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CONFLICT AND POVERTY, CATALYST OF AFRICAN UNDER-DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIAN SCENARIO

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Abstract

This paper attempted da critical examination of poverty and conflict with particular interest in the concents negative impact on the state of African development in general and Nigeria in particular Attention was given to the defuitions and explanations of the two concepts while, some of theoretical issues regarding the prevalence of conflict and poverty in societies were equally established. The paper captured some basic challenges confronting the Nigerian nation as a consequence of conflict and poverty and made useful recommendations to help in addressing the problems. Eristing debates on poverty and conflict as it relates to the under- development of Nigeria and other African nations were extensively explored.

Introduction

The desire of every nation or human society is to stand out from the crowd in terms of development. The concepts of developed, developing and under-developed nations of the world are indicators of different dynamics in the areas of social, economic and political states of various countries. However, the advancement of any nation is subject to the position of some socio- economic and political factors such as education, natural resources, conflict or peace and above all human capital among others. These are capable of facilitating or hindering the growth and development of a nation. According to Irobi (2005) conflict arising from ethnic differences may result in underdevelopment.

Once there is no peace in a nation, the chances of promoting poverty woud be very high. Countries without good diplomatic relationshin are bound to remain Victims ol perpetual armed conflict among their ethnic groups (Montsy and Gurr 2003)-

The implication is that, development can bardlv be achieved in any country where conflict and poverty prevail. Thus it could be afirmed that the crisis or seemingly continuous contlict within Nigeria's political sphere may have extended the poverty level in the country and subsequently,

distorted the trend of development in the country. This paper is an attempt to dissect conflict and poverty with a view to establishing their relationship and how they affect development in Nigeria and other developing African nations.

Definition of Conflict

Conflict is defined as a hostile situation arising from human selfish interest to satisfy oneself at others expense (Lammers, 1969). He maintains that for conflict to be present, the interference of (such nature must be deliberate and goal oriented by at least one party. Amusan (1996) defines conflict as a situation of disagreement between two parties. A conflict situation can be said to arise when the parties involved are unable to resolve their differences. Ejioguu (1990:26) opines that "conflict is a mutual hostility and all kinds of opposition or antagonistic interaction comprising disagreements or controversies about ideas, values and culture" This definition seems to perceive conflict as a kind of behaviour that reveals a state of discomfort between two persons or groups.

On a general note, conflict can be defined as 'a disagreement between two or more person who shares interest over limited resources' (Galtung, 1996). He perceives conflict from the triangular perspective to include the conflict condition, those involved in the conflict and the conflict of interest among them. The presence of incompatible interests, values or goals among groups of people or between individual persons can generate conflict.

One may equally argue that conflict is a function, of human behaviour which encompasses communications and gestures. Human behaviour can either convey a cordial or hostile message to the other. Thus conflict may ensue when the latter hostility is conveyed to others. Draman (2003) simply submits that, conflict can be armed oriented particularly if it last for a longer period of time.

This according to him can occur between governments (inter-state) or between governments and armed groups within states or between opposing armed group (intra-state). Conflict within societies appears to be the most commonly experienced in Africa in particular and other parts of the world in general (Draman, 2003). He observes that out of the 53 countries of Africa, 30 are presently witnessing some forms of intrastate conflict at various degrees.

See table 1 below for an overview of conflict situations in Africa.

	CENTRAL STATE SERIOUSLY INCAPACITATED DURING CONFLICT	CENTRAL STATE RELATIVELY INTACT DURING CONFLICT
Ongoing or recently- ended	Liberia ;Rwanda	Angola; Burundi; Sudan

large scale conflicts	Sierra Leone ;Somalia	
Previous large scale Conflicts	Chad; Uganda	Ethiopia ; Eritrea, Mozambique South Africa
New large-scale conflicts (began late 1990s)	Congo DRC; Guinea Bissau Cote d'Ivoire	
Smaller-scale more localized conflicts		Comoros; Djibouti; Mali; Namibia Niger; Senegal; Zimbabwe
Political violence short of War		Central African Republic; Ghana Kenya; Lesotho ; Mauritania Nigeria; Togo

According to Malcolm (2002) human beings by nature are associated with conflict because man is naturally selfish and always desiring to have the best for himself.

Conflict is bound to occur in situations where someone tries to haave everything at the expense of the other members of society (emphasis mine). Conflict however, seems to be an inevitable part of any human society Once people struggle for the same resource be it iobs, income housing, territory or even love affairs with woman or man. there is the possibility that conflict would arise especially when such resources are limited or ill managed.

(Okonta and Oronto,2001).

Table 2: Cases of Extreme Poverty

Region	Population below US\$1 per day (%)
East Asia	27.58

East Asia (excluding China)	18.51
Eastern European and Central Asia	1.56
Latin America and Caribbean	16.80
Middle East and North Africa	2.39
South Asia	44.01
Sub-Saharan Africa	47.67

Source: Chen and Ravallion (2000)

Causes of Conflict

Economic factors are the major causes of conflict in Africa and other societies (Irobi, 2005). He maintains that theorists uphold the argument that competition for scarce resources remains a common factor associated with virtually all the conflict situations in Africa. Nnoli (1980) offered empirical instances in his investigation that relates socio-economic factors as the major causes of conflict in Nigeria. In the views of Fuurnival, cited by Nnoli (1980:72-3), inadequate economic resources create room for disagreement between groups. These positions seem to admit that the quest for the control of economic power often result in serious conflict in human societies particularly, where the level of development of such social group is still very low.

The South African ethnic conflict according to Gerhard Mare, cited by Irobi (2005) appears to be the repercussion of lopsided development of that country.

Thus the Xhosas, Zulus and of course, the Afrikaners competed terribly for resources of South Africa. It appears that conflict over the distribution of resources is more prone in multi-ethnic countries like Nigeria and other larger countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The psychological disposition of any nation can equally, result in conflict among the ethnic groups of the nation (Irobi, 2005). He maintains that a mere suspicion that another ethnic group can attack, may build a sense of insecurity against the said suspected ethnic group and may lead to possible attack to defend oneself. According to this author "such ethnic conflict which arises from mere psychological assumptions of uncertainties and insecurity," is usually common if, a community has a post-traumatic experience from previous ethnic conflicts. Stemming from competition or insecurity. By implication, once there is distrust and suspicion, ethnic and any other form of conflict can hold in a society.

Hrovte (1985) identifies political issues as the likely causes of conflict at the ethnic, regional and other levels. For instance, the controls of territory and boundary issues are most common political matters that often result in conflict. The Palestinian and Jewish nationalism

each claim to Palestine, the ancient land between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean as theirs often lead to conflict. The Religious Zionists uphold that the area is the Promised Land given to the children of Israel by God while Secular Zionists contend that the land was promised homeland for the Jewish people by the British in the 1917 Balfour Declaration and confirmed by the League of Nations in the mandate awarded to Britain in 1922.

Whereas Palestinians believe that they are the rightful owners of the territory, they see Zionists as mere settlers who came in as a consequence of colonialism (Horowitz, 1985). The conflict between the two parties still lingers and may continue unabated. A similar case was witnessed between Nigeria and Cameroon concerning the Bakassi area which was claimed to have been ceded to Cameroon by Nigeria during General Gowon's regime. This was actually resolved at the level of the International Court of Justice following the degree of understanding and maturity exhibited by both parties.

The conflict experienced within the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria may equally be associated to that of territorial control. The Federal Government displays a master-servant kind of relationship when it comes to the distribution of resources particularly the mineral oil in the Niger Delta. Thus the indigenes feel enslaved and alienated over their God-given wealth.

Poverty can also be a strong factor for conflict (Okonta and Oronto, 2001). They submit that once people are poor, chances of getting provoked at any slight reason would be high. A ridden society can take any action that would necessitate their survival irrespective of the consequence of such action, as far as their needs met. The popular adage, 'a hungry man is an angry man,' may speak volume of poverty as a contributing factor to conflict in societies.

Another central cause of conflict is the issue of culture. According to Horowitz (1985) language and religion are the major causes of ethnic struggle. Modes of communication and belief systems are the main sense of individual place of origin and pride. They display personal and/or group

identity, thus any attempt by other persons outside the particular ethnic divide to abuse such culture, may ignite an immeasurable degree of conflict that may lead to armed violence (Galtung, 1996).

The incessant religious crisis in the Northern parts of Nigeria between the Islamic and Christian Religion faithful is a clear example of the strength of the roles of religious belief systems in the promotion of ethnic conflict in the Nigerian nation (Irobi, 2005). Bad governance and marginalisation of some ethnic groups are also causes of conflict in Nigeria and other multi-ethnic nations of Africa and beyond (Nnoli, 1980). With the dominance of three ethnic groups in Nigeria - Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba (Osaghae, 1991; Rotimi, 1996), the minority groups took up agitation and resistance to marginalisation and exposed Nigeria to the fight against ethnic dominance. Militancy started as a result of bad governance. For example, the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) emerged to agitate for the unfair treatment meted on the South Western

Nigeria by the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election which Chief Moshood. Kashimowo Abiola was reported to have won.

In the event of the democratic transition in Nigeria, ethnic conflict persisted and still remains, People from the Ibo extraction also agitate ethnic interest like the OPC (1997) affirms that. "the Igbo (Ibo) agitate against marginalization autonomy and freedom." He maintains that as long as such basic human needs are denied group or individual, conflict would become imminent because such deprived group already are aggrieved of such deprivation, can resort to violent actions. It could be submitted that the need for political reconstruction also calls for conflict. The Federal structure as observed by Irobi (2005) appears to have developed deep cracks and calls for immediate attention to remedy the faults.

The most challenging of the entire crisis in Nigeria according to Irobi (2005) is that arising from peoples' beliefs followed by resource allocation. Crisis in the North came up as a result of the introduction of "Sharia Courts" followed by the request of the Southern Nigeria for autonomy. Conflict situation however, indicates that there is a serious problem of conflict management in Nigeria.

The Concept of Poverty

Poverty according to Schaefer (2006) provides common definition problem to behavioural science scholars. Hence understanding the concept of poverty is a challenge to some extent. However, it is sometimes conceptualised in two broad forms to capture absolute or relative poverty. The former has to do with a minimum level of income that no family should be required to live below (Schaefer, 2006). This definition seems to portray poverty as a total deprivation of the necessities of human life. The idea of making policies regarding minimum income, places of residence, or educational programmes given to the poor has to do with bringing them to a certain level of comfort (Bauman, 1999). For example, the federal lowest income rate according to Bauman was increased to \$5.15 per hour in 1997 in the USA he reveals that, recently, over a million workers over 25 years of age are recruited at or less than the minimum wage.

However, the increase of the current poverty line can make a worker earn \$7.05 per hour for a full-time (Bureau of the Census, 2003e). The federal government's poverty line is the common indices for measuring absolute poverty.

This relates to a money income figure earned by individuals and amended every year to present the standard of live and living of people in a household (Bureau of the Census, 2003e). the "poverty line" remains the indices for identifying people who are regarded to be poor) DeNava-Robert, Y(They gave an example with year where any family that earned \$)A71:or less. The poverty line. This was the standard that was used by the USA government to determine the including industrial nations, it seems to be on the increase.

Relative poverty is a situation where people may have some material things that are needed for existence yet lack many other things that would deny them comfort (Schaefer 2006) thus it does not matter whether the poor of 2005 is better than those of the past decades since they still need help. The World Bank definition of poverty appears to have put seal to the concept as it summarises the various opinions about poverty. It adopts the basic needs approach and portrays that qualified to obtain certain benefits from the government (DeNavas-Walt et al. 2000). According to the scholars, absolute poverty rate has fallen in the US but in many other countries a serious problem that relates to people who are completely deprived of necessities of life probably by society or nature and are absolutely helpless (World Bank, 2003a). The World Bank provide a standard of \$1 and \$2 per day in 1993 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) as a way of measuring poverty.

The PPPs certainly measure the relative purchasing power of currencies across countries. No matter how one may look at poverty, it involves a situation of deprivation of so many things in life that makes an individual appear odd to him or herself and to other members of society. It involves an exclusion of people from the mainstream of events in society such as denial of civil and political rights (Galtung, 1996; Goodhand, 2001).

Anderson and Taylor (2005) reveal that "more than 32.9 million are poor in the US," This Represents 11.7 percent of the population. According to their findings, majority of the poor are White.

The Asian Americans, Native Americans, Black American and Hispanics were found poor with 21 percent for the Hispanics, 10 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders and 8 percent of non-Hispanics. Proctor and Dalaker (2002) confirm that the Whites are poorer than the others. The

majority of the poor are usually women and children hence the term, "feminisation of poverty" that is referring to the increasing rate of the poor who are women and children (Lee, 1994). The Population of the poor in developing and underdeveloped nations is quite alarming, more than the one recorded in the United States (Draman, 2003). Africa has the highest percent of poor people. See table below.

Causes of Poverty

Some people according to Ryan (1976) blame the poor for being poor. This school of thought contends that success requires individual motivation or push and ability. This position simply implies that people are poor because, they fail to work. However the submission that forty percent of the poor work' and the number of working poor) Proctor and Dalaker, Y- Y(has increased in recent year certainly nullified the argument of "blaming the victim of poverty'

The culture of poverty argument attacks the welfare dependency, the absence of work values and the irresponsibility of the poor as responsible for poverty. Thus poverty is regarded as a way of life that is transferred like other cultures from generation to generation) Andersen and Taylor,o(.

Thus the actual causes of poverty according to 'culture of poverty' view, remains the failure of family, schools and churches. Sociologically, poverty cannot be attributed to one cause, there are many causes. However, restructuring the economy is one major cause because it reduces earning power and increases unemployment) BacaZinn and Eitzen, Y - _)(... the rates of Women in the family and the labour markets have added to the over-representation or women among the poor. The reduction in government's social support for the poor has equally escalated the rate of poverty in societies (Wilson, 1996).

Conflict is a visible cause of poverty in many developing and underdeveloped countries of the world. No nation can attain success if, there is no peace and as a result, chances of remaining poor is high once there is conflict in society.

The recent crisis within the Niger Delta area for example, was causing Nigeria a great loss of oil revenue and may have increased the poverty level of Nigeria if it was not addressed.

Is Poverty Totally Bad?

Although many people may see poverty as a big threat to poverty is of some good value to society.

For example, the presence of poor people according to Gans (1995) suggested to have both the good and the bad in societies. This scholar maintains that poverty is of benefit to various segments of society The affluent people may justify inequality)Ryan, benefits of poverty a bound, for example, mental patients released from hospitals are usually sent to the low-income communities for rehabilitation.

Theoretical Purview

The theories of conflict, functionalism and human needs theories are captured to mankind, to a specific and Africa in general. Marx cited in Schaefer (2006) sees the gap between the upper and lower classes as the causes of conflict since exploitation persists. Thus as long as people are marginalized in any form the Debate on Conflict and Poverty. According to MATYEN (1995) suggests would be conflict and poverty because deprivation would be the case. On the other hand! functionalists simply, consider the class structure as functional to society since even including the poor would play a role for the survival of society. Hence the needs to having people who can clean the debris off the street. As for the presence of conflict. some would still become rich in the process through the sale of ammunitions. However, conflicted be avoided to reduce poverty for Nigeria to have a better future. Burton John's theory of human needs is equally considered relevant for the explanation conflict in Nigeria and other African countries. This theory captures the failure of institutions to provide the basic needs for African citizens as the causes of conflict in & Saharan African. It tends to debunk the Hobberian theory which sees human beings naturally aggressive. The theory contends that conflict can be curtailed in any soo including Africa if institutions were functional.

There are several arguments as to whether conflict and poverty are related. While some scholars argue that poverty causes conflict, others maintain that conflict causes poverty (Draman, 2003). From my perspective, the relationship between both concepts can hardly be associated with cases of conflicts (World Bank, 2003). Arguably, one could submit that the relationship is symbiotic in nature. None the less, whereas poverty is capable of resulting in conflict, conflict is equally in a position to have consequences of Conflict and Poverty in Nigeria those who contend that there is no relationship between poverty and conflict poverty can cause conflict given the presence of other factors. In other words, the scenario cannot lead to conflict. Nelson (1998) succinctly posits that lack of food, shelter, clothing and other basic needs in low-income countries and TAO of them located in Sub-Saharan Africa other human needs may result in conflict. Regrettably, strong evidence could be found Mohammed (2001) affirms that agricultural activities, industrial projects and exploration were paralysed in Sudan as a result of protracted conflict. Also in Chad, conflict obstructed the exploration of oil deposits which were capable of generating a minimum of 10 million tons of oil per year between 1960 and 1995 (Draman, 2003). He observes that the prolonged conflict, The country's exportation activities suffered as well as their major goods. Here not shifted to other countries that needed the products. Like other African nations also face serious challenge of sluggish development due to religious and other forms of unrest arising from bad governance and marginalised sharing of national resources.

There is no rational argument against the fact that conflict creates negative impact on poverty. Although, Luckham (2001) seems to argue that one may not generate a representative data to determine the actual negative impact of conflict to the growth of any nation due to obvious reason of insecurity, it is important to recap that in a conflict situation, the primary need of any one is survival not production for development. At the end of conflicts, resources and efforts which would have been used to advance society, in terms of development would have been used for repairs and reconstruction of destroyed national and individual facilities. The effect of the recent Jos crisis for example, is yet to be resolved. Other cases in the Niger Delta, South Eastern and South Western regions are equally regrettable. The recent Boko-Haram menace is helping to under-develop the Northern Nigeria.

Consequently, many people and the country in general, are impoverished as a result of conflict and poverty of material resources and that of the mind. Hence Nigerian nation may continue to move away from true or sustainable development if, conflict and poverty persist.

Recommendations

In line with the findings made, the following recommendations are advanced to assisting Nigeria in realising the objectives of her proposed vision 2020-20.

- There is need for a sovereign national conference to be organised to allow representatives of the multi-ethnic groups express their feelings and suggest the best way to move the nation forward.
- The resource allocation should be distributed to all ethnic origins with the consciousness of giving special attention to the host communities - the Niger Delta.
- Political parties should be streamlined to accommodate at most four parties, to give room for full participation of Nigerian citizens.
- More women should be carried along in the political structure of the country, to enable them make their impact to governance in the social system.
- Serious awareness should be created to avoid ethno-centric politics and look for the best Candidate irrespective of ethnic origin to stir the political ship of Nigeria. This means adopting what I call, the US Obama example."
- People should be given the right education that would enable them to contribute to societal growth and development.

Conclusion

It is clear from the scenario painted above that no nation can progress under the heat of Conflict and poverty. A little wonder King David was unable to build the temple of God (but Solomon did) owing to the series of wars he encountered.

So, if Africa in general and Nigeria in particular must experience genuine and sustainable development, it is expedient that the culture of peace should be embraced and weapons of conflict turned against poverty.

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