RETHINKING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN NIGERIA:
A RETROSPECTIVE TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Abstract

The paper emphasized on rethinking peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. As long as individual or group of individuals failed to recognize and identify their variations, colours, nations and tribes, peaceful co-existence will no longer exist among them, and this will lead to series of violence and conflicts. In this regards peace should be adored rather than violence, compromise rather than confrontation. In line with this, the principle of reconciliation should be given attention to address the gabs caused by lack of mutual understanding. Consequent upon this, this paper spelt out retrospective strategies to conflict resolution, reconciliation, patience and forgiveness will serve as tools for negotiation to reach an equitable settlement and to restore peace and security for their wellbeing. Finally, the paper recommends that, operating good governance that will provide leadership structures which is responsive, responsible, accountable and transparent should be observed which is in conformity with fundamental benefit of Human Right in Nigeria.

Keywords: Peaceful co-existence, conflict, resolution, rethinking

INTRODUCTION

The politics occupied the mind of the fellow men which created full confusion, domination, terror, division, and conflicts in Nigeria and the world at large. In fact, it is hardly to pass a day without conflict here and there, if conflict occurred people engage and struggle to come to the terms of reconciliation, hoping to have a peace in their future. The issue of conflict if it is not deal with and addressed, it will, alter and change the whole situations of citizens, instead of them to lives in peace and unity, they end up to lives in an unpleasant and disunity situation, violence or war, and this is where religion plays its role to help in putting the parties involved to negotiate and enter into reconciliatory terms to resolve their differences and to achieve in setting peace. People should bear in mind that, Allah made human beings into different sex, nation, tribes, and groups for a purpose. Therefore, it is usual as long as people lives together, they might have their individual or collective interest, opinion to defend, Cohen argued that” there is no society which does not have a conflict” (Jolayemi, 2005).

One may think that the biggest obstacle to African development is poverty, but like Osaghae (2002) argued, “the strategic danger to Africa’s expected rebirth is the disintegration of Nigeria, the largest
political concentration of African people in our continent,” with a population of 150 million people, any major conflict is a disaster to the continent.

The approaches to meeting challenge of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria are most promising and important, if all the stakeholders can embrace peace by looking at the issues that are militating against Nigeria’s coexistence. The first step to peace process would be a good democratic system that would attain the goals of peace and security focused on the citizens. Building reliable democratic process to accommodate all political affiliations would be a welcome development for Nigeria because of the diverse ethnic, religious and multicultural interests. For such process to be acceptable and for the people to have confidence in the political system, the system must give room for elections to be transparent, open, fair play, encourage equal participation, and accountability to the citizens. Participation by women should be encouraged, avenue should be created to allow women more access to positions and political power at all levels of government, this will ensure gender balance and equal participation, because they are wife’s, mothers and their vital contribution to the family income and national development have roles to play in peace building, leadership should not be an all men affair. Leadership comes with accountability; the greatest national challenge facing this Heart of Africa and the most populous black nation on earth is leadership. Nigeria lacks quality leadership that is yet to transform economic wealth and distribution of state resources meaningfully into the lives of the governed. Until leadership is accepted as service to the nation and mankind and not the opportunity for personal wealth or enrichment, until Nigeria experience leadership that makes citizenry central to development and first in the affairs of the nation state, Nigeria shall remain in the same spot while the people live in penury for many generations to come. It is pertinent to note that a nation is respected when it is built on the rule of law and order. In a country where power means everything in the public arena and there are unconstitutional checks of balance of power between the Executives, the Legislatives, and the Judiciary, the rule of law will be undermined and the confidence in both the constitution and the judiciary that is the last hope of the common man will be eroded (Stedman, 1991).

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**Peace**

Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups. Throughout history leaders have used peace-making and diplomacy to establish a certain type of behavioral restraint that has resulted in the establishment of regional peace or economic growth through various forms of agreements or peace treaties. Such behavioral restraint has often resulted in the reduction of conflicts, greater economic interactivity, and consequently substantial prosperity (Galtung, 1996)

**Peaceful Co-existence**

This is a type of relation between states with different social systems. The underlying benefits of peaceful coexistence include the renunciation of war and the adoption of negotiations as a means of resolving disputes between states; equal rights, mutual understanding, and trust between states, as well as consideration of each other’s interests; non-interference in the internal affairs of another state; and recognition of each people’s right to choose freely its own socioeconomic and political system (Mayer, 2012).

Peaceful coexistence is a specific form of class struggle between socialism and capitalism in the nation arena. The struggle is waged between two ruling classes, each of which possesses full state power. The basically antagonistic conflict between the two opposing socioeconomic systems is transferred from the level of military clashes to that of economic competition, comparison of political systems and ways of life, and ideological struggle. The organic relationship and unity of struggle and cooperation are characteristic of peaceful coexistence and are both the source of its internal contradictoriness and a continual stimulus for seeking mutually acceptable solutions that preclude military conflict (Otite, 1999).
Conflict
Conflicts brings to the mind image such as antagonism, struggles between parties, opposition processes and threats to cooperation but not all conflicts come in these forms especially in the construction industry, they come in form of need to be met or desires to be satisfied, disagreements to be settled and ideas to be shared that eventually leads to change of attitude feelings and perception (Mba, 2013).

Conflict Resolution
Conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. Committed group members attempt to resolve group conflicts by actively communicating information about their conflicting motives or ideologies to the rest of group (e.g., intentions; reasons for holding certain beliefs) and by engaging in collective negotiation (Forsyth, 2009) Dimensions of resolution typically parallel the dimensions of conflict in the way the conflict is processed. Behavioral resolution is reflective of how the disputants act, their behaviour (Mayer, 2012) Ultimately a wide range of methods and procedures for addressing conflict exist, including negotiation, mediation, mediation-arbitration, (Methods, conflict resolution, 2016) diplomacy, and creative peace-building.

Theoretical Framework
The centre for world religious, diplomacy and conflict resolution offers a new approach to reducing global violence, terrorism and enhance nation building. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. According to Karl Marx (1998) those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is the individuals and group within society will work to try to maximize their own wealth and power.

The researcher reconceptualises peace in attempts to critique the notions of liberal peace and liberal peace building by including local aspects and cultural diversity in studies of post-war peace. Most notably, the concept of hybrid peace was introduced to juxtapose international and local indigenous perceptions of peace (Mac Gint, 2010). He also pointed out the need to broaden the understanding of peace as something complex, cultural and context dependent. Yet once again systematic comparative studies of peace are not much helped by these definitions.

ELEMENTS OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

Sovereign Equality
Sovereignty is the most important feature of any peaceful/independent state as well as the embodiment and safeguard of its national interests. No infringement upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country is allowed. Countries should respect each other's core interests and key concerns. These are fundamental rules which should not be cast aside or undermined at any time.

Common Security
Security should be universal. All countries have the right to participate in the nation and regional security affairs on an equal footing and shoulder the shared responsibility to maintain security both the nationally and in various regions. We should champion common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security, and respect and ensure every country's security. It is unacceptable to have security just for one country or some countries while leaving the rest insecure, and still less should one be allowed to seek the so-called "absolute security" of itself at the expense of others' security.

Common Development
The sky, earth and world are big enough to allow the common development and prosperity of all countries. Today, some countries are getting richer while others are locked in poverty and underdevelopment. Such a situation should not be allowed to continue. Just as rising water lifts all boats and more water in the tributaries make a wider river, all will benefit when everyone develops.
When developing themselves, countries should work actively for common development of others so that the gains of development will reach more people in the world.

**Win-win Cooperation**
"Cooperation generates strength while isolation only leads to weakness." Win-win cooperation should be the basic policy goal of all countries in handling the nation affairs. It is a universal principle that applies to not only the economic field, but political, security, cultural and other areas as well.

**Inclusiveness and Mutual Learning**
Diversity of civilizations is a defining feature of the human society. In today's world, there are 7 billion people of more than 2,500 ethnic groups who live in over 200 countries and regions and speak more than 5,000 languages. Different nations and civilizations are rich in diversity and have their own distinct features. No one is superior or inferior to others.

**Fairness and Justice**
According to the ancient Chinese philosophy, "A just cause should be pursued for the common good". Justice is the noble goal that people of all countries pursue in the nation relations. However, we are still far away from realizing this goal.

**Benefits of Peaceful Co-Existence in Nigeria**

1. **It promotes basic norms governing the nation as well as basic benefits of the nation’s law.** These benefits, as an integrated, interconnected and indivisible concept, capture the essence of today's the nation and can apply to relations among all countries regardless of their social system, stage of development or size. Benefits of Peaceful Coexistence were expanded into ten benefits adopted at the Bandung Conference in 1955.

2. **It effectively upheld the rights and interests of the developing world.** The core of the benefits of Peaceful Coexistence is that there is sovereign equality among all countries and that no country should monopolize the nation affairs. These benefits offer a powerful intellectual tool for developing countries to uphold their sovereignty and independence, and they have thus become a rallying call for enhancing solidarity, cooperation and strength among them. These benefits have deepened the mutual understanding and trust among developing countries, boosted South-South cooperation and also contributed to the improvement of North-South relations.

3. **It promotes positive role in building a more equitable and rational the nation political and economic order.** Rejecting the law of the jungle by which the strong bully the weak, the benefits of Peaceful Coexistence strengthened the movement against imperialism and colonialism that eventually brought colonialism to an end. The increased level of religious intolerance, various gaps and violence in society today, increases the need for genuine interfaith dialogue, tolerance and harmony that will lead to a deeper understanding of, and relationship building with other faiths and beliefs.

**CHALLENGES FACING CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA**

**Ethnical Rivalry**
Any society gives resources and opportunities freely at anybody’s dispersal. But as it is in nature that human beings compete, there lacks equal sharing of these resources and opportunities. The strong amass more while the weakest lack and this naturally enslaves the weak to the wish of the strong if they have to survive (Godwin 2009).

**Religious Societies and Peaceful Co-existence among Communities**
Religious leaders and societies have had a unique leverage for promoting peace and reconciliation among parties, including an ability to dehumanize situations that have been dehumanized over the course of protracted conflict. They hold credibility statuses as trusted institutions and those with
ability to respect set values. Religious societies are crowned with the capability to mobilize community, nation and the nation support for a peace process (USIP, 2004)

**Political incitement**

Political leaders are often valued as heroes and heroines in the society. Some political leaders often take advantage of the crowds following them to partake their own political interest. The illiterate, mostly, are the less liberal and often act according to the directives given by the political leaders whether publicly or secretively. Also, the poor take steps to act in line with the leaders’ directives in order to receive casual hand-outs

**Poverty Reduction**

Poverty, inequality and marginalization have been pinpointed by many scholars as one of the major reasons for violence among communities in Kenya (Weiss, 2004). Consequently, efforts of peace building by addressing poverty, inequality and marginalization have been carried out by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and even faith based organizations in the Kenya at large.

a. **Self-help groups and peaceful co-existence among communities** Self-help groups are groups of people (mostly comprise of local youth and women) who come together with a common interest of developing their social-economic standards. Many scholars have studied the role of these groups in promoting peace and combating ethnic rivalry.

**Conflict Resolution Strategies in Nigeria**

The essence of conflict management is a kind of activity that was aim at assisting the conflicting parties to meet a level of understanding from the initial conflicting views where the parties agree to avoid crisis and violence but accept compromise and cooperative attitude towards attaining peaceful environment. According to Ramin(2011). Thus, conflict management is interference in an ongoing conflict process with the objectives of: reducing the level of destruction and violence; and preventing its escalation into other areas. Just as causes of conflicts are diverse so also are the strategies to curb or manage it. While scholars like Thomas and Kilman, (2007) identified five conflict management styles: competitive; collaborative; compromising; avoiding; and accommodating. However, Goldfien and Robbennolt (2007) opined that the dual thrust model of conflict management is based on two underlying themes: pro-self (that is concern for self) or pro-social (that is concern for others) goals and that the interaction between these two themes gives rise to the five conflict management strategies which are:

i. **Avoidance as conflict management strategy** - Conflict manager who adopt this style allow the conflict to phase out on its own through inaction and passivity. This conflict management approach is usually adopted when the manager is not concerned about their own outcomes (pro-self) or that of others (pro-social) (Goldfien & Robbenholt, 2007). Avoiding has the advantage of giving time to better prepare and collect information before acting and is a low stress approach when the conflict duration is short.

ii. **Accommodation** - Also termed accommodating or smoothing approach; It is adopted when conflict managers are determined to meet the needs of others and have a general concern for maintaining stable, positive social relationships and harmony (Forsyth, 2009). It sometimes enhances the protection of more important interests while giving up on less important ones, as well as provides the opportunity of reassessing the situation from other angles.

iii. **Competition** - This approach involves the use of force to get the other party to accept the conflict manager’s view. This strategy maximizes self-assertiveness and minimizes empathy (that is concern for others). The conflict managers see conflict as a challenge of win or lose. The benefits of this approach are that it provides a quick resolution to a conflict and increases self-esteem. However, the shortcomings of this style are that it could escalate the conflict and the relationship between the parties would be negatively affected. This approach might require a lot of expenses or resources and does not allow the conflict manager to take advantage of the strong points of the opponent’s position. More so, losers might want to retaliate.
iv. Cooperation - Also termed collaborating approach; it is adopted when the conflict managers are highly interested in both their own outcomes and the outcomes of others. This style sees conflict as a creative opportunity of which investment in time and resources could find a win-win solution (Forsyth, 2009).

v. Conciliation - Also termed compromising approach; it is adopted when conflict managers’ value fairness and in doing so, anticipate mutual give-and-take interactions. This approach enhances faster issue resolution, reduces tension and friction till a win-win solution could be achieved. However, the cons are that it could result in a loss-loss situation if initial demands are too great.

vi. Mediation - This process sometimes called conciliation; is a means by which a third party, the mediator attempts to reconcile the differences between the contesting parties. The mediator may try to maintain constructive discussion, search for common area of agreement and suggest compromises. However, the mediator’s decisions are not binding and need not be accepted by the contesting parties. Mediation has been view by the United Nation University of Peace “as voluntarily, informal, non-binding process undertaken by an external party that foster the settlement of differences or demands between directly invested parties”. (Quoted in Miller, 2003)

vii. Conciliation - A conciliator has the skill to communicate separately with parties in conflict and assist the parties to understand themselves and reduce the tension through various advocacies. Conciliation is a third party activity, which covers intermediary efforts aimed at persuading the parties to a conflict to achieve a peaceful means of resolving differences Miller (2003) has the opinion that conciliation as “the voluntary referral of a conflict to a neutral external party, which either suggests a nonbinding settlement or conducts explorations to facilitate more structures or techniques of conflict resolution”. The conciliator has the technical knowledge to facilitate peaceful resolution with conflicting parties.

viii. Arbitration - This another types of conflict management which requires the intervention of third party to resolve the conflict or differences through the assistance of a neutral third party in conflict situation. The arbitrator has the comfort to listen to evidences from both two parties and the third party offer decision which usually refers as” award” which is expected to be bided by all the parties concern. In this aspect the conflict parties agree to submit to third party intervener and accept the outcomes of the final decision by the arbitrator.

ix. Adjudication- Adjudication is a conflict management that is applicable to use of the court and litigation processes. The parties to conflict may only decide to use court of law decision in resolving the case. The court process has various level of court hearing from the law court to highest court in the country. Adjudication as a means of addressing conflicts, which may leads to frustrations and further escalation of the conflict, because the expected outcome in terms of justice and fair play.

x. Integration - This technique requires the conflicting parties to collaborate in order to resolve the conflict. It requires both parties to have the attitude that, although they may be in conflict, they will strive to develop collaboratively a solution that satisfies the needs of both parties. Thus, the needs of the parties will b integrated by the solution. With this method too, the win-lose mentality is often so strong that the opposing g integrative solution is impossible (Mankelow and Carlson, 2013).

xi. Good Governance - Governance is a process of running affairs of government activities in a progressive manner to deliver for good of the citizens in the country. The essence of good governance is to ensure maintenance of rule of law, transparency, accountability, separation of power that will ensure the equality and respect for the fundamental Human Right of all citizens. The existence of good governance helps to address various conflicting issues arising from the issue of equality, power sharing, and ethnic identity differences and addressing social problems of the society.
CONCLUSION
This paper has discussed rethinking peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. The researchers adopted these techniques or approaches to the management of conflict in Nigeria. The paper addresses some nature and dynamics, roots of conflict and suggested effective solution to the problems. It is important to find a solution to conflict at individuals, groups, organizations and at community level through application of the right strategy of accommodation, cooperation, conciliation, consensus, mediation, arbitration, conciliation, integration and collective agreement. Sometime conflicts lead to better ideas and enhance productivity which is positive nature and should be maintained and encourage while the negative side of conflict lead to death of peoples and damage of properties. After a thorough review and analysis of relevant materials given the findings from the study on the issues of dialogue, the paper concluded that, it is imperative for the political leaders and policy makers to address the myriad pressing needs of conflict resolution. The paper recommended the following things to consider in addressing the various conflicts in Nigeria.

i. Operating good governance that will provide leadership structures which is responsive, responsible, accountable, and transparent and observing the fundamental benefits of Human Right in Nigeria.

ii. Addressing the root causes of conflict not considering the superficial factors behind the conflicts.

iii. Engaging traditional institutions and other community structure in conflict management process.

iv. Educating the large society the importance of peaceful living than adopting conflict in Nigeria.

v. Rigidity should be eliminated during negotiation.

vi. A give and take approach will promote peace.

vii. The third party to intervene in conflict should be honest, non-partisan and trusted by the conflicting parties.

viii. Effective communication Networks between conflict parties will reduce the level of tension.

ix. Dialoguing and bargaining should be used in a fair, honest, equitable and acceptable manner during peace talk process.

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