or a feeling of community and a common conception of the state. Instead the community is fragmented into numerous groups.

Although there are conflicts in many parts of Africa, the preceding discourse shows that West Africa is the *hottest bed* of conflict in Africa, with so many countries enmeshed in intra-state conflict. The leadership role of Nigeria in ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group), the restoration of peace to Sao Tome and Principe, the good example shown by Nigeria during the 2003 peaceful elections etc. are commendable. Nigeria is currently working on the Policy on Internally Displaced Persons. This could be Nigeria’s contribution to the principles that guide the resettlement and rehabilitation of persons made homeless as a result of conflict. Nigeria should continue to play this leadership role. The appeal in this paper is that African leaders should have the political will to *prevent conflicts* in their various countries by employing the strategies enumerated in this paper because as I said earlier, *prevention is better than cure*. We cannot begin to talk about cooperation and integration in Africa without ensuring sustainable peace on the continent.

## END NOTES

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