

Conflict Resolutions, Peace and Africa's Quest for Development

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Abstract

Africa is very rich both in human and natural resources. However, despite this, she is poor, undeveloped and impoverished as a result of crises, such as: political, religious, ethnic, cultural among others, which of course, affect her peace and quest for development. It is instructive and expedient to point it out that, no society can develop under strife, whatever may be the its source. A society that is conflict-ridden is not likely to get the peace that is predominantly necessary for development in all spheres of human activity. In order to achieve its intended objective, the paper discusses peace, conflict resolutions, meaning, features and dimensions of development. Also, some proposed recommendations are equally made. The paper concludes that, for Africa to develop, and join the comity of nations, there should be conflict resolutions and peace, this is because, peace is a necessary ingredient, sine qua non, hallmark and a great catalyst for true and all-round development.

Keywords: Peace, conflict resolutions, development, Africa, proposed solution

Introduction

Africa, without doubt, is one of the richest continents in the world. Yet, the people of Africa have been brutally traumatized as a result of crises, senseless wars, fights, hostilities, civil unrest, civil commotion, ceaseless conflicts with their attendant consequences. Ayittey (1991:2) affirms this when he avers that Africa's natural resources and mineral wealth are widely acclaimed as vast and diversified. It has 40 percent of the world's potential hydroelectric power supply, the bulk of the world's diamonds and chromium, 30 percent of the uranium in the noncommunist world, 50 percent of the world's gold, 90 percent of its phosphates; 40 percent of its platinum, 75 percent of its coal, 8 percent of its known petroleum reserves, 12 percent of its natural gas, 3 percent of its iron ore and millions upon millions of acres of untilled agricultural land.

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To know Africa, is to have some knowledge of its geography and interact with its people and the environment. Nkrumah (1970:13) gives us a general geographical view of Africa:

Africa and its islands, with a land area of some twelve million square miles... could easily contain within it, and with room to spare, the whole of India, Europe, Japan, the British Isles, Scandinavian and New Zealand. The United States of America could easily be fitted into the Sahara Desert. Africa is geographically compact, and in terms of natural resources, potentially the richest continent in the world.

Similarly, Ali Mazrui (1980:71) writes on the enormous natural wealth which Africa is endowed with:

Estimates of Africa's resources are on the whole tentative. Not enough prospecting for resources under the ground has taken place, but it is fair to say that Africa has 96 per cent of its gold, 42 per cent of its cobalt, 34 percent of its bauxite and 28 percent of its uranium. Africa's iron reserves are probably twice those of the United States, and its reserves of chrome are the most important by far outside the Soviet Union.

For many years now, African countries namely, Nigeria, Angola, Libya, Egypt, Gabon, etc. have been producing crude oil for sale to European and American markets in large quantities. Apart from mineral resources and oil, it is believed that Africa ranks among the world's largest agricultural producers. The land, water air and sun add to the economic wealth of Africa. It is therefore appropriate to say that nature or providence has treated Africa as the most beloved continent in the world. Having said that, I am aware of some of the natural disasters in Africa, which had claimed many lives namely, malaria, earthquake, flood etc. The fact that Africans were victims of those disasters does not rule out the claim that nature has treated African with sympathy. After all, human beings are to co-exist with nature and natural "disasters" are mere functions of nature. If natural resources have no human beings to make use of them, nobody will appreciate their values and beauty. In other words, natural resources depend on human existence for their utilization. In modern African, human resources abound in all sectors of learning. Before independence, African nationalists – Kwame Nkrumah, Herbert Macaulay, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Jomo Kenyatta etc. fought for the liberation of African States. All that African elite, in those trying periods, stood and fought for, was to decolonize African minds and take the mantle of leadership which colonialism denied them.

Taking this to philosophical realm, the poignant questions are: should Africa still be poor? Can she develop without conflict resolutions and peace? Without mincing words, the answer is NO. Africa cannot develop and join the comity of nations, while peace and conflict resolutions are not given due attention. By extension, peace, conflict resolutions, are sine qua non (an essential or indispensable element, condition, ingredient, prerequisite) for development. They are hallmarks of development. It is against this background therefore, that concerted efforts are made in this paper, to lucidly explain the philosophical discourse of conflict resolutions, peace and development in Africa.

Peace defined

Balogun (2006:10) defines peace as freedom from hostilities, freedom from civil commotion, freedom from disorder, freedom from mental or spiritual disturbance or confusion or conflict arising from passion or sense of guilt, freedom from war, cessation of war.” He goes further to opine that “one may be tempted to assume, on the basis of the above definition of peace, the absence of war is synonymous with peace. But, the unfolding events in the world actually indicate that there are many tensions all over the globe pointing to the absence of peace (Ibid:10). He goes further again to say that the installation of elaborate, sophisticated and seemingly invincible security devices do not guarantee peace and security. The successful attack on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 and the terror visited on London in July 7, 2005 bear witness to the fact that peace and security are not just a matter for technological devices (Ibid:11). The situation is even worse in Africa, Asia and Middle East. Pope John II, in his message for the celebration of the World Day Peace on 1st January, 2005, described the world situation in the following terms: if we look at the present state of the world, we cannot help, but note the disturbing spread of various social and political manifestations of evil: from the social disorders to anarchy and war, from injustice to acts of violence and killings (Ibid:11).

Given this stark reality, the questions we should ask are: Will absolute peace ever be attainable in this war-ravaged world of ours (Africa inclusive)? How many people think that man’s exploitation of man and man’s inhumanity to man are direct opposite of peace? Besides, peace is a state of tranquility, quiet, harmony; absence of violence. For instance, a state free from civic disturbance. A state free of war. A state free of oppressive and unpleasant thoughts, emotions and acrimonies.

Similarly, Aja (2000:2) maintains that peace is a relative condition of security friendly climate that allows individuals and groups relations to progressive order and stability. The main difference between war and peace is that while the former is destructive and disintegrative, the latter is constructive, cooperative, integrative and collaborative. Peace is the human desired condition and order of existence that allows the ruler and the ruled fulfill life obligations with minimum fear or danger on life, liberty and property. Thus far, he avers, peace has been severally linked to “justice”, “development”, and “security” (Ibid:2). Peace, we must note and place serious emphasis on it that, is very crucial for any nation, or society in order for her to develop. In line with this therefore, we must bear it in mind that the various crises in Africa, be social, political, religious, cultural, ethnic will not help Africa to develop, but rather, it will militate against her quest for development, despite the huge, enormous human and natural resources. It is quite interesting to note with all intents and purposes, honesty and candour, that the Boko Haram crises, in the North East, Nigeria will certainly affect her development. In the same vein, the Fulani herdsmen crises in the West and part of the South of Nigeria will equally affect our development. Also, crises in other parts of Africa such as The Sudanese conflict (South Kordofan and Blue Nile); Lord's Resistance Army (Uganda); Western Sahara conflict and insurgency in the Maghreb (Morocco) and many more will undermine Africa's growth cum development. The point of emphasis is that, no Nation can truly develop and join the comity of nations, while there is no peace, for peace as well as conflict resolution is instrumental to development.

At this juncture, I will like to go philosophical. To this end therefore, “dating the ancient, medieval and modern generations, most philosophers have had diverse perspective of peace”. (Sabine & Thorson, 1973:533) primarily, each of them conceives peace as both natural and also a creation of human society. What the human (civic) society creates is basically a mirror of the peace in nature as established by the Supreme Being (God). For instance, John Locke insists that the universe is not lawless, but orderly. For St. Augustine of Hippo, there are two cities:

- (a) The city of God that is built upon perfect (heaven) peace.
- (b) The earthly city of man which is characterized by selfishness, greed, corruption, tension and strife, fear and terror of death.

Furthermore, philosophers in the class of Plato, Rousseau and John Locke point to the natural man as good, full of faculty of goodwill and cooperation and desirous of peace as the prime value of human existence. As a Corollary, the Hedonists and utilitarians hold that man, by

nature, has the instinct to seek pleasure, happiness rather than things that cause pain and misery (Plato,1968).

Conflict Resolution Defined

The two concepts involved above shall be separately explained.

Conflict: A clash or disagreement, often violent between two or more opposing groups or individuals. According to Aja (2000:15) conflict may be defined as an attitude, a behaviour or an action or a process that introduces strains and stresses in the relationship between two or more parties on, say, the attainment of a set of interests or goals.

Resolution: A strong will, determination, the state of being resolute.

At this juncture, we should note that economic resources and power are some of the major causes of conflicts in Africa. Be that as it may, we should at all cost, avoid conflicts and adopt, embrace conflict resolutions which will of course, serve as a great catalyst for Africa's development. Besides, Dzurgba (2006:14) declares that conflict is a social problem in which two or more persons, families, districts, communities, states or nations are at war with each other, conflict charge the people with tensions, threats, fears, anxieties and uncertainties. In a fight against one another, militiamen or soldiers shoot, cut, hack or club one another to death. The death toll rises as casualties also increase. Combatants use arrows, knives, cutlasses, guns, missiles, bombs, chemicals and nuclear arms depending on whether or not the war is a local war or not.

By and large, it is obvious from above, that no matter what, it behooves on us in Africa to avoid conflicts which may lead to wanton destruction of precious lives and valuable property. We must, try to embrace peace and conflict resolutions, in order to attain the desired and lofty development.

Conflict Resolution

According to Aja, (2000:32) conflict resolution comprises agenda setting to assist parties in conflict or dispute to establish a common ground, given certain guiding principles or conditionalities for peaceful coexistence. It establishes a range of principles, rules and regulations that help disputing parties to operate within the tenets of international law and diplomacy. It should be seen as a set of peace and security guidelines or diplomatic and legal procedures for achieving relative order and stability.

In addition, conflict resolution is both a principle and a practice in the promotion of capacity building towards bargaining, negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration, it is derived from the strong belief that conflicts or wars need not be left alone. There is need to manage war or conflict by bringing parties into the appreciation of the human and economic costs as well as the mutual benefits of returning to order and stability.

Development defined

It means the progress recorded by man in all facets of human endeavour. It consists of improvement recorded in the material and non-material aspects of life. It represents qualitative leap from one economic, social, cultural, political reaction to another (Odimegwu 2006:18). According to Rodney (1972:9) “development in human society is a many sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibilities and material well-being”. On his part, Oladipo (2009:94) opines that “development is a social concept standing for the process, though, which human beings strive to improve the conditions of their lives.

Dimensions of development

In a nutshell, we have political, economic, social, cultural, technological, educational, religious, and moral development. For instance, man’s development is incomplete without morality. A person cannot live a happy life, if he has no modicum and iota of morality in him. Also, no nation has ever attained greatness either by disparaging its conscience or by making a virtue and ideal out of morality. And, any great person or society that neglects morality heads for decadence and perdition (Ogunmodede, 1986:237 – 238). This shows the importance of morality to the society. I want to therefore charge African leaders to bring back morality to governance and allow it to be their watchword, if truly we want to develop in the true sense of it.

Features of Development

These are some of the features of development:

- Promotion of equality of the people. This means that everybody is equal to enjoy the resources of the land, no difference between the rich and the poor.
- Absence of exploitation. There should not be any form of exploitation from the rulers to the ruled.

- Promotion of the dignity and respect for human beings. Human dignity and values must be respected at all times. People should not be treated like slaves or second class citizens.
- Avoidance of discrimination on grounds of sex or colour. There should neither be discrimination nor segregation on the grounds of sex or colour. In other words, being feminine or masculine should not be a basis, yardstick, parameter or a criterion in the distribution of resources.
- Promotion of national independence at self-reliance. Self-reliance is the realization of the principle of self-reliance. It is the ideology or orientation based on this principle; a set of purposeful activities directed towards self-realization.

Rodney on Features of Development

Walter Rodney is of the view that developed economies have many features which contrast with underdeveloped ones. For the purpose of clarity and elucidation therefore, these features will now be fully itemized and explained. According to him, developed countries are all industrialized. That is to say, the greater part of their working population is engaged in industry rather than agriculture, and most of their wealth comes out of mines, factories etc. (Rodney, 1972:24). They have a high output of labour per man in industry because of their advanced technology and skills. This is well known but it is also striking that the developed countries, have a much more advanced agriculture than the rest of the World. Their Agriculture has already become an industry, and the agricultural part of the economy produces more although it is small. He stresses further that the countries because they rely on agriculture and have little or no industry; but their agriculture is unscientific and the yields are far less than those of the developed countries.

Another feature of development according to him is that the social services provided by a country are of importance equal to that of its material production in bringing about well-being and happiness. It is universally accepted that the state has the responsibility to establish schools and hospitals, but whether these are provided by the government or by private agencies, their numbers can be established in relation to the size of the population. The extent to which basic goods and social services are available in a country can also be measured indirectly by looking at the life expectancy, the frequency of deaths among children, the amount of malnutrition, the occurrence of diseases which could be prevented by inoculation and public health services, and the proportion of illiterates. In all these respects, the

comparison between the developed and underdeveloped countries shows huge and even frightening differences (Ibid, 25)

Again, he opines that it takes a large number of skilled people to make an industrial economy function; while the countries of Africa have a woefully insufficient number of highly qualified personnel. In African countries, professionals, technicians, high level of administrators and skilled workers emigrate from their homes and the small number of skilled people available to the underdeveloped World is further depleted by the lure of better pay and opportunities in the developed World. It is therefore ironical and paradoxical that the lopsided nature of the present international economy is strikingly brought home by the fact that the underdeveloped countries have in turn to recruit foreign experts at fantastic cost.

Besides, he is of the view that it is typical of underdeveloped economies, that they do not concentrate on those sectors of the economy which in turn will generate growth and raise production to a new level altogether, and there are very few ties between one sector and another so that agriculture and industry could react beneficially on each other. In the same vein, it is to be maintained that whatever savings are made within the economy are mainly sent abroad or are frittered away in consumption rather than being redirected to productive purposes. Much of the national income which remains within the country goes to pay individuals who are directly involved in producing wealth but only in rendering auxiliary services civil servants, merchants, soldiers, etc. What aggravates the situation is that more people are employed in those jobs than are really necessary to give efficient service; and to crown it all, these people do not reinvest in agriculture or industry. They squander the wealth created by the peasants and workers by purchasing cars, whisky and perfumes (Ibid, 26).

Proposed Solutions

At this juncture, I want to proffer some solutions to the identified problems in the course of this paper. According to Ayittey, (1991:16) “to remedy a problem, it should first be exposed. Then, one must carefully diagnose its causes, prescribe a solution, and monitor the efficacy of the prescription”. Falaiye (2012:36) equally declares that “in prescribing the way forward, I do not pretend that I have the final answers to any nagging problem confronting us in Africa. The truth is that Philosophers, never have final answers to any problem. Indeed, sometimes, philosophers concern themselves more with the questions and problems than the answers. Other disciplines derive pleasure in seemingly final answers to questions, until philosophers raise further questions that put the seemingly obvious answers in jeopardy. My

prescriptions therefore are conjectures, open to refutations and further criticisms as knowledge expands, this is a well-known principle in epistemology”.

Having said this, these are my proposed recommendations which, will go a long way in solving or addressing crises in Africa and their attendant consequences:

- Prevention, they say is better than cure, hence, efforts must be made to guide against violence, crises, conflicts and the likes.
- The demand for peace, order, stability, unity should be embraced by all.
- African leaders must accept defeat at elections.
- Favouritism, tribalism, ethnicity, lopsided appointments should be discouraged.
- Injustice, oppression, suppressions, misgovernance should be discouraged.
- O.A.U, ECOWAS, A.U. should be alive to their responsibilities.
- Africans should learn to live peacefully and harmoniously.
- Adequate Peace Education/Enlightenment should be done in Africa.
- That Africans should avoid at all cost, crises, conflicts, insurgencies, terrorism, and violence.
- Government should act decisively to stop the spread of any violence whenever and wherever it rears its ugly head.

Conclusions

“Let us harvest our thoughts in this section” (Azenabor, 2002:88). I have attempted to outline and discuss peace, conflict resolutions, development, proposed solutions and other issues relevant to this paper. I therefore want to conclude by quoting Balogun (2012:36) “the search for world peace should not be left in the hands of the proverbial four people four people, namely, Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. We are told that there was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody’s job. Everybody thought, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn’t do it. Finally, Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done. The important job being referred to here is African peace. We must all be involved to that peace reigns supreme, which of course will metamorphose into Africa’s development

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