

# **Peace, Conflict and Security in Africa: Employing an African Solution to African Problems**

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## **Abstract**

The greatest challenge that faces the human race today is to live in a peaceful world; a world devoid of endless conflicts and a world that is secure to all. People are either worried of neighbours who rise against neighbours or are worried of being attacked by criminal gangs. The African continent has for many years fallen victim of a variety of conflicts. Decades ago, conflict was mainly among nations, but as the number of inter state conflicts decreased, there has been an upsurge of inter-society conflicts such as ethnic cleansing, politically related violence, cattle rustling, pastoralists fighting for resources, just to mention but a few. The prevalence of armed violence in Africa has often been blamed on injustice, unequal distribution of resources, poverty, lack of cultural integration, marginalization, external support from the West - especially in the supply of ammunition, among other factors. It is amazing how modern day conflict involves sophisticated ammunitions that are not manufactured in Africa. A lot of information has been written and spoken about mutual co-existence but it seems that the more we talk about peace, the more things remain the same. Many peace actors have proposed the so called "African solutions to African problems" as opposed to "Western solutions to African problems" but conflict still persists. This paper will discuss the importance of peace especially in regard to the socio-economic development of the African people and the African continent. It looks as peace as not just the mere absence of conflicts but rather the presence of firm structures that ensure the cementing of proper, realistic and genuine relationships and interactions that ultimately leads to comprehensive peace-building process. It will also look at the trigger factors and prescribe the way forward to amicable resolutions of conflict; and how the African continent can be secure to all without relying on idealistic prescriptions from the West - who are largely perceived as part of the problems than the solutions. As a way of employing an African solution to African problems, this paper suggests factors such as diplomatically engaging the conflicting parties, deep analysis of the exacerbating factors, focusing more on preventive measures rather than curative ones, and the media reportage of the conflict.

**Key words:** ammunitions, conflict, ethnicity, media, Peace building, violence

## **Introduction**

The greatest challenge that still faces the human race today is to live in a peaceful world; a world devoid of endless conflicts and a world that is secure to all. People are either worried of neighbours who rise against neighbours or are worried of being attacked by criminal gangs. Conflicts and insecurity have been on the rise.

The African continent has for many years fallen victim of a variety of conflicts. Decades ago, conflict was mainly among nations (such as Uganda-Congo, Rwanda-Burundi, Somalia-Ethiopia, Angola-Mozambique, among others) but as the number of conflicts between states decreased in the 90s, there has been an upsurge of society conflicts such as ethnic cleansing, politically related violence, cattle rustling, pastoralists fighting for resources, just to mention but a few. The prevalence of armed violence in Africa has often been blamed on injustice, unequal distribution of resources, poverty, lack of cultural integration (read intolerance or inability of African societies to adapt to the context of globalization), and external support from the West - especially in the supply of ammunition. It is amazing how modern day conflict involves sophisticated ammunitions that are not manufactured in Africa.

Sadly, a lot of information has been written and spoken about mutual co-existence but it seems the more we talk about peace, the more things remain the same. Many peace actors (Goldmann, 2005; Okumu & Jaye, 2010; Mburu,

2003; Ayittey, 1994) have proposed the so called “African solutions to African problems” as opposed to “Western solutions to African problems”

This paper discusses the importance of peace especially in regard to the socio-economic development of the African people and the African continent. Like other authors such as Pixler (2009) it looks at peace as not just the mere absence of conflicts but rather the presence of firm structures that ensure the cementing of proper, realistic and genuine relationships and interactions that ultimately leads to comprehensive peace-building process.

This paper looks at factors that trigger conflict and prescribes the way forward to amicable resolutions of conflict; and how the African continent can be secure to all without relying on idealistic prescriptions from the West – who are largely perceived as part of the problems than the solutions (Gounden, Pillay & Mbugua, 2003).

As long as poverty and marginalization exists, the twin problems of lack of peace and insecurity will prevail. Rice (2007) argues that among the most significant consequences of country-level poverty is heightened risk of conflict. Thus, as a way of employing an African solution to African problems, the paper suggests factors such as diplomatically engaging the conflicting parties, deep analysis of the exacerbating factors, focusing more on preventive measures rather than curative ones (such as military disarmament) i.e. being more pro-active than reactive, discarding retrogressive cultural practices that promote violence, curtailing corruption in government, formation of all-inclusive government and ensuring equitable distribution of resources and sensitizing the people on the importance of sharing the little that they have.

Finally, the paper examines the role of the media (both local and international) in reducing or escalating conflict. Do the media reports about conflicts help to resolve the issues or only accelerate them? How should the media treat issues regarding conflict and insecurity?

## **Background**

For many decades, the African continent has been home to numerous forms of conflicts that are fuelled by various factors that include disagreement over borderlines, unequal distribution of resources, scramble over meager resources, lack of cultural integration, marginalization, ethnicity, historical migration patterns and settlement, land tenure systems, poor conflict resolution strategies among other related variables which affect stability and sustainable development (Adan & Pkalya, 2006; Katelo, 2010; Okumu, 2013).

Several debates have emerged, with some arguing that much of the global conflict can be attributed to the existence of an oppressive social system of power that reinforces differences between groups and allows one group to have power or privilege over another group. Once a particular group feels marginalized or not involved in a decision making process, peace is threatened.

Conflicts in Africa dates back to pre-colonial days when several communities fought for control of certain territories either for settlement purposes or acquisition of natural resources that was beneficial for human existence and trade. Pastoral communities fought to capture huge chunks of land (read pasture) and water for their animals; whereas agriculturally oriented ones wanted to acquire more land for cultivation. Furthermore, most clashes were meant to create a semblance of ‘ethnic sovereignty and independence’ where communities may have thought that failure to guard their space would lead to being probably overpowered, assimilated and governed by other communities. This view is summed up by Besley and Reynal-Querol (2012), who say: “Prior to the scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century culminating in the Berlin conference of 1884, Africa was characterized by a patch work of heterogeneous political systems. Some of these were organized authority structures of long-standing including a number of historic kingdoms. Other areas were governed in a relatively stateless fashion. Just as in Medieval Europe, the conflicts were a reflection of the process of indigenous state building.”

## **Methods and Materials**

A critical review of relevant ideas and information relating to the topic was conducted. It expresses the authors view point in relation to what other scholars and authors have said. It involved scanning literature efficiently to become well informed on the topic and questioning the information in the text and presenting it from a variety of perspectives. The review involved analyzing the content and their interations.

## **Types of Conflicts**

Africa's postcolonial wars are mainly intra-state and inter-state. In this paper focus is on five types of intra-state wars as explained by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (Zeleza, 2007). They include secessionist wars, wars of devolution, wars of regime change, wars of social banditry, and armed inter-communal clashes.

Secessionist wars are fought by groups that seek to secede from a given state and establish their own independent state. The most famous example is the Igbo-dominated provinces in south-eastern Nigeria that proclaimed an independent republic of Biafra, which triggered the civil war that cost Nigeria dearly in terms of the numbers of people who died - up to a million - not to mention the destruction of material resources.

Devolution wars are spawned by attempts by marginalized ethnic, religious and regional groups to renegotiate the terms of incorporation into the state and the national political space and their objective is decentralization rather than outright secession. This is simply a war where people fight for their rights.

Zeleza (2007) further explains that wars of regime change are those often engineered by self-described revolutionary movements that seek to overthrow the existing government and establish a new socio-economic dispensation, including conditions and content of citizenship. He gives an example of the National Resistance Movement - Army (NRM-A) of Yoweri Museveni, which captured power in Uganda in 1986, after a protracted battle with government forces allied to the late Idd Amin. Wars of social banditry include widespread acts of violence that are socially organized against the state and other social institutions, with the objective not of capturing state power as such but of creating chaotic conditions that are conducive to predatory accumulation. Examples include rebel activities of Kony in Uganda, Al-Shabab in Somalia, Boko-Haram in Nigeria, Shifta war in Kenya in the late 80s and early 90s, among others.

For their part, armed inter-communal insurrections are often episodic eruptions of violence, sparked by specific incidents that stoke long simmering antagonisms, anxieties and aggressions. They can lead to great loss of life and if unchecked can mutate into prolonged warfare between ethnic communities. Examples include the Rwanda genocide (where Hutus and Tutsi rose against each other), Kenyan post-election crisis in 2008, the Tana River crisis in Kenya, among others.

After independence, many African nations degenerated into civil wars that pitted communities against communities and religions (Ayittey, 1994). The mostly documented clashes include Rwanda genocide that pitted Hutus and Tutsi communities, Angola civil war, Sudan inter-faith war that lasted over 20 years and killed over 2 million people (arguably the most devastating in Africa), Uganda civil war (during Idd Amin regime), Somalia clan conflicts and the Ogaden war that have hardly been solved for decades.

We have witnessed other wars in Burundi, Chad, Congo, Ivory-Coast, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali (Tuareg rebellion) Mozambique, Namibia (Herero genocide) Sierra-Leone, Kenya's inter-tribal clashes and the 2007/2008 post-election violence, South Africa's xenophobia, just to name a few. These examples depict Africa as a continent riddled with all manner of clashes; literally a continent that has hardly witnessed real peace and security.

Inter-state conflicts witnessed in the past decade include Ethiopia-Eritrea border tussles, Uganda-Congo mineral oriented clashes, Rwanda-Burundi tensions, Sudan-Chad clashes, Mauritania-Senegal border wars, and Chad-Libya conflict.

### **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms**

As Paul Tiyambe Zeleza explains, there can be no singular explanation for or solution to Africa's conflicts (Zeleza, 2007). At best, one can only say that these conflicts are rooted in the complex constructions and conjunctures of Africa's political economies, social identities, and cultural ecologies as configured out of specific local, national, and regional historical experiences.

In order to get proper solutions to specific problems, the peace actors must first strive to understand the above mentioned complexities. It must be understood that not all prescriptions may apply to all forms of conflicts. Various conflict resolution strategies have been attempted to restore calm in Africa, but none of them seems sustainable in creating an atmosphere for peace, security and inter-ethnic as well as intra-ethnic co-existence in Africa. Sometimes it seems the more people talk about peace, the more things remain the same. Even as the inter-state conflicts subside, there are no signs that suggest robust integration among nations. An un-easy calm exists.

The West, specifically, appears to have responded with what looks like a genuine humanitarian intervention attempt. Yet, when looked at a bit more deeply, there are many murky — often contradictory — issues coming to the fore that complicate the picture. Unfortunately, the African governments have been quick to adopt these forms of conflict resolutions that often do not give desired results. It has been observed that most peace actors prescribe their so-called 'elitist resolutions' that are normally drafted in hotels while they endeavour to do little to understand the real cause of tensions. Most of the prescriptions given on creating peaceful co-existence are based on external assumptions.

These include forceful disarmament by use of military, peace keeping missions in troubled areas, threats to conflicting parties, prosecution of perpetrators of conflict, sanctions, espionage, among other things. These methods have been employed in many instances to resolve conflicts, but all in vain because they do not address the causes of conflicts and often do not bring the warring parties into an amicable resolution of conflict. In such cases peace is forced on to the people, instead of creating an environment where people embrace peace themselves.

### **Diplomatic Approach**

The human nature has tendencies of rebelling against forceful systems. It has been observed that the more force one applies the more rebellion they create. Nations have created rebellious groups because of attempting to use force in solving conflicts. Hunting down dissenting parties with heavy ammunition instead of listening to their grievances has often been counter-active.

For example, the devastating inter-faith war in Sudan (that led to eventual split of the nation) started after the government used force to subdue what was considered as a 'small group' of Christians who were protesting against having the Sharia (Muslim) Laws imposed on them. The 'small group' later armed itself and soon the country was on fire. This counter-active method eventually led to over 2 million deaths. Western oriented interventions such as deploying peace

keeping troupes, imposing sanctions or warrant of arrests on personalities, and many more, could not help the situation.

Secondly, in 1984 the Kenyan government deployed the military to use force in disarming the Pokot and Turkana communities who were believed to own illegal guns that were regularly used in cattle raids (Okumu, 2013). In the process, hundreds of people were victimized, others were killed, animals were confiscated, people were beaten to confess gun ownership, but the method did not yield much; if anything, it led the targeted pastoralists into rebellion and

eventual acquisition of more guns. As the army departed, the cattle raids intensified. The desired results were not achieved.

Thus, imagine in the above two examples, what would have happened if the Sudanese government came down and engaged Christians in open and diplomatic dialogue on Sharia Laws? What if the Sudanese government listened to the Christians' grievances? Could we have seen 2 million deaths? How would the peace situation be in West-Pokot today if the government agitated for voluntary disarmament and engagement of the local residents in dialogue?

Through dialogue one is able to understand the real cause of the conflict and be in a position to not only heal the situation but also prevent any similar occurrence in future. The African solution entails involving elders, sitting at a round table, talking with each other (not to each other) and genuinely voicing one's concerns.

In the end, as it is done in pastoral communities in Kenya, the warring parties share a meal – a sign of friendship. Furthermore, it is a taboo amongst the pastoralist to attack someone you shared a meal with. This eradicates conflict.

### **Inclusiveness**

As earlier mentioned, peace is threatened in a society when particular group of people feel marginalized and excluded from decision making process and sharing of the national cake. Thus, it is possible to solve conflicts in Africa by enabling each and every defined group to be part and parcel of the society.

According to Galtung and Jacobsen (2000), a country cannot develop until all sectors of its society (including minority groups) are involved in the decision making bodies and get equal opportunities in all of the spheres of society as economic growth cannot be achieved without peace and security and vice-versa. Women's equality, in addition to being relevant for economic growth, is also crucial for peace and security building.

### **Peace Races and Meetings**

Sport has been a unifying factor amongst peoples of different races, culture, ethnicity and socioeconomic status and therefore has been very instrumental in cultivating peace in conflict regions if well utilized (Mganda, 2013). In her quest for peace in West-Pokot, former international athlete Tegla Loroupe has deliberately used diplomatic means in resolving the twin problem of cattle raids and ethnic clashes. Through her foundation – Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation

– she uses sports as a way of creating a forum for warring communities to engage in dialogue (Kochomay, 2007).

Her philosophy is "If you intent to move a mountain, you must start by carrying away small stones." Through sports and local peace meetings, she slowly and patiently carries away small stones by engaging people in constructive dialogue; and eventually succeeded in moving the mountain that is violent conflicts.

Her foundation reaches out to the pastoralists through sports. She organizes an annual peace race where pastoralists come together to compete in various track events. This enables them to understand and appreciate each other. They run together, eat together, mix freely and get to socialize (Kochomay, 2007).

Since its inception, the Foundation has successfully conducted over 22 peace races that have brought together thousands of pastoralists from Pokot, Turkana and Samburu (from Kenya), Karamojong and Sabiny (from Uganda), Toposa (Southern Sudan) and Merrille from Ethiopia, among other warring communities, to foster peaceful co-existence and explore alternative forms of livelihood. The races were mainly held in Kapenguria, Moroto (Uganda), Turkwel (along the Turkana-Pokot border) Maralal and even extended all the way to Tana River in Coastal Kenya.

This race is about running, certainly, but not running for money. It is not a race for the elite; it's a race for the local communities to compete with each other, show-case their talents, have fun and bond. The race is about the quest for peace. It seeks to create the gradual appreciation of each

other and the knowledge of negative effects of violence in the society. At the end, armed warriors often surrender their illegally arms and pledge to live in peace with each other.

Giving an example of Ethiopia, Galtung and Jacobsen (2000) explain that opportunities for intervention to improve human security of the pastoral communities include communities meetings to enhance community participation. For example, in July 2006, there was a very important regional pastoralists gathering which was held in Ethiopia's Borena Zone. Three hundred (300) pastoralists from 18 different groups met in the regional pastoralgathering (RPG) for a week of discussion on issues related to pastoralists' livelihoods. Participants discussed four major issues: the need to eliminate conflict; to increase the productivity of pastoralists; to increase pastoralist access to the market; and to develop governance structures to support pastoralism. Important peace talks were also held between several pastoralists including those in the Guji and Borena zones of Ethiopia.

The participants agreed that in spite of such obstacles as impediments to cross-boarder trade and prevalence of conflict in the Horn of Africa region, pastoralism remains a viable livelihood capable of making a significant contribution to the national economy.

### **Sensitization**

The pastoralists depend almost entirely on livestock for livelihood. However, when water and pasture resources diminish, the animals eventually die. As a result, the herdsmen end up raiding their neighbours as a restocking strategy. Peace actors observe that this is the reason why many cases of cattle theft occur during the dry season. Retaliations by the attacked communities to defend or recover their stolen animals often lead to further deadly clashes, and the circle of violence goes on and on.

Although several people have come up with various factors which they consider to be the main causes of cattle rustling among the pastoralists, poverty and the livestock monoculture are the key factors that influence cattle rustling. Many pastoralists often believe that without a cow they are as good as dead. They believe in nothing other than cattle rearing. Essentially, it is the number of animals that matters but not the economic value. Such people will do anything to acquire as many animals as possible, including stealing and killing.

Furthermore, the easy availability of the gun makes everything worse. It is not easy for un-armed people to go for raids, but an armed raider is a bold raider. Thus, without a gun, incidents of cattle rustling would be very minimal. That's why sensitization and advocating for peaceful disarmament is the best way to go. The day the pastoralist region will be free of illegal guns, the threat of cattle rustling will become history.

Basically, the advent of armed cattle rustling is the most unfortunate thing that has ever happened to pastoralists. However, through sensitization, positive results have been witnessed after it emerged that the levels of interaction between the warring communities has drastically improved. People who never talked to each other before - and only met at battlefields - are currently doing business with each other.

Furthermore, numerous weapons have been surrendered and cattle raiding activities have reduced drastically. Notorious crooks that were once a thorn in the flesh of the police and local residents have surrendered their guns and are now clean citizens conducting honest business

### **Rehabilitation program**

Most cattle rustlers often leave home and hide in the bush as they carry out such heinous crimes. Thus, it is important to rehabilitate them fully into the society and prevent them from degenerating back into lawlessness.

Tegla Loroupe Foundation has a warrior rehabilitation program aimed at according reformed people a soft landing (Mganda, 2013). Some people could have stayed in the bush for over 10 years. All they know is life with a gun. But after they surrender their illegal weapons, they are initiated back into the society by boosting them to begin small income generating activities. This could be through getting them engaged in modern livestock keeping projects or engaging them in sports, music, among other talents. For instance, one of the reformed warriors discovered that he had a talent of singing. He was helped to record several songs. He now earns a living from music. Others have gone back to school, some into farming, transport business and even sports. These reformed men and women are later engaged in advocating for peace where they give personal testimonies on the importance of living in peace and therefore motivating others.

### **Truth and Reconciliation**

Truth and Reconciliation is based on the concept that let the truth be told, let people own up, let them take responsibility and above all, let them forgive each other and forget. This is in tandem with African traditions where people owned up to wrong-doing and essentially were forgiven and the society was united again. This is contra to modern courts where owning up to having committed an offence leads to sentence.

According to Ogot (2008), several countries have had their truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Chile, Salvador, Argentina, and above all South Africa. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up in 1993, and which reported in 1998, has been the most ambitious and far-reaching of the attempts at catharsis and justice, in all these processes.

The essential problem, however, is how to balance peace and justice, forgetting and forgiving, healing and punishment, truth and reconciliation. Truth and reconciliation are mere words: to have reality they have to become deeds and these deeds must be undertaken by individuals scarred by the past and corroded by mistrust; individuals above all, who refuse to live with silence, with lies, with equivocations and excuses. Truth and Reconciliation is not an individual process: The country must first of all accept that such a process is necessary if the country is to have any kind of future at all.

There are those people who would argue that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a waste of time and money, especially if it is to be accompanied by amnesty, as was the case in South Africa. However, such commissions usually lead to one important result: they narrow the range of impermissible lies that one can tell in public. In Argentina, for example, the truth Commission revealed that the regime had taken drugged prisoners and thrown them out of helicopters to drown in the sea. In Czechoslovakia, it discovered that large numbers of eminent Czech citizens had betrayed their neighbours, spouses, and children, to the secret Police.

Perhaps the answer lies in revisiting the past. There is an urgency to talk about the past among many of those who have suffered gross violations of human rights. The success of Spielberg's world-wide drive to have the survivors of the Holocaust tell their stories is a living example of the truth of this statement (Levin, 2006). But if urgency to recount the past exists, so too, does it's opposite. Some victims and survivors have ambivalence in the way they approach the past: a strong pull towards forgetting, or rather a denial of memory co-existing with a need to recall the details of the trauma.

## **Conclusion**

The greatest challenge that the human race faces presently still remains to live in a world free of the threats of violent conflicts. In the African society, violence exists literally everywhere: in homes, schools, public places and the communities. Relationships between people are often strained; they are ready to fight at the slightest provocation. Thus, it is paramount that the society fully engages in peace-building efforts to sensitize the people on the importance of living in peace with each other.

Many problems facing Africans today result from lack of peace and insecurity; while the rest is caused by ignorance. We have largely remained underdeveloped because of the unnecessary burdens of the many senseless wars that we fight. We spent a lot of time and resources running around with guns aimed at our fellow brothers and sisters.

It is unfortunate that Africans have not even utilized one-third of their potential because they have engrossed themselves so much in violent conflict, something that has not given them time to nurture their talents, exercise creativity, explore various forms of development and be able to make a difference in their lives and the society.

If we can stop armed conflicts in Africa, this continent will not have people begging for food, people living in refugee camps and slums, people with virtually no sources of income, destitute children, among other forms of suffering. Violence makes people live in fear, and they won't engage in any meaningful development.

There is need to start at the grassroots level and preach peace all the way to the top so that people can embrace each other (and forget about violence) despite the magnitude of provocation. We need to tell people that violence is not a solution to any problem they face.

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